



Report of the 3rd Library Assessment Conference
"Building Effective, Sustainable, Practical Assessment"

25-27th October 2010, Baltimore

by

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Monday 25th October 2010 - 9:00-18:30

Keynote presentations

The conference opened with a welcoming speech by the organizer's (Steve Hiller (University of Washington), Martha Kyrillidou (Association of Research Libraries), and Jim Self (University of Virginia)) and Steve's presentation [Monday Morning Metrics with Steve](#) which presented the breakdown of conference participants and other interesting details about the last three LAC conferences. This was followed by a presentation by Fred Heath (University of Texas) entitled [Library Assessment: The Way We Have Grown](#) which reviewed the development of library assessment from its early stages to the present time. Megan Oakleaf from the University of Syracuse followed this with an entertaining presentation entitled [Are They Learning? Are We? Learning Outcomes and the Academic Library](#) which outlined the importance of the librarian on the student learning process and this can only be accomplished if librarians continually learn themselves. Next, Danuta Nitecki (Drexel University) gave the presentation [Space Assessment as a Venue for Defining the Academic Library](#) which underscored the relationship of library space and the library's aims. She recommended adopting the Japanese concept of "ba" that considers a library as "a shared space to build relationships and to advance both individual and collective knowledge". The evening began with Charles Lowry's (Executive Director, Association of Research Libraries) presentation [We Don't Know What The Future Will Be, Except That There Will Be One](#) which discussed ARL's "scenario thinking project" which presents the following four scenarios for the future of research libraries: "Research Entrepreneurs", "Re-use and Recycle", "Disciplines in Charge", "Global Followers". The project asked one key question "How do we transform our organization(s) to create differential value for future users (individuals, institutions, and beyond), given the external dynamics redefining the research environment over the next 20 years?" and published their findings as [ARL 2030 Scenarios: A User's Guide for Research Libraries](#)





Library Space

[Longitudinal Assessment of User-Driven Library Commons Spaces](#) Robert Fox, Ameet Doshi (Georgia Institute of Technology) demonstrated how renovating library spaces leads to increased use of library by individuals and groups. Their findings showed that the collaborative group work space was especially successful. They also showed that the renovated library spaces attracted users who previously sat in other spaces.

[LibQUAL+® and the Information Commons Initiative at Buffalo State College: 2003 to 2009](#)

Eugene Harvey, Maureen A. Lindstrom (Buffalo State College (SUNY)) reported on how they followed up on their low LQ scores (in all three dimensions: AS, IC, and LP) by implementing an [Information Commons](#) to improve students' perceptions of the library. This consisted of creating a web site to provide technology information for non-library services, as well as at the service desks - such as computer support and assistance with registration for classes. The "Information Commons" proved to be a great marketing tool, and the 2006 LQ results showed that students' perceptions of library services had improved significantly.

[An Assessment of the Bass Library as a Learning Commons Environment](#) Cheryl A. McCarthy (University of Rhode Island), Danuta A. Nitecki (Drexel University) discussed how the renovation of the Bass Library at Yale fostered student learning. Based on detailed unobtrusive observations, their findings confirmed that students used the new spaces available, and that they prefer studying alone, alongside someone or in groups.

[You Don't Say! Students at the University of Virginia Come Clean When Asked "What are you working on, and how can we help?"](#) Matt Ball, Meridith Wolnick (University of Virginia) reported on the focus groups they carried out to elicit student feedback on the new floor which was designed to facilitate mobile computing. They conducted several focus groups and offered chocolate bars as incentives. Some of the questions they asked were "what would you have liked to receive help with?" "where do you go for help?" "what difficulties have you encountered while doing your school work?". Then they asked the group to organize the issues into groups and stick them on the wall using "post-it notes". Next they asked the librarians to perform the task, and interestingly, both groups gave priority to the same issues. They





found that the busiest times in the library were between 16:00 and midnight (the library is open 24 hours a day, except Fridays and Saturdays) and therefore service desks and facilities need to be reinforced during these times. They also found that students generally used laptops for searching databases and writing papers within the library, but used the library's PCs for printing.

The next presentation [Multiple Methodologies for Space Assessment to Support Learning](#) provided me with the inspiration for our next assessment project. Karen Diller, Sue F. Phelps (Washington State University Vancouver) discussed their "*Space observation*" surveys which aimed to study the seating patterns in the library in order to provide students with appropriate learning spaces which are "conducive to high concentration and stress-reduction". They conducted a "*Mapping Survey*" of the seating distribution in the library by head counting the number of people sitting in the library at hourly intervals, and marking on a map where they were sitting. By analyzing the seating concentrations, they were able to make decisions to improve the physical space in the library. They also conducted a "*Photo Survey*" by photographing students four times a day in the library and on the campus where they were known to work in groups or individually and followed-up with structured interviews. Their findings show that students carry around a lot of belongings and they spread them out a lot – which deters people from sitting next to them. They also found the many of the areas designed for group work were used for individual study, but individual study areas were largely used for this purpose. Students like artwork on the walls, windows and light, rectangular tables and need electricity outlets for laptops. Another interesting finding was that their "satisfaction survey" showed that students preferred comfortable chairs but the "mapping survey" showed that they actually sat on tables and chairs - which may indicate inconsistencies in the students' responses, or shortcomings in the methodologies used.

