

Measuring Value: Assessment Data That Matters

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AAHSL Pre-Conference 28 October 2006
Seattle, Washington

Library Assessment

Library assessment provides a structured process to learn about our communities, their work and the libraries connection to what they do

The information acquired through library assessment is used in an iterative manner to improve library programs and services and make our libraries responsive to the needs of our communities.

Academic libraries do not exist in a vacuum but are part of a larger institution. Assessment within the institution may take place in individual areas as well as at the broad institutional level.

Thinking Strategically About Library Futures: Some Assessment-Related Questions

- What is the central work of the library and how can we do more, differently, and at less cost?
- What important services does the library provide that others can't?
- What advantages does the research library possess?
- How is customer behavior changing?
- How do we add value to our customers work?
- What are the essential factors responsible for library success now and in the future?

What We Need to Know to Support Our Communities

- Who are our customers (and potential customers)?
- What are their teaching, learning, clinical and research interests?
- What are their library and information needs?
- How do they currently use library/information services?
- How would they prefer to do so?
- What's important for their work?
- How do they differ from each other in library use/needs?
- How does the library add value to their work?

If It Was Only This Easy!



Donning his new canine decoder, Professor Schwartzman becomes the first human being on Earth to hear what barking dogs are actually saying.

The Challenge of Assessment in Libraries

- Traditional statistics don't define the 21st Century Library
 - Emphasize inputs, expenditures, acquisitions, holdings – how big and how much
 - Can no longer tell the library's story
 - Are not aligned with library/institutional goals and plans
 - Don't define and measure service quality
- Need metrics describing outcomes: success and value from the user's perspective
- Building the organizational culture and structure, tools, and skill set for library assessment

From the UK: Value and Impact Measurement Project (VAMP) (per Stephen Town)

- There is a need to demonstrate value and that libraries make a difference
- Measurement needs to show ‘real’ value
- Need to link to University mission
- Libraries are, and intend to be, ahead of the game
- Impact may be difficult or impossible to measure
- Develop a toolkit for measuring value

Higher Education Assessment Trends: Outcomes and Accountability

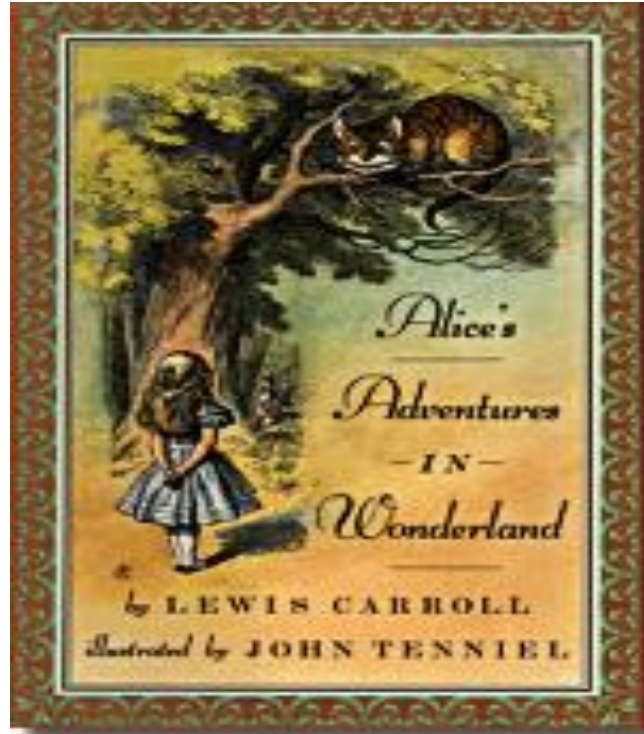
- Externally mandated assessment efforts spurred by accrediting and funding bodies
- Emphasis on outcomes based assessment
- Strong focus on student learning outcomes
- Encourage integration of educational technology tools with teaching and learning
- Promote strategic planning process that defines institutional mission, vision and goals
- Evaluate whether institution's actions match its articulated goals
- Fiscal responsibility and accountability

Higher Education Assessment Issues

- Outcomes based assessment is complex
- Measures and tests become “proxies” for goals
- Higher education institutions differ from each other
- Measuring specific knowledge and/or cognitive growth
- Formative and summative assessment
- Assessing such values as personal, civic, and social
- Time and expertise to do assessment right
- Buy in from stakeholders (especially faculty)
- **Sponsored research has not been a focus**

Libraries: Through the Looking Glass

How have things changed as far as getting your information in the past 5 years?



