

LITERATURE REVIEW FOR “COUNTING ON RESULTS”

An Institute of Museum and Library Services Project

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Introduction

A literature review was conducted to develop output and outcome measures for activities, services and materials (service components) utilized in fulfilling the selected services responses, published in “Planning for Results,” (Himmel and Wilson 1998). For example, an after school Internet literacy program is a possible service component of the ‘Information Literacy’ service response, and so on. This is an effort to ensure that the most important library services and materials are identified that comprise the ways in which libraries serve their communities. The eight service responses that are selected most often by libraries participating in this study, will be defined and reviewed and below, as well as suggested outputs and outcomes.

SERVICE RESPONSES

Basic Literacy

A library that offers *BASIC LITERACY* service addresses the need to read and to perform other essential daily tasks. (*Possible service components: ESL; family literacy; tutoring; functional math skills; media literacy; meeting space for tutoring.*)

Proof of literacy 100 years ago was simply being able to sign one’s name. Education was more of a moral value in the early 19th century (Jones, 1995, p. 26,) and did not really become a duty or necessity until after World War I when literacy affected job performance. Today literacy is much more complex. The maxim of ‘reading, writing and arithmetic,’ is only a start for elementary students born into a society who communicates with new languages, data bits, images and text in a variety of media (Megee 1997.) Libraries are faced with not only purchasing and offering the new media to the public, but also assessing its impact. While it was fairly easy to determine whether someone could read, write or add--it is more difficult to assess media literacy--how well someone accesses, analyzes, evaluates and then produces media (text, video, computer, etc.) Important research is coming out which does indicate users differ in approach and success. This directly affects how libraries respond.

For example, female Internet users are increasing. Females on average spend 1-5 minutes on a session, while men prefer longer sessions, 30 minutes (Clausen 1997.) As far as information retrieval, females are more goal-directed, stopping when information is found, and male users are more ‘learning by doing.’ It is also estimated that 12 million children will have Internet Access by the year 2000. The widest range of literacy related literature will be covered in this review under ‘Information Literacy.’

Suggested outputs: media type/percent by sex and age; media type/time spent/sex and age.

Suggested outcomes: enhanced ability to access, analyze, evaluate and produce media.

Business and Career Information

A library that offers *BUSINESS AND CAREER INFORMATION* services addresses a need for information related to business, careers, work, entrepreneurship, personal finances and obtaining employment. (*Possible service components: career guidance counseling; job placement service; public use computer equipment for preparing resumes; copy center; job development programs; WWW links.*)

The availability of public-use computers is burgeoning in public libraries over the past decade. The public sometimes accesses these computers for preparing resumes, looking for employment, or career guidance counseling. This is affirmed by recent articles in library literature, as well as the fact that librarians in this study are choosing this response as a major role.

Many paper products are now online. This of course is 'old news.' The inherent problem of the replacement of print for online, is that it is difficult to identify what people are accessing and how much. A review of the literature shows an increase in library literature on the public's use of library computers, and a diminishing number of articles on job centers, career guidance and other longtime service components. This is rather a reflection of lack of ability to make real counts of what the public is accessing, rather than a diminished interest in utilizing the library's online services.

Job centers were mentioned are still successful and popular, utilizing a mixture of print and electronic resources (Eriksen 1997.) In more rural areas the concept of a job-bus is utilized to take employment information out to people with diminished access (Martins 1991.) In assessing the library's role in career guidance, there was more discussion in the literature, but surprisingly with greater emphasis on student career days, career-weeks, career education in social studies classes, career cooperatives (Winkel 1999; Nelson 1993; DeStricker 1998; Harris 1995; Martin 1993; Nelson 1993.) Public use of computers is also dominated by use by children and young adults-- in the literature (Drumm 1999; Phillips 1995; Edmonds 1992.) Public access to the Internet through public use computers remains problematic to manage due to desire for filters by community or funders, or desire not to filter by librarians or users. It is assured that users are using computers in public libraries--it is not assured what they are using them for due to privacy considerations, which eliminates satisfactory counts of use that were available in print versions.