The evening activity consisted of a combined buffet dinner/poster session. Together with two colleagues, I was a judge in the poster competition. My favorite poster entitled [In the Zone @UNH: Practical Low-Cost Approaches to Student Space Concerns](#) by Annie Donahue, Jennifer Carroll, and Tracey Lauder (University of New Hampshire) described three initiatives undertaken by the University of New Hampshire Libraries to address students' concerns about limited collaborative space and noise issues. The first initiative was a "*Respect the Q*" campaign which utilized posters, table tents, an article on the library homepage, and a visit from the university mascot (Wild E. Cat) wearing a "*Respect the Q*" sandwich board during the finals period to reinforce the need for designated quiet areas in the library. The second





initiative was to move the Reserves Service Desk out of one of the large reading rooms designated for quiet study. This move had no budget impact but had a huge impact on reducing the noise level in the reading room as well as creating a more peaceful atmosphere in the room. The third initiative was to convert a large open mill space into three separate zones to accommodate **conversational**, **quiet**, and **silent** study. They found that by shifting reference stacks, group-study tables, and individual carrels they were able to create three distinct areas. Their marketing consisted of posters, table tents, screen-savers and bookmarks to alert users to the redesigned space and the new definitions of the noise tolerance levels for each zone.

Tuesday 26th October 2010 - 8:30-17:00

Keynote presentations

The morning began with Stephen Town's (University of York, UK) philosophical discussion of the value of libraries. His presentation **Value, Impact and the Transcendent Library: Progress and Pressures in Performance Measurement and Evaluation** discussed the concept of a "values scorecard" a long term performance measurement framework which focuses more on value and impact of the library, and less on behavior and activity.

Assessing Organizational Effectiveness: The Role of Frameworks Joe Matthews (JRM Consulting) discussed the frameworks available for assessing organizational effectiveness such as dashboards - which track to track the flows inherent in the business processes, process improvement initiatives, and "Balanced Scorecard" - an integrated management framework.

The Relationship between University Assessment and Library Assessment (David Shulenburg (Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities) reported on the findings of a study in Kalamazoo, Michigan whereby multiple datasets of individual students were analyzed to see what factors contributed to student success. They that found that students who underachieved were also under challenged. Shulenburg recommended the book "Academically Adrift" a longitudinal study of students' critical thinking, but not library use. They followed over 2,300 students at 24 institutions by examining the factors associated with learning in higher education. Learning was assessed according to measures



**Library Assessment Team****צוות הערכה**

developed by the Collegiate Learning Association (CLA) and considered factors related to individual development as well as patterns of inequality associated with disadvantaged groups of students. The study concluded that higher retention rates and higher graduation rates among students are connected to the amount of investment by the student affairs units.

Value and Impact**[Still Bound for Disappointment? A Follow-up with Faculty about Journal Collections, Based on LibQUAL+® Results](#)**

Jennifer Rutner (Columbia University), Jim Self (University of Virginia) reported on Columbia's replication of Jim Self's 2006 University of Virginia study on why faculty at Virginia (and all ARL libraries) are dissatisfied with the electronic journal collections (question IC8 on LQ) by conducting follow-up interviews. They found that the situation had not improved since 2003, and although universities are buying more e-journals, faculty are still not satisfied with the collection. Moreover, satisfaction with the e-journal collection is closely connected to overall satisfaction with the library. Interestingly, the librarians generally thought the e-journal collections were excellent.

[The Value of Academic Libraries: Findings and Implications for the Profession](#)

Lisa Hinchliffe (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), Megan Oakleaf (Syracuse University), Mary Ellen Davis (Association of College and Research Libraries) described a project undertaken by the *Association of College and Research Libraries* called "*The Value of Academic Libraries*" which emphasized the role of academic libraries in student enrollment, student retention and graduation rates, student success and achievement, learning and experience, faculty research productivity, teaching, grant proposals, and institutional reputation. They recommended additional library involvement in the above issues.

Organizational Performance**[Building Scorecards in Academic Research Libraries: Organizational Issues and Measuring Performance](#)**

Vivian Lewis (McMaster University), Steve Hiller (University of Washington), Elizabeth Mengel (Johns Hopkins University), Donna Tolson (University of Virginia) described the use of the *Balanced Scorecard* as an organizational strategic planning tool at four different universities. BC is based on the division of an institution's goals into four critical areas - finance, learning and growth, customer, and internal processes. For each area,





2-3 organizational objectives are determined, e.g. develop a motivated, productive and engaged workforce, create productive and user-centered spaces, promote library services, resources and values, and secure funding. They emphasized that BS is not a library assessment project rather it is an integral part of the organization's overall objectives.

