



# The Assessment Environment in North American Research Libraries

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# Background

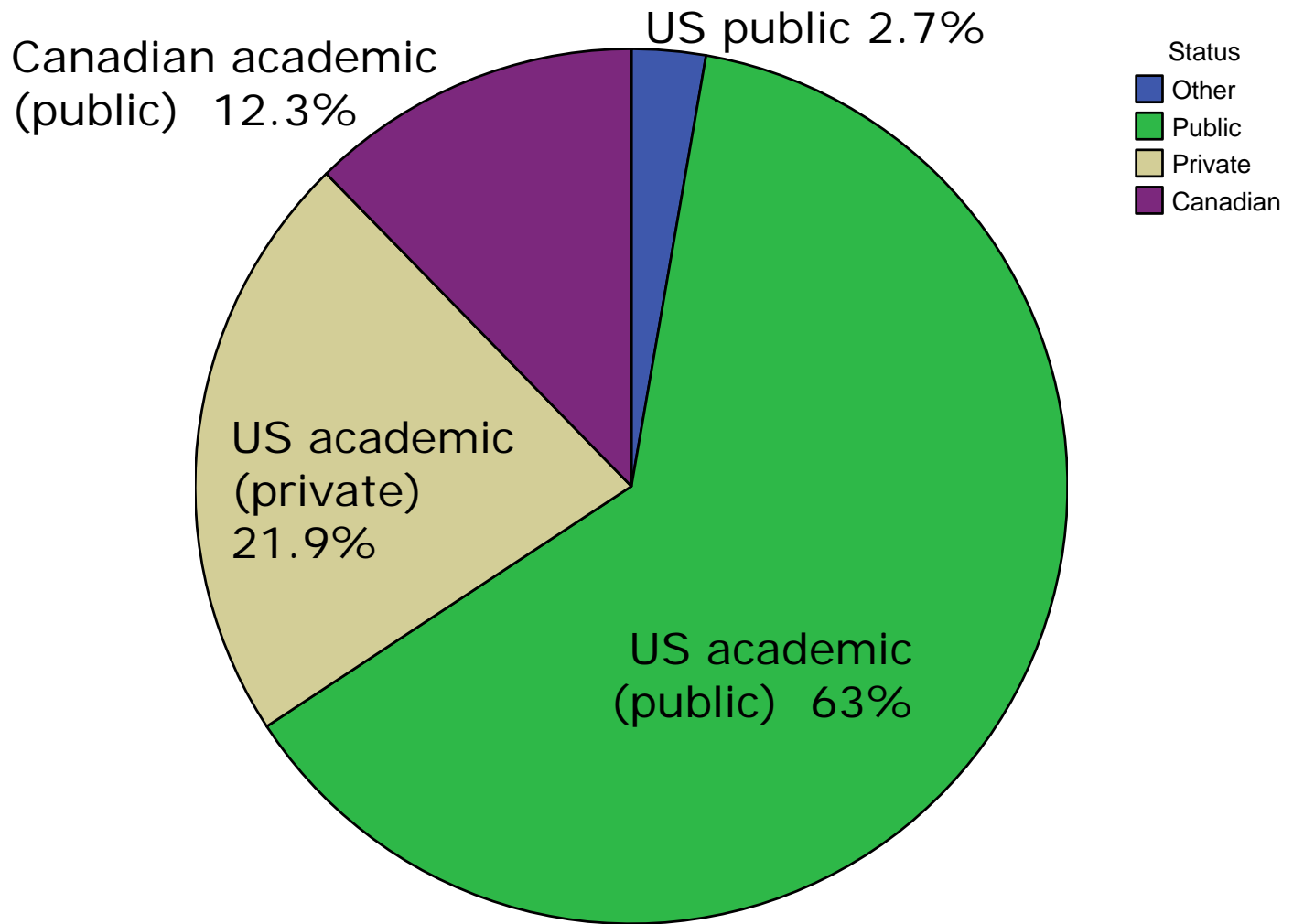
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**ARL** ASSOCIATION OF  
RESEARCH LIBRARIES

- Annual statistical surveys
- Many other programs: LibQUAL, stats training, Scholarly Communication, salary data...
- SPEC Kits  
<http://www.arl.org/resources/pubs/spec/complete.shtml>

