

Assessment Program Summary

Rutgers University, founded in 1766, is the eighth oldest institution of higher learning in the United States. As Rutgers has evolved into a major research university, the library system has also grown into one of the top academic research libraries in the country. Expanding from one library to twenty-six separate libraries, collections, and reading rooms, located on campuses in New Brunswick/Piscataway, Camden, and Newark, and RU-Online, a digital library, the libraries at Rutgers serve approximately 2.5 million onsite users each year and many more remotely through their website. Measures that compare the Libraries expenditures, staff, and collections favorably to their AAU peers are reported in the *2005-2006 Rutgers Fact Book* published by the Office of Institutional Research and Academic Planning (OIRAP).¹ Surveys by OIRAP during the 1990's of undergraduate student opinion showed both high awareness and satisfaction with library services.

Because library services and scholarly information resources are developed in support of the academic and research programs of the university, the Rutgers University Libraries have a long history of asking students, faculty,

¹ *Rutgers Factbook 2005/06*, pages 161-6, <http://oirap.rutgers.edu/instchar/factpdf/aau05.pdf>

and administrators from all disciplines and campuses what they need to be successful. The Libraries current five-year strategic plan, for example, responds to survey data and other information gathered from Rutgers students, faculty, staff, and administrators through a year-long planning process that included the LibQual+™ survey, a communications audit, numerous focus group discussions, and departmental surveys. These assessment activities are described more fully below. Their findings have helped the Libraries envision a virtual and physical library that is more integrated into the academic life of Rutgers students and faculty and more focused on what they need most. Assessment measures that demonstrate progress will be developed for each strategic area of the plan and reported on at least annually. The revised mission and vision statements and clearly articulated strategic goals in the plan will make assessment possible and meaningful. See Appendix A for the Libraries Mission, Vision, and Goals statements. The complete strategic plan may be viewed on the Libraries website at http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/about/reports/strategicplan_2006-2011.pdf

The Libraries continue to develop support for and expertise in assessment and evaluation. Recent initiatives include programs during the spring semester 2008 about creating better user experiences, which includes a quantitative approach to evaluating and improving programs and services, and learning

outcomes assessment and information literacy, featuring a guest presenter from the University of Maryland. The Associate University Librarian for Research and Instructional Services and a web developer recently attended ethnographic evaluation training, and the Associate University Librarian for Planning and Organizational Research, a new position created as of July 1, 2006, regularly attends assessment and evaluation workshops and conferences. Prior to these efforts, an Assessment Committee conducted several surveys and worked on development of a balanced scorecard.

General Assessment

General planning assessment activities that informed development of the Libraries current five-year strategic plan included the LibQual+™ survey, a communications audit, numerous focus group discussions, and departmental surveys:

LibQUAL+™

During the spring 2005, the Rutgers University Libraries were one of 234 libraries internationally that participated in the Association of Research Libraries sponsored LibQUAL+™ survey. This survey helps libraries assess and improve library services, change organizational culture, and market the library services using a web-based survey to track, understand, and act upon users' opinions of service quality. LibQUAL+™ measures user perceptions of service affect

(customer service), information control (information provided and its accessibility), and library as place. Open-ended comments from users are solicited. OIRAP drew a sample of 7,624 individuals across all three campuses, excluding library personnel. We received 796 usable surveys out of 880 surveys and collected 372 comments from our users. An executive summary and the full report are available at <http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/about/libqual.shtml>.

Communications Audit

The primary goal of the 2003/04 communications audit of the Rutgers University Libraries was to improve student and faculty knowledge and awareness about library resources and services. The audit evaluated the Libraries current communications program (internal and external) and provided direction for enhancing its effectiveness. The audit used both quantitative and qualitative research, including online surveys of faculty, students, and library personnel; personal interviews with key administrators on the New Brunswick, Newark, and Camden campuses; interviews with key Libraries personnel on all three campuses; "intercept interviews" with students; focus groups with faculty and students; staff forums within the Libraries; and meetings of key library committees. A marketing and communications team has developed a plan and funds have been allocated for its implementation. Assessment measures for elements of the plan are included.

Focus Groups

Marie Radford and Dan O'Connor, professors in the School of Communication, Information and Library Studies, conducted a series of eight focus groups designed to help the Libraries develop strategic directions for the next five years. Five groups with a total of 40 faculty/administrators and three groups with a total of 30 students were conducted April 21-April 30, 2004 at four sites across the university. Both faculty and students commented on the need for library instruction and scholarly information resources and the importance of the library as place. The executive summary is available at http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/staff/groups/strategic_planning/reports/DLI-II_fac_student_focus_group_report.shtml.

