

"But those numbers aren't used for anything" Convincing library employees data can tell the story of their work

Anna Marie Johnson and Michelle Crowe, Indiana University Libraries, Bloomington



Why the Reluctance?

Employees

- Forget
- Don't see importance
- Are confused about "what counts"
- Don't understand how data will be used
- Turnover
- Fear it will be used against them

"Not remembering to record instruction or consultation data also surfaced as a regular occurrence. These inconsistencies in statistics recording impacted the accuracy of self-reported instruction and consultation (reference) data." (Bolton 2024, p.733)

"Assessment can make people feel like they are defending what they do." (Ozburn and Lunstrom, 2020)

"Most directors are not satisfied with their ability to get the data from their staff when they need it. Almost all described resistance from their staff to developing systematic data collection frameworks. They noted considerable negative reactions from staff to their requests for statistical data and distrust by staff, in general, about the use of these statistics." (Lakos, 2007)

Exploring the Problem: Is this about trust?

Common Knowledge Assumptions:

- Library decisions are made better when informed by data
- Stories about the library are more impactful when data is included. Audiences such as administrators and donors are influenced by collected facts and reported data.
- Human-reported data (compared to systems-generated data) is often incomplete, and thus less trustworthy when compared to other data collection.



Exploring Barriers in Data Storytelling

- Do administrators trust the data when making and explaining decisions?
- Do communicators and leaders trust the data when telling stories to internal and external audiences?
- Do library employees trust administrators to interpret the data they submit? Do they believe decisions will be made based on their data collection efforts?

Examples of Data Storytelling

OER offers unique data opportunities

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Johnson, Anna Marie <amj42@iu.edu>
To: Crowe, Michelle Ann



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Strategies

- Agreed upon definitions
- Robust AND easy data collection
- Demonstrating to employees that data will be used
- Assuring employees that just one metric won't be used but rather many data points will inform decisions
- Ensuring employees know how to find collection points

"...two most critical determinants for successful assessment were library leadership that promoted, supported and used assessment, and an organizational culture that was customer-centered and motivated to improve library services" (p. 225, Kyrillidou and Self, 2008 as cited by Ozburn and Lundstrom, 2020)

Using data collected by library partners to tell library stories

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