

Planning a User Study— The Process Defined

Library literature is replete with articles describing library user studies. However, little has been written about the planning process necessary to undertake a task as complex as a user study that measures the effectiveness of an academic library's services. This article focuses on the planning process that was used by the staff of a college library to develop and implement a user study. Outlined here are the planning steps necessary to coordinate disparate staff concerns and interests to undertake a complex study and accomplish stated objectives in a specified time.

THE LITERATURE

Planning is certainly not a new concept to the library profession, but it is a concept of increasing importance to today's rapidly changing academic libraries. However, even a cursory glance at the literature of library planning makes it painfully obvious to the researcher that literature on planning is still in its infancy in the library profession.

Bibliographic control of the literature on planning for libraries is problematical. Subject headings, such as "Library Planning," lead most frequently to literature on the planning of library buildings. More general headings relating to library administration and management or planning library services are too broad to be satisfactory approaches when one wants information on planning theory and models. The researcher on this topic must rely heavily on the literature of systems analysis and planning theory from business and other related disciplines in the social sciences, and be prepared to do a lot of reading and sifting.

Many librarians have found the literature relating to planning in academic and research libraries issued by the Association of Research Libraries and the Council on Li-

brary Resources extremely helpful. This literature tends to focus on library self-studies, management self-analysis, and developing goals and objectives. The self-studies present a planning model and offer the expert assistance of professional consultants trained to facilitate the planning process.¹

Other librarians have looked to the literature of business, operations research, and systems theory to provide planning and evaluation models. One excellent article that appeared several years ago in library literature is McClure's article on planning as a strategy for action.²

A third area of planning literature concerns public library planning. Palmour's handbook³ has relevance to the academic librarian and is the most recent in a long tradition of planning manuals for the public sector.

Bibliographic control of the literature on library surveys and user studies is even more problematic to the researcher. The literature is too enormous to be tackled by any one researcher, as evidenced by numerous bibliographies and reviews devoted to these topics in *Library Literature*, *Information Science Abstracts*, etc. Terms such as "survey," "user study," and "evaluation study" are frequently used interchangeably, and no distinction is made in subject headings and bibliographic citations between types of user studies or points of view. Research that explores the use made of an information system

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is lumped together with research on users and their characteristics. In addition, the bulk of the literature is descriptive rather than analytic and therefore of limited use to the library planner.

Zweizig^{4,5,6} and Dervin⁷ have pointed out the deficiencies of the current literature on user studies and have suggested research alternatives of interest to the library planner.

The task of this article is to present a basic planning model, apply it to a planning activity—that of developing a user study—and detail the process involved. Of the wealth of material on planning and user studies reviewed, cited here are only those materials that relate specifically to the planning process of a library survey or a user study.

THE PLANNING MODEL

The specific elements of a planning process may differ from model to model; but the basic stages of planning are readily identifiable, relatively similar from model to model, and can be applied to the study of any library problem. All of these stages can be taken with or without benefit of outside consultants, options that are not always available to many smaller academic libraries.

Perhaps the basic planning model is best visualized as similar to a general model of the scientific method of inquiry found in any elementary science or social science text. The left column of figure 1 (Busha and Harter)⁸ illustrates the steps involved in the scientific method. On the right are the roughly equivalent stages of planning which were used in the planning process of the present study.

As is apparent from figure 1, the process of inquiry is a regenerative process in which information derived contributes to the generation of new hypotheses that must be researched and tested. The creativity of this process comes in the early stages of problem definition and the design of an appropriate methodology to address the problem. The more mechanical tasks of gathering and analyzing the data and reporting results necessarily follow. However, no analyses, no matter how sophisticated, can make up for a badly formulated hypothesis or a poorly designed methodology.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

Illustrated now will be the application of this general planning model through a discussion of planning as a process that provides a structure for problem-solving activities in a

