

**Mildred F. Sawyer Library**  
**Institutional Accountability: Understanding the Library's Value**  
**Revised: 2004 October 5**

Institutional Accountability

Higher education is judged by many criteria, such as operational efficiency and internal and external perceptions of quality. Institutional accountability is demonstrated, in part, by the development, compilation and review of measures of effectiveness and efficiency. These measures are intended to be continuously applied to quantify and qualify the institution's progress towards meeting its stated mission and purpose, and to guide the institution when making improvements.

To support the university's accountability efforts, the Sawyer Library considers:

- how do we contribute to the mission of the University?
- how well do we do it?
- how do we know?
- what do we do with that information?
- how do we tell others?

Demonstration of institutional effectiveness is through the accomplishment of goals and expected educational results that are clearly linked to the institution's stated purpose found in its mission statement. Ultimately, this means that there must be an alignment between the mission and goals of the library and the mission and goals of the institution.

Library Measures

The Mildred F. Sawyer Library maintains an Excel-based management information system of input, process and output data elements. Data elements are collected and compiled using manual and automated internal and external logs and records. Direct outcomes measures may be generated through automated pre/post tests (Blackboard) and logs and records from external information vendors.

Quantitative measures are critical when demonstrating accountability and include:

- inputs -- the resources used to support the library's infrastructure: collections, staffing, the physical facility and installed information technologies.
- activities -- what the program does with the inputs to fulfill its mission (conduct the program; teach classes, etc.).
- outputs -- the direct products of program activities. Measures identify how much work is performed and/or how many units of service is provided, such as the number of books circulated or the number of reference questions answered.

Inputs and outputs are invaluable measures for making administrative and operational decisions concerning the provision of library services.

Student Outcomes and the Library

“Outcomes” emphasize results-oriented goals directly related to education, research and service processes. Student outcomes refer to aggregate statistics on groups of students, such as graduation, retention, transfer rates, etc. Student learning outcomes document the change in knowledge, attitudes, and behavior in students over the duration of a program of study, and are intended to answer questions including:

- what do students know that they did not know before?
- what can they do that they could not do before?

Therefore, outcomes focus on results (program impact on students and other constituents) and the quality of services provided. Learning outcomes measure changes in library users as a result of their contact with an academic library’s programs, resources and services:

- new knowledge;
- new skills; and
- changed attitudes or values.

There are differences between and among outcomes for administrative and student support services, and outcomes for academic programs. The library’s goals and objectives can be characterized as fulfilling both support services and academic program roles by:

- providing library resources and services
- conducting instruction to improve student information skills. Educational objectives from our student learning outcomes assessment plan specify:

*Meeting the Requirements of the Core Curriculum*

Improve information fluency by further developing student skills and abilities to:

- + understand the components and stages of the information search process used to undertake an information-based course assignment, such as submitting a “research” paper
- + identify, locate, retrieve and evaluate information sources for use in course assignments
- + understand the ethical and legal use of information when presenting and supporting a course assignment
- + become more familiar with the resources and services provided by the Sawyer Library to meet information-related course assignment needs

*Preparing for, and Succeeding Within, a Major Area of Study*

Improve student information fluency by further developing their core-based research skills and abilities to:

- + identify resources not owned by the Sawyer Library and determine how to retrieve them
- + locate, organize and evaluate information from any source specific to the discipline
- + examine and compare information from various sources in order to evaluate reliability, validity, accuracy, authority, timeliness, objectivity (point of view or bias) specific to the discipline
- + demonstrate awareness of the scholarly communication processes for the literature of the discipline.

### Types of Measures and Outcomes

Different types of measures and outcomes have been identified. As a result, accountability requires an analysis that considers three primary measures and outcome types:

- Effectiveness Measures: results/performance concerning teaching-learning, scholarly activity (research) and community service. It includes accountability concerning the library's dual roles for both academic program and administrative support unit efforts. Generally, effectiveness uses or produces human-based knowledge or skills.
- Efficiency Measures: relating the amount of work performed/service provided to the amount of resources consumed. Generally, efficiency is non-human based, employing a tool such as an information technology or physical facility.
- Productivity Measures: combines efficiency and effectiveness in a single indicator.

### Effectiveness Measures

#### A. Learning and Teaching

The library conducts information skills instruction, and the library supports and contributes to faculty teaching efforts concerning information skills, the availability of resources to support course content, and student attitudes and values.

Learning outcomes would include the impact of library services, resources and instruction on the development of students' skills to effectively search, retrieve and evaluate information and information resources, fostering community and individual values concerning the ethical uses of information, and recognizing a need for lifelong learning.

