

The  
**QUALITY**  
Infrastructure

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# The **QUALITY** Infrastructure

*Measuring, Analyzing, and Improving Library Services*

Edited by

**SARAH ANNE MURPHY**



**AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION**

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## Introduction

QUALITY FUNCTIONS AS A STRATEGIC COMPETITIVE ASSET, and libraries with high-functioning quality infrastructures, defined by programs with dedicated personnel, are best positioned to demonstrate their value. This collection of essays, written by authors from a variety of backgrounds and library institutions, is dedicated to promoting the benefits of developing a quality infrastructure within a library organization. By dedicating a department, committee, or employee to assessment activities, or implementing programs such as the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence, Lean Six Sigma, or the Balanced Scorecard, these libraries have realized sustainable change. The contributors to this volume show that it is possible to establish a programmatic approach to measuring, analyzing, and improving library services whether a library serves a large research-intensive university, a small liberal arts college, or is itself a special library. Such discipline not only improves the value of library services, but aids a library or library organization in communicating its value to the individuals it serves.

Our hope is to expand librarians' conversations on assessment beyond specific tools to measure customer perceptions of service quality, learning

outcomes, and website usability. While knowledge and application of such tools is necessary to develop an understanding of library customers' needs and a library's success at satisfying these needs, these tools, used in isolation, cannot effect sustainable change. A library can only continuously improve and effectively respond to the needs of the individuals it serves by dedicating the human, financial, and capital resources required to support effective assessment.

These resources are the foundation for any library assessment program. Regardless of whether a library refers to its efforts to understand the effectiveness of its services and programs as assessment, quality improvement, impact evaluation, or evidence-based librarianship, a library with an effective quality infrastructure must invest in the personnel supporting these programs, and provide the equipment and finances necessary to do their work. Further, personnel in such programs ideally follow a process or model for structuring their work. Lean Six Sigma and the Baldrige Criteria, for example, offer a framework that aids an organization's efforts to consistently seek improvement. By working through Lean Six Sigma's Define-Measure-Analyze-Improve-Control (DMAIC) model, or the Baldrige Criteria's structured questions, a library may efficiently gather information regarding a problem or situation and take effective action. Consciously following such processes prevents library employees from skipping important steps in the improvement process, such as failing to truly consider the voice of the customer or understand the root cause of an issue. Further, by using these processes, or tools such as the Balanced Scorecard, library employees are better positioned to effectively work together and communicate their progress to others.<sup>1</sup>

While the implementation of formal assessment or quality infrastructures in libraries is evolving, a variety of approaches are relevant, depending on the size of the institution the library supports, and factors such as the library and the institution's culture. Further, many libraries may have already consciously or unconsciously adopted elements of established quality infrastructures or programs. A recent survey of 536 academic libraries employing more than ten professional librarians and having a Carnegie Foundation Basic Classification of Master's/S or above, for instance, revealed that just five of 158 responding libraries (3.1 percent) utilized Lean Six Sigma or another established quality improvement program to structure or organize their library's assessment program.<sup>2</sup> An additional 36 libraries (22.8 percent), however, indicated that while they had no formally established quality infrastructure, they did have a framework or system for identifying, prioritizing, and organizing assessment projects. While nearly all survey respondents ( $n = 151$ , 95.5 percent) indicated that their library leaders promoted and supported the gathering and utilization of assessment or quality improvement data, less than half of the same survey respondents ( $n = 70$ , 44.3 percent) indicated that their library provides



a budget to support their assessment or quality improvement activities. Only half ( $n = 83$ , 52.5 percent) noted their library had staff specifically assigned to coordinate their library's assessment or quality improvement program.

Without devoting a budget or staff to programmatically measuring, analyzing, and improving library services, libraries will continue to struggle to sustain assessment efforts and consistently demonstrate their value. The contributors to this book were tasked to share how a systematic quality or assessment program was established within their library organization, detail the roles established for individuals participating in the program, discuss recent activities or projects, and indicate how their program has affected sustainable change within their organization as evidenced by continuous learning and improvement.

The evolution of the well-respected assessment program at the University of Washington Libraries is outlined by Steve Hiller and Stephanie Wright in chapter 1. The program was established with a task force appointed to study the needs of the libraries' users and the success of the libraries in satisfying these needs in 1991, and activities are now directed by an Office of Assessment and Planning, which diligently works to link assessment with the libraries' strategic planning initiatives using the Balanced Scorecard framework. The office is staffed by a director who serves as an internal consultant for assessment activities conducted by library staff, and a part-time management information librarian, who assists the director in developing, implementing, and managing the program. Two standing committees, the Strategic Planning Action Team and the Libraries Assessment and Metrics Team, support the activities of the office, helping to develop outcomes and success metrics, and making data and other key information available to staff and the public. Ongoing projects include the Triennial and In-Library Use surveys which provide longitudinal information detailing how students and faculty use the libraries and their information needs and priorities. Usability and other qualitative assessment methods are also conducted, and e-metrics focused on electronic resource usage and costs are collected.

The development of the Management Information Services Department at the University of Virginia Libraries is discussed by Lynda White in chapter 2. Formed in 1997, the department is now staffed by three full-time employees dedicated to assessment, data collection, analysis, and reporting. The director researches assessment tools and provides data on demand while the associate director focuses on gathering and analyzing qualitative data, and a programmer provides specialized services for various assessment-related projects. Significant projects include the adaptation of the Balanced Scorecard in 2001 to monitor the overall health of the libraries. Metrics for the scorecard focus on various aspects of the libraries' operations and are reviewed annually to confirm ongoing relevance. Recent initiatives include the administration of a

work-life survey designed to gather information on organizational communication issues, employee job satisfaction, staff development, and other issues. The department distributes a user satisfaction survey to approximately one third of the university's population annually, allowing faculty and students to share their opinions regarding the library's collections, services, and facilities.

The University of Arizona Libraries' unique approach to continuously improving collections and services is shared by Chestalene Pintozzi in chapter 3. By adopting core elements of management philosophies, such as Total Quality Management or Six Sigma, and designing their organizational structure around these principles, the libraries has positioned itself to understand the needs and expectations of its primary user groups and stakeholders. Recent projects have resulted in the redeployment of staff at library reference and information desks, cost savings for interlibrary loan through process improvement, and systems for aligning team and personal goals with the libraries' strategic plan. The libraries administers LibQUAL annually to assess service quality in relation to customer expectations. It also distributes a Library Services Survey to determine how well the libraries' Information Commons is meeting user needs. Ongoing challenges for the libraries' assessment and planning initiatives include the identification of appropriate outcome measures, and the efficiency and accuracy of data collection and reporting.

Syracuse University Library's Program Management Center (PMC) is introduced by Terriruth Carrier and Nancy Turner in chapter 4. To proactively demonstrate the library's value, the PMC has adopted aspects of the Six Sigma and Project Management Professional (PMP) approaches to investigation, data collection, analysis, and process improvement. The PMC consists of four full-time employees and includes a director who is a certified Project Management Professional. The director is responsible for developing the library's assessment program, while the head of user research and assessment librarian focuses on studying patron use of library services, facilities, and resources. The application and statistical analyst librarian manages the library's data sets and develops programs that support staff responsible for collecting data, while the project coordinator and data specialist monitors project milestones and also consolidates and analyzes data. Two projects that illustrate the PMC's approach to library assessment are detailed in this chapter: the Gate Count and Security Alarm project, and the Library Measures Data Repository.

