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Mixed methods of assessment: measures of enhancing library services in academia

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Abstract

Purpose – Collection assessment is an essential aspect of library collection development, especially for public institutions currently affected by financial budget cuts. Collection managers working with little to no budget have the task of establishing unconventional methods of selecting most relevant materials. This paper aims to demonstrate the correlation between a syllabi analysis, faculty survey and circulation statistics as a practical measure to enhance and expand the architecture library services at the City College of New York and in academia in general.

Design/methodology/approach – This study uses mixed use assessment strategies to evaluate a library collection. The scope of the study supports combining collection-based practices and use-based methods to gather two types of data: quantitative (including collection size and/or in-house use statistics) and qualitative (accomplished by user opinion surveys, focus groups and/or list checking).

Findings – Out of 74 architecture faculty members, 22 participated in a library survey to help uncover new opportunities for cross-collaboration. The findings simultaneously reinforce the importance of exploring syllabi and usage data as methods of assessment to reveal opportunities for cultivating library collections.

Originality/value – This paper will provide a better understanding of faculty perceptions to discover academic needs and achieve library integration into the design curriculum. The study demonstrates prospective directions for collection evaluation and faculty collaboration to open further opportunities for building a successful library.

Keywords Collection building, Cross-collaboration, Mixed-methods assessment, Multi-method assessment, Syllabi analysis, Use-based method

Paper type Research paper

Introduction: project goal/mission

Academic libraries continuously encounter shifting pedagogical and economic environments as a result of increasingly unpredictable user behavior. Faced with enormous challenges, libraries are compelled to validate their space, collections and services. Collection development is an essential component of quality library service and at times can place budgetary constraints on library operations. Collection development encompasses several methodical functions imperative for building a library collection. Several key factors include material selection, acquisitions, preservation and conservation and weeding, as well as routine assessments of usage and user needs.

Librarians tend to search for new information tools and techniques to help contribute to the success of their academic institutions. In collection assessment, library managers develop measures of effectiveness to meet their institutional mission and goals. Johnson (2009, p. 226) writes succinctly, “the aim of assessment is to determine how well the collection supports the goals, needs, and mission of the library or parent organization”. Assessment is a crucial aspect of library collection development, especially for public institutions affected by financial budget cuts. Collection managers working with little

to no budget have the task of establishing innovative methods of selecting relevant material. The process of assessment allows library managers to objectively determine the breadth, strengths and/or deficiencies of a collection. An assessment outcome can also track directional trend patterns and ultimately establish how the library compares to other libraries at similar institutions.

There are numerous systematic methods of assessing a library's holdings, such as collection-based assessment, user/usage-based assessment and citation analysis. Kohn (2013, p. 87) recommends that “multiple methods could be combined to evaluate the collection from different angles that might correlate with different aspects of a library's mission”. Every library has unique circumstances that call for creative measures; therefore, combining multiple methods of assessment is an ideal course of action. This study demonstrates the correlation between a syllabi analysis, faculty survey and circulation statistics by assessing the City College Architecture Library collections as a practical measure to enhance and expand library services in academia in general. Pairing syllabi analysis with circulation statistics and a faculty perceptions' survey, as internal cost-effective library resources, serve as practical tools for this study. The continuous demands for collection assessment can secure the provisions of adequate library service to support an academic program and individual information needs of students and faculty.

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Background

The City College of New York (CCNY) is part of the City University of New York (CUNY), one of the largest public urban university systems in the country. Located in the heart of a major New York City urban area, CCNY is one of the most ethnically diverse academic institutions of CUNY. CCNY has seven library divisions situated in five separate buildings across campus, and its library system is currently the largest within CUNY. The libraries provide extensive print, electronic and non-print information resources in support of the college's instructional, scholarship and research mission to elevate academic success.

