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How We Came to Dread Fridays: Developing an Academic Library Assessment Plan Two Hours at a Time

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Developing an Academic Library Assessment Plan Two Hours at a Time

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Abstract

During the summer of 2012, St. John Fisher College's Lavery Library developed a coordinated assessment plan. Committing to weekly meetings, Lavery reviewed ACRL Standards, identifying key outcomes that would link to the college strategic plan. Utilizing the unique synergy of the library staff, librarians committed to persistence, collaboration, and flexible teamwork. Based on their summer-long perseverance, the librarians originated an assessment strategy that has not only aligned them with the college, but has also positioned them to demonstrate the value they provide to their academic community.

Keywords

Case studies; Assessment; Work groups; Organizational learning; Academic libraries; library value; higher education; information skills

Introduction

In 2011, Lavery Library at St. John Fisher College (Fisher) began exploring the idea of assessment and methods to demonstrate library value to the college. By creating an assessment plan that provided qualitative and quantitative results, the librarians would emerge with knowledge of how they could improve their services. An impending need to demonstrate the value the library provided to the college was a key driver: Fisher was preparing for a Middle States accreditation visit in 2016 by developing a strategic plan. The college's strategic plan includes an institutional effectiveness goal, which states, "Demonstrating an ongoing commitment to evidence-based institutional effectiveness and continuous improvement of student learning outcomes, the College will collect, interpret, and disseminate information for ongoing strategic analysis that is designed to inform and link decision-

making, long-range planning, and resource allocation" (SJFC 2012, 12). Lavery Library took advantage of this prime opportunity to align an assessment plan with College goals.

With no defined procedure to provide guidance, the librarians initiated the development of their assessment strategy. Lavery's staff embodies a unique synergy. We are fortunate to have a team of librarians with complementing strengths. Fostering team-based departments, rather than silos, provides a creative, trusting, and fearless environment which enabled the librarians to build an assessment plan from the ground up. This process would take them to a new level of collaboration and set forth an original method which would change and grow with their learning experiences. The following case study outlines the basic structure of Lavery's assessment plan, as well as the successes and failures of filling in the details.

College and Library Background

College and Library History

Fisher is a small liberal arts institution, founded in the late 1940s. Located in Rochester, New York, the college is based in the Catholic tradition of American higher education. Fisher offers thirty-two majors and nine professional programs within the following schools: Arts and Sciences, Business, Nursing, Pharmacy, and Education. With the exception of the School of Pharmacy, which does not offer an undergraduate program, and the School of Business, which does not offer a doctorate program, all of these schools offer studies in undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs.

Lavery Library is the college's sole library, situated in the center of campus. Over the past five years, the library has undergone many transformations including the recent implementation of a Learning Commons that incorporates Office of Information Technology and library research assistance in one central location, the Learning Commons Help Desk. The library currently has eight librarians, ten support staff, and twenty-five student workers who maintain over 160,000 volumes, over 175 databases, and support Fisher's FTE (Full-Time Equivalent Enrollment) of approximately 4,000 students and over 400 faculty.

Library Culture

The library's culture of full involvement from everyone, is instrumental in its approach to everything the library does, including assessment. All eight librarians, including the Library Director, participate in multiple roles of service. Each librarian's responsibilities include teaching library instruction, working regular shifts at the Learning Commons Help Desk, liaison with departments and their faculty, and managing their departments within the library. The librarians fully demonstrate the "all hands-on deck" philosophy of librarianship. The library's assessment model reflects this synergy in the shared knowledge and understanding all parties bring to the table. Less time was spent learning about the various responsibilities of the library, leaving more time to attack an assessment strategy.

The Need to Assess the Assessment Need

From the beginning of assessment planning, timing was significant. Fisher had recently revised its strategic plan to prepare for a Middle States accreditation visit in 2016, and the plan included a goal to address "evidence-based institutional effectiveness." For the library to anticipate our assistance in fulfilling the college's goal, we would be able to demonstrate value with direct alignment to the institution's campus-wide initiative. In order to do this, we needed to evaluate our current situation and originate an assessment strategy.

