

# Networking in North Texas: Connected by Assessment

Kay Chapa, MPA, MSLS, and Diane Wahl, MLS, PMP

The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas and University of North Texas

## PURPOSE:

Assessment is increasingly important in academic libraries, and assessments require greater focus on the results of library activities as opposed to traditionally collected inputs and outputs. Libraries need effective ways to share information about successful techniques, internally developed tools, vendor experiences, etc. – especially when budget limitations may reduce the ability of some to attend conferences. Librarians in North Texas are working to create a regional “culture of assessment” via a network of assessment librarians.

## DESIGN/METHODOLOGY/APPROACH:

In the fall of 2008, academic librarians in North Texas began meeting annually to share information about library assessment activities at their institutions. The meeting location and planning rotates among the participating libraries.

The first meeting focused on overviews of assessment activities at each institution. At the second meeting librarians representing different institutions presented detailed information about specific assessment initiatives of wide interest. This meeting also included an evaluation of each library’s interests and strengths to identify possible collaborators/consultants among participants.

To provide a venue for communication outside of the meetings, a social network on Ning was created: North Texas Library Assessment (NTLA) at <http://ntlibassess.ning.com>. When Ning became a fee-based site in 2010, the network moved to Google Groups (<http://groups.google.com/group/ntlibassess>).

## FINDINGS:

- Academic librarians are willing to take time out of their schedules to meet and discuss assessment. Twenty-two librarians from 11 academic institutions attended the first meeting, and 15 librarians from nine institutions attended the second. The third meeting is scheduled later in 2010.
- Social networking tools permit ongoing sharing and communication. Information and questions about conferences, assessment tools, and related topics are being posted on the NTLA site.

## PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS/VALUE:

Bringing together librarians in the area who are involved in assessment has established a network of contacts for participants. They know what types of assessment activities are going on at area libraries and who to contact if they are planning similar activities or facing similar issues.

## WHAT WE DO



## WHERE WE MEET

Each annual meeting is held at a different library. As part of the program, the host library highlights some of its assessment activities.

AGENDA		
<b>Fall 2009 Meeting</b> <b>North Texas Library Assessment Group</b> UT Southwestern Medical Center Library November 6, 2009 9:15 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.		
When	What	Where
9:15 A.M. – 9:30 A.M.	Registration Continental breakfast	Library Administration Conference Room (E3-314E)
9:30 A.M. – 10:00 A.M.	Overview Kay Chapa, Program Evaluation and Assessment Specialist UT Southwestern Medical Center Library  Welcome Kelly Gonzalez, Deputy Director	

## WHAT WE SHARE

- Assessment activities at each library, especially information on how others implement specific assessment techniques
- Experiences as participants in LibQUAL+ Lite™ pilot and beta test
- Experiences with assessment tools and/or software (e.g., Counting Opinions, Atlas.ti)
- Trends and new ideas from professional meetings that not everyone was able to attend
- Results from a member survey