The Architecture Library (the Library) is a division of the CCNY libraries and is in the Bernard and Anne Spitzer School of Architecture (the School of Architecture) building. The physical space of the library is integral in supplying unique library materials within close proximity to its primary user population. The setting is ideal for providing equitable access to library resources in support of the rigorous architecture studio method of instruction. According to [Senkevitch \(1989, p. 21\)](#) the "scope and extent of an architectural education and design studio method of instruction dictates idiosyncratic uses of library materials by architecture students and professionals alike". Architecture studio-based instruction focuses on learning through active participation, creative ability and/or design process. "Design studios" are generally interactive classrooms – studio type settings – which contribute to flows of creativity, collaboration and team-work. This type of instruction enables students to receive a first-hand experience into their future profession. Moreover, having the library in the same vicinity as the School of Architecture encourages the serendipitous perusing of books on the shelf and stimulates creativity in architectural design.

The Library is crucial to cultivate and enhance the educational experience of students, faculty and like professionals. The collection currently exceeds 36,000 volumes, which includes monographs, bound journals and subscriptions to approximately 65 serials. It supports the diverse undergraduate and graduate curriculum requirements of the professional degree programs in Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Urban Design and Sustainability in the Urban Environment. The Library's monographic allocation is distributed by the centralized library department in support of the architecture program. During the 2014–2015 academic year, funding for books were estimated at \$7000; adding over 300 new titles, deaccessioning 50 and restricting accessions to reserve material only. The scope of the collection consists of well-defined materials related to New York City architecture and city planning. Subjects include architectural criticism, architectural history, building types, urban planning, technology (with an emphasis on sustainable green building) and other directly related fields.

The Library provides an atmosphere of reciprocal support by collaborating with students, administrators and faculty to establish clear ideas for any type of evaluation and/or assessment. For example, in preparation for the undergraduate program accreditation visit in the spring 2017 semester by the National Architectural Accreditation Board (NAAB), the accrediting organization for all professional schools of architecture in the USA, an assessment of the reserve collection

was executed to focus on usage patterns, as well as the borrowing frequency to determine academic support in the architectural curriculum. The author's main concern was whether library resources, including materials on reserve and services were addressing curricular need and usage of library material. Developing a productive environment for assessment is a joint activity that requires team effort to achieve a positive outcome for everyone involved. Through the periodic nature of assessment, libraries develop best practices to influence future decision-making to surpass user expectations. As [Kim Leeder \(2011\)](#) concisely explains:

[...] collaboration, requires both parties to acknowledge, understand, and even embrace the other's viewpoint, with the result being a shared vision or product that is greater than the sum of its parts.

Building strong alliances between the library and department faculty can produce positive outcomes to cultivate relationships and educate on library resources. From a librarian's perspective, partnerships with faculty require shared mutual interests to improve student learning and achieve professional growth.

Literature review

The existing literature provides numerous evidence-based approaches for collection evaluation and assessment. In collection assessment, there are multiple methods of gathering data which lead to the Library's current conditions and any future developments. Both collection-centered and user-centered techniques were selected to assess the reserve monograph collection in the Library. Using the response of a faculty survey and select syllabi – through a list-checking method – to evaluate the circulation data of the reserve monographs on the shelf, [Borin and Yi \(2008, p. 141\)](#) suggest that "collection evaluation and assessment needs to be ongoing so that collections can be adjusted to fit varied and changing needs". Given the constantly evolving pedagogical and financial environments of academic libraries, conducting a combination of multiple data-gathering methods provide an inside view of the Library collection's strengths and weaknesses. According to a 1998 Library Journal survey, "virtually every library surveyed relies on faculty title recommendations [...] ranking faculty as the number-one source" (p. 145). The architecture librarian holds multiple responsibilities which include acquiring material to engage our diverse teaching faculty and meet the information needs of all its stakeholders. [Dinkins \(2003, p. 47\)](#) indicates that "teaching faculty's allegiance to their particular discipline or specialty, as well as to the research needs of their students, impact their selection decisions". In an article by [Agee \(2005\)](#), the author reiterates that surveying faculty may be useful in measuring the value of a discipline-specific portion of the collection. Even though faculty recommendations for accession help enhance library holdings, collection managers are generally committed to support the entire user group, which includes students, faculty, staff and the college community. The research literature clearly contributes limited insights into using a course syllabus study as a collection development tool. However, [Shirkey \(2011\)](#) affirms that, as a user-centered method, a syllabus study can yield benefits for the collection and the library as a whole. Many library studies indicate circulation

statistics as one of the most common user-centered practices in collection assessment. [Evans and Saponaro \(2012, p. 143\)](#) identify “two basic assumptions that underlie usage studies:

- 1 the adequacy of the print collection is directly related to its use, and
- 2 circulation records provide a reasonably representative picture of collection use”.

