Library Assessment Trends in the U.S.A.

Steve Hiller
Director, Assessment and Planning
University of Washington Libraries
International Relations Program
ALA Annual June 25, 2012
Library Assessment

Library assessment is a structured process to:

- Learn about our communities & services to make them successful
- Use data for effective management & decision-making
- Emphasize communication with customers & stakeholders
- Seek opportunities for collaboration & comparisons
- Help demonstrate library value
U.S. Higher Education and Assessment

- No national library or standards for performance
- Thousands of colleges and universities – missions differ
  - Large number of private institutions
- Institutions are accredited by regional associations (non-governmental) and some programs by professional bodies
- Educational component funded locally (taxes/tuition)
- Federal government funds research/provides student loans
- Internal allocation of funds done at institutional level
Traditional Library “Assessment”: Inputs

Focus on how big/how much

• Budget (staff, collections, operations)
• Staff size
• Collection size
• Facilities
• Related infrastructure (hours, seats, computers)
• Size of user communities and programs

ARL “Investment Index” measures inputs related to expenditures and staff numbers
Traditional Library Assessment: Outputs

Focus on usage

• Collections (print, electronic, ILL)
• Reference services
• Facilities (gate counts)
• Instruction sessions
• Discovery and retrieval
• Other Web sessions

May indicate if “inputs” are used, but doesn’t tell us what users were able to accomplish as a result.
These Are Self-Reported Statistics Too!

I didn’t have any accurate numbers so I just made up this one.

Studies have shown that accurate numbers aren’t any more useful than the ones you make up.

How many studies showed that?

Eighty-seven.
Trends in Academic Library Assessment

- Library statistics (1907-)
- Customer-centered library concept (1995-)
  - User-centered design for library space
- Outcomes-based assessment and metrics (2000-)
  - Teaching and learning (information literacy)
- Multiple methods - including qualitative (2000-)
- Library value and impact (2005-)
- Collaboration - Integrating library & institutional assessment (2010-)
  - Libraries and faculty research productivity
  - Libraries and student learning outcomes
Example: Learning Outcomes Assessment

Figure 1: Assessment Cycle

Outcomes
What do we want to achieve?
What do we want the student to achieve?
What does an excellent information literacy program do?

Continuous Improvement
What, if any, changes are necessary as a result of the learning? What are our priorities and the plan for action?

Criteria for Success:
How will we know the students we have met the outcomes? What standards of success will we use to determine program effectiveness?

Analysis
What can we learn from the evidence/data/information? What does it reveal? Are our current activities getting us toward our outcome?

Assessment:
How will the student demonstrate their learning and ability? What evidence, data, or information do we need to gather about our program? How and when will we gather it?

Library/College Mission/Values/Goals
Strategic Directions
Library Instruction Program Mission/Goals

Adapted by Gilchrist, 2005 from Pierce College Accreditation/Assessment Teams. Lakewood and Puyallup, Washington. 2005
Assessment Drivers

• Institutional accountability, justification and funding
• Accreditation – Student learning outcomes
• Service improvement & evidence-based decision making
• Marketing & promoting library resources and services

No longer “how good is this library but how much good does this library do”
Major Assessment Players: 
Building the Assessment Community

Rely on associations and groups – no national library

• Association of Research Libraries
• Association of College and Research Libraries
• National Information Standards Organization
• Library Assessment Conference
Association of Research Libraries (ARL)
http://www.arl.org/stats/

• Represents 125 largest libraries
• ARL Statistics
• New measures and new tools
  – LibQUAL+® user survey, MINES for libraries
• Individual library consulting
  – Effective, Sustainable and Practical Assessment (ESP)
    • 42 libraries visited 2005-2010 to evaluate assessment needs and programs
• Balanced Scorecard for libraries
• Continuing education
• Lib-Value
  – Partner in IMLS grant to measure value and return on investment in academic libraries)
Multiple Institutions Using Multiple Methods to Measure Multiple Values for Multiple Stakeholders
Current Projects

- Books and Ebooks
- Special Collections
- Information Commons
- Teaching
- Learning
- Comprehensive Library
- Reading and Scholarship
- Tools
- Website and Value Bibliography
Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) http://www.ala.org/acrl/

• Standards and Guidelines
  – Information Literacy, Higher Education Outcomes

• Continuing Education
  – Information Literacy Immersion, Assessment Track, Webinars

• Programs, Committees, Discussion Groups
  – Value of Academic Libraries, Assessment

• Value of Academic Libraries Initiative
Association of College and Research Libraries
Value of Academic Libraries

Purpose:
• Current state of literature on the value of libraries
• Suggestions for immediate next steps in demonstrating academic library value
• Research agenda for articulating library value
• Focus on defining outcomes

Prepared by Megan Oakleaf, Sept. 2010
http://www.acrl.ala.org/value/
Value of Academic Libraries Research Agenda

