Growing a Culture of Assessment at the Drake Memorial Library

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Introduction

- In recent years, the Drake Memorial Library has partnered with the First-year Experience Program to provide information literacy instruction to incoming freshmen during their Academic Planning Seminar course.
- Instruction and reference librarians only have a single 50-minute session to introduce incoming freshmen to the library, its resources, and teach basic information literacy skills.
- Informal assessment has always been done, but the data was self-limiting and storing in silos.
- Campus wide focus on student learning and assessment has prioritized the connection of library goals with those of the campus at large.

Objectives

- Determine the existing information literacy skills of incoming freshmen "on-basewide"
- Assess the effectiveness of our current information literacy sessions
- "Close the loop" by setting us to finding improvements to information literacy sessions and make effective use of limited class time
- Tie the results of our findings to broader campus assessment initiatives and communicate these results
- Build a perpetual culture of assessment in the library to improve our resources and services.

Literature Review

- Of the many case studies, methods, and theories, the Brockport Assessment in Action team focused on selected elements which best suited our local circumstances and literature.
- The work of Burgess (2011), Merri (2010), Schilling & Agapito (2012) and others shows that a less than ideal environment surrounding the pre/post approach, these sessions can indeed be assessed with actionable results.

Process & Methods

- Previously established for existing information literacy sessions, managed to the ACRL information literacy competency standards for higher education.
- A 3-point scoring rubric was developed prior to the semester to guide instructors in their planning and developing evaluations.
- Building on existing template, the team moved and updated the plan to emphasize each of the outcomes behind the session.
- Both tests were loaded into the campus learning management system. Instructor emails were sent prior to each session providing context to take the test.
- Students took the pre-test in the library or end of the session or outside of class if they were not on time.
- New data was compiled and analyzed by the IR team member. Of the 424 pre and 423 post test respondents, a total of 846 respondents who met our criteria took both tests.

Conclusions & Next Steps

- Students showed a clear improvement of their information literacy skills from pre to post test.
- Incoming freshmen lack advanced skills such as advanced search techniques and knowledge of basic copyright and plagiarism concerns.
- Students improved the most from pre to post test in the outcomes concerning the understanding of services and resources available at the library.
- Students struggle with identification of formats and determining the appropriateness of using multidisciplinary and/or subject-specific databases.
- Students entering Brockport are able to confidently identify databases, reference sources, and websites pertaining to a specific subject as well as the ability to perform simple search strategies.
- The results found during the assessment will be worked into revised information literacy outcomes and lesson plans for the Fall 2014 semester and beyond.
- The ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education are currently undergoing significant revisions. These changes will alter the outcomes and concepts taught in library information literacy sessions.
- Future assessment of information literacy sessions will be modified according to these changes with more emphasis on authentic assessment methods.
- Assessment timeline will shift to match the new college assessment cycle, and data will be put into the campus assessment software platform, TIA. This will allow future assessment efforts to be directly tied into broader campus goals.

Quality questions to obtain student feelings about the library and resources included. 

Advanced Information literacy concepts were included in the tests, but not focused on during instruction.

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The project is part of the program “Assessment in Action: Academic Libraries and Student Success” which is undertaken by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) in partnership with the Association for Institutional Research and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities. The program, sponsored by ACRL’s Value of Academic Libraries initiative, is made possible by the Institute of Museum and Library Services.