Two Decades of User Surveys

The Experience of Two Research Libraries from 1992 to 2011

Jim Self, University of Virginia
Steve Hiller, University of Washington

Northumbria Conference
22 August 2011
User Surveys

- Accepted methodology
- Identify user issues, concerns and needs
- Measure library performance from user perspective
- Provide opportunities for open ended comments
- Provide data for statistical analysis and generalization
- Results can lead to changes and improvements
- Useful for institutional assessment and accreditation
User Surveys

- Records of perceptions, not actual performance
- Difficult to frame complicated questions
- Results affected by wording of questions
- Results often lack context
- Can be difficult and costly to do properly
- Survey fatigue can limit participation
- Not the only tool in the assessment toolkit

...but longitudinal data can show graphic changes
The University of Virginia

- 15,000 undergraduates
  - 67% in-state, 33% out
  - Most notable for liberal arts
  - Highly ranked by U.S. News

- 6,000 graduate students
  - Prominent for humanities, law, business
  - Plans expansion in sciences

- Located in Charlottesville
  - Metro population of 160,000

U.Va. Library Assessment Information:
http://www2.lib.virginia.edu/mis/
University of Washington

• Comprehensive public research university located in Seattle
  – 28,000 undergraduate students
  – 12,000 graduate/professional students (80 doctoral programs)
  – 4,000 faculty
  – 23 in Times World Uni Rankings

• $1.4 billion yearly in external research funds

U.Va. Library Surveys 1.0

- Faculty
- Sample of 500
  - 1993 (paper)
  - 1996 (paper)
  - 2000 (Web)
  - 2004 (Web)

- Students
- Separate tallies for grads and undergrads
- Sample size varied
  - 1994 (paper)
  - 1998 (Web)
  - 2001 (Web)
  - 2005 (Web)
U.Va. Library Surveys 1.5
LibQUAL+® 2006

• Why do LibQUAL?
  – Comparisons with peer libraries
  – Comparison of user ratings and desires
  – Ease of administration

• Why not?
  – Low response rates
  – Inability to customize
U.Va. Library Surveys 2.0

• Starting in 2008
• Annual surveys with smaller samples
• One third of teaching faculty
• 500 graduate students, 750 undergraduates
• Separate tallies and analysis for each category
• Brief report annually
• Comprehensive report every three years
UW Libraries Surveys

• Triennial surveys began in 1992 (7th survey in 2010)
• Surveys initially focused on satisfaction and use, now includes importance, impact, usefulness and priorities
• All faculty surveyed; sample of students
  – 1634 faculty respondents in 2010
• Switched from paper to Web in 2004
• Groups surveyed at same time, but questions differ between groups and may change over time
• New in-library use survey began in 2002 on 3 year cycle to better capture use of physical library
Survey Response Rates


Fac, 70%
Ugrads, 43%
Ugrads, 41%
Fac, 28%

Fac, 46%
Fac, 39%
Ugrads, 16%

92/94  95/98  00/01  04/05  07/09  10/11
the results ...

University of Virginia
- Faculty value online access and ILL/Document Delivery
- Grad students value online collections and access
- Undergrads value space and comfort
- Customer service high in satisfaction and importance

University of Washington
- Faculty value collections
- Grad Students value access
- Undergrads value place
- Libraries get a lot of love
- Moving beyond love and satisfaction to importance and impact
Weekly Visits to a Physical Library
U.Va. and UW, 1993-2011

Undergrads
- 84% (93/94)
- 79% (96/98)
- 67% (00/01)
- 67% (10/11)

Grads
- 43% (93/94)
- 38% (96/98)
- 23% (00/01)
- 21% (10/11)

Faculty
- 69% (93/94)
- 67% (96/98)
- 67% (00/01)
- 67% (10/11)
# UW In-Library Use Survey

## User Percentage by Group 2002-2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2002 n=3878</th>
<th>2005 n=3266</th>
<th>2008 n=3196</th>
<th>2011 n=3379</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Students</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Students</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty/Staff</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not UW affiliated</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
U.Va: Monitoring the Online Catalog Satisfaction with VIRGO since 1993

Ugrads
Grads
Faculty

U.Va.: Monitoring the Online Catalog
Virgo Visibility since 1993

Percent

- Faculty
- Grads
- Ugrads

1993/94
1996/98
2000/01
2004/05
2008
2009
2010
2011

70%
84%
86%
70%
UW Library Services and Resources: Overall Importance to Work by Group

(Scale of 1 “Not Important” to 5 “Very Important”)
UW Libraries Contribution to Research Productivity (Based on Funding Source)
(Scale of 1 “Minor” to 5 “Major”)
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

Engineering: 2.5
Business: 2.75
Science: 3
Medicine: 3.15
Public Hlth: 3.25
Nursing: 3.5
Arts: 3.5
Social Sci: 3.75
Humanities: 4
UW Libraries Contribution to Enriching Student Learning Experiences
(Faculty Response by College/School)

Scale of 1 (Minor) to 5 (Major)

- Engineering: 3.75
- Business: 3.5
- Science: 3.8
- Medicine: 4.3
- Public Hlth: 4.5
- Nursing: 4.7
- Arts: 5
- Social Sci: 4.6
- Humanities: 4.5
UW Subject Librarian Visibility and Satisfaction By Faculty College/School

Visibility: 67%
Satisfaction: 30%

- Built Environments
- Fine Arts
- Nursing
- Social Work
- Built Environments
- Social Sciences
- Education
- Humanities
- Sciences
- I School
- Pharmacy
- Dentistry
- Environment
- Business
- Engineering
- Public Affairs
- Public Health
- Medicine
- Social Sciences
- Humanities
- Sciences
Issues in Survey Implementation

• Customized vs Standardized
• Web vs Paper
• Frequency of administration
• Longitudinal tracking vs new or changed questions
• Library only surveys
Other Tools at U.Va. and UW

• Balanced Scorecard
• Usability testing
• Focus groups
• Structured interviews
• Staff surveys
• Task surveys, with post-it notes
• In-house user surveys
• Observation
• Data mining
• Statistical compilations
Putting Survey Data to Use

- Additional resources for the science & arts libraries
- Undergraduate library open 24 hours
- Support for transition from print to e-journals
- New and improved study spaces
- Reallocate budgets and staffing internally
- Use externally in budget requests
- Inform the strategic planning process, develop performance measures,
- Enhanced usability of discovery tools
- Identify areas for further study
more info at...

- U.Va.
  [http://www2.lib.virginia.edu/mis/](http://www2.lib.virginia.edu/mis/)

- UW