[Measuring the Value of Library Resources and Student Academic Performance through Relational Datasets](#) Margie Jantti, Brian Cox (University of Wollongong, Australia) described an ongoing project which attempts to determine whether a student's academic performance improves as a result of using information resources made available by the library. Their methods include: analysis of student performance, attrition rates, demographics and their use of books and electronic materials.

[Cutting the Knot: A Holistic and Pragmatic Framework for Public Services Measures](#)

Zsuzsa Koltay, Elena MacGurn (Cornell University) described their online system for collecting public service output measures (mainly the number of reference transactions) which they called **Count It!**. To simplify matters, the terms *Bibliographic Instruction* and *Reference Assistance* were combined into one field, and *Ready-Reference* was given another field. The tool was designed for management decision-making. The disadvantage of this tool is that there is no qualitative analysis of learning outcomes, effectiveness of and satisfaction with reference transactions.

[Library Administrators' Uses and Perceptions of Performance Measurement Information in the Strategic Development of Competitive Responses](#)

Larry Nash White (East Carolina University) reported on a study of library managers' uses and perceptions of performance measurement information in strategic decision-making. He referred to "key informants" - i.e. practitioners in the field with expertise in performance metrics who assist administrators. His findings show that there are three key factors common to administrators who used performance measurement strategically: competitiveness of administrator, use and perceptions of value of performance measurement (e.g. to assist them in making decisions about staff workload and staff retention), and retention practices.

In the evening there was a buffet reception at the impressive [Peabody Library](#)

Wednesday 27th October 2010 – 8:30-13:15





Information Services

[Ask the Expert: Using Expertise Domains for Library Service Assessment](#) Amy Brunvand (University of Utah) described how the library combined service desks in order to provide a “one-stop shopping knowledge commons” for students. During one semester they recorded all patron queries and used content analysis to identify the following four categories of queries: connecting people with information, technology assistance, interpreting library policy and layout, and patron suggestions and comments. As a result they restructured library departments so that they now use “expertise domains” to provide subject specialist at reference desks and virtually.

[Instant Messaging, a Synchronous Virtual Reference Tool that Mirrors Higher Education’s Mission and Students’](#)

[Needs: How Grounded Theory Placed the Library in the Middle of the Mix](#) Sarah Passonneau, Dan Coffey (Iowa State University) reported on a grounded theory study of synchronous virtual reference interviews that analyzed their effects on teaching and learning, community awareness and service quality. Their findings confirmed the role of virtual reference in the teaching and learning experiences for users and for complementing the mission of the institution.

[Renewals and Interlibrary Loans in Libraries](#) Niels Ole Pors (Royal School of Library and Information Science, Denmark) reported on a national longitudinal study of renewals of interlibrary loans using an ecological perspective. His findings show a drastic increase in ILL renewals (especially in academic libraries) which indicates a significant change in user behavior.

Data and Libraries

[The Future of Academic Librarians in the Workforce: A Ten-Year Forecast of Librarian Supply and Demand](#) Jose-Marie Griffiths (Bryant University), Donald King (Bryant University and University of Tennessee) reported on a study that examined a ten-year forecast of the supply and demand of academic librarians. Their findings show that the demand exceeds the supply and that during the period 2007-2017 there will be a deficit of between 800-1600 librarians in USA.

Marketing and Advocacy





[Cycling Through: Paths Libraries Take to Marketing Electronic Resources](#) Marie Kennedy (Loyola Marymount University) discussed the results of her content analysis of the published literature on the marketing of electronic resources in libraries. Her findings show that too few academic libraries have marketing plans and too few libraries publish their marketing activities in professional or academic journals.

[Truth-Telling and Survey Methods in Advocacy Research: A Call for the Formation of the Flat Venus Society in Library Assessment](#) Ray Lyons (Independent Consultant) discussed how national library advocacy research and visibility marketing often have shortcomings such as neglecting to acknowledge biases (which may lead to over interpretation of the findings), or using convenience sampling instead of representative sampling.

[Marketing and Assessment in Academic Libraries: A Marriage of Convenience or True Love?](#)

Lynne Porat (University of Haifa) outlined the aims of the marketing and assessment teams and described some of the difficulties of collaboration. She described how the teams overcame the obstacles, and presented some of their joint marketing/assessment projects that were carried out during the past two years, the high point being the publication of the "You Said, We Did" document on the library blog, Facebook and in the library newsletter.

Summary:

The conference was enjoyable both personally and professionally and it was a great privilege and pleasure to spend quality time with, and to learn from, my American, South African and Australian colleagues.

