



**Review of**

**“ASSESSMENT OF LIBRARY SERVICES:  
AN EXAMINATION OF SERVICE QUALITY  
AND OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT,”**

**presented by Peter Heron at the 2001 OK ACRL Conference**

by Sherry Young

During OK ACRL's 2001 annual conference, author and library school professor Peter Heron discussed the concepts of service quality and outcomes assessment. Insuring service quality centers on evaluation of library services from a customer perspective and requires the following steps: measuring the level of discrepancy between expectation or wants of library “customers” and their perception of what the library actually provides, identifying situations in which the customers expect more than they believe they receive, and taking action that decreases or eliminates such gaps. Dr. Heron criticized over-use and misuse of the survey method as a data-gathering technique and argued in favor of use of alternative data collection methods. Such alternative methods include, according to Professor Heron, focus groups, customer advisory panels, satisfaction analysis, and transaction log and complaint analysis. Underlying the emphasis on service quality is the belief that use of the customer perspective is the most accurate measure of quality.

Professor Heron discussed outcomes assessment with regard to information literacy skills. Making a distinction between objectives related to lower order skills and higher order skills, Dr. Heron discussed his perception of a need to focus on higher order skills, such as those related to problem solving and critical thinking. He listed ways to measure outcomes directly and ways to measure them

indirectly. Professor Heron's list of direct measures included the following: pre/post tests, developmental portfolios, capstone courses, content analysis, think-aloud protocols, citation analysis, tests, videotape or audiotape evaluation, and exit interviews. His list of indirect measures included these items: graduation rates, professional licensure, retention rates, focus groups, and surveys. Heron's talk succeeded in generating interest in the topics of service quality and outcomes assessment. His books Service Quality in Academic Libraries and An Action Plan for Outcomes Assessment in Your Library provide detailed explanation of the concepts Dr. Heron presented to conference attendees.

**Sources:**

Heron, P. & Altman, E. (1996). Service Quality in Academic Libraries. Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Heron, P. & Dugan, R.E. (2002). An Action Plan for Outcomes Assessment in Your Library. Chicago: American Library Association.

Swinney, V. (2002). Embracing Assessment: New Measures for Academic Librarians. [Review of the 2002 Oklahoma Chapter of the Association for College and Research Libraries, Inc. conference presentations].

# "EMBRACING ASSESSMENT: NEW MEASURES FOR ACADEMIC LIBRARIES"

by Gwen Dobbs, Beth Reiten and Victoria Swinney  
2001 Annual Fall Conference  
Monday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2001, OSU-OKC Campus  
The Oklahoma ACRL Chapter held its fourth annual fall conference on October 22, 2001 at the Oklahoma State University, Oklahoma City Campus. Three Speakers shared both their theoretical and practical experiences in assessment in academic libraries and academia.

## **Dr. Peter Hernon, Simmons College Assessment of Library Services: An Examination of Service Quality AND Outcomes Assessment**

Dr. Hernon discussed the "Gap Theory of Service Quality" which includes: customers' expectations and management's perceptions of those expectations; and customers' service expectation and the perceived quality of service. This theory looks at the library from the perspective of users, not librarians. These gaps are the basis of a customer-oriented definition of service quality that examines the discrepancy between customers' expectations for excellent service and their perceptions of the actual service delivered. Dr. Hernon outlined and critiqued different service quality measurement tools, primarily SERVQUAL and LIBQUAL+, while also addressing problems inherent in surveys in general (i.e. poor response rates, overuse, not enough follow-up, do respondents reflect the population,...). Hernon cautioned whatever method is used, get feedback from your service population on the tool itself before you attempt to measure with it.

According to Dr. Hernon, outcomes assessment is generally aimed at information literacy skills. He pointed out the distinction between lower order (skills) and higher order (critical thinking and problem solving) objectives, and the need to focus on the

latter. He also offered an example list of direct and indirect outcomes measures. Direct measures include pre/post tests, developmental portfolios, capstone courses, content analysis, think-aloud protocols, citation analysis, tests, videotape or audiotape evaluation, and exit interviews. Indirect measures include graduation rates, professional licensure, retention rates, focus groups, and surveys. These lists provide good starting places as we look for more ways to measure outcomes.

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## **TREASURER'S TALK:**

by Steve Locy

First, thanks to all for electing me OK-ACRL treasurer. If I can answer any questions about our budget or your membership please feel free to email me at [slocy@okstate.edu](mailto:slocy@okstate.edu). I thought I would report on the last OK-ACRL conference "Embracing Assessment: New Measures for Academic Libraries" from a treasurer's perspective. We had 53 people register for the conference, but 4 registrants were no-shows. The total raised from registration fees was \$2,315. So how is this money used? Over \$550 was spent on the plane ticket for Peter Hernon while Frontier Food Service was paid \$703.95, which included the lunch and snacks and drinks throughout the day. Over \$300 was spent on dinner for the speakers, hosted by the ACRL-OK Board, and hotel room plus miscellaneous supplies. Based on these expenditures, approximately \$1,600 was spent for the conference, which leaves OK-ACRL with a profit of roughly \$715. The Board will use this money for mailings and pre-registration expenses associated with the 2002 annual conference. Thanks for supporting your chapter. OK-ACRL is fortunate to make a profit this year- we have not been so fortunate in the past.

