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Do or Do Not...There is No Try: The Quest for Library Value

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Proposal Information

Do or Do Not...There is No Try: The Quest for Library Value

Megan Oakleaf	Primary Speaker
Graham Stone	Presenter
David Pattern	Presenter
Melissa Bowles-Terry	Presenter
Kate Peterson	Presenter
Jan Fransen	Presenter
Shane Nackerud	Presenter

ACRL 2013 proposal review is a blind, peer-review process. MO

Session Format Panel Session

Describe your innovative application of technology as it applies to libraries.

How does this make you and/or your library more effective, efficient, or productive?

Preconference length:

Maximum enrollment:

Program Title

Do or Do Not...There is No Try: The Quest for Library Value

Short program description

Librarians today can establish academic library value by linking library services and resources to the missions, goals, and needs of their institutions. Statistical correlations between student library interactions and established learning and retention measures offer one path to demonstrable library value. This panel reveals research results from three libraries that successfully followed this path, shares best practices for “doing” value research, and embraces the quest to both prove and improve the value of academic libraries.

Full program description

Librarians can establish academic library value by linking library services and resources to institutional missions. Statistical correlations between student library interactions and established learning, retention, and attainment measures offer one path to demonstrable library value. This panel will begin with an overview of library value initiatives and then highlight the research of librarians from three institutions that have successfully applied a statistical correlation approach.

At the first institution, librarians studied connections between student academic success and information literacy instruction. They found a statistically significant difference in grade point average (GPA) between graduating seniors who had upper-level library instruction and those that did not. By matching records of library instruction with student courses, librarians determined the level of library instruction students had received, categorized students by level of library instruction, and compared their GPAs. Study results suggest that students learn more when they have library instruction in upper-level courses. This analysis of over 4,000 academic transcripts can be applied to “close the loop” and make decisions about developing tiered information literacy programming that does not try to “front load” all library instruction in the first year curriculum.

At a second institution, librarians measured how often, and in what ways, students use library services and resources. By measuring usage of 13 different library access points, data revealed a high level of library usage among both undergraduate and graduate students. Partnering with the institutional researchers, librarians investigated whether students who use library services tend to be more successful academically or are more likely to be retained after their first semester. Results show a positive correlation between library use and GPA, even when controlling for other academic success factors; the data also shows that freshmen who use the library are more likely to re-enroll for spring semester than those who do not. This project is ongoing; it will also follow the initial cohort of students through their academic career.

A third institution studied over 33,000 students at 8 universities and found a statistically significant relationship between library activity data (specifically the number of items borrowed and logins to e-resources in the library) and student attainment. These results have generated the next phase of the study which seeks to clarify relationship between library activity and student achievement by investigating additional data from one university. Both class of degree and percentage-level data about student attainment will be compared to variables such as gender, age, ethnicity, declared disability, retention, and reading list use. This data will be used to identify predictors for student outcomes, with a focus on engagement with library services, in order to understand how library activity relates to student attainment, including possible causal relationships. Results from both phases will be used to develop workshops focused on exploring possible rationales for identified correlations.

In addition to sharing these results, panelists will frame statistical correlations in the larger picture of library value research, describe best practices for conducting value research, and reinforce the need to both prove and improve the value of academic libraries.

Learning outcomes.

- Objective 1: Attendees will be able to explain the concept of correlation and the role of correlation in establishing and communicating the value of academic libraries.
- Objective 2: Attendees will be able to state several correlations between student interactions with the library and learning, retention, and achievement measures.
- Objective 3: Attendees will be able to form a plan for the investigation of correlations between library interactions and success measures at their own institutions.