An implementation of the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence by the Information Service Office (ISO) at the National Institute of Standards and Technology, as a means to allow ISO to quickly respond to changing technologies and customer expectations, is outlined by Barbara Silcox, Mary-Deirdre Corragio, Susan Makar, and Mylene Ouimette in chapter 5. The ISO uses the Baldrige Criteria to systematically involve its entire workforce in strategic planning and organizational assessment. To showcase role model

practices that have enabled the organization to create a culture focused on knowledge sharing, improvement, and results, details of ISO's Lab Liaison Program, Vision Implementation Project, and Workforce Development and Performance Management Systems are provided. Such practices have allowed the organization to maintain its focus on creating value for both customers and key stakeholders.

Another application of the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence is detailed by Xuemao Wang and Emily Thornton of the Emory University Libraries in chapter 6. The historical context for the libraries' decision to adopt the program as a means for guiding self-assessment and continuous improvement is provided along with a review of the libraries' efforts to address the detailed questions included in each of the seven categories of the Baldrige Framework and provide specific examples of the benefits and challenges the libraries realized after applying the criteria. While work in applying the criteria continues, hope remains that the criteria will offer the libraries a means to integrate its performance improvement initiatives and establish an organizational culture driven by excellence.

A consortial perspective is provided by Dana Thomas and Kate Davis through a review of the development of the Ontario Council of University Libraries' (OCUL's) evaluation and assessment program in chapter 7. Focused on supporting OCUL's Scholars Portal suite of information resources and services, the program is influencing the development of both the consortium's and member libraries' collections and services. Notable projects include the development of the Scholars Portal Usage Data utility, which allows consortium members to pull COUNTER-compliant usage data for books and journals accessed through the locally developed Scholars Portal interface. The Serials Collection Overlap Tool also enables both the consortium and member institutions to make informed decisions regarding whether to retain existing or acquire new content by highlighting the number of unique titles that would be added through a purchase, or lost in a cancellation.

The University of California-San Diego Libraries' unique approach to managing the libraries' assessment activities and supporting data-driven decision making is discussed by Kymberly Goodson and Daniel Suchy in chapter 8. Rather than appointing an assessment committee or coordinator, the libraries chose to create and fill four analyst positions: the decision support analyst, the user services technology analyst, the collection services analyst, and the business analyst. The roles and responsibilities for two of these analyst positions, the decision support and user services technology analysts, are specifically outlined in the chapter. Recent activities include ongoing usability testing to redesign and maintain the libraries' website, online tutorials, and locally produced digital collections; assessment of the content of chat, text, and e-mail reference questions; and collection and analysis of data for

the libraries' space reconfiguration projects. Projects completed by the decision support analyst have informed the libraries' budget reduction strategies, while projects of the user services technology analyst have directly informed decisions related to adopting potential technologies and services or continuing with current technologies and services.

The responsibilities of the Kansas State University Libraries' Office of Library Planning and Assessment are outlined by Laurel Littrell in chapter 9. Established after a major organizational restructuring in 2010, the office is tasked with increasing assessment capacity to support the libraries' strategic planning efforts and the university's accreditation needs. The office's director is responsible for leading the libraries' strategic planning process, monitoring the implementation of the libraries' strategic plan, and ensuring that the libraries' strategic initiatives remain aligned with the university's strategic agenda. A research and development librarian and a service quality librarian are responsible for studying customer satisfaction and researching new products, services, and practices for implementation throughout the Kansas State University Libraries. A library data coordinator supports office activities by collecting, maintaining, and disseminating statistics related to the libraries' operations. Current activities include supporting the university's re-accreditation bid, introducing a strategic planning process for the libraries in 2012, and administering LibQUAL.

A model for creating an assessment program with limited staff resources in a small liberal arts college setting is shared by Lucretia McCulley of the University of Richmond in chapter 10. The Boatwright Memorial Library's Assessment Committee uses a focused approach to work together as a team to employ a number of assessment tools and methodologies to gather information on student learning, user services, and building facilities. The committee collaborates with other departments on campus, such as the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and the Student Development Division, to maximize resources, inform its work, and successfully execute assessment projects. Further collaborations with the university's Sociology and Anthropology Department has provided valuable feedback on student behavior in their library.

Lastly, a hybrid structure for supporting an assessment program at Washington University in St. Louis is detailed by Carol Mollman in chapter 11. With an Assessment Team led by a full-time assessment coordinator, the libraries has successfully developed a culture of assessment via regular communication forums and by identifying opportunities to involve over 88 percent of all staff in assessment activities. A formal process for initiating, conducting, and completing assessment projects has been established, and projects are supported by specialized subgroups of the Assessment Team. Recent activities include the deployment of an in-house Service Quality Survey, which identified user concerns regarding Wi-Fi coverage within library buildings, the libraries'

hours, and the availability of collaborative work areas. While the program is still evolving, Mollman provides structured commentary illustrating how it has served as a catalyst for change.

While the chapters in this book are not intended to be read in any particular order, they do illustrate that establishing a formal infrastructure for supporting a library's quality or assessment program is imperative for the program's success. Many models for these infrastructures exist and may be adapted and applied in academic libraries of various sizes and organizational and political cultures. By establishing a programmatic approach to measuring, analyzing, and improving library services, academic libraries can realize sustainable change and better position themselves to communicate their value.

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#### NOTES

1. Nancy Tague, *The Quality Toolbox*, 2nd ed. (Milwaukee, WI: ASQ Quality, 2005), 35.
2. Sarah A. Murphy, "Quality Frameworks for Academic Libraries: Organizing and Sustaining Library Assessment Activities," Library Assessment Conference, Charlottesville, Virginia, October 31, 2012.

STEVE HILLER AND  
STEPHANIE WRIGHT

Office of Assessment and Planning,  
University of Washington Libraries

# 1

## From User Needs to Organizational Performance

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Twenty Years of Assessment at the  
University of Washington Libraries

THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON (UW) IS A LARGE, COMPREHENSIVE research university with a main campus located in Seattle, Washington, and two smaller branch campuses within thirty-five miles. The university has ranked first among public universities in the amount of funding received from federal research awards since the 1970s (second overall) and is rated among the top twenty-five research universities in the world by the *Times* of London and the Academic Ranking of World Universities. Current student enrollment is approximately 30,000 undergraduate students and 15,000 graduate and professional students.

The University of Washington Libraries' long-established and robust assessment program has delivered critical information about user needs, library and information use, importance, impact, and priorities during the past twenty years. Employing a variety of qualitative and quantitative assessment methods, including a large scale-triennial survey of faculty and students conducted since 1992, the libraries uses assessment information extensively in planning, program development, service evaluation, and in communicating the value of the library to the broader community. The UW Libraries

has developed and fostered a “culture of assessment” where evidence-based decision making and a user-centered focus are expectations from line staff to administration. Libraries staff have made substantial contributions to the library assessment field in such areas as user needs assessment, usability, collections and resources usage, space planning, and organizational performance assessment. As cofounder and cosponsor of the biennial Library Assessment Conference, the University of Washington Libraries has been an influential leader in promoting and nurturing the value of assessment for libraries and their communities.