A greater part of the literature on collection development emphasizes selecting and combining both qualitative and quantitative methods to effectively assess a collection.

Usage statistics assessment

Circulation usage statistics help collection managers make informed decisions regarding the accession and de-accession of library material, especially when budgetary restrictions are of concern. The literature generally states that many collection assessment processes require a significant investment of time and funds; therefore, selecting an internal measure, such as circulation usage statistics, proved to be most effective for this study. [Knivel et al. \(2006, p. 36\)](#) indicated that “reduced buying power in libraries makes the use of data in collection development of increasing importance”. [Kohn \(2013\)](#) launched a centralized usage-based evaluation of the Landman Library’s print collection, specifically tailored to aid undergraduate courses at Arcadia University. The author affirmed this quantitative method of assessment a befitting and cost-effective way of gauging use patterns to benefit decision-making in future material selection and de-selection. Kohn’s study concentrated on mapping a range of call numbers instead of using Library of Congress Classifications or Sub-Classes. The author modified the use-based method by comparing average check-outs per book and percentage of items borrowed.

Libraries benefit from the use of circulation statistics and other types of data, which affirms the demand for material, guides collection development decisions, as well as spending accession allocations. According to a report by [Osburn \(1992\)](#), financial stresses influence a shift in emphasis from spending allocations based on assumptions to basing on demand. Material selectors make informed decisions based on local circulation and frequently requested data to fulfill user needs and anticipate demand rather than acquiring just to fill the shelves. Collection managers generally do not have the financial resources to exhaustively purchase material. Therefore, using statistical reports from the library’s automated system along with faculty consultation, tailors the effort to strengthening the collection.

The ALEPH Integrated Library System encompasses all of CCNY and CUNY Libraries acquisition, bibliographic, circulation and online public access catalog data. As [Agee \(2005, p. 9\)](#) explains, “most online management systems collect circulation data that may be organized in report form to provide frequency of individual title or classification area loan information” the Library’s automation software capabilities include providing library circulation reports on-demand. [Agee \(2005, p. 93\)](#) indicates that “library online management systems are a very powerful and efficient user-centered collection evaluation tool”. In a report to faculty, [Crawley-Low \(2002, p. 315\)](#) conveys that “circulation data can be used to create a list of highly used materials and to identify materials

that require multiple copies, replacement, or both”. Limited resources (budget, staffing, time-frame, etc.) are an important motivation in deciding to collect circulation data obtained from the Library’s internal circulation system.

Syllabus assessment

A syllabus provides course content, defines expectations and communication between student and instructor. It is a valuable informational resource tool for librarians to become familiar with course requirements and assignments. The syllabi assessment enables the librarian to effectively gather documents in support of curriculum integration, collection development and learning information competencies. [Parkes and Harris \(2002\)](#) suggest that syllabi serve three major roles: a contract, permanent record and student-learning tool. The authors highlight the significance of retaining a course syllabus as an outcome assessment tool for program accreditation. Syllabi serve to demonstrate course expectations and evaluate both individual instructors and entire programs. These permanent records are designed to meet program and accreditation requirements, as well as document required and supplementary reading materials to develop course knowledge. The [National Architectural Accreditation Board \(2014\)](#) mandates that architecture schools have “convenient, equitable access to literature and information, as well as appropriate visual and digital resources that support professional education in architecture”. Syllabi also disclose numerous instructional methods of student assessments including course participation, quizzes and exams, attendance and required reading assignments.

