The Role of Library Assessment

The library community needs to invest more in data collection and analysis and to take its examples from commercial leaders that have a much more detailed and insightful understanding of their customer base and preferences. In particular, there is a need for ongoing longitudinal data and intelligence functions to provide a vital early radar warning of oncoming change.

No library we are aware of has a department devoted to the evaluation of the user, how can that be?

(Information Behaviour of the Researcher of the Future, CIBER, January 2008)
North American Libraries with Notable Assessment Programs

- Alberta “Ongoing student surveys”
- Cornell “In-house research capability”
- Pennsylvania “Data Farm”
- Rochester “Ethnographic approaches”
- Virginia “Balanced Scorecard”
- Washington “User needs”
Building a Community of Practice: Library Assessment Conference

• Co-sponsored by Association of Research Libraries, University of Virginia and University of Washington

• Held biennially
  – 2006 Charlottesville, Virginia (220 registrants)
  – 2008 Seattle, Washington (August 4-7, 380 registrants)
  – 2010 Washington D.C. area

• Focused on practitioners
  – Papers, panels, posters, informal contact
  – ½ day workshops
Association of Research Libraries Sponsored Assessment

• Tools
  – ARL Statistics
  – LibQUAL+®
  – MINES for Libraries

• Building a Community of Practice
  – Library Assessment Conferences
  – Service Quality Evaluation Academy
  – Library Assessment blog
  – Workshops

Individual Library Consultation (Jim and Steve)
  – Making Library Assessment Work (24 libraries in 2005-06)
  – Effective, Sustainable, Practical Library Assessment (6 in 2007)
UW Libraries Assessment Priorities
Customer Needs, Use and Success

• Understanding how faculty and students work
• Information seeking behavior and use
• Patterns of library use
• Value of library
• User needs
• Library contribution to customer success
• User satisfaction with services, collections, overall
The University of Washington

- UW located in beautiful Seattle metro population 3.2 million
- Comprehensive public research university
  - 27,000 undergraduate students
  - 12,000 graduate and professional students (80 doctoral programs)
  - 4,000 research and teaching faculty
- Large research library system
  - $40 million annual budget
  - 150 librarians on 3 campuses
  - Assessment program started in 1992; formal department established in 2006
UW Libraries Assessment Methods

- In-library use surveys every 3 years beginning 1993
  - 4000 completed surveys each survey year
- Focus groups/Interviews (annually since 1998)
- Observation (guided and non-obtrusive)
- Usability
- Use statistics/data mining
The Importance of the Research Enterprise
University of Washington Operating Revenues
$2.55 Billion in 2006-07

Research Grants $1.05 Billion
UW ranks 2nd in federal government research funding

Health and Human Services
$510 million
National Science Foundation
$95 million
Other federal agencies
$190 million
Industry/Foundations
$90 million
Other non-federal
$140 million
UW Students, Faculty and Doctorates Awarded by Academic Area

**Undergraduate Majors**
- Phy Sci - Eng: 22%
- Health Sci: 5%
- Bioscience: 21%
- Other: 52%

**Grad/Professional Students**
- Phy Sci - Eng: 18%
- Health Sci: 31%
- Bioscience: 12%
- Other: 38%

**Faculty**
- Health Sci: 47%
- Phy Sci - Eng: 18%
- Bioscience: 10%
- Other: 20%

**Doctorates Awarded (600+)**
- Phy Sci - Eng: 30%
- Health Sci: 20%
- Bioscience: 19%
- Other: 31%
Biosciences at the UW

• Contain majority of nationally/internationally ranked graduate and research programs
• Largest segment of University research community
  – 47% of graduate and professional students
  – 39% of doctorates awarded
  – 55% of teaching and research faculty
• Receive 80% of externally funded research monies
UW Libraries Review of Biosciences Support 2006

- Better understand how bioscientists work
- Understand significance and value of bioscience and research enterprise to University
- Gauge extent and impact of interdisciplinary research
- What role does the library play in their work and how has it changed
- Review viability of Libraries organizational structure/footprint
- Strengthen library connection to support of bioscience programs and the research enterprise
Biosciences Focus Group/Interview Themes

• Content is primary link to the library
  – Identify library with ejournals; want more titles & backfiles

• Provide library-related services and resources in our space not yours
  – Discovery begins primarily outside of library space with Google and Pub Med; Web of Science also important
  – Library services/tools seen as overly complex & fragmented
  – If not online want digital delivery
  – Go to physical library only as last resort

• Lack understanding of library services/resources

• Increasing overlap between “bio” & other research
Biosciences Task Force Recommendations

