HOW DO YOU MEASURE FUN AND RELAXATION?

Assessing Academic Library Programming Using Traditional and Non-Traditional Forms of Assessment

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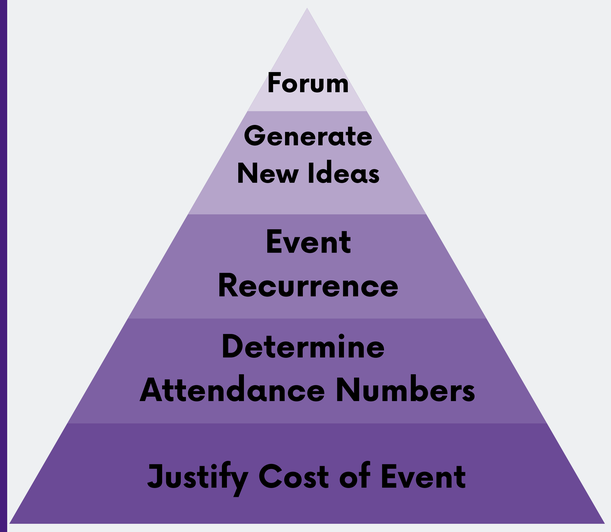
BACKGROUND

January 2016, the Dean of LSU Libraries, Stanley Wilder introduced in both the Dean's Council and Advisory Group meeting, his wish for the libraries to create programming during LSU exam weeks. Eight members of the LSU Libraries faculty and staff were asked to serve on the committee, including me. Some of the initial ideas for the committee included a game room, postcard writing station, Pet Therapy, midnight pizza, coffee, goodie bags, and a quiet room. The committee resolved to host the first exam week program during Spring 2016 Midterms. With approval from the Associate Dean, we opened a "Relaxation Room" including origami, coloring, puzzles, games, a postcard writing station, and bubble wrap. In addition to the room, we hosted a pizza night and a, "Find the General" game in the lobby.

Since the beginning, we have added more activities to the Relaxation Room including a sensory table, bean bag chairs, and relaxing music. We have also expanded our exam week activities to included Pet Therapy, crafts in the lobby, Coffee with a Cop, a 3-Minute Rave, popsicles and more. We have had successes as well as missteps. Through our growth in programming, we have also grown in our assessment. One question we have asked since the first programming meeting is, "How do you measure fun?".

ASSESSMENT GOALS



TRADITIONAL ASSESSMENT

Survey

We have adopted several various renditions of our survey since the formation of the Programming Committee. Each version tried to get information about who was using the room, their feedback and provided a place for comments. We incentivized the survey using a small prize such as a $5 coffee gift card or study basket. We drew the winner's name from the students who filled out a survey.

Name:

Email:

Did you Enjoy Your Time in the De-Stress Room?

Yes No

What did you like best?

What would you like to see in the future?

Comments:

Original Survey

We originally wanted to know if students:

- enjoyed the Relaxation Room
- what they liked best
- what they would like to see in the future
- provided a place for comments

Most Recent Survey

The most recent revision focuses on:

- where they found out about the room
- how they are using the room
- provides a place for comments
- what their major is

Email:

Major:

How did you hear about the room? Circle all that apply.

Library Website — Signs in the Library

Friend — Other:

Social Media

Did you use this room to study or relax?

Study — Relax

Have you visited this room in past semesters?

Yes — No

Comments:

Pros

- allows for student feedback
- helps the committee evaluate the effectiveness of the program
- questions aid with tracking impact of advertising
- surveys count as part of outreach numbers
- comments help reinforce the student's positive experiences

Cons

- lower response rates
- repeat information consistently (more food and more naps)
- committee members spend time collecting the responses throughout the day

Counting

Counting is our primary form of assessment. It is the easiest way for us to ensure student attendance. We count people in the Relaxation Room. We count people at the individual events. We count people through pizza slices, postcards, stress balls, cookies and cups of coffee. We have even attempted to count people at Pet Therapy. Due to the nature of people in general and how large some of these events are, there is some margin of error with our numbers. However, it is the easiest way for us to justify our expenses and provide a rationale for events.

Original Counts

Spring 2016 Finals

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:00	0	0	1	2	0
10:00		1	3	6	0
12:00	4	4	3	3	0
2:00	8	6	3	5	0
4:00	4	5	5	4	0
6:00			4	3	
8:00	7	6	4	6	
10:00	5	3	7	3	
11:00	4	3	5	3	
Total:	32	28	35	35	0
Surveys	13	10	5	3	4

Surveys	14
Post Cards	89
Stressballs	62
Pizzas	600 75 Pizzas
Guided Meditation	4
Pet Therapy	500
Social Media	5
RR Counts	130
Total Student Outreac	1404

The Programming Committee counts student interaction and not individual students. We check the Relaxation Room consistently throughout the day. Empty spaces in the chart (left) indicated missed room checks. One of our struggles is measuring student use between the hours of midnight and eight a.m.

Spring 2018 Counts

In the spring of 2018, we purchased a modest doorway counter. The counter counts entrances and exits from the Relaxation Room. By dividing the number of total room visits in half and then removing the visits from committee members, we are now able to get a more accurate idea of room usage throughout the week. We also have apps on our cell phones that we can use to help track event attendance.