During March 2008, as follow up to what students told us in LibQUAL+®, the Libraries will hold focus groups of graduate and undergraduate students to explore use of library facilities and onsite reference services. The information gathered will be used to inform plans for renovation of the reference room in the Alexander Library and to review how reference and information services are offered in the New Brunswick/Piscataway libraries.

Departmental Surveys

Librarians with academic department liaison responsibilities surveyed faculty during spring 2004 in preparation for composing the Libraries current

strategic plan. Liaisons' perceptions varied significantly regarding which tools should be utilized to gather faculty information, using qualitative (open-ended questions, in-person interviews, textual analysis), quantitative (ranking surveys, frequency data), and combination (percentages of responses by categories formed from responses) methodologies. Faculty provided data about their students' information and library needs. A summary report is available at http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/staff/groups/strategic_planning/reports/Deptsummaries_DLI2061604_Libutti.pdf

Strategic Plan and Annual Action Agendas

Implementation of the *Strategic Plan 2006-2011* requires that the Libraries develop annual action agendas keyed to the strategic goals identified. During academic year 2007/08, the Libraries are putting in place a purposeful process for that work. All committees and program areas that contributed papers for development of the plan have updated their reports based on the final strategic plan, selected the goals and objectives for which they will be responsible, and specified the tasks they will pursue. Members of the University Librarian's Cabinet have prioritized the tasks into first and second tiers and are now defining outcomes and indicators for each task.

Collections Assessment

Comprehensive assessment of collections has been carried on in a somewhat limited fashion at Rutgers. Beginning in 1999, the Libraries Assessment Committee studied user success and ease using library resources and services. That same year, the head of library systems began to track use of licensed databases. Electronic reserves and e-journal user surveys followed in 2002. Results of the LibQUAL+™ survey, conducted in 2005, indicated that in the opinion of our users "Making electronic resources accessible from my home or office" was a high priority. This result supports the Libraries aggressive effort to add databases and convert print journals to electronic format. During fiscal year 2006/07, statistics on the use of electronic resources were used to make retention and cancellation decisions. Past survey reports, including LibQUAL+™ can be reviewed at:

http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/staff/groups/assessment_com/reports.shtml.

More sophisticated analysis of user data is being planned. The Libraries integrated library system, SIRSI, has developed Director's Station, an application that allows us to combine and analyze different data elements, such as circulation data and collections expenditures. MINES, Measuring the Impact of Networked Electronic Services, is an online, transaction-based survey that collects data about the purpose of use of electronic resources and the

demographics of users. MINES is available to individual libraries and library consortia as part of the "New Measures and Assessment" initiative of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL). For use at Rutgers and many other institutions, MINES must be programmed to work with EZproxy remote authentication software. The Libraries began reviewing MINES during the summer 2007, when the researchers who developed the protocol and the ARL coordinator visited Rutgers for an open presentation and technical meeting. We have since accepted an invitation from ARL to partner for an IMLS grant that will support the development needed. The Associate University Librarian for Planning and Organizational Research is coordinating this initiative. Further information about MINES is available at:

<http://www.arl.org/stats/initiatives/mines/index.shtml>.

Individual Faculty

To assess what is needed to support research and learning, the Libraries most important line of communication with the teaching departments and faculty is the library liaison or collection development librarian. As stated on the Libraries website, these librarians "are responsible for selecting library materials in specific subject areas, for communicating with appropriate departments and individuals about library collections, and for assessing information resources in their subject areas of responsibility. They also teach library instruction sessions,

develop online and print materials that support research and instruction, and provide information consultation services in their subject specialties." Individual collection development librarians conduct assessments of the collections in their subject areas. Their decisions are responsive to faculty and student needs and are based on their knowledge of the literatures of their subjects and the use, comprehensiveness, or other measures of the portion located at Rutgers. See http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/about/collection_dir.shtml for more information.

Information Literacy Assessment

Information literacy instruction and learning is integral to our Libraries mission and goals, underlies our vision and our strategic plan, and is reflected in much of the way that we work as partners with members of the faculty and with others on the campus and in our ongoing assessment work.

The Libraries ascribe to the information literacy competency standards developed by the Association of College and Research Libraries, the premier division of the American Library Association for libraries serving higher education. The standards are supported by a number of higher education organizations, including the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. See Appendix B for the standards.

