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Assessment Strategies for Technical Services

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Agenda

- Assessment landscape
- Our research on assessment
- Goals of assessment
- Five assessment methods
 - Workflow assessment
 - Customer surveys
 - Focus groups
 - Benchmarking
 - Periodic 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

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: Cataloging

- Cataloging: Number of respondents: 62
 - Surveys: 4.8%
 - Qualitative methods: 9.7%
 - Statistics collection and analysis: 69%
 - Usability: 1.6%
 - Other (Benchmarking, Unit cost analyses, Balanced Scorecard, Process improvement): 14.5%
 - Have not assessed: 24%

SPEC Kit on Library Assessment: Acquisitions

- Acquisitions: Number of respondents: 62
 - Surveys: 14.5%
 - Qualitative methods: 13%
 - Statistics collection and analysis: 74%
 - Usability: 0%
 - Other: 13%
 - Have not assessed: 21%

SPEC Kit on Library Assessment: Preservation

- Preservation: Number of respondents: 61
 - Surveys: 13%
 - Qualitative methods: 13%
 - Statistics collection and analysis: 57%
 - Usability: 0%
 - Other: 8%
 - Have not assessed: 33%

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>

Technical Services Assessment

- Rebecca L. Mugridge, “Technical Services Assessment: A Survey of Pennsylvania Academic Libraries” *Library Resources and Technical Services* 58:2 (April 2014): 100-110.
 - Survey sent to 120 PA academic libraries
 - 63 responses
 - 53% response rate

Technical Services Assessment: Research Findings

- 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: Research Findings

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

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

Five methods of assessment that we're going to discuss in this presentation:

- 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

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

Customer service survey

Example 1

- Cataloging and Metadata Services (2011)
 - Queried subject and campus libraries
 - Not anonymous
 - One survey response per library

Customer service survey

Example 1 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]

Customer service survey

Example 1 survey questions

- 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?

Customer service survey

Example 2

- Departmental Survey (2012)
 - All library employees surveyed
 - Anonymous
 - General and specific questions
 - Open ended questions

Customer service survey:

Example 2 survey questions

- Rate your overall satisfaction with the services provided by [the unit] for each of the following aspects:
 - Accuracy
 - Completeness
 - Effectiveness
 - Efficiency
 - Timeliness
- Have you ever had any interactions with [the unit's] website?
- Do you have any suggestions about the currently provided services or any new services that you would like to see offered by [the unit]
- How often do you interact with [the unit]?

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

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.

Sample focus group topics

- Do you find it easy to communicate with the three cataloging units?
- Do you ever use the Technical Service Division Web page to identify appropriate contacts to resolve problems?
- Are maintenance problems you encounter quickly resolved to your satisfaction?
- What do you find most confusing about what the cataloging units do?
- What do we do in cataloging that is the most helpful to your library?
- What one service would you like to see cataloging provide which is not currently provided?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell us about cataloging?

Activity #1

If you were going to conduct a customer service survey or a focus group at your library, what burning questions would you like to have answered?

Quality assessment: Example 1

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: Example 2

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.
- Findings:
 - Defining production benchmarks for cataloging doesn’t work very well
 - Cataloging is highly specialized and can’t be quantified in the same way as mechanized-based measurements.
- J. Buschman and F.W. Chickering, “A Rough Measure of Copy Cataloging Productivity in the Academic Library.” *Library Philosophy and Practice*,
<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/139>
 - It is possible to determine benchmarks for copy cataloging

Benchmarking as an Assessment Tool

- Rebecca L. Mugridge and Nancy M. Poehlmann, “Benchmarking as an Assessment Tool for Cataloging” (Manuscript under review).
 - 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 benchmarking: Research Findings

- Improve or streamline processes: 72%
- Make better decisions: 61%
- Improve services: 33%
- Reallocate staff or other resources: 33%
- Explore offering new services: 22%
- Inform strategic planning activities: 22%

Information collected: Research Findings

- Procedures: 82%
- Statistics: 73%
- Policies: 55%
- Staffing levels: 36%
- Best practices: 55%

Goals and results: Research Findings

Goal or Result	Libraries that selected this as a goal of benchmarking (n=18)	Libraries that selected this as a result of benchmarking (n=10)
Improve or streamline processes	13 (72.2 percent)	7 (70 %)
Make better decisions	11 (61.1 percent)	5 (50 %)
Improve services	6 (33.3 percent)	3 (30 %)
Reallocate staff or other resources	6 (33.3 percent)	3 (30 %)
Explore offering new services	4 (22.2 percent)	1 (10 %)
Inform strategic planning activities	4 (22.2 percent)	1 (10 %)

Reporting benchmarking results: Research findings

- Informational report to library administration: 60%
- Annual report: 30%
- Assessment report: 20%
- Presentations: 10%

Benchmarking pros and cons: Research findings

- Advantages
 - Improve performance
 - Generate ideas
 - Encourage a continuous improvement mindset
- Disadvantages/Challenges
 - 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
- Assessment of cataloging and technical services in different types of libraries: how are our needs different; how are they similar?
- Qualitative benchmarks for technical services
- Share experiences at conferences and other venues
- Share experiences through case studies
- 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

Activity #2

Given the opportunity, what would you assess at your library and why? What method or methods would you use?

Questions?

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