

Assessing The Academic Networked Environment A CNI Project



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Background

This CNI project was developed as an outgrowth of the publication *Assessing the Academic Networked Environment: Strategies and Options* by Charles McClure and Cynthia Lopata (CNI, 1996). The manual described the challenges of assessing networks and networked services and offered guidance on approaches to developing measures. The authors described sample measures in a variety of areas. The institutions participating in the CNI project chose areas of assessment for their particular campus and developed measures using the McClure/Lopata manual as a starting point.

Areas of Assessment

The participating institutions selected areas of assessment that met the needs of their individual campuses. The areas included:

- Teaching and learning using networks and networked resources
- User support
- Library and information resources and services
- Network use

Participating Institutions

Each participating institution brought together a team of individuals representing various units, generally including both the IT division and the library and sometimes including an instructional development center, campus survey center, and others.

In response to a Call for Participation, the institutions chosen to participate in the project were:

- Brown University
- Dartmouth College
- Gettysburg College
- King's College London
- Mary Washington College
- University of Washington
- Virginia Tech

Lessons Learned

The CNI project has given the participating teams experience with a set of tools and has given them a start in establishing a baseline of data on electronic resources and services use for their campus. The teams have encountered many challenges and have learned many lessons as they worked on implementing their assessment programs. The program generated data that will promote incorporation of users' viewpoints into the way campus networks and network services evolve. Some specific findings include:

- A mandate for the campus as a whole to develop assessment measures as part of an accountability program was a strong driving factor for some teams.
- Strong support from institutional leaders - heads of the library and IT - and upper level campus administrators was important for resource allocation and making this activity a priority.
- Time and resource commitments for assessment activities are significant.
- The project provided a mechanism for individuals from many units on campus to coordinate assessment efforts in relation to networks and networked services.
- Support from a campus survey research center or statistical expert was a valuable addition to the team working on assessment issues.
- Incorporation of more than one type of data collection to measure a service was useful; e.g. a web-based or paper survey on support services followed by a focus groups.

Project Support

CNI received support for this project from Indiana University; Christopher Peebles and his staff were instrumental in the implementation of the project. Sam

McDonald of Indiana U. worked on compiling information for our website and provided additional support. Gerry Bernbom of Indiana U. served as facilitator of the two project team meetings and also had input into the development of the program. Charles McClure was a guiding force in the implementation of the project, as well as providing its initial inspiration. In addition, CNI received support for this program from the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR).

Further Information

Reports from each of the institutions's initiatives and supporting materials, including in many cases the surveys and other instruments used, are available on CNI's website at: <http://www.cni.org/projects/assessing/>

Assessing the Academic Networked Environment: Strategies and Options (CNI, 1996) is available at:

<http://istweb.syr.edu/~mcclure/>

To order a print copy, send a check for \$15 to

CNI Publications, Department #0692, Washington, DC 20073-0692

Data on use, quality, and costs of network services

Christopher Peebles, CNI Visiting Fellow and Associate Vice President and Dean of Information Technology at Indiana University, has developed an impressive set of survey data that describes use and satisfaction with an array of services including user support, hardware and software, and e-mail. To view the materials he uses in his presentations, which are updated on a regular basis, you can visit:

<http://www.indiana.edu/~ucsdcas/jm/>

To view 9 years of Indiana University IT quality surveys, you can visit:

<http://www.indiana.edu/~uitssur/>

To view the Activity Based Cost data for the central IT organization at IU you can visit:

<http://www.indiana.edu/~ucs/business/scindex.html>

