The Assessment Environment in North American Research Libraries

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Background

- Annual statistical surveys
- Many other programs: LibQUAL, stats training, Scholarly Communication, salary data...
- SPEC Kits
Response by Type of Library

- US academic (public): 63%
- US academic (private): 21.9%
- Canadian academic (public): 12.3%
- US public: 2.7%

Status:
- Other
- Public
- Private
- Canadian
Survey Information

- May-June 2007
- 60% response rate
- 99% do assessment other than routine
  ARL statistics
## Assessment Methods: Used by 80%+

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statistics gathering (e.g., e-resource usage, gate counts, ARL statistics, etc.)</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveys developed elsewhere (e.g., CSEQ, LibQUAL+®)</td>
<td>97.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web usability testing</td>
<td>95.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locally designed user satisfaction survey</td>
<td>95.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Groups</td>
<td>95.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestion Box</td>
<td>94.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalog user interface usability</td>
<td>91.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities use studies</td>
<td>91.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>89.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>85.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online user feedback (pop-up windows, etc.)</td>
<td>81.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Assessment Methods: Less Used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Process improvement</td>
<td>75.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistics inventory</td>
<td>74.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student learning outcomes evaluations</td>
<td>73.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data mining and analyses</td>
<td>72.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit cost analysis</td>
<td>71.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benchmarking</td>
<td>69.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worklife/organizational climate studies</td>
<td>62.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other method not included above</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wayfinding</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balanced scorecard</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secret Shopper Studies</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When Assessment Began

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before 1970</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>45.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Since 2000</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Growth of Assessment
### Impetus for Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desire to know more about your customers</td>
<td>91.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigation of possible new library services or resources</td>
<td>70.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to identify library performance objectives</td>
<td>64.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to know more about your processes</td>
<td>64.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to reallocate library resources</td>
<td>57.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability requirements from your parent institution</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional or programmatic accreditation process</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposal from staff member with assessment knowledge</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Year Current Programs Were Established

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>Ad Hoc Committee</th>
<th>Standing Committee</th>
<th>Full-time Coordinator</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Part-time Coordinator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000s</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Responsibility for Assessment

- Other: 28.99%
- Part-time Coordinator: 17.39%
- Standing Committee: 17.39%
- Full-time Coordinator: 15.94%
- Department: 14.49%
- Ad hoc Committee: 5.80%
## Assessment Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analyzes, interprets, and reports on data collected in assessment activities</td>
<td>96.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consults with staff on assessment methods and needs</td>
<td>91.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performs assessment activities</td>
<td>86.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinates collection of data across the library</td>
<td>76.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitors/coordinates assessment projects throughout the library</td>
<td>74.52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Assessment Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coordinates the reporting/archiving of the library’s statistical data</td>
<td>69.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fills requests for library data</td>
<td>66.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submits external surveys (ARL, ALS, NATC, American Library Directory, etc.)</td>
<td>66.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides training on assessment topics</td>
<td>53.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approves assessment projects throughout the library</td>
<td>27.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>23.79%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Units Assessed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>55.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial/Business Services</td>
<td>52.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development/Fundraising</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publicity/Marketing</td>
<td>35.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Use of Assessment Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Changes in website design</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities improvements</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection development or arrangement</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening hours</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff/Staffing levels</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library administrators are committed to supporting assessment</td>
<td>4.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment results are used to improve my library</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment is evident in our library planning documents such as the strategic plan</td>
<td>4.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My library evaluates its operations and programs for service quality</td>
<td>3.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment is a library priority</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My library has local assessment resources and experts</td>
<td>3.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is support and/or rewards for staff who engage in assessment activities</td>
<td>3.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff accepts responsibility for assessment activities</td>
<td>3.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff have the necessary assessment expertise and skills</td>
<td>2.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff development in assessment is adequate</td>
<td>2.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Staff Abilities

- **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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support Provided</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support is given for training provided outside of our institution</td>
<td>59.7%</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support is given for training provided by our parent institution</td>
<td>32.8%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No particular training is provided</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training is provided by the library</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Assessment Venues

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

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