Since the initial assessment was begun in the fall semester of 2011, the library has from time to time changed the assessment methods to improve on the type of data being collected. In the fall of 2014, an attempt to glean even more information was brought forth. In addition to assessing the Col.101’s and Col. 136 sessions we also had the Col. 100 sessions to assess. Forty-eight College Studies sessions, reaching 866 students were taught by eight librarians.

The pretest questions were expanded to try to learn more about the research and library use habits of the students coming into Jefferson College. Additional questions were added such as “do you know how to find a book” and “do you know how to find an article”, which were in the form of a simple yes or no question. A section was also added with questions on how many times in the previous year did they visit another library (e.g. high school, public or another college), did they check out materials from that library, and did they have to complete assignments that required library research. A final section was included that asked how true on a scale of 1(Not true) to 5 (Very True) were the following statements: I feel comfortable asking for help in libraries; I am good with computers; and I know how to find credible information for research.

The posttest question that is asked at the end of the LUI session, - name 3 things that you learned today about college level research- remained the same.

In addition to expanding the pretest portion of the College Studies assessment, we also added an end-of-the-semester posttest. This presented students with tasks such as put in order the steps to finding a book in the Jefferson College Library, and put in order the steps to finding an article. We also included a question asking them the number of times throughout the semester they came for additional library use instruction and checked out and used library materials and library space. The purpose of this type of assessment was to determine how much students were using the information they learned in their initial library use instruction session.

Even though the questions sounded useful when created, the results produced were not helpful in assessing the impact the instruction methods used in teaching these sessions.

**Summary of results: Fall 2014 – 866 responses from the pretest**

- 38% indicated they have never completed research for an assignment
- 48% of students indicated yes to the question on the pretest “do you know how to find a book in the Jefferson College Library on the subject of privacy”
- 47% of students indicated yes to the question on the pretest “do you know how to find a journal or magazine article on the subject of privacy”
- 44% indicated very true to “how comfortable they feel asking for help in the library” whereas only 2% answered not true
- 30% indicated very true to “I am good with computers” and 2.5% answered not true

**Summary of results: Spring 2015 – 224 responses from the pretest**
• 56% indicated they have never completed research for an assignment
• 55% of students indicated yes to the question on the pretest “do you know how to find a book in the Jefferson College Library on the subject of privacy”
• 45% of students indicated yes to the question on the pretest “do you know how to find a journal or magazine article on the subject of privacy”
• 46% indicated very true to “how comfortable they feel asking for help in the library” whereas 3.5% answered not true
• 31% indicated very true to “I am good with computers” and 5% answered not true

“Outcome-based evaluation is designed to get an organization, such as a library, to answer a crucial question: We do what, for whom, for what outcomes or benefits?” (Matthews, 2007, p.25)

Sometimes answering that crucial question comes with challenges and even the best laid plans don’t always work out. The assessment process tried during the fall 2014 and spring 2015 semester was one of those times.

Challenges:

Wording of the questions on the pretest was not as clear as it could have been. At the freshman/sophomore level basic literacy skills and comprehension skills should also be taken into consideration. For example, more than half of students each semester answered that they knew how to find a book at the Jefferson College library, yet only 27% could put the steps in the correct order on the end-of-semester survey. This could be because students interpreted the question as “sure, I can find a book, I can go look on the shelf and pick one”, which was not the intention of the question.

The end of semester survey was much too detailed and long. In addition, the response rate was low. In the fall of 2014 the end-of-semester survey was distributed to instructors via Survey Monkey. Instructors were asked to share the link with their students. Of 866 students that responded to the pretest in class, only 33 submitted an end-of-semester survey. The mode of delivery was not the best. In the spring of 2015, a paper copy was distributed to each instructor for them to administer the survey in class and return it to the library. Of the 224 responses on the pretest that we received in the spring semester, 132 surveys were returned at the end of the semester. This was a better method of distribution, but it was also more time consuming as library staff had to manually enter all the responses.

Conclusion:

Although some interesting data was collected in both the pretest and posttest in terms of students’ research skills and library use habits, it was of little relevancy to the methods of instruction and library’s understanding of the student population. In previous semesters a simple 2 question pretest was used to gather data, and no end of semester survey had been issued to gauge what students had retained. From the fall semester of 2015 on, the simpler way of collecting that data is the better way to assess; especially at the community college level.

Work Cited: