

Assessment for Students or Assessment for Instruction Programs?



Library Assessment Conference 2008
Seattle, Washington

Michigan State University Libraries Assessment Pilots 2007

The Library Instruction Team at Michigan State University (MSU) Libraries conducted three assessment pilots over the course of Fall Semester 2007. The pilots were an endeavor to develop a method of assessment to be used in conjunction with in-class library instruction for the purpose of promoting and progressing the cause of information literacy. These initiatives began as independent projects, which developed out of the need to assess student information literacy capabilities, but evolved into an ethos that is driven by assessing students, instructors and the instruction program continuously.

This approach to assessment provided a strategy to employ resources currently available to Librarians at MSU and procure other resources that would assist in meeting the end goal. Using a variety of perspectives the Library Instruction team achieved the objective of working collectively as well as independently resulting in methods of assessment that are well matched.

Implementing the first pilot only one year ago and having less than one year of data to analyze, the MSU Library's assessment initiatives are in the beginning stages. Therefore, analysis of all feedback is just starting and is considered incomplete. However, planning and developing of all three pilots has progressed rapidly, leading right into execution and has nonetheless laid the groundwork for assessment activities at MSU Libraries. This has helped give tremendous insight into how assessment initiatives should proceed.

Details on the Students Needs Assessment pilot, the Information Literacy Modules, and the Clickers pilot are offered.

Students Needs Assessment

METHOD: Beginning each session with a keyword brainstorming activity on a specific topic students were asked to contribute related terms, words, and subjects using a white board. Then dividing the class into groups of 4-5 students, each group is instructed to find a particular type of information such as a scholarly article, book, background information and a website on the topic previously discussed. The students were given about 5 minutes to search working with their group.

PURPOSE: The data gathered was used to assess search capabilities of Tier 1 Writing students **prior** to receiving library instruction.

DATA: Data was gathered from a total of 10 classes, approximately 25 students in each class, with a total of 250 students surveyed (approximately 4-5 per group equaling 50 groups).

Information Literacy Modules

METHOD: The modules were created using software called Camtasia Studio, which allows you to record software applications, web pages, PowerPoint presentations and other things that are normally viewed on a computer screen. At the end of each video segment are two or three questions relating to the information presented in the module. The student responses are used to assess their information literacy skills. The development and implementation of the modules were achieved in collaboration and with the cooperation of MSU's Tier 1 Writing Department.

PURPOSE: The modules were not only an attempt to provide additional tutorial information to students that are provided in-class instruction at the library, but also to reach any of our constituents that may be at a distance or unable to come into the library for instruction.

DATA: All modules are followed with multiple-choice questions. The data is stored in the university's course management software ANGEL.

Clickers

METHOD: Clickers receive and store data through software, which is completely integrated into Microsoft PowerPoint. The PowerPoint presentation allows the instructor to engage the audience by encouraging participation. The presentation created by the LI Team included six questions that polled students on their understanding of the online catalog, periodical indexes, where to find help in the library, etc.

PURPOSE: Assess student comprehension of information presented in instruction sessions as well as the effectiveness of the library instruction program at MSU.

DATA: In total 10 classes were polled with the average class size of 21 students in 2007 and 17 students in 2008, with over 70% of each group responding correctly to all polling questions. The Library Instruction Team at MSU believes that the percentage should be over 90% to confirm effectiveness.

A closer look at the data also implies that the method used to present information or the manner in which the questions are phrased may cause ambiguity in feedback. Such implications show the need to assess both students and the instruction program.

Contact Information

Lesley Brown
Reference & Instruction Librarian
Michigan State University
100 Library, East Lansing, MI 48824
(517) 432-6123 ext. 312
brownles@msu.edu