Assessment at the Florida A&M University Libraries

The FAMU University Libraries integrate assessment into all aspects of library management and service as a means of reaching strategic initiatives and goals. The FAMU Assessment Office has defined assessment as a systematic process of collecting, analyzing, and documenting evidence that students succeed in reaching the expectations and standards set for them, that administrative and educational support services are effective in ensuring the fulfillment of FAMU’s mission and continuous quality improvement of programs and services.

The Director of Libraries appointed a Library Assessment Committee (LAC) charged with responsibility for crafting and implementing an assessment strategy for the libraries. This group meets weekly and has representation from all service areas of the libraries. In addition, the chair of the Library Assessment Committee is a member of the Institutional Level Assessment Committee giving the Libraries input and representation as it relates to assessment at the institutional level.

The entire library staff was encouraged to participate in setting library goals and initiatives rooted in the FAMU Mission Statement. With this involvement, the Library Assessment Committee (LAC) revised the library vision and mission statements and crafted a five year strategic plan for the University Libraries. The Strategic Plan is now used as a resource and planning guide for all of our operations and services. However, we engage in continuous and varied assessment activities in order to verify that we are closely aligned with our strategic plan and to guide planning and resource allocation. We access our information resources, our human resources and our physical resources. In addition we make use of Standards to develop and gauge general information services.

Assessment: Information Resources

Information resources mainly reference providing timely access to quality information resources. Our goal is to select, acquire, manage, preserve, and provide access to informational resources to support all programs, inspirational teaching, relevant research, and service. Examples of assessment for information resources follows:

- LibQUAL+ – an international web-based standardized survey sponsored by the Association of Research Libraries. This tool in part measures customer perception of access to physical and electronic resources, access to rare resources, access to local and distance reference assistance, access to materials in various formats, equipment support to access resources, access to a virtual library, and access to instruction on how to use the library and library resources.
- Wordcat Analysis (WCA) – This tool is being used by the libraries in the State University System (SUS) to determine what collections are similar to the collections of peer institutions.
- Program Reviews – These analyses of library collections and services are customized for the use of individual academic programs and provided to document resources in support of accrediting processes. For 2005-2006 we prepared 12 program reviews.
Monthly reports – Reports from Technical Services access and report activity for a period of time; materials added to or removed from the catalog and summarizes the growth in collections. Public services reports provide statistics on library instruction to customers and they analyze the use of specified reference services. Systems reports provide statistics on technology use by internal and external customers and they analyze use patterns and needs. These reports also analyze the kinds of requests and inquiries made, and document service failures so that we can remedy them.

Library inventories are conducted continually to maintain an authentic catalog and to guide collection management decisions. Equipment inventories help to determine how well we support the technology needs of internal and external customers.

Faculty Liaisons – Collection development meetings are held with library subject specialist and faculty liaisons each semester as a means of assessing needs and collections and to be sure that collections adequately support curricular requirements.

Surveys – Each service desk conducts customer surveys each month to access customer perceptions of satisfaction with resources and access to resources.

Comment box – We provide access to physical and electronic suggestion boxes as a means of receiving feedback from customers.

Assessment: Human Resources

Human resources are our most valuable asset and as such must come under continual review and assessment. Our intention is to provide the highest level of customer service in the delivery of information. One of our library goals is to provide quality library human resources in sufficient quantity as support for outstanding academic outcomes.

Examples of assessment for human resources are the following:

- LibQUAL+ - A portion of this previously referenced instrument assesses customer perception of employee competence, courtesy, availability and other general customer service attributes. In addition to the survey questions, respondents have an opportunity to make comments. The comments are very valuable in assessing customer perception of human resources. Survey results are used for staff training and planning.
- Monthly reports – These reports document professional and staff development activities, creative activities, instructional activities and other accomplishments for the previous month.
- Annual reports – These reports provide an analysis of yearly accomplishments.
- Self-evaluations – These annual narratives are prepared by each librarian as a self-assessment of their alignment with university, library and personal professional goals. They report also new degrees, certifications, awards and honors.
- Productivity reports – These reports assess the productivity of a unit for a particular task over a period of time.
- General and departmental meetings – These sessions provide an opportunity to disseminate information, to receive feedback from employees, and to engage in project development.
• Annual Evaluation and Interview – Each employee is evaluated annually and participates in an evaluation interview with the supervisor as a means of developing the best talent available.
• Annual Assignments – These assignments are reviewed to verify that positions function systematically to support the goals of the libraries.
• Salary Equity Study – The library is providing information as requested to support the University Personnel Relations/Hay Group salary equity study.

Assessment: Physical Resources
Physical resources reference the library physical plant and the library environment. These must also come under review and assessment to be sure that they support the work and study needs of customers. Our goal in this area is to provide safe, clean, secure, and comfortable library facilities. Examples of assessment for physical resources are the following:
• Fire Drill Reports – These reports access how closely the library follows emergency policies and procedures as set by the University. It also documents any condition that compromises safe egress from the building in case of emergency.
• Disaster Training resources – Various training documents are reviewed as a means of assessing our own policies and procedures for disaster preparedness.
• Industry Reports – Various reports are referenced to assist in selecting or evaluating our selection and provision of facilities, equipment and furnishings.
• Post Evaluation Occupancy (POE) Survey – The literature recommends conducting an evaluation of a new facility after it has been occupied for about a year. We conducted a POE survey nearly 2 years after the library annex was completed to determine if the new facility met the specified building project goals. Internal and external customers were given an opportunity to participate.
• Internal reporting – Staff are encouraged to report any condition that makes the facilities unsafe or unsecured. Staff are also encouraged to assist in promoting cleanliness and to request extra cleaning as necessary.
• LibQUAL+ - This instrument referenced previously measures customer perception of library facilities as they relate to sufficient library space for study, diverse kinds of study spaces, and an environment conducive to study.

Examples of General Assessment
• The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Standards & Guidelines are used to assist in developing, monitoring and evaluating information services.
  http://www.al.../acrlstandards/standardsguidelines.htm
• Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement, published by the Commission on Colleges are used to assist in evaluating information services.
• Program Standards are used to assist in developing and evaluating library support for various academic programs.
Assessment Activities, Findings and Outcomes:
FAMU Library assessment tools and strategies are shared in various venues such as in conference presentations and posters, or with campus agencies or in campus town halls. We are comparing our assessment outcomes with those of our peers and aspirational peers in preparation for benchmarking services.

We do not base planning on the outcomes of any one assessment tool, but review them together as a set of tools used for assessment based planning. Summary findings are that customers are satisfied with information services, human resources and facilities provided by the University Libraries. They are most interested in having access to scholarly information that suits their own time and location preferences. Our virtual library presence is becoming increasingly critical to customer satisfaction with library information services and book collections remain vital to our programmatic requirements. We find that we adequately support the curricular needs of the university community.

Library assessment outcomes suggest the following selected planned actions:
Continue collection development and faculty liaison activity
Increase access to journal and microform collections
Increase marketing available resources and signage
Increase access to tutorials and guides
Continue provision of library quiet, noisy, group and collaborative study spaces
Continue development of the information commons
Practice the ABC’s of customer service (attitudes/behaviors/connections)
Continue to encourage faculty and staff development
Continue to provide sufficient staffing, resources and facilities

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