# Response by Type of Library





# Survey Information

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- May-June 2007
- 60% response rate
- 99% do assessment other than routine ARL statistics

# Assessment Methods: Used by 80%+

Statistics gathering (e.g., e-resource usage, gate counts, ARL statistics, etc.)	100.0%
Surveys developed elsewhere (e.g., CSEQ, LibQUAL+®)	97.2%
Web usability testing	95.8%
Locally designed user satisfaction survey	95.8%
Focus Groups	95.8%
Suggestion Box	94.3%
Catalog user interface usability	91.8%
Facilities use studies	91.3%
Interviews	89.7%
Observation	85.5%
Online user feedback (pop-up windows, etc.)	81.4%

# Assessment Methods: Less Used

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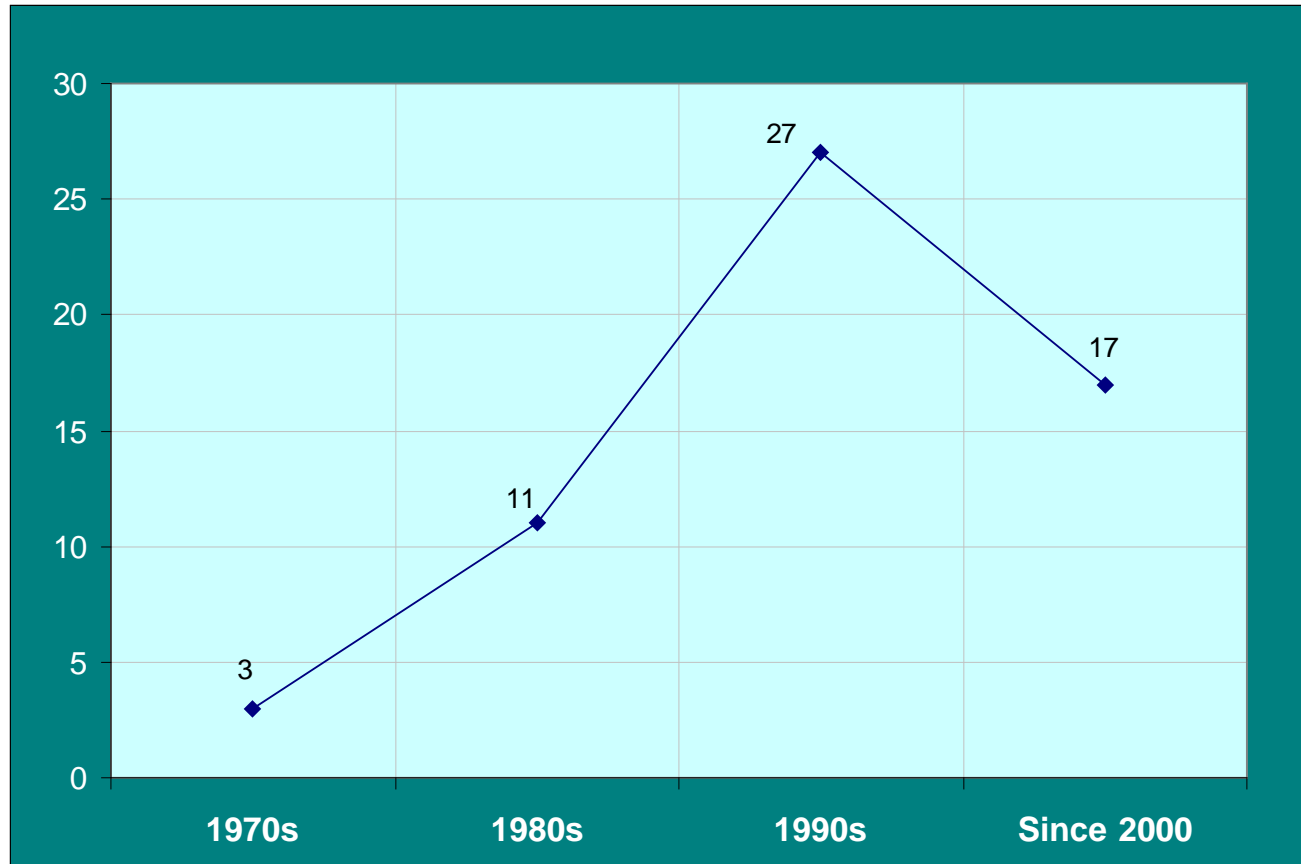
Process improvement	75.4%
Statistics inventory	74.6%
Student learning outcomes evaluations	73.2%
Data mining and analyses	72.1%
Unit cost analysis	71.6%
Benchmarking	69.1%
Worklife/organizational climate studies	62.1%
Other method not included above	42.4%
Wayfinding	35.3%
Balanced scorecard	12.3%
Secret Shopper Studies	10.0%

