Be a Data Champion – Presented by Amy Koester and Toby Greenwalt
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Conducting a Data Audit

Conducting a data audit can be a helpful first step in championing data at your library. A data audit allows you to gain a bigger picture understanding of all of the data sets that are available in your library. With this understanding, you can identify redundancies and useless data sets that could be modified or discontinued; different data sets that could be analyzed together to give a better picture of a particular aspect of library service; and gaps in current data that can help you identify where you'd like to learn more. The following resources and framework are meant to be a jumping off point for conducting a data audit at your library.

Resources to Guide Your Data Audit
- "5 Steps Your Nonprofit Needs to Take When Performing a Data Audit" from *Action Graphics*
- "What Type of Data Should My Nonprofit or Foundation Collect?" by Alexandra Pittman from *TechSoup*

A Framework for Conducting Your Data Audit
1. For each type of data set, identify the following:
   - What is the source of the data? This may be a vendor's interface, a software you utilize to collate data, a form, etc.
   - Is the data quantitative or qualitative? Quantitative data can be analyzed numerically, while qualitative data will require content analysis.
   - What populations does this data describe?
   - What aspect of library service does the data describe? For example, building usage, circulation, programming, desk interactions, patron preferences, etc.
   - How frequently is the data set updated?
   - How is the data currently being used?
   - Is the data collection automated, or must it be collected and/or collated manually?
   - Is the data shareable?
   - Who is the staff person to contact with questions about the data?
   - What are the privacy implications of the data set?

2. Consult with colleagues in other departments and areas of the library to ascertain whether there are additional data sets to be included in the audit.

3. Conduct analyses of your data sets. Examples may include:
   - Sort your data sets by aspect of library service described, grouping together data sets that shed information on the same service. Are any data sets redundant? If so, how might the redundancy be eliminated by ending unnecessary data collection, revising what is collected, etc.? Are there any clear gaps in data describing a service? If so, what additional data would give you a clearer understanding of that service?
   - Sort your data sets by how frequently the data is updated. In instances where updates are frequent, consider whether frequent updates are necessary and/or whether they can be automated to maximize efficiency. In instances where updates are infrequent, consider whether it is necessary to maintain the data set.
   - Sort your data sets by how the data is currently being used. Give a close look to data sets that are collected but are infrequently used and/or shared, considering whether continued collection is necessary, if a plan for sharing regularly is necessary, etc.
   - Sort your data sets by whether there are privacy implications involved in continued collection and housing of the data set. For data sets with implications for patron privacy, consider whether maintaining private data is actually beneficial; if there isn't a clear need for the private data, make arrangements to purge private data regularly.