

# Summary for Public Library Date Wrangling Workshop

September 11, 2009

## Statistics Process

1. Identify why you want to collect this data
  - a. Annual Report?
  - b. Additional funding?
  - c. Measuring library success?
  - d. Other?
2. What do you need to collect?
  - a. This is based on why you need the information. You will need different statistics for acquiring additional book money as compared to measuring the success of storytime.
3. How will you collect that information?
  - a. Automation System
  - b. Manually
4. What does the data mean?
  - a. Now that you have the information, you must evaluate it. Is the library meeting its goal? Do you need more money for materials?
5. Determine how to present that data to your board and other local community/government officials

## Why should you collect statistics?

- **Statistics can help you realize whether or not you have reached your goals**

*Example:* You would like to increase circulation for your non-fiction collection.

1. Find out the circulation statistics now. How many non-fiction items are circulating? What is the turnover rate?
2. Implement your ideas for increasing circulation
3. Find out the circulation statistics after you have implemented your ideas. Did it increase? If not, why not?

- **Show value of the library to other people (including govt. officials)**

*Example 1:* Find out how many people use the library in a day. Compare this number to the number of people in town. Does 25% of the population walk through the door? Share this information with government officials and your chamber of commerce. They may not realize how much foot traffic the library receives in a given day.

*Example 2:* Figure out how much your collection circulates per capita. Share these numbers with your local government officials. You may also want to find out how much it would cost if people purchased these items privately. The cost savings can be an important and eye opening piece of information to share with local government officials.

- **Helpful for grant writing**

*Example:* Statistics can be used to help support your case for being awarded a grant. You may need to go beyond the library by reporting statistics for your community and the people you serve.

- **Can be used to re-evaluate and improve services**

*Example:* Start with your statistics. Do you have poor circulation in one area? Do you have low attendance at programs? Or maybe your reference questions have dropped? Begin analyzing why that might be and brainstorming ideas for improving it. You can use statistics to help you set goals for improving an area of the library.

- **Can show the need for additional staff and/or funding**

*Example 1:* Find out the productivity statistics for your staff. How many check-ins does your circulation staff perform in a day? How many check-outs? How many holds do they process? You probably need to do a comparison over time, but these statistics may help support your case for additional staff.

*Example 2:* Comparing your library's budget and circulation to other libraries of a similar size may help you obtain additional funding. If you are receiving significantly less money for materials than many of the other libraries in your size category, then you can argue for more funding.

- **Have to for the annual report.** This report is sent to the federal government who can use these numbers to argue for more funding for libraries. These statistics are also helpful for libraries who want to compare their results to other libraries.

## What should you collect?

What you collect depends upon what you need. Use the examples above as a guide for what types of statistics you should collect.

- All the statistics for the annual report (happens in the fall)
- Circulation statistics – checkouts, check-ins, turnover rate
- Productivity statistics – check-ins, reference questions answered, ILLs, anything that shows what employees have done.
- Collection statistics – what parts of the collection check out? How much?

## What does the data mean?

Evaluate your data by considering

- Rankings – how do you compare with other libraries? Are we worse? Are we better? Why do we think we are worse or better? Where would we like to rank against other libraries? How do we make that happen?
- Historical data – look for trends by comparing statistics over several years or months. If there are changes, why? What internal factors might have contributed to an increase or decrease? What external factors might have contributed to an increase or decrease?
- Events – certain events can affect your results. Did the library close for a time?
- Other formulas – figure out the turnover rate if evaluating your collection. Consider the return on investment.

## Presenting the Data to Government Officials and Others

- Make the data tell a story
- Relate the information to your audience – in Billings if you stacked the number of books that were checked out on top of one another it would be taller than the Rimrock
- Mention the return on investment