Suggested outputs:

try to create a specific computer log-in sheet by which a user might check off a certain service response that 'illustrates' or embodies what they are using the computer for, i.e., business and career for resume writing, or job seeking. Have check offs for sex and age.

number of students by age per career day/week or cooperative program

number of students/type of career selection (for collection development)

number of people using computers/sex/age/occupation

Outcomes:

Students develop early incentive to gain knowledge and skills while in school for future employment

Public sees the library as a growing entity for relevant information access, because of professional librarian guidance

Commons

A library that provides a *COMMONS* environment helps address the need of people to meet and interact with others in their community and to participate in public discourse about community issues. *Possible service components: meeting room space; community events bulletin board or kiosk; email access; coffee shop; videoconferencing facilities.*

Amidst discussion of the impacts of networks and electronic resources, discussions of the the importance of the library as a physical 'place' continue (Fast 1998.) It is suggested that the library's physical place in the community affects accessibility by certain groups inhibited to travel far for library services by lack of habit, cultural perceptions and topographical factors (Koontz 1997.) Interestingly enough, some studies estimate that only thirty percent of library activity actually has to do with checking out books. By contrast the library as 'place' affects non-traditional use of the library that is not counted in traditional statistics of library use. Non traditional use of the library includes: students needing a place to study, friends meeting at the library because it is convenient or free, pedestrians getting out of inclement weather, visits to exhibits, listening to speakers, patronizing the library shop or even eating lunch on the steps (Simon, 1992.) Quick personal email access, by those libraries offering it, is increasingly popular.

Library displays and in-library exhibits (which offered 841 citations from 1984 to present!) remain popular for place-oriented users and for librarians who for a century enjoy developing them. The exhibits range from 'why we celebrate Earth Day,' (Stoss 2000) to 'The Wizard of Oz (Hopkins 2000) to Yeats at the NY Public Library (AB Bookman's Weekly 1999) to just about anything imaginable. Community bulletin boards, once popular before the electronic age--seem to be less so, with people gaining quick community information from other myriad sources. Rural areas where the library is still vitally in the town center would be more successful with such a board. Some libraries have removed the boards due to complaints by diverse groups (Kristl 1997.) Videoconferencing is on the wane also, after the advent of Internet usage.

Suggested outputs:

- * non-traditional use should be counted on a sampling basis/sex and age
- * per capita or user percentage of use square footage available for sitting and reading and studying by age
- * in-library programs/displays should be ranked on an annual basis to attempt to gage what programs attract the greatest number of people age/sex/occupation

Outcomes:

- * enjoyed access to a public place for personal development
- * appreciated and learned about new places and concepts as viewed in library exhibits
- * relaxed in a quiet environment to reflect and browse

Current Topics and Titles

A library that provides *CURRENT TOPICS AND TITLES* helps to fulfill community residents' appetite for information about popular cultural and social trends and their desire for satisfying recreational experiences. *Possible service components: booktalks; author signings; readers' advisory; display shelvings*

This service response is bound to be chosen by every public library. This remains one of the most popular reasons to visit a public library--to browse, select a book, or brush up on a current topic. More and more 'brushing up' on a current topic seems to be absorbed by Internet usage. Searching current topics and titles is evidenced under the 'General Information' service response from the review of an increasing number of articles on electronic reference and ready reference services. The tried and true booktalks continue to be popular with old and young readers (Swann 2000; Norton 1997; Baxter 1997; Bodart 1995) as well as popular among librarians promoting reading. Reader's advisory is also a role that librarians still embrace and is often discussed (71 articles since the mid-80s) by type of book, romance, mystery, young adult, children (Swann 2000; Chelton 1999; Burgin 1996.) Reader's advisory services also guide adults to the Internet (Fialkoff 1998; Burgin 1996.)

Suggested outputs:

- * circulation by topic/title/age/occupation
- * in-library use of materials by topic/title/age/occupation
- * booktalks/other programs promoting current topics and titles/number/age/sex

Outcomes:

- * satisfaction of meeting users' expectations of receiving the most current topic and titles in the most efficient and effective distribution channel possible
- * the library is effective in promoting materials and service that users enjoy
- * use of these materials and services in the library is convenient and efficient

General Information

A library that offers *GENERAL INFORMATION* helps meet the need for information and answers to questions on a broad array of topics related to work, school, and personal life.

