Statistics and Evaluation in the Promotion of Libraries

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Some data

- UNLP Libraries:
  - 55,500 active readers
  - 502,000 items consulted
  - *(Informe basado en datos estadísticos de las Bibliotecas (año 2006))*

☺ or ☹ ?

Some definitions

- Data
  - 55,500 active readers
  - 502,000 loans
- Statistics
  - 502,000 / 55, 000 = 9 loans for each reader
- Performance indicators
  - '9 loans per reader is good'
  - '9 loans per reader is not good'

Gathering data (1)

- Using machines
  - Items in the catalogue
  - Number of books loaned
  - Number of photocopies made
  - Number of people entering the library through a control gate

Gathering data (2)

- Count objects
  - Number of seats in the library
  - Number of computers in the library
  - Number of readers present in the library
- Count money
  - Expenditure on staff – books – the building
- Count events
  - The number of questions that readers ask
  - Number of readers entering the library (if no control gate
  - Take samples

Gathering data (3)

- Asking people
  - What did you do in the library today?
  - Was your visit to the library successful?
  - Are you satisfied with the library?
  - What is more important to you: more books or longer opening hours?

How to gather data

- Be careful!
  - If you only count during one week, is it typical?
  - What does coming into and leaving a building really signify?
  - If your survey is web-based, how do you ask readers who don't use it?
  - Does the number of loans reflect usage or just the loan period?

Statistics for management (1)

- Efficiency: inputs
- How much does it cost to catalogue each book?
- What percentage of expenditure is devoted to books and journals?
- How much does it cost simply to keep the library open?

Statistics for management (2)

- Efficiency: outputs
  - How many books are borrowed? - What is the cost of each loan?
  - How many enquiries are answered? – What is the cost of each enquiry?
  - How many visitors to the website each day?

Statistics for management (3)

- Benchmarking – comparing statistics
  - Internal
    - This year – last year
  - External
    - Find similar institutions
  - Make sure that the figures are truly comparable
- Planning
  - Making plans – how should the figures change?

Statistics for strategic planning

- 'Improve the selection of books for students'
  - Increase the proportion of new books
  - Increase the percentage of new stock that is borrowed
  - Ask the students directly, before and after

Statistics for advocacy

- 'Libraries are good for society'
  - -Do we all agree?
- Should we spend money on a new library or
  - On a hospital?
  - On new accommodation for students?

Outputs and outcomes

- Outputs = how people use libraries
- Outcomes = what happens as a result
  - How libraries make a difference to people

Direct outcomes

- Activity surveys
- Satisfaction surveys
- IFLA survey
  - If you do not use the library, why not (for example):
    - too far away,
    - the items I want are not available
  - Have you benefited from visiting the library or using its online services?
  - If this library did not exist, could you have got the same information elsewhere?

Have you benefited...?

- Have you learned something new?
- Have you obtained new ideas?
- Have you got helpful information for job seeking?
- Have you got helpful information for health?
- Has the library helped you to save time?
- Has the library helped you to be better in your job?

Can you get the information elsewhere?

- From another library?
- Via the Internet?
- From colleagues, friends etc.?
- In the media (newspapers, radio, television)?
- Perhaps, but it would take more time and effort
- No, I do not think I would have got the same information

Context

- Demographics

	Población total	Usuarios total	Penetración
Odontología	4849	243	5%
Informática	4742	414	9%
Bellas Artes	11236	998	9%
Pública	113690	16192	14%
Naturales	3776	746	20%
Bachillerato	1529	322	21%
Trabajo Social	2332	657	28%
Derecho	14066	7542	54%

Non-library information

- Success in examinations
- Success in finding employment

Narrative

- Stories are more interesting than statistics
- Do a survey
- Always ask for comments!
  - 'Tell us how the library helps you most'
  - 'What is the most important thing we can do to help your work or study?'
  - 'What was the best thing that happened while you were using the library this week?'
  - 'What was the worst thing?'

And finally…

- Statistics are just numbers
- Performance indicators impose values on statistics
- Our values come from 'outside' the statistics
- Planning involves trying to meet our values
- Advocacy relies on the values we have
- Advocacy needs stories as well as statistics

- Thank you very much!
- Muchas gracias!

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