To begin the library's assessment strategy, we evaluated assessment processes already taking place. For example, the traditional paper tally sheet, used to track reference transactions, was recently updated to an online tracking system (a Google Form) that provided more qualitative and quantitative data. The library was also embedded into Fisher's First-Year program. This program provided information literacy (IL) exposure to all Fisher freshmen. The library already collected survey responses from students at the end of each of these library sessions. In addition to these existing activities, several significant changes had been made in recent years that necessitated a more developed assessment strategy:

- Shifting of the collection focus from print to electronic

- Migration from ownership of electronic resources to subscription-based access

- Expansion of the library's role in campus IL instruction

- Explosion of service points (e.g., digital reference services, online tutorials, etc.)

- Ever-changing behavior and expectations of library users

- Increased costs of maintaining physical facilities, digital infrastructure, and human capital.

What was lacking in current processes was a tying-together of disparate assessment activities going on in all aspects of library operations. The librarians needed to look for a way to pull ongoing efforts together into a more efficient, long-range assessment plan. We decided to begin our assessment strategy with an area that already had an assessment activity-- the IL instruction program.

Librarians have participated in Fisher's "Learning Communities" for a decade. Learning Communities are made up of two mandatory courses taken by freshmen during their first semester. Each set of courses includes professors who work together to introduce the concept of IL and effective research to incoming students. One part of the program is an English course, while the other is usually in another department, such as philosophy, anthropology, or economics.

In 2005, a required research-based writing course was added for second semester freshmen. The Learning Community in the fall, and Research-Based Writing in the spring constitute the college's First-Year program. The librarians were included in the spring course as well, extending the IL instruction they had begun in the Learning Communities. In these courses, librarians teach basic IL concepts and provide an introduction to library resources to build student comfort levels. The program acts as a springboard for later IL sessions within each major, which each librarian manages with their liaison departments. The program has grown since 2005 and collaboration between faculty and librarians has blossomed into a beneficial relationship for the students.

Building the Foundation: The First Bricks

Workshops and Literature

A key impetus to the librarians' assessment drive was a regional workshop led by Megan Oakleaf and hosted at St. John Fisher College. Oakleaf's visit focused on the theme of the ACRL *Value of Academic Libraries* report which stressed the need for libraries to answer the question, "How does the library advance the missions of the institution?" (Oakleaf 2010, 11). The assessment philosophy Oakleaf promotes is not directed solely toward performance improvement (although this is a *very* important goal), but toward communicating that value to institutional decision-makers.

Following Oakleaf's workshop, the librarians also viewed three ACRL Assessment Webinars organized and presented by Lisa Hinchliffe, Coordinator for Information Literacy Services and Instruction, Professor of Library Administration, University of Illinois at Urbana- Champaign, and Deb Gilchrist, Vice President for Learning and Student Success, Pierce College. This series of webinars, titled *Applying the Standards for Libraries in Higher Education*, was presented in three-parts: *Designing Assessments*, *Strategic Planning and Benchmarking*, and *Communicating Results and Crafting the Library's Story* (Gilchrist and Hinchliffe 2012b). Each presentation provided examples and guidance to move forward a general assessment plan. Focusing on the *Standards for Libraries in Higher Education* (*SLHE*), these webinars provided background information demonstrating how to immediately implement assessment as well as plan for the long term. This was exactly the library's aim. Some librarians looked further into the literature for more background on IL assessment and for guidance in aligning the library's academic plan to that of the college. While this may seem like an easy concept, it is easy to get lost in the day-to-day routine of operations and forget about the importance of connecting the library with the college. Brinley Franklin showcases the University of Connecticut library's struggle to realign itself with institutional priorities in his 2009 case study. Franklin describes an academic library's strategic realignment on a scale much larger than Lavery's, but his examples demonstrate the path Lavery was following would ultimately benefit both the library and the college. In his closing, Franklin states, "The ultimate test of success will be how well integrated the UConn Libraries have become in the university's efforts to carry out its academic plan and if the libraries' user survey results and LibQUAL+ scores reflect greater user satisfaction in 2014" (505). The act of sharing assessment results, perhaps in combination with users' perceived satisfaction with the library, had been the entire focus of the third ACRL webinar. It would also come up again when the librarians looked at ways to effectively exhibit Lavery's value. Sharing results of library assessment efforts with the campus would be an essential step in effectively closing the assessment loop.

