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Staying on Course When Riding the Rapids of Change: Meeting the Challenges of Assessment

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Staying on Course When Riding the Rapids of Change: Meeting the Challenges of Assessment
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Introduction: Why should you listen to me?

Here are some examples of how I have used assessment in the library I direct:

- Annual report

    - Stopped subscribing to 9 non-theological paper journals (use, availability in electronic format, cost) with a savings of $584.05 per year
    - Note: As a result of this process, one faculty member began donating his copies of one of these titles to the library so the library no longer needed to subscribe to it.

- Wages survey – increased wages of one full-time paraprofessional staff member by 6%

- Student surveys

    - Opening hours on Saturday evenings before final exams
    - Remove day-time lock from book drop

- Students focus group – change in library (and campus) dress code

- Faculty and student surveys – EBSCOhost 15 minute mini-workshops

- Building evaluations

    - Replacement of cracked tile in lobby
    - Repair of front pillars

- Student surveys and focus groups – purchased soft office chairs for computer workstations

- Performance reviews

    - Find out what they do not know. Eg. DVD player
    - Find out their training needs. Eg. how to use databases

Challenge #1: Being too busy to do assessment (busyness)

- The issue is not time or cost, but <u>priority</u>.

    - People spend time and money doing what is important to them.

Eg: Run down homes with satellite dishes.

Note: If you show me your budget and schedule, I can tell you what is important to you.

- o Assessment will not get done until it is important to those in leadership. This will not happen until they see the benefits of assessment.

  Eg: Lancaster Bible College – the leadership is committed to assessment

- Focus on the <u>benefits</u> of assessment

  - o Keep the library on course (supporting its mission)

    - ▪ Object lesson: toy raft, protractor, long straight pole, objects to represent the destination and a diversion.

      - There are many things to get a boat off course. Eg. Waves, wind, fog, rocks

      - If a boat gets off course even a little, it may end up very far from its desired destination.

      - The earlier an off-course boat is corrected, the easier it is to correct.

        Eg. I told student worker to begin shifting books on a certain shelf, but she started on a different shelf. As a result, she had to shift them again.

      - Keeping a boat on course requires constant correction.

        Keeping the library on course requires constant correction.

        Illustrations: Thermostat
        Cruise control

  - o Help fulfill accreditation requirements

    - ▪ *Comprehensive Integrated Standards*, Criteria 2 (Association for Biblical Higher Education, 2007)

- *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education: Eligibility Requirements and Standards for Accreditation*, Standard 7 (Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2006)

- *Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions: An Overview*, Criteria 2 (North Central Association, 2003)

- *Resource Manual for Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement*, Core Requirement 2.5; Comprehensive Standards 3.3.1 (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, 2005)

Challenge #2: Knowing what to assess (ignorance)

- Assessment should be based upon the <u>mission</u> and <u>objectives</u> of the library. (idealistic)

  Eg: Mission and objectives of the John L. Patton Library

  o Mission

    The mission of the John L. Patten Library is to provide information and information skills to faculty and students of Faith Baptist Bible College and Theological Seminary in a Christ-like manner to support its programs.

  o Objective 5

    The library provides convenient and timely access to information resources that supports the curriculum.

  o Objective 8

    The library budget effectively supports the hiring and maintaining of needed library staff.

- Assessment should be based upon the information needs of students/faculty. We should start with the way people are. (realistic)

  o Theology (Bible)

    - Created in the image of God Ps.139:14

      - Finite and dependent upon God

        o Have weaknesses
        o Make mistakes

      - God-given unique gifts Ill: personality tests
      - Rational, emotional, volitional, and social

- Innate knowledge of God and His standards of behavior Rom. 1 and 2

- Corrupted by sin and alienation from God, people, and themselves

    - Seek meaning in life apart from God – often lead to frustration and aggravation Ill: student who was impatient with computers
    - Innate drive to live by their own standards
    - Prone to rationalization and destructive behavior Ill: excuses for late or lost books

- God is working in them to bring them into a right relationship with Himself, others, and themselves

Question: Should we treat students as teenagers or adults?

- Implications

    - They don't know everything, but are able to learn.

        Response – They need to be shown where good information is and how to find it.

    - They have unique information needs.

        Response – They have unique needs.

