



2008-2009 Assessment Plan Report

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT REPORT-SERVICE UNITS AY 2008-2009

Report Date: May 27, 2009

Division/Office: Gleeson Library

Department/Program: Reference Department/Library Instruction

Person completing the Report: Joe Garity, Coordinator of Library Instruction

1. **Overview Statement:** Briefly summarize the assessment activities that were undertaken this academic year, indicating:
 - a. which program learning outcomes were assessed this year.
 - b. who in your department/program was involved in the assessment of the above learning outcomes
 - a) We randomly chose 8 sections from the Rhetoric and Composition Program, gave them a pre-test and post-test for their library research session and measured these learning outcomes:
 - Students will learn to choose the appropriate search tools
 - Students will learn to formulate Boolean searches
 - Students will learn to differentiate between scholarly and popular sources
 - Students will learn to interpret parts of a citation
 - Students will learn to use additional tools to access sources in and beyond the Gleeson collection
 - b) Joe Garity coordinated the overall assessment, reference librarian Carol Spector created the questions and gathered the data on the Survey Monkey forms, and classes chosen for assessment were taught by Joe Garity, Carol Spector, Penny Scott and Sherise Kimura. All of the reference librarians who teach Rhetoric and Composition classes met to discuss the results.
2. **Please Answers the Following Questions for Each of the Student Outcomes Assessed:**
 - a. **What did you do?**
Describe clearly and concisely how you assessed the learning outcomes that were evaluated this year (e.g., measures, research methods, etc.). [please use bullet points to answer this question]

We selected at random 8 sections in the Rhetoric and Composition program to



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give both a pre-test and post-test. We chose R&C110, R&C120, and R&C250 for a variety of levels of knowledge. We used Survey Monkey to administer the tests. Specific questions were written to test students' knowledge of each learning outcome. We increased the complexity/nature of the questions for the upper level classes (R&C120 and R&C250). After administering the pre-tests and post-tests, we compared the scores to see what impact the sessions had on the students achieving the learning outcomes.

- For choosing appropriate search tools, we gave the R&C110 students a grid with kinds of information (“current news” “information that has not been edited” “full text journal articles”) and asked them to choose which source they would use to find that kind of information.
- For formulating Boolean searches, we gave the R&C120 and R&C250 students a grid with different Boolean connectors (“and” “or” and “not”) and asked them how their results would be affected by using that connector (more results, less results, etc). We also had them chose between what were “keyword” searches and what were “subject” searches.
- For differentiating between scholarly and popular sources, we gave the R&C120 and R&C250 students a grid listing characteristics (has a bibliography, states the credentials of the authors, appears in publications with lots of ads and pictures, is brief) and asked them to determine which was more likely to be scholarly or popular.
- For interpreting parts of a citation, we showed the R&C110 students a sample citation and asked them to identify the source publication from multiple choices. For R&C120 and R&C250 students, we showed them a grid with a book, journal, and web site citation and asked them to identify what type the source was.
- For using tools to access sources, we asked all levels of students to identify the purpose of several library tools (Link+, Journal Finder, USF Find Full Text) and gave them multiple choice answers of which tool should be used for different purposes.

b. What did the staff in the department or program learn?

Summarize your findings and conclusions as a result of the assessment indicating strengths and weaknesses in student learning demonstrated by this assessment.

Overall, students learn in our classes how to use appropriate resources and how to search them effectively. The data show strengths in being able to formulate Boolean searches, use truncation techniques, and combine search terms correctly. Students are able to learn the mechanics of searching and which sources to search. Students also showed a particular strength in learning about Link+, a tool for getting books from other libraries (R&C110: correct answer 26% in the pre-test, 87% post-test; R&C120:



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correct answer 22% in the pre-test, 55% post-test).

Students' weaknesses are in interpreting parts of a citation and using the library tools to access the full text if it is not directly available to them in the database they are currently in. Students have difficulty differentiating between websites, articles and books. Most students could identify a web site (over 80%) but only about half could identify books vs journals articles from reading a citation. Students growing up on the web are comfortable with computers but moving from computers to library skills—using the printed and electronic resources of the library—are not as strong. The data show they are weak in differentiating the kinds of sources they are looking at on computers. The R&C250 classes were best at differentiating between kinds of citations, but even they were correct only about 60% of the time. They are transfer students, not freshman, and so have more experience using academic sources.

One area that surprised us was that students were more knowledgeable about Boolean searching than we expected. In working one to one with students we see some of them struggling with Boolean searching but overall the majority of students showed an understanding of it, both in the pretests and the posttests.

Students also were able to define differences between scholarly and popular sources both before and after the classes. After our sessions, in both R&C120 and R&C250 classes, over 90% of the students identified that scholarly sources generally have bibliographies and state the authors' credentials. In both the R&C120 and R&C250 classes, we stress that in our sessions now and students do show evidence they are able to identify those characteristics.

c. What will be done differently as a result of what was learned?

Discuss how programs will be changed to improve student learning as a result of the assessment. Include a discussion of how staff will help students overcome their weaknesses and improve their strengths.

In the research sessions we teach here in the library, we are going to shift the focus of our content to have more emphasis on how to read and interpret citations and how to use those citations to get access to the full text. The library subscribes to multiple sources of full text but getting between one source and another is clearly a weakness for some of the students. Although we showed improvement after our sessions in the use of tools like "USF Find Full Text" and "Journal Finder" the students still are somewhat unclear about how to use these. In our classes we will go into more detail about how to use tools like "USF Find Full Text" more effectively. We will give specific exercises in the sessions on using these tools.

The library webmaster, Randy Souther, has changed the library's home page to use consistent language for the three key tools for finding information; they now are



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labeled “Find books” “Find articles” and “Find journals.” We think changing the language will help students to see how all three are related but different. We are going to add an explanatory link to “Find journals” to go through the steps of using that tool to get to full text. We will teach with this new language next semester and see if scores change.

We are showing this data to the Rhetoric and Composition faculty who work with assessment and will partner more with them in terms of what areas they stress in the classroom and what areas we stress in our research sessions with their students. Working with them, we are going to more clearly define what levels of complexity should be taught at each session (R&C110 vs 120 vs 250). We are also going to expand the assessment into other levels of classes in Rhetoric and Composition, like R&C130/131. The Rhetoric and Composition faculty are sending us a sample of bibliographies done for the students’ final papers so we can see what sources the students actually use and how many are using the library’s resources.

3. **Attach a copy of the components of the department/program assessment plan that have been modified since its initial submission:**
 - a. Program Mission
 - b. Program Learning Goals
 - c. Program Learning Outcomes
 - d. Program Learning Rubrics aligned with outcomes
 - e. Curriculum map that shows the programs that pertain to the outcome

Please return to: Provost Office by June 1, 2009

You can send your replies as either a Word attachment (to: marin@usfca.edu) or as a hard copy to: Provost Office, Lone Mountain Rossi Wing 4th floor.

If you have any questions, please contact: William Murry, Director of Institutional Assessment (wmurry@usfca.edu or x5486).