A DECADE OF USER SURVEYS

Utilizing and Assessing a Standard Assessment Tool to Measure Library Performance at the University of Virginia and University of Washington

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Steve Hiller, University of Washington
User Surveys

- Obtain direct responses to a series of questions
- Identify user issues, concerns and needs
- Measure library performance from user perspective, including satisfaction
- Acquire quantifiable data that can be statistically analyzed and generalizeable for the larger population
- Use results to improve or change services
- Campus/community political benefits
- Institutional assessment/accreditation
“Two Proofs”

• Surveys designed to provide multidimensional user perspective on library performance
  – Use type and frequency
  – Satisfaction
  – Importance
  – Priority
  – Written comments

• Use survey results with other measures/user input such as counts, observation, focus groups
Locations of the University of Virginia (UVA) and the University of Washington (UW)
University of Virginia (UVA)

- 12,500 undergraduates
  - 65% from Virginia, 35% out of state
  - Selective admissions, with high retention and graduation rates
  - Notable for liberal arts
- 6,000 graduate and professional students
  - Notable programs in humanities, law, business
- Located in Charlottesville
  - Small city in metro area of 160,000
  - Scenic environment -- Blue Ridge, horse farms, wineries
  - Home to early Presidents and modern day celebrities
UVA Library Surveys

- Faculty
- Sample of 500
  - 1993 (paper)
  - 1996 (paper)
  - 2000 (Web)

- Students
- Separate tallies for grads and undergrads
- Sample size varied
  - 1994 (paper)
  - 1998 (Web)
  - 2001 (Web)
UVA Results

• Response rates
  – Faculty: 63-70%
  – Graduate Students: 53-65%
  – Undergraduates: 43-50%

• Overall satisfaction (1 to 5 scale)
  
<table>
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<tr>
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<th>93/94</th>
<th>96/98</th>
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<td>Faculty</td>
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<td>Graduate Students</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>3.97</td>
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<tr>
<td>Undergraduates</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>3.90</td>
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UVA Faculty Satisfaction

Overall Satisfaction Rating on a scale of 1 to 5

- Social Sciences: 4.27, 4.48
- Humanities: 4.09, 4.26
- Composite: 3.87, 4.14
- Sciences: 3.8, 4.6


Graph showing the increase in satisfaction ratings over time.
UVA Faculty In-Person Library Use
(% visiting at least weekly)
UVA Hours per Week in the Library
Student Survey 2001

- Less than 2: 31.0% (Grads), 44.5% (Undergrads)
- 2 to 10: 13.4% (Grads), 31.0% (Undergrads)
- 10 to 20: 5.4% (Grads), 15.0% (Undergrads)
- 20+:
  - Grads: 4.2%
  - Undergrads: 4.2%

Legend:
- Grads
- Undergrads
Analyzing the UVA Results

• Two Scores for Resources, Services, Facilities
  – Satisfaction = Mean Rating (1 to 5)
  – Visibility = Percentage Answering the Question

• Permits comparison over time and among groups
• Identifies areas that need more attention
UVA Reference Activity and Reference Visibility in Student Surveys

Reference Questions Recorded per Week in Annual Sample vs Fiscal Year

- 1993: 1,000
- 1994: 7,000
- 1995: 39.3% Visibility
- 1996: 63.9% Visibility
- 1997: 39.3% Visibility
- 1998: 2,519
- 1999: 6,008
- 2000: 75.8% Visibility
- 2001: 50%

Reference Visibility among Undergraduate
UVA Priorities

• 2000 Faculty
  – Books, Journals, Electronic Databases, E-Texts and Journals, Document Delivery/ILL

• 2001 Graduate Students
  – Books, Electronic Journals, Print Journals

• 2001 Undergraduates
  – Books, Computer Workstations, Physical Comfort

• 2001 Law Students
  – Physical Comfort, Computer Workstations, Books
Qualitative Data in UVA Surveys

- Standard open ended questions
  - What is the greatest strength of the library?
  - What needs to be improved?
  - Do you have general comments?