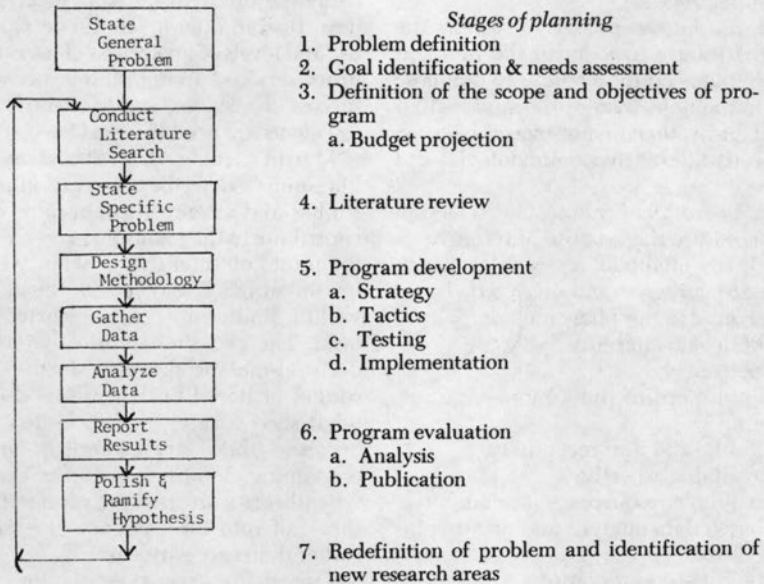


Fig. 1
Model of the Scientific Method

library. An example of a complex activity—the development and implementation of a user study—has been used to illustrate and highlight certain aspects of the planning process. Outlined here are the planning steps necessary to coordinate disparate staff concerns and interests in order to undertake a complex study and accomplish stated objectives in a specified time.

Experience and insight form the foundation of any well-conceived plan. The experienced planner incorporates these into a flexible but goal-directed process in which organizational goals and objectives are translated into plans of action. The resulting service programs are evaluated by obtaining *measurable* evidence of the extent to which organizational objectives and provided services correlate with user needs. All stages of planning—problem definition, goal identification, needs assessment, program development, program evaluation, etc.—must be present before talk of a planning process can begin. This type of planning is not an end in itself, but a means of achieving an end—a continuous process requiring constant reappraisal as conditions, needs, and services change.

Three major phases may be identified in any planning process:

1. The *narrative phase*, in which the main activities are to identify the problem and justify the need for a study; to diagnose and define the objectives of the study—first in general terms, then in more specific terms; and to specify alternative methodologies and options.

2. The *operational phase*, in which a strategy to ensure the best use of resources is developed; the methodology is determined; and data are gathered and analyzed. Issues to be considered in this phase include:

- a. budget availability
- b. personnel
- c. limitations of time, money, access, etc.
- d. public and staff receptivity
- e. available expertise
- f. available resources, e.g., computer-based data analysis and printing facilities
- g. political considerations

3. The *evaluative phase*, in which results are analyzed and reported; costs are com-

pared to benefits derived; results are compared to program objectives and adjustments are made.

The above process will now be illustrated through an examination of the planning of a user study by a group of librarians, library staff, and faculty at a medium-sized college library.

The library of the State University of New York College at Brockport is part of a relatively new institution serving approximately 10,000 students and faculty. It is a very active and busy library which enjoys a good relationship with its clientele and has been reasonably well supported by the college over the past decade of rapid growth. Forty-eight staff members (eighteen librarians) provide the basic services one has come to expect from an academic library, as well as an ambitious program of bibliographic instruction.

IDENTIFYING PROBLEM, JUSTIFYING NEED, DEFINING OBJECTIVES

Perhaps the first question to ask when beginning a planning effort is why. In this case, Why do a user study? The answer to that question is critical and provides the *raison d'être* for all subsequent planning activity.

In general terms, the purpose of a user study is similar to market research in business. It is an attempt to discover patterns of use and levels of awareness of users toward library services, to determine success or non-success of services, and to identify what adjustments are needed in service strategy.

Martin's article, "User Studies and Library Planning," describes several kinds of user studies and attempts to appraise what they contribute to the planning process.⁹ He labels the most common study "who, what, when investigations," and judges them beneficial within limitations of a clearly identified need. Their results can directly facilitate the decision-making process. Martin states that studies of how libraries are used (and with what success rate) tend to be less frequent, because they are complex and time-consuming. Evaluative studies that look at why libraries are used are rarer still, because they fall into the category of experimental rather than survey research.