Our primary recommendation in the current Middle States Reaccreditation Self Study is that the university undertake the development of an information literacy assessment plan that is integrally linked to the new curriculum and that includes learning outcomes, assessment measures and criteria, and an assessment schedule. In response to this challenge, the Libraries have begun a new initiative that involves information competencies, a virtual learning component, and assessment. The Libraries are working with Kognito Interactive (<http://www.kognito.com/>) to develop models for teaching and assessment of information literacy. The nursing program, President McCormick's Future Scholars Program, and the Office of Academic Engagement's Learning Communities have all been identified as potential partners for development of e-learning tools. Key librarians are members of the university's Assessment Council and will have support from that group for development of the assessment plan.

Searchpath

In spring 2005, the Libraries released an online information literacy tutorial for undergraduates called *Searchpath* [<http://Searchpath.libraries.rutgers.edu>]. *Searchpath* is an adaptation of the tutorial developed at Western Michigan University and an offspring of the Texas Information Literacy Tutorial (TILT). It is an interactive web-based tutorial

designed to teach students basic library and research skills and covers the research process from initial topic selection to citation styles and the issues of copyright and plagiarism. Each of the six modules: *Starting Smart*, *Choosing a Topic*, *Using IRIS*, *Finding Articles*, *Using the Web*, and *Citing Sources* includes learning outcomes towards building information literacy skills for effectively searching, selecting, and evaluating information sources. The tutorial is intended as a stand-alone tool and as a supplemental tool to library research instruction sessions. Preliminary quantitative and qualitative assessment of the *Searchpath* tutorial has been underway since its introduction, primarily in the form of written feedback from students, module quiz results, and interviews with students. A number of instructors in the New Brunswick Writing Program 355:201 and 355:301 courses have incorporated the tutorial into their sections.

Each *Searchpath* module includes a test of skills learned that allows results to be mailed to a student's instructor. The Libraries Instructional Services Committee oversees *Searchpath*, which also has a reports function from which analyses are developed for tutorial improvement and for informing instruction planning discussions with academic faculty. A recent analysis shows that students viewed the opening page of the first module 5,165 times during the fall 2005, spring 2006, and fall 2006 semesters. For those same semesters, the first question of the quiz for the first module was answered 1,974 times. Quiz scores

range from a low of 79.8% for the module “Choosing a Topic” for the fall 2005 semester to a high of 92.4% for the module “Identifying Information Sources” for the spring 2006 semester. The module “Choosing a Topic” also had the lowest use. Its goals and content are more related to teaching than library faculty responsibilities and indicate the need for closer collaboration between teaching and library faculty. Scores for all other modules for the three semesters reviewed range from mid 80% to low 90%, and all scores show improvement over time.

These measures have been presented to the Instructional Services Committee for their use in reviewing *Searchpath*.

Project SAILS

During academic year 2005, the Rutgers University Libraries participated along with 69 other academic institutions in Phase III development of the Project for the Standardized Assessment, of Information Literacy Skills (Project SAILS). Rutgers students tested were undergraduates over 17 years old who had earned fewer than 23 credits as of the fall 2004. The average student at Rutgers University performed on all standards at about the same level as the average student from all institutions combined. The academic institutions that participated in this phase included six of Rutgers peer institutions: University of California, Irvine, University of Colorado at Boulder, University of Kansas, University of Maryland (College Park), Syracuse University, and University of

Texas at Austin. Participation in this assessment included a gap analysis of what students did not know. Regrettably, the sample of students tested was too small for us to make any general statement about the way this measure, when fully validated, can most effectively be used at Rutgers. However, working on this project provided valuable experience for us in understanding and playing a part in the development of a national measure, as well as in the analysis of and thinking through possible follow-ups of gaps in learning. The Libraries final project report can be found at

http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/staff/pub_serv/reports/SAILS_final_report.pdf.

ETS ICT Literacy Assessment

Rutgers librarians attended various presentations over the past few years about the ETS ICT Literacy Assessment as it was being developed, and a library faculty member represented the Rutgers University Libraries on a content validation panel held at ETS during November 2005. Exposure to this measure in its development phase was invaluable to us. We believe that it will be important to continue to follow and be involved with ETS in its work in this area. The task-oriented nature of this online test appears to offer a more in-depth approach to understanding the many dimensions of information learning. Information about the ICT Literacy Assessment can be found at: <http://www.ets.org/ictliteracy/>.

Individual Faculty

Individual library faculty conduct assessment reviews to measure teaching effectiveness. An example is for the Shaping a Life course at Douglass College. The lead librarian does a systematic analysis of citations from all Douglass first year students' final research papers to assess success or failure of her teaching efforts.

