



ACRL
e & Resea
wancin

Karen Brown
Professor, Dominican U
Graduate School of Library and Info

Contributor:
Kara J. Malenfa
ACRL Senior Strategist for Spe

Contents

Executive Summary	1
Compelling Evidence for Library Contributions to Student Learning and Success	1
Building Evidence for Library Contributions to Students' Academic Success	2
Findings about Higher Education Assessment.....	2
Introduction	3
Institutional Teams Represent a Variety of Higher Education Settings.....	4
Connections between Library Factors and Academic Outcomes Investigated.....	6
An Expanded Array of Replicable Assessment Approaches for Demonstrating Contributions.....	8
Mining Data with Embedded Technology Applications	10
Using the Framework for Information Literacy for Assessment.....	11
Compelling Evidence for Library Contributions to Student Learning and Success.....	12
1. Students Benefit from Library Instruction in Their Initial Coursework.....	12
2. Library Use Increases Student Success	13
3. Collaborative Academic Programs and Services Involving the Library Enhance Student Learning	13
4. Information Literacy Instruction Strengthens General Education Outcomes.....	14
Building Evidence for Library Impact	16
Student Retention Improves with Library Instructional Services	16
Library Research Consultation Services Boost Student Learning.....	17
Library Instruction Adds Value to a Student's Long-Term Academic Experience	17
The Library Promotes Academic Rapport and Student Engagement	18
Use of Library Space Relates Positively to Student Learning and Success.....	19
Collaborative Assessment Fosters Library Leadership.....	20
Collaborating for Understanding.....	20
Collaborating for Results	21
Collaborating to Increase Library Advocacy	22
Conclusion	23

Executive Summary

Academic librarians from across North America continued to expand assessment practices through their participation in the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) three year program Assessment in Action: Academic Libraries and Student Success (AiA). Launched in 2013 by ACRL, in partnership with the Association of Institutional Research and the Association of Public Land Grant Universities, and with funding from the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services, AiA helping over 200 postsecondary institutions of all types investigate the library's impact on student learning and academic success. By promoting library leadership in campus-wide assessment projects, libraries are demonstrating contributions to issues of institutional significance.

Although each campus team carries out an assessment project that is unique to the institution's academic mission and priorities, the findings about different ways that libraries are contributing to students' learning benefit the higher education community as a whole by expanding the body of evidence-based assessment research related to students' academic experiences. In addition, numerous approaches, methods, and tools that the campus teams use to assess library impact can be replicated or adapted to a variety of different institutional settings and customized to align with specific campus academic priorities.

Compelling Evidence for Library Contributions to Student Learning and Success

The AiA project findings add support to a growing body of evidence that demonstrates positive contributions of academic libraries to student learning and success in many areas. The findings about library impact in each of the areas described below, which come from assessment projects conducted at different types of institutions, are particularly strong because they consistently point to the library as a positive influencing factor on students' academic success.

1. Students benefit from library instruction in their initial coursework
Information literacy instruction provided to students during their initial coursework helps them acquire a common set of competencies for their undergraduate studies. The assessment findings from numerous AiA projects that focused on information literacy initiatives for freshmen and new students underscore that students receiving this instruction perform better in their courses than students who do not
2. Library use increases

Introduction

Academic librarians from across North America continue to expand assessment practices

research focus of AiA. As each campus team identifies important questions related to institutional priorities and addresses them through a collaborative assessment process, the findings promote meaningful action around student learning and inform future library practice. Through these projects, the AiA librarians take a leadership role that has resulted in increasing the visibility of the library and its contributions to academic initiatives on the campus.

This report focuses on the assessment projects conducted by those teams that participated in the second year of the program, from April 2014 to June 2015, and presented poster sessions at the 2015 American Library Association Annual Conference in San Francisco, California, June 26 and June 27. In addition, each team leader completed a final project descriptive report, includes abstracts and images of the posters. These reports are fully searchable online collection. Each team leader was also asked to complete a reflective report and, while these second reports are kept confidential, aggregate and anonymous comments from the reflective reports have contributed to this synthesis. This publication is also informed by results from two focus group interviews taken in June 2015. (c) (s) (j) (a) (i) (v) (T) (U) (c) (f) (e) (1) (e)

The following are sample inquiry questions from the second year of the program reflect the variety of student learning and success factors investigated.