Exploring more about IL and assessment, Oakleaf and Kaske provide a background and possible approach through the use of a series of questions in their 2009 article. Asking why assessment needs to be done and what can come from it, Oakleaf and Kaske outline a series of questions libraries can ask to determine if assessment truly needs to take place. If so, who the stakeholders are, what the costs are, and what the expected outcomes might be. Answering questions related to these issues, according to Oakleaf and Kaske, can simplify the assessment approach and "help librarians identify criteria for choosing the information literacy assessments that best fit their needs"

(2009, 273). The authors reaffirm the librarians' tactic of having an end goal in mind, "Once articulated, the assessment purpose can guide decision-making throughout the information literacy assessment process" (276). This article helped confirm the library's assessment planning was a meaningful process that was being done for the right reasons.

As the librarians' understanding of assessment grew with their plan to focus on IL, they began to think ahead to steps of implementation. They would need objectives to assess, artifacts of evidence to collect, and tools with which to evaluate those artifacts. There are many methods that can be used to collect evidence as well as many tools with which to assess them. Walsh looks at a multitude of assessment approaches with one main goal in mind- "What methods are being developed and used by librarians to measure information literacy and do any of them have proven reliability and validity?" (2009, 20) Walsh groups assessment tactics into nine different tools: multiple-choice questionnaire, bibliography analysis, quiz/test, self-assessment, portfolios, essays, observations, simulations, and final grades. He finds that multiple-choice questionnaires are used most frequently, and that these are far from easy to validate (22). Libraries use multiple choice quizzes in different ways. Some libraries make great effort to test reliability and validity by using multiple questions for each concept tested (e.g., Cameron et al. 2007). They map the questions to various information literacy standards, and their questionnaires are long and in-depth. Other libraries only use a few questions to give quick quizzes at the end of a library session. These quizzes are not tested for reliability and are mostly used to test skills learned within that same library class (Walsh 2009, 21).

As the librarians were using surveys in their First-Year program instruction sessions, they decided to continue using this tool with some modifications. We also considered using more than one tool for the various types of instruction being taught beyond the First Year program. Utilizing rubrics when looking at bibliographies and observing student presentations and discussions, were also going to be used during our initial assessment period. Knowing the benefits and limits for each instrument used would be helpful in utilizing them effectively.

In another article, Oakleaf discusses three major assessment tools: fixed choice tests, performance assessments, and rubrics (2008). She also describes scenarios in which each tool may be particularly effective. For example, while fixed-choice tests, like the survey that the library uses in its First-Year program, are effective in that they measure "acquisition of facts" and can be "adapted to local learning goals and students," these types of tests are limited because they only measure "recognition rather than recall" (236). Surveys require many questions to

increase their validity, although they can provide great numerical data to demonstrate results in statistical ways. While the library could certainly use quizzes, we needed to develop a greater understanding of the results they provide.

Another example would be Oakleaf's evaluation of rubrics. These are instruments the librarians had not used extensively; however, we decided to develop them for the initial IL assessment period. Oakleaf cautions that putting an effective rubric together and norming its application between evaluators required time investment; however, the many benefits of using a rubric for assessment outweighed the limits. Rubrics provide more meaningful results and focus on standards. A well-designed rubric "delivers data that is easy to understand, defend, and convey" (Oakleaf 2008, 248). In order to assess IL on a larger scale, we would need to use multiple tools. The librarians would carry this concept forward as we organized our IL assessment plan.

Reviewing these resources challenged the librarians' instinct to assess only what was currently being done well. If we desired to improve library services, we would need to make sure the assessment plan included areas of weakness. The librarians would begin to develop assessment outcomes using ACRL's *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* (*ILCSHE*) and the *SLHE*. We hoped these standards would provide the guidelines to lead the library toward IL success with students. This approach turned out to be extremely difficult, but would also provide some of the greatest growth opportunities of the entire process.

A Librarian Retreat

The final step before the library began actual, action-packed implementation of assessment was the most simple and relaxing of all: a retreat. We stepped away from campus for a day to analyze all of the information, and we generated ideas gathered from the various workshops, webinars, discussions, and articles examined over past months. The retreat included two brainstorming activities: a current priority brainstorm, and an exercise integrating assessment organization into those responsibilities.

To determine current priorities, the library director facilitated a visual exercise. Each librarian took a pack of Post-it Notes and laid out all the projects they were working on or would be working on over the summer. These Post-it Notes were added to a large stretch of paper laid out on a table. The projects were then organized into similar clusters. Finally, comments were written on the paper so priorities could be rearranged visually and determined by

the librarians together. These allowed everyone to see where the assessment process would fit into their schedules and where some projects might be relegated to a lesser priority, and, therefore, take up less time.

