What Impact Do Academic Libraries Have on Teaching and Learning?

A Review of the Literature and Preliminary Taxonomy of Standards

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Association of Research Libraries Assessment Conference, Baltimore, Maryland: October 27, 2010
Current Academic Library Assessment Climate (in a nutshell):

- Darkening financial horizon
- Increasing costs of resources and services
- Increased emphasis on **OUTCOMES** for institutional-level evaluation
Foundations, so far...

- Significant contributions to understanding library’s contribution to research:
  - Study of library return on investment (ROI) in library resources in development of successful grant applications:
    - Phase I (U.S.) and
    - Phase II (International)

- Ongoing efforts to shift academic library assessment conversation from input and output measurement to a focus on outcomes...
  - ARL New Measures Initiative

- ...and to improve understanding of the “state of the art” of academic library assessment
  - Megan Oakleaf and ACRL’s *Value of Academic Libraries: A Comprehensive Research Review and Report*
Significant progress has been made in establishing models for demonstrating Return on Investment for Research.

...but what of the Academic Library’s Contribution to Teaching and Learning?

- More difficult to assess and demonstrate CAUSATION. Most studies demonstrate either
  - Correlation between student success and library use, or
  - Short-term effects of information literacy instruction.

We’re also not always entirely sure what we should be trying to demonstrate.
Our Project

Part of IMLS-Funded Project:

Carol Tenopir, The University of Tennessee: Lead Principal Investigator
Paula Kaufman, The University of Illinois: Co-Principal Investigator
http://libvalue.cci.utk.edu/
Our Goals and Approach:

- Helping to create structure for future assessment efforts:
- Shift from initial conceptualization presented in abstract for the LAC:
  - Focus on Six Regional Accrediting Agencies’ Standards
    - Several LIS-related projects have looked at Regional Standards, but most have either:
      - Focused on one agency’s standards, or
      - Focused on standards specifically related to **The Library** or **Library-Related Endeavors**, such as **Information Literacy**
So what! IL is important!

Yes, it is...

But we believe (and we’re not alone) academic libraries need to expand evidence of their influence to reflect institution-level standards in order to maintain relevance.
Quick Review: Institution-Level Accreditation in the U.S.

- No common standards at the national level;
- Six regional agencies
- Similar themes in standards, but lack of uniformity:
  - Language
  - Structure
  - Frequency of updates
- All Six Agencies’ Standards address
  - Library Collections with varying degrees of specificity;
  - Information Literacy in direct or “Equivalent Language”
Other Standards for Academic Libraries:

- Program-level accreditation; varies by institution and accredited degree
  - Written to “provide a comprehensive outline to methodically examine and analyze all library operations, services, and outcomes in the context of accreditation.”
What we did...

- Reviewed the most recent Standards documents of the Six Regional Agencies
- Collected statements related to Teaching and/or Learning
  - ...and library’s support of same
- Identified common themes
- Reviewed ACRL’s Standards and matched statements to themes from the Agencies’ Standards

...then,

- We reviewed the LIS literature for existing models appropriate for assessing library services re: the themes we identified.
### Common Themes:

While the six Agencies’ Standards do differ significantly, it was possible for us to identify several shared themes and objectives:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. The Institution is Focused on Student Achievement</th>
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<td><strong>Subtheme a.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Subtheme b.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Subtheme c.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Subtheme d.</strong></td>
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<th>II. Teaching and Learning is a Clear Institutional Priority</th>
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<td><strong>Subtheme a.</strong></td>
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<th>III. The Institution Promotes a “Culture of Assessment”</th>
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Focus: Library Support for Teaching and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)

- Concept introduced by Ernest Boyer in Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate (1990)
  - Boyer pointed out that faculty are rarely afforded the same respect for excellence in teaching as they are for successful research.
  - Boyer called for abandoning “the old ‘teaching versus research’ debate” in favor of acknowledging the scholarly aspects of teaching by giving “the familiar and honourable term ‘scholarship’ a broader, more capacious meaning, one that brings legitimacy to the full scope of academic work.”
- Lee Shulman credited with expanding and clarifying the dimensions of the concept.
Tenets of SoTL:

- Application of principles and methods of scholarship to the questions, problems and challenges of teaching
  - Serious study of teaching within disciplinary context
  - Empirical investigation
  - Dissemination of findings in same venues appropriate for other discipline-specific research (i.e., not confined to teaching-related publications and conferences)
- Reflective teaching practice
  - Peer review of teaching effectiveness
- Continuous assessment and improvement
  - Application of findings from original research, peer assessment, and other modes of study to improving teaching
SoTL presents a natural fit for academic libraries...

...so why have librarians been so slow to pick up on it?

“The SoTL movement provides excellent opportunities for librarians, both in respect to developing their own projects and for supporting, and developing relationships with, faculty working on SoTL projects. Despite this potential, there has been very little written about SoTL in the professional library literature.”
Specifically...

- Application of principles and methods of scholarship to the questions, problems and challenges of teaching
  - Creation of collections to support scholarly inquiry into teaching and learning
  - Hosting events related to SoTL, including workshops and conferences
  - Engaging in SoTL-related research into librarians’ own instruction
- Reflective teaching practice
  - Providing support and facilities for faculty and other instructors to engage in observation and review of teaching
  - Librarians engaging in peer review of own instruction
- Continuous assessment and improvement
  - Application of findings from original research, peer assessment, and other modes of study to improving teaching (in classroom and library instructional settings)
Next Steps?

For Libraries (our suggestions):

- Conduct in-depth review of relevant regional accreditation standards
  - Identify standards (beyond those that address the library specifically) related to teaching and learning
  - Develop an action plan for efforts to address and support those priorities
  - Communicate efforts to stakeholders in the institution and beyond.

For us?

- Themes discussed in this paper will provide a framework for a series of studies at UTK related to library support for teaching and learning
  - Instructor surveys
  - Instructor interviews/focus groups
  - Experimental study of impact of library instruction; multiple sections of undergraduate required classes
Thank you for your time!

Questions?
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Note: full references for works cited in presentation are available in our paper.