# When Assessment Began

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Before 1970	1	1.7%
1970s	3	5.1%
1980s	11	18.6%
1990s	27	45.8%
Since 2000	17	28.8%

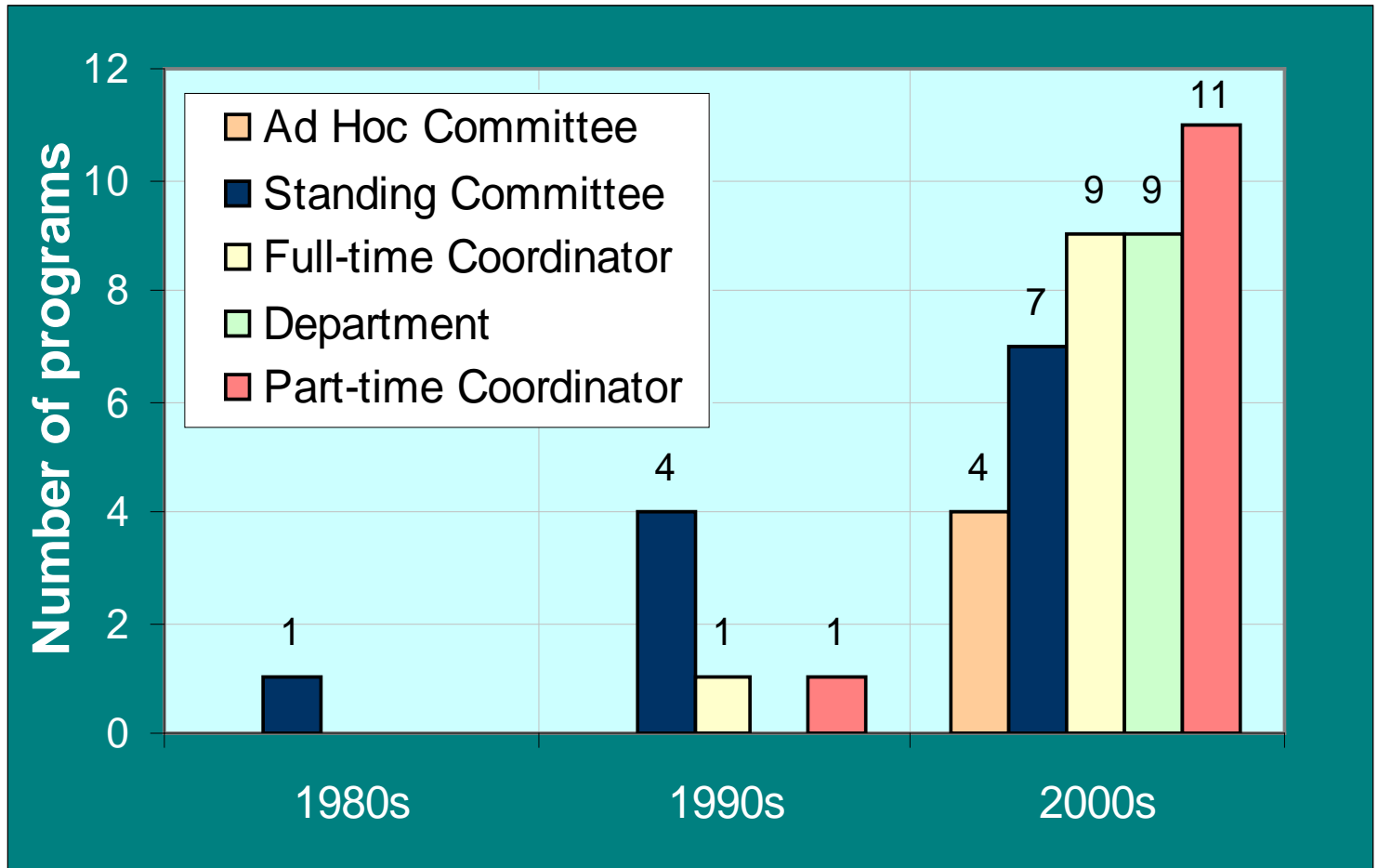
# Growth of Assessment



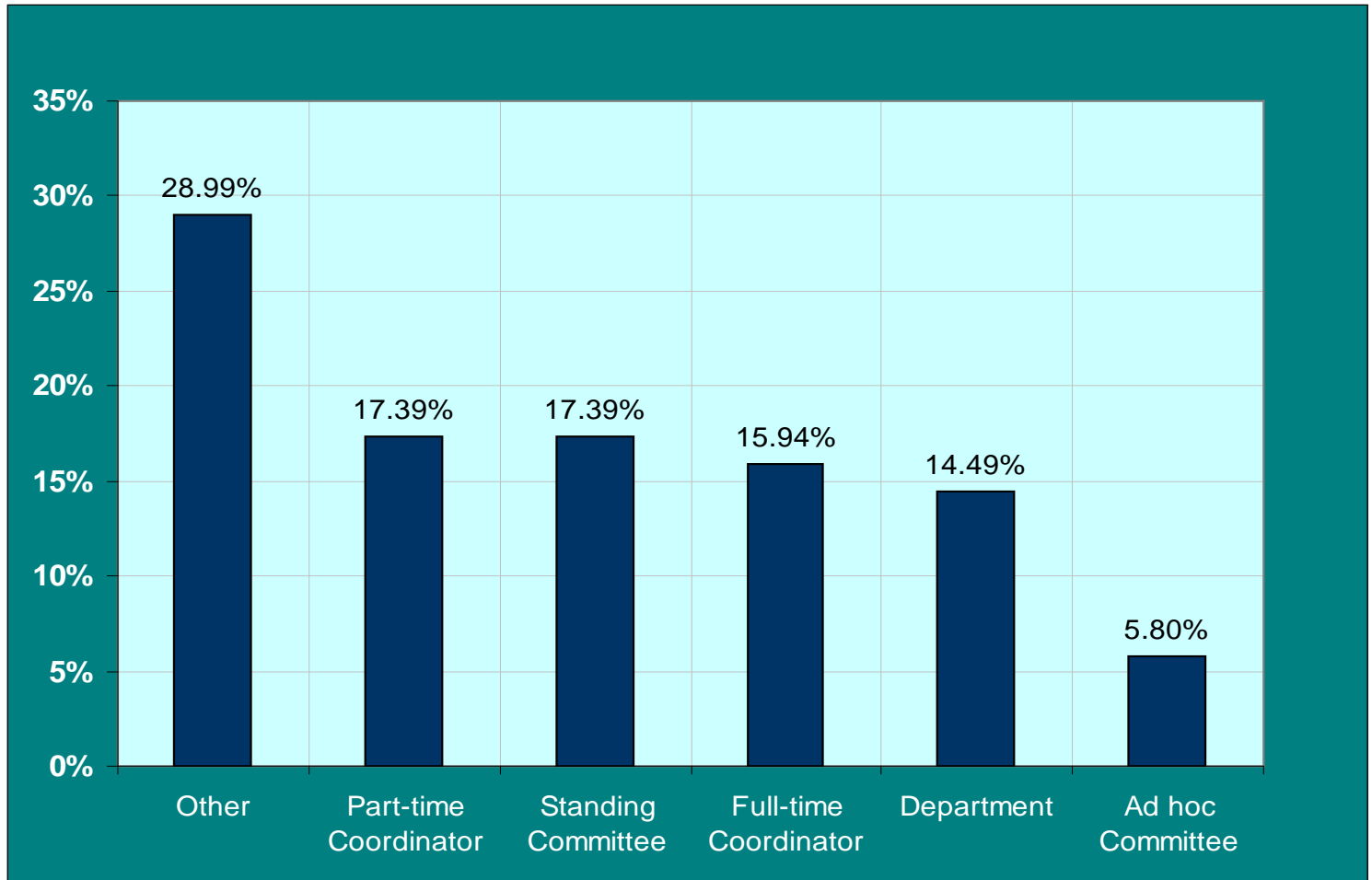
# Impetus for Assessment

Desire to know more about your customers	91.2%
Investigation of possible new library services or resources	70.6%
Desire to identify library performance objectives	64.7%
Desire to know more about your processes	64.7%
Need to reallocate library resources	57.4%
Accountability requirements from your parent institution	39.7%
Institutional or programmatic accreditation process	29.4%
Other	23.5%
Proposal from staff member with assessment knowledge	17.7%

# Year Current Programs Were Established



# Responsibility for Assessment





# Assessment Tasks

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Analyzes, interprets, and reports on data collected in assessment activities	<b>96.67%</b>
Consults with staff on assessment methods and needs	<b>91.67%</b>
Performs assessment activities	<b>86.67%</b>
Coordinates collection of data across the library	<b>76.00%</b>
Monitors/coordinates assessment projects throughout the library	<b>74.52%</b>



# Assessment Tasks

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Coordinates the reporting/archiving of the library's statistical data	69.40%
Fills requests for library data	66.36%
Submits external surveys (ARL, ALS, NATC, American Library Directory, etc.)	66.18%
