

Running Head: EVALUATION PLAN

Evaluation Plan for
The Newman Division of Nursing Library
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Library evaluation can seem a vague and overwhelming task. Yet, it can also be simplified as: “[consisting] of comparing ‘what is’ to ‘what ought to be’” (Van House et al, 1990, p.3). In my previous paper, the Newman Division of Nursing (NDN) Library’s main patrons, students, were the focus of a community analysis. In this paper, I hope to offer an evaluation plan for the NDN Library to gage the collection, facilities, and programs in terms of user needs.

The goal of this evaluation is to point to areas in programs and service that need improvement in the Newman Division of Nursing (NDN) Library. Robbins-Carter and Zweizig state it thus:

“The purpose of an evaluation is not just to know whether to feel good about some aspect of the library. Its purpose is to allow us to make better decisions about the library – to identify the aspects that might be improved and functions that need to be speeded up or made less expensive” (Robbins-Carter & Zweizig, 1985)

The NDN Library was created to serve NDN faculty and students, as well as the hospital community (Newman Division of Nursing, 2006). The library is overseen by both Emporia State University’s School of Library and Information Management (SLIM), as well as the NDN. The library is staffed by graduate assistants enrolled in Emporia State University’s SLIM master’s program, and three technical assistants hired from the students at the NDN. There is a senior and junior graduate assistant position. This creates some continuity of staff at the NDN library. One of the expectations and goals of every graduate assistant who works at the NDN library is to find develop a project for the improvement of the NDN library.

Emmanuel found in her collection evaluation that, “Many libraries have found that a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, or use-centered and collection-centered methods, is the best solution” (2002, p. 83). Nicholson takes this concept further. According to Nicholson, “There is not a single measure that can be taken that represents the library; multiple measures are needed to holistically understand the entire library system” (2004, p. 174). This is especially true of the NDN Library. Any one evaluation would target such a tiny part of an already small library, and the resulting change would have little effect on the whole library organism. Therefore, this evaluation will target the entire NDN library. Specifically: programs, services targeted toward the students will be addressed. The NDN Library is a small organization, and an evaluation of the whole organization on a regular basis is not unrealistic. The library is utilized daily by students, and somewhat less frequently by faculty. Small, half-hour infoliteracy “modules” are conducted by the librarians a few times a year during various classes. The collection is current, and is weeded and inventoried on a yearly rotation. According to the most recent yearly survey, completed in May of 2006, no area of the library is completely lacking, although there are areas within some programs and services with room for improvement. (2006).

“Librarians must...consider the user’s viewpoint of their use experience,” and in keeping with this, the NDN Library conducts a yearly survey (Nicholson, 2004, p 170). Currently, the survey is the main method of measurement used in evaluating the library. This survey, passed out to all the students in a class, is not required to be completed; however, most do. The 2006 survey consisted of eight questions, 6 of which asked students to rank services and programs offered in terms of satisfaction. Eighty-nine

surveys were passed out and completed. The division chair must approve this survey before it can be distributed.

While the survey is a useful tool, and provides useable data, it does not give a complete enough measurement of the NDN Library. At the very least, the survey should include more questions pertaining to use of the collection, and questions about the relevance and usefulness of the infoliteracy modules. While the book collection is weeded on a yearly rotation, very little is done to evaluate the periodical collection. There is no policy or procedure in place to weed journals. Quizzes could also be given on skills learned in the infoliteracy modules, providing both output, and some measure of outcome. Some basic observation is conducted on a regular basis by the library technicians as to the use of the library at certain times of the day, and the use of certain online databases. However, more general observation; such as the number of students using study areas, or the number of students using materials in the stacks to the number of students using periodicals, could be conducted. Further, focus groups including not only students, but also faculty, would serve to fill in areas that are found to be unsatisfactory on the survey with concrete ways to improve those areas. All elements of this evaluation plan are to take place within the school year.

It is important to note that while, “Measurement produces data; ...evaluation creates information” (Nicholson, 2004, p 175). Nicholson goes on to plot internal and external views of the library system and the use of the library in a four-square chart using evaluation criteria for measurement. This is especially useful for organizing library-wide evaluations. In the case of the NDN Library, primary criteria to focus on are relevance, quality, and efficiency. Better measures of the outcomes of the infoliteracy modules, for

example, could speak to all three criteria, and even a weeding plan for the periodicals collection would improve library efficiency. Data collected from this evaluation would not only improve the library for the NDN, but also provide direction for the graduate assistant librarians. Arguing for a holistic evaluation plan acknowledges that, “all components of the library function as a single system, and making changes based upon an evaluation of a small component of that system can be problematic” (Nicholson, 2004, p 179).

In this evaluation plan, I have outlined areas for evaluation improvement; including an improved survey, periodicals and journals weeding policy, quizzes for the infoliteracy modules, increased observation, and faculty/student focus groups. Yet in looking at the current evaluation processes in place, and proposed evaluation processes, it is important to remember that no one evaluation process will be a cure-all for a library. In fact, “each step in the evaluation process may result in learning more about the [aspects] of the library being evaluated” (Robbins-Carter & Zweizig, 1985). It is my hope that this evaluation will do just that.

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