Culture of Assessment Survey

Year One Results Report

Introduction

The Culture of Assessment Survey was developed by the former Assessment Committee at the University of Manitoba Libraries. It was constructed to measure the University of Manitoba Libraries' progress in building a culture of assessment at our institution, and provide us with opportunities to course-correct and address concerns regarding assessment design and evidence based practice in the Libraries. This first survey, distributed to all Libraries' staff through email, gives us our baseline culture of assessment measure as an institution. It was available for staff responses between July 23rd and September 4th.

What Do We Mean by a Culture of Assessment?

A culture of assessment means that we have a Libraries-wide:

- Common understanding of the importance of assessment in our decision-making
- Expectation of evidence-based practices and services
- Commitment to improving service by a continuous process of iterative (cyclical) assessment, analysis, and action

Why Do We Want a Culture of Assessment?

A culture of assessment gives us:

- Better results: evidence-based decision making is more likely to lead to positive results than other forms of decision making
- More stability: within a culture of assessment, changes in practice and policy that were evidence-based are less likely to be altered for other reasons, and are thus more stable, more predictable (both for staff and library users), and ultimately better-performing
- Better job satisfaction: a culture of assessment encourages participation of all staff, not just people at the higher levels. People who feel that they are **able to** make a difference are more likely to try new initiatives and have higher levels of job satisfaction

Survey Design

The former Assessment Committee at the University of Manitoba Libraries designed the Culture of Assessment Survey collaboratively, using a number of examples from other institutions as an initial guideline. Tania Gottschalk, Les Moore, Vickie Albrecht, Carla Epp, Gary Strike, and Ruby Warren contributed to its design and development. The survey was created to measure four facets the Assessment Committee identified as indicative of a strong culture of assessment:

1. Libraries Commitment to Assessment
2. Individual Commitment to Assessment
3. Evidence-based Decision Making
4. Perceptions of Assessment

Each facet was assigned two to four questions, with the goal of keeping the survey a manageable length for busy staff. Questions for each facet were as follows:

Libraries Commitment to Assessment
1. I am given time to participate in assessment projects, whether conducting, planning, or discussing results.
2. I have been encouraged to attend assessment related training opportunities.
3. The Libraries frequently and openly discuss assessments being conducted, and their results.

Individual Commitment to Assessment
1. I think it's important for the Libraries to conduct regular assessments.
2. I'm expected to participate in assessment projects, whether conducting, planning, or discussing results.

Evidence-based Decision Making
1. Assessment is broadly used within the Libraries to make decisions.
2. Assessment results lead to change in the Libraries.
3. Services/programs are regularly evaluated for effectiveness.

Perceptions of Assessment
1. I am concerned about how assessment results may be used by the Libraries.
   a. If Agreed, Open Ended: What concerns you?
2. I know what assessments are being conducted in my unit or department.
   a. If Agreed, Open Ended: Can you provide examples of the assessments your unit or department is conducting?

Each closed question was made a statement with a five point scale labeled "Strongly Disagree", "Disagree", "Neutral", "Agree", and "Strongly Agree".

Results - Participation

Seventy-two complete surveys were returned, out of a total potential two hundred and twenty-eight respondents. Four additional respondents completed some questions, while leaving others blank. Their responses are counted for the questions they chose to answer, but have been excluded from calculating the overall response rate and confidence interval.

For this first survey, we have achieved a 31% Response rate with a confidence level of 10 (meaning each response percentage can be generalized from respondents to all employees confidently

within +/-10 percentage points – so if 50% of respondents report agreement, 40-60% of employees overall would likely report agreement).

Results and Summarizing Results Statements

Q1 – Assessment is broadly used within the University of Manitoba Libraries to make decisions.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	I Don't Know	Total
6.58%	30.26%	25.00%	25.00%	3.95%	9.21%	
5	23	19	19	3	7	76

The answer distribution across this question indicates that respondents are fairly evenly split between believing that assessment is used within the University of Manitoba Libraries to make decisions and believing that it is not. 80% of respondents to this question were clustered around the centre, which could reflect the effects of central tendency bias, or could indicate a lack of strong feelings across respondents. That 25% of respondents had no opinion on the above statement, and roughly 36% of respondents disagreed with it, means there remains substantial work to do in building this aspect of our culture of assessment.

Q2 – Services/programs at the University of Manitoba Libraries are regularly evaluated for effectiveness.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	I Don't Know	Total
10.53%	32.89%	22.37%	23.68%	1.32%	9.21%	
8	25	17	18	1	7	76

Roughly 43% of respondents disagreed with this statement on some level, while only 25% agreed. There is a slight indication that staff do **not** believe that services and programs are regularly evaluated for effectiveness.

Q3 – The University of Manitoba Libraries frequently and openly discuss assessments being conducted, and their results.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	I Don't Know	Total
7.89%	32.89%	19.74%	31.58%	5.26%	2.63%	
6	25	15	24	4	2	76

Approximately 37% of respondents agree that the Libraries frequently and openly discuss assessments and their results. Respondents who disagreed come in at 41%, so once again, distribution is fairly even across the scale with a central tendency.

