

Information Use Management and Policy Institute
College of Information, Florida State University

**INCREASING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EVALUATION FOR
IMPROVED PUBLIC LIBRARY DECISION MAKING AND ADVOCACY:
BEST PRACTICES NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

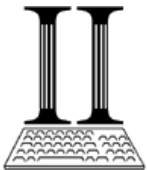
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INCREASING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EVALUATION FOR IMPROVED PUBLIC LIBRARY DECISION MAKING AND ADVOCACY

In December 2005, the Information Use Management and Policy Institute (Information Institute) of Florida State University began preparations for the 2005-2007 IMLS' grant entitled *Increasing the Effectiveness of Evaluation for Improved Public Library Decision Making and Advocacy*. This 30 month study began December 01, 2005 and ends July 01, 2008.

This draft interim report provides insights on progress made by the research team in the initial planning and organization of the project, and presents initial results of preliminary evaluations conducted by the research team. More specifically, this report presents the results of efforts by the research team in completing Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the project (1 December 2005 – 1 July 2006). Activities for Phase 1 and Phase 2 are included in this report within the *Project Tasks* section (below).

This research project addresses *IMLS National Leadership Grant demonstration project priorities* such as: 1) evaluation of the impact of library and library services on library users and/or communities; 2) improve the body of knowledge about users' information needs, expectations, and behavior; and 3) provide knowledge that enhances people's ability to use library services and resources.

PROJECT GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND OUTCOMES

The overall purpose of this project is to develop an Evaluation Decision Making System (EDMS) that will help public librarians and managers match data collection needs with *best* evaluation approaches to demonstrate public library value to communities served. The following long-term goals guide this process. Public librarians and managers will be able to:

- Capture evaluation information regarding library services and programs that best meets user, community, and public librarian/manager information needs (Goal 1);
- Select and use appropriate, efficient, and effective evaluation approaches in order to undertake informative evaluation activities (Goal 2);
- Understand uses, impacts/benefits, value, and other aspects of library services and programs to library community and funders (Goal 3); and
- Advocate at a local level more effectively benefits, impacts, and value of library services and programs to the public library community and funders (Goal 4).

Additionally, meeting these goals will improve library services to better meet patron needs and will provide practical methods and mechanisms for providing evaluation results to local, state, and federal funding agencies.

To achieve the above goals, the research team developed shorter-term objectives that will allow the researchers to assess the project as each phase of the project is completed. Objectives for this project are to:

1. Describe the success with which selected public libraries are currently employing a number of different evaluation approaches;

2. Better understand how library situational factors (organizational, community, other) affect the successful use of leading evaluation approaches;
3. Compare and contrast the types of data that leading evaluation approaches provide public library managers and what such data enable managers to say about their library services and resources;
4. Compare and contrast the strengths and weaknesses of leading evaluation approaches;
5. Develop guidelines and practical recommendations to assist library managers in selecting appropriate evaluation approaches and under what circumstances selected evaluation approaches offer a *best fit* given their evaluation needs;
6. Provide assistance in using evaluation data for library advocacy purposes; and
7. Design and create a *nationwide* and *sustainable* EDMS to facilitate assessment efforts in public libraries, based on an iterative development process with project partners.

The research team will modify these objectives if necessary during the course of the study. This initial interim report presents results from evaluations conducted in the initial phases (1 and 2) of the project and addresses objectives one and two above.

In addition to the goals and objectives of the project, the research team developed outcomes as part of an iterative ongoing outcomes-based assessment of the project goals of the completed EDMS product. The project outcomes are:

- Outcome 1: Public librarians and managers identify data needs of local community officials and funding agencies (addresses Goal 1).
- Outcome 2: Public librarians and managers identify data sources needed to assess services and programs in specific library situational contexts (addresses Goal 1).
- Outcome 3: Public librarians and managers select evaluation approaches appropriate to targeted data needs within specific situational contexts (addresses Goal 2).
- Outcome 4: Public librarians and managers disseminate evaluation results in a format appropriate for target audiences (addresses Goal 3).
- Outcome 5: EDMS users and project partners more successfully advocate for improved library services and programs (addresses Goal 4).

The research team created initial indicators for each of the outcomes above.

As the project progresses and the EDMS product is developed and implemented, members of the research team will work with members of a project advisory committee and project partners to re-assess the outcome indicators. Outcome indicators allow researchers to better ascertain impacts on public libraries from EDMS use. The completed EDMS design includes outcomes assessment tools for sustained assessment of the EDMS product.

This project builds upon various and uncoordinated strands of evaluation research, evaluation development, and evaluation practices as applied to library services and programs. The overall study consists of five primary phases where each phase contains several tasks along with planned activities to complete each task. This interim report presents results for initial preparation and evaluation activities for Phase 1, *Project Preparations (December 1, 2005 – February 1, 2006)* and Phase 2, *Best Practice Review (February 2, 2006 – June 1, 2006)* of this project.

PHASE 1: TASKS

The tasks developed for this project will help public librarians and managers: 1) match data collection needs with *best* evaluation approaches to demonstrate public library value to communities served, and 2) create a better understanding of evaluation in a public library setting.

Phase 1: Project Preparation (December 1, 2005-February 1, 2006)

Phase 1 includes three tasks and activities developed to complete each of the tasks. Table 1 (below) presents the three tasks and a brief description of the planned activities.

Phase One Project Preparation		
	Tasks	Activities
1	Project planning, review of schedule, and other planning activities	Review project plan and timeline. Make changes as necessary.
2	Establish advisory committee	Establish a project advisory committee comprised of researchers, practitioners, administrators, and others knowledgeable about public library evaluation activities. Expertise will be determined by literature reviewed and through interviews with individuals identified as experts in evaluation.
3	Discussions with potential dissemination partners	Enter discussions with potential project dissemination partners such as WebJunction, Public Library Association (PLA), and American Library Association (ALA) research and statistics committees to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Spread awareness of the project; 2) Inform stakeholders of the potential usefulness of the EDMS to the public library community; and 3) Devise strategies for the inclusion of and/or linking to the EDMS from key services – e.g., the WebJunction Learning Center.

Table 1: Phase 1 Tasks and Activities (December 1, 2005-February 1, 2006)

More specifically, the purpose of Phase 1 includes the engagement of the project team, along with the project partners and the project advisory committee in efforts to refine the overall plan of the project. Refinement of the plan consists of assessment of the tasks within each phase of the project and the refinement of key project activities for each project phase for the duration of the project. In addition, the project team will continue to conduct discussions with key dissemination stakeholders such as state library staff and key ALA/PLA staff throughout the duration of the project for completion and sustainability purposes of the project.

Phase One: Project Preparation Results

Task 1: Project Planning

The research team initially met in December 2005 to review all aspects of the project and to assign preliminary duties to each member of the team. Members of the research team developed a technology plan (submitted to IMLS), addressed issues of implementation of the

EDMS, and developed methodologies and a timeline for completion of evaluation activities within Phase 2 of the project.

Task 2: Project Advisory Team

The research team established a Project Advisory Committee during the first phase of the project. The Advisory Committee includes project partner liaisons, practitioners, administrators, and others knowledgeable about public library evaluation activities. The Advisory Committee serves in an overall project evaluative capacity and provides regular feedback and review of each project phase, data collection efforts, and project documents.

The Advisory Committee will meet regularly through electronic means and in person at selected national conferences (e.g., ALA 2006-7 Midwinter and Annual meetings, PLA 2006). The research team will conduct the review and analysis of best practices for evaluation in public libraries and will distribute, review, and discuss findings from Phase 2 (below) with the Advisory Committee at the ALA 2006 Annual Summer Conference (22 – 29 June 2006 in New Orleans). Appendix A includes a list of Advisory Committee members.

Task 3: Project Partners

The research team recruited four partners: the Baltimore County Public Library (BCPL), the Omaha Public Library (OPL), the MidYork Library System (MLS), and the American Library Association's (ALA) Office for Research. The library partners represent a diverse library community along a number of demographics, including library size, service community, geographic region, and evaluation needs. All, however, have substantial experience and interest in evaluation efforts; and all provide an important practitioner-based perspective for the project in general and the EDMS in particular. The three library partners serve multiple roles that include:

- **Advisory:** The partners will advise the project team throughout the project regarding evaluation approaches, field-testing, EDMS design, and other project-related matters;
- **Evaluation content experts:** The partners will assist the project team in the development of the EDMS evaluation content, approach, and presentation;
- **Field test agents:** The partners will serve as field testers for the development of beta, and subsequent versions of the EDMS. They will also assist the project team with the identification of other libraries that may serve as field test agents for the EDMS; and
- **Dissemination:** The project partners are members of key public library organizations, including the Urban Library Council, Public Library Association (PLA) Research & Statistics Committee, Western Council of State Library Agencies, to name a few, and will promote the EDMS within these and other organizations.

Appendix A includes a list of Project Partners.

The ALA's Office for Research serves two primary roles: (1) advisory, by providing guidance regarding project approach and EDMS development, and (2) dissemination, as the Director of this office sits on all key statistical public library committees, including those within

ALA and PLA and the National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES) Federal State Cooperative System (FSCS) public library survey.

The ALA's Office for Research will also create an evaluation web presence on the ALA website that will include links to and descriptions of the EDMS, among other items. Together, these activities will promote the EDMS in a number of critical venues and expand the awareness of the EDMS and its availability to public libraries.

PHASE 2: TASKS

Phase 2: Best Practice Review (February 1, 2006-June 1, 2006)

Phase 2 includes three tasks along with a brief description of activities developed to complete each of the tasks. Table 2 (below) presents the three tasks.

Phase Two Best Practice Review		
	Tasks	Activities
1	Evaluation practice and literature review	Review of current literature and research related to evaluation and assessment practices in the public library community.
2	Identification of best practice and problematic evaluation efforts	A. Identify best practice and problematic evaluation practices in various library settings with a range of advocacy needs. B. Identification of evaluation practices in public libraries using state data coordinators, state librarians, public librarians, and library managers.
3	Review of library reports and documents	Assess evaluation efforts in LSTA annual reports, library annual reports, annual budget reports, and other documents related to evaluation efforts.
4	Report to Advisory Committee	Provide library partners with a draft report that summarizes findings from the above activities for comment and suggestions.

Table 2: Best Practice Review (February 1, 2006-June 1, 2006)

The general purpose of Phase 2 of this study is to identify and assess existing evaluation approaches and practices. More specifically, the study team will conduct an evaluation literature review and identify *best practice* evaluation activities as a means of meeting objectives 1-2 of this research project. These objectives are: 1) describe the success with which selected public libraries are currently employing a number of different evaluation approaches, and 2) better understand how library situational factors (organizational, community, other) affect the successful use of leading evaluation approaches.

To meet these objectives, the research team created project evaluation methodologies (below) to understand:

1. Existing types of evaluation approaches used in public library settings;
2. Identification of additional evaluation approaches readily available for use in public library settings;
3. Situational factors in a library setting associated with evaluation approaches; and
4. Data types associated with each approach in relation to library situational factors.

The results of the different evaluation approaches used in Phase II will guide the determination of the design and content of the EDMS (Phase 3 of the study).

Phase 2: Best Practice Review Methodologies

Task 1: Evaluation Practice and Literature Review

The purpose of Task 1 is to review current literature and research related to evaluation and assessment practices in the public library community.

Methodology – Members of the Information Institute research team conduct a review of current literature. Criteria developed for guidance in the literature review include:

- Present an overview of types of evaluations available for use;
- Understand potential data types produced by each evaluation; and
- Identify potential applications and problematic experiences of each evaluation approach within varying library situational settings and contexts.

The literature review focuses on published results of evaluation practices and assessments used by library practitioners and researchers.

Task 2: Evaluation Efforts

- A. Best Practice Focus Groups: Identify best practice and problematic evaluation practices in various library settings with a range of advocacy needs.

Methodology – The project team will conduct interviews and/or focus groups during site visits with selected state data coordinators (in state library agencies), state librarians, state library staff, library consultants, public libraries, and others knowledgeable about public library evaluation efforts. Interviews/focus groups will occur in Florida, Texas, Iowa, Oregon, and New Jersey.

- B. Evaluation Practices Survey: Identification of evaluation practices in public libraries using state data coordinators, state librarians, public librarians, and library managers.

Methodology – The project team will conduct surveys of the four project partners and the seven advisory committee members to identify the most common problems and issues associated with public library evaluation efforts. The project's library partners and advisory committee members will respond to a short survey asking for information broadly related to actual, best practice, and problematic evaluation practices. The research team will distribute the survey electronically.

Task 3: Review of Library Reports and Documents

The purpose of task 3 is to assess evaluation efforts in LSTA annual reports, library annual reports, annual budget reports, and other documents related to evaluation efforts.

Methodology – Examine selected required state LSTA annual reports as supplied by IMLS and state library agencies; and examine selected statewide library annual reports, annual budget reports, and other documents related to evaluation efforts provided by state library agencies as available.

Task 4: Report to Advisory Committee

The purpose is to provide library partners and members of the advisory committee with a draft report that summarizes findings from the above activities for comment and suggestions.

Methodology – Distribute, review, and discuss findings from Phase 2 with the project partners and advisory committee at the ALA 2006 Annual Summer Conference (June 22-29, 2006) in New Orleans. The research team, in coordination with the advisory committee and partners will use the results to guide the ongoing development and implementation of the EDMS.

PHASE 2: BEST PRACTICE REVIEW RESULTS

Task 1: Evaluation Practice and Literature Review

The purpose of Task 1 is to review current literature and research related to evaluation and assessment practices in the public library environment. Criteria developed for guidance in the literature review include the presentation of an overview of evaluation strategy design, types of evaluations available and implemented, and of potential data types produced by each evaluation type. The literature review focuses on published results of evaluation practices and assessments used by library practitioners and researchers.

Evaluation Needs

Rising costs, diminishing resources, and changes within the way libraries deliver services and resources create situations where funding sources (i.e., local, state, and federal agencies, private organizations, and local library constituents) raise concerns about how libraries deliver quality services with fewer resources. The concerns of how to maintain quality services with diminishing resources lead to the need for libraries to provide accountability and to show value for investments. These concerns compel public libraries to provide evidence to funding agencies and local constituents of good fiscal management practices regarding the quality, value, returns on investments, and impacts of the services they provide and the resources they use. These concerns force libraries to evaluate how they conduct business and to show the quality of services provided. (Bertot & Snead, 2005a, b; Buschman, 2003; Mathews, 2004; Van House & Childers, 1993)

To provide evidence to address these concerns, library practitioners must engage in evaluation efforts of some kind. At times, these approaches may include evaluation strategies that are systematic in application; and at other times, the evaluation attempts may be ad hoc with no strategy developed at all. Either way the selection of inefficient, ineffective, or simply the wrong evaluations within a strategy, or failure to develop a strategy may lead to a failure in the provision of appropriate data from appropriate sources. The evaluations selected may fail to provide effective, efficient, or even adequate evidence regarding quality, value, returns on investment (ROI), or impacts. To provide evidence in an effective and efficient manner, libraries must develop evaluation strategies focused on the collection of data specific to the use and delivery of services and resources. (Bertot, McClure, & Ryan, 2001; Brophy & Kouling, 1996; Durrance & Fisher, 2005; Hernon & Dugan, 2002; Matthews, 2004)

To develop effective and efficient evaluation strategies, Bertot and Snead (2005a, b) assert that libraries must take into account issues that can directly affect the selection of evaluation approaches and the types of data collected. Issues such as:

- Tailoring evaluation approaches to fit particular circumstances and information needs of the library community and stakeholders;
- Evaluation design, planning, and execution within the tailored evaluation effort as part of an evaluation strategy; and
- Selection of the *best* evaluation approach developed to meet specific data needs as part of an evaluation design.

More specifically, Bertot and Snead (2005a, b) suggest that to address a real, known need such as value or impact of a service on library patrons, library practitioners need to know and have access to information on which evaluation approach best fits what evaluation need.

Selection of Best Practice Evaluation Approach

In general, to determine the evaluation approach that best fits an evaluation need, library practitioners need to make decisions that revolve around three fundamental aspects of library services, programs, and activities (Bertot & Snead, 2005a, b; Matthews, 2004):

1. Inputs – the resources libraries invest (i.e., money, staff, commercial databases, etc.);
2. Activities – the services, programs, and activities the inputs actually generate (i.e., licensed resources available, story hours, training sessions, etc.); and
3. Outputs – the number of services, programs, and activities generated from library investments (e.g., number of workstations, number of databases licensed, number of print materials purchased, number of training sessions, etc.).

These three fundamental aspects of library services determine resource allocation and inform the decision-making process for the design, development, and implementation of library services and resources.

In addition to determining best evaluation approaches based on fundamental aspects of library services (i.e., inputs, activities, and outputs), Bertot & Davis (2005) suggest that public library practitioners should approach identifying and meeting evaluation needs from one of three different perspectives. The three perspectives are:

1. *Stakeholder type* – Local, State, and National Agencies, City/county boards, Community leaders, Funding sources, Patrons by demographic areas, etc.
2. *Data or information need* – type of data or information needed to address concerns, issues, etc.; and
3. *Evaluation approach* – the type of evaluation used such as outputs, outcomes, etc.

As envisioned, these three different perspectives will help library practitioners' select evaluation approaches that best meet their specific library evaluation needs.

The three fundamental aspects of library services combined with the appropriate evaluation perspective(s) will best determine evaluation needs. In addition, library practitioners must also identify and match types of data required to address real, known needs such as value or impacts of a service on library patrons, the community, funding sources, etc.; types, kinds, and extent of library services provided; and resources used or allocated for the services, etc. Library practitioners need to understand the impact of how relational effects influence the selection of best practice evaluation approaches and how to match approaches to the most appropriate data needs. (Bertot & Davis, 2005; Bertot & Snead, 2005a, b)

Influence of Relational Effects on Best Practice Evaluation Selection

No documented effort to date provides comprehensive assistance in the determination of which specific evaluation approach to use relative to specific library situational factors, data needs, and other considerations. With so many evaluation options available, there is a substantial need to *bridge* evaluation approaches to situational factors by understanding relational effects that naturally exist within a library's evaluation environment. (Bertot & Davis, 2005; Bertot & Snead, 2005a, b)

Evaluation within a library occurs within specific settings. Relations to other factors within these specific settings influence the kind of data needed for informed decision-making practices, factors such as the identification of affected stakeholders, stakeholder perspectives, types of evaluation frameworks available, and organizational and situational context of the evaluation process. Understanding relational factors will provide library practitioners and managers with understanding and guidance in the selection of *best practice* assessment techniques capable of meeting their data information needs. (Bertot & Davis, 2005; Bertot & Snead, 2005a, b) Examples of relational effects among library stakeholders, stakeholder perspectives, evaluation approaches, and situational factors include:

Stakeholders: Stakeholders may want to know a number of things regarding investments made in the public library (i.e., stakeholder data and/or information needs) such as the ways patrons benefit from reading library online or print material. Stakeholders may also have concerns such as community returns for every dollar invested; the need to continue to fund print collections in the same amount or to divert more resources to online material; or what users of library services think about the quality of the services they receive from the library. (Bertot & Davis, 2005; Bertot & Snead, 2005a, b)

Stakeholder Evaluation Perspective: Drives the *stakeholder* data and information needs and frames questions that library managers must answer to make resource allocation decisions. The stakeholder evaluation perspective influences the evaluation approaches library managers will use in order to meet stakeholder data demands. (Bertot & Davis, 2005)

Evaluation Approaches: Assessment frameworks that library managers may use in order to answer *stakeholder* questions and make resource allocation decisions. At present, evaluation approach implementation tends to occur in isolation and integration of factors such as effort required for the evaluation, resource devotion to the evaluation, data collection, and reporting of results for advocacy and other purposes may not occur.

Organizational & Situational Context: Operating environment where evaluation activity occurs and can create a number of constraints on the evaluation activities in which libraries can engage. These can include limited staff resources and expertise, limited evaluation resources, specific "time frames" for evaluations, and limiting technology and other infrastructure that does not permit the collection of critical data. (Bertot & Davis, 2005; Bertot & Snead, 2005a, b)

Library relational effects can directly influence the selection of evaluation approaches and the kinds of data needed to address issues and questions asked by library funders, constituents, and other interested parties.

Evaluation Approaches

Research suggests that researchers, library managers, and library practitioners have developed and/or adapted a number of evaluation approaches for use in the management of both traditional and networked library services and resources. Initial research suggests that among the most widely used evaluation methods and approaches available, a number of primary evaluation strategies used in public library settings, encompass many of the individual evaluation methods and approaches. These primary evaluation strategies include outputs, performance measures, outcomes assessment, quality assessment, and value determination. (Bertot, 2003; Bertot & McClure, 2003a, b; Bertot & Snead, 2005a, b; Matthews, 2004) Examples of the application of these primary evaluation strategies include:

Outputs: typically counts of library activities patrons use (e.g., number of database sessions, number of database items examined, number of training sessions, etc.).

Performance Measures: typically are measures of the breadth and scope of services (e.g., training attendance per capita, cost per database session, etc.); and the measurement of the efficiency or effectiveness of activities (e.g., usability of service, accessibility to services, etc.).

Outcomes Assessment: method that seeks to determine the impact of a library's services or resources on the library service and resource users; or seeks to determine benefits as changes in skill or knowledge levels that library users derive from the use of library services and resources.

Quality Assessment: determinations of the degree to which users find the delivery of a library's services, programs, and activities satisfactory and meets or exceeds user expectations; and may include the extent to which library services and resources meet library determined quality standards.

Value Determination: involves the use of outputs, outcomes, and quality assessment evaluation approaches to provide an overall assessment of library services along financial, customer, internal, and innovation or learning dimensions; and although not widely employed in libraries at present, this approach has the potential to offer a comprehensive and integrated evaluation approach.

There are many other evaluation approaches available for use in a public library setting; however, many of these fall within one of the five areas above. (Bertot & Davis, 2005; Bertot & Snead, 2005a, b; Mathews, 2004)

Selecting the appropriate evaluation approach is essential for a successful evaluation effort. In addition, library practitioners need to determine the type of data or information needed.

Determining the data or information needed aides in the selection of the best evaluation approach selected based on the types of data each primary evaluation strategy is best capable of retrieving.

Identifying specific evaluation approaches available to capture data or information begins with addressing issues involved in meeting information needs. Bertot and Snead (2005a) provide questions that provide insights to data needs, type of evaluations specifically developed to capture the data types, and primary evaluation approaches. Examples include:

- Do you need to know how patrons use online resources? Data comes from a usability study and/or log analysis [Outputs/Performance Measures].
- How do your patrons feel about reference services? Information from user satisfaction surveys, focus groups of users, interviews, and library list serves, etc. [Quality Assessment].
- How effective is your Web interface at delivering information resources to patrons? Information obtained from a Web page analysis, usability study, log analysis, SERVQUAL, etc. [Quality Assessment].
- How do library services and resources affect patrons? Data comes from outputs/performance measures [Outcomes assessment].
- How do libraries justify service value in terms of cost, usefulness to patrons, impact on patrons, and impact on mission of the library? Data comes from ROI/outputs, user satisfaction and usability surveys, and outcomes [Value Assessment that employs Outputs, Performance Measures, Quality Assessments, and Outcomes Assessments].

Questions such as these represent the need to address the information needs of a library and to link those needs to evaluation approaches.

Research shows that library practitioners must provide evidence to answer questions or concerns about the ability of libraries to deliver quality services with fewer resources, to funding agencies and local constituents. Library practitioners must provide evidence of good fiscal management practices regarding the quality, value, returns on investments, and impacts of the services they provide and the resources they use. To do this, library practitioners must use the most appropriate evaluation approach within the best evaluation strategy matched to specific data and information needs. Matching data needs to “best” practice evaluation strategies will deliver the most impact for resources allocated for library services, programs and activities. (Bertot & Snead, 2005a, b; Buschman, 2003; Mathews, 2004)

Task 2: Evaluation Efforts – Best Practice Focus Group Results

This report summarizes the results of best practice focus group and interview activities as part of the Task 2 project requirements. The researcher conducted focus groups and interviews in five states: Texas, Iowa, New Jersey, Oregon, and Florida beginning January 20 and ending April 13, 2006. The researcher visited five State Library agencies and nineteen public libraries.

The purpose of these activities was to gain an understanding of specific situational factors and contexts within a library setting that affect public library evaluation efforts, data needs, and the ability to advocate for libraries in the communities they serve. The research team will use the data provided by these results in the design and development of the EDMS. A copy of the interview and focus group instrument is included in this document (See Appendix B).

Introduction

Florida State University's Information Use Management and Policy Institute <<http://www.ii.fsu.edu>> is developing an Evaluation Decision Management System (EDMS) <<http://www.ii.fsu.edu/projects/effective-eval/>>. EDMS is part of the project "Increasing the Effectiveness of Evaluation for Improved Public Library Decision Making and Advocacy" funded by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services <<http://www.ims.gov/>>.

This report summarizes one of the activities in Phase II: Best Practice Reviews, conducted by the research team in five states: Texas, Iowa, New Jersey, Oregon and Florida beginning January 20 and ending April 13, 2006. The researcher visited five State Library agencies and nineteen public libraries. The purpose of these activities was to gain an understanding of specific situational factors and contexts within a library setting that affect public library evaluation efforts, data needs, and the ability to advocate for libraries in the communities that they serve.

Findings

What Constitutes Evaluation?

There is a gap between what public library managers' view as evaluation and what national level evaluators and the academic community view as evaluation. This may have an impact on how these public library managers may view and use EDMS and what they may expect EDMS to offer.

