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Assessment Strategies for Cataloging Managers

Rebecca L. Mugridge

Association for Library Collections and Technical Services

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Introduction



- * Hometown: Pittsburgh
- * Studied at Penn State, the University of Pittsburgh, and Robert Morris U.
- * Worked primarily in cataloging units in academic libraries

Agenda for today's webinar

- * Assessment landscape
- * My research on assessment
- * Goals of assessment
- * Five assessment methods
 - * Workflow assessment
 - * Customer surveys
 - * Focus groups
 - * Benchmarking
 - * Cataloging reviews

Assessment landscape

- * *ACRL Value of Academic Libraries* report
- * LibQual™
- * ARL biennial assessment conferences
- * ARL SPEC Kit on Library Assessment
- * ALCTS e-forum on assessment
- * CaMMS Heads of Cataloging Interest Group programs

Value of Academic Libraries

- * 2011 PaLA CRD Spring Workshop with Megan Oakleaf as keynote speaker
- * *The Value of Academic Libraries: A Comprehensive Research Review and Report* (Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2010)
- * There are 22 recommendations for next steps for librarians who wish to demonstrate value

Value recommendations (1)

- * Communicating **assessment** needs and results to library stakeholders
- * Using evidence-based decision making
- * Creating confidence in library **assessment** efforts
- * Dedicating **assessment** personnel and training

Value recommendations (2)

- * Fostering environments that encourage creativity and risk taking
- * Integrating library **assessment** within library planning, budget, and reward structures
- * Ensuring that **assessment** efforts have requisite resources

LibQual

“LibQUAL+ is a suite of services that libraries use to solicit, track, understand, and act upon users' opinions of service quality. These services are offered to the library community by the Association of Research Libraries ([ARL](http://www.arl.org)). The program's centerpiece is a rigorously tested Web-based survey bundled with training that helps libraries assess and improve library services, change organizational culture, and market the library” (<http://www.libqual.org/home>)

LibQual goals

- * From the website <http://www.libqual.org/home> :
 - * Foster a culture of excellence in providing library service
 - * Help libraries better understand user perceptions of library service quality
 - * Collect and interpret library user feedback systematically over time
 - * Provide libraries with comparable assessment information from peer institutions
 - * Identify best practices in library service
 - * Enhance library staff members' analytical skills for interpreting and acting on data

ARL biennial assessment conferences

- * <http://libraryassessment.org/>
- * Conferences in 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012
- * Focused more on information literacy, student learning, reference services
- * No programs that address assessment of technical services or cataloging
- * 2014 conference in Seattle, WA, August 4-6

SPEC kit on Library Assessment

- * Spec Kit 303 (Stephanie Wright and Lynda S. White)
- * Assessment of technical services activities addressed in one question:
- * “Please indicate which of the following departments/units your library has assessed since 2002 and what methodologies were used for those assessment”

SPEC Kit on Library Assessment (2)

- * Cataloging: Number of respondents: 62
 - * Surveys (4.8%)
 - * Qualitative methods (9.7%)
 - * Statistics collection and analysis (69%)
 - * Usability (1.6%)
 - * Other (14.5%)
 - * Have not assessed (24%)

SPEC Kit on Library Assessment (3)

- * “Other” category includes:
 - * Benchmarking
 - * Unit cost analyses
 - * Balanced Scorecard
 - * Process improvement
 - * Other

ALCTS E-Forum on Statistics and Assessment

- * What statistics are collected by technical services and how are they collected?
- * The differences between collecting statistics and providing meaningful reports.
- * How do technical services utilize statistics to assess the effectiveness of their operations? What benchmarks are used to define success?
- * How do technical services operations factor into efforts to define the value of the library to the parent organization or community?
- * <http://www.ala.org/alcts/confevents/past/e-forum>

CaMMS Heads of Cataloging Interest Group programs

- * 2011
 - * Assessment 101 by Joyce Chapman
- * 2012
 - * Quantitative Assessment by Casey Cheney
 - * Assessment in Practice by Rebecca Mugridge
- * Archived in ALA Connect on the CaMMS Heads of Cataloging Interest Group page

Interest in assessment

- * Penn State University Libraries *Library Assessment and Metrics Committee*
- * Projects:
 - * Workshop for supervisors and other managers and administrators
 - * Departmental assessment project (a three year rotation of surveys, assessing operational and “business” departments within the Libraries)

