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## REVIEW

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STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENT FOR ACADEMIC LIBRARIES: A WORKBOOK. William Neal Nelson and Robert W. Fernekes. *Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2002, 156 pages, list price: \$20.00, spiral bound.*

If your library is already involved in or embarking on strategic planning and assessment; if you want to make use of the 2000 edition of the ACRL College Library Standards, this is the workbook for you. The authors, Nelson and Fernekes, are extremely experienced, Fernekes contributing author for key sections of the Standards document. The authors have already made numerous presentations introducing the new Standards. Now, they have written a workbook that gives the user a framework with assessment guides and much more for the practical applications of the Standards. Academic librarians across the country, eager to consider “the ways in which library users are changed as a result of their contact with the library’s resources and programs,” should use this workbook for outcomes assessment.

Stated in the introduction/preface of this workbook, “the goal of this workbook is to provide the user with:

- A knowledge of the principles of the newest ACRL standards,
- Worksheets to assist in the assessment process,

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- Practical examples to use as a guide to assessment techniques, and
- Checklists and suggestions for application of these principles and practices to their own particular library.”

### ***WHO WILL FIND THIS WORKBOOK USEFUL?***

Although the College Library Standards were crafted with a particular group in mind, the authors indicate the workbook is for all sizes of both public and private academic libraries. Professional academic librarians and administrators are the obvious audience yet significant portions of this workbook would be useful to many including librarians other than academic and administrators other than those in a library. With content modification and with the framework of Part II and Part III providing a basic model, the assessment process outlined by Nelson and Fernekes would be a useful starting place for anyone wishing to assess any service organization in the areas included in the workbook: *Services, Instruction, Resources, Access, Staff, Facilities, Communication and Cooperation, Administration and Budget.*

### ***HOW WILL IT BE USEFUL?***

Users of this workbook will be those who have crafted or are in the process of developing a mission statement for their organization and are ready to carry their planning and assessment process further. Nelson and Fernekes provide tables and worksheets for using the mission statement as well as organizational goals and objectives and statistical data, making planning, assessment and outcomes assessment a continuous activity “loop” for a service oriented organization. Their chart models for aligning standardized accreditation measures with sections of the ACRL standards are extremely useful for identifying measures to demonstrate continuing improvement. Tools in this workbook are applicable for a planning retreat, a planning committee’s use and/or individuals leading assessment activities in their institution.

### ***A CLOSER LOOK***

In addition to a well-organized coverage of the planning and assessment processes in an academic library, the authors have included

throughout the workbook numerous resources such as tables, charts, worksheets and assessment tools. Highlights follow:

The workbook is divided into three parts. Part 1 includes an overview and chapters on “planning,” “assessment” and “outcomes assessment.” Here, the authors use a sample library mission statement and the corresponding institutional mission statement to demonstrate linkage of the two. A sample three-column chart, including columns for the ACRL/CLS standards, performance areas and data sources and applications, is completed for each of these three chapters.

A highlight in this section is instruction in the use of a “planning matrix.” In addition, Nelson and Fernekes provide a sample partially completed matrix, an “assessment worksheet” listing formal evaluation tools, worksheets for identifying existing institutional evidence and for identifying statistical data for peer comparison, and a blank worksheet entitled “Your Library Goals and Objectives” with columns for “Purpose,” “Goal,” “Evaluation Procedure” and “Use of Results.” The section concludes with a list of activities to consider for continuous improvement.

Part II, in the authors’ words “provides the core content for implementing the Standards . . .” In an extremely practical arrangement, chapters are arranged similarly, making it easy to use each. Contents here include “essential ideas for defining and measuring your library’s contribution to institutional goals, evaluation questions, a worksheet for identifying measures of success and user survey sample questions.” Directly before these sections, right where the user needs it, is the glossary.

The *Glossary of Key Assessment Topics and Terminology* is exemplary. Concepts are discussed fully, examples are sprinkled liberally throughout, Web sites are included, and there are cross-references to the bibliography.

The three chapters in Part III are, as in Part II, also arranged similarly. Features in these sections are a performance chart and evaluation questions. Compliance is the theme that stands out as a library evaluator weighs answers to questions, comparing them with specific accreditation requirements.

The workbook concludes with a superior set of appendices. Appendix A, a “selected,” annotated bibliography on library assessment, includes materials that will facilitate use of the workbook. Appendix B uses a graphic presentation to focus on factors that drive performance. Appendix C is a sample of a graduating student survey from Augusta State University, and Appendices D-1 through Appendix I all are charts placing the ACRL Standards beside various accrediting agency stan-

dards. This unique piece is another one of those highly useful aspects of the workbook.

Nelson and Fernekes's workbook is a wonderfully woven series of tools promoting academic library outcomes assessment. Because of its complexity, however, it could be somewhat overwhelming for a novice to the tasks of strategic planning and assessment in a college library. The book is so well explained, this is certainly not an insurmountable issue. It does mean, however, that its use will require study and perhaps some practice. This is actually a positive aside to the use of the workbook in that users studying the processes together gain the opportunity to execute those processes effectively.

Finally, the authors appear to consider this workbook to be, like an academic library planning process, never finished. To that end, in the book's forward they encourage us to provide suggestions for improvement of the workbook. With this opportunity comes the chance for many practitioners to contribute to the body of knowledge on library outcomes assessment.

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