Public library managers primarily think of evaluation in terms of use. Reasons that public library managers interviewed use evaluation are:

- **Pilot/improve operations:** to "find out how we are doing," to "better pilot and learn what needs attention," to improve library operations and services. There is particular interest in "workload management" evaluation (e.g., how does the introduction or modification of a library service impact on staff workload?)
- **Value:** To show the library's worth to funders and the public; and,

- **Meet a requirement:** “We do some evaluations because we have to, e.g., the annual statistical report [required by the state].”

Public library managers’ first priority is how an evaluation helps the local library. The further the evaluation moves away from the local the less important it becomes. Expressing evaluation in terms of methodologies (quantitative or qualitative, outputs, impacts) may not help orient public library managers in the same way and to the same degree as it does national policy makers and the academic community.

Public library managers’ pragmatic evaluation question, “do I (or someone on my staff or someone I know) know how to do the evaluation, do I have the time, money, resources, and are the results good enough to persuade my audience?” Getting the evaluation “right” often appears as a luxury they cannot afford...or they cannot obtain at any price.

EDMS categories that describe an evaluation that may matter most may be those that identify the problem it helps pilot or value (or requirement it meets), and quickly helps a user identify whether they can do the evaluation. Additionally, categories that may matter describe how long it will take; time, money, staff resources needed; and quickly allows the user to determine whether the results will persuade an intended audience.

Use of Integrated Library System (ILS) Statistics Modules

Is learning to use a public library’s ILS statistical module an evaluation technique? All libraries visited would say yes. Do all libraries struggle to make their ILS statistics modules work for them despite vendor support and ILS interest groups, both or which may vary? Yes. Is this a potential EDMS activity now or in the future? Despite vendor and user efforts, all public libraries appear to have problems in this area. Are ILS vendors a potential EDMS funding source? Is there some minimal service that EDMS could provide to ILS statistics-module user groups to advance their effort?

Evaluation or Presentation

The public and state library managers interviewed did not separate or strongly distinguish between presentation techniques (how evaluation results are packaged and presented) and evaluation (data collection and analysis). In their view, effective presentation and repackaging/reusing evaluation results for multi purposes and audiences were all part of the same skill set. All had seen examples of good data poorly presented and minimal data having significant impact due to good presentation. Public library managers would suggest that the EDMS should pay as much attention to the means of presentation as the means of data collection and analysis.

Word of Mouth

One component of successfully valuing a library to its community is positive “word of mouth.” Is a systematic effort to create positive word of mouth discussion about the library and obtain feedback on ways to improve the library a form of evaluation? The libraries visited are interested in pursuing this question.

What Constitutes Evaluation Summary

Public library managers evaluate to better pilot or improve library operations, to show library value and to meet requirements. When choosing an evaluation technique, their interests are pragmatic: what problem does this solve (note: making your ILS statistics module work for you might be a problem area), can I do or learn how to do the technique, how much does it cost, how much time, and will the results persuade my audience? These considerations might become EDMS access points.

Unanticipated Role of External Factors in Willingness to Evaluate

Interviews with public library managers reinforced the notion that one cannot have enough feedback in the design and implementation of an evaluation system, particularly one with national scope, like EDMS. Two instances mentioned by the librarians visited illustrate:

- **Technology plans:** Several years ago, the development of public library technology plans received much attention, since, for example, E-rate applications required a technology plan. State Libraries spent significant effort training reluctant public library managers to produce such plans. What was obvious to many public library managers but not to technology-planning advocates was that such planning substantially reduces value if public library funding (let alone funding for IT) was not stable and not realistically guaranteed from year to year let alone 3-5 years down the road.
- **Electronic services:** A great deal of effort recently has been devoted to developing national (indeed international) e-metrics – measures of electronic resources and services often based on usage. Public libraries have been slow to adopt these measures. A significant reason for public library managers reluctance to adopt, unknown to most national e-metrics advocates, is that usage of electronic services is low, usage is particularly low when compared to traditional library services especially when cost per use estimates are calculated. [A better approach is to show the rapid rise in uses of electronic services, which is often dramatic.]

The lesson learned for EDMS development is to be sure that evaluation techniques and measures are realistic, needed, can be understood locally, and useful to public library managers.

EDMS Audience: Public Library Evaluation Capacity Varies

When considering who the audience for EDMS is and what is its evaluation capacity several classes of public libraries emerged:

- **Libraries with no staff to dedicate, even part time, to evaluation:** Librarians at most small libraries, which make up the majority of libraries, barely have enough time to run the library and little time to evaluate it. In addition, library managers may not have an M.L.S. or any formal evaluation training. These librarians would give priority to quick, easy, “ready to use” evaluation tools. These library managers may not have the time for tutorials, long explanations, and moderately complicated or new evaluation techniques. Indeed, lack of time may preclude considerations like interest in an EDMS evaluation technique, willingness to try, ability, and even utility.

- **Libraries with staff to dedicate, even part time, to evaluation:** The next level are those libraries that have one or more librarians who can dedicate some portion of their time to items beyond the day-to-day running of the library. These librarians would still give priority to quick, easy, “ready to use” evaluation tools.
- **Large urban libraries:** These libraries have planning and evaluation staff further distinguished by the need for more sophisticated techniques that can be value specific to library services, benefits, and impacts.
- **Library systems:** Evaluation or training in evaluation techniques may be a service offered to member libraries. One form of evaluation increasingly expected is to show the library’s value or system’s value – where local and situational factors determine “value.”
- **Libraries with the same ILS:** Libraries visited had an active interest in learning to use their ILS statistical modules, particularly to improve operational efficiency and for piloting. On its face, this *may* be a need best met by ILS vendors or ILS interest groups rather than EDMS.
- **Intermediaries:** This group may include Library systems and the State Library, Library Development Coordinators and State Data Coordinators: One role that this group may play is to train public library managers in evaluation techniques, including required annual statistical survey completion, annual budget presentations, technology planning, and strategic planning.
- **Library school students and faculty:** Discussions with public and state library managers suggest that the only possible time that librarians *might* receive systematic training in library evaluation is during Library and Information Science (LIS) programs. A high quality set of instructional materials might assist LIS programs do a better job in this area.

These categories of public libraries may suggest the following priorities assuming the objective of reaching the largest number of libraries:

1. **All libraries:** EDMS modules offer quick, easy, “ready to use” evaluation tools. These modules would be useful to all libraries (the possible exception might be large urban libraries).
2. **Intermediaries:** EDMS modules on evaluation topics are ready for use by intermediaries offering training and assistance. These modules might present high pay off but also might be more complicated or time-consuming evaluation topics yet still reach a large number of public library managers.
3. **Libraries with dedicated evaluation staff and library school students:** This group matches the original EDMS intent – extended instructional modules that require some knowledge, interest, and ongoing involvement.
4. **Specialized groups:** Are there shared evaluation needs among library systems and large urban libraries that EDMS could meet? There might well be dedicated staff that would use extended EDMS tutorials.

In sum, the potential EDMS audience(s) are perhaps more diverse than anticipated.

EDMS Based on Recurring Evaluation Needs

One obvious way to construct and present EDMS is around recurring evaluation needs. Those interviewed mention: annual budget hearing; annual statistical report; annual report (good indicator of whether a library has staff dedicated to evaluation); technology plan; and funded project evaluation (LSTA funded projects may require outcomes measurement). They also mention status of electronic services (reports to Boards and local funders showing value of new and expensive workstations, equipment, Internet connection, etc.), status of any new service report, workload management reports (impact of new or modified service on staff and resources), and summer reading reports.

Key Stakeholder Evaluations

Some public library managers when asked about their current evaluation efforts and needs thought in terms of presentation of evaluation data to key stakeholder groups, such as library boards, local government officials/funders, local government agencies, and local business groups. Would it be worthwhile for EDMS to develop and/or collect good examples of evaluations targeted to key stakeholder groups? If EDMS was organized around evaluation problems, a category could be “what to present to key stakeholder group X – e.g., what to present to library boards?”

Value Evaluations

Particularly during the early interviews, the researcher outlined what Institute study team members called a Public Library Value Toolkit (PLVT) with the following elements:

- **Basic facts:** a summary of facts, budget and service data with the library presented as a business;
- **Indirect economic impact:** using multipliers, present the library’s impact on the local economy and jobs;
- **Market value:** addresses the question, “What would the community have to pay if the library did not exist and had to obtain library services from the commercial marketplace?”
- **Peer comparison:** How do peer libraries compare to the library? What would it take to match key areas in peer libraries for the library?
- **Existing Data:** Libraries would not need to collect new data and would rely on existing library data, data from the state library, National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), etc.; output would be in the form of an annual report, press releases, and PowerPoint presentation.

Reaction was uniform among the library managers interviewed: “Where can I get this, sign me up!”

Templates

What constitutes a good return on investment (ROI) evaluation has received increased attention with the introduction of the Arts & Economic Prosperity Calculator

<http://ww3.artsusa.org/information_resources/economic_impact/calculator.asp> by the lobbying group ArtsUSA. Significant areas of potential interest of such calculators in EDMS development include:

- Coordinated evaluations whose sum is greater than its parts: Evaluations of arts institutions conducted in individual, representative, cities using the same methodology. The results allowed “good enough” generalization to all U.S. cities.
- A web based Calculator was developed to produce an estimate of return on investment given limited, readily available, data provided by the calculator user.
- Presented calculator ROI results in a variety of ready to use formats include press releases, op-ed pieces, and PowerPoint presentations.
- Method information made available for those interested.

Arts & Economic Prosperity Calculator’s significance for EDMS is: 1) it no longer may be sufficient to teach someone how to evaluate. One may interactively do an evaluation via a web site and present an actual evaluation product. 2) The evaluation product must be ready to use in a variety of formats. The Arts & Economic Prosperity Calculator may have raised the bar on web based evaluation instructional systems.

It is the Relationship....

The researcher spent a great deal of time emphasizing evaluation and measures while interviewing public library managers. Eventually, during the interview, many of the library managers would comment to the effect “it’s not the evaluation’s logical argument, data or presentation that matter as much as the *relationship* when attempting to persuade.” The relationship component seemed to have at least two parts:

1. “The library should be seen as a contributing member to local government and local government problem solving.” “The budget hearing should not be the first (and only) time local government sees you.”
2. A high quality evaluation and presentation are insufficient by themselves to persuade, *or*, a positive relationship may trump or mitigate evaluative data however presented. There is a need to establish trust and credibility that can only occur with positive interaction over time.

Can EDMS alert public library managers to this? Can public library managers build systematic relationships using EDMS? Is that part of evaluation? Is it part of EDMS?

A single evaluation and presentation done in isolation does not have the impact of a systematically crafted yearlong evaluation plan with on-going interaction between library managers and the local community and governing board/officials. Is it possible to link various evaluations into a systematic yearlong program of evaluation?

Lessons Learned

The lessons learned from this best practice review of public and state library managers include the following:

- There is far more diversity in potential EDMS audiences than first contemplated. This may suggest two potential EDMS design modifications: 1) choose to focus on one audience (or a cluster of audiences with related needs); or, 2) offer each audience identified a well-designed versatile demonstration product, one that demonstrates the impacts of additional evaluation funding and effort.
- As proposed originally, EDMS may be best suited for library school students and faculty users and possibly large urban libraries, library systems, and libraries with dedicated evaluation staff. Even within this grouping, library practitioners may be oriented differently than library school members: practitioners oriented to evaluation problem solving; academics oriented to evaluation technique or theory.
- There may be a fundamental shift in expectation regarding what web based training systems, like EDMS, offer. The centerpiece of prior training systems was on presentation of theory and technique. Next generation systems may focus on a pragmatic, needed (and motivating), evaluation product with an interactive approach to data collection, tentative analysis presented in draft form and in a ready to use format and evaluation theory and technique modules offered in a supporting role. Library managers interviewed would readily embrace this type of approach with its emphasis on pragmatic, easy to do evaluations, and ready to use evaluation products.

With the advent of library networks, it becomes possible, indeed necessary, to rethink who could/should be doing what aspects of an evaluation process, and where. Is it necessary or even desirable for a local library manager to conduct all aspects of a library evaluation (e.g., data collection, analysis, presentation), or train to do so, in a networked environment? Alternatively, should evaluation systems like EDMS be contemplating, indeed prototyping, distributed, networked library evaluation decision-management systems?

Consider the *Arts & Economic Prosperity Calculator* and the *Institute's Biennial Connectivity Survey* in light of these questions. These early, network based, evaluation systems not only do the evaluation mechanics better; they also redistribute evaluation expertise closer to where it actually resides. As the EDMS evolves, developers should consider issues related to evaluation costs at the local level, leveraging evaluation efforts nationally or regionally, and sharing evaluation expertise.

Task 2: Evaluation Efforts – Evaluation Practices Survey Results

The purpose of this survey is to solicit information from the project’s partners, advisory committee, and other experts regarding the practices and uses of evaluation in particular public library settings. The research team will use the data provided by the survey in the design and development of the EDMS.

Each of the four project partners and the seven advisory committee members received electronic surveys and were encouraged to share the surveys with others in their respective organizations or libraries. Each partner and committee member organization, or associated library responded and returned at least one survey. There were two additional surveys received; thirteen completed surveys.

Note: The contact individuals were not necessarily the respondents of the surveys. The names of the survey participants are confidential per the Human Subject Committee Guidelines (<http://www.research.fsu.edu/humansubjects/index.html>) of Florida State University.

This report presents compiled survey data by question and area of focus of the question (underlined headings). Where applicable, the report presents results by two categories: 1) national library organization plus state library responses (referred hereafter as SL), and 2) public library responses (PL). A copy of the survey instrument is included within this document (See Appendix C).

Background

Question 1: Name of reporting library: of the thirteen surveys received, one is from a national organization (ALA), two are from state library systems (Texas and Florida), and 10 are from public library systems.

Question 2: FTE total staff: FY 2005

SL range: 122 - 208 PL range: 5 - 521

Question 3: Most recent annual operating budget (FY 2005):

	Budget Range	# of surveys/type	Budget Amounts (Range in \$)
SL	N/A	One national assoc.; Two state libraries	11,068,544 – 27,900,000
PL	< one million	3 libraries	63,291 – 254,238
	One to ten million	3 libraries	2.4 – 9.6
	> ten million	4 libraries	17.6 – 44.5

Table 3: FY 2005 Operating Budget Summary Compiled from Survey Respondents

Advocacy Arguments

Question 4: What are the three *current* and *most important* advocacy arguments you are making to your local community and/or governing board?

Question 5: What, if any, formal or informal evaluation activities related to the library and the community, have you conducted to make these advocacy arguments?

	Current Advocacy Arguments (Question 4)	Evaluation Activities (Question 5)
1.	Provide information access across broad demographics of stakeholders (i.e., income, age, race, urban and rural areas, etc.).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web statistics; and • Anecdotal evidence from comments, interviews, and focus groups
2.	Need to obtain resources from authoritative and credible sources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature reviews (studies that provide data/stats)
3.	Report on taxpayer returns on investment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return on Investment studies.
4.	Inform all residents of the state of available services and resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and promotional materials
5.	Provide funding for libraries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PL Funding surveys;
6.	Allocate additional compensation for salaries and library staffing in local libraries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Census data analysis; • Retirement studies; • ALISE Statistical Reports; • Media contacts; and • PL Salary Surveys

Table 4: SL Formal and Informal Advocacy Argument Evaluation Activities

State library agencies and national organizations approach advocacy from a broad perspective. Table 4 above presents SL participants current and most important areas of advocacy focus and evaluation activities related to the library and the community typically used for the efforts. Areas of *advocacy focus* identified include funding efforts, justification or accountability efforts, and marketing efforts at the state and federal levels. Advocacy also includes focus on recognition and identification of specific needs of diverse stakeholder groups across states, informing all citizens within a state of available services and resources from local libraries, advocacy of the provision of credible sources from local libraries, and the provision of access to information sources for all.

State library agencies and national organizations employ a variety of evaluations that include outputs, performance measures, and outcomes assessments. In addition, these agencies and organizations utilize broad-based studies from a variety of sources, many of which are non-library sources in support of advocacy efforts. Evaluation efforts tend to be across library communities. Efforts also seem to focus on state level and national level agencies and organizations in attempts to collect data from a variety of sources related to diverse and geographically dispersed stakeholder populations.

Question 4 and 5: (Continued)

Area of Advocacy	Current Advocacy Arguments For: (Question 4)	Evaluation Activity for Argument (Question 5)
Library Committee and/or Boards	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased staff and staff pay; 2. Increased funding for technology, Internet access, and online services; 3. Funding for equitable access to information; 4. Increased budget for services and resources; 5. Development of co-funding opportunities (other sources of income); 6. Recognition of the significance of the “library as a place”; and 7. Development of strategic plans for improving community literacy levels based on a library’s mission and goals. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Staff study 2. Budget statistical analysis; library usage statistics 3. Outputs; demographic study; material budget comparisons 4. Cost increase comparisons 5. Presentations to community groups 6. Offer in-house library literacy and reading programs 7. Partnering with community groups; library role selection
Local Government	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Need for centrally-based library provision of services and resources; 2. Pre-purchase future services and resources at current levels of cost; 3. Continue to provide level of funding to support current level of services and resources; and 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Outputs 2. Based on library meeting current outputs and outcomes 3. Based on reporting success and activity levels of services and resources
Local Community	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Co-funding support from local business, organizations, and advocacy groups (partnering with other community groups); 2. Presenting library value to the community; 3. Presenting the library as supporter and provider of education opportunities for all ages; and 4. Inclusion of library programs as support of early childhood and teen reading programs in local schools. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Comparison w/city in cost per capita; outputs; local surveys 2. Output statistics 3. Public opinion studies; literature of published studies 4. Outputs; informal staff focus groups
State Library and/or Government	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Providing regional service through shared and cooperative-based services and resources 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Secret shopper evaluation program

Table 5: PL Formal and Informal Advocacy Argument Evaluation Activities

Local libraries tend to present advocacy efforts in four primary areas: local library committees and/or boards, local government agencies, local community, and state and national agencies. Table 5 above presents PL participants current and most important areas of advocacy focus and evaluation activities related to the library and the community typically used for the efforts. Local library advocacy efforts focus more on internal activities of the library, or coops of libraries in the provision of services and resources necessary to meet stakeholder needs and demands, and externally in justification and/or fund-raising efforts for the provision and the allocation of resources in providing library services, programs, and activities to local library communities.

Local libraries use a variety of assessments that include outputs, quality assessments, and outcomes assessments in advocacy efforts. Efforts primarily focus on outputs and performance measures used to assess local library services, activities, and programs with an

emphasis on the use of anecdotal and observation-based data sources. Externally, library evaluation efforts tend to focus on value assessments for fund-raising and accountability purposes.

Evaluation Activities

Question 6: Think about the last 1-2 years in which your library has conducted *any* type of evaluation activity. Please describe *typical areas* in library management, decision-making, and planning for which your library conducts some type of an evaluation [assessment of the quality, impact, cost, or benefits of library programs or services]. Describe them briefly.

Evaluation	Areas of Application
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persons Served • Materials Provided • Persons Trained • Librarians Trained/Assisted
Customer satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services offered satisfaction levels • Satisfaction with staff, website, conferences, etc.
Employee satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State program evaluation • Survey of Organizational Excellence
Cost avoidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [No specific area given]
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turnaround time • Item cost for materials delivered • Cost per transaction for services • Transaction/staff • Lost/missing items • Cost per person provided project sponsored services
Outcomes (General)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All LSTA funded projects including internal projects • Percent of population without public library service • Dollar value of cost-avoidance achieved by resource sharing
IMLS Outcomes-based Evaluation Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some LSTA funded services • Continuing education areas • Targeted services offered by regional library systems
Functionality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selected web sites
Usability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selected services offered
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selected web sites
State Aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compilation of information on use of State Aid • Study conducted on State Aid
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of Five-year plans
Annual Reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of departmental developed goals for association, departments, and unit/office task level goals

Table 6: SL Evaluation Activities and Areas of Application

Table 6 above presents SL evaluations conducted in the last two years and descriptions of typical areas of application in library management, decision-making, and planning. State libraries and national organizations utilize a variety of evaluation efforts in the assessment of

state and federally applied library services and allocation of resources. Evaluations include outputs, performance measures, quality assessments, and outcome assessments.

Based on participant comments and responses, the predominant evaluation approach used is outputs in determining the use of state provided services, resources, and costs associated with the statewide provision of these services. Performance measures and quality assessments tend to focus on state provided services and resources as well. Required assessments and reporting of the use of federal funds (LSTA grants) utilize outcomes assessment as the primary evaluation where outputs and performance measures are part of the outcomes assessment process.

Question 6: (Continued)

Evaluation	Areas of Application
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate with County Government (budget and usage statistics) • Along with inputs to measure service and program effectiveness • Monthly reports on service and program usage, demographics of users, and outreach statistics (number of programs and attendance) • Web usage • Track volunteer hours • Track revenue sources • Annual reports to boards, local government, and state libraries • Measure workloads (i.e., circulation, reference stats) for management of staff deployment and staff workload disbursements
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey of Library Board on priorities to meet in providing services
Community/customer service surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of services needed and used • Availability awareness of services • Identification of needs not being met
Library assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal focus group sessions (staff, meetings of library directors) • Development and annual review of library quality standards • Weekly planning for activities based on statistics and qualitative assessments of prior weeks activities and future needs
Outcomes-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LSTA grants • Programming assessments
Staff surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify training needs and issues

Table 7: PL Evaluation Activities and Areas of Application

Table 7 above presents PL evaluations conducted in the last two years and descriptions of typical areas of application in library management, decision making, and planning. Public library participants indicate they rely predominantly upon outputs for library management, decision-making, and planning efforts. Outputs as the evaluation provide data on use of library provided services and resources for advocacy, report generation, and for management decisions. Outputs also heavily support other areas such as funding and determination of need for additional service provision.

PL's use quality assessments and performance measures for: planning purposes; patron/customer satisfaction of existing and needed services; and to identify training needs and issues. In addition, quality assessments and performance measures are included in and

for library management and decision-making purposes. Outcomes assessments primarily fulfill LSTA grant required assessments.

Evaluation Approaches

Question 7: Are there particular types of evaluation (e.g., e-metrics, outcomes assessment, service quality, performance measures, budget analysis, etc.) that you typically employ when conducting an evaluation of library services/programs? If yes, why did you select these particular techniques?

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Statistical analysis | 6. Budget analysis |
| 2. Performance Measures | 7. E-metrics |
| 3. Surveys | 8. Anecdotal evidence |
| 4. Outcome based evaluation | 9. Service assessments |
| 5. Staff Reviews | |

The list above presents types of evaluations SL participants indicate as typically employed when conducting an evaluation of library services and programs. SL participants, however, did not include reasons for making the selections.

Type of Evaluation	Reason for Selection
Average book price	Rising costs arguments
Staffing for results	Address staff salary and benefit issues
Budget analysis	Decision making based on priorities due to budget cuts
Outputs	Creating external reports and for internal decision making
E-metrics	Required for various reports
Service quality	Determine effectiveness of reference service
Outcomes assessment	Directed to do so by the state and federal government
Activity analysis	Directs the following year’s action items based on prior year.
Industry ratios	Standard library data points used in comparison to other libraries over time to measure progress

Table 8: PL Reported Reasons for Selection of Specific Types of Evaluations

Table 8 above presents types of evaluations that PL participants indicate they typically employed when conducting an evaluation of library services and programs. Participant responses on reasons for selecting the evaluations listed include resource allocation arguments, planning efforts, and required reporting efforts.

Question 8: Name a recent evaluation activity conducted at your library. What were the problems you encountered in conducting the evaluation, how successful was the evaluation, how was it administered, and did the evaluation assist the library in any of its advocacy efforts?

Table 9 below presents two examples of recent evaluation activities conducted by SL participants. Each example includes success of the evaluation, problems encountered in conducting the evaluation, administration of the evaluation, and use of the results for advocacy purposes.

1	<i>Type of Evaluation</i>	Online customer satisfaction surveys (libraries rate programs)
	<i>Successes</i>	High return rates, program ratings, and general comments are useful.
	<i>Problems</i>	(None mentioned)
	<i>How was it administered?</i>	Included as part of annual required reports
	<i>Did it assist in library advocacy efforts?</i>	Comments are anecdotal and provide good illustrations of value of library programs to legislators.
2	<i>Type of Evaluation</i>	LSTA outcomes evaluation
	<i>Successes</i>	Libraries do a good job with the grant application process
	<i>Problems</i>	Libraries have problems making decisions for continuations or modifications needed for the projects. Libraries have problems evaluating data collected from evaluations. Broad, generic outcomes used to aggregate data are not very meaningful to grant recipients.
	<i>How was it administered?</i>	Required of each LSTA grant recipient
	<i>Did it assist in library advocacy efforts?</i>	Beneficial statewide for funding efforts Provides cohesive reports to IMLS on success of projects

Table 9: Selected SL Examples of Evaluation Use

Question 8: (Continued)

1	<i>Type of Evaluation</i>	Annual customer survey
	<i>Successes</i>	Administered from all library locations Response rate has increased over prior years
	<i>Problems</i>	Survey must be short (try to keep at one page) so limited data is returned in terms of depth of topics.
	<i>How was it administered?</i>	Single page survey (Spanish and English) of questions with rank or rate responses distributed to patrons from circulation desks of libraries.
	<i>Did it assist in library advocacy efforts?</i>	Used the data internally for library decision-making and externally with City Council Members; most often to present library value to the community
2	<i>Type of Evaluation</i>	Attendance sheets and brief survey cards
	<i>Successes</i>	Determined number of: participants newly exposed to NOVEL databases, prior awareness of the databases, and likelihood of use of databases in the future. Increased usage of databases noted after the project period.
	<i>Problems</i>	Difficult to determine success based on use following the presentations.
	<i>How was it administered?</i>	Administered at presentations of NOVEL in community settings as part of an LSTA grant
	<i>Did it assist in library advocacy efforts?</i>	Raised awareness of libraries within the community, specifically raised awareness with library funders

Table 10: Selected PL Examples of Evaluation Use

Table 10 above presents two examples of recent evaluation activities conducted by PL participants. Each example includes success of the evaluation, problems encountered in

conducting the evaluation, administration of the evaluation, and use of the results for advocacy purposes.

