Library Assessment Strategic Plan

Originally approved by Library Managers Aug. 5, 2015; Revised Dec. 2018

Assessment Philosophy

The staff of the Waidner-Spahr Library strive to continuously improve our services and collections. This is most effectively achieved through an evidence-based approach that includes assessment to confirm desired outcomes are being achieved and to identify areas for improvement. When available, best practices established by the library and education professions are applied to our operations and assessed periodically to confirm that we are meeting our community's needs in an efficient and fiscally responsible manner.

Assessment Purpose

The primary purposes of our assessment activities are:

- to identify actionable recommendations for improvement in library services, resources, and management
- to demonstrate the impact of services and resources in supporting the mission of the College

Some data and statistics are routinely collected in the course of library management, or to fulfill external reporting requirements (ACRL Annual Survey, IPEDS). Many of the library's systems automatically collect large amounts of data (e.g., the number of times books have circulated, gate count, e-resource usage data, cataloging statistics). In other cases counts are recorded manually by staff (reference and instruction statistics). These data sources can be used to generate routine or ad hoc administrative reports as needed, and are valuable for tracking staff effort and managing day-to-day and seasonal operations. These many types of data sources and routine reports are not detailed in this plan, because they are not in and of themselves assessments.

Assessment Strategy

Targeted assessment questions are selected and prioritized based on their likelihood to generate useful information. The questions listed in this plan are examples of those that are typically of high and recurring priority. Conducting these assessments is considered worth the substantial time they will take, but not all of these will be conducted every year. Additional assessment questions may be added for a particular year. (A list of past examples is included on page 4 of this plan).

The following practices and principles apply to our assessment strategy:

- Assessment activities are prioritized to focus on areas of greatest potential impact.
- The time spent on an assessment is proportional to the potential usefulness of the results, and activities or projects are aimed at answering questions that cannot reasonably be answered without conducting a formal assessment.
- Assessment activities will be practical in scope, and scaled to our staff size and skill set. At times, technical assistance or outside expertise may be required to conduct more rigorous assessments.
- Where appropriate we will take advantage of existing assessment instruments/programs, such as the MISO Survey and the HEDS Research Practices Survey.
- Assessment activities in all units of the library are coordinated and paced over time so as not to overwhelm participating users or library staff. To the extent practical, they are also coordinated with other assessment activities taking place at the College.
- Record keeping and reporting are critical to an effective, ongoing assessment program. An assessment is not considered complete until it is reported out, and its methods, data, and summary report with any recommendations are filed in the library's permanent records.
- Library managers are responsible for following up on recommendations arising out of assessments, and follow-up decisions and actions will be reported out to the relevant stakeholders.

Annual Assessment Planning

Annually, as part of goal setting, library managers will determine which assessment questions we will focus on in the coming year. Consideration will be given to current internal and external circumstances and priorities, available staff time, and distribution of workload. Recurring items from this strategic plan will be selected, and any additional targeted assessments for the year will be decided upon.

Checklist for Annual Assessment Plan Development*:
- o Questions selected are those with the highest priority.
- o Each question chosen gathers useful information.
- o Each question asks only one question (i.e. "extent of X, Y, and Z" is not appropriate).
- o Costs associated with the assessments to be conducted are within the library budget.
- o Required technical assistance has been identified and is available.
- o Available staff time and distribution of workload among the library staff has been considered.

*Selected and adapted from W.K. Kellogg Foundation. *Logic Model Development Guide*. Battle Creek, MI: The Foundation, 2004.

Examples of Additional, Ad Hoc Assessment Activities

Other services, resources or practices may be prioritized for assessment in a given year. Rather than being conducted on a recurring schedule, these assessments often occur in the context of special projects or circumstances. They frequently require extended, intensive efforts of multiple library staff. Examples of these assessment activities include:

- Archives & Special Collections work-study employee satisfaction and usefulness survey in 2009
- Extensive usability studies conducted during new library website design and migration in 2013-14
- "Understanding Library Impacts" information literacy skills assessment conducted for the History Department in 2013-14
- Overlap analysis, faculty survey, and subsequent withdrawal of JSTOR duplicate print holdings in 2014-15
- Assessment of demand driven acquisitions (DDA) strategy for ebooks in 2013-14, and 2016
- Evaluation of next generation library systems (OPAC, discovery) 2010, 2013, 2017
- A collaborative study between the Library and the Writing Center in 2017 examining incidents of plagiarism among international students vs. incidents among domestic students
- Collection and analysis of data on reference questions originating at the circulation desk during the fall 2018 term, to evaluate whether student staff were referring questions appropriately
- Evaluative comparison of cost of RSC Gold journal package subscription vs. interlibrary loan/document delivery in 2018
- Assess the Library's current practices for providing equitable, inclusive, and culturally competent services to the Dickinson community (multi-year goal starting 2018)

Overall Library Services & Resources

Evaluation Focus Area (service or program to assess)	Examples of questions of interest (outcomes)	Examples of indicators / sources of data	Purpose of the evaluation. How the information gathered will be used.	People responsible for conducting this assessment (note if outside technical assistance is needed)	Interval / timing (for true assessment, not just data collection/ compilation)
Overall library services & resources	Are faculty, students and college staff satisfied with various library services and resources? Which services and resources are most important to them? Which services and resources do they use the most?	MISO Survey (*Includes questions of interest to other LIS departments.*). Lunch focus-groups with faculty departments. ACRLMetrics	Provides longitudinal comparison of changing user opinions. Allows comparison with other institutions. Indicator of areas of possible concern that warrant further investigation. Report to Library Advisory and ITS Committees. Include in annual report.	AD for library resources & administration with support from Institutional Effectiveness for MISO Survey, and in consultation with others in LIS as appropriate. Library managers for ACRLMetrics, focus groups.	MISO Survey every two years, during Spring semester, results in June/July. Periodic focus-groups.
Library Budget	Are various parts of the budget adequate to meet current needs?	Data sources will vary depending on the section of the budget being examined.	Inform budget request to P&B. Identify areas for potential savings, or needs for additional funds.	Library management team	In conjunction with budget request cycle (as dictated by P&B). In certain years some segments of budget may get more intensive scrutiny based on identified needs, or College budget priorties.

Access Services:

Evaluation Focus Area (service or program to assess)	Examples of questions of interest (outcomes)	Examples of indicators / sources of data	Purpose of the evaluation. How the information gathered will be used.	Core assessment team for this focus area (note if outside technical assistance is needed)	Interval / timing (for true assessment, not just data collection/ compilation)
Interlibrary loan	Are users satisfied with our ILL service? Are ILL loans to & from our library balanced? How fast are our users' ILL requests delivered? Are ILL and acquisitions properly balanced?	Satisfaction survey (MISO). Speed, fill rate. Sources that are most ILL'd and databases from which ILLs are originating (for collection development).	Make service adjustments based on user satisfaction. Feed into collections decisions. Use for budget planning. Report on ACRL Annual Survey, annual report.	Access services staff.	Every 2-3 years. (MISO is every 2 years.)
Circulation services	Are users satisfied with services received at the Circulation Desk? How is our print circulation trending (given the rise in e-book acquisitions)?	Circulation statistics collected annually. Satisfaction survey (MISO) every two years. Other?	Make service adjustments based on user satisfaction level. Feed into collections decisions. Report on Oberlin Survey, IPEDS, annual report.	Access services staff.	Every 2-3 years. (MISO is every 2 years.)
Reserves service	Do reserve policies meet the needs of faculty and students? To what extent are hard copy reserve materials being used (including films)?	Circulation statistics. Satisfaction survey (MISO).	Make service adjustments based on user satisfaction level. Feed into collections decisions. Report on Oberlin Survey, annual report.	Access services staff (in consultation with liaisons)	Every 3-4 years. (MISO is every 2 years.)