Line defines one type of user study, the survey, as "a systematic collection of data concerning a library, its activities, opera-

tions, staff, use and users, at a given time." A survey gives an overview, "a map rather than a detailed plan," and it may be motivated by the need to improve, to provide information, to bring complex situations under control, or to satisfy curiosity.¹⁰

Specifically, the staff at SUNY Brockport Library lacked data about who used the library, for what purposes, and to what extent their needs were satisfied. The staff needed information about users to assist in the analysis of problems, and wanted to support budget requests with statistical measures of outcomes of services. The library was entering an extended period of financial constraints in which the college would compare every resource allocation to benefit derived. In addition, the college was anticipating a required self-study and self-evaluation in the near future.

The library could not afford to be passive. The library staff decided to seek out the users and question them about the services offered; to test hypotheses based on experience, insight, and observation; to provide data for the college's self-study; and to provide data to help the library make decisions about budget and service cuts, should such cuts become necessary in the future. The plan was for a modest beginning, to develop a "who, what, when" survey.

Once the justification for a survey is defined and the type of study and the focus are clearly identified, the normative phase of the process moves from the general to the specific. In this stage, it is necessary to analyze in precise terms what the specific objectives of the survey are and what costs will be and what the expected outcomes are. Alternative methods to accomplish the stated objectives must also be identified and given full consideration.

DETERMINING BUDGET

The importance of a budget as a planning document cannot be overemphasized.¹¹ Whether one develops an all-inclusive budget that gives details of both direct and indirect costs (e.g., cost of committee members' time, overhead, etc.) or narrows the scope to include only the direct costs of paper, printing, mailing, computer time, or student assistance, these costs must be carefully identified and projected before further

planning takes place. The availability or lack of money is a key consideration in determining what methodology will be used and other critical decisions in the planning process. Budget limitations made it necessary for the authors to narrow the scope of the original survey plans and to rely on "free advice" from knowledgeable campus faculty. Once plans were formulated and costs projected, money was requested from the library administration. Plans were modified in response to the budget allocated.

SETTING UP THE WORK GROUP OR COMMITTEE

Because the major objectives of this study were administrative in nature (i.e., focused on measuring effectiveness of service rather than learning more about the information-gathering behavior of users or user performance in our library), it was important to supplement administrative input with points of view from various levels of staff and a variety of service departments. Because the task was complex and time-consuming, a special committee was created. Its charge was to develop, implement, analyze, and evaluate a survey of library users within a ten-month period.

The composition of a committee, identification of its charge, and determination of its reporting relationships and timetables are absolutely critical to the success of any planning process, and careful thought must be given to each of these considerations before potential committee members are approached. Committee members for this study were chosen for their interest and expertise in the subject, their professional compatibility, and their reputation for successful completion of work. The authors also tried to represent the diverse interests of various library departments. Leadership must be provided by someone with good leadership skills as well as knowledge of communication and group-dynamics skills. It is important to have a balance between people who are "product" oriented ("let's get the job done") and people who are "process" oriented ("let's get agreement on this issue before we move to the next item").

The committee's role in planning should be clearly spelled out, both to committee members and to the rest of the library staff. Discussion and publicity about the commit-

tee work should begin at the formative stage.

A realistic discussion and appraisal of the complexities of the task ahead and what might be expected is essential in the early planning stages. Martin warns that "when the question is raised concerning what the library wants to know about its users, and how the information will be applied to planning, ambiguities appear."¹² After all, "user needs" are hard to define, even by the user, and user "interests" are even more nebulous. Edwin E. Williams summed it up nicely when he said of surveying,

I was sometimes discouraged by the complexities of surveying and the questions it raises. Recalling the hitherto competent centipede who became helplessly entangled when asked how he managed to coordinate so many legs, I wondered if I were becoming so conscious of the complexities that I should never be able to do any more surveying.¹³

Problems arise from the inexperience of the committee, the members of which may never have done any survey research; from expectations of both library staff and users about what the survey will do; and from the limitations of eliciting information from human beings and all the complexities inherent in that process. The measurement of attitudes is extremely complex and the limitation and potentialities of the task must be discussed frankly from the beginning if the committee is to become a cohesive work group.