Through collaborative efforts with faculty, the library must obtain syllabi to provide the appropriate assigned literature and resources to students. This collection assessment tool can also provide the librarian to help build their expertise to build on related subject matter. Librarians often develop resourceful methods of obtaining syllabi. Strategies may include the following:

- sending e-mail request to faculty in advance of semester;
- retrieving a copy from department administrative office;
- making an announcement at faculty meetings;
- enlisting available instructors to advocate on behalf of the library to other faculty; and
- as a last resort, photocopy syllabi as students line up at the circulation desk.

There are various methods of identifying information needs to build robust library collections to support academic programs. According to [Farison and Donovan \(2013, p. 37\)](#) “one way to do this is to gather syllabi and assignments for classes taught in courses at colleges or universities”. The authors found that gathering and dissecting exploring syllabi, reading lists and assignments supply librarians with the means to help students acquire relevant information in their assigned discipline. The Architecture Library maintains a comprehensive print-based syllabi archive dating back to fall 1999. The preservation of course syllabi helps librarians track the pedagogical history of an academic program. In academia, architecture libraries strive to acquire the most appropriate resources to aid the curricular and research interests of architecture students and teaching faculty. [Johnson \(2009\)](#) indicates that in list-checking, the

selector compares lists prepared for a specific user group, namely, a course syllabus, to analyze against library holdings. Gathering syllabi and required or supplemental reading lists serve as an educational tool for collection analysis. This form of list checking is compared with the library's collection to fulfill current curricular needs of the architecture program. Inviting professors to submit their reading lists and studio assignments to the librarian can help gain accurate course understanding.

Anderson (1988, p. 14) examines the use of syllabi as a means of improving the effectiveness of library collection development. The author presents three major techniques libraries can apply in using syllabi "to improve communication between librarian—faculty; increasing the accession of more relevant materials; and increase use of library resources". Anderson (1988, p. 15) uses a compilation of interview responses from librarians with varying perspectives on syllabi use as a collection builder. The author concludes by affirming that "course objectives along with recommended, required, or supplemental readings are integral parts in identifying materials the library should have in its collection to support the assigned course work". The extents of existing academic library collections are subject to reflect adequate curricular and research interest of college community.

Furthermore, Opar (2013) an architectural librarian at Syracuse University considers "suggested precedents" and "studio assignments" as valuable sources of information to determine which materials to add to the collection. Architecture precedents – the use of historical and contemporary buildings as guides for students' designs – are vital in providing a variety of technical architectural drawings that are used in the design process. Precedents serve as a reference between the structure and other similar designs. A selector's knowledge base in scholarly needs and interests, along with research trends in relevant subject areas facilitate in uncovering a library collection's strengths and identify areas needing improvement. Without doubt, the communication among collection managers and library users (i.e. student, instructor and researcher) is essential to support their decision-making in acquiring information resources.

Points of investigation (objective)

A constantly shrinking library budget for monographic material prompted an in-house study from the three following sets of data to determine whether library resources and services are incorporated into coursework at City College. The dataset was used to develop the following:

- users' expectations and perspectives of library resources and services via a faculty survey;
- a syllabi study to discover curricular needs and achieve library integration into the design curriculum; and
- a circulation statistics study of required and optional texts as an indicator of usage.

Methodology/scope of study

There are countless methods of assessing a particular collection; a combination of techniques will best provide the desired results. *Collection-based* techniques examine the breadth of library materials compared to other peer institutions. Conversely, *user/usage-based* investigative assessments gather

information on user expectations and approach to the collection. This study supports combining collection-based practices and use-based methods to gather two types of data: quantitative (including collection size and/or in-house use statistics) and qualitative (accomplished by user opinion surveys, focus groups and/or list checking).

Because the School of Architecture has multifaceted and unique academic programs, conducting an in-depth study of all relevant subject areas would not be feasible. To make the process of evaluation cost-effective and manageable, the study was performed in-house, using the resources available in the CCNY Architecture Library. A random syllabi sample was gathered from "course reserves" binders stored in the Library. The span of analysis is confined to a total of [38] syllabi collected from the fall 2014 and spring 2015 academic year. To reinforce the program goals of academic achievement, a quantitative assessment of the required titles was conducted with the objective of enhancing library collections. The data results demonstrate clear indications of the reserve collection's strengths and weaknesses.