Archives & Special Collections:

Evaluation Focus Area (service or program to assess)	Examples of questions of interest (outcomes)	Examples of indicators / sources of data	Purpose of the evaluation. How the information gathered will be used.	Core assessment team for this focus area (note if outside technical assistance is needed)	Interval / timing (for true assessment, not just data collection/ compilation)
Campus visibility	Are students, faculty, and admins aware of resources & services?	Campus requests. Student use. Exhibit & event visitation.	Improve campus outreach activities and increase usage.	Archivist & special collections librarian; Events Committee members	As concerns arise
Student employee and intern experience	Are interns and work/study students learning valuable skills? Do they receive proper training? Are they pleased with their work outcomes?	Personal interviews. Surveys. Anecdotal evidence/unsolicited comments.	Improve training activities for student hires. Ensure the usefulness of skills developed and their transferability.	Archivist & special collections librarian	Every 7-10 years
A&SC reading room	Are patrons afforded the space and work atmosphere (sound, lighting, etc.) needed? Are technologies adequate?	Data on room use. Observational studies. User satisfaction surveys.	Maintain an environment to suit multiple user types researching with various forms of content.	Appropriate Archives staff members	Every 7-10 years
Reference services provided by A&SC	Are patrons' research needs being met effectively and efficiently?	Satisfaction surveys.	Confirm that reference service model is effective and satisfactory.	Appropriate Archives staff members	As concerns arise

Library Building & Facilities

Evaluation Focus Area (service or program to assess)	Examples of questions of interest (outcomes)	Examples of indicators / sources of data	Purpose of the evaluation. How the information gathered will be used.	Core assessment team for this focus area (note if outside technical assistance is needed)	Interval / timing (for true assessment, not just data collection/ compilation)
Classrooms	Are classrooms satisfactory in number and available technology? Is the current room reservation system working well?	Data on room use. Interviews with those who teach in the rooms.	Use to identify facilities improvements needed, inform budget requests, make improvements in reservation system.	AD for access services, AD for information literacy & research services, and executive secretary	Every 5 years, or as concerns arise.
Public areas	What are our users preferred seating areas and types? Is the technology available satisfactory (including electrical outlets and lighting)?	Observational studies. Satisfaction survey.	Use to identify facilities improvements needed, furniture requests.	AD for access services, executive secretary, access services staff (in consultation with library director)	Every 5 years
Study rooms	Are study rooms satisfactory in number and available technology? Is the current study room reservation system working well for students and library staff?	Data on room use. Observational studies. Survey and/or focus group of users. Interviews with access services staff.	Use to identify facilities improvements needed, inform budget requests, make improvements in reservation system.	AD for access services and access services staff	Every 5 years

Collections

Evaluation Focus Area (service or program to assess)	Examples of questions of interest (outcomes)	Examples of indicators / sources of data	Purpose of the evaluation. How the information gathered will be used.	Core assessment team for this focus area (note if outside technical assistance is needed)	Interval / timing (for true assessment, not just data collection/ compilation)
Subscription databases	Are we providing resources relevant to current needs? Are e-resource subscription costs justified by use? Is redundant content minimized?	Analysis of usage statistics; cost-per-use estimates. Consultations with or surveys of relevant faculty.	Identify underutilized resources for additional marketing, cancellation, platform change. Budget planning.	AD for library resources & administration, e-resources librarian, e-resources technician. (In consultation with relevant liaisons)	Usage on most checked annually prior to renewal. Targeted assessment every 1-3 years for designated vendors or disciplines/ departments.
Journal subscriptions	Are subscriptions being maintained relevant to current needs? Are we providing preferred formats for users? Is redundant content minimized?	Usage data of online journals to identify lower use titles for liaison review. Surveys and consultations with relevant liaisons and faculty.	Curricular needs and faculty format preferences change. Identify format changes, platform changes, cancellations.	AD for library resources & administration, e-resources librarian, e-resources technician. (In consultation with relevant liaisons; coordinate with AD for access services)	Every 2 to 4 years for comprehensive review. In between, targeted reviews of subsets, by publisher or academic department/subject.
Monograph & other non-serial collections (standing orders; print books; e-books including subscriptions and DDA; films, etc.)	Are we making available the monographs our users want? Are monograph costs justified by use? Is mix of purchase, subscription, standing order, EBA & DDA appropriate? Is approval plan profile appropriate for current needs?	Data & reports from Gobi, ILS. E-book usage reports. ILL activity may indicate gaps in collections.	Identify areas of high and low use to adjust collecting activity/profiles. Budget planning.	AD for library resources & administration, technical services librarian, acquisitions technician. (in consultation with AD for access services)	Targeted at different segments of the collection every 2-4 years.