“We never have to go to the library”

UW College of Education Faculty Focus Group 2000

(sounds of laughter and lots of paper ripping noise on audio tape)

1990's: Customer-Centered Library and the Culture of Assessment

Customer-Centered Library

- All services and activities are viewed through the eyes of the customers
- Customers determine quality
- Library services and resources add value to the customer

Culture of Assessment

- Organizational environment in which decisions are based on facts, research and analysis,
- Services are planned and delivered to maximize positive customer outcomes

User-centered libraries “collect data and use them as the basis for decision-making rather than rely on subjective impressions and opinions”

(Stoffle, Renaud and Veldof, “Choosing Our Futures”, *C&RL*, 1996)

The Customer-Centered Library

- Focuses on customer information needs and services
- Customer is at the center of service & resource decisions
- Quality services and user satisfaction are goals shared by all library staff
- Personalized service that recognizes diverse user needs
- Operations organized to attain user-centered objectives
- Evaluation & assessment focused on customer outcomes
- **Decisions are based on data not assumptions**
(“assumicide”)

ARL Responds with New Measures 2000-

- User Satisfaction/Service Quality
 - LibQUAL+™
 - DigiQUAL™
 - Measuring Library Service Quality Lyceum
- Teaching and Learning
 - SAILS
 - Learning Outcomes
- Research
 - MINES for Libraries
- Cost Effectiveness
 - ILL/DD Study
- E-Metrics
 - ARL supplementary statistics

What Are We Measuring?

“Institutional assessment efforts should not be concerned about valuing what can be measured, but instead about measuring what is valued.”

A.W. Astin, “Assessment for Excellence, 1991

“What is easy to measure is not necessarily what is desirable to measure. It is always tempting to set goals based on the data that are gathered, rather than developing a data-gathering system linked to assessing progress towards meeting established goals.”

M. Kryllidou, “An overview of performance measures in higher education and libraries”, 1998

Using Data Effectively Easier Said Than Done

Libraries in many cases are collecting data without really having the will, organizational capacity, or interest to interpret and use the data effectively in library planning. . .

The result is a kind of purposeless data collection that has little hope of serving as a foundation for the development of guidelines, best practices, or benchmarks

(Denise Troll Covey, *Usage and Usability Assessment: Practices and Concerns*, 2002)

What Are We Measuring?

The ARL Statistics

- Measure of resources input into the library
- ARL Membership Criteria Index
 - Volumes held
 - Volumes added, gross
 - Current serials
 - Total library expenditures
 - Total professional plus support staff
- ARL stats increasingly diverge from library strategic goals and services and what's important to measure

What Are We Measuring?

Reviewing the ARL Statistics

October 2005, ARL Board approved a study to:

- Determine if there are new ways of describing research library collections.
 - What is it we are currently measuring
 - Are they the right data
 - Develop alternative models
- Develop a profile of the characteristics of a contemporary research library
- Determine/develop new meaningful measures to augment current ones to support this profile

Potential Supplementary Quantitative Stats (Per Bruce Thompson)

- Current ARL stats that could be used for benchmarking
 - Current index without “total expenditures”
 - User interactions
 - # Participants in group presentations
 - # Presentations to library groups
 - # Reference transactions
 - Interlibrary loan activities
 - Borrowed total items
 - Loaned total items
- Expenditure focused statistics
- Set of statistics related to the digital library (from ARL supplementary statistics)

Library of the Future Qualitative Profile

Developing New Metrics (per Yvonna Lincoln)

- Uniqueness of collections
- Defining the value of consortia
- Administrative and budgetary efficiencies
- Student outcomes/student learning/graduate success
- Contributions to faculty productivity
- Social frameworks/intellectual networks
- Generating new knowledge
- Creating the collective good with reusable assets

Library of the Future Will Also Need . . .

. . . To have it's own data collection and management personnel, individuals who constantly collect, analyze and prepare reports on data regarding what services are being used, which portions of the collection are getting the highest usage, what materials are being lent through interlibrary loan, and who patrons are.

Documenting the libraries contributions to quality teaching, student outcomes, research productivity will become critical.

Moving Assessment Forward: From Counting to Understanding to Action

- **The Old Days: Bigger is better, inputs and outputs**
 - More dollars = more books, journals, and staff
 - Library quality determined by size and funding
- **Measuring Use: Counting output**
 - Use of print and electronic resources
 - Use of other resources and services
 - Use of facilities
- **User Needs Assessment and Behavior: Why and How**
 - Learning why and how libraries are needed and used
 - Learning how libraries add value to the academic endeavor
- **Using Assessment Data to Make Our Libraries Better**
 - That's the hard part!

Multidimensional Library Assessment: Beyond Counts and Satisfaction Surveys

- Data based decision making needs good data sources
 - Development of management information services
- Use of multiple assessment methods
- Focus on user needs and information seeking and using behavior
- Increased reliance on qualitative data to identify issues from the perspective of users
- Learning from our users
- Partnering with other campus programs
- Understanding and using assessment data
- Making library assessment ongoing and sustainable

