

ISSUES IN ESTABLISHING A CULTURE OF ASSESSMENT IN A COMPLEX ACADEMIC HEALTH SCIENCES LIBRARY

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Objective

To report on the University of New Mexico (UNM) Health Sciences Library and Informatics Center's (HSLIC) experience in creating a culture of assessment through the regular administration of customer satisfaction surveys for its library and technology support services.



Photograph by Barry Sawyer

Setting

HSLIC's organizational structure includes four major divisions, reflecting its responsibilities to deliver the following integrated services to the Health Sciences campus:

- Library services
- Technology support
- Educational development
- Biomedical informatics training and consultation

Goal

To create a unified culture of assessment in which all services are assessed regularly, contributing to a picture of the overall effectiveness of HSLIC.

Methods

The management team committed to annual surveys, initially of library services and then of technology support.

- 2002 First library services survey developed in-house
- 2003 LibQUAL+™ survey administered for library services.
- 2004 A technology support survey was developed in-house after an unfruitful environmental scan for a national standardized survey appropriate for our environment.
- 2005 Second LibQUAL+™ survey administered.
- 2006 Second technology support survey administered after significant changes and another environmental scan.¹

Adopting or developing assessment measures for other services (educational development, biomedical informatics) is being planned.

HSLIC Technology Support Survey*		
Question Category	2004 Mean by Category	2006 Mean by Category**
Technology Support	2.95	2.72
Public Computing	2.95	2.82
Learning Central	-	2.65
WebCT	2.68	2.69
General	2.87	3.06

*Mean scores were derived from a 4 point scale, with 4 representing the highest possible score. **Survey was revised in 2006 to include new questions in each category as well as a section for the Learning Central course management application.

Comparison of LibQUAL+™ Service Adequacy Scores, 2003 to 2005*			
Dimension	2003 HSLIC Mean Adequacy Score	2005 HSLIC Mean Adequacy Score**	2005 Peer Libraries' Mean Adequacy Score
Affect of Service	1.08	0.91	0.66
Library as Place	1.07	0.98	0.56
Information Control	0.46***	0.05	0.18
Overall	0.80	0.59	0.45

*Adequacy Mean refers to the difference between the Perceived Mean (perceived level of service) and the Minimum Mean (minimum acceptable level of service). ** Higher mean adequacy scores for HSLIC on 2005 LIBQUAL+™ survey indicates more positive responses than in peer libraries. ***Score derived from 2003 Access to Information and Personal Control Dimensions.

Results

- Separate surveys using different methodologies (gap analysis vs. Likert) limits HSLIC's ability to integrate survey data and assess overall strengths and weaknesses.
- Locally developed technology support survey does not afford the opportunity to benchmark against similar institutions.
- Using different survey tools to assess different types of services presents problems in consistency of data interpretation, benchmarking, and strategic planning.
- Development of a unified culture of assessment is impeded by compartmentalized assessment of service units.



Photograph by Barry Sawyer

Conclusions

HSLIC will evaluate the cost-benefit of creating in-house surveys that better align with LibQUAL+™ versus accepting inherent discrepancies derived from using different methodologies.¹ The result will be a unified body of assessment which contributes to a picture of overall effectiveness of HSLIC services, creating a unified culture of assessment in the organization.

¹ As of summer 2006, HSLIC is partnering with UNM main campus computing to participate as a test institution for the TechQual survey under development at Texas A&M University