Possible service components: basic reference resource available through the library web page; 24 hour electronic reference service; dedicated telephone reference service; ready reference; BI programs

Reference service is one of the strongest service components provided by the public library for over a century (Garnsey 2000.) These services change often in response to new technologies. The provision of *General Information* frequently occurs through ready reference tools (those quickly and successfully accessed to answer user questions quickly), traditionally in print, and increasingly through electronic media, i.e., the Internet. In searching the literature 'ready reference' yields 54 hits, while 'electronic reference' yields 261. The potential of the Internet to provide quick response to 'ready reference' questions is no longer a subject of debate. A review of the 'electronic reference' articles yields a growing number of articles regarding: 1) electronic email reference; and 2) use of the Internet by librarians to answer user questions--ready reference and research questions.

E-mail reference services in public libraries are growing as the public becomes increasingly e-mail literate (Garnsey 2000.) Because of the relative newness of the service, there is little research in the public library field--most research resides in medical and academic libraries. A recent study, while not exhaustive, shed new light on important characteristics of the service, and its users, that could assist public libraries develop outputs and outcomes for email reference (Garnsey 2000.)The study accessed library web pages to determine which libraries offered email reference (329 public libraries.)

Findings included: 1) most librarians responded with answers within 24 to 48 hours; 2) most did not answer in-depth questions; 3) 82 percent answered questions from outside their service area; 4) most users used email reference because it was convenient; 5) 92% of questions were answered by staff, and 94% were satisfactory to the user; 6) 54% were female; 7) most users were in education and information technology professions; 8) all would use email reference again; 9) 55% of the libraries said the service was designed to provide ready reference yet the questions were one third ready reference, 25% research, and surprisingly, 18% genealogy researchers.

One major problem with the study was that library directors did not allow the researchers to directly contact the user, because of confidentiality issues, disallowing a more comprehensive research study. The experiences of other public libraries with email reference services closely mirror the above study emphasizing user convenience and the library's core values of personal service and equal access (O'Neill 1999; Tomaiuolo 2000; Eichler and Haleprin 2000.)

Secondly, in reviewing how librarians are utilizing the Internet to answer reference questions, one study determined that by and large, reference librarians are still in conflict regarding the relative value of electronic databases versus print resources. In this study 46% refused to select print or electronic as the tool of choice, reiterating the choice is based upon the needs of the user. Most librarians (73%) were in fact in agreement that the Net was useful in their daily work (Stover 2000.)

There is also discussion regarding guidelines and standards for electronic resources. While performance measures for staff are outside the scope of this review, user focus is not. It is suggested that user education for electronic resources should be provided according to level of need, formal and informal (Guidelines 1998,) Regarding possible user outcomes it is suggested that these should be addressed by age and situation, students k-12, parents educators, e.g. (Kasowitz et al 2000.) These outcomes should primarily include easily reachable and accessible digital reference services.

In summary, much of this literature suggests that while the Internet is judged to be an excellent way of search specific and often scientific databases for more sophisticated purposes, it is an excellent source of general information of the type usually handled in a typical reference collection of books, and offers huge potential to smaller public libraries that may not be able to afford sizable collections of books (Gabriel 1998.) This represents over half the public libraries in America.

(Please see summary to understand the specificity of these outputs and outcomes, and why I am not listing any.)

Information Literacy

A library that provides *INFORMATION LITERACY* service helps address the need for skills related to finding, evaluating and using information effectively. *Possible service components: classroom space; media literacy; computer laboratory; BI; instructional technology.*

Information literacy is by far the most reviewed concept amongst the 13 service responses, in the literature, garnering 480 'hits.' Information literacy is best defined as being able to recognize when information is needed and be able to locate, evaluate and use the information effectively. The antecedents to the term is actually traced back to 1960 standards for school libraries, and the term is first used in 1974 (Loertscher and Woolls 1999.) The term remains broad and increasingly covers a broad range of electronic-related activities and skills (Clausen 1997; Greenwood and Frisbie 1998.) Much research is being conducted on how people search electronic resources. Specifically, what worked and did not work, and how and what user instruction and skills can ameliorate problems (Barnett 1999; Diaz 1997; Clausen 1997).