More Tools in the Box: Multiple Methods for More Effective Assessment

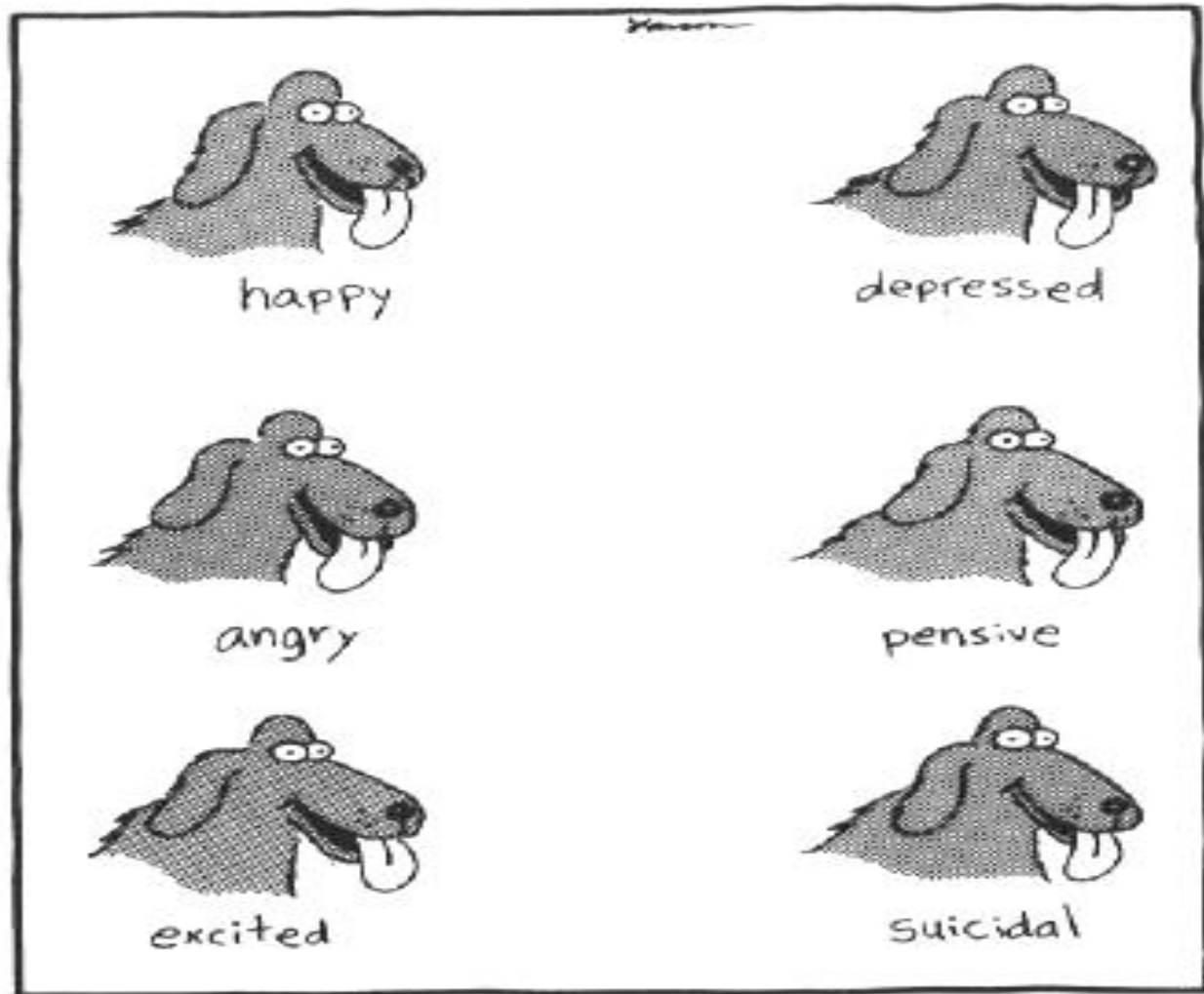
- Different methods may complement one another
- Follow up with another method that's more appropriate
- Large projects may need different approaches
- Acquire both quantitative and qualitative information
- Provide three dimensional view of issues or users
- “Two Proofs” (cross validation)
- Review already existing data (such as use statistics)

Understanding the Numbers

“You look at a number and don’t say that’s a fact. You want to say where did it come from, who generated it, why, is it consistent with what we would get from looking at other sources, does it make sense? What sort of insight can the quantitative record give to the qualitative one.”

Susan Carter, Co-Editor, *Historical Statistics of the United States* (2006), as quoted in the *New York Times*, February 22, 2006

Sometimes The Data Isn't Revealing



How to recognize the moods of an Irish setter

The Qualitative Provides the Key

- Increasing use of such qualitative methods as, comments interviews, focus groups, usability, observation
- Statistics often can't tell us
 - Who, how, why
 - Value, impact, outcomes
- Qualitative provides information directly from users
 - Their language
 - Their issues
 - Their work
- Qualitative provides understanding

Practical Assessment: Results That Can Be Used!

- Keep it simple and focused – “less is more”
- Know when “good ‘nuff” is good enough
- Focus on what is important to your customers and stakeholders
- Use assessment where it can add value to customers
- Present results so they are understandable and actionable
- Libraries are organized to act on results

Use Assessment Data for Good!