DEFINING THE SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The committee must analyze in precise terms what information it wants to find out, what information it can realistically find out within the constraints of the study, and what it will do with the information. It must plan the survey before formulating specific questions to be asked of users. As Wood points out in his article on user surveys, knowing what you want to find out and what you already know will help you determine "the scale of the investigation, the method to be used, the timing of the study, and the type of questions to be asked or the type of information to be recorded."¹⁴

Once the committee defines the general hypothesis and specific problem statement, it can begin to identify the objectives of the study. Is the objective to measure work load or user satisfaction? Will the survey be lim-

ited to library users, or will it include nonusers? How large is the population to be surveyed, and what are the possibilities and limitations the committee must consider?

Decisions about point of view (administrative, user, etc.), depth of detail, and population (user, nonuser) must be made and adhered to. All of these decisions will help focus the task and will force a careful review of options and limitations.

After the objectives of the study are developed, a certain amount of background work remains to be done to help develop a framework. The committee must:

1. Identify what data about the organization and its services are currently available and what is known through experience and observation. Communication with colleagues is critical at this stage and will save much time and work.

2. Review the literature and look for models of similar projects. Seek guidance from colleagues at the home institution or at other institutions who have experience in similar projects. Identifying a guide or model can save enormous amounts of work and may contribute to the research validity of the results.

3. Pull together institutional mission and goal statements and develop a hierarchy of goals as a basis for the development of, and later, the evaluation of, the survey. Remember, performance will be measured against stated goals and objectives. It is very helpful to involve other appropriate staff in this goal-identification step to ensure a valid outcome and gain acceptance of and publicity about the committee's work.

4. Identify campus policies regarding research on human subjects and integrate appropriate procedures in the planning. Such policies may place restrictions on activities and will have to be taken into account from the beginning. Only when the objectives are clearly delineated and referenced to the goals of the organization and its various service units is the committee ready to move from the normative phase to the operational phase.

DEVELOPING A PLANNING CHART

At this stage of planning, or possibly even earlier, it is useful to develop a planning chart and timetable on which all activities to

be performed are listed and responsibilities and deadlines are assigned. A Gantt chart, in which time is plotted on the horizontal axis for each part of a project, allows for indication of progress at regular intervals and provides a comprehensive illustration of the process as a whole.¹⁵ Things to be done are entered in symbols (as shown in figure 2 below), and descriptions may be included under the portions of the calendar in which the activity is planned. New work can be added to take precedence over work already planned, and no erasure is necessary.

The obvious advantages of a planning chart are that it makes a definite plan for

each project necessary, and that it forces the "thinking through" of things that will be encountered and must be provided for. This type of chart both illustrates simultaneous activities and allows for the addition of steps that may have been overlooked or that may develop while the process is under way.

DETERMINING THE METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLING DESIGN

The planning committee is now ready to consider the methodology and design of their proposed survey. An effective and practical way to look at various methodologies is to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of a

Activities	Assigned to	Date Begun	Month <u>March</u>	Month <u>April</u>	Month <u>May</u>
			Week ending 7 14 21 28	Week ending 5 12 19 26	Week ending 3 10 17 24 31
Define objectives of each service dept.	Dept. heads	3/7/79	┌──────────┐		
1. Circ.	J. B.	"	┌───┐	┌───┐	
2. Reserve	R. L.	"	┌───┐	┌───┐	
3. ILL	K. W.	"	┌───┐	┌───┐	
4. Reference, etc.	S. P.	"	┌───┐	┌───┐	
Identify and collect presently available service statistics	Committee members (list)	3/14/79	┌──────────┐		
Literature review		3/14/79	┌──────────┐		
Develop budget, etc.	Committee chairperson working w/ Asst. Dir.		┌───┐		

Some standard symbols used in a planning chart:

- ┌ = entered under the date when a project is planned to start
- ┐ = entered under the date when a project is planned to finish
- = time span during which the project is active
- ▬ = state of progress, as shown by the length of heavy line compared to the planned
- √ = used to identify date of progress report

Source: Carl Heyel, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Management* (New York: Van Nostrand, 1973), p.281.

