Public Library Statistics: Collecting, Finding, and Using

An Infopeople Webinar

Monday, September 14, 2009
12:00 noon to 1:00 p.m.

Presenter: Ira Bray
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Agenda

- Overview
- Collecting data
- National and state data
- Cleaning data
- Analyzing the data
- Using the information - presentation

My background

- Ten years of work with the annual public library survey
- Database and programming background
- C+ in Algebra in high school

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What are we talking about?

Name, address, . . . . ,
Operating expenditures
Circulation
Wireless available?
Staffing

What are we talking about?

Directory data
Service inputs
Service outputs
Statistics
Information for use

Why?

Good Information=Good Decisions
Math Phobia

Most calculations only involve simple multiplication or division
Online tools can do the work for you
Excel, IMLS Peer Comparison Tool, Counting Opinions LibPas provide a user friendly way to generate information

Math Phobia

I’m math phobic!
(Arithmophobia)

Yes or No?

Local, State and National Data

National data includes circulation, visits, holdings, programs, income & expenditures, etc.
State can collect additional items. In CA we collect library web site virtual visits for example
Local library can collect wait times, facility costs, detail on collection usage, etc.
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**Surveys**
- IMLS – Annual Public Library Survey
- California State Library – Annual Public Library Survey
- ALA – Public Library Data Service (PLDS)*
- Ad hoc surveys – ALA, Gates, CSL
  *used twice as often as IMLS data

**Survey Publications**

**Ad Hoc Surveys**
Often grant funded and focused on a particular issue.
Quantitative and Qualitative

Both types of analysis are needed, both help you tell your story.

Data Gathering

Annual Cycle - IMLS

- August – Survey Instrument for previous fiscal year opens
- December – Begin submission to IMLS
- March – Begin production of state publication of results
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Annual Cycle Process Model

Data Elements

- IMLS National definitions
- Definitions can and do change
- Local/State/National collaboration

National, State and Local Data

State collection and report combines national and California only items
Times are a’changing….,

New services, new metrics
Local library takes initiative
State can decide to add to survey
Public Library Statistics Cooperative (PLSC) can add to national survey

Collection Methodology

- Review definitions each year in June
- Automation may provide assistance
- No personal information gathered
- Sampling may be OK – touch base

Perfection Preferred

- Collection method may not be feasible or may fail
- Accuracy from a good faith effort
- No data better than fictional data
- Same response each year – red flag!
Data Cleansing

- Error messages are there to help
- Missing data – what to do
- Survey due dates and the greater good
- Winter follow up calls

Data Driven Decisions

- Using the data to manage and persuade, manage and plan
- Graphics tell a story
- Currency can be an issue
- Ask for free assistance

Peer Comparisons

Benchmarking

- Compare apples to apples, like libraries along one or more attributes
- Even among peers there can be good reasons for differences
- Currency can be an issue
- Ask for free assistance
### Peer Comparisons

**Benchmarking**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library</th>
<th>Operating Income per Capita</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Westchester PL</td>
<td>$100.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Pasadena PL</td>
<td>$80.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleveland PL</td>
<td>$60.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reno PL</td>
<td>$62.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>$65.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community PL</td>
<td>$50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mendenhall PL</td>
<td>$100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Show changes over time**

**Link to environmental changes or service inputs – why did this data change?**

**Currency can be an issue (again)**

**Consistent collection method**

**Ask for free assistance**

### Trend Data

- Show changes over time
- Link to environmental changes or service inputs – why did this data change?
- Currency can be an issue (again)
- Consistent collection method
- Ask for free assistance
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Trend Data

Ratios

- Compensates for changes in population: income per capita, expenditures per capita, circulation per capita
- Expresses efficiency and effectiveness: circulation per holding, staff FTE per capita

Graphs and Charts

Nationwide, visits to public libraries totaled 1.4 billion, or 4.9 library visits per capita (Table 8), a small increase from the 4.8 visits per capita that were made during FY 2006. As in the case of per capita circulation, this is a continuation of a larger, longer period trend. Per capita visits increased from 4.2 to 4.3 between FY 1998 and FY 2007, an overall increase of 7 percent (Figure 2).
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Files and Spreadsheets

Ratings Comparisons
Hennen's HALPR Index
www.haplr-index.com/

Library Journal Index of Public Library Service
www.libraryjournal.com/article/CA6629180.html

Resources & Reading

California State Library statistics page
http://www.library.ca.gov/lds/librarystats.html

Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) statistics page
http://harvester.census.gov/imls/index.asp

American Library Association (ALA) Research and Statistics
http://www.ala.org/ala/professionalresources/publications/researchstats/index.cfm

Public Library Association and Public Library Data Service: Public Library Data Service Statistical Report

Public Library Funding & Technology Access Study
http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/ors/plftas/connectivity09.cfm

Counting Opinions LibPas Service (free to California Public Libraries)
http://ca.countingopinions.com

Colorado Library Research Service
http://www.coloradolibrary.org/
THANK YOU!

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