Recruiting for Results: Assessment Skills and the Academic Library Job Market

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“Assessment cannot be seen as a separate ‘management activity’ but must be appreciated and valued by all members of the culture and assumed to be part of their regular work.”

Building Capacity for the Culture of Assessment

“Library administrations are typically committed to the concept of a culture of assessment . . . but there is a perception that this commitment is not shared by all staff . . . . [who] do not have the skills or rewards needed to carry out assessment projects.”

“The Director of Assessment and Planning provides leadership and vision for the Libraries assessment and planning activities and is responsible for ensuring that assessment, measurement, planning, and analysis are integral parts of Libraries programs and services.”

How Healthy is the Culture of Assessment?

- Presence of assessment as an area of concern in LIS education programs?
- Scope of assessment skills among current academic librarians?
- Perceptions of needs for professional development in the area of assessment?
- Recruitment of assessment-savvy professionals into academic libraries?
Learning from Instruction

- Instruction in LIS programs (Westbrook, 1999)
- Teaching as a core skill (Lynch & Smith, 2001)
- Instructional leadership (Fowler & Walter, 2003)
- Instructional improvement (Walter & Hinchliffe, 2005)
- Specialized positions (Shank, 2006)
- Standards and guidelines (ACRL, 2007)
- Assessment of student learning (Oakleaf, 2009, 2010)
Learning from Instruction

“Candidate will lead development of course-integrated instruction and teach approximately 25 instruction sessions per semester; oversee assessment and evaluation; provide pedagogical support for delivering instruction; promote instruction to campus constituencies”

- **Requirements include:**
  - 5 years experience promoting information literacy
  - Substantive teaching experience
  - Knowledge of instruction theory, practices, and management
  - Experience in instructional design and technology
  - Experience in assessment
The Recruitment Study

- 395 positions examined for mention of assessment as a responsibility or as a required or preferred skill
- Are we recruiting for assessment skills, and, if we are, are we doing so in a meaningful way?
The Recruitment Study

LIMITATIONS

Until you spread your wings,
you’ll have no idea how far you can walk.

www.despair.com
The Recruitment Study

- 16% of ads (n=65) mention assessment as a job responsibility
- In ads mentioning assessment:
  - 37% mention collection evaluation or use statistics
  - 18.5% mention information literacy
  - 15% mention “assessment of services”
  - 12% mention assessment as a component of strategic planning
The Recruitment Study

- assessment of library publications
- needs assessment
- assessment of operations
- "assessment strategies"
- "assessing outcomes"
- "oversee assessment and evaluation"

Each of these aspects of assessment earned one mention in the 65 positions we identified as mentioning assessment at all.
The Recruitment Study

- “Provide, promote, measure, and assess the delivery of high-quality programs, services, and collections” [subject specialist]

- “Leads planning and assessment efforts” [head of reference]

- “[Provide] leadership in planning, implementing, managing and assessing programs related to serving users . . .” [associate dean]

“All the evolution we know of proceeds from the vague to the definite.”

Charles Sanders Pierce (1898)
The Recruitment Study

“The position’s primary responsibility will be to plan, develop, market, and evaluate instruction activities offered by the Libraries and to contribute to building an environment that firmly places the Libraries at the center of student learning on campus. The Head of Instruction will also provide leadership for the Libraries’ participation in campus education initiatives to ensure that the Libraries are partners in the ongoing development of programs and services, such as the assessment of student learning (e.g., iSkills).”
“Staff members articulated that expectations related to their involvement in . . . assessment activities were informally as opposed to formally communicated . . . . could not definitely claim whether assessment activities were evaluated during formal annual review processes . . . . [or] recall whether assessment activities were included in staff job descriptions.”

Improving Our Efforts

- Focused review of assessment positions outside of academic libraries
- “Snapshot” of positions advertised in the Chronicle of Higher Education during Aug-Sept 2010
- 10 relevant job descriptions
Targeting Core Skills

- Define & refine outcomes
- Create an assessment plan
- Identify data needs
- Develop studies to respond to data needs
- Select appropriate assessment measures
- Analyze & interpret assessment results
- Communicate & report assessment results
- Demonstrate excellent skills in data analysis, presentation, & organization
- Prepare data for decision-making processes
Identifying Advanced Skills

- Develop, implement, and manage assessment program to support mission, values, and strategic initiatives
- Consult with units and departments; work with academic and administrative leaders to develop, maintain, and conduct assessment activities
- Monitor assessment activities across the university
- Train faculty and staff in assessment skills
- Provide technical expertise in selection of assessment measures
- Develop, implement, and maintain systems for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting assessment data
- Employ assessment management methodologies and applications
- Prepare data for decision-making processes, communication with external stakeholders, and accreditation purposes
Improving Position Descriptions

- Identify importance of assessment in organizational description
- Be specific in identifying assessment responsibilities in position
- Identify specific assessment skills relevant to responsibilities
- Map qualifications to skills required to successfully meet responsibilities
- Establish connections between responsibilities and the broader environment for assessment in libraries and on campus
Subject Specialist – Assessment Aware

“The Social Sciences Librarian will build and promote a program of library services and collections in all formats which connects scholars, content and emerging technologies to meet the needs of social sciences . . . . will be a member of the social sciences team and participate in social science projects, assessment, and represent the team on collaborative digital initiatives for social science disciplines.”

- **Requirements include:**
  - Advanced degree in the social sciences
  - Interest/Expertise in digital initiatives as applied to the social sciences, e.g., data curation
  - Awareness of technologies/tool/data resources in the social sciences
  - Ability to plan, design, implement, and assess library programs and services, including collections, instruction, and consultation
“The Reference Librarian will design and promote a program of reference services, instructional offerings, and collection services. . . . will deliver and assess reference, instruction, and collection effectiveness by identifying relevant outcomes, participating in the development of an assessment plan, and analyzing data. . . . will communicate assessment results to interested stakeholders and use them for continuous improvement.”

- Requirements include:
  - Background or experience in evaluation and assessment
  - Familiarity with assessment planning and data systems
  - Awareness of institutional assessment and accreditation activities
  - Ability to plan, design, implement, and assess library programs and services, including collections and instruction.
  - Familiarity with reference service assessment tools and techniques, e.g., READ Scale
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