2018 Spring Finals

	Mon	Tuesday	Wednes	Thurs	Friday	Mon	Tuesdi	Wedn	Thursday
8:00	1	2	1	1	1	4	0	0	0
10:00	16	5	3	4	2	9	8	6	6
12:00	2	2	4	2	3	7	3	3	5
2:00	4	4	2	1	2	7	14	3	3
4:00	1	0	0	2	7	9	5	6	
6:00	4	0	2	1	7	7	5	5	8
8:00	0	2	6	0	12	1	11	8	
10:00	0	2	1	0	12	4	14	11	
Total	30	9	14	22	9	52	36	57	31

290 Number of People Counted in Room	
1404 Number on Room Counter	
Pet Therapy	400
Student Health	200
Buttons	200
Student Pizza	600 200 Pizz 2 slices per person
Free Breakfast	150
Popsicles	100
Cookies and Coffee	300 5 Trays (2 cookies per person)
Pet Therapy Day 2	400
Pizzas	400 50 Pizzas
Post Cards	75
Stressballs	122
Tony's Treasures	10
RR Counts	1109
Total Student Outreac	2969

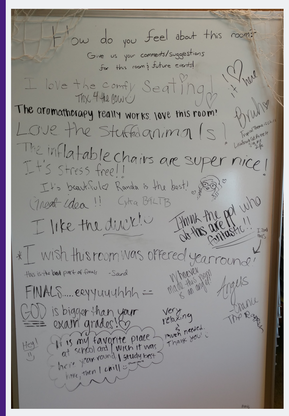
Pros

- easy to justify costs when you have "hard" numbers
- with smaller events, counting is quick and easy
- tools are available to assist with counts

Cons

- not ideal for large events with moving people
- hard to accurately count larger events
- counting does not work for every situation

NON-TRADITIONAL ASSESSMENT



Assessment on the Fly

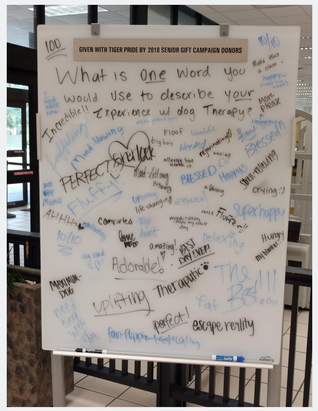
One of the more recent ways we have assessed our programming has been through "assessment on the fly." Assessment on the fly uses informal means to get immediate feedback. We ask questions to random students throughout the event. We track their responses and review them after the program has ended.
Another way to assess on the fly is by using a community whiteboard and dry erase markers. We write one or two questions onto the whiteboard and students answer the question(s) during the program. This assessment style works great for many different types of functions and can be a great way of receiving immediate feedback.

Pros

- allows for immediate student feedback
- can help us course correct during the program
- allows for transparency within the assessment
- comments help reinforce positive experiences

Cons

- comments can get lost
- can be difficult to get a variety of different opinions
- students may not be 100% honest (groupthink)
- selection bias



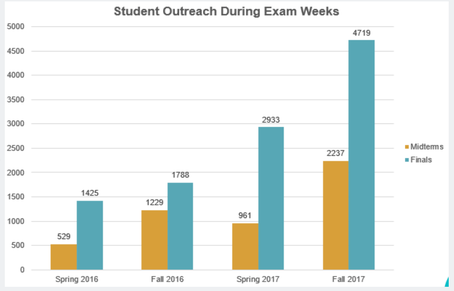
EVIDENCE BASED PRACTICE

Assessing programs helps with decision making. We often host programs and events that have never been done within our library before. Not all of them have been winners. Fall of 2017, we partnered to host a movie night with the East Baton Rouge Parish Libraries' Bookmobile. Between the cost of renting parking spaces, issues with location, and trouble with event set-up, the few students who attended were not enough to justify re-attempting this program.

We also use assessments to help justify increasing programming. Our students love pet therapy. We would often see over five hundred students during Pet Therapy. Through our assessment on the fly, as well as comments within the survey, and high numbers during the event, students told us that they wanted more. This information empowered us to expand pet therapy to a second day allowing for even more students to participate.

Overall, our programming assessments demonstrate that students love library programs. Due to the consistently surpassing numbers, our surveys, and positive feedback, the necessity to provide justification has changed. The committee has demonstrated that we are able to outreach to many students while keeping costs low. Thankfully we no longer must assess as stringently as we have in previous semesters. We now have more freedom to play around with how we assess events..

CONCLUSION

Numbers and surveys can only tell so much of the story. It is important to include comments and feedback into our assessments. A successful event for us is one where a student attends and gets a positive experience out of it. It doesn't have to be just an educational experience or an information experience. If a student comes to an event and has fun and creates a positive memory of the libraries, that is worth it. It is great to be able to validate the Programming Committees existence and show how we measure fun and relaxation but at the end of the day, those unquantifiable moments are worth more than anything else.

We utilize assessment to not only record growth in our programming but also as a reflection of our growth in assessing as well.