The second activity was focused on the upcoming assessment plan. Large sheets of paper were affixed to the walls and titled with each of the *SLHE* standards. Each librarian attached a Post-it Note as she or he brainstormed an activity in which the library could reach a goal or to assess an activity we were already doing. Both brainstorming events resulted in a clarified priority list for the immediate future as well as the long range forecast for assessment by the library. These priorities were evaluated to determine the best approach for implementing assessment while continuing to provide quality services to the campus. Not all responsibilities on the list were assessment-related. For example, the task for librarians to develop their online subject guides was given priority over weeding the collection. Marketing online subject guides would be an initiative for the librarians with their liaison departments in the fall, while weeding was not a time-sensitive task.

These actions allowed everyone to see all of the "tasks on the table," and it was easier to organize a plan for implementation of assessment while daily responsibilities and projects continued as well. In order to overcome initial trepidation, regular meetings were in order--two hours each Friday over the course of the summer of 2012 to work on the assessment plan as a group. These meetings became fondly known as "dreaded Fridays." As a result, the librarians were developing a lens through which a shared sense of the value and vocabulary of assessment assisted in providing an understanding of how it would fit into daily life and the library's future.

The Three-Year Plan

As a first step, the librarians reviewed ACRL's information literacy and the *SLHE*. A key element recognized in the ACRL assessment webinars was that every aspect of library service did not need to be assessed at the same time. Assessment could be tailored to focus on institutional priorities and the library's own timeline. With a forthcoming Middle States accreditation in 2016, the librarians determined that a three-year timeframe (starting in the summer of 2012) would provide the chance to focus on the same First-Year program assessments in year four, to see where the library had made an impact. We would then focus on four of the nine *SLHE* standards during the other two years of the three-year cycle. The decision to put the IL assessment cycle at the start of the rotation was deliberate to allow further focus on this goal when it recurs in the Middle States accreditation year.

Identifying Assessment Activities

The Brainstorm

Once the Librarians decided to focus on the ILCSHE for the first year of the library assessment rotation, the next task was to identify particular aspects of IL to assess. Targeting all bullet points in the standards wasn't feasible. Rather, the library needed to pinpoint key outcomes under each standard, identify times when librarians teach those skills, and choose instruments and methods to assess student success. To do so, each librarian wrote a list of courses with which she or he worked, as well as specific IL skills each intended to teach. These lists (and all later assessment plan documentation) were saved into a networked share space housed and backed-up by the campus IT office. Each skill was tied to an ILCSHE standard, and the librarian noted what assessment or documentation was currently taking place as well as the number of students taught (see Table 1). Accumulated together, these lists of courses and skills became an informal library curriculum map.

Insert Table 1 here.

This task took some librarians longer than others due to different teaching loads, and, therefore, some returned much longer lists. However, the lists and their accompanying discussions provided a definite connection between the standards on paper and the practical act of teaching, which helped make assessment feel real. Using the lists, the librarians identified a great deal of classroom assessment activity (hand-counting, discussion observation, the use of Turning Point clickers, etc), but very little of the data was being *captured* and archived. Also, individuals gained appreciation of what others do in the classroom, gathered tips and tactics, and, as a result, the librarians grew their sense of synergy.

The Breakout

To plan for each standard, the five ILCSHE standards were divided between two groups of four librarians each. Group A tackled standards 1-2, which focus on identifying research topic concepts and search strategy development. This represents the core of the library's involvement in the college's First-Year program. Group B focused on standards 3-5: evaluation, use, and context/attribution. This area had less common ground since few

librarians had mapped library instruction through all four years of their liaison areas' curricula. Four librarians volunteered for each group, and they began to identify classes where librarians teach each area of IL.

Group A consisted chiefly of librarians with lighter teaching loads, with one very active upper-level subject liaison. This was by design, as less-frequent instructors still had significant experience in teaching First-Year IL every semester. More active teaching librarians volunteered for the second group to provide guidance in the less clear areas of students' information use. Each group reviewed the standards to identify key outcomes touched in library instruction, listing these in an informal brainstorm. This "two groups" model lasted only one week due to a widespread belief that the librarians were missing some very assessable opportunities.

