Identifying Potential Data, Evidence, and Input

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Identifying Potential Data, Evidence, and/or Input

Existing Information
- Information from the Literature
- Information You Must Gather
What data do you already have access to?

- Consider a **data audit** to understand the data your library already collects or has access to.
- **Connect on campus** to discern what data others on your campus have access to.
- **Explore the literature** to discover what others before you, perhaps at similar institutions/libraries, have found.
What type of data is each element?

• Input
• Output
• Outcome
• Librarian time/effort
• Use
• Satisfaction
• Service quality
• Group-level
• Individual-level
• Something else?
In what ways is each data element relevant?

- **meaningful** to users/stakeholders
- **formatted** according to user/stakeholder preferences
- **useful** to library management of services, resources, spaces, etc.
- answers **open questions**
- enables **decision making**
- enables **resource allocations**
- enables **actions**
- worth **sharing**
- related to focus areas, strategic priorities or needs
- related to professional or other standards
How might librarians access the data element?

- available
- not yet available
- in library information systems
- in supplier/vendor information systems
- in institutional/organizational information systems
- in consortia/state/national information systems

What **processes** are required to access the data in usable formats and in alignment with data best practices and ethics?
How is (might) the data element be disseminated?

- in library communications
  - internal-facing
  - external-facing
- in planning documents
- in presentations
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Existing Information

Information from the Literature

Information You Must Gather
Sources for Pre-Existing Data

- Published literature (journals, books)
- Publisher data repositories (accompanying published literature)
- Presentations
- White papers
- Direct from authors and librarians (following IRB and other ethical data practices)

Who else cares about this data?

- **Library colleagues** at similar institutions or other institutions, geographically close or far, etc. Think narrow and broad.

- **Federal agencies, researchers, academic disciplines, funders**, etc. focused on similar topics (e.g., student success, research productivity).

- Who are **authorities** in the field?

- What **terms** might they use?

- What **databases** might contain this content (i.e., look beyond library literature)?

- What **issues/concepts** or sub-issues/concepts are relevant?

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Follow Good Research Practices

Keywords
- Brainstorm keywords

Thesaurus
- Use thesauri to identify appropriate controlled vocabulary
- Link terms using Boolean operations, truncation, etc.

Features
- Consider database limiters or other search features

Try
- Complete a few quick searches

Try again
- Scan records retrieved; look for better subject headings or descriptions; consider viability of selected database as needed

Look for a gem
- Find an on-topic record; mine it for search terms, citations, likely authors or journals, etc.; leverage any citation tracing database functionality
When Existing Research May Not Be Helpful

• Library research is often not generalizable due to focus on specific contexts.
• Library research is often limited in terms of data reach (focused only on libraries and not the full user experience).
• Library research is often episodic or one-off rather than longitudinal, coherent, or building off others’ work.
• Library research is often not disseminated widely; therefore it is not easily discoverable.
• Library research may not be representative in its samples; therefore it may (advertently or inadvertently) codify practices or perpetuate beliefs that are inaccurate and harmful.
• Library research tends to be short on theory as a grounding and therefore over rely on assumptions that may be faulty.
• Library research tends to over rely on limited approaches (e.g., surveys).

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Existing Information
Information from the Literature
Information You Must Gather
Thinking Through Gathering New Data

• What are the **concepts, problem areas, or variables** you need to gather data about?

• Does the data arise naturally out of the situation being studied? If not, how will you **locate the data**?

• How do you plan to **gather the data** (e.g., survey, interview, focus group, observation)? Is **more than one method** of data gathering needed?

• Are special processes, equipment, technology, or knowledge required for gathering the data? If so, do you have access to those resources?

Thinking Through Gathering New Data

- Do you have **sufficient access to participants** to ensure a **representative and/or meaningful sample** for data gathering?

- What are the **costs** in gathering the data (e.g., time, money, social capital, intellectual/emotional labor of or risk to participants)?

- How certain are you that this data will **accurately reflect** the areas you plan to study and understand? Are they directly related?

- How certain are you that this data will be **actionable** in ways that are **beneficial to the participant community**?

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