SPEC Kit 330

Library Contribution to Accreditation

September 2012

Holly Mercer

Associate Dean, Scholarly Communication and Research Services

University of Tennessee

Michael Maciel

Assessment Coordinator

Texas A&M University

Association of Research Libraries

Series Editor: Lee Anne George

SPEC Kits are published by the

Association of Research Libraries
21 Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 800
Washington, DC 20036-1118
P (202) 296-2296 F (202) 872-0884
http://www.arl.org/resources/pubs/spec/
pubs@arl.org

ISSN 0160 3582

ISBN 1-59407-885-8 / 978-1-59407-885-9 print
ISBN 1-59407-886-6 / 978-1-59407-886-6 online

Copyright © 2012

This compilation is copyrighted by the Association of Research Libraries. ARL grants blanket permission to reproduce and distribute copies of this work for nonprofit, educational, or library purposes, provided that copies are distributed at or below cost and that ARL, the source, and copyright notice are included on each copy. This permission is in addition to rights of reproduction granted under Sections 107, 108, and other provisions of the US Copyright Act.

The paper used in this publication meets the requirements of ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992 (R1997) Permanence of Paper for Publications and Documents in Libraries and Archives.

SPEC Kit 330

Library Contribution to Accreditation

September 2012

SURVEY RESULTS

Executive Summary 11

Survey Questions and Responses 17

Responding Institutions

..... 51

REPRESENTATIVE DOCUMENTS

Accreditation Process Descriptions

Duke University

Duke University Accreditation Process 56

Georgetown University

Middle States Accreditation. Introduction 58

Georgia Institute of Technology

Office of Assessment | Documents 61

Howard University

Library Assessment Plan—Goal 1 Objective 1a 62

Library Assessment Plan—Goal 1 Objective 1b 63

Library Assessment Plan—Goal 1 Objective 1c 65

Library Assessment Plan—Goal 2 Objective 2a 67

Library Assessment Plan—Goal 2 Objective 2b 68

Library Assessment Plan—Goal 2 Objective 2c 70

Library Assessment Plan—Goal 2 Objective 2d 71

Library Assessment Plan—Goal 3 Objective 3 72

Library Assessment Plan—Goal 4 Objective 4a 73

Library Assessment Plan—Goal 4 Objective 4b 74

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Library Assessment @ Illinois 75

University of Tennessee

Program/Accreditation Review Process 76

Programmatic Accrediting Agency Reports

University of Calgary

American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA). Standard 5: Library and Information Resources (October 2009) 78

Iowa State University

American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA). 21.5. Library and Information Resources 82

Johns Hopkins University

Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educations Programs. Sheridan Libraries 2012 CACREP Report..... 84

Accreditation Board of Engineering Technology. Sheridan Libraries 2011 ABET Report..... 86

Oklahoma State University

Library Report for American Medical Association Accreditation Review 88

University of Waterloo

Architecture Library Accreditation Report August 2010..... 91

Regional Accrediting Agency Reports

Brigham Young University

Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU). Library and Information Resources 5 98

University of Colorado at Boulder

Examples of University Libraries Evidence for Criteria 1, 3, 4, 5 of the North Central Association Higher Learning Commission Requirements for Re-accreditation 2010 121

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Institutional Self-Study Prepared for the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. Chapter 7: Library and Other Information Resources 127

Texas A&M University

SACS Reaffirmation of Accreditation. Core Requirement 2.9.....138

SACS Reaffirmation of Accreditation. Comprehensive Standard 3.8.1.....149

SACS Reaffirmation of Accreditation. Comprehensive Standard 3.8.2 157

SACS Reaffirmation of Accreditation. Comprehensive Standard 3.8.3 164

University of Virginia

Core Requirements 2.9 – Learning Resources and Services.....170

Comprehensive Standards 3.8.2 – Access to Instruction.....175

SELECTED RESOURCES

Journal Articles and Other Works.....181
Regional Accrediting Agency Reports.....182
Other Resources.....183
Assessment Management Systems 183

SURVEY RESULTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

According to the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, "Accreditation in higher education is a collegial process of self-review and peer review for [the] improvement of academic quality and public accountability of institutions and programs."[1] Accreditation is a cyclic endeavor, generally involving five steps: 1) a self-study, 2) a site visit by peers, 3) a follow-up report, 4) a pronouncement by the accrediting agency on whether to accredit the program or institution, and 5) a mid-term report and review. At the end of the term, the process cycle begins again.

Within the boundaries of this formula there is potential for great variation in the standards by which institutions or programs are measured. Institutions have the flexibility to establish their missions, set goals, and explain how they achieve them. Accreditors are moving away from inputs-based measures to outcomes-based measures. As a result, guidelines and standards are less prescriptive.