To guide the investigation, circulation data patterns were compiled from the required and supplemental print titles referenced in the syllabi sample. Data compilation and analysis also include the faculty survey responses concerning their expectations of library resources/services. In an effort to organize the required and supplemental readings in each syllabus, an Excel spreadsheet organized titles in alphabetical order. Additionally, a tally was formulated of the most frequently assigned and optional readings identified in the syllabi. In all, 547 titles were classified from the syllabi and were defined as follows: print and electronic books, book chapters, print and electronic journal articles and Web resources. Only a few titles were assigned or suggested and, in some instances, recurred in multiple courses during the sample academic year.

To gauge faculty expectation and perception of library resources, a survey was administered between October and November 2016 using Survey Monkey, a free Web-based development software for undertaking surveys. The sample questionnaire was modeled after a survey instrument developed by Cindy Shirkey at East Carolina University, which covered the use of syllabi studies for collection development (Shirkey, 2011). Through the survey, faculty's research interests assisted Shirkey in purchasing library resources. The author concluded that "faculty put a great deal of time into creating new syllabi, and were dissatisfied with library reserve holdings; an effort that should not be ignored by the library". (Shirkey, 2011, p. 159). The modified survey was distributed via email to 74 active faculty members in the School of Architecture. To achieve a desirable response rate, an additional reminder e-mail was sent two weeks later. Because the Architecture Library faces budgetary constraints, the free survey tool and internal participation of this departmental faculty were the best approach. To allow different perspectives, the random selection encouraged a response from faculty of different professorial titles (i.e. Full-time, Adjunct and Visiting Professor).

Faculty survey

Stagnant or dwindling acquisition budgets in academic institutions make it essential for librarians to make practical

decisions in selecting library materials. Cooperation between architecture faculty and liaison librarians is ideal to secure an adequate collection in support of all areas of the curriculum. Architecture faculty is responsible for providing instruction and creating a syllabus – a learning tool that includes course description, pedagogical goals, required/supplemental reading materials – among other things; this group seemed the most suitable candidates for the survey. According to O'Brien *et al.* (2008, p. 14), “when carefully designed, a syllabus will provide your students with essential information and resources that can help them become effective learners by actively shaping their own learning”. The survey intended to improve mutual communication between the librarian and the School of Architecture. When creating a survey, the research requires precise questioning to provide meaningful insights to assist in making more appropriate collection development decisions. It is imperative to generate a suitable questionnaire to reach a precise target audience. Selecting the right participants demonstrated whether the information represented the stakeholder population. The sample questionnaire in this study consisted of ten multiple-choice questions to gauge whether library resources and services are incorporated into instructional practices.

Participant profile

Out of the 74 members of the architecture faculty, 22 participated in the sample survey, representing a response rate of 29.7 per cent. The participants identified faculty status as Non-Tenured 50 per cent ($n = 11$), Tenure-Track 27.7 per cent ($n = 5$) and Tenured 27.3 per cent ($n = 6$). Participants also reported academic title ranks: thirty-one percent ($n = 7$) identified as Adjunct Professor, 22.7 per cent ($n = 5$) Associate Professor, 13.6 per cent ($n = 3$) Professor and Assistant Professor and 9.1 per cent ($n = 2$) Instructor and Visiting Professor.

Preparing and/or revising an effective course syllabus requires time and effort. According to the questionnaire responses, 40.9 per cent ($n = 9$) spent more than 24 h to either create or revise a previously designed syllabus. In total, 36 per cent required 11–24 h of syllabi preparation and 22.7 per cent ($n = 5$) needed less than 10 h. Instructors have different methods of distributing the syllabus to their students. Most instructors prefer to handout the syllabus as well as digitally post it to Blackboard or share it via Drop Box. In all, 59 per cent responded to using both handout and electronic format. On the other hand, 36.4 per cent ($n = 8$) only distribute syllabi digitally and 4.5 per cent ($n = 1$) hand out a printed copy in class. In hindsight, this question should have had an additional choice – provide the library a copy. Shirkey (2011, p. 156) “highlights the necessity of asking faculty directly for their syllabi, as syllabi posted on course management systems and paper copies are not freely accessible”. Frequently, collection managers solicit emails and reminders requesting the syllabus in advance of each semester. However, most times the library resorts to approaching students – on the first day of the semester – to request their syllabi and make copies of them.

