Build a Live & Interactive Library Dashboard Using Google Data Studio

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Purpose

Libraries are good at data collection and interpreting this data but need to become better at sharing our results. We need to make our analytics insights accessible—both internally and externally—so they do not exist in a vacuum but demonstrate value and inform decision making.

One step towards building a culture of assessment in your institution is presentation of real-time data (from multiple sources) in a clear and visually engaging manner. Data collection can be messy, drawing from numerous service areas, using different data tools and methods. There is information on expenditures, collections statistics, teaching support, technology use, and both physical and virtual traffic analytics. Stakeholders throughout one university's libraries may have access to some sources relevant to them but be unaware of others. As such, creating a dashboard that consolidates different data streams filtered and displayed into a single report is important for getting stakeholders involved, and your insights put into practice. In addition, while proprietary software such as Tableau is an option for some institutions, the full version can be prohibitively expensive, and the free version makes all of your data public without access restrictions.

Workshop Design

For the 2020 Library Assessment Conference, we planned to present a workshop to guide participants through the process of setting up a dashboard using Google Data Studio and connecting this dashboard to data streams. At the end of the session, participants were to have created a sample dashboard that they could enhance and easily share with colleagues and administrators.

Audience

This workshop was intended for anyone interested in creating data dashboards for their institution. There was no requirement for advanced technical skills, only knowledge of their institution's different data collection products.

Topics Covered

We planned to begin by briefly describing the current dashboard/visualization/business intelligence landscape, with an emphasis on products and techniques relevant to standard library data streams. We then intended to demo the University of Miami Libraries dashboards, and show examples of what data might be captured and what sort of questions might be answered with such a tool. This workshop was designed to walk participants through the process of setting up Google Data Studio account; building data connectors; interacting with the data and generating visualizations.

Finally, we prepared to discuss how one can customize dashboards for different stakeholders' needs, from librarians trying to improve their collection development decisions, to a department head trying to better manage resources and to an administrator or dean who wants to get a bird's eye view on operations.

Learning Outcomes

We believe that our method of using Google Data Studio provides an inexpensive way for Libraries to present their information to their stakeholders. At the end of the workshop, participants were to have created sample dashboard that they could enhance and easily share with their colleagues.

References

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