**Qualitative Assessment in Library Instruction**

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 *Presentation & handout available at* [*researchtips.org/presentations*](http://researchtips.org/presentations/)

**Definitions**

**Assessment** – Systematic collection, examination, and interpretation of qualitative and quantitative data about student learning and use of that information to document and improve student learning (Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association).

**Formative Assessment** – Gathering information about student learning while it is taking place so that modifications to classroom activities and assignments may occur.

**Summative Assessment** – Assessment practices that occur at the conclusion of a course or a program, e.g., end-of-course instructor evaluations, final exams, etc., which provide an overall snapshot of what students have learned.

**Quantitative Assessment** – A type of assessments which use structures predetermined response options that can be summarized into meaningful numbers and analyzed statistically. (Suskie, 2009,33).

**Qualitative Assessment** – Assessments which use flexible, naturalistic methods ans usually analyzed by looking for recurring patterns and themes. (Suskie, 2009,33).

**General Assessment Resources**

Radcliff, Carolyn et al. *Practical Guide to Information Literacy Assessment for Academic Librarians*. Westport, CT: Libraries

Unlimited, 2007.

Overview of assessment techniques outlining the time, money, and level of assessment for each technique.

Nilson, L. *Teaching at Its Best: A Research-Based Resource for College Instructors*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, 2010.

Includes a section on assessment (Part 6) and writing to learn assignments (Ch. 17) to assess student learning.

Suskie, Linda A. *Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009.

Comprehensive general guide to understanding, planning and using assessments as well as an assessment toolbox.

*Assessment of Library Instruction.* Portland State University Library [guides.library.pdx.edu/assessment](http://guides.library.pdx.edu/assessment/)

Overview of process for selecting an assessment technique and description of a wide range of assessments.

*Virginia Tech University Libraries Instruction Clearinghouse – Assessment Tools* [www.lib.vt.edu/RIS/clearinghouse/assessments.html](http://www.lib.vt.edu/RIS/clearinghouse/assessments.html)

**Classroom Assessment Techniques**

Angelo, Thomas A. and K. Patricia Cross. *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers*. 2nd.

ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1993.

Describes 50 formative classroom assessment techniques that can be used to get a snapshot of student learning.

**Performance Assessments**

Mueller, Jon. *Assessing Critical* S*kills*. Columbus, OH: Linworth Books, 2009.

Examples of performance assessments for information literacy skills including research logs, and hands-on searches.

Rubric Assessment of Information Literacy Skills (RAILS). [railsontrack.info](http://railsontrack.info/rubrics.aspx)

Helps librarians assess student information literacy skills exhibited in "artifacts of student learning" like research papers, presentations, worksheets, portfolios, or reflective journals.

Oakleaf, M. "Staying on Track with Rubric Assessment: 5 Institutions Investigate Information Literacy Learning." *Peer Review*. 2011.

Rubistar [rubistar.4teachers.org](http://rubistar.4teachers.org/index.php/) Templates and sample rubrics for project-based learning activities.

**Online Tools for Collecting Feedback**

* Google Documents Forms, SurveyMonkey, LibGuides CMS
* CorkboardMe [corkboard.me](http://corkboard.me/)
  + Online corkboard with post it notes. Allows multiple participants to type at same time.
* Classroom response systems for real-time feedback - accessible from computer or mobile devices.  
  + Socrative [socrative.com](file:///C:\Users\bernss\AppData\Local\Temp\socrative.com) & GoSoapBox [gosoapbox.com](http://gosoapbox.com/)
    - Ask open-ended questions, multiple choice, or T/F questions, as well as view and capture results.
  + Poll Everywhere [www.polleverywhere.com](http://www.polleverywhere.com)
    - Online polling - collects responses through computer, text messaging, or tweeting.
  + Understood It [understoodit.com](https://understoodit.com/)
    - Gauge student understanding during class by allowing students to voice confusion (or understanding) anonymously.