Will an evidencebased medicine instruction session improve students' accuracy and source quality in answering clinical questions? (A.T. Still University)

How does information literacy contribute to critical thinking in undergraduate students? (Arkansas Tech University)

What understanding do students have of the concepts "web" and "database"? (Des Moines Area Community College)

What is the influence of instructional collaboration between global learning faculty and library faculty on students' information literacy? (Florida International University)

Does one-shot information competency library instruction in courses prior to English 103, a freshman/sophomore level research and writing course, contribute to students' success in English 103? (Pierce College at Fort Steilacoom)

Does student use of library resources, spaces, and services correlate with self-rated efficacy in student-defined measures of success? (Wake Forest University)

What impact does the number of library instruction sessions and access to a course LibGuide

My biggest insight from this project was the realization that it is possible to measure the impact of attitudes and confidence in a meaningful way in relation to library instruction. This insight, I believe, will be the beginning of a new way to approach assessment that I will apply in future projects.

—AiA librarian, reflective report

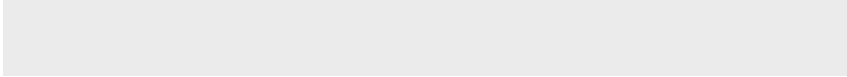
The approaches are developed to guide the collection of the data needed to answer the inquiry question formulated by the campus team. Surveys, rubrics, and pre and posttests were the most common methods employed by teams in Year 2 which parallels the types of assessment methods most frequently used by AiA teams in the previous year. Fifty percent of the campus teams in Year 2 combined two or more assessment methods for their studies. This mixed methods approach typically brought together quantitative and qualitative data for analysis, leading to a robust, contextualized assessment of the factors being investigated. The two projects described below highlight this approach.

At Montclair State University, the assessment project focused on government documents and data information literacy in the sciences, specifically as it relates to the university's new masters in public health program. A multimodal assessment process was implemented that included pre- and posttest measurements of session information literacy class outcomes, use of embedded online research guides, student reports of the influence on their learning of one-on-one research appointments with librarians, and faculty perceptions of the library's impact on students' success in two public health courses. The team found that these multiple assessment methods captured both quantitative and qualitative measures of student learning and also took into account different learning styles of students.

The Utah State University campus team investigated the relationship between course grades and library instruction provided to psychology students at strategic points during their degree-specific coursework. Although the team began with one assessment tool, an analysis of grade transcripts, it soon incorporated two additional tools to supplement the initial data and inform future directions: (1) student surveys of confidence with research skills and proficiency, and (2) a faculty focus group to determine skills that instructors want their students to have to be successful. The data each correlations between library instruction and higher grades. The lead librarian noted the benefits of collecting quantitative and qualitative data, "While some of the correlations are slight, we believe the feedback we received from students and faculty in the qualitative portion will increase those connections."

The following table presents a summary of assessment methods used in Year 1 and Year 2 projects

Table 5. Summary of Assessment Methods and Tools

A large grey rectangular block redacting the content of the table.

services that involves the library were documented by projects in the program's second year at Eastern Mennonite University and the University of Nebraska at Omaha

Arkansas Tech University identifies critical thinking as a student success indicator, and it is a specific goal of the general education program. The library offers a credit-hour elective course, Introduction to Library Resources, which is designed to promote higher order thinking in students. The AiA team at the university investigated whether critical thinking skills were indeed being used in the course. The assessment was based on the TRAILS (Tool for Realtime Assessment of Information Literacy Skills) pre and posttest rubric for 12th grade. Although the results were inconclusive in connection with many attributes of critical thinking, the rubric did measure a positive association between students' ability to use information literacy skills to apply higher level thinking toward creating a viable thesis statement and supporting statement with authoritative and relevant resources.

At Temple University the library reaches a large number of students in general education courses. One of those courses, Philadelphia Arts and Culture, enrolls students from all majors at all levels. In the course, students complete the same

i-5-11(, e)-1.1Tc 0 Tw 13.26.-

Building Evidence for Library Impact

The AiA projects are building evidence for library impact in other areas as well. The results of some of these investigations are described below. While these impact areas may not have been studied as extensively as the four areas discussed in the previous section, the project findings may not be as consistently strong, the assessment results do build evidence for positive connections between the library and students' academic success.