Situational Factors

Question 9: Please comment on the factors (staff knowledge, resources, technology applications, time, etc.) in your library that affect the success as they relate to conducting successful evaluations of library services/programs?

SL participants' note that increases in SL staff knowledge directly affects evaluation in the successful electronic collection and use of e-metrics and in the statistical analysis of usage data. Participants also note that increases in staff knowledge directly influence the awareness and use of customer comments. Additional factors for successful evaluation include timely feedback from library staff, management, and advisory boards and reviews concerning library services and programs.

Factors noted that could directly influence or affect successful implementation of a specific evaluation (outcomes assessment) include:

- 1) Library management support of the evaluation;
- 2) Training of library staff in conducting the assessments;
- 3) Available training resources (i.e., outcomes toolkits, websites, etc.);
- 4) Commitment of library staff to conduct the assessments; and
- 5) Time provided for library staff to conduct the assessments.

The primary issue or factor identified with *lack* of success of outcomes assessment as an evaluation approach is training of library staff to conduct the assessment.

The two most critical factors affecting successful evaluations in libraries identified by PL's are *Staff Knowledge* and *Staff Time*. Library managers view staff-members as capable of conducting evaluations, but often lack training and/or the necessary time to conduct evaluations successfully. Additional factors identified include:

1. Organizational change – greater focus is needed to plan, implement, and analyze programs using evaluations;
2. Library workload – inhibits evaluation attempts;
3. Program development – new programs are often developed and implemented with little or no evaluation conducted to determine success of existing programs;
4. Evaluation approach development – library staff are comfortable with using historical evaluations (i.e., inputs, outputs) but lack training or understanding in the use of new or more recently developed evaluation approaches;
5. Interest in evaluation – there may be little or no interest from administration to staff level in conducting anything but basic evaluations (i.e., input/output counts);
6. Evaluation structure – lack of a planned and structured evaluation strategy makes planning, assigning responsibility, managing data, creating reports, and responding to required reporting difficult;

7. Technology changes – changes in technology systems in libraries may limit access to previously accessible data; and
8. Software and database vendors – a lack of standards or consistency in data provided by software and database vendors make evaluations such as e-metrics or log analysis difficult to use in comparing across different databases or systems.

There were additional factors identified as affecting a specific evaluation.

Participants noted that it is difficult to apply a process that utilizes social science derived outcomes to library situations. One participant noted social science programs tend to study and follow a specific small number of individuals over time. Libraries need outcomes related to library services and programs and rarely have the knowledge of, or the means to assess impacts on specific individuals over a period-of-time. Another participant also noted that library staff members have problems determining impacts that are valid, useful, and meaningful in terms of library programs and services. Library staff members do not typically have the expertise to determine or assess meaningful impacts.

Participants noted that staff members at a library system level might be capable and committed to conducting evaluation; however, there are also factors that may affect the transference of the expertise to libraries at a local level. Factors such as: 1) range of expertise levels of library directors, managers, and staff at different libraries (based on size and location) that can make training sessions difficult to conduct; and 2) lack of support from library administrators in the provision of time and money needed to train library staff members or for travel reimbursement to training sessions.

Required Evaluation Reporting

Question 10: What regular or ongoing evaluation reports are you required to submit to local government, state government, the federal government or other sources, AND what types of assessment do these reports require?

Type of Government	Reporting Requirements	Type(s) of Evaluation Conducted
<i>Local Government</i>	N/A	N/A
<i>State Government</i>	Performance Measures(Outputs, Outcomes, Efficiencies)	Statistics gathering & analysis
	Customer Satisfaction Report	Survey-type rankings, anecdotal comments
	Fiscal report on State Aid	Fiscal report on use of funds
<i>Federal Government</i>	Inputs, Outputs,	Statistics gathering, budget analysis
	Inputs, Outputs, Outcomes, Anecdotes, Other	Narrative, outcome evaluation, statistics, budget report, anecdotal comments
	Annual and fiscal reports on funded LSTA projects	Outcome / fiscal
<i>Other</i>	Internal Organization Reports	Annual Fiscal, some impacts, monthly project reports

Table 11: SL Reporting Requirements and Evaluations Conducted.

Table 11 above presents SL regular and ongoing types of evaluations conducted to fulfill local, state, and federal government reporting requirements. SL participants indicate no reporting requirements for local government. State libraries reported no required reports other than state and national government required. The national library association indicated no required reports for local, state, or federal agencies and listed organizational reporting requirements.

(Question 10 Continued)

Type of Government	Reporting Requirements	Type(s) of Evaluation Conducted
<i>Local Government</i>	Budget Reports	Output measures and customer satisfaction surveys
	Operational Readiness Report (Mayor's Office)	Output measures and customer satisfaction surveys
	Annual Report and Budget	Justification for any increases
	Departmental Budget Requirements	Audits
	Annual Report to City Council	Use figures from automation system & state library report
	5 Year Plan of Service	Assessment of plan
<i>State Government</i>	Annual Report to State Library	Statistical reporting of various output measures
	Annual Survey; Long range Plan/Technology Plan	Review of current programs, equipment, and plan for sustainability
	Annual Report on Use of State Funds	Assess special projects using state funds
<i>Federal Government</i>	LSTA Grant Reports	Statistical reporting of various output measures
	E-rate Reports	Spending on POTs
<i>Other</i>		

Table 12: PL Reporting Requirements and Evaluations Conducted.

Table 12 above presents PL regular and ongoing types of evaluations conducted to fulfill local, state, and federal government reporting requirements. PL participants indicate reporting requirements for local, state, and federal government agencies.

Web-Based Instructional Design Considerations

Question 11: Ultimately, this project will result in the design and development of the project's web-based Evaluation Decision Management System (EDMS) that public librarians, managers, and others can use to assist in selecting, using, and reporting/analyzing data from various evaluation approaches for advocacy purposes. What are the three most important factors that we should consider in the design and development of the EDMS?

Of the 13 questions in the survey, participants included more suggestions and comments for question 11 than any other question. The question asks participants to suggest the three most important factors for consideration in the design and development of the EDMS. All participants offered a minimum of three and most offered more than three. Most participants

included additional comments in discussion of the three or more suggested factors. SL and PL suggestions and comments are combined for this answer.

EDMS	Module Design Factors
Usability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ease of use • User friendly • Intuitive, non-intimidating • Clarity of presentation • Easily accessible features for “non-technocrats” • Easy for funders, non-librarians, and public to understand • Adaptable to fit different needs • Clean interface • Easy to navigate
Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear instructions for use of the site and the content within the site • Provide detailed, step-by-step instructions for worksheets (Examples and templates) • Technical support (easily accessible) • Contextual help page and features • Feedback, a way for libraries to share successful techniques • Core modules, relevant to frequently requested evaluation/assessment information

Table 13: EDMS Design Factors

Table 13 above presents EDMS module design factors suggested by participants. The primary focus of participant comments for design of the EDMS is usability of the site and features offered within the site. Usability areas referenced in participant comments include navigation of the site; functionality; presentation of content; and aesthetics of the web pages. Recommended features within the site include built-in help features, access to technical support, provision of feedback mechanisms, and inclusion of instructions in the form of tutorials and clear instructions.

All participants included “ease of use” and “user friendly” in their comments. Participants also provided the following suggestions to improve the impact of design factors of the EDMS:

- “Assume a very low level of sophistication from libraries in the beginning. Build up to greater sophistication over time.”
- “Build tools that lead to easy to understand answers. I will never use the term ‘chi-square’ with my city council.”
- “Aim for high impact in the short run.”

The primary concern of participants for design of the EDMS was simplicity of use of the site and features within the site.

EDMS	Content Development Factors
Evaluation Selection/Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include a glossary with definitions that lay people can understand • Include suggestions for sampling methods • Lay person level tutorials on evaluation methodologies, especially for types of evaluation techniques such as cost-benefit analysis, difference between quantitative, qualitative, performance measures, and quality standards • Directions on identification of meaningful data elements, and/or good examples of when to use different evaluation methods and appropriate instruments • Matrix or rubric explaining which methodologies are appropriate for specific evaluation scenarios • Make use of measures and data already being gathered, as much as possible • Outputs from evaluations must be relevant to needed results • Flexibility of evaluation approaches for adapting to fit a variety of types of projects requiring evaluation • Tutorial on how to convert statistics to meaningful advocacy tools • Example that show a library how to pick an advocacy argument, decide what type of data is best suited for that type of argument, how to collect the necessary data, etc • Warnings or cautions about what not to use in advocacy efforts
Templates/Evaluation Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include examples of evaluation instruments and reports • Should contain concrete, real-world examples that users can relate to real-life examples • Interactive templates for developing evaluation approaches and generating reports • Interactive and downloadable templates for ongoing data collection efforts (i.e., ongoing collection of comments, anecdotal data, library counts, uploading documents, etc) • Able to generate variety of reports for custom needs • Templates are importable and exportable to and from Word, Excel and Access • Options to import (access) external data/information sources into interactive templates

Table 14: EDMS Content Development Factors

Table 12 above presents EDMS module content development factors suggested by participants. The primary focus of participant comments for content development of the EDMS is evaluation selection, evaluation use, the provision of templates for conducting evaluations, and examples of different types of evaluations.

Participants also provided the following suggestions to improve the impact of design factors of the EDMS:

- “It must be scalable—useful to libraries that don’t have a great many staff members or much in-house expertise in data collection and analysis as well as useful to larger libraries with more staff, resources and experience using data.”

- “Need to take into consideration the availability of library resources (knowledge, staff, funding) for carrying out evaluation & advocacy.”

The primary concerns for participants for content development of the EDMS are the inclusion of examples of evaluation, directions for using evaluation approaches, and how to apply results for advocacy purposes.

Example Evaluations

Question 12: If you have example evaluations from the past 3 years that you could provide us, or that might be available on your website or electronically, please provide them to us (send to Chuck McClure’s attention at the address below)?

Participants provided the research team with examples of a variety of evaluation instruments they use and links to reports that include evaluation instruments. The instruments provide the research team with examples that will aide in the development of the EDMS.

Other Thoughts

Question 13: If you have other thoughts about how evaluation is done in your library, issues related to conducting that evaluation, how evaluation is or is not related to successful advocacy, and the development of the EDMS, please describe them here.

The research team asked participants for additional thoughts on conducting evaluation in their libraries and for examples of issues related to conducting the evaluations. In addition, the research team asks about relationships and successful use of evaluation for advocacy purposes. The following is a selection of participant comments:

- “Realization that tying successful advocacy or increased funding to specific successful evaluation or projects is very difficult as there are many factors including politics and economic climate that come into play.”
- “Evaluation is very important to advocacy and is probably one of the first things that get pushed to the back-burner in small libraries due to time constraints. Good training on how to do an evaluation and the importance of evaluating is missing from classes being offered in our state.”
- “Refresher courses are needed on conducting evaluations. Talking this over with each other, we have decided we need some kind of more formal evaluation!”
- “Evaluation is CRUCIAL to advocacy. We cannot just go and say ‘we need the money – give it to us’. That will not work any more. Everything we do must be done for a reason and if we are not successful or do not evaluate what we have done we will be wasting valuable resources. As an example, the ... County Executive is calling for all agencies that receive money from the county to report on what is being done with the money. We must determine a better way of determining impact on a small scale. Most impact studies have only been conducted at the state or large city level. Impact is why we exist so it is imperative that we figure out a way to determine impact in a meaningful way. In addition, the evaluation target that is done the least is impact. It is better to do something in this area than nothing.”

- “Don’t assume the library field speaks your language when it comes to evaluation. It’s not in our blood. Librarians are terrifically responsive to public needs as presented by customers on the service floor. We are not as ‘planful’, as evaluative, or as inclined toward innovation. Since we don’t have the background or the inclination, we don’t start out where you do. Simplify your language or we won’t be in synch.”

Several respondents referred back to question 11 for comments regarding the EDMS.

Summary

State library and the national library association participants indicate the need for both formal and informal evaluation processes for reporting, funding, and advocacy purposes. These participants supplied types of evaluations used, application of the evaluations, reasons for selections of the evaluations, areas of application of the evaluations, and advocacy efforts supported by evaluation.

