Acknowledging the political, economic, and values-based motivators of assessment work:
An analysis of publications on academic library assessment

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How do librarians identify and express motivators of assessment work?
Sample and Methodology

- Conference proceedings from Library Assessment Conferences
  - 10% of papers in each year: 39 papers
  - Mix of keynotes, papers, short papers
- Content analysis in NVivo
- Inductive thematic coding of ‘motivators’
  - This study attempts to determine X...
  - The library used X methodologies/tools to...
  - We felt that better understanding X would...
Purposes of Assessment

- **Prove**
  - quality assurance / external

- **Improve**
  - quality enhancement / internal
### Results: Prove and Improve

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivator</th>
<th></th>
<th>Improve: 36 papers (92%)</th>
<th>Both: 13 papers (33%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop Internal Expertise</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contribute To Body of Research</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Involve Users</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Determine User Satisfaction</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Measure Contribution of Library</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Make Decisions (Current and Future)</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improve the Library (Services/Resources/Spaces)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Understand Users’ Behaviours/Needs/Knowledge</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Advocacy and Justification</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Demand from Administration</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Political/Economic Situation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Prove/Demonstrate Value of Library</td>
<td>9</td>
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‘Prove’ Motivators

“...ARL libraries are examining their value and impact with an eye toward defining their return on investment...”
- Dupont, 2010

“The political climate calls for increased accountability...”
- Stemmer and Mahan, 2012

“...external pressures on educational institutions by their stakeholders...”
- Lakos, 2006

“...provide briefing materials targeted to administrative offices and the President and Provost.”
- Brown, 2012
"The first investigation concerned the sometimes long queues that formed... while students were waiting to use a computer workstation."

- Jager, 2014

"We hope these results will help illuminate current services and inform future improvements, planning, and implementation of library services and programs."

- Harvey, 2010

"Does information literacy make a contribution to overall learning and transition for pre-college students?"

- Gilchrist, 2014

"To assist staff in using data, not assumptions, to make decisions."

- McCulley, 2010
Recommendations

- Before beginning assessment work, identify:
  - What values and goals are motivating your work?
  - What will certain types of results tell you?
  - Will the results be used, and how?

- Clearly describe motivators of your work:
  - Near the start of the paper / presentation
  - Avoid using empty or buzz words (or define them)
Questions?