Provides training on assessment topics	53.55%
Approves assessment projects throughout the library	27.94%
Other	23.79%

# Units Assessed

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Administration	55.7%
Financial/Business Services	52.2%
Development/Fundraising	43.8%
Human Resources	40.6%
Publicity/Marketing	35.4%



# Use of Assessment Results

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Changes in website design	46.0%
Facilities improvements	44.4%
Collection development or arrangement	27.0%
Opening hours	27.0%
Staff/Staffing levels	27.0%

# Culture of Assessment

	Mean	% Agreeing
Library <b>administrators are committed</b> to supporting assessment	4.12	79.1%
Assessment <b>results are used to improve my library</b>	4.00	76.1%
Assessment is <b>evident in our library planning documents</b> such as the strategic plan	4.05	74.2%
My <b>library evaluates its operations and programs</b> for service quality	3.91	71.6%
Assessment is a <b>library priority</b>	3.84	67.2%
My library has <b>local assessment resources and experts</b>	3.39	49.3%
There is <b>support and/or rewards for staff</b> who engage in assessment activities	3.12	43.9%
<b>Staff accepts responsibility</b> for assessment activities	3.18	31.3%
Staff have the <b>necessary assessment expertise</b> and skills	2.84	19.4%
<b>Staff development in assessment</b> is adequate	2.65	16.9%

# Staff Abilities

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## ○ Strengths

- Formal presentations
- Formal reports
- Draw conclusions
- Make recommendations
- Project management
