National University Library Assessment Policy

Introduction: Assessing the Library

According to its Mission Statement, the National University Library System (NULS) “provides the National University System community with access to affordable, quality resources and relevant information literacy skills, expediting their integration into the community of lifelong learners.”

The operative word in the NULS statement is *access*. The library system operates in *support* of the teaching, learning, and research functions of the National University System and makes available the resources and services necessary to that support. It is the faculty and students that are principally involved in the institutional, program, and student learning outcomes. The role of the library system is to supply some of the tools that will help achieve these outcomes.

In this context, assessment relates to the library system’s success in selecting its resources, designing its services, and marketing both to the community in support of institutional, program, and student learning outcomes. An academic library succeeds to the extent that it succeeds in these endeavors, and assessment provides the means to measure this success.

Effective assessment is a multi-step process:

1. Identify a program learning outcome (PLO) that feeds into a related institutional learning outcome (ILO);
2. Identify appropriate direct and indirect measures of this outcome;
3. Set reasonable targets for these measures;
4. Measure performance and collect evidence of the factors affecting performance;
   a. If the target is met, raise the target;
   b. If the target is not met, identify the factors hindering its achievement and take corrective action if feasible;
5. Close the loop: Repeat step (4)
How We Assess the Library

Resources
The principal method of measuring resource use is manual counts of in-house use kept by library staff and automated reports supplied by our online catalog system and by vendors of our subscribed online resources. These reports measure various user activities such as book circulation, reshelving of items used on library premises, and downloads of journal articles and book sections, as well as searches of online databases. This data (1) helps us make informed cost-benefit decisions relating to a particular resource and (2) enables us to identify sudden unexplained changes in the use of a given resource and begin looking for causes. Low use is not by itself an indicator of low value, but may simply indicate a marketing failure on the part of the Library.

Service Quality
Every year the Library participates in the University’s Student Satisfaction Survey, which measures student satisfaction with various library services. Every three years the Library also takes part in a more intensive LibQUAL+ survey of library service quality, covering all library users, administered by the Association of Research Libraries. Results from these surveys allow us to identify areas in which the Library is meeting user expectations as well as those in which there is room for improvement. As with resource use data, survey results identify the presence of a problem but not necessarily the nature of the problem.

Library instruction tutorials
Students may take a quiz after completing a library instruction class or an online tutorial on the Library Web site. Results from these quizzes measure their effectiveness and help us identify areas in need of improvement. In August 2011, the Library analyzed the quizzes associated with its two online tutorials: iLibrary and Advanced Research in Education.
Measuring Resource Use (NU ILO 6)

COUNTER Resource Usage Reports: Description

Launched in March 2002, COUNTER (Counting Online Usage of Networked Electronic Resources) is an international initiative serving librarians, publishers and intermediaries by setting standards that facilitate the recording and reporting of online usage statistics in a consistent, credible and compatible way. The first COUNTER Code of Practice, covering online journals and databases, was published in 2003. COUNTER’s coverage was extended further with the launch of the Code of Practice for online books and reference works in 2006. The body of COUNTER compliant usage statistics has steadily grown as more and more vendors have adopted the COUNTER Codes of Practice. This has contributed to the new discipline of usage bibliometrics and a great deal of work is underway to try to establish value metrics associated with usage, in which the COUNTER compliant statistics play an increasingly important role.

The following vendors supply COUNTER usage reports to the Library:

- ABC-CLIO
- American Council of Learned Societies
- Atypon Link
- Caliber
- Cambridge University Press
- Credo Reference
- EBL (requests but not downloads)
- Ebrary
- EBSCOhost
- Emerald
- OCLC FirstSearch
- Oxford University Press
- ProQuest
- Safari Books Online
- Science Direct
- Thomson Gale
- Wiley InterScience

COUNTER Resource Usage Reports: Process

1. Usage reports are downloaded from vendor Web sites on a monthly basis
2. Data from individual reports is merged to feed monthly Library Trends report
3. On an annual basis, usage is examined to determine
   a. Changes in patterns of use
   b. Overlap in subscriptions from multiple vendors
4. Based on changes in patterns of use (step 4.a), subscription packages are identified for addition, removal, or closer monitoring
5. Depending on the extent of overlap (step 4.b), subscription packages are identified for cancellation
Library Activity Statistics: Description
The Library collects statistics on activity in its various functional areas on a monthly basis. These statistics are consolidated annually into a fiscal year statistical report. Subsets are reported to various external agencies (US Department of Education, Association of College and Research Libraries). Statistics are collected in the following functional areas:

- **Public services**
  - Gate count (Spectrum Library)
  - Circulation
  - In-house use of materials
  - Video booking
  - Interlibrary lending and borrowing
  - Library instruction (see also Measuring Information Literacy (ILO 1) below)
  - Reference

- **Technical services**
  - Ordering and acquisitions
  - Cataloging
  - Serial publications