Organizationally, the program has progressed from a committee to a part-time assessment coordinator to an Office of Assessment and Planning, headed by a director who is part of the libraries’ administrative leadership. Established in 2006, this office works to integrate assessment with strategic planning utilizing the Balanced Scorecard organizational performance model. Two standing committees, the Strategic Planning Action Team and the Libraries Assessment and Metrics Team, play instrumental roles in supporting these efforts.

This chapter will review the development of assessment efforts at the University of Washington Libraries and the evolution of an assessment program from one that focused primarily on user needs assessment to one that is integrated with planning and organizational performance. More information about the UW Libraries assessment program, including survey forms and results, can be found at the UW Libraries Assessment website.<sup>1</sup>

## **Program Foundation, 1991–1994**

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The University of Washington Libraries established a library assessment program in 1991. (See figure 1.1.) The initial catalyst for development arose from the libraries’ first strategic plan that year, which called for a user-centered approach to services and resources. Specifically, the plan called for the libraries to “develop and implement a study to identify user populations, their information needs, and how well they are being met.”<sup>2</sup> Prior efforts to gain information about user needs were sporadic, narrowly focused, or user-initiated. Indirect cost studies conducted by consultants for the university in the 1980s did include a short survey at campus libraries which gathered basic demographic information and the purpose of the visit (research, teaching/learning, etc.). However, the data were not used by the libraries for assessing user behavior or programmatic change. Similarly, while statistics were available for such areas as circulation and reference, the data had not been analyzed or used for improvement.

**FIGURE 1.1**

Organizational Infrastructure for Library Assessment 1991–present

Year	Groups	Leadership/Support	Reports to
1991–1997	Task Force on Library Services	Cochairs	Associate Director, Public Services
1997–1999	Library Assessment Group	Chair	Associate Director, Research and Instructional Services
1999–2006	Library Assessment Group	Library Assessment Coordinator (50%)	Associate Dean, Research and Instructional Services
2006–2008	Library Assessment Group	Director, Assessment and Planning  Management Information Librarian (50%)	Director, Assessment and Planning
2008–	Libraries Assessment and Metrics Team	Team Chair  Director Assessment and Planning  Other support (25%)	Director, Assessment and Planning

Betty Bengtson, director of the University Libraries, appointed the Task Force on Library Services in 1991. The task force was charged to develop and implement a study to identify the libraries' various user populations and their needs for library services; to evaluate how well the University Libraries is meeting those needs; to recommend any needed modifications in or additions to the current array of services offered; to recommend levels of library services to be provided to primary and secondary users; and to prepare detailed reports at each phase of study, evaluation, and recommendation.

To achieve these goals, the task force developed a survey that was mailed out in 1992 to faculty and students with the intent to determine who the library users and potential users were, why they used (or didn't use) the library, what resources and services were used, and what their needs for library-related information were. The survey, which later became known as the Triennial Survey, also asked how satisfied faculty and students were with



the resources and services of the library. The following year, the task force developed an In-Library Use Survey to gather data about the use of library services by nonaffiliated visitors. These two surveys provided the basis for what was to become a lengthy history of user-centered and evidence-based decision making.

## **Developing an Ongoing Assessment Program, 1995–1999**

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The UW Libraries' focus on understanding user needs and ensuring that programs and services addressed those needs were central to the development of a robust assessment program. The user-centered approach to services was also seen as the responsibility of all library staff members. The 1995–1999 Strategic Plan reiterated the commitment to a user-centered library:

A user-centered services program must be at the heart of the Libraries' activities. User-centered services are the responsibility of all Libraries units. Each unit must understand who its users, or customers, are. Whom do the units serve and what user needs they are trying to meet are the critical questions. Continued attention is required to user needs assessment.<sup>3</sup>

This was translated into the first goal and corresponding objective of the 1995–1999 Strategic Plan: “Enhance and strengthen services based on user needs” and “Implement ongoing user needs assessment and develop criteria to measure quality of service.”

The charge for the Task Force on Library Services was revised in 1995 to provide support for the libraries' 1995–99 Strategic Plan as well as to reflect the success of the user surveys. The revised charge asked the task force to build on the spring 1992 faculty and student surveys and conduct faculty and student surveys during spring 1995; finalize a service levels policy and a schedule and plan for implementation; develop criteria to measure the quality of library services; and recommend organizational strategies for ongoing user needs assessment.

As the scope and range of assessment activities increased throughout the libraries, the need for an ongoing, coordinated program of assessment assumed greater importance. The Task Force on Library Services recommended that it be dissolved in 1997 and suggested that an assessment coordinator position be created that would work closely with a new group focused on library assessment. The cover letter to the task force's report noted that

as a result of the Task Force's work, the Libraries now has a service policy and valuable information on the different groups which use libraries, how and why libraries and library services are used, a quantitative measure of user satisfaction, and user priorities for the future. The Task Force has also laid the foundation for a more sustained and integrated Libraries assessment program.

After six years, it's now time . . . to put into place a more comprehensive assessment program. We recommend the appointment of an Assessment Librarian to develop an ongoing program and lead and coordinate assessment efforts in the Libraries.

While the library assessment coordinator position was included in the libraries' list of new positions, budget reductions precluded filling it. Instead, a new Library Assessment Group was formed with a broader charge to support "the University Libraries programs and services through development and implementation of appropriate evaluation and assessment measures. The Group will provide clear and timely reports and results. The Group will also work with other assessment efforts on campus as well as provide support and expertise for other assessment activities within the Libraries."

The specific responsibilities of the Library Assessment Group were to coordinate the libraries' measurement, evaluation, and assessment activities; develop and implement an ongoing assessment program in support of the libraries programs, services, and operations; employ appropriate tools, techniques, and measures to acquire information needed for ongoing user needs assessment; develop criteria to measure service quality; provide support and expertise for other assessment efforts undertaken in the libraries; disseminate assessment information in a clear, timely, and appropriate manner to library staff, the campus community, and the profession; and collaborate with other campus units in related assessment and evaluation efforts.

The link between a user-centered focus and assessment was further developed with the concept of a "culture of assessment" in the UW Libraries that would be a necessary corollary of the user-centered library. Local discussions on this concept started in 1994 and Betsy Wilson, associate director of public services, developed it further, along with Amos Lakos of the University of Waterloo and Shelley Phipps of the University of Arizona. This led to a definition of a culture of assessment as "an environment in which decisions are based on facts, research and analysis, and where services are planned and delivered in ways that maximize positive outcomes and impacts for library clients. A *culture of assessment* is an integral part of the process of change and

the creation of a user-centered library.”<sup>4</sup> This concept also fit our own model of a coordinated but decentralized approach to library assessment.

## **Building Effective, Sustainable and Practical Library Assessment, 1999–2005**

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The 1999–2003 Strategic Plan identified “Assess and evaluate the effectiveness of our programs and services” as an overriding theme, noting that

academic libraries everywhere are being required by their institutions to demonstrate the outcomes and efficacy of funded programs. The rapid pace of change and increasing expectations of users necessitate continuous examination of library programs and the internal practices and resources that support them.