- Facilitate focus groups

## ○ Weaknesses

- Sampling
- Research design
- Focus group research
- Survey design
- Qualitative analysis

# Training for Assessment

	%	N
Support is given for training provided <b>outside of our institution</b>	59.7%	40
Support is given for training provided <b>by our parent institution</b>	32.8%	22
<b>No particular training is provided</b>	29.9%	20
Training is <b>provided by the library</b>	28.4%	19

# Assessment Venues

	% Who Have Attended
ARL assessment-related meetings	85.7%
ALA/ACRL sessions/discussion groups on assessment	66.7%
ALA/LAMA sessions/discussion groups on assessment	58.3%
Library Assessment Conference (e.g., Charlottesville 2006)	56.9%
Evidenced-Based Library and Information Practice Conference (EBLIP)	17.5%
Northumbria International Conferences on Performance Measurement in Libraries	15.6%



# Training Needs

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- Training in the basics
- Hands-on training
- Training on specific tools and techniques



# Professional Development Needs

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“More practical instruction on how to formulate survey and interview questions. There’s a lot of discussion about do’s and don’ts, but no opportunity to learn in a collaborative, hands on environment.”

“Practical level assessment training for staff at all levels of the library. When you don’t have an expert on staff where do you begin with assessment.”



# Contact Information

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