Against the Grain

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People Profile: Cory Tucker

Editor

Identify Future Needs & Research Trends in Disciplines

An important part of any assessment is to find the future needs of the library users. This is vital because new programs and classes are added each year and the library will need to have materials to support these programs and classes. It is also important to obtain information regarding future research needs of faculty and also identify trends in disciplines. These trends may affect future research and curricular needs.

Format Preference

In many cases, one component of a collection assessment is to identify what format (print or electronic) users prefer. This allows the library to possibly change formats for materials and to potentially change budget allocations for materials and disciplines.

In regards to collection-centered assessment, the main focus is on the collection. For collection-centered evaluations, the types of assessment may include:

1. Describing what the library currently has in the collection, including number of books, journals, databases, etc.
2. Age analysis of the collection.
3. Strengths and weaknesses of the collection. Where are the gaps in the collection? Gaps may include real and perceived gaps in the collection.
4. Determine usage levels by resource type and subject.
5. Allocation of funding (spending by resource type, discipline, etc.).

Tools used in collection assessment

The data collection portion of the assessment is the most time-consuming aspect of the project. For each type of assessment, there are several tools and/or statistics that can be used to gather information.

For client-centered assessment, tools include interviews, surveys and focus groups. Other types of materials may include departmental, college or university strategic documents. For client-centered assessment, these tools are used to document the opinions, attitudes, experiences and abilities regarding the library resources by sampling a population of current users. In order to conduct surveys, interviews and focus groups, it is important to perform a literature review to see how they have been used in other collection assessments and it is also recommended to gather background information on how to design and use these tools. For each of these tools, one of the most important factors is creating effective and appropriate questions. In collection assessment projects, one or more of these tools may be used. Surveys are great tools to use because of the ability to gather information from a large group of users. With the increase and availability of survey software, such as **SuveyMonkey** (*http://www.surveymonkey.com*), surveys can be designed and distributed very efficiently.

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people profile

Cory Tucker

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BORN & LIVED: Born in Lawrence, Kansas. Have lived in Wichita, Kansas; Knoxville, Tennessee; Frankfort, Kentucky; Tampa, Florida and now Las Vegas, NV.

EDUCATION: Bachelor of Science in Finance from the **University of Tennessee**, Knoxville. Master of Arts in Library and Information Science from the **University of South Florida**.

FIRST JOB: Dishwasher in my father's restaurant.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: Member of **American Library Association**, Business Reference and Services Section, **ACRL** (University Libraries Section) and **ALCTS**.

IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO: Hike, travel, exercise.

FAVORITE BOOKS: *The Alchemist*, *On the Road*, *The Stranger*.

MOST MEANINGFUL CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: Obtaining tenure at **UNLV**.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: Interesting question. From a collection management perspective, I think the library resources need to have better discoverability in the user's space, not on the library's Website. I also see a big step in the movement of books from print to electronic...space issues, book prices, publishing costs and user preferences will affect this.

Online surveys allow the email delivery of a URL and the survey can be accessed with the click of a mouse! Additionally, online survey software makes data collection very easy and most of the software allows the exporting of reports into **Excel**.

Concerning content, the survey will need to consist of mostly close-ended questions. Some examples of survey questions can be found in the Appendix. Keep in mind that a survey should not take too much time to complete. A survey that takes more than twenty minutes can cause "survey fatigue." Another fact to consider is the timing of the survey. It is important that the survey is not sent out during busy times of the semester (finals) or during a time of year when faculty or students are not on campus (during summer sessions).

Interviews are another option for user-centered assessment. Interviews are very time consuming, but can provide detailed information in a one-on-one environment. One potential difficulty of the interview process is dealing with the schedules of the person to be interviewed.

Focus groups are a wonderful tool to use in collection assessment. Focus groups provide an opportunity for the library user to provide in-depth information and generally take up to one or two hours. Focus groups are a good tool to use to obtain detailed information from a few sources in a reasonable amount of time. As far as potential problems with focus groups, these may include participant influence over other members, experience of focus group leader, interpreting comments and group interaction.

In addition to the above tools, another type of information that is useful is compiling a bibliography of faculty publications and identifying where faculty are publishing and what resources they are citing in their research. A bibliography can easily be created by using citation tools such as **RefWorks**. Other tools that may be used may include university demographic data such as number of faculty, new programs and classes, strategic documents, syllabi, grants received and student/faculty growth by discipline. University demographic data is a great resource to use to identify trends on campus. The demographic data can be a key component in an analysis because it provides specific information on library users such as number of new faculty and growth in student population by level (undergraduate and graduate). Monitoring statistics for new classes and new programs provide information on what departments and colleges are adding as far as new areas of study or research and will identify library resources that may need to be added to the collection. Strategic documents of departments and colleges can provide information on both short and long-term strategies and may provide information on future areas of study or research.

Grants received is another statistic that can provide valuable information. By obtaining figures for grants applied for and received, the library can identify specific disciplines that are more research intensive and these disciplines may need new library resources. Syllabi, in most cases, identify the types of research projects and assignments students are being asked to complete and the library may want to add resources to help student learning. From my experience with collection assessment projects, I would suggest collecting the last