Assessment Strategies for Technical Services (Presentation)

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Assessment Strategies for Technical Services

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SUNYLA
June 12, 2014
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

  - 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
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](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](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

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


• 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.

  • 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

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