Rendering Repositories:
Taking out the Fat and Getting to the Impact

Surveying users about your digital collections can tell librarians and administration how collections contribute to institutional goals. This type of assessment could be replicated for almost any collection, not just for institutional repositories.

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NUTRITION INFORMATION
To determine the impact of the University of North Texas (UNT) Digital Library, including its UNT Scholarly Works institutional repository, librarians investigated the value as perceived by UNT faculty, staff, and graduate students. This involved a survey distributed to stakeholders and specifically tried to see how aware they were of the collections, what value they saw in them, what contributions they had made to the repository, and how the collections were used.

DIETARY STANDARDS
ACRL *Standards for Libraries in Higher Education* (2011) Principle 5, Indicators 5.1, 5.2, 5.5; Principle 7, Indicator 7.4

NISO Framework of Guidance for Building Good Digital Collections.

COOKING TIME
4–6 months, depending on taste

Serves deans, digital librarians, and repository managers.

COOKING TECHNIQUE
Survey, descriptive and inferential statistics

INGREDIENTS
- Digital collections/scholarly repository
- Survey
- Data analysis
- Reporting

PREPARATION
Look at what others in the field have done. Determine how to get email distribution lists for faculty, staff, and students.

THE ASSESSMENT
Decide on specific research questions, such as: Is there a relationship between perceived value and awareness of these resources by UNT faculty, staff, and graduate students?

Create operational definitions for terms. Generic constructs such as awareness, contributions, and use will need to be defined so that analysis is conducted consistently.

Determine what demographic information you need to collect: UNT collected role, degree level, major, department, job title, gender, and age.

Develop survey based on research questions. A copy of UNT's survey is available here: http://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc307537/

Use cognitive interviewing to refine survey questions. Administering a draft survey to a small group and receiving feedback will help you clarify questions and make sure things flow correctly.

Get Institutional Review Board permission to conduct the survey.

Launch the survey for a period of at least three weeks, but not more than three months. Send reminders either manually or automatically through your survey software.

Compile descriptive statistics based on demographics and simple results.

Conduct inferential analysis with odds ratios and logistical regression. If you do not possess these skills, someone on your campus does! Try a math lab, statistics professor, or office for faculty success.

Deduce the impact of your collections.

Use statistical analysis to answer your research questions. Use results in reports to administration. Demonstrate the value and use of your repositories by faculty, staff, and students.

ALLERGY WARNINGS

Be aware of all of the reliability and validity issues that go along with survey research.

Consider focusing your first assessment of this type on one specific collection, not the entire digital library.

CHEF'S NOTE

Our findings were that an increase in awareness of the UNT Libraries' digital repositories was statistically associated with a greater likelihood of multiple types of use and contributions back to digital repositories. Also, our graduate students were more likely to be aware of and use the UNT Libraries' digital repositories than our faculty or staff. We intend to repeat this assessment every 3–4 years as a longitudinal study to see how perceived values change.

RELATED RESOURCES

Library of Congress. *Digital Library Standards* (n.d.). https://www.loc.gov/library/digitalstandards.html

NISO. *A Framework of Guidance for Building Good Digital Collections* (2007). http://www.niso.org/publications/rp/framework3.pdf

Verheul, Ingeborg, Anna Maria Tammaro, and Steve Witt Eds. *Digital Library Futures: User perspectives and institutional strategies* (2010). http://www.ifla.org/publications/ifla-publications-series-146?og=2431

Waugh, Laura, Jesse Hamner, Janette Klein, and Sian Brannon. "Evaluating the University of North Texas' Digital Collections and Institutional Repository: An Exploratory Assessment of Stakeholder Perceptions and Use." *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* *41*(6) (2015): 744–750.