Mapping Classes to Standards and Outcomes

With all the librarians back in one room, progress through the ILCSHE standards was fairly quick. By looking through the brainstormed lists of currently taught skills and going through the standards, the librarians identified key outcomes that were currently being touched upon in classes and which provide a cross-section of that IL standard's goal. All skills were looked at, not *only* "low-hanging fruit," or the IL skills that were the easiest to target.

Comparing Spreadsheet Models

Deciding on a schema by which to articulate the plan took multiple sessions. What emerged was a fusion of two models: the spreadsheet demonstrated in the first webinar of Gilchrist and Hinchliffe's series on library assessment (2012a) and some elements absorbed from the School of Pharmacy assessment plan. The end result had columns for course, standard, learning objective outcome, capture method, analysis, and action, as well as markers of expected timeline and responsibility for the instruction and assessment (see Table 2).

Insert Table 2 here.

Learning Outcomes

Outcomes, as presented in the Task Force on Academic Library Outcomes Report, are "the ways in which library users are changed as a result of their contact with the library's resources and programs" (ACRL 1998, sec. 2).

The user is at the center of an outcomes-based model, whereas the library is at the center of a "performance indicator" model. The *SLHE* choose the former: libraries assess their success by drilling down to their user outcomes (ACRL 2011, 7).

Each of these instructional assessment recommendations structure written outcome statements in slightly different ways. The 1998 task force report demonstrates outcome statements that are simply a skill: e.g. "Student matches information needs to information resources and can organize an effective search strategy." The SLHE's sample outcomes appendix (ACRL 2011, 15) codifies this in the structure, "population," "verb," and "action." Discussion led the librarians to aim for more impact-oriented learning outcomes. The structure was kept in line with the model promoted by the University of Illinois, Urbana Champaign Library's "Tips on Writing Learning Outcomes", e.g., "Students will be able to construct a search statement using topic-relevant and controlled vocabulary in order to search databases with maximum effectiveness." The key elements of this structure are: targeted user population; a verb clause, like an action or a learned skill; and the impact this skill will have for the user, marked with the words "in order to."

The librarians integrated a space in their plan spreadsheet for a learning outcome statement. An additional layer of complexity was introduced to the framework after a discussion in which it was determined that each outcome needed to be statistically measurable. To do this, the librarians conceived of the notion of adding benchmark percentages, and the learning outcome template became "X% of students will [verb] in order to...." An example could be "75% of students will use Boolean operators in order to narrow search results."

The theory discussed was that an outcome needed to be measurable in order to be useful. In practice, this was the first iteration of our assessment cycle. As there was no baseline to measure against, assigning a percentage seemed like an arbitrary decision of success or failure; thus, we decided to wait to assign percentages. When it came time to judge student output at the end of the fall, however, these outcomes had remained in template form: the "X%," the "[verb]" and the ellipses remained. This lack of clear outcomes led to difficulty judging user output; without a common understanding of what success looked like, a lot of time was spent discussing this before evaluation could take place. This oversight in planning led to slightly more work later on, but enough framework was in place to allow us to move forward and glean useful statistics. As this was a great learning experience, in future assessment, we plan to evaluate collected artifacts more efficiently.

Crafting Assessments

Crafting effective learning assessments is a topic of its own, and one with which many of the librarians were less familiar. One immediate goal focused on forms of assessment that deal most directly with effective one-shot IL instruction sessions: *formative* assessments in which student learning is assessed mid-class to ensure uptake of an idea, as well as *direct*, *summative* assessments that demonstrate effectiveness of teaching at the close of a session (Leskes 2002). Framing current IL practices in these terms, we saw teaching practices already employed, such as clickers, worksheets in-class, and a quiz at the close of the session. These could be used to demonstrate instructional effectiveness. Upon review of the quiz employed in previous semesters, the instruction librarian discovered questions that did not directly link to outcomes we sought to teach. Some questions were removed, and others retooled to more explicitly target learning outcomes.

A broader goal for demonstrating library value to the institution was to go beyond assessing one-shot instruction sessions and get a bigger picture of library impact on students' academic success. A long-standing model for assessing IL is through pre- and post-assessment—establishing a baseline and then testing progress at the end of a student's academic career. Scharf et al. (2007) state that: "typical among direct information literacy assessment tools is the test or questionnaire" (464). This manner of direct IL assessment employs test questions to gauge specific IL skills. This model is in line with what we employ in one-shot instruction sessions, and it can be applied on broader scales using standardized IL tests such as iSkills, Madison, or SAILS. The librarians considered using standardized IL tests to gauge skills at different points in student academic trajectories: 1st-year, 3rd-year, graduate. Due to iSkills' scenario-based structure, we developed initial interest in it, but we later determined cost-per-instrument would make wide-scale adoption of a standardized test prohibitive, particularly if funded by the library. Instead, we are working with campus assessment coordinators to select a testing instrument that will scale to the campus.