Student Retention Improves with Library Instructional Services

At most higher education institutions, student retention is designated as a high priority, and the campus library's contributions to this priority are receiving attention and recognition as a result of assessment studies that investigate the connection. Determining retention rates can include different measures, but the focus is typically on a student's continued progress from one semester to the next or a student's persistence toward degree completion. One of the eleven AiA projects in Year 2 that investigated retention in relation to library services is highlighted below.

The guiding inquiry question for the NorthWest Arkansas Community College

To enhance the library experience of Aboriginal (native) students ~~at the~~ University of Alberta, the library initiated PLAS: Personal Librarian for Aboriginal Students. Incoming students were partnered with a librarian, who maintained contact with the student and

Establishing partnerships across the campus for assessment work prompts consideration of the unique roles and functions of different campus units in relation to students' academic success. Several librarian team leaders reported that discussions about the primary focus of the project, the type of data needed to answer the inquiry question, and the most appropriate method(s) for gathering the data led to increased awareness among the team members about different perspectives on student learning and institutional priorities among the various campus units and departments. Identification of multiple types of data and sources for generating data, particularly beyond what the library might produce on its own, also expanded and enriched the teams' understanding of how student learning could be measured and described.

The collaborative approach also led to important conversations that got to the heart (and complexity) of teaching and learning. Each team member brought experience and a unique viewpoint to the discussion of such topics and issues as 1) core learning outcomes that all undergraduate students should achieve, 2) attributes that defined academic success, 3) the connection of academic rapport to student learning, 4) the relationship of classroom learning to career success. As one lead librarian noted, "I believe that the most valuable aspects of this project were the formal and informal conversations and discussions about student learning and assessment. We all learned something new from each other and became more aware how other departments on campus work toward similar goals and face similar challenges. These kinds of discussions also occurred in the libraries among the staff as a project progressed. Discussed potential contributions of library instruction within the broader context of student learning and academic experiences on the campus, for example, were considered. Meaningful assessment required clear articulation and common agreement about the specifics of academic factors and learning attributes that would be measured. These discussions, which were challenging, were essential to the collaborative assessment work being carried out."

Collaborating for Results

Collaboration with other campus units was also a means for the libraries to broaden their contribution to academic services and initiatives on the campus. The AiA program was the framework for several libraries to initiate a new program, service, or library practice and assess its impact.

At the University of Pittsburgh-

At Wake Technical Community College, the library collaborated with the English faculty and discovered new ways to expand its contributions to campus-wide assessment. The campus team investigated the impact of the library's information literacy instruction on student success. In addition to documenting a positive impact, the library increased its relationship with the English faculty and also noted that other departments on the campus recognized the library as more than a facility for books.

In these two examples, the librarians took a leadership role that was collaborative and results oriented and that initiative contributed directly to improving student learning and success at the institution.

Collaborating to Increase Library Advocacy

By leading a campus team through an assessment project, the AiA librarians advanced the mission of the library in alignment with institutional priorities. The library's contributions to enhancing student learning and increasing academic success and the role of librarians in documenting these efforts were noticed. On many campuses, the library is now recognized for its ability to plan and carry out assessment in ways that produce meaningful evidence about student learning. In more than one instance, AiA librarians saw the fruits of their efforts realized when the other team members or faculty and administrators outside the library advocated on behalf of the library. As one lead librarian explained, "The two nonlibrarians [on the team] are enthusiastic supporters who found the whole experience meaningful."

The AiA librarians reported that the team-based assessment project expanded and strengthened their leadership and advocacy skills as they led the campus team and, in the process, theory into practice. While it is relatively easy to acknowledge the importance of effective project management, the actual experience of negotiating group dynamics and keeping a team on track more difficult. For many of the librarians, the AiA professional development fostered professional and personal growth by integrating action with reflection. As members of a learning community during the 14-month program, the librarians were able to problem solve and test ideas in a collaborative, supportive environment. In their project and reflective reports, the librarians frequently mentioned building competencies in the following areas: (1) initiating partnerships with individuals and departments across campus, (2) feeling confident with leading team-based activities, (3) managing the process and practice of assessment, and (4) communicating the library contributions to students' academic success based on the project findings. This learning changed the librarians at an individual
