Developing the Understanding Library Impacts protocol: Using the language of learning outcomes to communicate academic library value

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About the protocol

The Understanding Library Impacts protocol (ULI) is a user-centered approach[1] for connecting academic library use with undergraduate learning outcomes and identifying factors of library use which contribute to or inhibit achieving those outcomes.

The protocol has been refined in a pilot study and a field trial using qualitative methods. The instrument is now available as a survey.

Conceptual framework

Student use of the academic library → supports → Student effort on course work → enables → Achieving learning outcomes related to the academic major

Impact and next steps

The ULI protocol is a new library assessment tool designed for communicating academic library value to stakeholders and supporting internal decision making and resource allocation.

Next steps for the project include pilot tests of the ULI Survey to evaluate and refine the instrument.

Developing the instrument

Pilot study[2] (2005)

- Liberal Arts College
- Interviews
  - Librarian focus group
  - 4 faculty
  - 12 students
- Critical incident technique
- Revised Bloom's Taxonomy
- Intercoder reliability

Results

- Codebooks
- Refined questions and probes
- Classified learning outcomes
- Library use categories (resources, services, and facilities)
- Impact factors
- Affective outcomes

Field Trial[3] (2006/7)

- Doctoral/Research University
- Interviews
  - Librarian focus groups
  - 2 History faculty
  - 10 History majors
- Critical incident technique
- Revised Taxonomy

Results

- Candidate outcomes for History majors
- Refined questions and probes
- Refined
  - library use response categories
  - inventory of impact factors
  - range of affective outcomes

ULI Survey (2010/11)

Academic projects (up to 3)

- Nature of project or paper
- Library resources, services, and facilities used during project
- How did they help?
- Were there problems?
- Changes in affective state

+ NSSE DEEP learning scale[4]
+ CSEQ library experiences scale[5]
+ Demographic questions

Field Trial 10 undergraduate history majors (6 women, 4 non-traditional, 5 seniors, 5 enrolled in the Honors college) reported on 19 projects or papers

Deriving candidate outcomes

- Interviews with 2 History faculty
- Analysis of syllabi
- Student interpretations of learning goals
- Classified with Revised Taxonomy

Academic work	Learning outcomes
Senior thesis / proposal	Create conceptual knowledge
Presentation	Analyze and evaluate concepts
Review	Apply procedures and concepts
Research paper	Understand facts, concepts, and procedures
Construct a bibliography	
Visit library / archives	

How did the library help?

Interviews with history majors

- What was the assignment?
- What were you expected to learn?
- What library resources, services, and facilities did you use?
- How did they help?
- What problems did you have?
- Which was most important?
- How would you do without it?
- What grade did you receive on this project?
- How would you feel if you had to complete a similar project now?

"I would cry. I rely so much on them because I work at home …I would be pretty devastated if I didn't have electronic resources" (ST-04-A)

Selected results

- Projects: 4 Senior theses, 1 presentation, 12 research papers, and 2 reviews
- Student interpretations of learning outcomes aligned with expectations of History department

- 100% of students used print or archival resources in 79% of the projects
- 100% of students used e-resources in 68% of the projects
- 80% of students used reference services when completing 84% of the projects

Top 5 impact factors

- Convenience of E-resources
- E-resources enhance access
- Approachability of librarians
- Availability of print and e-resources
- Aspects of print and digital interfaces

Connecting library use to learning outcomes

Print resources / archives (21)

E-resources (34)

Facilities (2)

Library computers (2)

Interlibrary Loan (3)

Reference and instruction (16)

were used to complete →

Academic work
Senior thesis / proposal (4)
Presentation (1)
Research paper (12)
Review (2)

during which students achieved →

Learning outcomes
Create conceptual knowledge
Analyze and evaluate concepts
Apply procedures and concepts
Understand facts, concepts, and procedures
Affective outcomes
Increased confidence
Decreased anxiety

● Undergraduate use of the library ● Academic work ● Outcomes

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