



Acknowledging the political, economic,
and values-based motivators of
assessment work:

An analysis of publications on academic
library assessment

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Research Question

- ▶ How do librarians identify and express motivators of assessment work?

Sample and Methodology

- ▶ Conference proceedings from Library Assessment Conferences
 - ▶ 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014 (361 papers)
 - ▶ 10% of papers in each year: 39 papers
 - ▶ Mix of keynotes, papers, short papers
- ▶ Content analysis in NVivo
- ▶ Inductive thematic coding of ‘motivators’
 - ▶ This study attempts to determine X...
 - ▶ The library used X methodologies/tools to...
 - ▶ We felt that better understanding X would...

Purposes of Assessment

▶ Prove

- ▶ quality assurance / external

▶ Improve

- ▶ quality enhancement / internal

Results: Prove and Improve

Motivator			
Develop Internal Expertise	2	Improve: 36 papers (92%)	Both: 13 papers (33%)
Contribute To Body of Research	4		
Involve Users	6		
Determine User Satisfaction	6		
Measure Contribution of Library	13		
Make Decisions (Current and Future)	15		
Improve the Library (Services/Resources/Spaces)	23		
Understand Users' Behaviours/Needs/Knowledge	24		
Advocacy and Justification	3	Prove: 18 papers (46%)	
Demand from Administration	4		
Political/Economic Situation	5		
Accountability	7		
Prove/Demonstrate Value of Library	9		

‘Prove’ Motivators

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“... ARL libraries are examining their value and impact with an eye toward defining their return on investment...”

- Dupont, 2010

“... external pressures on educational institutions by their stakeholders...”

- Lakos, 2006

“The political climate calls for increased accountability...”

- Stemmer and Mahan, 2012

“... provide briefing materials targeted to administrative offices and the President and Provost.”

- Brown, 2012

‘Improve’ Motivators

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“We hope these results will help illuminate current services and inform future improvements, planning, and implementation of library services and programs.”

- Harvey, 2010

“To assist staff in using data, not assumptions, to make decisions.”

- McCulley, 2010

“The first investigation concerned the sometimes long queues that formed... while students were waiting to use a computer workstation.”

Jager, 2014

“Does information literacy make a contribution to overall learning and transition for pre-college students?”

- Gilchrist, 2014

Recommendations

- ▶ Before beginning assessment work, identify:
 - ▶ What values and goals are motivating your work?
 - ▶ What will certain types of results tell you?
 - ▶ Will the results be used, and how?
- ▶ Clearly describe motivators of your work:
 - ▶ Near the start of the paper / presentation
 - ▶ Avoid using empty or buzz words (or define them)

Questions?