An ongoing assessment program not only provides valuable information with which we can plan for innovative and cost-effective new library services, but it also responds to our commitment to ensuring that public money is spent wisely and effectively.<sup>5</sup>

The continued growth of libraries assessment efforts made it difficult to rely on a volunteer committee for ongoing support and sustainability. The Library Assessment Group and others in the libraries continued to state the case for someone to have formal designation as library assessment coordinator. Steve Hiller, head of the Science Libraries and chair of the Library Assessment Group, was appointed as half-time library assessment coordinator in late 1999 (he continued as head of the Science Libraries). The Library Assessment Group charge was revised to reflect this change, and tasked to work with the library assessment coordinator to initiate and support library assessment efforts within the University Libraries; develop an ongoing, sustainable assessment program; identify user needs and assess the libraries’ efforts at meeting them; foster a culture of assessment within the libraries; provide support as needed for assessment efforts conducted by other library staff; develop expertise and understanding of assessment measures and techniques and share these with library staff as needed; conduct the libraries’ triennial user surveys; and communicate assessment activities and results to appropriate individuals and groups.

While information about the UW assessment program had been presented at conferences and survey information was available on the libraries’ website, there was no published record other than articles in the libraries newsletter *Library Directions*. That changed in 2001 with the publication

in *Library Trends* of an article based on a presentation at an Association of Research Libraries–sponsored symposium in October 2000 on measuring service quality.<sup>6</sup> Presentations made at national and international conferences from 2001 to 2005 were published in proceedings, papers, and journals and that practice has continued.

The UW Libraries was also recognized as an institutional, regional, and national leader in assessment. The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities in its 2003 decennial accreditation review of the University of Washington commended the libraries' commitment to effective assessment, stating that "planning, assessment and continuous improvement are ongoing processes with broad staff participation. The libraries' program for the measurement of library use and user satisfaction has resulted in ten years of longitudinal data and satisfaction rates and user behavior. This information is frequently referred to and used to modify existing services and plan new ones." The UW Libraries received the Association of College and Research Libraries' 2004 Excellence in Libraries award for research libraries. The award statement noted that "the UW Libraries have developed exemplary programs including innovative digital collections and services, information literacy for the UW campus, an assessment centered culture, and creative staff development and training."

In August 2004, Steve Hiller was appointed as a visiting program officer for assessment at the Association of Research Libraries (ARL). He joined Jim Self of the University of Virginia Library and Martha Kyrillidou at ARL in developing a service called "Making Library Assessment Work" (later renamed "Effective, Sustainable and Practical Library Assessment"). Both the University of Virginia Library and the UW Libraries were well-known leaders in the library assessment field. Recognizing that the usage and successful implementation of LibQUAL+ had provided copious amounts of assessment-related data, the goals of this service were to enable libraries to better utilize this information for change and improvement. A special focus was on the organizational structure that would facilitate and sustain success. The service consisted of a one and one-half day visit to a participating library followed by a report summarizing the participating library's current situation and recommendations for moving assessment forward. Forty-three libraries participated in this service between 2005 and 2010.

## **Integrating Planning and Assessment, 2006–2011**

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While the strategic plans for 2002–2005 and 2006–2010 reaffirmed the libraries' user-centered focus and the role of assessment in understanding user needs and evaluating program effectiveness, ongoing operational and

management support for these plans was not well-defined.<sup>7</sup> A staff committee worked with the Libraries Cabinet (administration) to craft the plans, but implementation and review were the responsibilities of the cabinet and managers. While a number of the objectives in each strategic plan included some form of measurement, these were rarely reviewed or assessed.

As the scope of assessment activities continued to expand and deepen, the libraries made the commitment to create an organizational place for assessment with a full-time director responsible for both assessment and planning. The alignment and better integration of assessment with planning were seen as strengthening overall organizational performance and accountability.

The Office of Assessment and Planning was established in early 2006 with Steve Hiller appointed as director. The director is responsible for providing leadership and vision for the libraries' assessment and planning activities, ensuring that assessment, measurement, planning, and analysis are integral parts of the libraries' programs and services. The director oversees assessment efforts within the University Libraries, serving as an internal consultant for assessment activities conducted by other library staff and working with the libraries' areas to analyze and report assessment data. The director represents the libraries in campus, regional, and national assessment efforts; evaluates the effectiveness of library assessment efforts; and recommends ways to strengthen the libraries' assessment and measurement program. He creates and maintains a sustainable planning environment and provides information, analysis, and reports to support the libraries' planning and management activities. Lastly, the director establishes, manages, and provides access to management information; and coordinates the ARL statistics and handles other centrally reported data and requests such as ARL SPEC kits and IPEDS surveys. The director reports to the senior associate dean who is responsible for library administrative services.

To provide additional support for assessment, a temporary half-time position titled management information librarian was created. This position works under the general direction of the director of assessment and planning and is responsible for supporting assessment efforts within the University Libraries. The management information librarian assists in the development, implementation, and management of a program to select and provide access to data and statistics collected by the libraries. This individual contributes to the compilation of a libraries data/fact site and print counterpart and maintains and enhances the Libraries Assessment website.

The UW Libraries continues to be an active participant in the national and international assessment arenas. In 2006 the management information librarian and a colleague at the University of Virginia Libraries coauthored an ARL SPEC Kit on Library Assessment, to provide guidance for librarians developing assessment programs at their institutions.<sup>8</sup> The UW Libraries was

one of three cofounders and organizers of the Library Assessment Conference which has been held every two years since 2006. In addition to helping organize the conferences, UW librarians have been active participants, presenting papers and posters on such topics as local surveys, e-metrics, usability, qualitative studies, the Balanced Scorecard, teaching and learning, and the culture of assessment. UW librarians have also presented at each of the Northumbria International Conferences on Performance Measurement in Libraries and Information Services since 2001.

In 2008 the Library Assessment Group was renamed the Libraries Assessment and Metrics Team (LAMT) and given a revised charge to assist in assessing organizational performance through the development of outcomes and success metrics; to help develop a management information infrastructure to make data and key statistics available to staff and the public; to maintain the Library Assessment website; and to plan the semiannual library assessment forums.

LAMT is now responsible for helping to plan the Triennial Survey and the In-Library Use Survey, and for reorganizing the presentation of assessment and library statistical information on the libraries' website. The assessment page is publicly available and provides information about the membership and charge of the Libraries Assessment and Metrics Team as well as presentations, publications, and reports produced by its members. The website promotes transparency in assessment efforts by providing links to results, survey forms, and summaries for the Triennial and In-Library Use surveys. In that same vein of transparency, the libraries' statistics are also publicly accessible through the website.

Midway through our 2006–2010 Strategic Plan, the Office of Assessment and Planning began to explore alternatives that could better support development and overall management of the planning process. Our five-year plans produced a number of successful initiatives, including the user-centered-library and the anytime-anyplace library that are cornerstones of our programs and services today—but over time the process for creating each new strategic plan took longer, was time- and labor-intensive, and was overly detailed and inclusive. The “strategic” focus was often overwhelmed by the number of goals and objectives and the links with weak oversight, execution, and measurement. Many of our staff began to see strategic planning as an exercise that was separate from and not tied to their ongoing work.

