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**
  - \(\frac{502,000}{55,000} = 9\) 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
## Demographics

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<th>Field</th>
<th>Población total</th>
<th>Usuarios total</th>
<th>Penetración</th>
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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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