Battles, Blowups, and Bailouts: the Human Side of Planning

Summer discussions centered on specific topics or tasks: to plot out a timeline, to test a rubric, to plan a survey, etc. As with any planning process, there were distractions along the way. These diversions often ventured

into the realm of professional philosophy, particularly where the library's role in education was discussed. Some debates continued into the fall, when the plan was implemented.

Librarians' Roles as Assessors

Oakleaf highlights an emerging idea in library assessment in which library outcomes link to "authentic work, including research projects and papers, lab reports, creative products, internships, service learning activities, capstone projects, and e-portfolios" (2010, 45). The ILCSHE place significant weight on the "higher orders of thinking" (as based on Bloom's Taxonomy) in terms of evaluation and information use (ACRL 2000, 6). The librarians tackled higher-order IL skills by seeking partnerships with faculty who welcomed the product-based assessment Oakleaf promotes. However, this idea begged the question: where is the librarian's role in addressing these outcomes? The librarians had little organized interaction with students beyond the single library sessions they provided, except in the cases of classes with a nearly-embedded liaison. Assessment based on bibliographies collected at the end of the semester seemed to reflect more on the course's primary instructor than on the librarian's direct involvement with the class. Librarians continued to wrestle with this topic through the semester, and we were not comfortable claiming success when library instruction was significantly distanced from end products turned in at the end of the semester.

One potential solution to this instruction-to-product linkage is an assessment management system. "Assessment management systems help educators manage their outcomes (learning outcomes as well as strategic/organizational outcomes), record and maintain data on each outcome, facilitate connections to similar outcomes throughout an institution, and generate reports" (Oakleaf 2010, 94). These systems allow assessment data to link across departmental lines, allowing measurement of program effectiveness for all manner of student support services: academic advising, writing and math centers, educational opportunity programs, technology support, and library services. Oakleaf strongly encourages adoption of assessment management systems as these allow multiple librarians engaging in "one-shot" classes to "enter assessment data, focus on different student groups (or the same groups over time), and use different assessment methods. Because they aggregate data by outcomes, they generate reports that demonstrate how well the library is achieving its outcomes as well as contributing to the mission of its overarching institution" (94). While the college began exploring assessment management systems during the fall, no such system had been selected by the college as of early 2013.

Librarian Liaisons and Departmental Over-Representation

To gauge student success in these areas without such a system to link one-shot sessions to higher-order IL skills, we needed access to students' final projects. Since librarians have a close relationship with our first-year program, collecting and assessing student portfolios from the spring component courses is part of the assessment plan for the spring 2013 semester. Work from upper-level courses was more elusive, requiring more subject liaison work with students and faculty, possibly through capturing student course outcomes and final projects.

While the library does not have a full embedding program, some librarians are more closely integrated with their liaison departments, particularly in Nursing, Pharmacy, Education, and Sport Management. These subject librarians volunteered to assess many of the higher-order skills, leading to an over-representation as they don't represent the full breadth of campus. Librarians have yet to determine if data gathered from those programs reflects on the library's entire service population or on those specific (and successful) liaison programs. We continue to reflect on where limits exist for us as we work with upper-level classes. If upper-level courses warrant comprehensive assessment in a way that requires embedded librarians, can the library afford to invest enough time across the curriculum to do it well?

Squaring Circles with Rubrics

A majority of the student output the librarians could assess is delivered in qualitative formats: bibliographies, search strings, posters, papers, etc. We needed a tool to turn free-form outputs like these from purely qualitative data into something quantifiable: a rubric. A rubric is a guide for assigning scores along specific criteria, where the rater assigns values along a spectrum. Rubrics were compiled to assess paper content, bibliographies, presentations, and poster sessions.

Often, rubric criteria will be assigned a weight: if a teacher is to assign a percentage or letter grade, the weights would usually add up to 100%. While totaling or weighting scores in each rubric was considered, this seemed unnecessary as the purpose was to judge the library's own success through the student's work, not to assign a grade to a student. By linking an IL standard to each line of each rubric, we could easily assess student success in each goal we had to teach. Table 3 demonstrates the library's poster session rubric as an example.