Typically, the state library participants apply formal evaluation efforts at a broad perspective regarding stakeholder needs, funding opportunities, reporting requirements, marketing efforts, etc. Public library participants indicate the need for both informal and formal evaluation as well, but suggest that most formal evaluation efforts are beyond their library resource availabilities and/or staff capabilities. They indicate their staffs are capable and willing to conduct more formal type evaluations but require training and training aides to do so. Public library participants apply evaluations locally and suggest that it is difficult to apply broad-based required outcomes and outcomes assessments to local situations.

Reporting is difficult for public library staff as well. Participants suggest this is also due to the broader base of data needs for external reporting along with a willingness but lack of training for library staffs in the use of evaluations needed to collect the data, the lack of training aides in reporting the results of evaluation, and the lack of training for advocacy purposes. Public library participants all indicate a willingness to conduct more evaluations; however, they also indicate they need training in the use of evaluations and several indicated a need for templates, simple but inclusive guidelines, and examples of prior evaluations (sample reports).

Task 3: Review of Library Reports and Documents

The purpose of this evaluation is to identify and assess existing evaluation approaches and practices found in library reports and documents. To accomplish this purpose, the research team assessed LSTA annual reports, public library annual reports, and other documents related to evaluation efforts. The research team received selected LSTA reports from five state libraries and obtained LSTA reports from state library and public library web sites.

Results

LSTA reports require outcomes assessment. To evaluate the LSTA reports for outcomes assessment, the research team identified twenty evaluation factors that together create a comprehensive outcomes assessment effort from planning to data collection to analysis to reporting results. The evaluation factors were then categorized into four areas of interests: descriptive factors, research factors, outcomes assessment factors, and result factors. Each LSTA report was evaluated for the presence of the factors. Cumulative findings of the evaluations are reported in Figures 1-5 (below). Table 15 (below) contains a list of the factors by areas of interest along with a brief description of each factor.

Factor Area	Evaluation Factor	Description
Descriptive Factors	Project Description	Describes the project
	Partners	Lists and defines role of any partners in the project
	Stakeholders Defined	Identifies stakeholders impacted by the research
	Stakeholder Perspectives	Describes perspectives of or impacts on stakeholders
	Organizational/Situational Factors	Identifies library setting, factors related to the research such as available resources, library community support, demographics, etc. that influence the evaluation process
Research Factors	Need	Why the research is important
	Purpose	What the researchers are trying to accomplish
	Goals	Long term expected or anticipated results of the research
	Objectives	Generally shorter term results developed to help meet goals
	Research Questions	Research questions of interest that frame the research
Outcomes Assessment Factors	Outcomes Indicators	Measurable indicators used to gauge impacts, or outcomes
	IMLS Outcomes	Impacts, or benefits of the research on individuals, organizations, etc. (required by IMLS as part of grant process)
	Other Project Outcomes	Additional outcomes identified by researchers as useful or relative to the project
	Evaluation Approach(s)	Methods used for data collection (also a research factor)
Result Factors	Success	Degree the project succeeded, generally based on meeting goals, objectives, and outcomes
	Barriers/Problems	Issues encountered that are problematic to research efforts
	Limitations	Issues that limit the research effort (i.e. sample size, etc.)
	Sustainability	Future efforts to sustain research efforts, to present results, to maintain services, etc.
	Data Collected	Outputs, anecdotal evidence, etc. reported
	Advocacy Efforts	Efforts to use results for benefit of the library

Table 15: Description of Outcomes Assessment Research Factors by Area

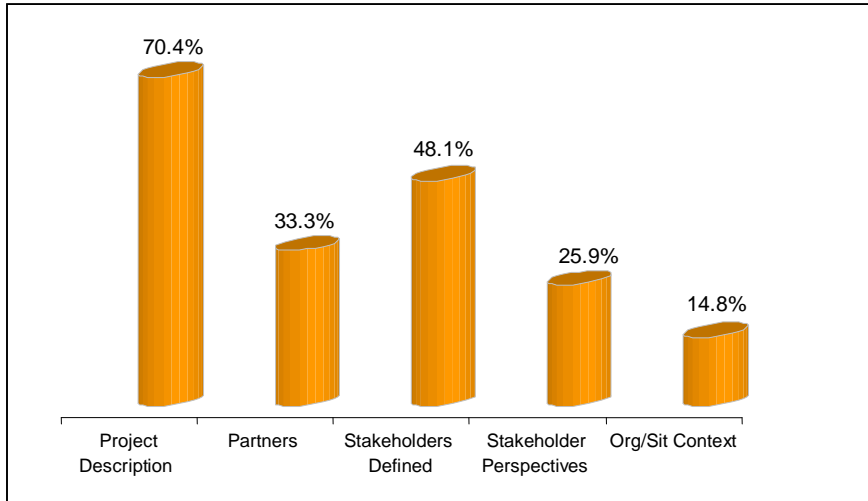


Figure 1: Descriptive Factors Located in Reports by Percentage

Figure 1 (above) presents descriptive factors by percentage. Related findings include:

- Of the 70.4% of reports with project descriptions included, the descriptions ranged from name of project to full narrative, with the majority of projects briefly described.
- Less than half of the reports mentioned the stakeholders or the stakeholder perspectives relative to the project.

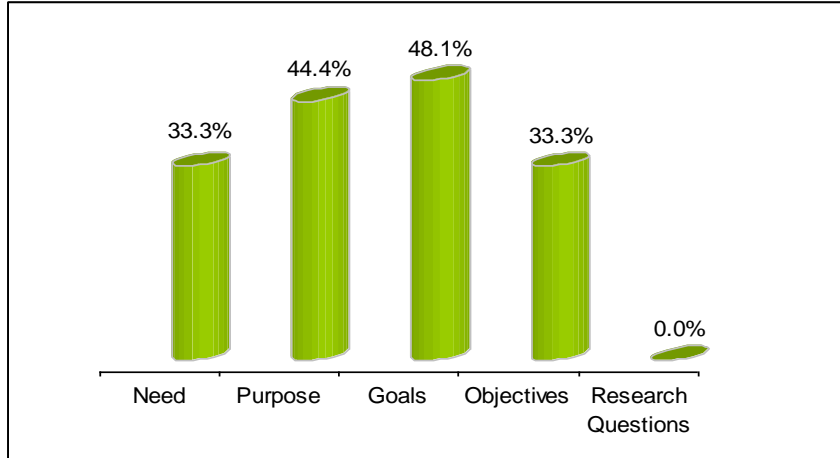


Figure 2: Research Factors Located in Reports by Percentage

Figure 2 (above) presents research factors by percentage. Related findings include:

- Of all reports, 55% included either the need or the purpose of the project.
- 27% of the total reports listed both the need and the purpose.
- 49% of the reports did not list a need or a purpose.
- Only 8% of the reports included all five factors.
- Reports tended to mention either goals or objectives with 6% of the total reports listing both goals and objectives and 22% of the total reports listing either.

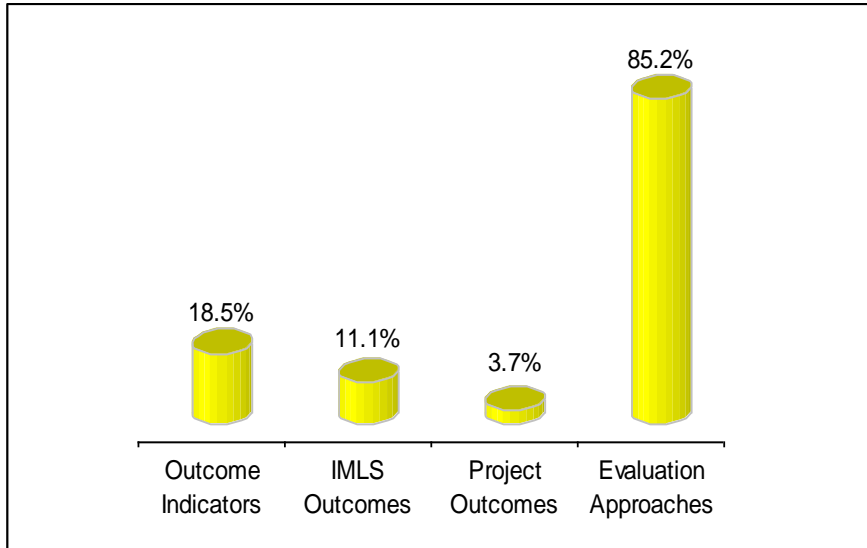


Figure 3: Outcomes Assessment Factors Located in Reports by Percentage

Figure 3 (above) presents outcomes factors by percentage. Related findings include:

- 14.8% of total reports referenced or listed at least one IMLS or project outcome.
- 85.2% of the total reports did not mention or reference any outcomes.
- 85.2% of the total reports included descriptions and findings of evaluations used within the narrative.
- All reports that referenced or listed outcomes also referenced or listed indicators and evaluation approaches.

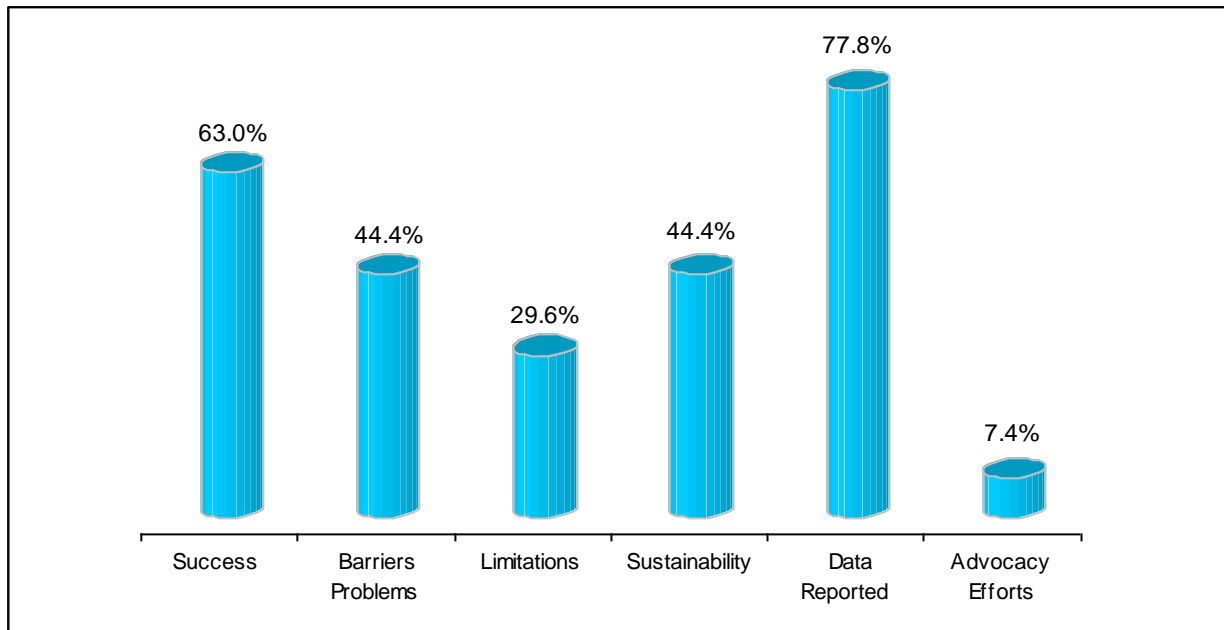


Figure 4: Result Factors Located in Reports by Percentage

Figure 4 (above) presents result factors located in reports by percentage. Related findings include:

- Nearly 30% of all reports included discussions of successes, barriers/problems, and limitations of the project.
- 26% of all reports did not include any discussions of successes, barrier/problems, or limitations of the project.
- 37% of all reports included discussions of sustainability and included outputs or indicator data within the findings (i.e. total counts, percentages, etc.).