Students generally assume the library has their required and/or supplemental reading material on hand at the beginning of each semester. However, 54 per cent of the faculty who participated in our survey did not regularly place required text

on reserve, while 59.1 per cent ($n = 13$) entrust their personal copies to the library for the duration of the semester. Surprisingly, 91 per cent ($n = 20$) of the faculty claimed to have requested the librarian purchase those required titles not yet owned by the library. Overall, the faculty survey had a response rate of 29.7 per cent, much lower than the expected target rate of 40 per cent or higher. Perhaps, the low response rate was because of the time allotted to complete the online survey, which opens discussions of adjusting the parameters for future research. Moreover, better communication is needed between the librarian and instructor, to provide significant resources to accommodate the school of architecture curriculum (Figure 1).

Explanation of data

Library assessment offers collection managers the ideal tools to effectively gauge the state of its holdings. To optimize results, the data were gathered from the School of Architecture faculty survey in conjunction with a random sample list of readings and compared for analysis to reserve circulation frequencies of the 2014–2015 syllabi. Ideally, it is important to select both collection-centered and user-centered assessment techniques to reach a well-rounded outcome. For the purpose of this study, 547 classified titles were consolidated to illustrate the circulation patterns of print reserve monographs during the 2014–2015 academic year. The strategy of assessment excluded 183 (33.4 per cent) duplicate titles, 50 (9.1 per cent) print and electronic journal articles, 38 (7 per cent) freely available Web resources and 24 (4 per cent) CUNY electronic books from the final list of readings.

Table I represents the circulation data for the select monographs placed on reserve in the Library during the fall 2014 – spring 2015 academic semester. The “Monograph Total” constitutes the total number of books either purchased and/or pulled from the Library shelves for course reserve. “Circulation Total” represents the number of times the reserve monographs were loaned to users during the period in question. “Circulation per Title” shows the average number of times each reserve monograph circulated throughout this period.

Clear limitations in the analysis recognize that the circulation data only provides how many times items were checked out but did not identify whether patrons were enrolled in the specific courses from the gathered architecture syllabi. Drawbacks included the fact that not all syllabi had required or supplemental reading assignments and faculty sharing the same reading material may have also affected the final results.

Figure 1 Survey, syllabi, and usage statistics assessment

FIGURE 1 SURVEY, SYLLABI, AND USAGE STATISTICS ASSESSMENT: COMPARATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

FACULTY SURVEY		SYLLABI ANALYSIS		USAGE STATISTICS	
Participants:	74	Total:	38	Total Titles:	269
Questions:	10	Coverage:	2014-2015	Circ Total:	448
Coverage:	31 Days	Full List:	547	Circ Per Title:	1.6
Non-tenured:	11	Dups.:	184	0 Circs:	131
Tenure-track:	5	Not Available:	46	% of 0 Circs:	48.6%
Tenured:	6	CUNY(CLICS):	26	5+ Circs:	24
Response Rate:	29.7%	REF (Non-Circ):	22	% of 5+ Circs:	9%

Table I Circulation of reserve print monographs at the CCNY architecture library 2014-2015

Monograph total	Circulation total	Circulation per title	0 Circulations	% of 0 Circulations	5+ Circulations	% of 5+ Circulations
269	448	1.6	131	48.6	24	9

Furthermore, faculty do not generally design their required list of readings based upon library availability. This supports the need for future study which includes surveying student borrowing practices to improve library circulation.