Q4 – I think it's important for the University of Manitoba Libraries to conduct regular assessments.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	I Don't Know	Total
1.35% 1	2.70% 2	9.46% 7	37.84% 28	47.30% 35	1.35% 1	74

Roughly 85% of respondents personally believed that it is important for the University of Manitoba Libraries to conduct regular assessments.

Q5 – Assessment results lead to change in the University of Manitoba Libraries.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	I Don't Know	Total
2.70% 2	10.81% 8	31.08% 23	29.73% 22	10.81% 8	14.86% 11	74

Roughly 40% of respondents agreed that assessment results lead to change in the University of Manitoba Libraries, while roughly 13.5% disagreed. There is a large percentage of respondents that have no opinion or don't know what their opinion is, however.

Q6 – I am concerned about how assessment results may be used by the University of Manitoba Libraries.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
2.70% 2	28.38% 21	35.14% 26	24.32% 18	9.46% 7	74

Roughly 34% of respondents have active concerns about how assessment results may be used by the University of Manitoba Libraries.

Q7 – Please identify any concerns you may have.

Raw answers cannot be displayed for confidentiality reasons. Answers were coded and grouped together (when applicable) based on the subject of concern.

Fourteen out of twenty-five respondents who received this question chose to complete it (only those who'd indicated agreement with the statement of concern were prompted with Question 7).

- 3 respondents were concerned that there wasn't enough assessment being done.
- 4 respondents were concerned that evidence didn't inform changes.
- 4 respondents indicated there wasn't enough communication of assessment methods and how results informed decision-making.
- 3 respondents were concerned about assessments having proper methodology.
- 2 respondents indicated they felt assessments were only done to support decisions that were already made.

- 2 respondents were concerned about past assessment results implementations having failed.
- 2 respondents were concerned about a lack of connection between planning, assessments, and assessment results recommendations implementation.
- Other concerns raised by individual respondents:
    - Evidence based change isn't mandatory.
    - Concern over lack of context in using results.
    - Assessments could be negatively focused.
    - Assessment overrides staff knowledge.
    - Assessment duplication.
    - Concern about evidence/results suppression.

Q8 – In my position, I'm expected to participate in assessment projects, whether conducting, planning, or discussing results.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	I Don't Know	Total
8.22%	20.55%	20.55%	35.62%	12.33%	2.74%	
6	15	15	26	9	2	73

48% of respondents report that they are expected to participate in work assessment projects, whether conducting, planning, or discussing results. 29% believe they are not expected to participate.

Q9 – In my position, I am allowed time to participate in assessment projects, whether conducting, planning, or discussing results.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	I Don't Know	Total
8.22%	13.70%	24.66%	36.99%	13.70%	2.74%	
6	10	18	27	10	2	73

Roughly 51% of respondents report that they are allowed time to participate in assessment projects, whether conducting, planning, or discussing results. 22% report that they are not given time to participate.

Q10 – I have been encouraged to attend assessment related training opportunities.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	I Don't Know	Total
9.59%	19.18%	30.14%	32.88%	8.22%	0.00%	
7	14	22	24	6	0	73

Approximately 41% of respondents report being encouraged to attend assessment related training opportunities. Roughly 29% report that they haven't been encouraged.

Q11 – I know what assessments are being conducted in my unit or department.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
10.96% 8	28.77% 21	26.03% 19	34.25% 25	0.00% 0	73

No respondents strongly agreed with the statement "I know what assessments are being conducted in my unit or department." Roughly 40% disagreed, while 34% agreed that they knew which assessments were being conducted.

Q12 – Please provide examples of the assessments your unit or department is conducting.

Raw answers cannot be displayed for confidentiality reasons. Answers were coded and grouped together (when applicable) based on the subject of concern.

This open question was completed by ten of the twenty-five eligible respondents (only respondents who agreed with Question 11 were presented with this question).

- 4 cited space assessments in their unit/department
- 3 cited stats collection in their unit/department
- 3 cited service assessments in their unit/department
- 3 cited collections assessments in their unit/department
- Other responses from individuals:
  - LibQUAL
  - Usability
  - Cultural Assessments (things like this survey)
  - None

Recommendations

Although most staff are convinced of the importance of assessment, much remains to be done at the University of Manitoba Libraries, across all of the addressed facets of our culture of assessment. Greater communication and transparency about responses to collected assessment information, and the integration of assessment into the planning process, is necessary to increase staff confidence in our institutional assessment use. Greater promotion of assessments and their results, as well as broader staff participation in initiatives, is needed to improve our organizational assessment culture.

Suggested Next Steps

- User Experience Librarian to consult with the Learning and Organizational Development Librarian to provide more assessment related learning and development opportunities
- Promote assessment initiatives as they are undertaken

- Post assessment results with explicit connections to future planning and recommendation implementation
- User Experience Librarian to consult with Management Group regarding wider staff involvement during the assessment planning and implementation process

The survey is scheduled to be repeated in the Fall of 2018, subject to approval from the University Librarian and Management Group.