Technical Services Assessment

- * Rebecca L. Mugridge, “Technical Services Assessment: A Survey of Pennsylvania Academic Libraries” *Library Resources and Technical Services* 58:2 (April 2014) (Accepted).
 - * Survey sent to 120 PA academic libraries
 - * 63 responses
 - * 57% response rate

Technical Services Assessment (2)

- * Methods of assessment included:
 - * Gathering statistics (84%)
 - * Gathering input from non-technical services staff (44%)
 - * Conducting customer service surveys (25%)
 - * Benchmarking (19%)
 - * Suggestion box (12%)
 - * Focus groups (10%)

Technical Services Assessment (3)

- * Departments assessed:
 - * Cataloging/Metadata (57%)
 - * Acquisitions (57%)
 - * Electronic Resources Management (45%)
 - * Preservation (26%)

Benchmarking as an Assessment Tool

- * Rebecca L. Mugridge and Nancy M. Poehlmann, “Benchmarking as an Assessment Tool for Cataloging” (Manuscript in Progress).
- * Survey conducted on AUTOCAT
- * 92 completed surveys
- * 20 libraries reported using benchmarking (22%)
- * 9/10 libraries reported that they planned to use benchmarking again within the next five years

Goals of assessment

- * Streamline or improve processes
- * Make better decisions
- * Lower costs
- * Reallocate staff or other resources
- * Identify activities and services that can be eliminated
- * Inform strategic planning activities
- * Communicate with customers or administration

Assessment activities

- * Workflow analysis and assessment with a facilitator
- * Customer surveys
- * Interviews or focus groups
- * Quality assessment
- * Benchmarking

Workflow analysis and assessment

- * Most-commonly reported form of assessment in the library literature
- * Examples:
 - * Assessment of technical services workflow
 - * Assessment of cataloging and database maintenance
 - * Workflow assessment and redesign
 - * Streamlining work between acquisitions and cataloging
 - * Assessment of shelf-ready services

CQI at Penn State

- * Penn State's model is based on Continuous Quality Improvement, using a five-step model:
 - * Where are we now?
 - * Where should we be in the future?
 - * How will we know when we get there?
 - * How far do we have to go?
 - * How do we get there?
- * http://www.psu.edu/president/pia/cqi/planning_model1.pdf

CQI improvement teams

- * CQI Improvement Teams need:
 - * A clear process
 - * Support from a sponsor
 - * An administrative leader for the team
 - * A facilitator
- * We used the Fast Track approach:
- * <http://www.psu.edu/president/pia/innovation/fasttrack.pdf>

When is CQI useful?

- * When useful:
 - * Multiple units
 - * Complex workflow
 - * Workflow has been in place for a long time
 - * Differences of opinion exist about how to address workflow changes

How CQI works

- * Start with a list of issues or questions
- * Include all stakeholders in process
- * Kick off meeting with sponsors
- * Make an effort to understand the current process
- * Identify areas for improvement
- * Map new process and report back to sponsors
- * Follow up assessment

FastTrack CQI team 1

- * Video processing for Media Technology Support Services (AV rental/booking/support for classrooms across university)
 - * Cataloging
 - * Acquisitions
 - * Media Technology Support
- * Looked at workflow between the three units
- * Goal to decrease processing time and increase efficiencies

FastTrack CQI team 2

- * Catalyst: Reorganization of government documents processing
- * Stakeholder departments:
 - * Cataloging
 - * Acquisitions and serials
 - * Social Sciences Library
- * U.S., PA, UN, Canadian, EU, etc.

FastTrack CQI team results

- * Streamlined processes with fewer hand-offs
- * Greater efficiencies
- * Faster turn-around times (Acquisition to Shelf)
- * Better understanding of workflow
- * Improved documentation
- * Greater confidence in established processes

Customer service survey

- * Applicable to operational departments as well as to some committees, working groups, etc.
- * Cataloging and Metadata Services (2011)
 - * Queried subject and campus libraries
 - * Not anonymous
 - * One survey response per library

Survey questions

- * At which branch, subject, or campus library do you work?
- * What services do we provide to your unit?
- * How happy are you with the following aspects of this service:
 - * Speed of services
 - * Quality of services
 - * Speed of response to reported problems
- * If you wish, describe specific service experiences in detail.
- * Do you feel that you know to whom to talk about service issues as they arise? [Y/N]

Survey questions, cont'd

- * How comfortable do you feel with the process of asking for help?
 - * Not comfortable
 - * Somewhat comfortable
 - * Very comfortable
- * Are you able to find information or documentation on the Cataloging and Metadata Services website? [Y/N]
- * Describe your process for asking questions about cataloging services.
- * If you could see one new service provided to your library by Cataloging and Metadata Services, what would it be?
- * Do you have any additional comments?

Benefits of surveys

- * They can tell you something that you don't know
- * They can corroborate something that you already suspect
- * They demonstrate to your customers that you care what they think
- * They can serve as a public relations or marketing tool
- * They can be used to support change, request funding, or pursue further assessment efforts

Interviews or focus groups

- * Informally as part of a periodic “checking in” with customers
- * Example: Periodic meetings with subject library staff
- * Most included all of their staff available at the meeting time
- * Results: better communication with our customers and greater comfort level with asking questions

Sample focus group topics

- * Update on RDA implementation
- * Feedback on current projects
- * New project proposals
- * Assistance with cataloging statistics
- * Issues, problems, or concerns
- * Clarify policies, procedures, and workflow
- * Any other questions

Research on focus groups in cataloging

- * K.C. Elhard and Qiang Jin, “Shifting focus: Assessing cataloging service through focus groups,” *Library Collections, Acquisitions, & Technical Services* 28:2 (2004): 196-204.

Quality assessment

- * Annual cataloging reviews
- * Each cataloging team conducts own review
- * Develop own process
- * Write report
 - * What was the process?
 - * Training needs identified?
 - * Policy issues identified?
 - * Overall assessment of the process itself?

Quality assessment: Process

- * Example 1: Music AV Cataloging Team: each team member catalogs one DVD, one CD, and one kit
- * Example 2: Monographs Team: each team member catalogs three items, including a foreign language item and a conference
- * Example 3: Special Collections Cataloging Team: one year focus on literary manuscripts, another year focus on monographs, etc.

Quality assessment: training assessment

- * Yale University: retrospective conversion project
- * Retraining program
- * Quality assurance testing
 - * Evaluated for a period of time
 - * Major vs. minor errors
 - * Made decisions based on the results
- * Could be conducted yearly or as needed

Quality assessment: Benefits

- * Ensures that everyone is following policies and procedures
- * Identify training needs
- * Team building exercise
- * Open discussions
- * Non-threatening questioning
- * Good management practice
- * Builds confidence

Benchmarking

Definition:

Benchmarking is the process of comparing one's own policies, procedures or other factors, e.g., statistics, to other institutions for evaluative purposes or to determine best practices

Statistical benchmarks

- * Michael D. Charbonneau, “Production Benchmarks for Catalogers in Academic Libraries: Are We There Yet?” *Library Resources & Technical Services* 49:1 (2005), 40-48.

Goals of benchmarking

- * Improve or streamline processes
- * Make better decisions
- * Improve services
- * Reallocate staff or other resources
- * Explore offering new services
- * Inform strategic planning activities

Benchmarking pros and cons

- * Advantages
 - * Improve performance
 - * Generate ideas
 - * Encourage a continuous improvement mindset
- * Disadvantages
 - * Apples to oranges comparisons
 - * It's difficult to identify a peer group

Assess the assessment

- * Some assessment efforts may prove to be more effective than others
- * Did the assessment effort give you the information you need to meet your goals?
- * If not, you may choose another approach or refine your current approach
- * Document and share the results (internally, and if possible, externally)

Need for further research

- * Research on specific assessment methods
- * Share experiences through case studies
- * Assessment of cataloging and technical services in different types of libraries: how are our needs different; how are they similar?
- * Share experiences at conferences and other venues
- * Qualitative benchmarks for technical services
- * Technical services assessment toolkit

Conclusion

- * There are many ways that we can conduct meaningful assessment of cataloging activities:
 - * Workflow analysis and assessment with an outside facilitator
 - * Customer surveys
 - * Interviews or focus groups
 - * Internal evaluation, assessment, or reviews
 - * Benchmarking

Questions?

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