

IT'S A NUMBERS GAME

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LIBRARIANSHIP 101 | SEPTEMBER 2021

WHY NUMBERS?

There's a certainty to the meaning of a number.

You can compare library systems in groups by income, population, and expenditures.

THE DRIVING FORCE

THE ANNUAL PUBLIC LIBRARY SURVEY

Every state and territory reports data back to the federal government.

This information is reported to congress.

HOW DO YOU STACK UP?

These numbers are used to tell the story of your library system each year.

These numbers are used to compare your library system against others of a similar size/funding level.

Not everything will be measured - remember, the survey asks for quantitative data (numbers).

IT'S IMPORTANT



ACCURACY IS IMPORTANT - THESE NUMBERS ARE REPORTED
LOCALLY, STATEWIDE, AND NATIONALLY.



THE NUMBERS ARE EXAMINED TO FIND TRENDS AND RESULTS
OUTSIDE OF EXPECTED RANGES ARE QUESTIONED



A TREND IS ESTABLISHED OVER TIME

WHEN YOU WORK FOR A PUBLIC LIBRARY...

...You are part of library statistics.

...Every employee and hour is counted.

...There is an entire section called "staff" devoted to counting employees and the hours they work annually.

WHAT ABOUT YOUR JOB?

Activity	Statistic	Percentage
Do you help patrons check out materials?	Physical Item Circulation (24)	50%
Do you delete materials from the collection?	Total items Withdrawn (19)	7%
Do you enter new patrons into the system?	Number of Registered Users (23)	13%
Do you handle money for fines or fees?	Other Operating Income (8.0)	7%
Do you give book talks at schools?	Number of Children's Programs (32)	17%
Do you help with computers?	Number of Computer or Tech Classes (37)	43%
Do you provide programming?	Total Number of Library Programs (31)	50%

MONEY IS PART OF STATS!

INCOME

- Basic data about funding from cities & counties are included
- State and federal grant funding is also part of the report

EXPENSES

- Salaries, wages, and benefits
- Materials and other operating expenses (utilities)



...BUT IT'S
MORE
THAN JUST
MONEY

NUMBERS ARE USED TO:

describe
the library
collection
by type

show how
the library
is used

show if a
service was
added or
discontinued

show
unexpected
events during
the fiscal year
(like 2020)

STATS CAN BE FLEXIBLE

2020 was the year of the asterisk.

Some data can be collected for a short time only.
Stats can show how you changed to meet a need.

DONT BE AFRAID TO CHANGE

2020 showed how adaptable libraries can be and how they can change to meet a need. Questions were added to capture data on new library services. I think that we are changing what we measure. Definitions are not carved in stone.

TOP RESPONSES FOR THIS CLASS

- ✓ CIRCULATION (15)
- ✓ PROGRAMMING (15)
- ✓ COMPUTER ASSISTANCE (13)
- ✓ CUSTOMER SERVICE (11)
- ✓ ADD PATRONS (6)
- ✓ REFERENCE (6)
- ✓ CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMING (5)
- ✓ READER'S ADVISORY (5)
- ✓ INTERLIBRARY LOAN (3)
- ✓ ANSWERING THE TELEPHONE (3)

PROJECT TIME

Pick a time period
and keep some stats.
Compare over time.

What do you think accounts
for the changes?

Ask your supervisor
what is done with the
numbers you collect.

What happens to them?

QUESTIONS?

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