Methods for User-Based Evaluation

Professor Helen R. Tibbo
School of Information and Library Science
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
tibbo@ils.unc.edu
Many thanks to my colleague, Professor Barbara Wildemuth for much of the content of these slides.
Why we conduct user-based evaluation

- Learn about the current users of the collection
  - Purposes, methods, tools, content, satisfaction, impact
- Learn about potential future audiences
  - Purposes, methods, tools, content, satisfaction, impact
Focus of the study

- Evaluation versus basic research
  - Research is more generalizable
  - Evaluation has local basis
- Scope of study from narrow to broad
Evaluation criteria

- Effectiveness
- Utility/ usefulness/ impact
- Satisfaction
Using the criterion for evaluation

- **Criterion-referenced evaluation**
  - A standard is set prior to the study

- **Norm-referenced evaluation**
  - Comparison with some other alternative
Data collection

- Watching the users
- Asking the users questions
Methods for watching the users

- Direct observation during use
- Think-aloud protocols
- Transaction logs

Library of Congress Manuscript Division

Archdiocese of Milwaukee Archives
Methods for asking questions

- Questionnaires
  - Surveys
  - Measures
- Interviews
- Focus groups
## Sample satisfaction measure

McKinney, Yoon, & Zahedi, 2002

After using this Web site, I am... | Very dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 | Very satisfied
---|---
After using this Web site, I am... | Very displeased 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 | Very pleased
Using this Web site made me... | Frustrated 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 | Contented
After using this Web site, I am | Terrible 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 | Delighted
After using this Web site, I... | Will never use it again 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 | Will definitely use it again
Study sample

- Define the population of interest
- Consider sample size
- Develop a sampling plan
  - Probabilistic sampling
  - Nonprobabilistic sampling
Research design

- Controlling extraneous variables
- Achieving internal validity
- Achieving external validity
Data analysis: quantitative

- Descriptive statistics
- Inferential statistics
From results to conclusions

- Check for statistical significance
- Check for meaningfulness of results
- Draw conclusions
Data analysis: qualitative

- Qualitative content analysis
- Specifying a unit of analysis
- Recognizing themes
- Looking for negative evidence
From results to conclusions

- Identify themes for further analysis
- Weigh positive against negative
- Draw conclusions
Review

- The research/evaluation question
- Evaluation criteria
- Data collection
- Study sample
- Research design
- Data analysis
- Drawing conclusions
Ax-SNet

- Archival eXcellence in Information Seeking Studies Network
- Collaboration of University of North Carolina, University of Toronto, University of Michigan, and many institutional partners across North America and the world.
- Myself, Wendy Duff (Toronto), & Beth Yakel (Michigan)
Ax-SNet

- An evolving international collaboration of researchers and institutions interested in:
  - facilitating accessible access to and use of primary sources;
  - exploring user information seeking and use behaviors;
  - provision of user instruction and guidance;
  - User-based evaluation.
Ax-SNet

- The institutional partners, along with the researchers, will identify areas for which evaluation tools and modules will be created.
- Researchers will develop these tools.
- Practitioners will test them at their institutions.
- Researchers will revise until reliable tools are built.