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ACRL's standards for libraries in higher education: Academic library directors weigh in

Patricia A. Iannuzzi

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, patricia.iannuzzi@unlv.edu

Jeanne M. Brown

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, jeanne.brown@unlv.edu

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Patricia Iannuzzi and Jeanne M. Brown

ACRL's standards for libraries in higher education

Academic library directors weigh in

ACRL Board of Directors approved the current ACRL Standards for Libraries in Higher Education¹ in June 2004. In 2009, then-ACRL President Lori Goetsch charged a task force² to review and revise these important standards.

To inform their work, the task force surveyed academic library directors in spring 2010 on their use of, and need for, the standards. This report is a snapshot of the results.

Of the effective pool of 1,260 directors,³ 988 responded to the survey. From those respondents, 833 completed the full survey, for a return rate of 66.11 percent. The task force wishes to convey our appreciation to all who completed the survey.

The high response rate is indicative, we believe, of a keen interest in the standards on the part of academic library directors. This interest is substantiated by the many questions received in the ACRL office revolving around standards and benchmarking.

Thirty-one percent of the full 988 respondents represent institutions granting associate degrees as the highest level. Seventeen percent were from bachelor's degree level institutions, 27 percent from master's level, and 26 percent from those at institutions at the doctoral degree level. (Percentages are rounded to nearest whole number.) Fifty-eight percent of the library directors responding were members of ACRL.

Nine hundred seventy respondents provided feedback on their awareness and use

of the current ACRL Standards for Libraries in Higher Education. Forty-seven percent knew of the standards and have used them. Thirty-eight percent knew of the standards but had not used them. Sixteen percent were not aware of the standards.

The task force was particularly interested in why directors who knew of the standards had chosen not to use them; 278 answered this question. The top two reasons given were "no campus support for use of library standards" (37%) and "use regional accreditation standards instead" (37%). Directors who had used the standards found them most useful for preparing accreditation reports and engaging in library self-studies.

Two questions were asked on the survey to elicit feedback on what directors would find useful in a standards document: "What are the types and characteristics of standards that would be most useful for you in your position as library director?" and "The ACRL Standards for Libraries in Higher Education are being revised. Please check any of the areas below that you would like to see in the standards."

For both questions, feedback indicated the importance of relating library standards

Patricia Iannuzzi is dean of libraries at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas, and chair of the task force on the ACRL Standards for Libraries in Higher Education, e-mail: patricia.iannuzzi@unlv.edu, Jeanne M. Brown is assessment librarian at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas, and a member of the task force, e-mail: jeanne.brown@unlv.edu

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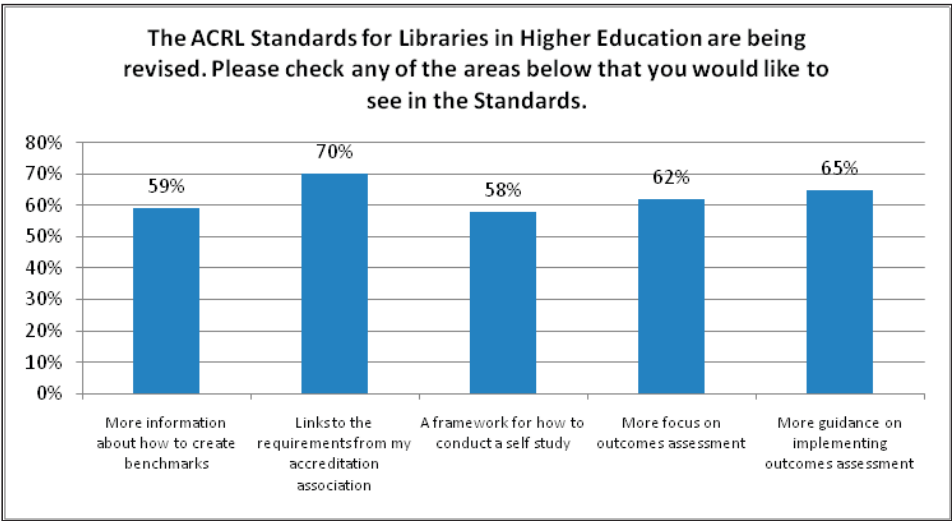
to the standards of the regional accrediting body.

An additional question provided an open-ended opportunity for respondents to indicate the data sources and types of standards used. The top three categories were peer comparisons (28%), National Center for Education Statistics data (23%), and accreditation standards (22%).

Of the 824 respondents to the question of whether ACRL should provide training on the use of ACRL standards in outcomes

Higher Education,” 2004, www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/standards/standardslibraries.cfm (accessed July 29, 2010).

2. Task force members are Tom Abbott (University of Maine-Augusta), Jeanne Brown (University of Nevada-Las Vegas), Susan Gibbons (University of Rochester), Lynne King (Schenectady County Community College), Sharon McCaslin (Fontbonne University), Mary Reichel (Appalachian State University), Joan Ruelle (Hollins Uni-



assessment, 78 percent indicated that they would indeed be interested in such training.

In conclusion, our colleagues have clearly indicated a need to align library standards with regional accreditation standards. The task force is committed to using the standards revision process as an opportunity to do that and to inform accreditation standards as well.

We will use the input received through this survey to frame the new version of the standards. Be assured, however, that there will be ample opportunity for additional feedback.

Notes

1. ACRL, “Standards for Libraries in

versity), Lisa Stillwell (Franklin & Marshall College), and Patricia Iannuzzi (University of Nevada-Las Vegas), chair.

3. Although the ACRL offices had 3,605 institutions on their director’s list, only 1,260 proved valid. The breakdown on the full list is as follows: 127 were ineligible to submit data to the National Center for Education Statistics (we did not survey these directors); 7 had no library director or other contact; 3 had no library; 9 had merged with other institutions (so were not surveyed); 1,199 had incorrect/missing e-mail addresses not yet resolved—these are by and large for-profit schools and it is very difficult to locate contact info; and 1,260 had good addresses for library directors. *zz*