The School of Architecture has approximately 70 faculty members and 420 students pursuing undergraduate and graduate degrees in Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Urban Design with a concentration in Sustainability. Yet, circulation statistics in column three of [Table I](#) demonstrate a very low average number of 1.6 checkouts per title circulated. One hundred thirty-one reserve titles are labeled “0 Circulations” as these items never circulated during the academic year, although listed as required or suggested text on the syllabi. The “5+ Circulations” column points out the number of items which circulated five or more times. Overall, close to 49 per cent never circulated during the academic year. Because library circulation statistics have dropped despite an increase in user visits, it leads to ongoing discussions of marketing library resources. This project envisions students and faculty becoming better acquainted with the Library collection and the librarian getting integrated with the School of Architecture.

Discussions

Changing technology and the implementation of institutional practices (i.e. Blackboard) are driving forces in declining usage statistics and ultimately the discontinuation of the digital reserve management system. Docutek Eres – Electronic Reserve Management System – was first introduced to the CCNY Libraries in around summer 2005 through spring 2013. Docutek ERes system allow access to linked journal articles from the Library’s subscription databases, scanned book sections (no more than 10 per cent), as well as other print materials instructors place on reserve as required class readings. The license permits scanned library material to be fully available 24-7 from on and off campus. To ensure copyright compliance, the library restricts access to instructor and registered students in the course. The document scanning service enhanced the library’s visibility, provided access to program syllabi and expanded access to the collection. ERes enabled broad partnerships between architecture instructors, students and the librarian. According to [Caswell et al.’s \(2005, p. 14\)](#) survey on scanning services “creates a technologically rich environment of collaboration, discovery, and creativity”. Additionally, this integration of library resources aided student and faculty research projects and interests in support of the overall curriculum. With the implementation of Blackboard and other document sharing services (i.e. Google Docs and Dropbox) the library is now excluded from the process. The CUNYwide push for faculty to use Blackboard – course management system – resulted in a diminished responsibility for library eReserves. This transition made instructors solely responsible for posting digital readings, essentially taking the accountability away from the library. Instructors are now less

inclined to submit syllabi, and therefore, the librarian must continuously solicit faculty for their course syllabus and/or to obtain required reading list.

Faculty Librarian engagement is further complicated by professor status. During the 2014-2015 fiscal year, 34.2 per cent of all School of Architecture faculty were full-time tenured or tenure-track, while adjunct faculty made up approximately 64.3 per cent. The disproportionate numbers of short-term positions make it challenging for the librarian to collaborate. Adjunct and visiting faculty positions are either part-time or short-term appointments, ranging from one semester to three years or more. At times, contingent faculty members are hired on short notice with limited control over course content or reading material. These last-minute appointments often curb the possibilities of frequent library visits or information literacy sessions for students. Professors and librarians alike tend to overestimate the research skills and patterns of library use of their students. Faculty members are inclined to “make assumptions and fail to require their students visit with a librarian before embarking on research projects”. ([Kolowich, 2011](#)). The library holds a wealth of knowledge and resources to support student learning. However, a small number of professors encourage or require library interaction.

With the emergence of the digital era, library physical space now plays a critical role in the changing dynamic. According to [Bailin \(2011, p. 342\)](#) “many university libraries have transformed their spaces into new environments that support the changing information needs of twenty-first century students”. Library space is in high demand, as library headcounts are continuously high, yet circulation statistics are unusually low. Although the digital environment has changed, faculty members are the direct link to encourage library use. How can the library improve student-library engagement?

Recommendations

In light of the current situation, this multimethod research tackled distinct issues from various angles with the intention of establishing ongoing partnerships to increase student-faculty-librarian/library interaction. Nevertheless, the focal points of this article propose a glimpse of an architecture divisional library; suggestions may be applicable to other similar academic settings. Ideally, these methods of assessment are most productive when applied on a continuous basis to ensure a progressive outlook. To achieve departmental engagement and support library services, the following recommendations should be applied:

- Provide library services orientation workshop to new and returning adjunct faculty which specifically targets their input. Also prepare a quick reference guide to accessing library material, including required reserve material for their students.
- Partner with architecture faculty, who are avid library users to advocate for using library resources to other

faculty and students; faculty can serve as liaison to the library department.