Therefore, and not surprisingly, there is increasing discussion on user education programs. Far and away academic and special libraries offer user education for electronic resources, and continue to increase their programs, while public libraries offer the fewest. For example, a recent study (Rader 1999) identifies the following: publications dealing with user instruction in academic libraries increased 25 %; school library publications increased 78%; special library publications, 400%; and public library publications, numbering (2), -60%. Yet public library users like all users need to learn how to best access, retrieve, and organize the burgeoning information available electronically. Especially vulnerable are those users who have no other access than the library (none at a school or work.) Academic and school libraries and related associations are producing reports and guidelines and standards on information literacy, since teaching is the heart of their mission (Byerly and Brodie 1998; Breivi 1999.)

There are many information skills identified that qualify an individual to be information literate. (The list below can be used as the basis for select output measures.) Some of these include but are not exclusive to (Doyle 1994):

- * recognizes that accurate and complete information is the basis for intelligent decision making;
- * recognizes the need for information;
- * formulates questions based on information needs;
- * identifies potential sources of information;
- * develops successful search strategies;
- * accesses sources of information including computer-based and other technologies;
- * evaluates information;
- * organizes information for practical application;
- * integrates new information into an existing body of knowledge; and
- * uses information in critical thinking and problem solving

These outcomes are suggested (Burnheim 1992):

- * ability to formulate and analyze information needs;
- * ability to find resources;
- * ability to select resources;
- * ability to select resources for identified information needs;

- * ability to evaluate the information searching process;
- * ability to record and store information;
- * ability to present and communicate findings, and
- * ability to interpret, analyze, synthesize and evaluate collected information.

It is generally agreed by all, that information professionals are key to developing an information literate society, through guidance and training and skill development in schools, the public library, and in the workplace. The difficulty in developing the much needed standard statistics, outputs and outcomes, remains difficult, stymying the nation's 10,000 public library systems in measuring and reporting how users use the electronic resources offered (iott 1999.)

Suggested outputs (by age and sex and occupation):

- * success in finding information source
- * success in executing process of retrieval
- * number of logins
- * number of searches
- * number of documents retrieved
- * number people using public access terminals

Additional suggested outcomes:

- * gained new insights
- * used knowledge to benefit others

Lifelong Learning

A library that provides LIFELONG LEARNING service helps address the desire for self-directed personal growth and development opportunities. *Possible service components: electronic and printed pathfinders; how-to programs on topics of general public interest; special topical displays; demos and exhibits; history and biography resources*

Lifelong learning is one of the 13 service responses that remains, from the previous eight roles. Public libraries embrace the concept of lifelong learning since the days of industrialist millionaires such as Andrew Carnegie, who bequeathed millions to public library development, due to the role the library had in his career development.

At this point in time, the public library is still driven to provide information to enhance the lifelong learning process. Libraries historically do not ask users why they use the library or to justify why they use it. Amidst all public institutions only the public library provides services without conditions (de la Pena McCook 1992.) Public libraries attempt to serve their users based upon an analysis of the community-served, information needs--and this commitment is for the lifespan of all citizens (Ibid.) Some services that a user could access over a lifespan include: getting preschoolers ready to read, affording opportunity for retirees to explore family history, helping the unemployed seek new job skills, offering new-readers high interest books, helping students with papers and science projects, etc. (Ibid.)

Over time literacy programs are embraced within this lifelong learning role, and therefore, embraced by funders, and the public, in general. Literacy and libraries is synonymous. As reviewed in earlier service responses (basic literacy and information literacy) one can see that as a public agency the public library can be the premiere agency to assure equal access to a burgeoning amount of media, if so directed by the profession. With information skills being touted as most important, some work is being done to develop a continuum of formal learning that libraries might indicate and guide which literacy areas are covered when--and by what type of library (i.e., family literacy in public libraries during preschool years, and reading and writing for school age in the school library during K-12.) (Doiron 2000.)