Measures (in use and/or can be used)

- instructional objectives and student outcomes are specified so that what students are expected to know and do is evident.
  - + library has a current information literacy assessment plan
  - + direct and indirect learning outcomes measures identified in the library's assessment plan are, or can be, collected/compiled (see the current information fluency assessment plan for details)
  - + procedures, and processes are in place to evaluate and improve the quality and effectiveness of learning and teaching
- library provision/participation in formal and informal instruction/orientation
  - + number of library instruction/orientation sessions conducted
  - + description of student participants (course, etc.)
  - + number of student participants
- librarians maintain excellence in teaching and equivalent academic support roles.
  - + student and faculty class evaluations of librarian teaching effectiveness
- student perceptions of effectiveness of independent learning opportunities related to information fluency
  - + locally produced tutorials
  - + reference transactions involving substantive teaching
  - + term paper or other individual research advising sessions
  - + Web-based instruction
  - + available research and help guides
- the extent and effects of the integration of library resources use within academic programs and across the curriculum.

- + data from syllabi analysis of the number and type of assignments involving library/Internet research, and the assignment results when provided by faculty
- longitudinal data for same sample of students comparing year-to-year rating of their level of confidence about being able to perform specific information fluency skills.
- student perceptions of the effects of electronic databases on becoming information literate and academic performance, such as:
  - + has student use of the electronic databases affected the quality of papers and projects?
  - + have specific electronic resources or tools improved one's ability to succeed academically?
- faculty perceptions and experiences regarding the effects of network services and resources, such as:
  - + has the use of information resources via the University's network affected the quality of teaching material used in the classroom?
- summary of the results of library staff collaboration with other academic units to test and acquire new knowledge products and other instructional and information technology innovations to improve distance education and on-campus independent and course-related learning.
- perceptions of recent graduates about how their information fluency skills contributes to their success in graduate/professional programs and on the job.

## B. Service

Members of the library staff serve on institutional and school/program committees.

Measures (in use and/or can be used)

- library staff are members of committees and contribute significantly to campus programs and services.
  - + quantitative and qualitative summary of the results of librarians' memberships on campus committees and their collaborations with faculty and other academic staff

## C. Research

The availability and provision of library services and resources should have an influence on faculty research and publication. In addition, librarians participate in professional development within a student context (for example, librarians attend conferences that will support library service efforts).

Measures (in use and/or can be used)

- faculty perceptions and experiences regarding the effects of information services and resources, such as:
  - + has the use of the information resources via the University's network affected the quality of teaching material used in the classroom?
  - + do faculty members depend upon library services and resources for their research efforts?
  - + has the information resources via the University's network affected the way faculty do literature searches, conduct research, communicate, or publish?

- library staff participation/attendance at professional development opportunities

### Efficiency Measures

Measures (in use and/or can be used)

#### A. Access and Availability Measures

- proportion of collections/materials listed in OPAC
  - + inclusion of electronic sources and aggregate collections of sources
- extent and ease of access to library catalogs and databases for all on- and off-campus constituents
  - + match of hours open and electronic resources and services availability via proxy server
- availability of electronic collections (efficient because e-collections save space by not having to house the contents locally, saves labor when processing the contents, and are generally available 7/24/365)
  - + number and types of items (e-books, journals, etc.), number of databases
- user satisfaction/success rate in finding and obtaining materials
- re-shelving turn around time of print materials
- Interlibrary loan
  - + number of loaned and borrowed
  - + turnaround time

#### B. Use Measures

- number of remote and non-remote logins to the OPAC and other networked information resources.
- number of hits received by library-maintained Web pages.
- number of courses and students by academic program requiring use of library resources.
- use of collections and services
  - + reference transactions
  - + circulation transactions
  - + reserve transactions
  - + laptops
- user satisfaction with use of selected materials, services, and facilities.
- user satisfaction with availability and quality of library assistance.

#### C. Infrastructure Measures

- staffing
  - + number of professional, support and student assistant staff and how they are deployed to support campus and library mission and goals
  - + ratio of reference and instruction/training services staff to students/faculty.
  - + minimal number of vertical (hierarchical) organizational structural levels to facilitate communications
- collections
  - + number of locally held or accessible collections
    - by format of resource
    - by academic program

- currency of materials (copyright date -- “collection age”) for specific academic programs
- facilities/equipment
  - + facility square footage
    - ratio of public use to staff use
  - + number of seats
    - ratio of study (non-equipment) seats to seats at equipment
  - + number of public access stations
  - + number of public reference workstations
  - + number of public laptops for loan (reduces cost of wiring spaces; students can sit anywhere)
  - + number of public printers available
  - + number of registered laptop users
  - + number of seats and group study/workrooms per FTE
  - + number of pages printed (at no cost) from student printers (reduces staff intervention concerning printing charges)
    - cost per page printed from the student printers
  - + percentage of time that workstations are operational and not in repair

### Productivity Measures

Measures (in use and/or can be used)

- authentication of legal access to leased subscription databases from off-campus via the proxy server
 

Authentication via the proxy server is efficient in that it enables faculty and students to access quality information even when the library is physically closed. It is effective in that it impacts a user’s quality of life. For example, a percentage of the use of the proxy is during times when the library is open. With the availability of the authenticating proxy server, a user can be at home with the family and then later access the databases to meet their course needs without traveling to the library even though the library is still open. As another example, the proxy server enables access to the library’s electronic resources from any Internet connection on the planet, providing access for faculty while on sabbatical.