• How does the library contribute to:
  – Student enrollment
  – Student retention and graduation rates
  – Student success
  – Student achievement
  – Student learning
  – The student experience
  – Faculty research productivity
  – Faculty grant proposals and funding
  – Faculty teaching
  – Overall institutional reputation and prestige
National Information Standards Organization (NISO) http://www.niso.org/home/

- Information Standards
  - Data Dictionary (Z39.7)
- Performance measures
- Continuing education
  - Webinars
Library Assessment Conference
Building Effective, Sustainable, Practical Assessment

- Biennial conference started in 2006 by ARL, University of Virginia and University of Washington
- Influenced by success of the Northumbria Performance Measurement Conference held in Pittsburgh, 2001
- All areas of library assessment with focus on practical
  - Keynotes, papers, posters and workshops
- Opportunity for those interested in assessment to connect
- Largest library-assessment related meeting in the world
## Library Assessment Conference Basics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Registrants “Assessment” in job title</th>
<th>2006 Charlottesville, VA</th>
<th>2008 Seattle, WA</th>
<th>2010 Baltimore, MD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registrants</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registrants</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presentations (papers) Poster sessions Workshops</th>
<th>2006 Charlottesville, VA</th>
<th>2008 Seattle, WA</th>
<th>2010 Baltimore, MD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presentations (papers) Poster sessions Workshops</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentations (papers) Poster sessions Workshops</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentations (papers) Poster sessions Workshops</td>
<td>3 (half day, offered 2x)</td>
<td>6 (half-day)</td>
<td>2 (full-day)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentations (papers) Poster sessions Workshops</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 (half-day)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conference Proceedings</th>
<th>2006 Charlottesville, VA</th>
<th>2008 Seattle, WA</th>
<th>2010 Baltimore, MD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conference Proceedings</td>
<td>452 pages</td>
<td>552 pages</td>
<td>788 pages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2012 Library Assessment Conference

• 67 papers
  – Teaching and Learning (10)
  – Methods (12)
  – Value (7)
  – Data (6)
  – Collections (6)
  – Discovery (5)
  – Value (5)
  – Space (4)
  – Organizational performance (4)
  – Special Collections (3)

• 4 Keynotes
  – Libraries and the Academy

• 5 Workshops
  – Library Value (1/2 day)
  – Learning Outcomes
  – Library Space
  – LibQual+®
  – Balanced Scorecard (1/2 day)

• 85 posters
Assessment is Local
Assessing Library Value to the Institution

• Library contributions to learning, teaching and research
  – Student learning outcomes (accreditation, tuition)
  – Return on investment (externally funded research)

• Library value to the academic community
  – Information resources/collections
  – Library as place
  – Intellectual crossroads of the university

• Organizational performance and effectiveness

• Collaborations
UW Libraries 2010 Triennial Survey
Libraries Contribution to:
(Scale of 1 “Minor” to 5 “Major”)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean scores; % = those marking 4 or 5</th>
<th>Faculty 1634 surveys (39% response)</th>
<th>Graduate Students 680 surveys (32% response)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keeping current in your field</td>
<td>92% 4.67</td>
<td>90% 4.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding information in related fields or new areas</td>
<td>90% 4.56</td>
<td>91% 4.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being a more productive researcher</td>
<td>92% 4.63</td>
<td>93% 4.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enriching student learning experiences Overall academic success</td>
<td>77% 4.18</td>
<td>92% 4.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making more efficient use of your time</td>
<td>87% 4.46</td>
<td>80% 4.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
UW Libraries Contribution to Enriching Student Learning Experiences
(Faculty Response by College/School)

Scale of 1 (Minor) to 5 (Major)

- Engineering
- Business
- Science
- Medicine
- Public Health
- Nursing
- Arts
- Social Sciences
- Humanities

Scores:
- Engineering: 3.75
- Business: 3.5
- Science: 3.75
- Medicine: 4.25
- Public Health: 4.5
- Nursing: 4.75
- Arts: 5
- Social Sciences: 4.75
- Humanities: 4.5
UW Libraries Contribution to Recruiting Colleagues & Students to UW
(Faculty Response by College/School)

Scale of 1 (Minor) to 5 (Major)

- Engineering
- Business
- Science
- Medicine
- Public Hlth
- Nursing
- Arts
- Social Sci
- Humanities
Library Role in Recruitment & Student Enrichment in the Social Sciences by Program

![Graph showing the library role in recruitment and student enrichment by program. The x-axis represents different programs: Anthro, Comm, History, Philosophy, PoliSci, Int'l Studies, Sociology. The y-axis represents the level of enrichment and recruitment. The graph shows varying levels of enrichment and recruitment across different programs.]
Have Libraries Met these Challenges?

• What do we know about our communities to provide services and resources to make them successful?

• How do we demonstrate our effectiveness to user success?

• What do our stakeholders need to know in order to provide the resources needed for a successful library?