

Mildred F. Sawyer Library
Institutional Accountability: Understanding the Library's Value

Revised: 2009 October 16
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, review and reporting of measures of effectiveness, efficiency and productivity. 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 tests, 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 students as a result of their contact with the 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. Learning goals and outcomes from our student learning outcomes assessment plan specify:

Goal: Students demonstrate the ability to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use information ethically, legally and effectively.

Outcomes: Students will

- understand general library skills;
- search academic databases effectively;
- evaluate information sources;
- demonstrate ethical use of information; and,
- further develop research skills within their 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 (e.g., course)
 - + number of student participants
- librarians maintain excellence in teaching and equivalent academic support roles
 - + student and faculty 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 ratings 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 fluent 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 loaned
 - + group study room transactions (six-seat group study rooms only)
- 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 seats at two- and four-seat tables
- number of seats at two- and four-seat carrels
- number of seats in group study rooms
- + number of public access workstations (e.g., OPACs)
- + number of public research workstations
- + number of public laptops for loan
- + number of public printers available
- + number of pages printed (at no cost) from student printers
 - cost per page printed from the student printers
- + percentage of time that workstations are operational and not in repair

D. Return on Investment (ROI)

- usage figures linked to assigned market values (which are explained to the reader)
 - + value of books borrowed by students
 - general collection
 - reserve collection
 - + value of laptops loaned
 - + value of database usage from off-campus via the proxy server
 - + value of database access/availability and usage when the library is physically closed
 - + value of no-fee printing pages from library printers
- and then summed and compared to the library's University-supported direct operating expenditures as a ratio.

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

Reporting Measures/Metrics

Metrics exist within contexts. Therefore, metrics must be reported to the stakeholders interested in the context because of their perceptions. For example, metrics reported to students concerning library activities will be different from metrics reported to accrediting organizations because of the differing perspectives of these two stakeholders. When feasible, information will be presented as text and supplemented with visual charts or graphs, or other visual representations. The data necessary for reporting metrics will originate from the data stored in the library's statistical-based management information system, and will be accompanied with explanatory text.

A. Expenditures

- operating expenditures
 - + total expenditure by FTE
 - + staffing, information resources and other operating as a percentage of total expenditures
 - details by FTE (e.g., book expenditures by FTE; database expenditures by FTE; supplies used by students by FTE)

B. Usage

- totals for all transaction activities (e.g., circulation, reference, Interlibrary Loan; collection development)
 - + broad categories by FTE (e.g., circulation, reference, Interlibrary Loan)
 - details by FTE (e.g., reserve transactions by FTE; laptops loaned by FTE)
- library instruction conducted
- cultural/educational programs conducted

Appendix

Mildred F. Sawyer Library Strategic Plan

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 from the 2005 - 2010 Strategic Plan

Focus on Library Users

Objective 1.1: continually assess the library needs of students, faculty, staff, and administration

Activity 1.1.1: assess the library-related research needs of the faculty and graduate students, and estimate the cost to meet those needs

Activity 1.1.2: review the effectiveness of the Web-based "library user survey form" and "suggestion box"

Objective 1.2: evaluate, select, organize, and facilitate the availability/accessibility and retrieval of information in a multiplicity of formats to meet undergraduate, graduate and faculty needs

Activity 1.2.1: increase the total of accessible e-monographs including reserves from 28,000 in 2005 to 100,000 volumes by 2010

Activity 1.2.2: increase the availability of e-reference sources

Activity 1.2.3: increase the availability of e-reserves through the online catalog

Activity 1.2.4: increase the availability of Web-based help guides

Activity 1.2.5: evaluate the feasibility of merging the "free selected web sites" guides into the "help and research guides" eliminating the former as a genre of guides

Activity 1.2.6: increase the availability of media-based information news throughout the library

Activity 1.2.7: review the collection title by title and weed as necessary to improve collection quality

Activity 1.2.8: use the compiled collection report to analyze collection status

Activity 1.2.9: 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

Objective 1.3: recruit, select, develop, appraise and retain a qualified staff to perform the activities necessary to meet the library needs of the library's users

Activity 1.3.1: improve the effectiveness of the internally-applied professional librarian annual appraisal system

Objective 1.4: improve the library's space to provide an appropriate browsing, study, peer collaboration and working environment for collections, users, staff, and services