  - + number of proxy server logins
  - + day and time of day of proxy server logins
- cooperative resource-sharing agreements, and the resultant contracts with external information and document providers
  - + number of agreements, and with whom
  - + number of resources available
- interlibrary loan
  - + increases access and availability to other collections

### Outlay of a Data Collection/Reporting Form (Draft)

- identify the elements of the university mission relevant to the library
- state the library’s mission

Then (in columns?)

- state the specific goal
- state specific measurable library objectives and outcomes
  - + objective/outcome
  - + procedures or methods of assessment
  - + specified performance criteria for evaluating success
  - + extent to which the objectives and/or student outcomes have been achieved
- findings
- use of findings or making improvements

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 Ideas for measures come in part from: Lindauer, Bonnie Gratch (November 1998). Defining and Measuring the Library's Impact on Campuswide Outcomes. *College & Research Libraries*, 59, 546-570.  
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### **Mission Statement**

The Mildred F. Sawyer Library contributes to the overall mission of the University by making available, and providing access to, informational resources and qualified staff to support the teaching, learning and research needs of CAS and SSOM students, faculty and staff. It participates in the University's effort to teach students the skills they need to find and evaluate information; to learn rather than amass information; and to turn information into knowledge. The Sawyer Library also provides a place for students and faculty to read and study, to gather and deliberate, and to question, challenge and support one another. It is a goal that all members of the University community become independent, self-sufficient, self-directed, life-long information users.

### **Goals and Objectives: 2002 - 2005**

#### **GOAL 1: Acquire collections of resources in appropriate formats to meet the information needs of the Library's primary clientele**

Objective 1.1: identify and clarify the information needs of students, faculty, staff, and administration

Objective 1.2: create a collection development plan incorporating all formats

Objective 1.3: acquire materials supporting the collection development plan

Objective 1.4: ensure that access, primarily through accurate and standardized cataloging and indexing, is provided for Library holdings

Objective 1.5: promote a commitment by the University to the growth of the Library's collections in terms of reaching a normative percentage of the general operations budget in annual expenditures

#### **GOAL 2: Provide access to unowned resources in appropriate formats to meet the information needs of the Library's primary clientele**

Objective 2.1: increase access to and retrieval of information resources in electronic formats for the University community throughout the world

Objective 2.2: increase information retrieval opportunities for master's degree students

Objective 2.3: increase our cooperative efforts with other libraries and institutions to expand information services and resource sharing

**GOAL 3: Ensure the long-term availability of Library and University archival resources**

Objective 3.1: develop and implement a plan to preserve those resources determined to be irreplaceable, valuable, unique or essential because of content, authorship, or format

**GOAL 4: the Library's primary clientele will become self-sufficient in information access and retrieval**

Objective 4.1: guide the University community to acquire and improve skills in accessing, retrieving and evaluating information

Objective 4.2: develop and schedule classes for instruction concerning information access, retrieval and evaluation concerning specific products and services for both general applications and subject-specific disciplines

Objective 4.3: develop means to provide these services to Suffolk University students remote to the Boston campus

Objective 4.4: formally propose to the College of Arts and Sciences that information literacy be recognized as a core competency

Objective 4.5: create an expanded Bibliographic Instruction area of some 20 - 22 workstations.

**GOAL 5: Employ technologies that support access and retrieval of information, and increase user productivity**

Objective 5.1: plan for the expansion and integration of library technologies and services

Objective 5.2: maintain user productivity concerning information access and retrieval

Objective 5.3: enhance the Library's web site and its integrated library system as mechanisms to access electronic resources and information provided/about/created by the Library

**GOAL 6: Recruit, foster, and retain a qualified staff to perform those activities necessary to meet the information needs of the Library's primary clientele**

Objective 6.1: identify and quantify the need for additional staff to provide services

Objective 6.2: provide effective training for all Library staff

Objective 6.3: provide opportunities for individual staff development and education

Objective 6.4: periodically review working conditions and identify means for improvement

**GOAL 7: Provide an appropriate study, research and working environment for collections, users, staff, and services**

Objective 7.1: improve the conditions of the existing facility

Objective 7.2: request University resources to conduct a professional, internal space use study

Objective 7.3: develop a building program statement to quantify and qualify needs of a 21<sup>st</sup> century Sawyer Library

**GOAL 8: Assert the Library's role in the University community through active participation**

Objective 8.1: participate in University matters by convening, joining, or advising, committees and their activities that may affect Library services

Objective 8.2: collaborate with University administrators, officials, and others on all procedures, guidelines, and policy decisions affecting the Library

Objective 8.3: create a public information program to increase awareness of Library services and resources

Objective 8.4: ensure that the Library has the appropriate management and decision-making structures in place to support Library efforts

Objective 8.5: seek external funding needed for the Library to pursue excellence in accordance with the mission of the Library and the University