The purpose of this survey was to identify the scope of accreditation standards and the data provided by libraries to meet the requirements of accrediting bodies. The results may help libraries identify and understand what standards exist, and how their contributions lead to successful accreditation and reaccreditation for their parent institutions. Additionally, this survey sought to identify how deeply ARL libraries are involved in the accreditation process at the institutional level. As libraries strive to establish their impact and value in higher education, this measure is one way to gauge how institutional leaders perceive their libraries' contributions. Forty-one of the 115 academic ARL member libraries (36 US and 5 Canadian) responded to the survey between March 26 and April 30 for a response rate of 37%.

Regional and Programmatic Accrediting Agencies

There are six regional accrediting agencies in the United States. Canadian accreditation is done at the provincial rather than the federal level. Each of the responding US institutions is a member of one of the six regional agencies. The distribution of respondents' membership in a regional accrediting agency is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Respondents' and Institutions' Membership in Regional Accrediting Agencies

Regional Agency	Survey Respondents	Agency's ARL Members	%
North Central (NCA-HMC)	12	32	38%
Southern (SACSCOC)	9	24	38%
Middle States (MSCHE)	7	20	35%
Northwest (NWCCU)	3	5	60%
Western (WASC)	3	9	33%
New England (NEASC-CIHE)	2	9	22%
Canadian	5	16	31%
TOTAL	**41**	**115**	**37%**

The survey also asked respondents if their institutions belonged to various programmatic accrediting agencies. All but two (95%) reported they are members of one or more programmatic accrediting bodies. They identified 127 agencies that can be organized into 15 categories: 1) architecture and construction science; 2) agriculture; 3) business; 4) computer science, engineering, engineering technology, and science; 5) dentistry; 6) dietary; 7) education; 8) health care management; 9) medicine; 10) nursing; 11) pharmacy; 12) psychiatry, psychology, and social work; 13) therapy; 14) veterinary medicine; and 15) other programs. The agencies most frequently identified were ABET (applied science, computing, engineering, and engineering technology), the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), the American Psychological Association (APA), the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), and the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (CCNE).

Accreditation Reports and Site Visits

Thirty-nine of the responding libraries (95%) have participated in a regional or programmatic report in the last five years. Of these, 37 indicated they have participated in between one and 18 reports, for a total of 201. This is an average of 5.43 accreditation reports per library ($\sigma = 3.83$) during the last five-year period.

The highest number of reports were prepared for the National Architectural Accrediting Board (16) and ABET (15). The National Association of Schools of Music (8), NCATE, and the Council on Social Work Education (7 reports each) followed distantly. The survey asked respondents to select one report and briefly describe the library elements the agency asked for and what recommendations the agency had for the library. Seventeen respondents described regional agency reports; 27 described programmatic reports. In most cases, the accrediting agencies' follow up reports did not contain any specific recommendations regarding the institution's libraries.

Of the 37 survey respondents who have participated in the preparation of an accreditation agency report, 28 (76%) indicated they had participated in a regional or programmatic accreditation visit in the last five years. These added up to a total of 100 visits with an average of 3.70 per library ($\sigma = 2.49$). Visits at each institution ranged from 1 to 10 in the five-year span. Eleven respondents briefly described a visit by a regional accrediting agency; 17 reported on a programmatic agency visit.

Staff Participation in the Accreditation Process

The library staff who participate in the accreditation process varies, but associate directors (17 responses, or 55%) and directors (15, or 48%) are the most frequentparticipants. Other individuals who participate in report preparation, committee work, or site visits include subject librarians (such as "subject librarian for Journalism and Mass Communication") and branch librarians (e.g., "Head Veterinary Medicine Library")—particularly in the programmatic accreditation process—collection management librarians, and bibliographers. While survey comments indicate that library participation is not treated as a single-person assignment in many cases, only a few respondents indicated that a committee was formed for the accreditation process.

Associate directors have the broadest involvement, from serving on institutional accreditation groups, to preparing reports, to meeting with site visitors. Subject librarians and department or branch library heads most often prepare reports and meet with the visiting evaluation team. Directors most often play a role in the accreditation team visit.

Although respondents indicated that library staff worked with their institutional research office to prepare the accreditation report (36%) or to prepare for the site visit (29%), a greater percentage (58%) responded there was no interaction with that office. However, since some responses were for programmatic reviews rather than regional accreditation, involvement with the central institutional data office might not be warranted. The college, department, or faculty under accreditation review would typically address programmatic accreditation requirements. So, library involvement in the accreditation process may have been at the college/departmental rather than at the institutional level.

Online Assessment Management Systems

The survey asked whether the respondent's institution is using an online assessment management system (OAMS) to document outcomes, improvements, and quality enhancement plans. The implementation of these systems follows the trend among accrediting agencies to not only require institutions to report on their current states of compliance, but also demonstrate continuous evaluation and improvement within schools' processes and outcomes. Only 14 respondents (37%) report that they are using an OAMS.