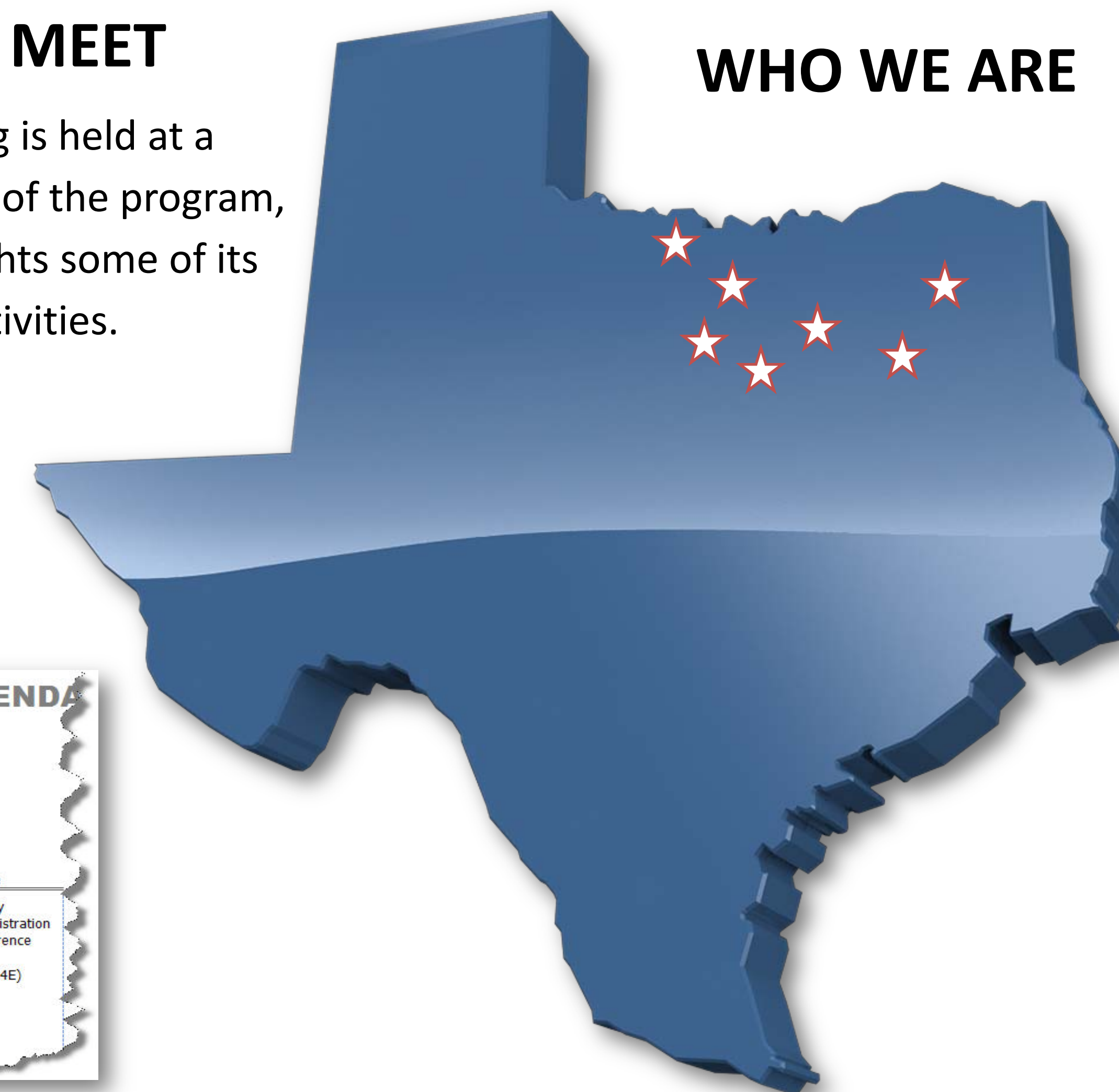
## TIMELINE OF SIGNIFICANT DATES/ACTIVITIES

2007 SPRING	2008 SUMMER	2008 FALL	2009 SUMMER	2009 FALL	2009 WINTER	2010 FALL	2010 WINTER
Met informally with area librarians during a professional development activity to discuss library assessment issues.	Attended Library Assessment Conference	Held first meeting of North Texas Library Assessment (NTLA) Group at University of North Texas in Denton.	Organized NTLA Ning Network.	Conducted needs assessment by emailing questionnaire to participants of first meeting.	Held second meeting of NTLA Group at the UT Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas.	Replaced the Ning Network with the new NTLA Google Group.	Will hold third meeting of the NTLA Group at University of Texas at Arlington.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to Jane Scott for her design expertise, Jon Crossno, Scott Carpenter, and the Publications Support Group at the UT Southwestern Medical Center Library.

## WHO WE ARE



PARTICIPATING LIBRARIES	LOCATION
Dallas Baptist University	Dallas
Midwestern State University	Wichita Falls
Saint Marks School	Dallas
Southern Methodist University	Dallas
Texas A&M at Commerce	Commerce
Texas Christian University	Fort Worth
Texas Wesleyan University	Fort Worth
Texas Women’s University	Fort Worth
University of Dallas	Dallas
University of North Texas	Denton
University of North Texas Health Science Center	Fort Worth
University of Texas at Arlington	Arlington
University of Texas at Dallas	Dallas
University of Texas at Tyler	Tyler
UT Southwestern Medical Center	Dallas

## WHO BENEFITS

***“Lewis Library is very excited to be a member of the North Texas Library Assessment Group and happy to be able to draw upon the knowledge and experience of library assessment experts in the group. We made immediate improvements in our assessment and evaluation plans based on exposure to the best practices of group members.”***

Daniel E. Burgard, Library Director  
Gibson D. Lewis Health Science Library  
University of North Texas Health Science Center