    - They are whole people.

        Response – They need to be related to with their intellectual, emotional, and social needs in mind.

    - They are able to choose.

        Response – They need to have freedom to make choices in their selection of information, but can be persuaded to make better choices.

    - They usually know what is right and often do it.

        Response – They need challenged to be diligent and honest in their use of information.

    - Sometimes they are lazy and make excuses.

        Response – They need to be held accountable for their use of information. Ill: library fine notices

- God may use a librarian to help a student grow.

- Note: These apply to librarians, too.

o Literature

Atlas, Michael C. "Library Anxiety in the Electronic Era, or Why Won't Anybody Talk to Me Anymore? One Librarian Rants," *Reference & User Services Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (2005): 314-319.

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o Surveys and focus groups of faculty and students

Eg: College higher use focus group thought LCCS was confusing and that it was frustrating not being able to find a book they needed in the library. Response – teach LCCS

o Analyze syllabi – research needs

- Assessment should be based upon recognized <u>standards</u> and <u>norms</u>. (objective)

  o Accrediting associations

  o Library associations

    - *Standards for Libraries in Higher Education*, Association of College and Research Libraries

    - *Library Guidelines for ABHE Colleges and Universities*, 2006 Preface – paragraph 1; Question 1.4; Question 12.1,2,4 (52 guidelines)

    - *Measuring Quality: International Guidelines for Performance Measures in Academic Libraries*, International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions

  o Other benchmarks

    - Past years
    - Peer libraries Eg. ABHE Annual Report Results

- Eg. Library Annual Report
  - Print and full-text e-periodicals
  - FTE library staff
  - E&G expenditures

Challenge #3: Being effective and efficient with assessment (wasted effort)

- Assessment can become an <u>end</u> in itself. It is easy to waste time and resources assessing what will not be used.

  - Eg. number of slides
  - Eg. number of computer workstations

- Tie assessment with the <u>mission</u> and <u>objectives</u> of the library. (effective)

  - Set <u>strategies</u> based upon the mission and objectives of the library. Examples from the JLP Library:

    - Objective 5

      - Strategy 3

        The Library Assistant regularly revises subject words and phrases in the library catalog records to ensure that they agree with Library of Congress Subject Headings. (ONGOING)

    - Objective 8

      - Strategy 2

        The Head Librarian develops and maintains a scale of wages for library staff that adequately compensates them based upon their credentials and expertise. (ONGOING)

  - Translate the strategies into specific assessment <u>measures</u>. Examples from the JLP Library:

    - Objective 5

      - Strategy 3

        Assessment measure 5

        The Library Assistant annually reports the approximate percentage of the subject words and phrases in the library catalog that have been revised. (SUMMER)

- Objective 8

  - Strategy 3

    Assessment measure 3

    The Head Librarian compares the wages of each person on the library staff every other year with others with comparable credentials and expertise in similar libraries and with jobs on campus and in the community. (BEGINNING EVEN YEAR)

  - Include <u>Use of Results</u> that are based on the assessment measures. Examples from the JLP Library:

    - Objective 5

      - Strategy 3

        Assessment measure 5

        Use of Results – If one-fifth (one book of LBSH) of these subject words and phrases have not been revised by the beginning of the summer, the Library Assistant makes it a priority to complete this amount by the end of the summer. (SUMMER)

    - Objective 8

      - Strategy 2

        Assessment measure 3

        Use of Results – If wages of a person on the library staff is below others with comparable credentials and expertise in similar libraries and with jobs on campus and in the community, the Head Librarian recommends an increase in wages for that person to the Business Department based upon this information. (BEGINNING EVEN YEAR)

- Only assess key areas (efficient)

  - Strategies, assessment measures, and use of results need to be specific enough to be measured.

    - Bad example – Help library users find needed information faster

- Good example – Average number of minutes it takes students to get needed information from the time they begin their search to when they receive the needed information

    o Someone should be assigned to carry out the strategies, assessment measures, and use of results.

        ▪ If no one is assigned to assess the library it will not get done.
        ▪ It must be so important that the position is given time and money.
        ▪ This person needs to be motivated to improve the library.

            - Bad example

                o Measure and analyze the use of the library website.