Although there are several products on the market, most of the institutions use a system developed in-house (8 responses, or 57%). The commercial products being used by ARL institutions include WEAVEonline, StudentVoice, CollegeNet, Compliance Assist, iQuest, LiveText, Nuventive, and Taskstream. None of the respondents are using Academic Management Systems, Concord, Dataliant, Insight Assessment, Smarter Services, TK20, Waypoint, or WIDS.

Note: The survey did not inquire about the use of faculty reporting systems that can generate formatted reports that match agency standards or requirements, such as faculty qualifications and research productivity for accreditation purposes.

Data Reported

The data each accrediting agency requires to meet standards runs the gambit of specificity. Some agencies have precise data sets that must be reported as evidence of compliance. Other agencies require that institutions not only demonstrate compliance but also identify and justify the types of data used to support the school's claim to compliance. Some examples:

> "The library services and the computing and information infrastructure must be adequate to support the scholarly and professional activities of the students and faculty."
> ABET, Inc. Criterion 7

> "Library Resources. Library collections and other resources are sufficient to support the program's mission and educational objectives."
> American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) — Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board (LAAB) Criterion 7C

Table 2: Library Data Reported for Accreditation

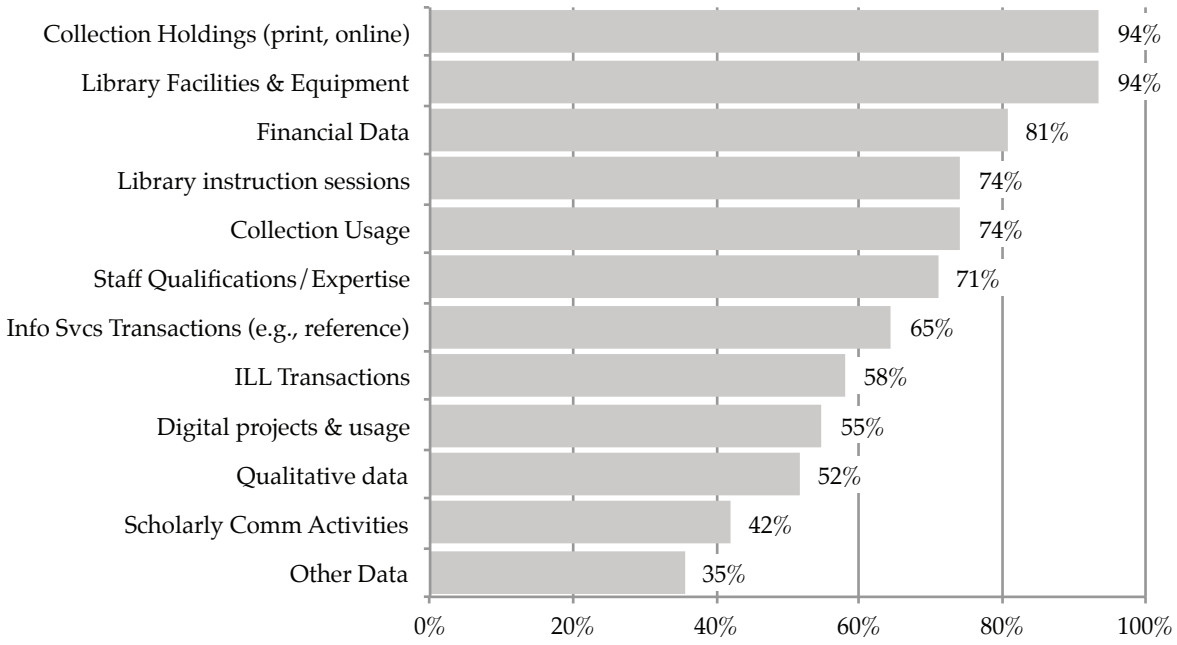
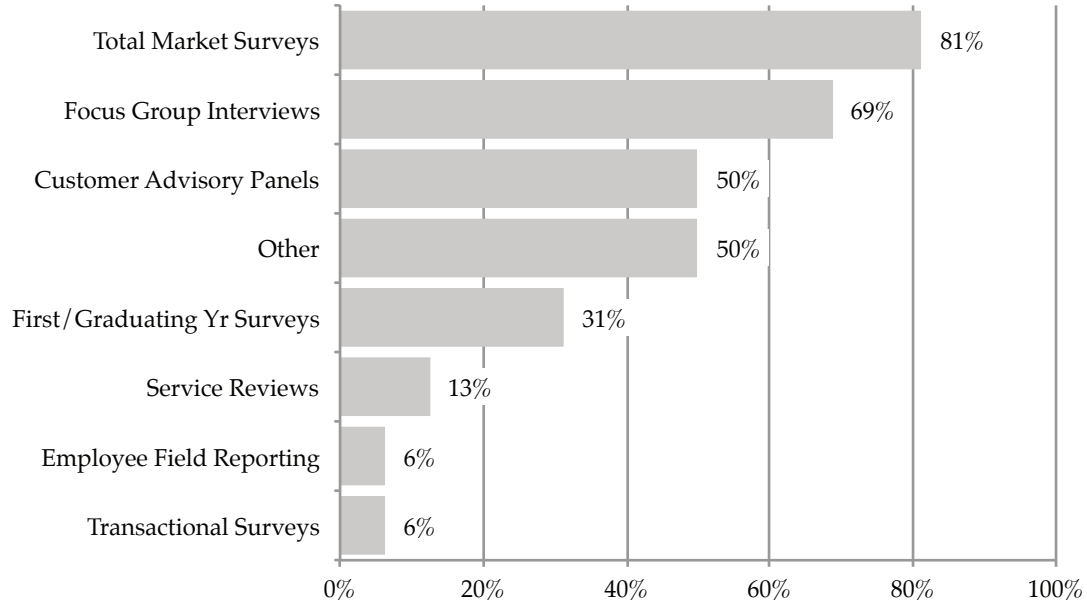


