Advocating for Technical Services through Assessment

Rebecca L. Mugridge

Potomac Technical Processing Librarians

October 12, 2018

Agenda

* Why do assessment?
* Assessment landscape
* My research on assessment
* Goals of assessment
* Assessment methods
  * Workflow assessment
  * Customer surveys
  * Focus groups
  * Benchmarking
* Advocating for Technical Services

Why do assessment?

* Gauge productivity
* Identify best practices
* Demonstrate accountability
* Demonstrate value or impact
* Generate data or information to support advocacy efforts
* Help set direction for division or department

Advocacy

Advocacy: The act of pleading or arguing in favor of something, such as a cause, idea, or policy; active support. (*The Free Dictionary*)

* Create new positions
* Keep or redefine current positions
* More funding
* Evaluate vendors
* Change procedures
* Create or modify policy
* Propose or eliminate services

Assessment

* Evaluation, estimation, appraisal
* "A type of evaluation that gathers evidence perhaps from the application of evaluation research." (Hernon and Altman, 2010)
* "the evaluation or estimation of the nature, quality, or ability of someone or something." (google.com)
* Examples:
    * How satisfied are our customers?
    * What is our turnaround time for new orders?
    * How do our productivity goals compare with other institutions'?
    * Can we eliminate steps from this workflow?
    * How do we ensure quality cataloging after training/review period?

Evidence

* Data on which to base proof or to establish truth or falsehood (*The Free Dictionary*)
* The available body of facts or information indicating whether a belief or proposition is true or valid (google.com)
* *Evidence* is anything that can be used to prove something (Vocabulary.com)

Data

* Facts and statistics collected together for reference or analysis. (google.com)
* Forms of data:
    * Questionnaire responses
    * Notes from a focus group
    * Audio or video files
    * Photos
    * Digital files
    * Collections of procedures or policies
    * Statistics
    * Flowcharts
    * Reports

Thesis

Assessment is an evaluation of a process, policy, workflow, standard, etc. that collects data that can be used as evidence to advocate for something. It will help you:

∗ Make management decisions
∗ Advocate for technical services
∗ Tell your story
∗ Demonstrate impact on the library, community, and profession

Why this topic?

* 2011 PaLA CRD Spring Workshop with Megan Oakleaf as keynote speaker

* *The Value of Academic Libraries: A Comprehensive Research Review and Report* (Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2010)

* There are 22 recommendations for next steps for librarians who wish to demonstrate value

Recommendation:
Mobilize library administrators (1)

* Communicating assessment needs and results to library stakeholders
* Using evidence-based decision making
* Creating confidence in library assessment efforts
* Dedicating assessment personnel and training

Recommendation:
Mobilize library administrators (2)

* Fostering environments that encourage creativity and risk taking

* Integrating library assessment within library planning, budget, and reward structures

* Ensuring that assessment efforts have requisite resources

Why a focus on Technical Services?

* Technical services staff equal 20-30% of our total staff
* Very little published on technical services assessment
* Most articles that do address assessment in technical services have to do with assessing *specific processes*
* Interested in a broader approach to technical services assessment

Assessment landscape

* LibQual™
* ACRL *Value of Academic Libraries* report
* ARL biennial assessment conferences
* ARL SPEC Kit on Library Assessment
* Evidence-Based Librarianship
* Conference and other programming on assessment
* Growing body of research on technical services assessment (e.g., CCQ special issue on Assessment of Cataloging and Metadata Services (55:7/8)

SPEC kit: *Library Assessment*

* Spec Kit 303 (Stephanie Wright and Lynda S. White)
* Assessment of technical services activities addressed in one question:
* "Please indicate which of the following departments/units your library has assessed since 2002 and what methodologies were used for those assessments."

SPEC Kit: *Library Assessment* : Cataloging

* Cataloging: Number of respondents: 62
  * Surveys: 4.8%
  * Qualitative methods: 9.7%
  * Statistics collection and analysis: 69%
  * Usability: 1.6%
  * Other (Benchmarking, Unit cost analyses, Balanced Scorecard, Process improvement): 14.5%
  * Have not assessed: 24%

SPEC Kit: *Library Assessment* : Acquisitions

* Acquisitions: Number of respondents: 62
  * Surveys: 14.5%
  * Qualitative methods: 13%
  * Statistics collection and analysis: 74%
  * Usability: 0%
  * Other (Benchmarking, Unit cost analyses, Balanced Scorecard, Process improvement): 13%
  * Have not assessed: 21%

SPEC Kit: *Library Assessment* : Preservation

* Preservation: Number of respondents: 61
  * Surveys: 13%
  * Qualitative methods: 13%
  * Statistics collection and analysis: 57%
  * Usability: 0%
  * Other (Benchmarking, Unit cost analyses, Balanced Scorecard, Process improvement): 8%
  * Have not assessed: 33%

Technical Services Assessment

* Rebecca L. Mugridge, "Technical Services Assessment: A Survey of Pennsylvania Academic Libraries" *Library Resources and Technical Services* 58:2 (April 2014): 100-110.
  * Survey sent to 120 PA academic libraries
  * 63 responses
  * 53% response rate