Fig. 2
Planning Chart for SUNY Brockport User Study

particular methodology against the limitations of staffing, financial, and temporal resources. For example, consideration of alternatives, such as the decision to include nonusers in the survey population or the decision to use a particular methodology (e.g., questionnaire, interview, observation, etc.), is directly influenced by the supply of staffing, money, and time available for the study.

Busha and Harter point up two key issues that require decisions: "the nature and extent of the population to be surveyed, including the availability of lists or rosters that identify the entire student group; and . . . the nature of the questionnaire or interview schedule, including formats and logistical techniques for questionnaire pretesting and actual distribution."¹⁶

The SUNY College at Brockport Library's planning committee decided to survey by self-administered questionnaire and to exclude nonusers from the survey. This decision was necessary because obtaining authorization to administer the questionnaire in a sample of classrooms required multiple administrative approvals and procedures that would have delayed the study. Committee members also felt that, for a first effort, assurance of a high response rate in a controlled environment (i.e., the library rather than a randomly selected classroom) was more desirable than conducting a broader-based survey.

If the planning group's membership lacks someone with experience or expertise in survey research, it is imperative to consult with campus experts and provide committee members with literature on this topic. The volumes by Maurice Line¹⁷ and Earl R. Babbie¹⁸ are highly recommended for their thorough treatment of survey research methodology. Busha and Harter's chapter on survey research suffices, however, as a briefer treatment of the fundamentals.

Someone on the committee should complete a literature search of similar library surveys and build a file of relevant documents with examples of survey instruments used. Significant articles should be shared with the full committee, so that all members will be sufficiently informed to make decisions about methodology, questionnaire development, etc.

Once the methodology is determined and

general agreement is reached about how the data analysis will be done, the chairperson can project actual costs for supplies, equipment, and personnel required for implementation. In this case, direct costs associated with the survey were for printing the questionnaire, campus mailing envelopes, computer-scoreable coding sheets, pencils, and salaries of student survey workers. Indirect costs were personnel costs of the planning committee members. Other costs might include postage, data processing costs, and a salary for the committee chairperson, if an outside person is used or if a staff person is given released time.

The development of a research and sampling design will naturally follow from the choice of survey method and the identified survey populations. Because of the relatively large size of the survey populations and the shortage of staff to administer the questionnaires, the Brockport planning committee developed two self-administered questionnaires—one for an in-library sample of student library users and a second one for all faculty and nonteaching professional staff. Since the committee had clearly defined its survey populations, it required a sampling design for only the student library users. A member of the sociology department's faculty helped to select a random systematic sample. Using the previous year's library use statistics, the population of library users was estimated. After adjusting for the number of nonstudent library users included in this figure, it was calculated that it would be necessary to administer the questionnaire to every twentieth student in order to obtain the desired sample size of 500. In practice this yielded 610 usable questionnaires.

Again, local expertise and/or technical information may be helpful in determining the needed sample size and appropriate sampling design. If informed consideration is not given to these concerns, the data generated and the resulting analysis will not be reliable, i.e., will not be applicable to the total population of library users.

In addition to decisions about the survey instrument, how it will be administered, and the sampling design, other components of the research design are selection of a sampling time unit and the place for administering the survey. At Brockport, it was decided to sam-

ple in the library during all hours the library was open for a seven-day, "typically" busy week in the fall semester. Other options would include sampling at specified times of the day, week, and month over an academic year.

