



We don't have an agenda... but we need one!

Launching an Assessment Agenda for Improving the User Experience

ABSTRACT

TITLE:
We don't have an agenda... but we need one! Launching an Assessment Agenda for improving User Experience at Northwestern.

BACKGROUND:
 As the Northwestern University Library's Public Services Division engaged a process of self-reorganization in the Spring of 2011, a high priority was placed upon meeting changing user needs and ensuring the continuing relevance and dynamism of the division through ongoing assessment.

OBJECTIVE:
 Ongoing and practical assessment was particularly marked for immediate action. An assessment librarian was appointed ahead of the curve of the reorganization, which quickly brought a central tension into clear focus. How does one create an assessment agenda where none existed before? What questions are even asked, and what could be the most practical and sustainable goals?

METHODS:
 The first prong of would maximize on-site expertise, with utilization of the librarians, library staff and student employees for generation of content using a variety of methods. The second prong was an examination of the user, via traffic patterns, usage of informational service points, and interactions with resources.

BACKGROUND

The new four-department organization of the Public Services Division.

Northwestern University Library Public Services Division Departments



Divisionally-determined directions of new user-oriented structure



Mission Statement of the Public Services Division, University Library, Northwestern University, (revised February 2011)
 The Public Services Division (PSD) supports the mission of the Northwestern University Library by offering convenient and innovative access to information services and resources in physical and virtual environments.

The PSD staff helps its diverse user community discover and evaluate information, facilitates access to resources regardless of format, and prepares students for successful information-seeking and lifelong learning. The PSD staff fosters a library-wide culture of exemplary customer service.

The PSD staff seeks to provide attractive, comfortable, and secure spaces for individual and collaborative learning.

OBJECTIVE

The practical implications of this project are expected to be rather significant, as assessment should be at the heart of the launch of the reorganization in its first full academic year. This early agenda-setting should be able to help define and clarify avenues of communication for immediate impact for our users' benefit as well as assisting ongoing refinement of the assessment process itself.

METHODS

- LISTENING TOUR**
- > Explain New Position to Staff, Brand Position as reliable source for assistance
 - > Build Trust Across Division
 - > Gather Information to Drive Next Steps
 - > Create Assessment plans based on divisionally-agreed upon priorities, and that address the collection of data through a variety of context-appropriate methods.

Focusing the Gathered Priorities

	Listening Tour	Post-Forum
Total Number of Staff Consulted	53	34
Priorities	n=85	n=49
Area of Assessment		
Services	21 (25%)	14 (29%)
Instruction	5 (6%)	0
Spaces/UX	34 (40%)	12 (24%)
Discovery	20 (24%)	23 (47%)
Collections	2 (2%)	0
Topic Orientation		
User	17 (20%)	35 (71%)
Coll.Facilities	23 (27%)	8 (16%)
Staffing & support	45 (53%)	6 (12%)
Keywords:		
User	8	35
Staffing	4	1
Services	8	12

- A need to refine the Data: Creating a Division-wide Forum**
- > Problem: too much data pointing to too many directions
 - The priorities gathered from the Listening Tour were rather diverse
 - The greatest interest lay in specific structural support issues of staff
 - > Forum would have specific goals to engage staff, share information
 - Establish context of mission, challenges in Academic Libraries
 - Have staff work together to create reasoning for assessment
 - **Discussion must work towards gathering focused priorities**

- Success!**
- Focus shifted in discussion to users, discovery
 - Feedback created in-session and post-session via survey
- > What else did it do?
- Clarified the role of the Assessment Librarian
 - Let staff talk to each other and come to a consensus on priorities
 - Created early categories for establishing baselines and design future data-collection instruments.

DATA PROJECT RESULTS

Create a Comparison Group for an unusual Academic Library

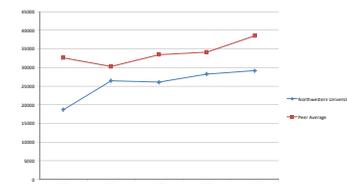
Identifying a group of academic libraries with the following characteristics:

- > Private School
- > 50-50 split in Undergrad/Graduate Student enrollment
- > Large Faculty body
- > Consortial ties
- > Identifiable measured services in NCES or ARL statistics

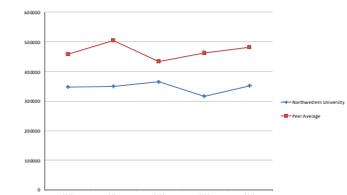
NU Library (blue) vs. Peer Group means (red), 2002-2010

Duke, Emory, Johns Hopkins, Notre Dame, Pennsylvania, Southern California University of Chicago, Vanderbilt, Washington University (St. Louis)

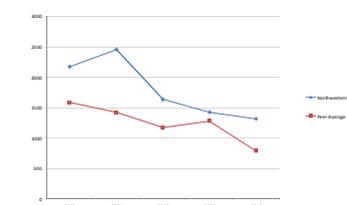
1. Weekly Gate Count



2. Yearly Circulation Statistics



3. Yearly Reference Interactions



What does this tell us?

The statistical outlier here is Reference Interactions. NUL is only above the group mean in this category, and yet this is the one category that is clearly declining across the board. Reference Interactions seem like the natural topic for a preliminary investigation, for first creating a better understanding of tracking these activities, as well as how these impact student learning.

REFERENCE DESK SERVICES ASSESSMENT PLAN



Incorporating the data gathered by staff as well as national trends in peer institutions, I created a plan that sought these specific data points

- > Service Quantity
 - Reported statistics
 - Qualitative data
- > Service Quality
 - Mystery Shopper
 - Desktracker staff entry analysis
 - Research Consultation Survey beta-testing

To accomplish performance measurement, I used the following tools

- > User Feedback
 - Mini-surveys for space usage
 - Student Employee Focus Group
 - Reference Room Post-It Note Feedback
- > Data compilation in software (Desktracker)
 - Traffic review
 - Cross-Divisional comparison by desk, day, and hour

USING THE RIGHT TOOLS TO ADDRESS THE RIGHT ISSUES

The Assessment Plan is constructed to gather data in a mixed methods model, and yet also tackles specific priorities raised by staff in the Listening Tour. This plan can serve as a flexible model for future assessment plans in this area as well as other areas or departments of the library.

- **Desktracker Review:** Staff Data on User Services, Spaces
- **Mini-Surveys & Reference Room Post-It notes:** User Discovery Data
- **Student Employee Focus Groups:** User/Staff data on Services, Discovery
- **Mystery Shopper:** User data on Spaces, Services
- **Research Consultation Survey:** User Discovery data on Instruction

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