We began looking in 2008 at other organizational planning and performance models, seeking a program that was truly strategic, with focused priorities and choices, and that allowed us to spend less time on process and more on strategy and defining key outcomes that could be aligned with organizational capacity and resources. The model we desired would allow us to be sufficiently nimble and agile to adapt to environmental, economic, and

institutional changes, as a five-year plan is too long. Such a model would need to integrate closely with our long-established assessment program where data had been used to inform programs and services but not necessarily linked to measuring progress on goals and objectives in the strategic plan. Further, the model we sought must involve staff in meaningful efforts to align workflows and responsibilities tied to strategic priorities and actions, and align with nascent university efforts to develop and implement a more rigorous planning process

In autumn 2008, the ARL began discussions on using the Balanced Scorecard as an organizational performance model in libraries. We were attracted by the focus on aligning strategy with metrics in a balanced framework that emphasized services to customers and stakeholders based on internal activities and a foundation of staff learning and expertise. The UW Libraries was one of four ARL libraries to participate in the “Library Scorecard” pilot that began in 2009.

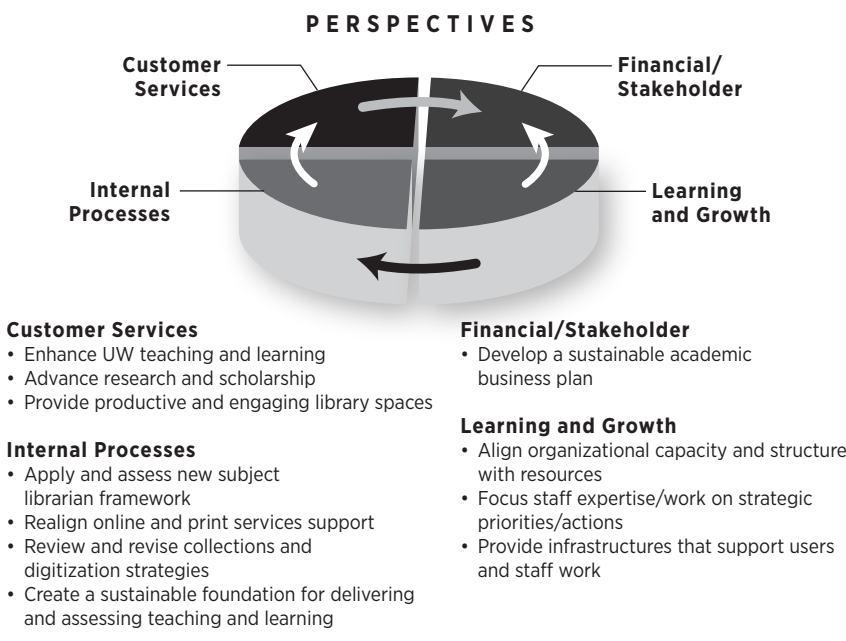
The ARL pilot was an opportunity to test the applicability of the Scorecard to strategic planning in the libraries and learn from our consultants as well as our cohorts. We used the “priorities” that were identified in our 2006–2010 Strategic Plan for our test scorecard. They were placed in the Scorecard framework and we worked with key individuals to develop outcomes and measures. Our takeaways from the Scorecard pilot were to define outcomes before developing measures, balance existing data with new data collection, and the realization that strategy drives metrics.

We were sufficiently pleased with the Strategy Map and Scorecard that they became the framework for our new 2011–2013 Strategic Plan.<sup>9</sup> (See figure 1.2.) As we build out our thirteen key objectives, staff who work most closely in those areas develop actions, outcomes, time lines, and suggest possible metrics. Metrics are reviewed by both the Strategic Planning Action Team and the Libraries Assessment and Metrics Team. Our Strategy Map concisely shows who we are and where we want to be to both our staff and the campus community—Mission and Strategic Directions (which are represented in the Customer and Stakeholder areas) frame the perspectives/objectives with a firm underpinning of organizational values. Our Strategy Map and Scorecard also are aligned with university initiatives related to student and faculty success as well as cost efficiencies and effectiveness.

In 2009 the director of assessment and planning joined the Libraries Cabinet (administrative leadership group) and took responsibility for the next strategic plan and for preparing the narrative for the annual budget submission to the university. Budget submissions in 2010 and 2011 began using the Balanced Scorecard as a framework for organizational performance,

**FIGURE 1.2**

University Libraries, University of Wisconsin, 2011–2013 Strategy Map



buttressed by local assessment data and comparative benchmarking statistics with peer ARL libraries.

### Assessment Activities: Local Surveys

The University of Washington Libraries is well known for its program of large-scale cyclical user surveys that have been conducted since 1992 (Triennial Survey). More than just satisfaction surveys, these surveys have provided invaluable information about how students and faculty use the libraries, their library and information needs and priorities, and the importance and contributions of the libraries during a period of rapid change in the information and higher education environments. Additional local cyclical surveys include an In-Library Use Survey and a library staff Diversity and Organizational Climate



Survey. The Triennial and In-Library Use surveys have been adapted by a number of other libraries

### **Triennial Survey**

For the first survey in 1992, the Task Force on Library Services worked with the UW Office of Educational Assessment (OEA) on the logistics and design of the survey. The task force arrived at several decisions concerning methodology that served as a foundation for future surveys:

- The survey would be run during the spring quarter.
- The survey population was defined as faculty, graduate and professional students, and undergraduates.
- Separate surveys would be designed for each group, although there would be a number of common questions.
- All faculty would be surveyed and a random sample of each student group taken.
- The survey would be mailed directly to the survey population.
- The survey would be returned to a nonlibrary campus unit for data entry.
- A small incentive would be offered for submission of surveys.

The OEA pulled the student samples from the registrar's database and the faculty names from the payroll database. Surveys were sent to 3,900 faculty and samples of 1,000 graduate and professional students and 1,000 undergraduates. The OEA also arranged for data entry and analysis, providing SPSS printouts of frequency responses (and means) for each group and cross-tabs by college/school and department for each group. The aggregate results for each group (including comments) were distributed to staff and academic program-specific information was distributed to subject librarians and unit heads. A short report on survey results was also included in the fall 1992 issue of *Library Directions*, a UW Libraries newsletter that was distributed to all UW faculty, library donors, regional and ARL libraries, and other interested parties. The 1992 results showed high satisfaction rates for all groups and that students, especially undergraduates, were the primary users of the physical library. Comments from undergraduates indicated that staff at some service desks did not take them seriously. Nearly 50 percent of faculty and graduate student respondents and 25 percent of undergraduates said they had connected remotely to the online catalog. While approximately 25 percent of

faculty and graduate students had connected remotely to an online bibliographic database, only 2 percent of undergraduates had. Lastly, the top three priorities were the same for each group—build collections, improve the online catalog, and add bibliographic databases.

The task force made several recommendations for follow-up actions, including online catalog improvement; recognizing undergraduates as the primary users of our physical spaces; making it easier to connect to library resources and services remotely; and ensuring that staff treated students respectfully. The latter led to the development of a “good customer service” class that all staff were required to participate in.

The strong administrative support of Director Betty Bengtson and the new associate director for public services, Betsy Wilson, was instrumental in getting the process for the 1992 survey started and ensuring that the results were used. The Kenneth S. Allen Endowment Fund, a large unrestricted endowment for the University Libraries, was also used to support the external costs of this survey and others that followed.

