Creating Good Practices:

A Survey of the Library Assessment Programs at ARL Libraries

Why Study Assessment Committees?

Discussion sparked at 2013 Southeast Library Assessment Conference
&
Observation of the need for best practices in developing assessment programs.

"Professional library organizations need to determine and disseminate best practices assessment practices."

- Lewin and Passonneau, 2012

Methodology: Survey

Focus: Assessment Committees in Academic Libraries

- Existence of committees
- Committee charge and function
- Committee membership
- Web presence
- Types of assessment activities

Methodology: Survey

Qualtrics used to host and deploy survey

113 surveys sent
61 surveys started
49 surveys completed
43% response rate

Committee Mission or Charge

80% reporting have mission or charge

Committee Stats:

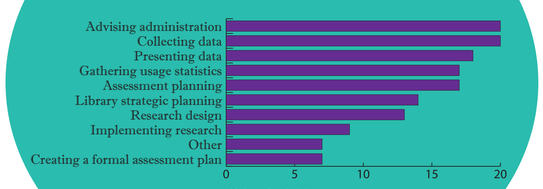
- Avg. 7.5 members
- Primarily formed by appointment or open call
- Mix of librarians and staff
- Term: 2 years, indefinite, or based on project

56% report having an Assessment Position compared to 34% reported in 2007 ARL survey.

Assessment Positions & Committees

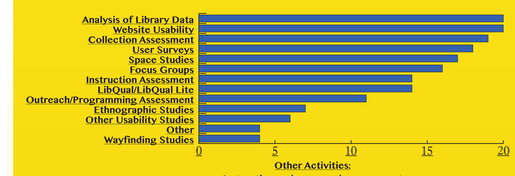
	Assessment position	Assessment as part of duties	No Assessment position	Total
Formal Standing committee	13	6	1	20
Ad hoc committee	5	3	1	9
No committee	7	6	3	16
Total	25	15	5	45

Assessment Committee Activities



Other Activities:
Assessment training
Consulting with librarians developing assessment
Developing metrics to assess progress on strategic priorities

Library Assessment Activities



Other Activities:
Instruction and user needs assessment
Interviews
MISO survey
Development of patron personas (user groups)

Selected Good Practices:

1. Develop clear goals for the group and have a stated charge or mission for the group. Making sure that all members understand the shared goals may be the most important and oft-cited factor of success for any group.

2. Put together a team that is representative and inclusive. Anecdotal evidence suggests between 6 and 8 members.

3. Set regular meeting times and share the group's agenda and minutes. Consider a public website that details the goals, activities, and successes of the group, as well as contact information, members, charge, and other organizational information.

4. Team member roles should be explicit, agreed upon, and understood by all members of the group, and all members should understand how the team will work through problems and give feedback, in short how the group will function in a practical way.

Selected Good Practices:

5. Make sure tasks assigned to members are meaningful and tangible, as opposed to "busywork."

6. When creating goals, aim for small sustainable projects with easily measurable impacts. If the group decides on a larger scale project, aim for a multi-year plan, where each year has a measurable impact.

7. Communicate results. Ensure that the group's agenda and minutes are freely accessible to the library as a whole. Present important findings to different groups within the library, ideally tailored to their interests. Repeated communication through multiple channels is the best way to engage your audience and ensure that assessment actually has an impact.

Websites

Does your Assessment Committee have a website? Of the 13 who reported having them, only 8 were open to both internal and external audiences while 5 were internal only. Lewin and Passonneau (2012) explored publicly available assessment data on library websites and found a lack of consistency.

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