QUESTIONNAIRE DEVELOPMENT AND REFINEMENT

No doubt, the design of a good questionnaire is the most difficult task the committee faces. To develop a list of questions or research statements that reflect the study's specific objectives and which will elicit the desired information is a time-consuming and often frustrating undertaking.¹⁹ Questions should mirror the hypotheses being tested and approach these hypotheses from several directions. At this stage it is important to focus on how responses will be analyzed and what correlations will be studied. Questions that provide demographic or other kinds of personal data should be considered. But care should be taken to exclude questions or statements that would elicit information for which the library has little need, is unwilling to make use of, or already knows. For example, in this study it was decided not to ask students how long they think the library should be open for service, because it was known from previous negotiations that students wanted twenty-four-hour library service, and the library couldn't afford to satisfy that demand.

As soon as a general list of desired information is complete, a subgroup of the main committee can begin drafting the questionnaire. Naturally, this work will be greatly aided by using suitable questions from other library questionnaires collected during the literature search.

After the first draft is complete, the full committee and possibly even other library staff should review it. By including other library staff in this process, ongoing communication about the survey effort is maintained. The library staff's active involvement in and commitment to the project are critical to its success. Any serious objections or problems can be brought to light at this time and collectively addressed.

Additional drafts will follow as questions are refined and language clarified. At this stage in the process, the expertise and objec-

tivity of faculty members not associated with the library can be of great assistance. In this study, advice on designing the questionnaire for computer analysis was sought from faculty in computer sciences, and advice on formulation of questions and language was sought from faculty in psychology, sociology, and educational research. (A word of caution, however. If one asks for advice and assistance, one must be prepared to accept and reject ideas and suggestions. It is easy to lose sight of one's objectives when faced with the often conflicting advice of others.)

The student questionnaire design efforts yielded a six-page questionnaire of sixty-eight items for response. Typeface and print size were used to contrast directions and introductory statements for sets of questions. The arrangement of questions was carefully planned to guide respondents from question to question, since in some cases certain respondents were required to skip specific questions.²⁰ The student questionnaire was primarily composed of controlled-response questions, although two open-ended questions were included. Open-ended questions were kept to a minimum to encourage a high response rate. Questions were grouped into sections and sections were introduced by statements such as: "The next set of questions is concerned with your experience in looking for and finding information and materials."

The faculty questionnaire, also six pages, was composed of seventy-five items for response. Although controlled-response questions predominated, there were slightly more open-ended questions. Several of the questions exactly duplicated those on the student questionnaire; however, a few were unique.

Both questionnaires underwent several revisions and a pretesting.

While the final draft is in preparation, planning for implementation of the pretest should proceed. A pretesting of the survey instrument can be done with a representative small-scale sample of the survey's sample. It isn't helpful to use library student assistants or library staff in the pretest, since the objective is to obtain useful information about problems with the questionnaire from potential survey respondents. Asking respondents to time how long it took them to complete the questionnaire will also indicate if the questionnaire is too long.

The final draft is reviewed by the full committee. The purpose is not to make minor stylistic or semantic changes, but rather to keep the committee informed and make certain that no important questions have been omitted. After this review, the questionnaire can be prepared and printed. (The final products were printed on colored paper and are visually attractive and professional-looking.)²¹

IMPLEMENTATION OF SURVEY

Careful planning is required for successful implementation of the survey, as well-planned implementation will increase chances of a high response rate. In the case of this study, the task of hiring, training, and scheduling student survey workers was primary. The need for thorough training and monitoring of survey workers cannot be overemphasized. As the time of the survey approaches, it is also important to inform the entire library staff about the details of the survey.

Even though the implementation plans were carefully made, unanticipated events occurred which required quick decisions. For example, it was found that students were curious about the survey and several individuals volunteered to fill out a questionnaire. Even though these questionnaires were kept separate from our sample population of every twentieth student, we realized midway through the survey week that we would have to deny volunteers the opportunity to fill out questionnaires or our supply would soon be depleted.

ANALYZING DATA AND PUBLICIZING RESULTS

Since survey data for samples larger than 100 are usually analyzed with computer-assisted statistical analysis packages, it is important to plan ahead for computer analysis so that response coding and monitoring can be kept to a minimum. Much time and effort can be saved by having the survey respondents mark their answers on optical scanning sheets, but optical scanning sheets work best in a controlled environment. In this case, the respondents were not "captives" but were free to complete the questionnaire at any time during their library visit. Therefore, it was felt that response rate and accuracy would be increased by not requiring them to use a separate answer sheet.

