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## Evaluating Library-Use Instruction

*Although library-use instruction programs have become popular during the 1970s, they are often not given the same type of support by library and college or university administrators as the more traditional library services. The paper contends that appropriate evaluation is an important element in gaining this support and describes the development and results of a systematic assessment of library-use instruction at DePauw University.*

All social institutions or subsystems, whether medical, educational, religious, economic, or political, are required to provide "proof" of their legitimacy and effectiveness in order to justify society's continued support.<sup>1</sup>

During the 1970s library-use instruction has enjoyed a renewed popularity.<sup>2</sup> Each passing year has brought reports from more and more academic libraries that they too have established library-use instruction programs. A survey of the number of conferences on this topic and the articles published in the library literature confirms that library-use instruction has been revived. Despite these developments, few academic libraries accord library-use instruction programs the same degree of importance as the more traditional services of the library.

Often library-use instruction programs are an "extra" service that a few librarians or even a single librarian, working at the

grass-roots level, have been willing to provide in addition to their other responsibilities. As a result, there is a history of library-use instruction programs floundering as the librarians responsible for them have changed positions or simply lost their initial enthusiasm when the work load became too great a burden.

A common concern among librarians promoting library-use instruction programs is how to gain the same kind of continuing support from the library and college or university administration as that received by traditional library services such as cataloging, circulation, acquisitions, and reference. Certainly there are many ways of seeking this support, but a most important method that should be part of any library-use instruction program is that of systematic evaluation.

In the field of education, evaluation is customarily divided into two types: formative evaluation and summative evaluation. Familiarity with the rationale and techniques associated with both types of evaluation is important for librarians developing library-use instruction programs. This article deals with both aspects of evaluation but focuses primarily upon summative evaluation. Formative evaluation is concerned with the development of a program and is useful in making methods of instruction more effective. Summative evaluation deals with efforts to assess the overall effectiveness of a program and to gain additional support for the program.<sup>3</sup>

This does not mean the same test or questionnaire cannot be used for both types

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# Evaluating Library Use Instruction

**Scott Walter**



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