- Invite instructors to incorporate the librarian's contact information on their syllabi.
- Regularly attending architecture faculty meetings will keep the librarian well-informed on daily activities, important events and/or changes in the curriculum.
- Publicize student and faculty achievements to connect with the School and the college community.
- Build connections with the School's administrative staff, as they are bridge between both students and instructors.
- Participate in events sponsored by the School of Architecture.
- Develop fundraising events with the American Institute of Architecture Student (AIAS) association to bring awareness to reserve materials and other services offered by the library.
- Use social media as an instructional tool to promote services (collection, new products) the college community may not be aware of, i.e. electronic resources, Lynda.com.
- Attend relevant professional development sessions to gain program insight to better service the student population.
- Provide skills and expertise to the School of Architecture during accreditation process.
- Offer citation workshops to both students and faculty. Announcing it at faculty/staff meetings.
- Create individual course guides for instructors to use as a point of reference which lead student resources held in the library.
- Collection managers should stress the importance of copyright to faculty. Often, professors provide reading materials directly to students in an effort to save them the time of accessing through the library's collection.

Conclusion

The use of combining multiple methods of assessment achieves a library collection that is representative of its user population. The in-house faculty survey, program syllabi assessment and the circulation usage statistics contributed distinct information which effectively complemented and justified the study. Collection-centered and user-centered assessment techniques assisted in accomplishing a well-rounded outcome. All three assessments were internal, cost-effective and flexible measures to ensure the collection was responsive to its stakeholders and committed to curricular requirements and user needs. Circulation statistics generated from the library-automated system provided useful information which solely focused on the collection. Therefore, it was essential to follow-up with a faculty perception survey to discover instructional strategies of fostering student-library engagement.

Despite the assessment revealing prospective directions for collection evaluation and consultation, faculty collaboration may open more opportunities for building a successful collection. Librarians should routinely invite teaching faculty to submit course syllabi to help ascertain various opportunities in developing and cultivating library collections. Targeting the faculty provided an insightful view of their text selection as a possible addition to our collection and the process of preparing or revising a syllabus. This research study shows the

significance of dissecting course syllabi, and how conceivable faculty collaborations would shed light on the benefits of library services. Ideally, embedding librarians within a curriculum enables close coordination and partnerships with teaching faculty and promotes academic success. The creations of faculty and librarian partnerships connect our students to relevant architectural resources.

The research assessment revealed indications of strengths in purchasing required texts and faculty recommendations; however, this exposed the extremely low usage circulation statistics. These factors demonstrate a need for better promotion of library material and holds major implications for future purchasing. The discoveries were not intended to set a standard method of building a collection. Instead, this study serves as a starting point in identifying key issues and incorporating significant changes to support any curricular program.

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Appendix

A syllabi study for library collection building

- 1 What is your faculty status at the college?
 - a. Non-Tenure Track
 - b. Tenure-Track
 - c. Tenured

- 2 What is your academic rank at the college?
 - a. Instructor
 - b. Adjunct
 - c. Assistant Professor
 - d. Associate Professor
 - e. Professor
 - f. Visiting Professor
- 3 How much time do you spend preparing or revising a syllabus?
 - a. Less than 10 h
 - b. 11–24 h
 - c. More than 24 h
- 4 How do you distribute your syllabi to students?
 - a. Hand out copy
 - b. Digital copy (i.e. Blackboard and drop box)
 - c. Both a and b
- 5 Have you ever placed your personal copy on reserve in the library?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- 6 Do you normally place all required texts on reserve in the library?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- 7 If the library does not own a title needed for reserve, would you request the library purchase a copy?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- 8 How often do you contact the librarian regarding titles (books) that should be added to the library's collection?
 - a. Never
 - b. 1–2 times per semester
 - c. 3 or more times per semester
- 9 Does the library usually have most, if not all material needed to teach your course(s)?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- 10 How do you generally distribute articles or selected readings to your class?
 - a. Hand out copy
 - b. Digital copy (i.e. Blackboard, Drop box)
 - c. Library reserve
 - d. Course reader
 - e. Provide link to the library's database

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