Survey proposal

* Survey the academic libraries in Pennsylvania to determine:
  * Whether they conducted assessment of technical services
  * How they conducted assessment
  * How they shared the results of their assessment activities
  * What actions they took based on their assessment activities

Technical Services

For the purposes of the survey, technical services is defined as units responsible for:

* Cataloging/Metadata
* Acquisitions
* Electronic resources management
* Preservation/Bindery/Physical processing

Demographics

* 63 responding libraries (53% response rate)
  * 16 Public (25%)
  * 47 Private (75%)
* Average total employees: 13 librarians, 17 staff
* Average total technical services employees: 2 librarians, 4 staff

Results

* 90% of libraries reported assessment of technical services
* Gathering statistics was the most common form of assessment (84%)
* Cataloging and acquisitions were the most assessed departments; preservation the least

Goals of technical services assessment

* Improve or streamline processes (68%)
* Improve services (63%)
* Make better decisions (62%)
* Inform strategic planning activities (55%)
* Explore offering new services (40%)
* Reallocate staff or other services (30%)
* Compare with other institutions (22%)

How do you report the results of technical services assessment?

* Annual report (61%)

* Informational report to library administration (52%)

* Mass email to library employees (11%)

* Library newsletter article (8%)

* Presentations (8%)

* Web site (5%)

* Campus newsletter article (2%)

Outcomes reported

* 35 responses
* Themes:
  * Streamlining processes
  * Staff reallocation
  * Changed vendors/Changed vendor services
  * Collection decisions
  * Training
  * Communication
  * New services
  * Changed ILSs

Assessment methods

* Statistics gathering and analysis
* Workflow analysis
* Customer surveys
* Interviews or focus groups
* Benchmarking

Statistics

* Reveal trends over time
* Changes in library collections focus
* Identify training needs
* Identify hiring needs
* Benchmark against peers
* Identify further assessment needs

Workflow analysis

* Most-commonly reported form of assessment in the library literature
* Examples:
  * Assessment of technical services workflow
  * Assessment of cataloging and database maintenance
  * Workflow assessment and redesign
  * Streamlining work between acquisitions and cataloging
  * Assessment of shelf-ready services

Resources

Richard M. Dougherty. *Streamlining Library Services: What We do, How Much Time It Takes, What It Costs, and How We Can Do It Better*. Scarecrow Press, 2008. 9780810851986.

Robert B. Freeborn and Ann H. Dodd. "And They Lived Happily Ever After: Findings from the Penn State University Libraries' AV Workflow Process Improvement Team." In *Teams in Library Technical Services*, edited by Rosann Bazirjian and Rebecca Mugridge. Scarecrow Press, 2006. 9780810852945.

Leigh Billings, et al. "Many Languages, Many Workflows: Mapping and Analyzing Technical Services Processes for East Asian and International Studies Materials." *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly 55:7/8: 606-629.*

Customer service survey

Surveys can:

* Provide new information
* Corroborate anecdotal reports
* Serve as a public relations or marketing tool
* Support change, funding requests, or further assessment
* Help you identify service gaps or services that are no longer needed

Customer service survey

Goals of conducting a customer service survey at UAlbany:

* To gauge overall satisfaction with the Division and Department services

* Identify areas for process improvement

Potential concerns

* Will the survey be anonymous?
* What information will be shared?
  * Will details be shared outside the Department/Division?
  * What if someone comments on specific people? Will that be shared?
* Will the survey be submitted for IRB approval?
* What information will be published?

Survey design

* Introduction, including goals for conducting survey
* Five pages; one for each department and one general
* Department mission, name of department head
* Likert scale rating department on 12 factors
* Other common questions: communication, comfort in asking questions, suggestions for improvement or other feedback
* Questions pertinent to specific departments
* You can download the survey questions here: http://scholarsarchive.library.albany.edu/ulib_fac_scholar/35/

Planning

* May 2014: Discussed at Department Heads' meeting
* June 2014: Discussed at Division meeting; shared draft
* July 2014: Shared draft with library administration
* August 2014: Submitted IRB application
* September 5, 2014: Received IRB approval
* September 12, 2014: Survey deployed
* October 6, 2014: Survey closed with 52 completed

Results

* **Advocacy for change (both internal and cross-divisional) and funding was supported by the results of this internal customer service assessment. Examples:**
  * Value placed on cataloging hidden collections supports funding for batchloading records for e-resources and microforms
  * Survey respondents' request for fewer steps in the ordering process supports cross-divisional efforts to streamline the procedures
  * We need to further assess certain workflows, e.g., our use of the Footprints ticketing system for IT problems
  * We need better signage in our work areas

Actions taken and next steps

* Reported results at our Division meeting
* Discussed at our Department meetings
* Reviewed problematic procedures and policies
* Identified areas that need further assessment
* Created maps of our Division offices
* Hosted a Division Open House
* Shared results at other library division meetings

Article:

* Mugridge, Rebecca L. and Nancy M. Poehlmann. "Internal Customer Service Assessment of Cataloging, Acquisitions, and Library Systems." *OCLC Systems & Services* 31(4) (2015): 219-248.