**Go Round** What is one thing you will take back from this session?

**Qualitative Assessment Methods**

1. Look at the list of assessment methods below and identify one that you have used before in instruction.
2. Think about a recent information literacy session you taught and choose one technique described below that you could try.
3. Discuss your answers to question 1 and 2 with a partner and prepare to share your observations with the group.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **One Method I Have Used…** | **One Method I Would Like to Try…** |
|  |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Method** | **How To Do It** | **How It Helps You** | **Applied to Information Literacy** |
| **Classroom Assessment Techniques** | | | |
| Background Knowledge Probe | Students complete a short, simple questionnaire at the beginning of class to find out what they already know about a topic. Can be used as a pre and post-assessment. | Shows you how well students are prepared for the lesson. | Have you used research databases before? What do you find most challenging about doing research? |
| Directed Paraphrasing | Students explain a concept for a specific audience and purpose in their own words. | Shows if students can put concepts they learned in their own words. | Explain one search strategy to another Writing 121 student. |
| Power of Two  (Silberman, *Active Learning*, 1996) | Students answer a question individually, compare their answer with a partner, and create a new improved version. Or assign different questions to different pairs. | Allows students to learn from each other and reinforces concepts you have presented. | What criteria should you use to evaluate sources? |
| Documented Problem Solutions | Pass out envelopes with problems on them and cards inside. Students write solutions to the problems and put them in the envelope. | Shows how students can use what they learned to solve problems that arise while doing research. | You do a search in a research database and you do not find enough articles. What can you do? |
| Focused Listing | Students list everything they know about a topic and share the list with a partner. Can be done before or after teaching a concept. Variation - assign different questions to each pair. | Shows what students already know or helps review a concept after you have covered it in class. | Students make a list of characteristics of a magazine or scholarly journal. |
| **Method** | **How To Do It** | **How It Helps You** | **Applied to Information Literacy** |
| One Minute Paper & Muddiest Point | At the end of a session, students write the most important thing they learned and the “muddiest point” - an important question remains unanswered... | Look over responses to find out which points you emphasized resonated most with students. Address important unanswered questions with the group. | What will you do differently based on what you learned in class today? What important question remains unanswered? (You could ask one or both of these questions.) |
| Go Round | At the end of a session, students finish the phrase, “As a result of today’s session, I will...” First, they write a response and then “go round” the class and verbally share answers. Oral variation of one minute paper. | Shows what the most salient concepts were. Reinforces important concepts as students restate them for each other. | For example: As a result of today’s session, I will search in multiple databases rather than always starting with General OneFile. |
| **Performance Assessment** | | | |
| Performance Assessment | Assess student performance by observing or documenting a process (for example, creating a search strategy, framing a research question, evaluating websites) or assessing a product (for example, annotated bibliography, research paper). Must write an assignment and a rating scale or rubric. | Shows how students can complete real tasks. Gain understanding of gaps in student learning. Can be time consuming and challenging to develop rubrics and train librarians to use them to rate artifacts of student learning. | Assess writing samples from portfolios put together by students who attended information literacy sessions. |
| **Beyond the Classroom** (see *Practical Guide to Information Literacy Assessment for Academic Librarians –* Radclliff et. al) | | | |
| Surveys | Conduct surveys with students or faculty before and/or after instruction sessions. Relatively easy way to reach a large number of participants and assess their perceptions. | Useful tools to gather information and perceptions, not necessarily related to content. | Nursing students complete a survey of their knowledge of information literacy concepts before/after instruction. |
| Interviewing | Interview individual students or faculty. Can get in-depth responses for a few individuals. | Students who received “blue ribbon” portfolios can be interviewed to learn what made them successful. |
| Focus Groups | Conduct focus groups with students or faculty. Benefit from insights not gained with individual interviews. | Conduct a focus group for online instructors after piloting a module for online writing students. |