Summary

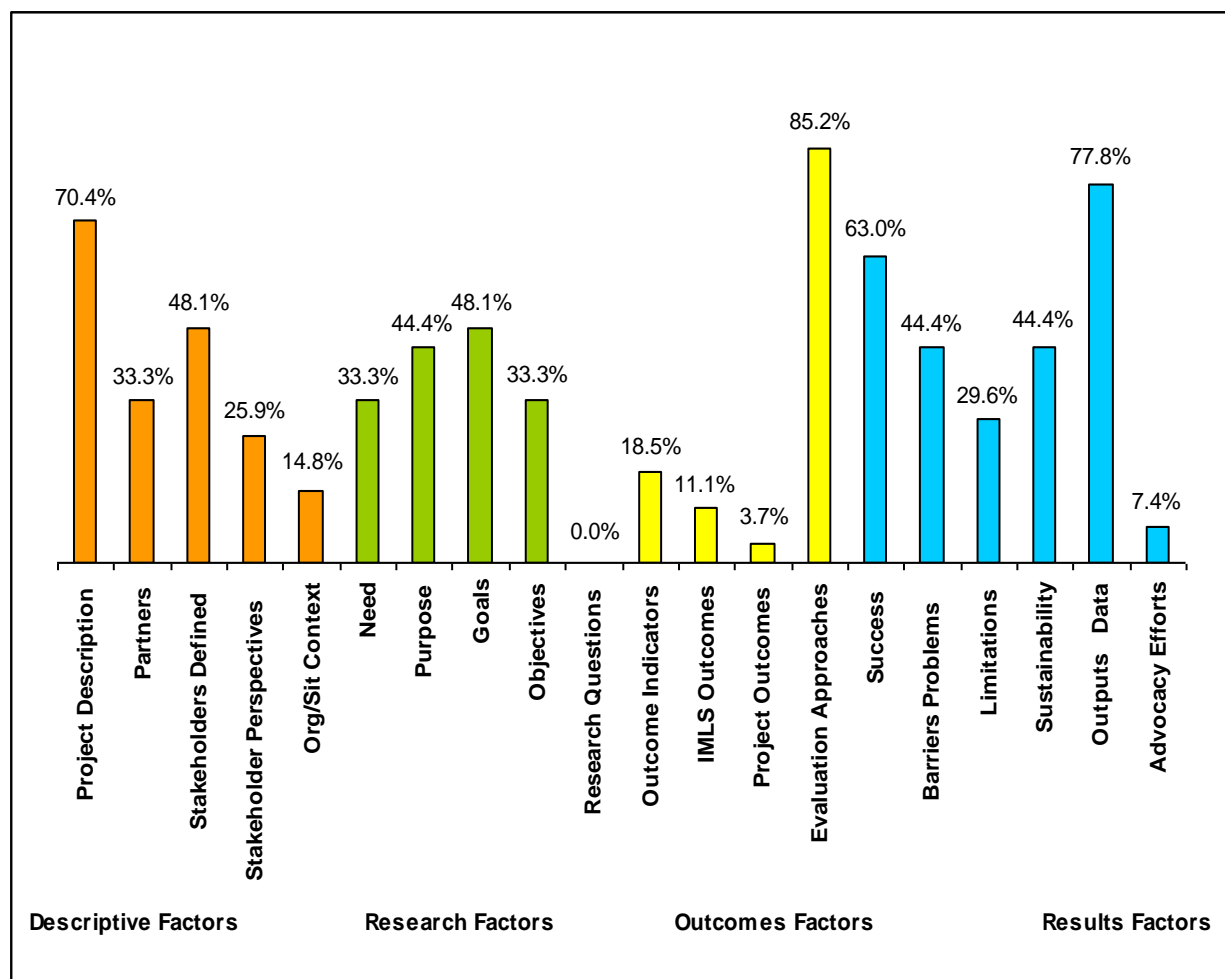


Figure 5: Cumulative Evaluation Factors by Percentage

The purpose of this evaluation is to identify and assess existing evaluation approaches and practices found in library reports and documents. In conducting this research, the research team identified twenty evaluation factors that together create a comprehensive understanding of research practices by library practitioners for outcomes assessment efforts (figures 1-4 above). Figure 5 (above) shows relationships between the 20 evaluation factors as found from assessment of selected LSTA reports.

These relationships, along with several additional findings and observations for figure 5 are shown below. The relationships, findings, and observations include:

- Library descriptions are often given in lieu of program descriptions. Figure 5 shows 70.4 % of the reports offer project descriptions. Of the remaining, nearly all described the library instead of the project with no relation offered to the project.
- Narrative approaches tend to focus upon project description, evaluation description, and evaluation results (generally counts of programs, trainings, total resources used, etc.) without considering or reporting relationships to goals, objectives, or outcomes. This leads to narratives and reported findings that may not be closely related to the purpose of the project, or that can be difficult to establish a relationship based on the narratives.
- When goals or outcomes are mentioned within the narrative, at times they are simply mentioned as being met with little or no discussion of how.
- Outcomes and goals are often discussed without identifying the actual outcomes or goals within the narrative.
- Many of the goals mentioned in the narratives are actually the outcome indicators and not project goals.
- Library statistics (i.e., usage, budget, other resource allocations, etc.) are often used to support the project findings instead of showing how project findings are related to outcomes or goals of the project.
- Figure 5 (above) shows 14.8% of the reports list outcomes. Of the 85.2% that do not list outcomes, many label/list outputs as outcomes.

In addition to library practices, the library reports include a variety of types of evaluations. These types of evaluation are primarily, but not always associated with the project activities and include: outputs (primary evaluation method); activity surveys (library use, opinion, demographic); activity focus groups (informal), and observation to collect anecdotal data; and studies/reports (marketing, return on investment).

The research team used evaluation factors to gain an understanding of library-practitioner research practices and the assessment of reports to identify types of evaluations used in funded research projects. With the exclusion of outcomes and outcomes indicators, the remaining evaluation factors can be applied to other evaluation efforts to gain an understanding of other library and/or researcher practices.

Task 4: Report to Advisory Committee

The purpose of this task was to provide library partners and members of the advisory committee with a draft report that summarizes findings from the above activities for comment and suggestions. To accomplish this task, the research team distributed, reviewed, and discussed findings from the evaluations presented above. The evaluations include: 1) evaluation practice literature review; 2) identification of best practice and problematic evaluation practices; and 3) review of library reports and documents.

The research team summarized key findings and developed questions to guide the discussion with the project partners and advisory committee at the ALA 2006 Annual Conference (June 22- 29, 2006) in New Orleans. The research team, in coordination with the advisory committee and partners will use the results of the meeting to guide the ongoing development and implementation of the EDMS. A copy of the summary and discussion questions is included in this report. (See Appendix D)

Results

The study team presented the findings from prior evaluations of the project and solicited project partner and advisory committee member views on the following issues:

- Given the wide disparity of librarian skills, needs, and potential uses of the EDMS should the EDMS design primarily target mid and larger sized public libraries?
- To what extent can the EDMS accommodate BOTH instruction in using and applying evaluation methods AND meet practical evaluation needs in the library?
- What are the most important types of modules that should be included in the EDMS and how might they be best organized and presented?

The discussion of these issues revolved around topics derived from the summary of key points identified through the current project evaluations as presented in this report. The results of the partner and advisory committee meeting form an initial best practice needs assessment for the EDMS that will inform the next phase of the project, the design of the EDMS.

Targeted Audience

The initial topic discussion area focused on the target audience. Participants felt the initial or first iterations of EDMS design may have to be limited based on broad levels of need in the library community and factors that might affect evaluation within this community such as available resources (i.e., staff size, funds available). Participants also felt limitations exist for the initial development of the EDMS due to the many types of evaluations necessary for required advocacy and accountability efforts at local, state, and national levels. Participants offered the following suggestions to help address limiting issues that affect the targeted audience for the EDMS:

- Seek additional partners such as the Public Library Association (currently seeking online solutions to evaluation in a library setting) for dissemination of the EDMS and to help

provide training to library audiences of all sizes, support to libraries with limited resources, and to develop synergistic opportunities for libraries; and

- Include, solicit participation, and rely upon library systems' offices, regional offices, and state agencies to provide support and training in using the EDMS content to help libraries that may be limited by resources such as number of staff, training issues, etc.

Participants felt that the size of the staff, time allowed for evaluation, training related issues, and funding may affect the targeted EDMS audience more than demographics such as rural libraries vs. urban libraries.

Motivation and Commitment to Evaluate

Participants noted that some large public libraries with available resources only conduct limited or required evaluations while smaller public libraries with limited resources may conduct numerous evaluations. Participants discussed how commitment and motivation might be key factors in the use of the EDMS where users of the EDMS may initially be those who have a predisposition to understanding the need for evaluation. Some participants noted, however, that increasing requirements for advocacy and accountability at the local, state, and national levels often require and may force more public libraries to use evaluation.

Education factors may be as valuable a feature in the EDMS as the evaluation content. A need exists to motivate library practitioners to move from a reactive (i.e., primarily conducting required evaluations) to a proactive state (i.e., planned evaluations in anticipation of needs, for future advocacy efforts, and for inclusion in a library's management decision-making process).

Piloting – How to Begin

Participants felt that public libraries need to know the type of information needed; how to access the information (methods of data collection); and how to apply the information to fulfill local, state, and national needs. Public library staffs, however, have differing degrees of experience (training), resources available, and time allocated for data or information collection. Participants felt the EDMS should provide levels or tiers of entry levels that address data needs for differing experience levels and available resources.

To address issues of motivation and commitment, participants also felt initial (alpha) EDMS modules content should address information needs at the local level (developed to meet local problems) and should provide clear examples that will show:

- 1) Evaluation efforts can be applied effectively at the local level;
- 2) Broader advocacy efforts can be addressed as well;
- 3) Evaluation is possible even for libraries with fewer available resources; and
- 4) Learning curves (large) do not necessarily exist for library staff members.

Participants felt multi-tiered entry points that address practical issues relative to local library needs and that provide clear examples, templates, and features are necessary for the EDMS.

Module Content Development

Participants suggested a number of approaches related to content development of modules. Examples include:

1. Evaluation approach – modules contain broad categories of evaluation approaches (i.e., outputs, outcomes, service quality, etc.). Participants agreed the evaluation approach would not be a good intro/entry level for the modules.
2. Context approach – entry level would contain a series of questions to determine user needs based on the context of the need (i.e., local library advocacy, state and federal reporting requirements, etc.) followed by links to the best evaluation approach and examples that meet the context data needs. The participants suggested the initial list of questions be limited to less than 10 and requested that the research team collect and circulate a list of questions for further discussion.
3. Scenario approach – also referred to as problem, purpose, case study, and situational approaches during the discussion where this approach briefly describes a common, recurring situation for which an evaluation might help.

Participants' discussion indicated interest in a hybrid of the context approach (i.e., using entry-level questions) combined with the scenario approach.

Summary

In general, participants felt the EDMS should target audiences based on public library staff size, available resources, and training or education needs and not on urban vs. rural type demographics. Participants also felt a process or effort focused specifically on education to increase motivation and commitment levels to conduct evaluations and on the value of evaluation within the EDMS will be as important as the evaluation approach content.

Much of the discussion of the EDMS centered on entry points into the EDMS and the general approach needed in developing the content of the modules. Participants suggested that multi-tiered entry-level points are necessary (primarily based on skill level but could also include other factors such as available resources). Participants also felt the initial (alpha/beta models) should contain practical applications and examples of evaluation approaches focused on meeting local library information needs. Participants held mixed interest in using the concept approach and the scenario-based approaches.

Based on the results of the meeting, the research team in coordination with the project partners and advisory committee will focus on the next phase of the project – content development and module design. In addition, the research team will contact the project partners and advisory committee to collect suggestions for the 6-10 most commonly asked questions by public libraries requiring evaluation efforts. The research team also encouraged both the partners and the advisory committee members to discuss different scenarios with their staff and other interested parties for the scenario approach of module content development. The questions and scenarios supplied will help guide the initial content development and EDMS design phases.

CONCLUSIONS

The research team successfully completed the evaluation tasks set for phase 1 and phase 2 for this project. The general purpose of this current study is to identify and assess existing evaluation approaches and practices. The objectives for completing phase 1 and 2 of this project are: 1) describe the success with which selected public libraries are currently employing a number of different evaluation approaches; and 2) better understand how library situational factors (organizational, community, other) affect the successful use of leading evaluation approaches.

The research team conducted a literature review to identify *best practice* evaluation activities as a means of meeting objectives 1-2 of this research project. Summaries of the findings are the need to:

- Understand that relational factors within specific library settings influence the kind of data needed for informed decision-making practices, factors such as:
 1. Identify affected stakeholders;
 2. Understand stakeholder perspectives;
 3. Recognize that different types of evaluation frameworks are available; and
 4. Account for different organizational and situational context as part of the evaluation process.
- Determine the type of data or information need based on relational factors to answer or address questions or concerns from stakeholders, library funders, library boards, government agencies, library management, etc.;
- Select the best evaluation approach to meet the data need by matching evaluation approaches to data types; and
- Present approaches, content, and other resources in ways in which the library community understands, finds usable, and can adapt for their needs.

Understanding relational factors; how these factors affect evaluation and data need selection; and matching data needs to the best evaluation strategy; will deliver the most impact for resources allocated for library service, programs and activities.

The research team also completed additional assessments to meet the above objectives. These efforts were: 1) identification of best practice and problematic evaluation practices in various library settings with a range of advocacy needs; 2) identification of evaluation practices in public libraries; and 3) review library reports and documents.