Examples of information literacy assessment work undertaken at the Dana Library are:

- The Academic Scholars Institute (summer program for students with conditional acceptances) has had an assessment component since 1994 that has resulted in regular changes in teaching presentations, time required, follow-ups, and the like. This assessment embraces both program and class levels, with program goals outlined in advance with the teaching faculty and the program administrators as part of a contractual arrangement that also provides for a written evaluation report. There is pre-testing and post-testing of learning, as well as student perception of helpfulness. During the class sessions, the Cross-Angelo style one-minute papers and one-minute evaluations are used.

- The English 122 composition class for under-prepared students also includes one-minute papers and evaluations. There is also qualitative evaluation work.
- In business, the business plan information literacy work includes considerable ongoing assessment, with librarians participating in plan grading.
- In urban education, a course with much library information embedded into the classroom management system (Blackboard), there are data on resource use. A librarian provides ongoing e-mail support that contributes to student learning.

Website

The Libraries are partnering with Assistant Professor Jacek Gwizdka, School of Communication, Information and Library Studies, to carry out a usability study of portions of the Libraries website during the spring 2008 semester. Assistant Professor Gwizdka teaches a course in the design and evaluation of digital library interfaces, and his students will assist with his analysis of the Libraries website. He has, in addition, developed an interesting click tracing protocol that automatically analyzes how many clicks or hops it takes a user to reach a desired outcome. If this approach works, the Libraries may continue using this type of strategy to evaluate the website as we move

towards redesign. Results and feedback from the process will be shared within the library and hopefully used to concentrate usability redesign on the most problematic areas of the site, or at least provide foundations for future redesign directions.

Library Faculty

Librarians at Rutgers University have faculty status. They hold at least the M.L.S. degree, with many having doctorates and professional experience and recognition in the disciplines in which they work or other areas of expertise. The library system has approximately 50 subject specialist and instruction librarians who teach.

In a recent university wide survey, librarians were asked if they contributed toward development or grading/review of measures for courses for which they teach. They reported contributing toward student papers more frequently (63.0%) than any other measure. The next most frequent measures are capstone experiences (33.3%), evaluations of internship performance (33.3%), oral presentations (29.6%), program review by an outside group (22.2%), public demonstrations of student research (22.2%), tests (22.2%), and oral defense of projects (11.1%). All other measures on the survey received two or fewer responses.

In the same university wide survey, librarians were asked to indicate the importance of various factors in making changes in class content. The most important factor is recommendation of a teaching faculty member (85.2%). The next most important factors are student interests (81.5%), changes in the discipline (51.9%), student complaints (51.9%), and analysis of the quality of students' work (48.1%). Other important factors are course evaluations (37.0%), curricular changes at the college level (40.7%), recommendations from national organizations in the disciplines (40.7%), and accreditation standards (30.8%). Recommendations of a curricular committee (18.5%) and periodic curricular reviews at department meetings (11.1%) were not as important. All other factors on the survey received two or fewer responses.

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Appendix A: Libraries Mission, Vision, and Goals

Mission

The Rutgers University Libraries support and enrich the instructional, research, and public service missions of the University through the stewardship of scholarly information and the delivery of information services.

Vision

The Libraries aspire to provide outstanding information resources and services that advance research and learning, support the university's goal to be among the top public AAU institutions in the country, and serve as an essential information resource for the state and beyond.

Goals

The Libraries *Strategic Plan, 2006-2011* describes five strategic goals, modeled after university goals, and objectives developed after substantial information gathering from the university community. The strategic goals are:

1. Improve the quality of scholarly resources and information services that support the advancement of academic excellence at Rutgers.
2. Enhance the effectiveness of library services for students and the development of library facilities as learning spaces.
3. Improve awareness of the resources, services, facilities, and support available to all of the Libraries constituencies.

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4. Increase the Libraries resources to the levels of peer AAU public universities and manage those resources more strategically and efficiently.
5. Continue to develop an organization and the human resources to achieve the Libraries strategic goals.

The complete strategic plan may be viewed on the Libraries website at

http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/about/reports/strategicplan_2006-2011.pdf.

Appendix B: Learning Goals

The Libraries ascribe to the information literacy competency standards² developed by the Association of College and Research Libraries. The five standards are:

1. The information literate student determines the nature and extent of the information needed.
2. The information literate student accesses needed information effectively and efficiently.
3. The information literate student evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system.
4. The information literate student, individually or as a member of a group, uses information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose.
5. The information literate student understands many of the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information and accesses and uses information ethically and legally.

² *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* (ACRL, 2000).