            - Good example

                o The Head of Technical Services measures and analyzes the use of the library website.

    o A target date should be assigned for each strategy, assessment measure, and use of results.

            - Bad example – The Head of Public Services tallies and analyzes the number of reference questions.
            - Good example – The Head of Public Services tallies and analyzes the number of reference questions each month.

    o Assessment should be evidence-based.

            - Bad example – The impact of the library on job fill rate of graduates
            - Good example – The impact of library orientation on student satisfaction of the library

    o Assess only what can be measured.

            - Bad example – Total wages of student assistants
            - Good example – Total wages per FTE student assistants

- Regularly assess the mission, objective, strategies, assessment measures, and use of results. Examples from the JLP Library:

    Objective 11

The mission of the college and seminary and the library mission, objectives, strategies, assessment measures, and use of results are mutually supportive and relevant to faculty and students and are used to help the library accomplish its mission and objectives.

Strategy 1

The Head Librarian ensures that the school's mission and library's mission, objectives, strategies, assessment measures, and use of results are mutually supportive and relevant to faculty and students and used to help the library accomplish its mission and objectives.

Assessment measure 1

The Head Librarian uses the Library Guidelines for ABHE Colleges and Universities (Guidelines 1.1-4) to assess the library mission statement every five years with the library staff and the Library Committee. (BEGINNING YEAR ENDING IN 0 OR 5)

Use of Results

If the library mission statement does not exceed standards based on the *Guidelines* (1.1-4), the Head Librarian adjusts this mission statement with the library staff and the Library Committee. (BEGINNING YEAR ENDING IN 0 OR 5)

- Eg. – The Balanced Scoreboard by Robert S. Kaplan and David P. Norton

    o Forces managers to focus on the handful of measures that are most critical.

    o Four perspectives

        ▪ Outward perspective – How do students and faculty see the library?

            • Time – time required for the library to meet the user's needs from the user's perspective. Eg. Students expect to come into the library or go to the library webpage and find the information they want in a few minutes.
            • Quality – accuracy of the information users receive from the user's perspective. Eg. Students expect to come into the library or go to the library webpage and find the reliable information.
            • Performance and service – how the library's resources and services help meet the information needs of users from the user's perspective. Eg. Students expect to come into the library or go to the library webpage and receive good service.

        ▪ Inward perspective – What internal processes, decisions, and actions are the library using to help meet its mission and objectives?

            • Time – time it takes for the library to meet the user's needs (technology needed) Eg. clear and accurate signage

- Quality – accuracy of information given Eg. process of selection of quality library resources
- Performance and service – effectiveness and efficiency (skills and productivity) of library staff (technology needed) Eg. no broken links on the library website

  - <u>Past</u> perspective – Is the library fulfilling its mission and objectives?

    - Inputs. Eg. number of books added to the collection for a certain subject
    - Outputs. Eg. number of people using the library website
    - Outcomes. Eg. effects of bibliographic instruction on grades

  - <u>Future</u> perspective – Can the library continue to innovate, improve, and learn?

    - Trends Eg. Documented improvement in the time it takes from ILL request until it is made available to the requester
    - Robust policies and procedures Eg. Library staff development plan

Challenge #4: Using the results of assessment (lack of application)

It is easy to collect statistics. It is not too hard to find out what the library needs based upon those statistics. It is difficult to use this information to help keep the library on course.

- <u>Analysis</u>

  - Analyze the results
  - Make recommendations and include them in the planning and strategies.

- <u>Awareness</u> (monthly)

  - Look at the mission, objectives, goals, assessment measures, and use of results. Eg. planning notebook

*Articles	*Promotional plan and calendar
*Mission and objectives of the school	*The Power of Personal Persuasion (ACRL)
*Strategic plan of the school	*Annual library report
*Library planning and assessment document	*Surveys and focus groups
	*Performance reviews and job descriptions
	*Building evaluation check-lists
*Library policies	*Delegation checklist
*Staff training plan	

  - Look at accurate and current assessment information.

- <u>Accountability</u>

- Get others on board

    - Meet with people assigned to carry out the strategies for accountability, input, and encouragement.
    - Give evidence for the status quo or any needed changes

- Keep doing what is working well. Don't focus on weaknesses.
- Make changes incrementally and slowly (normally)
- Be persistent (outlast those who oppose you)

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