Performance Assessments: (Radcliff, Chapter 11)

Overview:

Performance assessments allow students to demonstrate what they can do, as opposed to describing what they know. Performance assessments may be useful in assessing outcomes that focus on higher order thinking skills, e.g. those that stress interpretation, synthesis and planning. Performance assessments offer an alternative to more traditional knowledge tests. They are used to evaluate student performance by either observation or documentation of the process (for example, executing a search strategy). Librarians work with faculty to assess assignments that are related to the instruction they have provided; this is an opportunity to collaborate with classroom faculty.

Two elements are needed when using performance assessments: the assignment and the scoring guide. Examples of assignment design can be found (Radcliff, p. 117-119).

Scoring guides are objective tools that can be used effectively for performance assessment. Some examples include: checklists, rating scales, and rubrics. Examples of scoring guides can be found (Radcliff, p. 120-128).

Indicators:

- Requires a significant time commitment
- Requires little money
- Level of assessment: Classroom, Programmatic
- Domain: Behavioral
- Access to participants: Requires medium level of effort
- Requires intense collaboration with faculty
- No outside expertise needed

Key Characteristics:

- Focuses on what students can do, especially in regard to real-world problems, like report writing, proposal development, and job searching;
- Strong choice for assessing higher-order thinking skills such as planning, evaluation, interpretation, and navigating complexity;
- Can be used to assess both groups and individuals;
- Often given students a choice in how they complete their assignments, which can increase motivation and engagement;
- Strong choice for assessing activities and projects, especially those that develop over days, weeks, or months.