Getting the Right Fit: Tailoring Assessment Strategies for Your Library

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Some Initial Questions

• What is your definition of assessment?
• What comes to mind when you hear the term “assessment”?
• What benefits do you see for assessment?
• What are your concerns?
Assessment Defined

Process of...

• Defining
• Selecting
• Designing
• Collecting
• Analyzing
• Interpreting

• Using information to increase service/program effectiveness
Why Assessment?

- Answers questions:
  - What do users/stakeholders want & need?
  - How can services/programs better meet needs?
  - Is what we do working?
  - Could we do better?
  - What are problem areas?
- Traditional stats don’t tell whole story
“Librarians are increasingly called upon to document and articulate the value of academic and research libraries and their contribution to institutional mission and goals.”

(ACRL, 2010, p. 6)
Formal vs. Informal Assessment

- Formal Assessment
  - Data driven
  - Evidence-based
  - Accepted methods
  - Recognized as rigorous

- Informal Assessment
  - Anecdotes & casual observation
  - Used to be norm
  - No longer acceptable
Outcomes Assessment Basics

• Outcomes: “The ways in which library users are changed as a result of their contact with the library’s resources and programs” (ALA, 1998).

• “Libraries cannot demonstrate institutional value to maximum effect until they define outcomes of institutional relevance and then measure the degree to which they attain them” (Kaufman & Watstein, 2008, p. 227).
Outputs & Inputs

• Outputs
  • Quantify the work done
  • Don’t relate factors to overall effectiveness

• Inputs
  • Raw materials
  • Measured against standards
  • Insufficient for overall assessment
Principles for Applying Outcomes Assessment

- Center on users
  - Assess changes in service/resources use
- Relate to inputs - identify "best practices"
- Use variety of methods to corroborate conclusions
- Choose small number of outcomes
  - Need not address every aspect of service
- Adopt continuous process
Examples of Outcomes

• User matches information need to information resources
• User can organize an effective search strategy
• User effectively searches online catalog & retrieves relevant resources
• User can find appropriate resources
Steps in Assessment Process

• Why? Identify purpose
• Who? Identify team
• How? Choose model/approach/method
• Commit
• Training/planning
Assessment Tools

- Survey Research
- Interviews
- Focus Group Interviews
- Structured Observations
- Ethnographic Research
- Analytics
• Collection of data affects analysis of data
  • Ongoing process
• Feeds back into research design
• Theory, model, or hypothesis must grow from data analysis
“One size fits none!”

(Lynn’s Mom)
Finding the Right Fit – What to Consider?

• What do you already know? (Previous assessments)

• What have others done? (Literature review)

• What you want to know? (Problems/questions)
• Available resources
  • Budget
  • Human resources
    • In house?
    • Should you hire a consultant?
  • Faculty resources? (university/college)
  • Other institutional resources
• Parent institution needs/demands
What We Know About Assessment

• Ongoing process to understand & improve service

• Librarians are busy with day-to-day work & assessment can become another burden

• Assessment is a reality, a challenge we must meet!
Get the Right Fit!
Discussion and Questions

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Recommended Readings


Connaway, L. S., & Wakeling, S. (2012). To use or not to use Worldcat.org: An international perspective from different user groups. OCLC Internal Report.


Recommended Readings


Maciel, M. L. (2013, June 4). Identifying our customers’ needs and expectations: A data driven approach and analysis through the use of LibQUAL+™ (using five years’ data from LibQUAL+™ in Europe). Presented at the *Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Libraries International Conference (QQML 2013)*.


Recommended Readings