- Utility of qualitative data
  - Interesting reading, but difficult to aggregate
  - Risk of unsupported generalizations
  - Useful when correlated with quantitative data
  - Useful when applied to smaller units
Using Results – University of Virginia

• Additional resources for the science libraries (1994+)
  Major renovation (2001)
• Revision of library instruction for first year students (1995)
• Redefinition of collection development (1996)
• Initiative to improve shelving (1999)
• Undergraduate library open 24 hours (2000)
• Additional resources for the Fine Arts Library (2000)
• Support for various library initiatives--document delivery, acquisition of electronic resources, development of electronic centers (1994+)
University of Washington (UW)

- **Large Institution**
  - 10,000 graduate and professional students
  - 25,000 undergraduates
  - 3,000-6,000 faculty

- **Comprehensive/Research Oriented**
  - Strong professional schools in medicine, nursing, law
  - Excellent programs in biosciences, engineering, and area studies
  - 1st among public institutions in federal research grant funds

- **Located in City of Seattle**
  - Metropolitan area population of more than 3 million
  - Attractive physical environment – volcanoes, fjords, forests
  - Home to Microsoft, Adobe, Amazon.com, Weyerhaeuser, Immunex, Boeing, Starbucks, Nordstrom
## UW Survey Numbers and Costs

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<td>Faculty</td>
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<td>Surveys sent</td>
<td>1108</td>
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<td>1503</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Direct Costs</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
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<td>$19,000</td>
<td>$22,000 (estimated)</td>
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UW Survey Response Rates

Faculty Grad Undergrad
UW Survey Results

• Results
  – Satisfaction
  – Importance,
  – Needs,
  – Use patterns
  – Connectivity
  – Competencies
  – Library performance

• Analysis
  – Snapshot
  – Change over time
  – Differences within groups
  – Differences between groups

• Quantitative and qualitative data
## UW Overall Satisfaction

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>4.33</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grads</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>4.25</td>
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<td>Undergrads</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>4.28</td>
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UW Faculty Satisfaction (by Academic Area)

- **Humanities-Soc Sci**
- **Science-Engineering**
- **Health Sci**
- **Overall**

- 1995
- 1998
- 2001
### UW 1998 And 2001 Surveys
#### Priorities by Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRIORITY</th>
<th>Faculty 1998</th>
<th>Faculty 2001</th>
<th>Grad 1998</th>
<th>Grad 2001</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintain quality of print collections</td>
<td>69.6%</td>
<td>57.4%</td>
<td>52.1%</td>
<td>53.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deliver full-text to your computer</td>
<td>60.4%</td>
<td>73.4%</td>
<td>56.0%</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
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<td>Provide Electronic access to older journals</td>
<td>59.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deliver Bib Databases through Web</td>
<td>52.1%</td>
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<td>40.3%</td>
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<td>Provide course reserves electronically</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>36.5%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase library hours</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>37.6%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
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UW 1998 and 2001 Surveys
Faculty Top Priorities (By Academic area, Dashed line is 2001)
UW 2001 Faculty Survey
Importance of Resource Types (By academic area)
UW Computer Connectivity 1992-98

1992 campus computer account
1995 campus computer account
1998 Web accessible computer

Faculty
Grad
Undergrad
UW Remote Use of Library Resources and Services (use at least weekly)
UW In-Person Library Use 1998, 2001
(\% visiting at least weekly)

1998 2001
Faculty
Grad
Undergrad
UW Changes in In-Library Use Categories Between 1998 and 2001 (% using at least weekly)
UW 1998 Survey - Reasons for Visiting the Library (among those who visit at least weekly)

- Use only collections
- Use only workspace/services
- Use both

[Bar chart showing the percentage of faculty and undergrads who use only collections, use only workspace/services, or use both.]
Using Results – University of Washington

- **Facility** design and improvements focused on student needs (1992-)
- Performance measures instituted for reshelving (1995)
- **Hours** expanded during interims, weekends, evenings (1995-2000)
- Undergraduate library open **24 hours** (1998)
- Significant increase in number of library **computers** (1995-2000)
- **Remote access** to bibliographic databases (1992-)
- Emphasis on acquiring access to **full-text** resources (1998-)
- Survey results used by other campus units for developing **instructional technology workshops** (1998-)
- **Stopped** doing extensive database **documentation** (1998)
User Surveys – Strengths and Limitations for Measuring Library Performance

- **Strengths**
  - Obtain quantitative and qualitative data
  - May be able to generalize for the larger population(s)
  - Direct user input and evaluation of library performance
  - Flexible instrument
  - Powerful political tool

- **Limitations**
  - Behavioral perceptions not actual performance
  - Difficult to frame complex questions
  - Time-consuming; may be expensive
  - Changes in survey design and group composition can affect results
  - Survey fatigue

- **Alternatives/Other options**
  - Follow-up issues with other techniques
Some final thoughts . . .