

## **Research and Assessment Unit (RAU) Plan: Calendar years 2009 and 2010**

RAU exists to collect and analyze relevant evidence and data about trends, needs, possibilities, and performance in order to inform CUL decision making and to report about CUL's activities to the university and outside agencies.

### **ASSESSMENT NEEDS**

In order to provide best fit library services, CUL needs to know

- CU priorities so that CUL can stay in step
- how people learn, teach, and do research
- what contributes to successful learning/teaching/research outcomes
- how library collections, services, and systems align with how people learn, teach, and do research
- need for, usage levels of, impact of, and satisfaction with our collections and programs
- how efficient the library is at providing the needed collections and programs
- relevant trends in higher education, libraries and the information industry

### **ASSESSMENT ROLES**

CUL is a vibrant, complex institution with a high level of activity system-wide. Organizations with long term success share some attributes, one of which is a culture of assessment. This involves assessment activities permeating all planning and services, and assessment being undertaken throughout the organization. RAU, therefore, is not the only entity undertaking assessment in CUL. RAU undertakes central, large-scale assessment activities outlined below, as well as custom projects sponsored by the Library Executive Group or other high-priority projects. RAU also strives to support assessment activities and projects undertaken by other units through consulting, coordination and providing relevant communication channels and resources.

### **COMPONENTS OF A PROACTIVE ASSESSMENT PROGRAM AND RAU ACTIONS PLANNED**

#### **1) CUL directions perspective**

- RAU recommends ongoing monitoring of CU priorities as a basis for CUL strategic planning
  - Interview colleges every 3 years or so before CUL planning (using the 2000 project model lead by Sarah) about their goals and metrics that matter to them

- Ongoing communication by UL and AULs with colleges
- Ongoing monitoring of shifting user priorities via the outreach and subject specialist staff
- Ongoing monitoring of internal CU college publications as indicator of what CU values and sees as important or trendsetting
  - RAU action:** when college strategic directions are published, analyze them for implications for the library. Afterwards, if Lib Exec deems it necessary, conduct college interviews or environmental scan, or help develop methodology for LibExec or outreach staff.
  - RAU lead:** Rich
  - Anticipated major players:** LibExec, possibly outreach staff and subject specialists
  - RAU is successful** when it collects or helps collect, and communicates to LibExec data that will improve CUL's understanding of CU College goals and directions relevant to the library. Increased level of understanding is acknowledged by LibExec.

- Evaluate CUL's progress towards its strategic goals on an ongoing basis, at least annually. Best done if goals are written with formal objectives and appropriate metrics. **RAU recommends that the next round of strategic planning is conducted with this in mind.**

## 2) CUL use and users perspective

- Support the instruction program in assessing its contributions to higher education outcomes.
  - RAU action:** collaborate with the Instruction Committee and the Information Competency Initiative on building a learning outcomes assessment program for library instruction.
  - RAU lead:** Gaby
  - Anticipated major players:** Instruction Committee
  - RAU is successful** when it contributes to supporting learning outcomes assessment for the library's instruction program. Eventually such assessment should produce data that can improve the outcomes of the instruction program. RAU builds results into accreditation self study if the timing allows and results lend themselves to this.
- Participate in and contribute to CU accreditation self study
  - RAU action:** RAU is representing CUL on one of the accreditation working groups. We anticipate two major areas of relevance: provide library metrics to demonstrate library support

and represent the library's role in information literacy by investigating learning outcomes

**RAU lead:** Zsuzsa

**RAU is successful** if participation leads to meaningful contribution to accreditation self study and develops better relationship with other CU entities represented on the working group.

- Gauge user satisfaction with particular aspects of the library as well as find out more about user needs
  - RAU action:** investigate options for methodology such as interviews with up-and-coming faculty, graduate students and undergraduates, or a large scale user survey every 2-3 years for longitudinal data. What are gains and benefits of qualitative approaches, or repeating LibQual vs. doing a home-grown survey?
  - From RAU:** all
  - RAU is successful** if, after cross-unit discussion about research questions and after investigation of pros and cons of possible approaches, it brings a recommendation to Lib Exec on how to gather user satisfaction data.
  
- Make use of existing channels and data for our purposes; try to influence questions that generate library impact data on future IRP surveys
  - RAU action:** work with IRP on getting correlations from PULSE between library-related and research skills related data. Work with IRP to include library impact questions into next senior survey. Look into possible usefulness of getting longitudinal library data from IRP surveys
  - From RAU:** Zsuzsa and Joanne
  - RAU is successful** if it makes available library-specific data from IRP results specially presented to answer library-specific questions. If IRP is willing to ask questions that reflect library priorities.
  
