Knowledge Tests: (Radcliff, Chapter 9)

Overview:

Knowledge tests focus on what students know, rather than on their skills, behaviors, attitudes, or opinions. Knowledge tests can vary quite a lot in length and still be effective. Knowledge tests should be tied closely to the learning objectives and the concepts being taught. The questions on a knowledge test should be taken from the material that was covered during the instruction.

Types of Knowledge Test Items:

Objective Item: Objective test questions are usually quite short and have one correct answer that is predetermined. Many of the learning objectives in Standards One and Two of the ACRL IL Standards are suitable for testing with objective items.

Essay Items: Essay items are used to measure more subjective and analytical skills. They are useful for information learning objectives that focus on developing students’ abilities to plan and organize a research strategy, evaluate information and synthesize new information into their existing knowledge bases.

Standardized Tests: Three tests have come to prominence and are available for purchase. All three build on the ACRL IL Standards. These are: iSkills; Information Literacy Test (ILT) and Project SAILS.

Indicators:

- Requires some time investment for learning test-making skills and for grading essay items
- Requires little money, unless purchasing a standardized test
- Level of assessment: Classroom, Programmatic, Institutional
- Domain: Cognitive
- Access to participants: Requires medium level of effort
- Must get some buy-in and cooperation from faculty
- No outside expertise needed

Key Characteristics:

Objective Items

- Assesses students’ recall and understanding of facts and concepts;
- Format is familiar and easy for students to follow;
- Requires skill and creativity to write good test questions;
- Scoring is easy and fast;
- Can be effectively used for pre-and post-testing.

Essay Items

- Strong choice to evaluate higher order knowledge and analytic skills;
- Delivers richer information than objective item formats;
- Can be time consuming for students to complete;
- Can be time consuming and difficulty to score.