Table 3: Methods Used to Collect Qualitative Data



Survey respondents were asked to indicate what quantitative library data they reported for accreditation purposes. Not surprisingly, libraries contributed data to demonstrate institutional commitment, such as print and online holdings data, facilities and equipment, and financial data. They also contributed data that demonstrate engagement, such as circulation and interlibrary loan data, library instructional sessions conducted, and reference transactions. Most respondents (71%) indicated they provided evidence of staff qualifications and expertise, ranging from academic credentials to library faculty journal editorship and editorial board membership.

The survey also asked what methods the library uses to collect qualitative data for accreditation purposes, specifically those types identified by Leonard Berry.[2] Eighty-one percent reported using a total market survey such as LibQUAL+®. Focus groups are the next most frequently employed method, with customer advisory panels and other qualitative methods being used less frequently. Only one respondent reported using transactional surveys, even though these types of surveys have the broadest possible applications (e.g., in person reference transactions, online reference transactions, use at the conclusion of a website transaction, completion at the end of an instructional session, etc.) and are, relatively speaking, the easiest to construct.

Overall, 31 of the survey respondents (76%) indicated they used quantitative devices to collect data for accreditation purposes, compared to only 18 (44%) that use qualitative tools to demonstrate library impact for accreditation reporting.

Conclusion

As one respondent noted, "Library staff do not always know how library-contributed data is summarized for inclusion in [a] final report to the agency. Library staff have also noted that often the questions asked by the accrediting agency about library resources and services seem 'out of date' with current collection and service models." The data collected in this survey supports that perspective; those accrediting agencies that ask libraries to provide data still tend to ask for a report of volumes or subscription counts. However, another respondent noted, "Over the past several years, we've seen a trend away from a lot of very detailed questions (e.g., about numbers of volumes) to a more open-ended 'describe library resources' sort of approach. When we meet with reviewers, we are hearing slightly less emphasis on collections overall (though more emphasis on off-campus access to e-collections) and more emphasis on facilities than in the past, e.g., questions about ample study space—including availability of separate spaces for group work and quiet study, 24-hr access to the building, adequacy of wireless service."

It may be that the survey was conducted during an extended time of transition for accrediting agencies and higher education institutions. Accrediting bodies are shifting quantitative measures of library effectiveness (volume counts, hours open) to outcomes-based, qualitative measures. Libraries now must explain how their operations enhance student learning and institutional effectiveness, and, as a result, have a great deal of flexibility in how justification is provided. Libraries must determine what is appropriate and adequate, and make the case they meet the standards set by accrediting bodies.

For the time being, ARL member libraries can neither stop counting nor avoid justifying their effectiveness in supporting the mission of the larger institution. While a one-size-fits-all approach to program reviews and accreditation is neither feasible nor desirable, there is merit in a holistic approach to collecting and reporting library assessment data for accreditation. In 2005, ARL library directors indicated that the current ARL statistics failed to adequately describe or measure the effectiveness and impact of a 21st century research library. Since then, ARL has begun to lead the way in identifying more flexible statistics, including both quantitative and qualitative metrics, which can be collected and used as comparisons and benchmarks to each of its member institutions.

1 Council for Higher Education Accreditation. "CHEA-at-a-Glance" (2006), http://www.chea.org/pdf/chea_glance_2006.pdf Accessed August 18, 2012.

2 Berry, Leonard L. *On Great Service: a Framework for Action*. New York: Free Press, 1995.