Core Competencies for Librarians Engaged in Assessment

Presented by Sue Erickson, Virginia Wesleyan College

Based on research conducted by Sarah Passonneau, Iowa State University and Sue Erickson, Virginia Wesleyan College
What this webinar will cover

- Overview of the research conducted on job descriptions to develop the core competences
- Skill areas identified in the research
- Resources for developing those skills
- Job template
What is LLAMA MAES?

- LLAMA=Library Leadership, Administration and Management Association, a division of ALA
- MAES=Measurement, Assessment, and Evaluation Section of LLAMA
- LLAMA is for all types of libraries
Education Committee formed in 2011 - part of charge: develop core competencies for assessment librarians

6 library job websites and listservs were reviewed over 18 months

Search terms used: assessment, evaluation, metrics and strategic

231 job descriptions found with above terms were analyzed
Methodology

- Content analysis using Atlas.ti
- 64 codes were developed to identify competencies
- Codes were analyzed for co-occurrence
- Code families, super codes and subsequently networks were developed
Assessment Librarian positions

- 44 jobs; all were in academic libraries; most were ARL
- Top skill areas included:
  - Assessment Tools
  - Analysis/Analyze Data
  - Collaboration
  - Presentation
  - Assessment Methods
  - Innovative/Dynamic/Creative
  - Assessment Program (long term development of a program of assessment)
Non-Assessment Jobs with “Assessment” or “Evaluation” in the Job Posting

- 187 job postings in this category; 87% from college/university libraries
- 30% were instruction-oriented
- 20% were administrative positions (deans, directors, department heads)
- 16% public services/reference
- Instructional and administrative positions had more detailed assessment responsibilities
Confirmation of “Culture of Assessment”

- Inclusion of assessment in newer job areas, such as “Emerging Technologies” and “Digital Collections”
- Inclusion of assessment in more traditional job areas, such as archives, access services, cataloging
- Core competencies identified in this research can assist library administrators in developing new positions and reshaping existing ones
Where are we learning how to “do assessment”?

- Not in LIS programs: Askew and Theodore-Shusta found only 1 formal course on assessment & few programs requiring research methods
- On the job training
- Courses/seminars
- Conferences, such as LAC
- Self-directed learning
Recommendations for library assessment community

- Librarians can use core competencies to identify gaps in their own skills
- Assessment librarians can use our research to advocate for support for their own professional development
- Professional associations could identify gaps in professional development training
- Associations or LIS programs could develop a certificate program in library assessment
Recommendations for LLAMA MAES

- Reach out to PLA to more effectively research “assessment” in public libraries
- Add existing professional development opportunities to its Assessment Toolbox
- Reach out to LIS educators through the Association of Library and Information Science Educators (ALISE)
Top Skill Areas Needed for Assessment:
1. Background & Current Awareness

- Historical understanding of the growth of assessment in libraries
- Historical overview of important librarians and past initiatives
- Awareness of current national initiatives (LibQUAL+, ROI, NSSE, IPEDS/NCES, Balanced Scorecard, Value of Academic Libraries, etc.)
- Fluency with relevant library standards (ex. ACRL Standards for Libraries in Higher Education)
- Ability to identify resources to help develop skills and network (LLAMA MAES Assessment Toolbox, conferences, webinars, courses)
Top Skill Areas Needed for Assessment: 2. Research Methods

- Social science research design (focus groups, unobtrusive methods, etc.)
- Survey design (good construction, choosing rating scales, values, comment boxes)
- Developing a good research question
- Selecting the best method to answer the question
- Knowledge of influential library assessment methods (LibQUAL+, SAILS, RAILS, etc.)
- IRB training and ethical use of data
Top Skill Areas Needed for Assessment: 3. Statistical and Analytic Skills

- Background on descriptive statistics
- Introduction to basic statistical models (ex. T-test) and when to use them
- Understanding of quantitative and qualitative methodologies
- Introduction to basic qualitative coding methods
- Introduction to quantitative (SAS, SPSS) and qualitative (Atlas.ti, InVivo) software packages
- Introduction to analytic tools (web analytics, learning analytics)
Top Skill Areas Needed for Assessment: 4. Visualization and Presentation Skills

- Basic overview of graphic design rules
- Overview of different chart types and when to use them
- Visualization techniques to display qualitative data
- Slide presentation skills
- Good structural design (how to present a compelling narrative)
- Understanding your audience
- Good oral presentation habits (clear voice, general body language, hand movements, etc.)
Top Skill Areas Needed for Assessment:
5. Project Management and People Skills