Information Literacy & Research Services:

Evaluation Focus Area (service or program to assess)	Examples of questions of interest (outcomes)	Examples of indicators / sources of data	Purpose of the evaluation. How the information gathered will be used.	Core assessment team for this focus area (note if outside technical assistance is needed)	Interval / timing (for true assessment, not just data collection/ compilation)
Reference Service model (walk-ins, online, consultation appointments, referrals)	Are students aware of and satisfied with reference services? Are hours of service aligned with user needs and making best use of library staff time?	MISO Survey. Service use data. Additional periodic assessment.	Confirm that reference service model is effective and satisfactory.	AD for information literacy & research services and liaison librarian(s). Coordinate with AD for access services regarding referral aspect.	MISO satisfaction data every 2 years. Targeted reference service assessment every 5 years.
FYS Information literacy	Are FY info lit skills improved over the course of their first semester?	FYS instruction statistics. FYS faculty survey. Student feedback from assignments.	Determine what we need to emphasize with FY students and whether they employ new skills appropriately.	AD for information literacy & research services and liaison librarians. Assistance from director of writing program. (Data provided by all FYS liaisons.)	Every other year.
Writing in the Discipline (WID) Information Literacy	Are students in WID courses performing IL at higher levels that FYS students? Are WID students conducting IL appropriate to the discipline?	Student writing collected by faculty.	Determine student needs and how to best teach IL in WID courses.	AD for information literacy & research services. Papers collected by Writing Center.	Every other year.
Curriculum integrated information literacy	To what extent and how is information literacy integrated in the curriculum of the major? Are students' information literacy skills advancing through their major?	Instruction statistics by department. Additional assessments vary with by department (e.g., CALM lab, History 204).	Determine whether students are consistently and appropriately employing IL skills relevant to their major.	AD for information literacy & research services and relevant departmental liaison librarians.	Evaluate for each major, in conjunction with College 10 year departmental review cycle when practical or as opportunities present.

Overall Library Staffing:

Evaluation Focus Area (service or program to assess)	Examples of questions of interest (outcomes)	Examples of indicators / sources of data	Purpose of the evaluation. How the information gathered will be used.	Core assessment team for this focus area (note if outside technical assistance is needed)	Interval / timing (for true assessment, not just data collection/ compilation)
Staffing (permanent)	Is the number of staff adequate in each unit? Are staff workloads appropriately apportioned?	Work output data. Monitoring of any work backlogs. Supervisors' observation/analysis of workload distribution.	Re-align staff assignments. Revise job descriptions. Make case for additional staffing, or other changes requiring HR approval.	Library managers for units, in consultation with library director.	Every 5 years, or as needed by individual units (due to vacancy, major new service initiative, etc.).
Staffing (student)	Is overall student staffing budget adequate? Is training program working effectively?	Skills questionnaires completed by student workers.	Revise training program. Inform budget requests for student staffing.	AD for access services, circulation services supervisor (In consultation with others in library and information services)	Every 3-5 years

Web Presence

Evaluation Focus Area (service or program to assess)	Examples of questions of interest (outcomes)	Examples of indicators / sources of data	Purpose of the evaluation. How the information gathered will be used.	Core assessment team for this focus area (note if outside technical assistance is needed)	Interval / timing
Library online services (catalog, website, discovery service, LibGuides, Journal Locator, Databases list, etc.)	Are online services meeting current user needs? Are they "user-friendly"?	Usability studies. Use analytics. User satisfaction surveys. Feedback from liaison librarians. (Will vary depending on service being evaluated.)	Use to inform improvements to the online service being assessed. In some cases we may compare competing products.	Person(s) with primary responsibility for the system being evaluated (in consultation with liaison librarians, and access services as appropriate).	Rotate focus on various segments of our web-delivered services with the goal of assessing each every 3-5 years, or in conjunction with new system implementation.
Archives & Special Collections Website	Are users able to locate the kinds of information they seek? Does the site offer the kinds of resources users need? Is the site accessible/usable on multiple platforms?	Usability studies. Use analytics. User satisfaction surveys.	Use to inform improvements to site navigability, accessibility, and general content.	Archivist and appropriate Archives staff members	Every 3-5 years