

Assessment Report 2005/2006  
E. H. Butler Library

Changes to our assessment tools began with the fall 2005 semester. We changed the form for our course-related classes to a short, four question survey, making it much easier for reference librarians to administer during sometimes rather short library instruction class periods. Reference librarians have been extremely cooperative in assessing classes during this academic year, with nearly all classes being surveyed using our new form.

The form is based on the survey technique mentioned in Ten Best Teaching Practices (2000) by Donna Walker Tileston. There is space for students to complete the statement, "Three things I have learned in this class are:" At the bottom of the form is space for students to complete, "One thing I don't understand is:" On average, less than ten percent of the time, this last statement is completed, while on average over 90 percent of the time the first statement has three completed answers. This new form allows the teaching librarian to check for student understanding of the material covered in class, and to revise teaching strategies if needed.

The assessment tool for the credit-bearing library instruction classes also was changed. It was shortened to a ten question multiple choice instrument that continues to be used as both a pre- and post-test assessment. This simpler tool has also made administration of the assessment much easier, and reflects basic concepts of information literacy that should be covered at some point in each library course. The questions were developed from the college's Information Management: Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes in General Education document.

The national web-based library survey called LibQual+ was re-administered for three weeks (March 27 through April 14) this past spring semester. Developed by the Association of Research Libraries, it is a tool for measuring library users' perceptions of service quality and identifying areas for improvement. This is the second time we have administered LibQual+; the first time was during the spring 2003 semester. Participation in this year's survey increased within all users groups (undergraduates, graduates, faculty, library staff, and staff), and especially with our undergraduates, with 423 responses (as opposed to 250 in 2003). Total respondents this year were 629 (there were 432 in 2003). Perhaps the increased publicity of this year's survey and the incentive prize of an iPod nano helped boost participation.

The results of the 2006 LibQual+ survey were very positive and encouraging and show we are on the right track, especially when we compare this survey with the 2003 one. In all three categories of questions (affect of service, information control, and library as place) we have improved our scores, and the survey radar charts (used graphically to show aggregate results in terms of strengths and weaknesses) dramatically reveal this improvement. While the administering of LibQual+ is fairly straightforward and requires little technical expertise, the understanding and explanation of the survey's charts, tables, and other information require more in-depth study. We continue to analyze and compare the results of the 2003 and 2006 surveys and the over 400 written comments generated by both, and plan to hold a meeting this summer to present and share in detail the surveys' results with library staff. This forum will allow us to not only share how well we are doing but also to identify and discuss areas needing improvement and elicit comments, ideas, and suggestions from library staff.

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