Interviews or focus groups

* Informally as part of a periodic "checking in" with customers
* Example: Periodic meetings with subject library staff or other "customers" of technical services
  * Include as many staff of all levels as possible
  * Ask a set of standard questions
  * Document and report responses and discussion
  * Results: better communication with our customers and greater comfort level with asking questions

Research on focus groups in cataloging

* K.C. Elhard and Qiang Jin, "Shifting focus: Assessing cataloging service through focus groups," *Library Collections, Acquisitions, & Technical Services* 28:2 (2004): 196-204.
* Suggestions:
  * Have a neutral party lead the focus group
  * Record and transcribe the comments

Sample focus group topics (Elhard and Jin)

* Do you find it easy to communicate with the three cataloging units?
* Do you ever use the Technical Service Division Web page to identify appropriate contacts to resolve problems?
* Are maintenance problems you encounter quickly resolved to your satisfaction?
* What do you find most confusing about what the cataloging units do?
* What do we do in cataloging that is the most helpful to your library?
* What one service would you like to see cataloging provide which is not currently provided?
* Is there anything else you would like to tell us about cataloging?

Results
(Elhard and Jin)

Advocacy for change was supported by the use of focus groups to assess cataloging services at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Examples:

* Restructured the cataloging units
* Redesigned their contact list
* Appointed liaisons from cataloging to subject libraries
* Organized cataloging workshops

Benchmarking

Definition:

Benchmarking is the process of comparing one's own policies, procedures or other factors, e.g., statistics, to other institutions for evaluative purposes or to determine best practices, goals, or standards

Statistical benchmarks

* Mechael D. Charbonneau, "Production Benchmarks for Catalogers in Academic Libraries: Are We There Yet?" *Library Resources & Technical Services* 49:1 (2005), 40-48.
* Findings:
  * Defining production benchmarks for cataloging doesn't work very well
  * Cataloging is highly specialized and can't be quantified in the same way as mechanized-based measurements.
* J. Buschman and F.W. Chickering, "A Rough Measure of Copy Cataloging Productivity in the Academic Library." *Library Philosophy and Practice*, http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/139
  * It is possible to determine benchmarks for copy cataloging

Benchmarking as an Assessment Tool

* Mugridge, Rebecca L. and Nancy M. Poehlmann, "Benchmarking as an Assessment Tool for Cataloging." *Technical Services Quarterly,*32(2) (2015): 141-159.
  * http://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/6FRKceiu2MxJe58zEH97/full
  * Survey conducted on AUTOCAT
  * 92 completed surveys
  * 20 libraries reported using benchmarking (22%)
  * 9/10 libraries reported that they planned to use benchmarking again within the next five years

Goals of benchmarking: research findings

* Improve or streamline processes: 72%

* Make better decisions:61%

* Improve services: 33%

* Reallocate staff or other resources: 33%

* Explore offering new services: 22%

* Inform strategic planning activities: 22%

Information collected: research findings

* Procedures: 82%
* Statistics: 73%
* Policies: 55%
* Staffing levels: 36%
* Best practices: 55%

Goals and results: research findings

Goal or Result	Libraries that selected this as a goal of benchmarking (n=18)	Libraries that selected this as a result of benchmarking (n=10)
Improve or streamline processes	13 (72.2 percent)	7 (70 %)
Make better decisions	11 (61.1 percent)	5 (50 %)
Improve services	6 (33.3 percent)	3 (30 %)
Reallocate staff or other resources	6 (33.3 percent)	3 (30 %)
Explore offering new services	4 (22.2 percent)	1 (10 %)
Inform strategic planning activities	4 (22.2 percent)	1 (10 %)

Reporting benchmarking results: research findings

* Informational report to library administration: 60%
* Annual report: 30%
* Assessment report: 20%
* Presentations: 10%

Benchmarking pros and cons: research findings

* Advantages
  * Improve performance
  * Generate ideas
  * Encourage a continuous improvement mindset
* Disadvantages/Challenges
  * Apples to oranges comparisons
  * It's difficult to identify a peer group

Conclusion

Assessment can help you:

* Make management decisions
* Advocate for technical services
* Tell your story
* Demonstrate impact

Reminder:

* We don't do assessment just because it's interesting (although it is); we should have a goal in mind

Conclusion

* Advocacy through assessment happens by:
  * Identifying a goal or problem that needs attention
  * Selecting an assessment method that will give you the information you need to solve the problem
  * Sharing that information with all stakeholders, internal or external to your unit
* Tell your story, own the conversation!

Questions?

Rebecca L. Mugridge
Dean of University Libraries
University at Albany
LI-123 University Library
1400 Washington Ave.
Albany, NY 12222
email: rmugridge@albany.edu
phone: (518) 442-3570