The role that the public library plays in lifelong learning is only as vital as the resources of the library, how the library communicates and offers these resources to the public, and the initiative of the user. This role will largely be defined by the lifelong learning needs of the community served.

Other activities identified in the literature include but are not exclusive to: job and career development services; preschool story hours (on and off site); summer reading programs for children; access to small business development plans (Drescher 1994). These activities are only the tip of the iceberg, and could be multiplied by librarians in every community across America to best suit the lifelong learning services their library offers.

(These outputs and outcomes should be developed by each participating library, again--anchored by sex, age and occupation--other community-based demographics.)

Local History and Genealogy

A library that offers LOCAL HISTORY AND GENEALOGY service addresses the desire of community residents to know and better understand personal or community heritage.

Possible service components: instruction in genealogical research methods; programs on local history; archives; indexed newspapers; www links.

This service response is covered in 'General Information' and 'Lifelong Learning.'

These roles were not selected by the majority of participants in this study. Please see suggestions an summary that follows regarding these service responses.

Community Referral

A library that offers *COMMUNITY REFERRAL* addresses the need for information related to services provided by community agencies and organizations.

Possible service components: Community information databases; 24 hour I&R; dial-in access to community resource files; electronic access to community resources via malls, schools, etc.

Consumer Information

A library that provides *CONSUMER INFORMATION* service addresses the need for information to make informed consumer decisions and helps residents become more self-sufficient

Possible service components: special programs on health, legal or consumer topics; library web page on consumer issues; library publications and flyers; consumer complaint hotline; tele-text service on consumer topics; consumer affairs bulletin board

Cultural Awareness

A library that offers *CULTURAL AWARENESS* service helps satisfy the desire of community residents to gain an understanding of their own cultural heritage and the cultural heritage of others.

Possible service components: ethnic resource centers; library materials in several languages; lectures and book discussion groups; cultural fairs and exhibits

Formal Learning Support

A library that offers *FORMAL LEARNING SUPPORT* helps students who are enrolled in a formal program of education or who are pursuing their education through a program of home-schooling to attain their educational goals.

Possible service components: specialized curriculum-based collections; homework help center; computer lab; www site links with educational sites

Government Information

A library that offers *GOVERNMENT INFORMATION* service helps satisfy the need for information about elected officials and governmental agencies that enables people to participate in the democratic process.

Some possible service components: electronic access to local government information; federal, state, and local documents and records depository

SUGGESTIONS AND SUMMARY

This literature review of the ‘state-of...’ service components comprising the thirteen service responses, offer important strategic implications. The author of this review suggests the following restructuring.

Because some of the service responses seem more like ‘mini-mission’ statements or broad roles of the public library, it is suggested that these service responses become the role-umbrella for service responses. Please review the following reorganization:

Role/Service Response/Market-Based Outputs/Outcomes on a Sampling Basis

Role: Literacy

Service Responses:

Information Literacy

Basic Literacy

Role: General Information:

Service Responses:

Business and Career

Consumer Information

Community Information

Government Information

Genealogy and Local History

Role: Lifelong Learning

Current Topics and Title

Formal Learning Support

Cultural Awareness

Role: Commons

I was tempted to put this under Lifelong Learning)

Market-Based Outputs, and Outcomes (on a sampling basis)

As for the outputs, I am coining ‘Market-based outputs.’ This enables the library to anchor these outputs on market characteristics that are specific to the community served. I have suggested market characteristics which are heavily collected by public libraries at this time, that would not upset the ‘confidentiality-applecart,’ and that provide good insight into the user and the user’s station in life, the primary ones including: age, sex, and occupation.

I suggest outcomes which all agree are labor intensive to collect--to be gathered on a sampling basis--probably in all authenticity and likelihood--twice a year at most?

The roles and service responses should be reviewed every two years due to the dynamcy of change the public library is in at this point in time. The restructuring of the service responses under the role, would enable more flexibility.. Also why not have some 'custom-service responses' that each public library could employ.