Creating a culture of evidence brings evidence in action ... and greater user satisfaction

—Bill Myers, director of library development

Last year, there were more than 1.1 million visits to the KU Libraries web site, and more than 1.4 million people came through the Libraries’ doors. Did they find the information they were looking for? Did they get the help they needed? These are the basic questions that drive the Libraries’ assessment program, now in its third year.

The Libraries’ assessment program is based on the principle that the best management decisions are based on evidence, not assumptions and hunches. The Libraries’ assessment program is also based on the principle that library users are most qualified to assess resources and service delivery.

During the past two years, the Libraries have implemented several assessment initiatives:

• The Watson Library Reconfiguration survey was completed by nearly 1,000 students, faculty and staff in fall 2002. As a result of the evidence gathered, more public workstations have been added, a commons environment has been created, productivity software has been added to public workstations, new floor coverings and lighting have been installed, service points have been combined, and signage has been improved.

• The Libraries participated in the LibQUAL+ survey sponsored by the Association of Research Libraries and participated in by more than 400 libraries. More than 600 students, faculty and staff completed the survey that provided evidence on service, information access, library environs, and personal control.

• This past spring and summer, the Libraries’ Public Interface Design team conducted usability studies, first with current students and subsequently with incoming freshmen, to gather evidence on the navigability, layout and design of the Libraries’ web site. The new Libraries home page, activated in August, represents this evidence in action.

The Libraries has a number of new assessment initiatives planned or underway this fall in the areas of library spaces, access & delivery, scholarly resources, and information & instructional services.

The process of assessment is on-going as the Libraries’ pursue the primary service objective: providing library users with high-quality information access, content, and delivery.