The Power of Data - Advocating for Library by Showing Evidence of Impact

Markku Laitinen
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“Libraries and information services serve society by preserving memory, feeding development, enabling education & research, and supporting international understanding & community well being.”

(Alex Byrne 2005)
Power of Statistical Data – the aim of statistics

- To transmit information in a compact form
- Foundation of planning
- Statistical indicators measure the phenomena observed
- Statistical indicators are based on certain concepts and definitions
- Institutional practices may affect the statistics
- Statistical classifications shape our ideas of the phenomena observed

Measure what is measurable, and make measurable what is not so

- Galileo Galilei
Data is Power!

Measure what is measurable, and make measurable what is not so.

- Galileo Galilei
Evidence of impact

- Library statistics
- Library performance indicators
- User satisfaction surveys
  Impact surveys, interviews, success stories, comparison of library use with users’ success, IL tests etc.

- But how to advocate for library?
Put the right focus

- Does your library support the strategy of the mother organization?
- Do you support your customers on the Information Superhighway?
- Does your library have a special task?
  Join the focal developing groups
  Keep the know-how of your staff up-to-date

- Tell the good news about these
Put the right focus

- Equal opportunities of the population
  - To the education and hobby of literature and art
  - To constant developing of know-how, skills and civil readiness
  - To internationalization
  - To lifelong learning
- Especially a public library affects widely the society and the customers
Trade with your financier

- Give good news to your financier – tell a true success story
- Make a deal
- Give a price-tag to your services
  Report the use and value of your library

- Did you say Good Morning to your financier today?
Impact of library

- Influence of libraries and their services on individuals and on society
- Direct, immediate or long-term
  - Intended impact (outcomes) or unintended impact – perhaps unexpected
- Actual or potential benefits for a user
- Set the goals for impact of your library
Effect of library

- Saving time in information retrieval and in delivery of the information
- Growth of the scale and scope of used resources
  - Better information retrievals
  - Better literacy
  - Better information literacy
- Decreasing costs
Negative effects?

- Information overflow
- Problems in using new services
- High involvement of workload and/or costs for the library

Tell instead how the users were supported to cope with the huge number of information and to use the new services...

- ... Because we are advocating for library...
- Remember the institutional power but do not exaggerate its significance
- The change of rhetoric - the library must prove its value
Outcome

Qualitative data

Quantitative data

Policy

Impact assessment

Benchmarking, comparison

Strategic planning

Input

Service

Output
Data input in libraries from several sources
- manual
- computer run

Utilization of statistics
- Evaluation & impact assessment
- Benchmarking
- Value to users

Statistics

Services
- Collections
- Resources
  Uniformly reported data
  ISO 2789
  Quality of data
  Commitment

NATIONAL LIBRARY NETWORK SERVICES
The libraries are not alone

- Global Library Statistics. IFLA Journal (35) 2:123-130
- ISO 2789, International Library Statistics
- ISO 11620, Library performance indicators
- ISO 16439, Methods and procedures for assessing the impact of libraries
Increasing expertise in statistics

- National Impact Evaluation Group
- Common set of indicators for all libraries
- Internet page (in English): Impact of Finnish Libraries
- Training module for library statistics
"Hard methods" – system view: Statistics, Key figures, etc.

"Soft methods": User surveys, etc.

"Hard methods" – organization view: Resources (Funding, Premises, etc.)

Mixed methods

Impact assessment
Dicussion about the library’s role
Relevant indicators
Cooperation with the key groups
Statistical reasoning as daily practice
Impact assessment

We shall hurl ourselves into unknown to achieve something new