Insert Table 3 here.

Separating discrete criteria also helped pinpoint problems in the data collection method. We applied the same rubric to several classes' final posters, in different fields, and in one class saw very different analysis of the results. Particularly, the citations in this class were universally poor as they had only an author's last name and sometimes a date. Therefore, finding the cited article would be difficult or impossible. Other classes with which we used the rubric had fuller citations. Perhaps the reason for the poor citations in the one class could be explained by incorrect instructions from the professor, i.e., poster sessions were the equivalent of an in-text citation. Other than the citations, the posters met rubric criteria, so results from this assessment were still usable after excluding the citation component.

To evaluate rubrics, the librarians tested inter-rater reliability by applying them as a group, to see whether consistent results could be derived. A briefing began each scoring session, in an attempt to achieve agreement on interpreting the rubric. This discussion intended to minimize the likelihood of "outliers." In one session, a rater assigned scores consistently lower than the others. After debriefing about whether the instrument required amendment, the group decided to reject the outlier and leave the rubric intact. Other rubric discussions resulted in criteria revision and clarification which helped normalize results between raters. From this experience, the librarians better understood the value of "norming the rubrics" in order to provide reliable, valid results.

By establishing rubrics, measurable data could be gathered from student outputs. A baseline was established through these classes against which Lavery could compare later years' IL assessment results.

Punctuation Police: Assessing Citation Style

When the librarians were deciding on shared rubrics, a point of contention arose on how to judge students' citations. A number of librarians saw the role of citation assessment as judging whether a resource could be identified based on this citation, i.e., "after seeing this citation, can I find the article it refers to?" Other assessors suggested citation *consistency* was of key importance—when the student cites three articles using different styles, for example.

One librarian works closely with upper-level courses and actually contributes citation grades for a course. This relationship pushed her toward a more rigorous rubric that tested individual elements of citations such as spacing and punctuation, to develop student abilities to "publishable" level. This idea was met with pushback from other librarians who did not engage with courses in such a way, and some suggested this idea of librarians as "punctuation police" was actually adverse to advancing student scholarship. Some librarians suggested individual grading on the basis of style adherence should reside in the hands of course instructors, not librarians.

The Librarians recognized these various perspectives openly and agreed on a method to move forward. Ultimately, since rubrics were needed for each set of circumstances, consensus was not required. One general bibliography rubric emerged in which anti-plagiarism and findability concerns were addressed, and a second rubric was adopted for the sort of citation grading required in special cases. The discussion was enlightening, though, as differences in liaison approaches could suggest very divergent services and assessments. Libraries with other service models or cultures would reach much different conclusions. An assessment plan needs to fit each individual situation or it will be irrelevant, or even counterproductive.

Implementation: Fall 2012

Data Collection

During the fall of 2012, the library's assessment plan was implemented. Librarians who had identified classroom interception points applied their assessments in-class or after-class. Much of this collection took place in the first-year program, in which every freshman takes part: summative assessment conducted by a Qualtrics quiz with outcomes linked to each question. The librarians aimed for in-class delivery of the quiz, but some classes were unable to fit the survey into a class period; therefore students were instructed to complete it outside of class. In previous surveys administered outside of class, the library consistently observed that only a small percentage of students respond. This case was no exception; although 597 students were enrolled, only 391 (or 65 percent) completed the survey. The missing results were attributed to a combination of in-class non-completion, out-of-class non-completion, and absenteeism.

Early in the semester, an opportunity arose to collect baseline IL data from incoming doctoral students in a program that works very closely with the library. While this was not explicitly outlined in the "plan spreadsheet," the groundwork laid over the summer assessment meetings enabled the liaison librarian to compile a survey, with linkage to library learning outcomes. This survey was successfully delivered to students in short order.

Collection in less formal environments was more difficult, largely due to instructor switches and scheduling concerns. One librarian had all but one of the upper-level courses for which she had committed assessment in our summer meetings fall through. Of the other librarians who volunteered to assess senior-level classes, a majority of targeted classes was reached.

