

While the repositories at the forefront of digitization have had 10 years to experiment, make mistakes and have successes as well as failures, their willingness to share what they have learned benefits everyone. Abby Smith succinctly captures the progress made to date and distills the essentials into workable recommendations for the future of digitization in committed repositories. Every institution that is digitizing or thinking about doing it should have *Strategies for Building Digitized Collections* on their ready-reference shelves.

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### **Usage and Usability Assessment: Library Practices and Concerns**

By Denise T. Covey. Washington, DC: Digital Library Federation and Council on Library and Information Resources, 2002. 93 p. US\$20.00 soft ISBN 1887334890

Denise Covey has conducted a solid, informative qualitative analysis of library practices and concerns related to assessment of use and usability of online scholarly information. Her study is based on interviews with 71 individuals from 24 Digital Library Federation (DLF) member libraries conducted while she was a Distinguished DLF Fellow in 2000–2001.

The author found that all 24 institutions conducted user studies and that the methodologies most often employed were surveys, focus groups and user protocols. Some institutions also used heuristic evaluations, paper prototypes and scenarios, and card-sorting exercises. Covey describes each of these methodologies, reviews the purposes for which it was used by these libraries, and then identifies the problems they encountered. In turning to usage studies, she provides similar descriptions and analyses of methodologies used to collect and analyze transaction log data pertaining to their Web sites, local digital collections, OPACs and remote electronic resources.

Based on her interview data the author identifies six assessment challenges that these libraries face: focusing on collecting only meaningful data, developing assessment skills, developing comprehensive assessment plans, making assessment a core activity, managing assessment data, and acquiring sufficient information to understand trends in library use. She cites organizations and projects that have begun to address some of these concerns and shortcomings. However, she notes that librarians still need to improve their methodological and data analysis skills. She calls for more “how to” manuals and workshops, and standardized, field-tested research instruments. Similarly, she notes the need for guidance in analyzing and managing transaction log data. Finally, she suggests that libraries would benefit from the development of case studies describing effective approaches to collecting and using vendor transaction log data, successful efforts to make assessment a core activity, and

management information systems that effectively collect and manage assessment data pertaining to both traditional and digital resources and services.

This publication is valuable from a variety of perspectives. It provides a distillation of assessment challenges, categorizes them meaningfully, and offers practical suggestions for addressing them. Covey also provides cogent and accessible descriptions of various research methodologies, outlining their advantages and disadvantages as they pertain to the assessment of the use and usability of online scholarly information. In addition, she has compiled a useful, selective bibliography. This publication is a fine addition to the family of Council on Library Resources and Digital Library Federation reports.

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