The Brockport staff was fortunate to have the assistance of a graduate student who, under the supervision of a faculty member, prepared the code books, trained and supervised the student coders, and was responsible for quality control procedures. She also processed the coded data using options from the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). If library staff is not knowledgeable about data analysis and/or campus assistance with data analysis is not available, outside analysis must be planned and budgeted for. In any event, the undertaking requires considerable time and expense.

EVALUATION OF SURVEY

The evaluative phase of the planning process begins when the committee chairperson studies and analyzes the computer printouts in order to report the findings and compare them to the stated service goals and objectives of the organization. A comprehensive report of the final results must be prepared. The report should identify gaps between stated goals and objectives and the perceptions of survey respondents, and recommend needed action.

Analysis of the present survey findings confirmed the authors' general hypothesis that student and faculty users were quite satisfied with facilities, services, and staff. No major changes were required, but certain continuing efforts were given increased attention, such as the improvement of response time at service desks and the allocation of additional funds to provide extended hours before exam periods. Other findings have potential use for planning purposes. The knowledge that a high percentage of respondents seldom or never use a particular collection can provide the stimulus to consider modification of an existing service or development of a new service designed to facilitate increased usage.

Also, analysis might identify areas where further inquiry is warranted. The authors realized this possibility at the early stages of planning and developed a general questionnaire with the understanding that more focused follow-up studies could be planned if warranted. As a result of the findings, two specific areas that required further evaluation efforts were identified.

One area of concern was bibliographic in-

struction. Some useful information about the effectiveness of the library's instruction programs was obtained from the general questions in the survey. An analysis of correlations between the type of instruction the respondents received and the amount of difficulty they had in using various library services provided data to test the assumptions of this study. This analysis also whetted the authors' appetites for more specific exploration of this topic of primary importance to the library's program of service. For the first time, the staff had reliable data on which to build further studies.

A second area identified as needing a further evaluation was the success or failure of users to retrieve the materials they wanted from the stacks. Data showed a lack of respondent awareness of the Brockport library's computer printouts listing periodical holdings and books in circulation; little use of the card catalog as a source of information; and, not surprisingly, an almost total ignorance of the subject catalog. This information helped the staff to plan its instruction programs and illustrated the need for specific follow-up surveys of success/failure rates for finding materials in the library's collections. The planning process of this study allowed the authors to build on their first survey efforts and to plan supplementary surveys as needed.

PUBLICIZING RESULTS

Disseminating the results of a survey is an important activity, not only because the library staff expects to be informed, or because of the need to maintain good public rela-

tions, but also because reaction and feedback from staff and library users are necessary for ongoing planning and improvement of library services. An explanation of the purpose of this survey and how results were to be published was included in each questionnaire distributed. Results were distributed in staff meetings in the form of a report. Committee members also prepared articles that appeared in the library newsletter and other local and professional media. The number of questions and requests for copies of questionnaires received from colleagues made the widespread interest in the topic readily apparent.

PLANNING AS PROCESS

The authors have attempted to define the planning process in some detail. The final stage of any planning process, a vital one that is often overlooked, is that of evaluating the process and building on the results to develop an isolated planning activity into an integrated, ongoing planning process. This survey was simply one stage in the ongoing activity of assessing the library's programs of service in light of user response. Perhaps the most useful knowledge gained from this work was a clearer sense of fruitful areas of inquiry, a curiosity to learn more, and the realization that the process used was applicable to many projects that might be undertaken in the future. A final benefit was the development and sharing of planning skills among those involved in the project and an increased understanding of how to approach complex problems in a systematic way.

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 19. Useful illustrations of question wording and miswording are contained in Stanley L. Payne, *The Art of Asking Questions* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Pr., 1951).
 20. Douglas R. Berdie, *Questionnaires: Design and Use* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1974).
 21. Copies of the questionnaires may be obtained upon request from Bonnie Gratch or by consulting the ERIC document, ED 194 099, where they are located in the appendix. This document is a final report of the study and contains a lengthy section on data analysis.