

Assessment Visit Background Information

Below are some areas we would like information about before our assessment visit. Your response will give us a better sense of assessment work that has been done at your institution, specific issues that you'd like to see addressed, and your expectations for this visit. The intent is not to be onerous but to give us sufficient background information to craft our presentation and consultation to your local situation. Once we have your reply, we will follow up with email and/or telephone conversations. If possible, please reply to us by Tuesday, February 1.

1. Short summary of what's been done in assessment in last few years, including how you've used assessment information. Attach any relevant documents (or provide URLs)

In 1998 and 1999 we conducted internally generated surveys to determine user satisfaction – the first year (1998) was a paper based survey and the second (1999) was a web-based survey. In 2001 and 2002 we participated in LibQual but decided not to continue because the data, while interesting, did not give us enough data about our 42 departmental libraries. In 2004, with permission from Steve Hiller, we modified a survey used at the University of Washington and administered it to our graduate students (a grad student mass mailing with embedded URL). After the survey was completed we produced a summary and recommendations for what actions should occur as a result of the survey. (See attached documents)

We also use ARL statistics to monitor general trends in size of collection, total expenditures, etc. in relation to our peer institutions and these are often used at budget time to add leverage to arguments for funding requests. Various inputs to these statistics include data generated from a fall and spring "Sweeps Week" during which we collect data on patron counts in each of our public service units and reference questions asked. We use these samples to generate two of the answers for ARL required data.

In collections we collect use statistics when possible for cancellation decisions. For electronic journals these are collected centrally and available to all unit heads. For printed materials, some libraries are more proactive in collecting these than others.

We also mandate a unit annual report that gives summaries of significant events during the year, etc. and also requires each unit to lay out goals for the next year and report on the status of goals presented the prior year.

2. Important assessment motivators
 - a. External (e.g. accreditation, governing board, university)

The primary external assessment motivator is the university and in some cases (e.g. the Law Library and Government Documents) professional associations such as the American Association of Law Schools or national bodies such as the Superintendent of Documents.

- b. Internal (e.g. process improvement, better service/support, we should be doing this)

We have several internal motivators, such as process and workflow improvement, service integration and centralization, improved service and minimization of service points.

- 3. Organizational structure for assessment
 - a. Individual with responsibility

This varies depending on the area of assessment, but generally this falls to the Associate University Librarians (one each for Collections, Information Technology, and Services), Directors (one each for Business Operations, Development and Public Affairs, Human Resources, and the Mortenson Center for International Library Programs) and Coordinators (one each for Information Literacy, Preservation, and Training and Staff Development).

- b. Committee or other group

There are several other groups/committees within the library that do some kind of assessment, including the Collection Development Committee, the Services Advisory Committee, the User Education Committee.

- c. Reporting line

This is varied (see above).

- 4. What's worked well (short description)

Various user satisfaction surveys have been helpful, but really only see one aspect of our service and operations.

Position reviews as positions are vacated also seem to have created a culture where no assumptions are made about vacant positions. This at least forces us to re-examine that particular part of the library.

Various studies, task forces, etc. have over the past several years helped us to begin thinking critically about what we are about and what we need to get there.

Our strategic planning efforts since 1998 have also moved us in this direction.

- 5. What's been a problem/sticking or breaking point (short description)

We think the major problem we now face is trying to create an evidence based assessment culture whereby we garner evidence in the form of data and other information

in order to make informed decisions. At the present time we collect the data but do not use it.

6. Areas that you want us to address (e.g. organizational/culture, specific issues, methodology, analysis and reporting, using data for improvement)

See #5 above.

7. Expectations/outcomes for our participation in this effort

Our hope is that we can convince the Library not only of the utility of a evidence based decision making, but that we can convince them so that they are absolutely enthusiastic about thinking of ways to do it. That is, we don't need data collection instruction but help in using the data we do collect. There are pockets of data decision making, so we need help in fostering these pockets of positive deviance. Connected to this is the ability of how to discuss data or debate data intelligently, a skill that is not widespread here.

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