- Conduct research to keep in touch with local user work practices and priorities – communicate trends. The Extensible Catalog user study project is currently doing this – keep in touch with developments for future needs. Consider updating personas.
  
- Support the Mellon study investigating possible intervention programs for fourth year PhD students in the humanities.
  - RAU action:** work with Kornelia on finding out why fourth year students are struggling
  - From RAU:** Zsuzsa and Gaby
  - RAU successful** if it helps shape the intervention program through helping unearth source of difficulties that PhD students in the humanities encounter at this point in their academic careers.

### 3) Growth and assessment culture perspective

- Monitor literature and communicate results via easy-to-use system that allows multiple contributors all around CUL for distributed monitoring. Some major fields to include are higher education outcomes and metrics, CU and college publications on trends/goals/metrics, major trends in library practices and innovation, and user work practices

**RAU action:** create a trend tracker section of RAU's website and RSS feed. RAU will pre-populate this space with articles, publicize it to CUL staff and open it up for contributions and comments by all staff. RAU will also contribute to the site in an ongoing manner for sections relevant to its mission, such as assessment. RAU will recruit ongoing contributors from CUL to the site.

**RAU lead:** Rich

**Anticipated major players:** Jenn Colt-Demaree, Jim Reidy for migration from CommonSpot to Drupal

**RAU is successful** if new web site and RSS feed go online and become actively used by CUL as evidenced by steady submissions and comments to the trend tracker.

- Provide outreach, training, consulting, and support for non-RAU assessment efforts.

**RAU action:**

1) host survey series with Professional Development Committee during Spring 2009 including survey discussion as well as a training session and possibly a panel

2) participate in Professional Development week by presenting two sessions. One a case study based on the digital sign project, the other about using data to tell the library's story

3) create new RAU web site with trend tracker, resources, and easy links to eCommons and annual data collection resources

4) keep building RAU skill sets via training and taking on projects with methodologies that are new to RAU

**From RAU:** all

**Anticipated major players:** Professional Development Committee, Ellen and Carla for digital sign presentation, Jenn Colt-Demaree and Jim Reidy for web site migration from CommonSpot to Drupal

**RAU is successful if** survey events and presentations are well-attended and lead to awareness of RAU and connections built with non-RAU staff. New web-site will be online by end of summer. Each member of RAU develops a major new assessment-related skill each year.

- Communicate, disseminate, preserve assessment results from RAU and elsewhere in CUL

**RAU action:** discuss with Elaine Engst and David Ruddy the appropriateness of eCommons for this purpose, reevaluate platform as needed.

work with DLIT on access levels, put up all relevant results, publicize availability and encourage non-RAU reports to be added. Monitor repository-related developments within CUL in case a better solution emerges.

**From RAU:** Zsuzsa and Rich

**Anticipated major players:** Elaine Engst, David Ruddy, George from DLIT about eCommons access levels

**RAU is successful** if archive site includes more data with CUL staff turning to it for information. Use of site will be tracked to gauge use.

- Assess level of staff engagement

**RAU action:** work with Linda Bryan to repeat ClimateQual once every 3-5 years

**From RAU:** TBD

**Anticipated major players:** Linda Bryan

**RAU is successful** if periodic checks of the level of staff engagement are available.

#### 4) Internal business process and financial perspective

- Data collection via data collection system for reporting, benchmarking, decision-making and PR

**RAU action:**

1) streamline and adjust data collected to better represent current trends in library practices and needs for decision-making (e.g. electronic resources, LOGS, work with collection development on their needs)

2) streamline, as possible, data and data collection methods for what is reported to outside agencies

3) identify key indicators for strategic trend tracking based on balanced scorecard framework

4) if applicable, and requested by Lib Exec, participate in identifying key metrics to help track progress on goals in the next round of strategic plan – best done concurrently with planning

5) continue to investigate feasibility of a better technological solution for data collection. If found feasible, pursue its creation.

**From RAU:** Linda and all

**Anticipated major players:** DLIT, Bill Kara, unit data providers, collection development

**RAU is successful** if we can eliminate some measures that are high-cost and low-impact, if we can produce and report more data about electronic resource use, and if we produce key indicators that help show library value and trends. Further success means moving our data to a platform that can be more easily queried for ad-hoc needs.

- Do one major program evaluation a year based on invitation from AUL or department head

**RAU action:** conduct a project to assist the Communications department evaluate the relative effectiveness of different communication channels as well as other aspects of the program as requested

**RAU lead:** Zsuzsa

**Anticipated major players:** Communications

**RAU is successful if it** produces data that answers research questions posed by Xin and Ellen. Helpfulness of data is acknowledged by Xin and Ellen.