- **Systems**
  - Proxy server use
  - Online catalog use
Library Activity Statistics: Process

1. Library departments post monthly statistics
2. Statistics are monitored and gathered into a consolidated monthly report
   a. Unusual patterns are identified
   b. Techniques are devised for testing hypotheses to explain unusual patterns
   c. Hypotheses are tested
   d. If hypothesis is confirmed, library takes corrective action

EXAMPLES

A. CY2009 COUNTER report from EBSCOhost showed unexpected jump in reported database searches compared to previous years and compared to databases from other vendors.
   a. Library contacted EBSCOhost and supplied them with supporting data
   b. After examining the evidence, EBSCOhost acknowledged a problem with their data
   c. EBSCOhost sent revised data
   d. This prevented the Library from erroneously concluding that online searching activity had increased dramatically when in fact it had not

B. CY2009 COUNTER report from Science Direct showed article downloads far in excess of those explained by library pay-per-view activity
   a. Library examined COUNTER reports, other Science Direct activity reports, and subscription lists
   b. Library determined that excess downloads were explained by (1) titles for which the University had active CY2009 subscriptions and (2) Science Direct practice of recording article downloads twice, once as an HTML download and once as a PDF download
   c. These corrections allowed the Library to more accurately monitor its current Science Direct download activity and project into CY2010
Measuring Service Quality (NU ILO 6)

Student Satisfaction Surveys: Description
The semiannual Student Satisfaction Surveys, administered by the University, ask students how often (never, quarterly, monthly, weekly, daily) they use resources in the Spectrum Library and National University online library resources, and how satisfied they are (5-point Likert scale) with:

1. Spectrum Library
   a. Courtesy of staff
   b. Knowledgeableness of staff
   c. Accessibility of print resources
   d. Library orientation / instruction sessions
   e. Spectrum Library (space, parking, comfort)
2. NU library resources online
   a. Accessibility of electronic resources
   b. Timely delivery of requested book / article / document
   c. Courtesy of staff
   d. Timely response of Library helpdesk, email, voicemail
3. General Library support for learning and research
4. Overall quality of service provided by the Library

Student Satisfaction Surveys: Process
1. Student Satisfaction Survey administered by NU Office of Institutional Research and Assessment
2. Library results (report and raw data) sent to Library assessment staff
3. Library assessment staff analyze results for:
   a. Statistically significant changes from prior SSS
   b. Unusual patterns in student comments
4. Library assessment staff present results of analysis to Library Management Group and make recommendations for corrective action (if any)
5. Library Management Group determines appropriate corrective actions (if any)
LibQUAL+ Service Quality Surveys: Description
LibQUAL+ is a suite of services that libraries use to solicit, track, understand, and act upon users' opinions of service quality. These services are offered to the library community by the Association of Research Libraries (ARL). The program's centerpiece is a rigorously tested Web-based survey bundled with training that helps libraries assess and improve library services, change organizational culture, and market the library. The goals of LibQUAL+ are to:

1. Foster a culture of excellence in providing library service
2. Help libraries better understand user perceptions of library service quality
3. Collect and interpret library user feedback systematically over time
4. Provide libraries with comparable assessment information from peer institutions
5. Identify best practices in library service
6. Enhance library staff members' analytical skills for interpreting and acting on data

LibQUAL+ Service Quality Surveys: Process
1. LibQUAL+ survey administered locally by Library assessment staff (hosted by Association of Research Libraries [ARL])
2. Library results (report and raw data) sent to Library assessment staff by ARL
3. Library assessment staff analyze results for:
   a. Statistically significant changes from prior LibQUAL+ survey
   b. Unusual patterns in student comments
   c. Statistically significant differences from peer institutions
4. Library assessment staff present results of analysis to Library Management Group and make recommendations for corrective action (if any)
5. Library Management Group determines appropriate corrective actions (if any)
Measuring Information Literacy (NU ILO 1)

Library tutorial pre- and post-tests: Description
At the discretion of the instructor, the Library conducts assessments via pre- and post-tests in connection with information literacy instructional sessions. These tests may be in connection with onsite or online classes or with online pre-packaged tutorials.

Library tutorial pre- and post-tests: Process
For each assessed library instruction class and online tutorial:

1. Library instruction staff, in consultation with Library assessment staff, design an appropriate assessment instrument (including both pre- and post-test when possible)
2. Multimedia Services staff create, as appropriate, online tests, tracking and measuring mechanisms, and reports
3. Depending on the delivery mechanism,
   a. Library instruction staff administer tests related to onsite and online instruction
   b. Students take online tests following completion of tutorial modules
4. Library instruction staff evaluate test results
5. Depending on test results,
   a. Library instruction staff, in consultation with Library assessment staff, modify assessment instrument
   b. Library instruction staff modify content and/or structure of class or online tutorial.