Measuring the impact of new library services

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Outcomes are the results of library use as affecting the individual user.

Impact shows not the quality of the service, but the "quality" of individuals in consequence of using the service.
Impact / outcome of cultural institutions

- knowledge
- information literacy
- academic or professional success
- social inclusion
- individual well-being
Impact / outcome of library services

- changes in skills and competences
- changes in attitudes and behaviour
- changes in the structure of the library's clientele
- higher social inclusion
- higher success in research, study, or profession
Impact of a library's services on the outcomes of its parent institution

Outcomes of universities

- recruitment and retention of students
- recruitment and retention of excellent academic staff
- effective teaching
  - high graduation rates
  - high grades in examinations
  - high employment rates after examination
- effective research
  - high renown and use of research results and publications
  - renown of faculties and research groups
  - high amount of special grants
  - awards, honours

The library can support nearly all of these goals
Reasons for measuring impact of new services

accountability
- special funding needed: evidence of positive effects
- results-based budgeting
- justifying investment into change

management of resources
- rising expenses for new services
- higher workload when introducing new services
- increasing demand for new services
- new allocation of resources necessary

promotion of the library's role
- communication of benefits
New services
(includes services replacing or complementing traditional services)

Electronic services (examples)
- regional/national catalogue databases
- portals
- online ordering and delivery
- personalized services
- online reference
- digitized collections
- electronic publishing
- online self-paced training
- Internet access via the library

New non-electronic services (examples)
- group work areas
- study landscapes for problem-based learning
Methods of measuring impact of new services

Problems of measuring

- Most tested methods are time-consuming
- Data not available because of data protection rules
- Results of projects not comparable because of different data collection methods
- Services have different outcome and value for different user groups
- It is difficult to prove that changes in competences or behaviour are indeed due to library use

Influences on individuals are diverse
Methods of measuring impact of new services

1. Use statistics as measures of impact

- new electronic media
- frequency of use
- searches, downloads
- change in use of traditional services
- change in remote use
- number of new users
  - that had not used the library
  - that had not used the same service in traditional form
- percentage of the primary user group using electronic services

Users are familiar with the use of electronic resources and services.
Methods of measuring impact of new services

Qualitative measures

- **Asking users:** print or online surveys, focus groups, interviews

  - What knowledge have they of the new service?
  - Use of services (frequency, location of use)
  - Did they find the new service useful?
  - What problems?
  - Did they get training for a new service? useful?
  - Have they improved skills by using a new service?
Methods of measuring impact of new services

Qualitative measures

- Asking academic teachers
  - Do new services support teaching and research?
  - Do they encourage students to use new services?
  - For what purpose do they use new services?

- Asking library staff
  - What help do users need for what service?
  - Was there a change of skills after the introduction of a new service?
Methods of measuring impact of new services

Other methods

- **tests**: can assess user skills before and after training on a new service
- **performance monitoring/data mining**: can document changes in searching by a new service
- **"mystery shoppers"**: can report on failures or success and on improvements they perceived in their skills
- **analysis of documents and bibliographies compiled by users**: Is there a change in
  - resources used
  - accuracy of citations
  - number of electronic resources cited?
Implementing a regional portal for academic libraries

Methods used: use statistics, surveys of academics

**Statistical results**

- Higher percentage of external users
- Higher use of most electronic resources

**Survey results:**

Academics said they

- change of competences, attitudes, behaviour
- saved time by the integrated search
- changed their seeking ways
- found access easier
- found broader covering of relevant information
- became acquainted with new resources
- used more interdisciplinary search
- integrated the portal into teaching
Practical examples

Opening a group learning area

Methods used: use statistical surveys to track change in attitudes, behaviour, personal well-being

- Physical visits to the library have increased

Statistical results

- work more frequently in the library
- work more frequently in groups
- learn from group members who attended library training on electronic services
- find working in the library more attractive
Practical examples

Changing the journal collection to electronic form

Methods used: use statistics, survey to faculty.

Statistical results:
- Online versions were accessed 10 times more
- Usage of an online article 5.4 times cheaper
- High decline in print usage
- Remote use increased
- Physical library visits decreased

Survey results:
- In 1998 a number of academics were sceptical as to E-journals
- In 2002 it was exceptional for faculty staff not to use the electronic version

change of attitudes and behaviour
Implementation of an inquiry-based instruction program

Method used:
Analysis of bibliographies in students’ research papers

Results of the analysis

- increase in citations to scholarly journals
- no significant differences in topics
  - accuracy of citation
  - currency of resources
  - competence of judging

higher awareness of scholarly journals
Impact of new services on the library

Changes in organization and resource allocation
- investment of funds, room, staff time
- staff training
- user training
- change of workflows
- changes in organizational structure

Replacement of traditional by electronic services: possible improvements in
- speed of delivery
- accuracy of delivery
- ease of access
- relevance for users
- market penetration
Impact of new services on the library

Impact on costs

- Probably transforming a service from traditional to electronic form will not reduce costs
- But: Higher use will reduce cost-per-use

Impact on traditional services

- possible decrease in
  - circulation
  - copying
  - physical visits
- may be counterbalanced by
  - comfortable surroundings in the library
  - group working areas
  - good in-house IT equipment
Outcome projects

eVALUEd: in "evidence base", University of Central England: Toolkit for evaluating electronic information services
  http://www.evalued.uce.uk/index.htm

IMLS (Institute of Museum and Library Services): outcome-based evaluation of projects
  http://www.imls.gov/index.htm

ARL New Measures Initiative: several projects
  - Learning outcomes
  - Higher education outcomes research review
  - MINES (Measuring the impact of networked electronic services)
  http://www.arl.org/stats/newmeas/index.html
Outcome projects

**IBEC:** Information School of the University of Washington and University of Michigan School of Information: Toolkit for assessing the impact of information in communities
http://ibec.ischool.washington.edu/default1024.aspx

**SCONUL and LIRG (Library and Information Research Group):** impact initiative and mailing list
http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/archives/lis-impact.html

**IFLA Section Statistics and Evaluation:** working group on outcome/impact; bibliography of literature and projects worldwide
http://www.ulb.uni-muenster.de/outcome.html
Don't throw away the old bucket until you know whether the new one holds water.
Swedish Proverb

A new broom sweeps clean, but an old broom knows the corners.
Virgin Islander Proverb

Men learn little from success, but much from failure.
Arabian Proverb

To change and to improve are two different things.
German Proverb

No matter how much the world changes, cats will never lay eggs.
Bambara Proverb