Due to the early "course-to-outcome" brainstorm sessions, librarians who volunteered their liaison classes to assess certain skills faced a larger burden of the assessment task. One Lavery librarian worked with a significant number of upper-level classes over the semester, having volunteered to assess a number of skills using multiple rubrics. Librarians joined her in assessing these presentations and posters *in situ*. In a later meeting, she communicated that she still felt an unequal portion of the strain, being new to rubric-based assessment, and in turn feeling responsible for making sense of the gathered data. A more equal distribution of targeted courses in future semesters—or allowances for those assuming a greater workload—might mitigate some of this stress.

Analysis process

Early in the fall of 2012, the librarians looked ahead to Finals Week and marked their calendars with the tongue-in-cheek moniker "Hell Week." During that week, the librarians would schedule fifteen separate meetings, each an hour in length, to review data retrieved in each class that was assessed. Opportunities to make the assessment exercise more meaningful and efficient would then be evaluated.

Each librarian responsible for assessing a skill in a class took the lead for a session. In some cases the individual analyzed the data before arriving at the session, and then simply presented findings to the group. In other cases, the librarian shared student products or survey data and the librarians conducted analysis as a group. As this was the first semester reviewing assessment activities in such a group, a majority of classes fell into the latter category, which helped the librarians develop their understanding. The first sessions involving group rubric use took a little longer, but the process became fairly streamlined:

1   The leader would brief the group on the learning environment and share class outputs;

2   The group would discuss and achieve consensus for rubric criteria application;

3   Individuals would judge each output by the agreed-upon criteria;

4   The group would tabulate totals and averages for given assessed criteria;

5   The group would debrief to interpret results and think of next steps.

After the close of each meeting, the leader of the session prepared a paragraph-long narrative of what they gathered from assessing the class. These narratives archive the qualitative context that might be lost if the experience were relegated exclusively to the quantitative, and they were saved in our network shared space.

Next steps

After completing a semester of implementation, we can use the experience to strengthen and further refine this assessment strategy. In particular, survey questions will continue to be revised to improve reliability and validity, and outcome statements will shift from ACRL goals toward Fisher-specific outcomes. The library was fortunate to have one librarian attend the ACRL Assessment Immersion program. The skills and knowledge gained in the Immersion program will be utilized by making the attendee one of the library's assessment leaders.

Extending findings into future instruction and communicating these actions with the campus is the next step. Incorporating lessons learned will be essential to improving assessment strategies throughout our long range plan. We plan to revisit the way in which upper-level courses are targeted, pushing for a more broad-based approach independent of liaison-led library instruction. This will depend on strategic partnerships. The library collaborated with the college's Office of Information Technology early in the semester to conduct a campus-wide survey of library and technology services. A similar partnership with faculty leadership will be sought in pursuit of a third or fourth-year IL framework along the lines of the already established first-year program. We also intend to use the college's newly-hired Assessment Coordinator for Arts and Sciences as a pivotal resource.

At the time of this writing, several upcoming decisions will impact the next steps of our continued assessment strategy. As we develop a campus assessment plan, the library will work closely with the Assessment Coordinator to supply the campus with the library's results. As the college considers an assessment software

package, the library could be an interdisciplinary assessment partner. The most important next step as the library moves forward will be to share results and to keep momentum in collaboration with faculty. Sharing results is essential to closing the assessment loop, especially for libraries. If we do not share what we're doing, how can we expect stakeholders to acknowledge, appreciate, collaborate with, and fund the library? *Demonstrating* our value is not truly done until the library *presents* information to show that value in action.

Conclusion

In 2012, the library began exploring the idea of assessment and methods of demonstrating the library's value to the college. Over the course of that year the librarians benefited from gaining a shared perception of the library's value on campus as well as a shared vision for how to demonstrate and communicate that value outside the library. The librarians developed an assessment strategy that would align their initiatives with the college's goal of implementing evidence-based learning.

The librarians leveraged their unique synergy to develop an original assessment structure. Keeping library and institutional goals at the forefront of their assessment planning process, the librarians were able to create a flexible framework to assess information literacy skills across the curriculum. Through open and honest communication, the librarians recognized differences of opinion and used those differences to unify and strengthen the plan, rather than to break it apart. They were able to collaborate with people and departments campus-wide to integrate the library's planning into the college's long term goals. The ability to *communicate* and *collaborate* successfully, combined with *persistence* through the planning process, is truly what provided such a learning experience for Lavery Library. While the process wasn't perfect, with time, attention, perseverance, and teamwork, the library will successfully demonstrate its value to the college community.

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