The purpose of these activities was to gain an understanding of specific situational factors and contexts within a library setting that affect public library evaluation efforts, data needs, and the ability to advocate for libraries in the communities that they serve. Additionally, the purpose is to understand evaluation needs in applying evaluation approaches within the public library arena and the types of needs for conducting evaluations. Key issues and findings from the evaluation are that:

- Public library managers, library practitioners, and state library managers agree that formal and informal evaluation processes are necessary for reporting, funding, and advocacy purposes;
- There is a broad range of available evaluations within the public library field; library practitioners need access to this broad range of evaluation approaches to meet diverse needs.
- Public library managers primarily conduct evaluations to improve library operations at a local level to show library quality and values and to meet requirements of funders, library boards, state agencies, etc.
- Local, state, and national government agencies apply formal evaluation efforts at a broader perspective regarding stakeholder needs, funding opportunities, reporting requirements, marketing efforts, etc.
- Reporting is difficult for public library staff due in part to the broader base of data needs for external reporting along with a willingness but lack of training in the use of evaluations needed to collect data, the lack of training aides in reporting results of evaluation, and the lack of training for advocacy purposes.
- Narrative approaches to reporting as preferred by library practitioners tend to focus upon project description and presenting evaluation results (generally counts of programs, trainings, total resources used, etc.) with less focus on relationships of results to goals, objectives, or outcomes. This leads to narratives and reported findings where the relationship of findings to the purpose of the evaluation may not be close or clear.
- Public library participants apply evaluations locally and suggest that it is difficult to apply broad-based required outcomes and outcomes assessments to local situations.
- Web based training and education systems should focus on pragmatic and motivating presentations that are interactive for data collection; contain templates and instructions for ready-made applications of approaches; and include instructions on how to apply results for advocacy purposes.

Critical factors affecting successful evaluations in libraries identified by public libraries are *Staff Knowledge* and *Staff Time*.

Library staff members are capable of conducting evaluations but often lack training and/or the time necessary to conduct evaluations successfully. Key factors noted that could directly influence or affect successful implementation of an evaluation for public libraries include:

- Library management support of the evaluation;
- Training of library staff in conducting the assessments;
- Available training resources (i.e., outcomes toolkits, websites, etc.);
- Commitment of library staff to conduct the assessments; and
- Time provided for library staff to conduct the assessments.

A key factor associated with *lack* of evaluation success in public libraries is inadequate evaluation knowledge and training of library staff to conduct the assessment.

In addition, the research team met with project partners and advisory committee member in New Orleans, June 25, 2006. Based on results of the New Orleans meeting with the project partners and advisory committee, the research team will focus on developing questions and scenarios for the introduction or entry level into the module content and for the content development and module design. The research team will collect suggestions from the project partners and advisory committee members for the 6-10 most commonly asked questions by public libraries requiring evaluation efforts. The research team will also develop a list of scenarios for module content development. Questions and scenarios will guide the initial content development and EDMS design phases.

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APPENDIX A: IMLS Evaluation 2005 Grant Partners & Advisory Committee

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APPENDIX B: Interview and Focus Group Script

I am wondering if you would take a moment to give me your sense of the top 5-10 recurring situations in which public libraries need to conduct an evaluation. Here are a couple of potential situations: To produce an annual report, strategic plan, information technology plan, prepare for a budget hearing or referenda for additional funding. [Note: I have intentionally left out submitting the annual state data survey!]

We (the FSU Information Institute - John Bertot, Chuck McClure and I) are developing a web-based Evaluation Decision Making System (EDMS) funded by IMLS. One EDMS component is to produce tutorial modules that summarize the "best practice" evaluation strategies used by library managers to address these recurring situations.

1. Asked differently, if you were out training library managers in how to conduct an evaluation on X, what are the Xs most likely to be?
2. If you were referring the library managers you were training to an evaluation web site, what recurring evaluation situations would you like covered?
3. And seeing as you did so well with that top ten could you also give me your sense of the top ten, most useful, recurring, evaluation methods or techniques public library managers use/need. E.g., how to conduct a customer/user survey, a web survey, conducting a focus or group interview, or how to sample.
4. Asked differently if you were out training library managers and you only had an hour, so you had to refer workshop participants to a web site for step-by-step tutorials on X, Y, Z evaluation technique or method. What would X, Y, or Z be?

Why bother? We have a chance to develop something useful via this EDMS project. But in order to do so we need to know what useful is. By giving me your sense of what the recurring public library evaluation situations are and what the recurring evaluation methods and techniques are that are most useful you will help us avoid the fatal flaw of thinking we know what is needed without bothering to ask those in need.

**APPENDIX C: Partner, Advisory Committee, and Experts' Evaluation Practices and
Advocacy: Survey and/or Interview Script**

For IMLS Project: *Increasing the Effectiveness of Evaluation for Improved Public Library
Decision Making and Advocacy*

Information Institute, Florida State University
Version April 16, 2006

Purpose and Instructions

The purpose of this survey is to solicit information from the project's partners, advisory committee, and other experts regarding the practices and uses of evaluation in your particular library setting. The information you provide will be used by the study team in the design and development of the project's web-based Evaluation Decision Management System (EDMS), funded by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services, that public librarians, managers, and others can use to assist in selecting, using, and reporting/analyzing data from various evaluation approaches for advocacy purposes.

If you think someone else in your library can better respond to these questions please forward the survey to that person. If you are in a state library or professional association, also forward the survey to experts you know and please ask them to complete it for us. Regardless of whether you or someone else completes the survey, please return [or ask them to return] the survey to Chuck McClure cmcclore@lis.fsu.edu by May 15, 2006. THANKS.

Background

1. Name of reporting library: _____
2. FTE total staff: _____
3. Most recent annual operating budget (either calendar or fiscal year): _____

Advocacy Arguments

4. What are the three *current* and *most important* advocacy arguments you are making to your local community and/or governing board?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____

5. What, if any, formal or informal evaluation activities related to the library and the community have you conducted to make these advocacy arguments?

For a: _____

For b: _____

For c: _____

Evaluation Activities

6. Think about the last 1-2 years in which your library has conducted *any* type of evaluation activity. Please describe *typical areas* in library management, decision-making, and planning for which your library conducts some type of an evaluation [assessment of the quality, impact, cost, or benefits of library programs or services]. Describe them briefly.

Evaluation Approaches

7. Are there particular types of evaluation (e.g., e-metrics, outcomes assessment, service quality, performance measures, budget analysis, etc.) that you typically employ when conducting an evaluation of library services/programs? If yes, why these particular techniques?
8. Name a recent evaluation activity conducted at your library. What were the **problems** you encountered in conducting the evaluation, how **successful** was the evaluation, how was it **administered**, and did the evaluation **assist the library in any of its advocacy** efforts?

Situational Factors

9. Please comment on the factors (staff knowledge, resources, technology applications, time, etc.) in your library that affect the success as they relate to conducting successful evaluations of library services/programs?

Required Evaluation Reporting

10. What regular or ongoing evaluation reports are you required to submit to local government, state government, the federal government or other sources, AND what types of assessment do these reports require?

Type of Government	Reporting Requirements	Type(s) of Evaluation Conducted
Local Government		
State Government		
Federal Government		
Other		

Web-Based Instructional Design Considerations

11. Ultimately this project will result in the design and development of the project’s web-based Evaluation Decision Management System (EDMS) that public librarians, managers, and others can use to assist in selecting, using, and reporting/analyzing data from various evaluation approaches for advocacy purposes. What are the three most important factors that we should consider in the design and development of the EDMS?

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

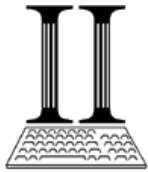
Example Evaluations

12. If you have example evaluations from the past 3 years that you could provide us or that might be available on your website or electronically, please provide them to us (send to Chuck McClure's attention at the address below).

Other Thoughts

13. If you have other thoughts about how evaluation is done in your library, issues related to conducting that evaluation, how evaluation is or is not related to successful advocacy, and the development of the EDMS, please describe them here.

THANKS for your help, please reply to Chuck McClure at cmcclore@lis.fsu.edu or if you have evaluation reports you could mail us, send to:



College of Information, Louis Shores Building Rm. 226
Information Use Management and Policy Institute
Florida State University
Tallahassee, Florida 32306
<http://www.ii.fsu.edu>

APPENDIX D: Best Practices Needs Assessment: Summary and Discussion Topics Handout

Presented to Project Partners and Advisory Committee at
ALA 2006 Summer Conference 25 June 2006

Overview

The research team successfully completed the evaluation tasks set for phase 1 and phase 2 for this project. The final step of phase 2 is to meet with the project partners and advisory committee at the ALA 2006 Annual Conference, June 2006 in New Orleans to discuss results of this interim report and to plan next steps, design, and implementation of the Evaluation Decision Making System (EDMS).

The general purpose of this current study is to identify and assess existing evaluation approaches and practices. The objectives for completing phase 1 and 2 of this project are to: 1) describe the success with which selected public libraries are currently employing a number of different evaluation approaches; and 2) better understand how library situational factors (organizational, community, other) affect the successful use of leading evaluation approaches. Additional background regarding the study can be found at: <http://www.ii.fsu.edu/projects/effective-eval/>.

The research team conducted a literature review and identified *best practice* evaluation activities as a means of meeting objectives 1-2 of this research project. A summary of the findings are the need to:

- Understand that relational factors within specific library settings influence the kind of data needed for informed decision-making practices, including such factors such as:
 5. Identification of affected stakeholders;
 6. Understanding stakeholder perspectives;
 7. Recognition that different types of evaluation frameworks are available; and
 8. Accounting for different organizational and situational context as part of the evaluation process.
- Determine the type of data or information need based on relational factors to answer or address questions and concerns from stakeholders, library funders, library boards, government agencies, library management, etc.;
- Select the best evaluation approach to meet the data need by matching evaluation approaches to data types; and
- Present approaches, content, and other resources in ways in which the library community understands, finds usable, and can adapt for their needs.

Understanding relational factors and how they affect evaluation and data need selection, and matching data needs to the best evaluation strategy will deliver the most impact for resources allocated for library service, programs and activities.

In addition, the research team also completed three data collection activities to meet the above objectives. The evaluations are: 1) identification of best practice and problematic evaluation practices in various library settings with a range of advocacy needs; 2) identification of current evaluation practices in public libraries; and 3) a review of library reports and documents.

The purpose of these activities was to gain an understanding of specific situational factors and contexts within a library setting that affect public library evaluation efforts, data needs, and the ability to advocate for libraries in the communities that they serve. Additionally, the purpose is to understand evaluation needs in applying evaluation approaches within the public library arena and the types of needs for conducting evaluations. Key issues and findings from these efforts were:

- Public library managers, library practitioners, and state library managers agree that formal and informal evaluation processes are necessary for reporting, funding, and advocacy purposes;
- There is a broad range of available evaluations within the public library field; library practitioners need access to this broad range of evaluation approaches to meet diverse needs.
- Public library managers primarily conduct evaluations to improve library operations at a local level to show library quality and values and to meet requirements of funders, library boards, state agencies, etc.
- Local, state, and national government agencies apply formal evaluation efforts at a broader perspective regarding stakeholder needs, funding opportunities, reporting requirements, marketing efforts, etc.
- Reporting is difficult for public library staff due in part to the broader base of data needs for external reporting along with a willingness but lack of training in the use of evaluations needed to collect data, the lack of training aides in reporting results of evaluation, and the lack of training for advocacy purposes.
- Narrative approaches to reporting as preferred by library practitioners tend to focus upon project description and presenting evaluation results (generally counts of programs, trainings, total resources used, etc.) with less focus on relationships of results to goals, objectives, or outcomes. This leads to narratives and reported findings that may not be closely related to the purpose of the evaluation.
- Public library participants apply evaluations locally and suggest that it is difficult to apply broad-based required outcomes and outcomes assessments to local situations.
- Web based training and education systems should focus on pragmatic and motivating presentations that are interactive for data collection; contain templates and instructions for ready-made applications of approaches; and include instructions on how to apply results for advocacy purposes.

Two of the most critical factors affecting successful evaluations in libraries identified by public libraries are *Staff Knowledge* and *Staff Time*.

Library staff members are capable of conducting evaluations but often lack training and/or the time necessary to successfully conduct evaluations. Key factors noted that can directly affect or affect successful implementation of an evaluation for public libraries include:

- Library management support of the evaluation;
- Training of library staff in conducting the assessments;
- Available training resources (i.e., outcomes toolkits, websites, etc.);
- Commitment of library staff to conduct the assessments; and
- Time provided for library staff to conduct the assessments.

A primary issue or factor associated with the *lack* of evaluation success in public libraries appears to be limited knowledge and training of library staff to conduct such assessments. Thus, there is clearly a need for a tool such as the EDMS.

The complete Best Practices Needs Assessment report can be found at:
<http://www.ii.fsu.edu/projects/effective-eval/>.

Discussion Topics

The project partners and advisory committee may have a number of topics and issues they wish to discuss at the June 25, 2006 meeting regarding the Best Practices Needs Assessment Report. The study team, however, is especially interested in the partners' and advisory committee views on the following:

- Given the wide disparity of librarian skills, needs, and potential uses of the EDMS should the design be targeted to mid and larger sized public libraries?
- To what extent can the EDMS accommodate BOTH instruction in using and applying evaluation methods AND meet practical evaluation needs in the library?
- What are the most important types of modules that should be included in the EDMS and how might they be best organized and presented?

The discussion of these and other related topics resulting from the Best Practices Needs Assessment will be used to inform the next phase of the project that is the design of the EDMS.