The 1992 survey (with some changes) was run again in 1995 and results showed a continued shift to use of online discovery tools and resources. For faculty and graduate students an increasing percentage of this use was done remotely, and remote library visits now surpassed visits to the physical library. While the majority of remote use still took place from campus offices and labs, 25 percent of the faculty reported connecting to online services and resources at least weekly from home. Survey data entry was done by the Office of Educational Assessment, but all of the analysis was conducted by two task force members using SPSS. With the successful completion of this second large-scale user survey of faculty and students, the survey was now optimistically called the Triennial Survey. The three-year cycle seemed a good fit for the iterative processes of survey design, implementation, analysis, recommendations, and resulting service improvements and changes.

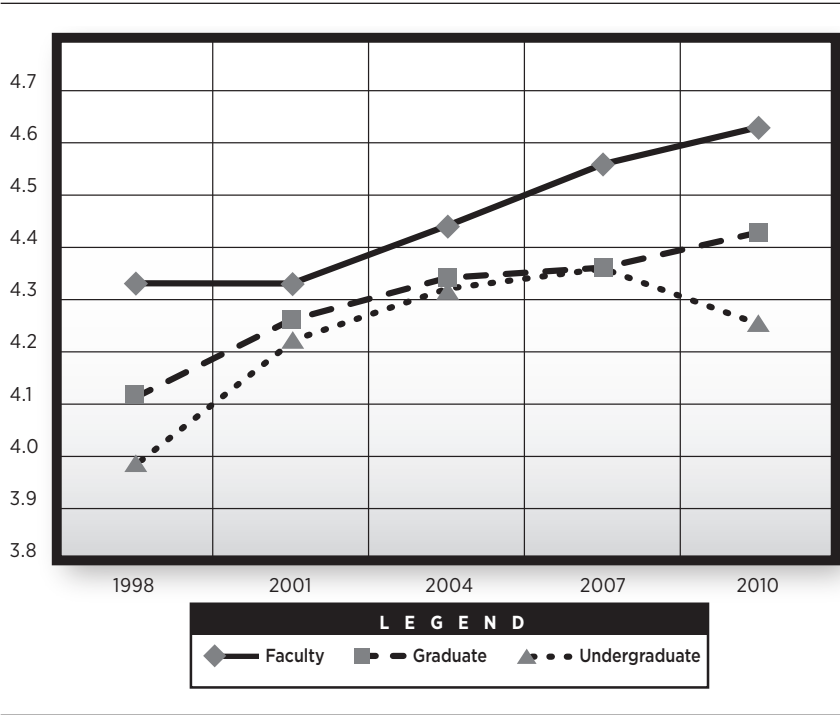
Preparation for the 1998 Triennial Survey included working closely with the faculty councils on educational technology and university libraries as well as campus computing and communications on questions dealing with the use and impact of information technology. The definition of “faculty” was standardized and this definition was used in all succeeding surveys. Separate survey “inserts” were sent to faculty and graduate students in the biosciences (including health sciences) and the fine arts. Results showed that the frequency of faculty and graduate student visits from outside the library continued to increase, especially from off campus, and bioscientists were willing to sacrifice print for online access.

Succeeding surveys in 2001, 2004, 2007, and 2010 kept a set of core questions, eliminated others, and added new ones, including some on library impact and scholarly communication. The survey went from print to web-based in

**FIGURE 1.3**  
 UW Libraries Triennial Survey, Number of Respondents  
 and Response Rate 1992–2010

Group	2010	2007	2004	2001	1998	1995	1992
Faculty	1,634 (39%)	1,455 (36%)	1,560 (40%)	1,345 (36%)	1,503 (40%)	1,359 (31%)	1,108 (28%)
Graduate/ Professional Students (UWS)	640 (32%)	580 (33%)	627 (40%)	597 (40%)	457 (46%)	409 (41%)	560 (56%)
Undergrads (UWS)	365 (16%)	467 (20%)	502 (25%)	497 (25%)	787 (39%)	463 (23%)	407 (41%)

**FIGURE 1.4**  
 Overall Satisfaction by Group: Triennial Survey, 1998–2010



2004. Related but separate surveys for UW Bothell and UW Tacoma students were done for the first time in 2007. Faculty from these schools were included in the survey population beginning with the 1998 surveys. The 2010 survey was run at a time of severe budget retrenchment at the university. The number of faculty respondents (1,634), and library importance, impact, and satisfaction were the highest ever recorded. However, undergraduate satisfaction dropped, related to overcrowding of library facilities. (See figures 1.3 and 1.4.)

### **In-Library Use Survey**

The UW Libraries first developed and implemented an In-Library Use Survey in 1993 to acquire information about nonaffiliated visitors and their use of library services. An elaborate sampling procedure was established that consisted of random two-hour survey periods at the then twenty campus libraries. Those exiting the library during these periods were asked their status and, if not university-affiliated, were given a short survey to complete. This method provided data on the percent of nonaffiliated users exiting the library as well as their activities in the library. Similar surveys were conducted in 1996 and 1999 but were limited to the five largest campus libraries due to the relatively small numbers of nonaffiliated users in most branch libraries and the consequent large number of sampling sessions needed. There were some changes in questions between the surveys to capture new information, especially related to technology and the use of online resources. Significant changes in in-library use patterns were observed among both nonaffiliated users and the University of Washington community during the 1990s. The 1999 exit survey revealed a continuing decline in the proportion of nonaffiliated users in the largest libraries to approximately 10 percent of all users.

Information about University of Washington student and faculty use of library facilities came from transactional data and also through the Triennial Survey. However, with the continued decrease in the frequency of faculty and graduate student visits to the physical library, surveying users in library facilities was seen as a more precise method for acquiring information about who was using our libraries, why they visited, and what they did during their visits, regardless of affiliation. In 2002 the In-Library Use Survey was given to everyone entering the library during designated survey periods. Survey methodology and distribution remained reasonably consistent in subsequent surveys run in 2005, 2008, and 2011. One-page surveys were distributed to those entering the library during two-hour time periods in May and completed surveys were returned as users exited the library. Approximately 4,000 surveys were returned during each survey year, and they confirmed the importance of the library as place for undergraduate students. The surveys over those years