- Activity 1.4.1: increase the integration of technology into physical space
- Objective 1.5: employ technologies and methodologies that support and increase user productivity and self-sufficiency
- Activity 1.5.1: improve the means to access and retrieve library-provided information sources and resources via the Web (e.g., metasearching subscription-based databases)
- Activity 1.5.2: ensure wireless access from every seat in the library to the Internet and the library's networked printers
- Activity 1.5.3: help students to obtain licenses to install curriculum-related software applications onto their personal laptops
- Objective 1.6: manage technology as an investment
- Activity 1.6.1: enhance the integrated library system as an access mechanism (e.g., a portal) to as many library resources and services as possible
- Activity 1.6.2: find a means to transfer online and in real-time the necessary information from student records in the Registrar's database to the patron database on the integrated library system
- Activity 1.6.3: explore the means to reduce the current level of labor maintenance of the wireless network
- Activity 1.6.4: improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Sawyer Library's University-based Web site (e.g., navigation, appearance, and content)

Focus on Student Learning

- Objective 2.1: guide the University community to acquire, improve and appreciate the skills to effectively access, retrieve and evaluate information, and to use it ethically
- Activity 2.1.1: develop and schedule classes for instruction to improve information access, retrieval and evaluation skills, and to use information ethically
- Activity 2.1.2: develop means to teach and reinforce information skills regardless of the location of the student
- Objective 2.2: create a self-paced Web-based orientation / tour / guide / tutorial
- Activity 2.2.1: design, deploy and evaluate the orientation
- Activity 2.2.2: test the effectiveness of "active and mobile" by designing this module to use wireless Tablet PCs
- Objective 2.3: integrate information skills and technology
- Activity 2.3.1: encourage or otherwise facilitate the application of information competencies across the curriculum
- Objective 2.4: assess student learning outcomes
- Activity 2.4.1: apply the library's assessment plan to information skills instruction
- Objective 2.5: create an information skills instructional plan of measurable learning objectives and outcomes to support the "First Year Experience"
- Activity 2.5.1: introduce the "First Semester Library Experience" by teaching and reinforcing the information skills identified in the core curriculum in the First Year Experience and Seminar for Freshmen focusing on:
- orientation to library resources and services
 - search and retrieval skills including Boolean logic
 - ethical use of information
- Activity 2.5.2: introduce the "Second Semester Library Experience" that:
- builds on the first semester with different learning objectives and outcomes

- supports information skills related to core curriculum
- reinforces and expands search and retrieval skills
- critically evaluates information resources

Objective 2.6: create an information skills instructional plan of measurable learning objectives and outcomes to support the “Library Experience in the Selected Discipline”

Activity 2.6.1: introduce the skills and reinforce the learning students need to read the literature and work within their discipline and declared major

Focus on Collaboration

Objective 3.1: increase our collaborative efforts to expand information services and resource sharing

Activity 3.1.1: pursue consortia agreements with other library and information providers to leverage additional information resource offerings with cost savings

Objective 3.2: assert the Library’s role in the University community through active participation and by advocating the library’s agenda

Activity 3.2.1: seek to establish and maintain teaching, research and service partnerships with University Centers, committees, working groups, departments, programs and offices

Activity 3.2.2: support the Center for Teaching Excellence to meet its identified educational objectives, including its virtual efforts

Activity 3.2.3: determine the need of establishing a digital repository management system (institutional repository) for faculty publications, presentations and other documents, and if need is identified, then create and manage through the integrated library system

Activity 3.2.4: increase awareness of Library services and resources through a public information program

Objective 3.3: collaborate with the Afriterrra Foundation to facilitate access to its resources

Activity 3.3.1: provide technical assistance and other support as possible to digitize the map collection and make it publicly available through the World Wide Web

Activity 3.3.2: create a plan to physically relocate the Afriterrra Foundation’s resources to the Sawyer Library by the end of 2011.

Objective 3.4: seek external funding needed for the Library to pursue excellence in accordance with the mission of the Library and the University

Activity 3.4.1: seek external funding for pilot and entrepreneurial projects

Objective 3.5: adhere to international standards to facilitate global collaboration (e.g., metadata)

Activity 3.5.1: determine and apply standards concerning document and image scanning so as to enable appropriate presentation of resources on the Library’s Web site

Focus on Supporting the Institutional Infrastructure

Objective 4.1: support institutional accountability efforts

Activity 4.1.1: identify, plan, evaluate and report the value of the library’s contributions to support the institution’s mission

Activity 4.1.2: ensure that the library has the appropriate management and decision-making structures in place to demonstrate accountability

Activity 4.1.3: support institutional and program accreditation efforts through the library’s infrastructure

Activity 4.1.4: increase retention by participating in the efforts such as the institution's "First Year Experience"

Objective 4.2: preserve the University's history through its Archives

Activity 4.2.1: provide assistance to the University's Archives program to preserve Suffolk University resources determined to be of historical value and irreplaceable, unique or essential because of content, authorship, or format

Activity 4.2.2: link to information about cataloged materials in the Archives through the library's online catalog if possible