## **Dr. Annmarie Shirazi, Oklahoma City Community College**

### **Caught Without a Leg to Stand On**

In the afternoon we heard from Annmarie Shirazi, OCCC's Dean of Institutional Effectiveness. Using a fable about a little fuzzy guy and an axe happy king, she addressed the concepts behind successful assessment implementations. After the more general overview, she spoke more directly on how program assessment works at OCCC. Shirazi divides objectives into three categories: process, satisfaction, and outcome objectives. She also mentioned a very interesting idea for collecting outcome data. She suggested that faculty members could add an essay question to an exam that could be given to the library rather than graded and then used in assessment. (For example, asking students to describe the process for finding material on a topic). A very important point in her talk was that doing the assessment isn't enough; you have to use your results to make improvements to your services.

## **Sheila Grant Johnson, Oklahoma State University**

### **Assessing Library Services: The Ideal and the Real**

The final speaker was Sheila Grant Johnson, OSU's Assistant Dean of Libraries for Public Services and Collections. She spoke about their participation in the ARL LIBQUAL+ project. LIBQUAL+ is a standardized service quality survey developed by Texas A & M University. Johnson mentioned some of the technical difficulties encountered, both in the initial set-up and during the actual administration of the survey. She then discussed the results of the survey. There was a very low return rate for the survey, so it's difficult to come to any firm conclusions with the data in hand. Johnson was aware of the shortcomings of the survey, but is very interested in continuing with service quality assessment.

## **GET INVOLVED!**

Have you ever held an organizational office? Would you like to? The OK-ACRL vice-president/president-elect is seeking 2003 OK-ACRL executive board candidates. If you would like an active role in Oklahoma's chapter of the Association of College and Research Libraries, there are several opportunities. This year we will be looking for candidates for Vice-President/President-Elect, Treasurer, Secretary, and Board Member-at-Large

If you wish to run for an elective position with OKACRL, please contact Beth Reiten at [reitene@okstate.edu](mailto:reitene@okstate.edu) or by phone at 405-744-9109.

## **COIL PROGRAM REPORT**

**May 31, 2002, Rose State College**

by Jason Dupree, Chair of COIL

Presenters: Beverly Joyce, University of Oklahoma and Tom Thorisch, OSU-Tulsa

Topic: Learning & Teaching Styles: Part 1-Learning Styles: Implications for Teaching, Part 2-Using Learning Style Theories to Improve Library-related Training and Bibliographic Instruction.

COIL's May 31 program consisted of an encore OLA conference presentation. Beverly Joyce summarized behavioral and cognitive learning styles, relating them to effective instruction. She referenced sources and studies used to classify personality categories and information processing patterns. Tom Thorisch described characteristics

of student library users, skills students need to succeed in library research, and related issues and common assumptions. He identified the differences between adult and young learners and emphasized the fact that information literacy is applicable to all learners and learning styles. Beverly and Tom encouraged workshop attendees to better analyze and address learning patterns, to include auditory, visual, and kinesthetic examples during instruction, and to allow for a student's growth during the research process.

# CALL FOR STUDENT POSTERS

## Student Poster Competition

The Oklahoma Chapter of the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) and the Council for Oklahoma Information Literacy (COIL) invite graduate students in the fields of library and information science to submit posters for the 2002 fall conference. The purpose of this competition is to highlight exemplary graduate student research or thesis work in the area of library instruction and information literacy. Student submitters will be notified of acceptance on or before October 4, 2002.

The author of each accepted poster display will win free conference admission. Presentations will be recognized at the conference, in the OK-ACRL newsletter, and on the COIL or OK-ACRL web site.

## Poster Submission Instructions

The poster proposals can be submitted through e-mail or as an e-mail (word processing) attachment. Proposals should describe, using 500 words or less, the issue, topic or program to be described.

Each proposal should include the author's name, institution, address, phone, e-mail, brief biographical information, and a letter from an advisor verifying student status. Please e-mail proposals to Jason Dupree ([dupreej@swosu.edu](mailto:dupreej@swosu.edu)) by September 20, 2002.

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR!**  
 The 2002 OK-ACRL Fall Conference, "Creating Information Literacy Programs" will feature Craig Gibson of George Mason University as the main speaker. COIL, Council for Oklahoma Information Literacy, will sponsor SLIS student poster sessions focused on the topic of Information Literacy. Students who present posters will be invited to attend the conference free of charge. Additional details soon will be available on the OKACRL website <<http://okacrl.okstate.edu>> and in your mailbox.

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