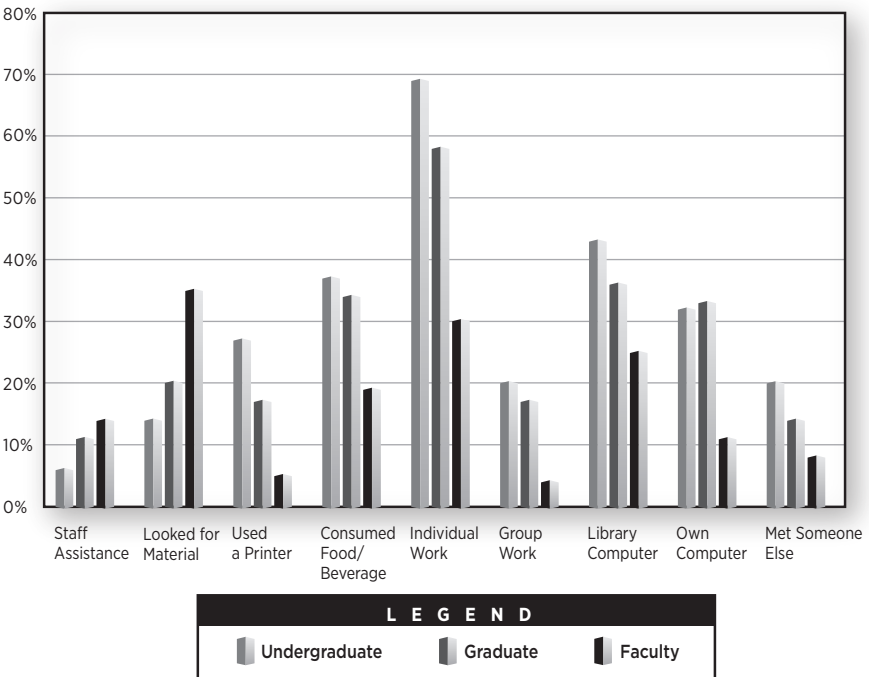
**FIGURE 1.5**

In-Library Use Survey, Number of Respondents by Group 2001-2011:  
Sessions in Common at UW Seattle

	2011	2008	2005	2002
<i>Undergraduates</i>	2,495 (74%)	2,210 (69%)	2,091 (64%)	2,304 (59%)
<i>Graduate/ Professional Students</i>	588 (17%)	640 (20%)	723 (22%)	986 (25%)
<i>Faculty/Staff</i>	130 (4%)	166 (5%)	168 (5%)	251 (7%)
<i>Nonaffiliated</i>	128 (4%)	154 (5%)	250 (8%)	312 (8%)
<i>Did not state</i>	38 (1%)	26 (1%)	34 (1%)	25 (1%)

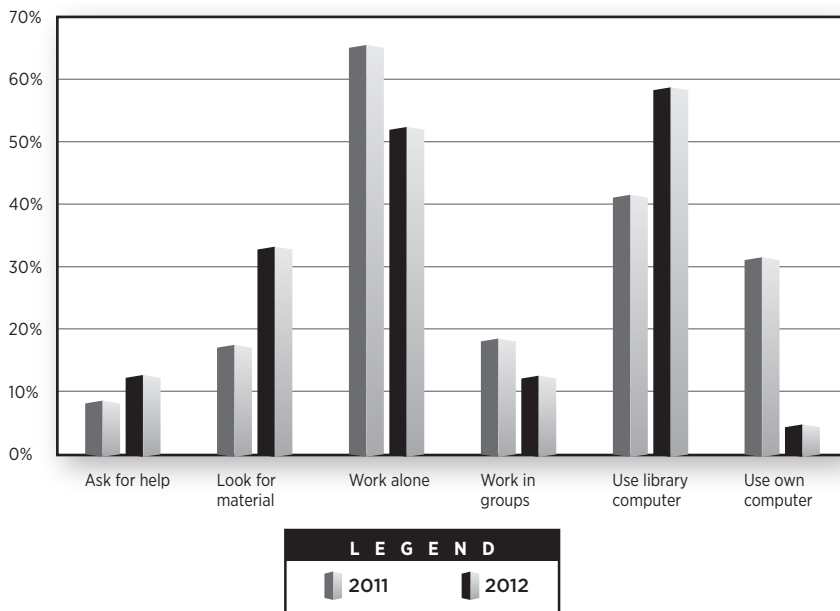
**FIGURE 1.6**

What Respondents Did in the Library by Group: 2011 In-Library Use Survey



**FIGURE 1.7**

Activities during Library Visit: 2011/2012 In-Library Use Survey



showed a steady increase in the percentage of respondents who were undergraduates—reaching 75 percent in 2011. Survey results that year also showed a decline in the use of library computers and a substantial increase in the use of personal computing devices. (See figures 1.5, 1.6, and 1.7.)

### Diversity and Organizational Climate Survey

In 2004 the libraries designed and conducted its first Diversity and Organizational Climate Survey. Survey results showed that communication needed improvement, and a number of steps were taken to facilitate communication at all levels. Similar surveys were run in 2008 and 2011 and showed improvement in communication and diversity importance and action. However, three years of budget reductions with no salary increases were factors in low ratings for staff support and recognition.

## Other Assessment Activities

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While the Triennial Survey remains the centerpiece of the assessment program, it is part of a suite of assessment activities that began to coalesce in the 1995–99 period. This suite includes e-metrics, usability, other qualitative assessment methods, and collaborative assessment both within and external to the university.

The work on e-metrics is led by Tim Jewell and colleagues in the Libraries Information Resources and Scholarly Communication program. Jewell served as an ARL visiting program officer in 1995–96 with a focus on expenditures for electronic resources.<sup>10</sup> His ARL work led to the development of several questions on the ARL Supplementary Statistics Survey that deal with electronic resource usage and costs. Jewell has continued working with e-metrics and had significant involvement in the development of Electronic Resources Management systems (ERM), including Project SUSHI during the past ten years and in several NISO working groups. More recent e-metrics work has involved developing different methods of determining the value of e-journals and e-journal packages.

The UW Libraries' first website was established in autumn 1994 and its content was tweaked on an annual basis through 1997 by libraries staff, although with little input from the user community. In 1998 a major redesign of the website was undertaken with the goal of refocusing it from a library-centric organizational structure to that of an "information gateway" which would enable users to find information that they needed without knowing how the library was organized. The libraries collaborated with the UW Department of Technical Communications in conducting usability testing with students developing the usability protocols and processes. Testing was done in the department's usability lab, which contained a number of tools to support different evaluation methods. Significant changes were made to the navigation and terminology used on the new site as a result of usability testing. Usability testing became an integral part of web design, and the libraries acquired equipment and expertise to perform its own usability testing beginning in 2001. Subsequent usability efforts have taken place under the aegis of the libraries' Information Technology Services, and notable activities have included WorldCat local implementation, LibGuides, and digital library initiatives.<sup>11</sup> The libraries has also used wayfinding to examine the "usability" of library physical space.

Qualitative information about library services and resources has traditionally been derived primarily from survey and suggestion box comments, faculty councils, reference transactions, and interactions between subject libraries and faculty and graduate students. While survey comments are analyzed and categorized, most other qualitative input was not subject to a

systematic analysis. In 1998 the libraries conducted its first set of structured focus groups, focusing on the biosciences and the fine arts. The bioscience focus groups (faculty and graduate students) centered on the use of resources, especially electronic resources, while the fine arts focus groups dealt primarily with the concept of a central fine arts library that would consolidate existing libraries for art, drama, and music. Information gleaned from these focus groups was used both in planning and for the libraries' 1998 Triennial Survey, which featured special inset surveys for faculty and students in those areas.

Focus groups have been conducted in such areas as interlibrary loan, teaching and learning, research needs, scholarly communication, disabled student services, and use of electronic and print resources. Three library advisory groups (faculty, graduate and professional students, and undergraduates) also provide structured input on topics ranging from discovery tools to collaborative work spaces.

Observational studies have also proven valuable, especially for time-sensitive information. Observational studies on the use of services and the use of facilities and equipment at specific times of the day have helped adjust the location of library computers and desk staffing. Guided observation and interviews have been completed, focusing on faculty and graduate student searching methods in bibliographic databases and how faculty find and use electronic journals. These studies proved quite useful in the development of search interfaces.

