

Actionable Assessment: How Assessment Leads to Change

Co-sponsored by ACRL Assessment Discussion Group and ACRL Academic Library Trends and Statistics Survey Editorial Board

Saturday, January 26, 2019, 4:30-5:30 pm Pacific time

Panelists:

- Jackie Belanger, Director of Assessment & Planning, University of Washington Libraries
- Emily Guhde, Director of Library Assessment, Georgetown University Library
- Leslie Hurst, Head, Teaching & Learning / Literature & Humanities Librarian, University of Washington Bothell/Cascadia College Campus Library

Moderator:

- Nancy Turner, Associate Director for Organizational Research & Strategy Alignment, Temple University Libraries

Actionable Assessment Lightning Talks

Emily Guhde discussed accountability in assessment, i.e., holding colleagues accountable.

Informal survey about how empowered assessment librarians feel regarding holding colleagues accountable:

- 29%: not at all empowered
- 26%
- 19%
- 23%
- 3%: very empowered

Assessment includes planning, implementing, analyzing, reporting, and taking action.

Assessment librarian has no control over accountability for action taken because the people who carry out the action don't report to the assessment librarian.

Solutions:

- Reframe: Using language that speaks to your colleagues, e.g., "recommendations" doesn't resonate with people. Change it to "potential actions." People tend to be more receptive and they could say no.
- Rewrite potential actions using SMART language. Choose language to specify goals.
- Require a response to potential actions: A response includes: 1. Potential action; 2. Decision to take action; 3. Responsibility; and 4. Timeline for action.

Leslie Hurst discussed how to use instruction statistics to guide an instruction program.

Strategies:

- Engage librarians with data. Sample prompts: "Is one program getting more instructions? Is the distribution of work equitable?" The prompts help find out the sustainability of the instruction program.
- Engage stakeholders to develop the path to action, e.g., increase the number of instruction librarians.
- Put data in context with other data, e.g., student FTE, enrollment, etc.

Jackie Belanger discussed how to engage her colleagues in the assessment process.

- Talk to colleagues to identify issues and barriers: Involve staff at all stages of the assessment cycle. More beneficial to include staff early on to get buy-in from staff and get them interested in the results.
- Make data less daunting: Targeted and multi-faceted strategy, e.g., using reports and dashboard using Tableau. Data broken down by topic and user group.
- Collaborative analysis, recommendation, and decision-making: Facilitate conversation of what staff see in the data and collaboratively generate recommendations. Build capacity to foster evidence-based thinking.
- Make next steps less daunting: Iterative, rapid, small-scale follow-ups, e.g., inviting students to try out chairs in the library to find out what works and how to move forward

Actionable Assessment Q&A between Moderator and Panelists

Question 1: What would you change with your assessment program or practice?

Jackie:

- Survey: Make the survey light using an agile approach; move through the assessment cycle more quickly
- Communication: It usually takes a year to complete an assessment. People feel tired or forget about the assessment after six months. Replace the practice with continuous conversation to keep people engaged.

Emily:

- Demonstrate the meaning of assessment
- People want to join in because they see the completion and outcomes of assessment projects.

Leslie:

- Slow down the change as part of feelings management. Provide documents to help people understand why there is the change.

Question 2: How do you track projects over time and build an assessment culture?

Leslie:

- Librarians are good at collecting data.

Jackie:

- Do a better job of training and communicating the success of assessment projects.
- People want to join in when they see visible results and conclusions.
- Raise the visibility of success stories.

Emily:

- Work on Plan B in preparation for Plan A falling through, which will let people know what comes out of the assessment.

Question 3: How does assessment support members of senior leadership?

Jackie:

- Use Tableau dashboard to package assessment results.
- Focus on things leadership is concerned about.
- Help administrators prepare for conversations with external stakeholders.

Leslie:

- Ask the library director what data they need to tell the story about the library.

Emily:

- Department heads examine data and provide a list of potential actions to leaders.

Reporting Out from Interaction among Audience Members

- Some department heads view the assessment librarian as somebody who tells them what to do
- If assessment results were siloed and not presented with reference to the big picture, potential of collaboration between departments for improvement might be reduced or overlooked
- Small surveys and big surveys serve different purposes. Small surveys are more agile.
- Important to build trust and confidence