- Basic group dynamic theory
- Methods to increase collaboration
- Methods to manage conflict (when different stakeholders want the assessment results to present divergent “stories”)
- Building capacity/buy-in for projects
- Team management skills
- Project management skills
- Methods to optimize creativity and productivity of a group
Top Ten: Background & Current Awareness

1. Knowledge of the history/background of library assessment
2. Awareness of national assessment programs and associations
POLL QUESTIONS

- Do you possess background knowledge in the history of library assessment?
- Do you feel you are up to date in current library assessment trends?
Background & Current Awareness Resources

- ACRL Value of Academic Libraries Toolkit - bibliography of resources
- ARL-ASSESS listserv
Top Ten: Research Development

3. Research methods - research question & selection of appropriate methodology
4. Research design - surveys, focus groups, observational methods
POLL QUESTIONS

- Do you possess skills in devising research questions and selecting appropriate methods for exploring them?
- Do you have skills in research design (survey design, focus groups, etc.)?
Research Development Resources

- Any social science research methods textbook (Sue’s pick: The Practice of Social Research by Earl R. Babbie)
- For academic librarians, audit a social science research methods course on your campus (see course listings under in Sociology, Political Science, Psychology)
Top Ten: Research Methods

5. Statistical analysis (T-test, Chi Square, descriptive statistics)
6. Quantitative and qualitative methods
POLL QUESTIONS

- Do you have skills in statistical analysis?
- Are you knowledgeable about qualitative research methods?
Research Methods Resources

- LLAMA MAES Assessment Toolbox - practical applications of research methods, and even samples from other institutions
- Atomic Learning or Lynda.com for tutorials on specific applications
Top Ten: Data Presentation

7. Data visualization (charts, graphs, graphic design)
8. Oral and written presentation of results
POLL QUESTIONS

- Are you skilled in presenting data visually?
- Do you have good written and oral communication skills?
Data Presentation Resources

- Books by Edward Tufte (http://www.edwardtufte.com/tufte/)

- Campus writing centers, writing groups, colleagues as first readers/proofreaders
Top Ten: Project Management & Team Leadership

9. Project management
10. Team management/leadership
POLL QUESTIONS

- Are you a skilled project manager?
- Do you have skills in facilitating/leading/managing teams?
Project Management & Team Leadership Resources

- Triangle Research Libraries Network Management Academy
- Facilitative leadership - [Center for Creative Leadership](#)
- Project management - [Project Management Institute](#), [Gantt Project](#) (free software)
- Team management - books by James Lewis and others
Professional Development for Assessment Librarians

- Library Assessment Conference
- Regional conferences (Southeastern LAC, CUNY)
## Hiring the Assessment Librarian: Job Template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competencies Required</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data Presentation Skills</strong></td>
<td>Slide show skills, summary skills, graphic skills, chart skills,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>table skills, clear spoken, concise, logical</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Data Analysis Skills</strong></td>
<td>Qualitative and quantitative; data coding skills,</td>
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<td><strong>Assessment Methodologies</strong></td>
<td>Surveys, unobtrusive methods, focus groups, learning outcomes,</td>
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<td>ethnographic methods, knowledge of non-traditional user</td>
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<td>assessment methods (i.e., graffiti boards, comment walls etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge of Assessment Software</strong></td>
<td>SAS, SPSS, Atlas.ti, InVIVO, Excel, Access, Other</td>
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<td><strong>Program Improvement/ Culture of Assessment</strong></td>
<td>Strategic Planning, Metrics, Library-wide assessment project/</td>
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<td>initiatives</td>
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Assessment Librarian Job Template Continued

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Excellent oral and written communication skills; presentation skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team work/Collaboration</td>
<td>Will work with multiple programs. Will work closely with program(s) <strong>PROGRAM NAME(S)</strong>. Will work closely with team(s) <strong>TEAM NAME(S)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Problem solving/Innovative</td>
<td>Good problem solving skills, (provide examples if appropriate). Good innovative skills, (provide examples if appropriate).</td>
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<td>Project Planning</td>
<td>Ability to start, manage and complete complex projects</td>
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<tr>
<td>Initiative and enterprise</td>
<td>Aptitude for initiating new projects that fit in with institutional priorities</td>
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Want more information?

- LL&M article
- Paper in Library Assessment Conference 2014 proceedings
- Contact: Sue Erickson, serickson@vwc.edu
  Sarah Passonneau, spassonn@iastate.edu
QUESTIONS?

Thank you for participating!