User surveys in the 1990s revealed that students, especially undergraduates, were the primary users of library facilities. Planning for new and renovated space prior to that time had focused mainly on faculty and library staff needs. As use of library space shifted from a collections focus to a user focus, efforts were made to gain input from users about their space needs. For example, users had the opportunity to try out furniture for renovations in the Odegaard Undergraduate and Suzallo-Allen libraries during internal renovations. In general, however, such input was collected indirectly and not in any systematic or structured manner.

Two recent renovation projects, the Research Commons and the Odegaard Undergraduate Library, have adopted a user-centered design approach. While the Odegaard renovation planning process has just started, students are already involved in focus groups, and design concepts. The architectural firm responsible for the renovation of the Research Commons space employed a user-centered design process that involved charrettes and other user involvement throughout the design process, including furniture and equipment evaluation.

To create a collaborative environment in which students and faculty can come together to share and discuss research, as well as get support for all steps of the research process, the design of the Research Commons involved the



reconfiguration of 15,500 square feet in the Allen Library into a new type of space. When the doors opened in October 2010 it was clear that this space was different than any other in the libraries. The majority of the furniture was movable for unlimited seating configurations; there were whiteboard surfaces on the walls and tables; and new collaborative technology areas with plasma screens were available for sharing laptop images.

The same user-centered approach to design that had proven so successful was also used to assess how the space was being used. Research Commons staff employed several techniques to evaluate why users came to the space, what users did in the space, and whether the space fostered collaboration. Evaluation methods included observation, discussion groups, and a short survey in spring 2011. Both the discussion groups and the short survey specifically asked visitors how they used the space. Each assessment method verified the findings of the others: users identified the Commons as collaborative work space and enjoyed the ability to customize their work environment with the flexible furniture and equipment available to them.

The findings from the survey were even more powerful when compared with results from the In-Library Use Survey for nonusers of the Research Commons. By comparing those two surveys we discovered that those who used the Research Commons tended to use the library for longer periods of time and used more of the services and resources offered by the libraries. Changes made based on the results of the discussion groups and surveys included removal of some computer workstations and rearrangement of others to deemphasize their use as individual work space, and two new reservable group areas were created to allow for more and larger group activities.

## **Collaborative Assessment**

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The UW Libraries have worked on collaborative assessment efforts with campus, organizational, and other institutional partners. The collaborative approach provides additional expertise and perspectives that enable richer assessments.

Collaborative assessment efforts with campus partners started in 1994 around the use of information technology in teaching and learning, especially in the UWired program. UWired began in autumn 1994 as a collaborative effort among four university units (including the libraries) to help integrate information technology and electronic information resources into the curriculum. A UWired evaluation group was established to develop a formative assessment program based on evaluation of the various program components to support the development and ongoing improvement of UWired offerings. Assessment actions included surveying new students and measuring use of the Center for Teaching and Learning Technology. Course evaluations focused

on competencies and outcomes and establishing outcomes for the major UWired activities outside of courses.

The libraries expanded collaboration with the Office of Educational Assessment and helped add questions relating to library use and satisfaction to the OEA's annual Senior Survey. Collaboration also extended outside the UW environment. The University of Washington was one of nine institutions that participated in the Coalition for Networked Information (CNI) project "Assessing the Academic Networked Environment" in 1997–98. The libraries was the lead party in the UW effort that focused on three major areas: use of networked information resources; teaching and learning; and library/information needs assessment. These areas built upon the libraries' established strengths in e-metrics, UWired, and user needs assessment. Project briefings on the UW experience in "Assessing the Academic Networked Environment" were given at the spring 1998 CNI conference and at the CAUSE conference in December 1998. A full-day pre-conference workshop on "Assessing the Academic Networked Environment" was given at the ACRL 9th National Conference in 1999, with three of the four presenters from the University of Washington.

The University Libraries was one of twelve participants in the ARL ServQUAL (later LibQUAL) pilot in 2000. The libraries participated in the pilot each year between 2000 and 2003 while still conducting its own surveys. When LibQUAL was finalized for 2004, the decision was made not to participate in that survey but to continue with our own. While the LibQUAL survey provided some useful information and offered the opportunity to compare results with other research libraries, we believed that local surveys could best capture information on user needs and priorities and respond to specific issues pertinent to the University of Washington. We also valued the survey data we had collected since 1992 and the ability to track changes and trends going forward.

The libraries continued to expand its assessment repertoire with new collaborative initiatives in information literacy and user-centered design. The UW Bothell Library has a long tradition of involvement with course and curricular design since its founding in 1991, helping to integrate information literacy concepts into the formal academic program. In 2006 Bothell librarians worked with English 102: Writing from Research faculty at the co-located community college to rate student work using rubrics. This has evolved into a more "practical and sustainable" method of student self-assessment integrated into the course. Identified positive outcomes from this assessment method include enhanced student learning, increased faculty-librarian collaboration, and higher visibility and relevance of the information literacy instruction program.<sup>12</sup> The effectiveness of this method has also been acknowledged through its inclusion in the Outcome Guide used for the course campuswide.

Further, the UW Bothell Library was one of five institutions selected to participate in the nationwide Rubric Assessment of Information Literacy Skills (RAILS) project that began in 2010. Samples of student work were collected and evaluated not only with the purpose of assessing students' learning, but also to gauge how well the librarians and faculty were assessing that learning.

## Conclusion

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The past twenty years have seen library assessment at the University of Washington grow from an initial survey to a multifaceted assessment program that is centered on customer-centered organizational performance within an integrated planning and assessment framework. The libraries is recognized at the University of Washington as an institutional leader in assessment and performance measurement. This has played a key role in decisions to increase investment in the libraries. As the university moves to a data-driven allocation model, it is critical that the libraries present supportive and compelling data that demonstrates its value to the university community.

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## Contributors

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**Kate Davis** was recently named the assistant director for collections and digital preservation at Scholars Portal, a division of the Ontario Council of University Libraries (OCUL). Prior to this assignment, she was the coordinator of the Scholars Portal Ebooks project. Davis earned an MLS in 2006 and an MA in Russian and East European studies in 2003, both from the University of Toronto. She has worked as a librarian with Scholars Portal since 2006, providing support to OCUL libraries for various Scholars Portal services.

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**Steve Hiller** is director of planning and assessment at the University of Washington Libraries. Prior to assuming this position in 2006, he had been head of science libraries and library assessment coordinator. Hiller has been active in the library assessment community for twenty years, presenting and publishing widely on assessment-related topics. He also serves as an assessment consultant and is co-chair of the Library Assessment Conference, which has been held biennially since 2006. His current interests include user needs assessment, organizational performance metrics, and developing organizational capacity for assessment.

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**Carol Mollman**, following a career in the business sector and as an adjunct professor in business communications at Aurora University, transitioned into academic librarianship as associate director of the Kopolow Business Library at Washington University in St. Louis. She is currently assessment coordinator for the Washington University Libraries. Mollman earned an MBA from Columbia University and an MLIS from the University of Kentucky. She frequently presents on assessment and business-related topics. She also currently serves on the Library Advisory Board of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis.

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