• Integrate search/discovery tools into users workflow
• Expand/improve information/service delivery options
• Make physical libraries more inviting/easier to use
  – Consolidate libraries, collections and service points
  – Reduce print holdings; focus on services
• Use an integrated approach to collection allocations
• Get librarians to work outside library space
• Lead/partner in scholarly communications and E-science
• Provide more targeted communication and marketing
Biosciences Review Follow-up: 2007-08 Actions

- Appointed a Director, Cyberinfrastructure Initiatives & Special Asst to the University Librarian for Biosciences & E-Science

- Libraries Strategic Plan priorities for 2007 include:
  - Improve discovery to delivery (WorldCat Local etc.)
  - Reshape our physical facilities as discovery and learning centers
  - Strengthen existing delivery services, both physical and digital, while developing new, more rapid delivery services
  - Enhance and strengthen the Libraries support for UW’s scientific research infrastructure
  - Do market research before developing & promoting services

- Informed development of Libraries 2007 Triennial Survey
In God We Trust: 
All Others Must Bring Data

Did themes raised in the interviews/focus groups reflect the bioscience population? The campus community? The 2007 Triennial Survey as a corroborating source

Related Questions
Mode of access (in-person, remote)
Resource type importance
Sources consulted for research
Primary reasons for using Libraries Web sites
Libraries contribution to work and academic success
Useful library services (new and/or expanded)
Reasons for In-Person Library Visits 2001
Faculty and Undergrads Visiting Weekly or More Often

Use Collections
- Faculty: 100%
- Undergrads: 50%

Use space or services
- Faculty: 30%
- Undergrads: 60%

Only Collections
- Faculty: 40%
- Undergrads: 20%

Only space or services
- Faculty: 10%
- Undergrads: 30%
Library as Place
Change In Frequency of In-Person Visits 1998-2007 (weekly+)

- Faculty
- Grad
- Undergrad

20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
80%

Undergrad Activities During Library Visits

(\% using at least weekly in 2004/2007)
Off-Campus Remote Use 1998-2007
(Percentage using library services/collections at least 2x week)
Sources Consulted for Information on Research Topics

(Scale of 1 “Not at All” to 5 “Usually”)

- Open Internet Search
- Open Internet Ref Source
- Library Catalog
- Bibliographic Databases
I wish the interface between scholar and UW libraries was better. I want to search with Scholar, but use UW's credentials to access full-length articles. Right now, there are a lot of intermediary pages I need to visit.  *Bioengineering grad student*
Libraries Contribution to: (Scale of 1 “Minor” to 5 “Major”)

- Being a more productive researcher
- Keeping current in your field
- Finding info in new or related areas
- Efficient use of time
- Academic success

Grad Faculty
WorldCat Local: Usage and Impacts

• One box, one stop shopping
  – Formats integrated
  – UW holdings, regional consortium, WorldCat, First Search, BL articles
  – User doesn’t need to know how we do things internally

• 200-275k searches per month
  – ~80% go to full record
  – Local OPAC down by ~ 140k

• WCL is our #2 ranked OpenURL origin
  – 31000+ clicks-to-content in each of last 2 qtrs

• Our borrowing from consortium is up 61%
• ILL requests up 114%
What Does It All Mean? 16 Years of Assessing User Needs

• Undergraduates
  – Library as Place
    • Work, meet, learn, live

• Graduate/professional students
  – Access to information and services
    • How can the library save me time?

• Faculty
  – Collections (physical and virtual)
What We’ve Learned about the UW Community

- Libraries are still important sources of scholarly information but lessening in value
- Library needs/use patterns vary by and within academic areas and groups - no “one size fits all”
- Remote access is preferred method and has changed the way faculty and students work and use libraries
- Faculty and students find information and use libraries differently than librarians prefer them too
- Library/information environment is perceived as too complex; users find simpler ways (Google) to get info
- Customers cannot predict the Libraries future
How UW Libraries Has Used Assessment

• Extend hours in Undergraduate Library (24/5.5)
• Create more diversified student learning spaces
• Eliminate print copies of journals
• Enhance usability of discovery tools and website
• Provide standardized service training for all staff
• Stop activities that do not add value
• Consolidate and merge branch libraries
• Change/reallocate collections budget and staffing
• Improve librarian liaison program to academic areas
• Support budget requests to University
Our Challenge: Maintain Relevancy and Centrality to the Academic Community

Overall Satisfaction by Group 1995-2007

- Faculty 4.25
- Grad 4.18
- Undergrad 3.97
- UW Seattle UG 4.36
- Faculty 4.56