A Checklist of Public Library Statistics

What to Compile and Why

Included here is a list of possible statistics that can be tracked by libraries, with reasons why librarians might want to track them. Not all these statistics are useful for every library. In general, libraries should use statistics to:

- Understand the community the library serves
- Evaluate the library’s efficiency and effectiveness
- Identify trends in library service
- Compare with other similar libraries
- Compare with state-wide or national averages
- Help in advocating for the library

Be aware, however, that the value of libraries CANNOT always be measured with numbers. If you are going to use statistics to advocate for your library, recognize that there are many other important contributions your library makes to its community that are better told in stories, anecdotes, and testimonials.

This is a work-in-progress. If you have suggestions or corrections, contact Tom Newman at tom.newman@ct.gov.

Community Statistics (use Census and other statistical resources):

1. Size and makeup of the community served
2. Relative wealth and income distribution of community served
3. Age and Educational makeup of community served
4. Identify Immigrant communities and Non-English speakers

Library Use & Service Measures:

5. Circulation
   a. Total & Total per capita
      i. Study trends over time
      ii. Is there a correlation with changes in materials expenditure, hours open?
   b. Adult & Adult’s % of total circulation
      i. Study trends over time
      ii. Is this becoming a bigger or smaller % of total circulation?
   c. Juvenile & Juvenile’s % of total circulation
      i. Study trends over time
      ii. Is this becoming a bigger or smaller % of total circulation?
   d. YA & YA’s % of total circulation
      i. Study trends over time
      ii. Is this becoming a bigger or smaller % of total circulation?
   e. Print, Audio, Video, etc. & their % of total circulation
      i. Study trends over time
ii. Are each of these becoming a bigger or smaller % of total circulation?
iii. Are there correlations with their expenditures?

f. **Electronic Items (Ebook, downloadable audio and video) & their % of total circulation**
   i. Trending upwards along with more acquisition?
   ii. If your library provides this service via a shared resource, is your circulation high compared to other libraries – if not, why not? – if so, should you purchase your own?


g. **Average Circulation per Hour** -Total Circulation divided by number of hours open
   i. A measure of how busy your library is - is the trend upwards?
   ii. High figures (compared to other libraries) might indicate your library needs to be open more hours.
   iii. Circulation per hour for specific time periods (times of day, days of week, months of year) could help determine if hours need to be changed.

h. **In-house circulation** (if applicable)
   i. **Non-resident circulation** (CCard loans)
      i. Is it a significant part of your circulation?
      ii. Is there an increasing or decreasing trend over time?

j. **Resident circulation in other towns** (CCard Borrows – from data obtained from State Library)
   i. Is this increasing over time? Are you losing customers or bringing them back?
   ii. What libraries are your residents using? Are they just bigger libraries or are they just convenient for your residents to reach?

6. **Library Visits** (using a reliable people counter, year-round)
   a. **Total & Total per capita**
      i. For identifying year to year, month to month trends – upwards?
      ii. For identifying daily and weekly use patterns to help determine staffing needs. Do your staffing levels match your busy visit periods?
   b. **Average Visits per Hour** -Total Visits divided by number of hours open
      i. A measure of how busy your library is - is the trend upwards?
      ii. High figures (compared to other libraries) might indicate your library needs to be open more hours.
      iii. Visits per hour for specific time periods (times of day, days of week, and months of year) could help determine if hours need to be changed.

7. **Program Attendance**
   a. **Total & Per Capita**
      i. Trends over time upwards?
      ii. Compare to trends in program expenditures – both going up?
   b. **Program Efficiency** (program expenditure per attendee)
      i. High per-attendee costs compared to other libraries (be careful since many libraries do not report expenditures by Friends groups and others, but do count the attendance for those events)
   c. **By Age Group**
      i. For examining programming strengths and weaknesses

8. **Use of Internet Computers and Access to the Web**
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a. Number of internet workstations per 1000 of population
   i. Is the trend increasing or decreasing?
   ii. Is your number typical for other libraries like yours?

b. Public Internet Sessions per day
   i. Is the trend upward? Are you meeting demand?
   ii. Do not compare to other libraries since how libraries count sessions varies too much

c. Public Internet Users per day
   i. More meaningful measure (if you can do it) than sessions per day since it measures how many people you are helping
   ii. Is the trend upward? Are you meeting demand?

d. Use of WIFI (if you can measure it)
   i. Trending upward? Will you be able to meet increasing demand?

9. Use of Databases
   a. Database searches, logins, and article views/downloads by town residents - for researchIT and other shared databases
      i. Trending upwards?
      ii. How many on-site and how many remotely
      iii. Your numbers compared to other libraries (if available)

   b. Database searches, logins, and article views/downloads by town residents in locally-provided databases
      i. Trending upwards?
      ii. Does cost justify use?
      iii. How many on-site and how many remotely

10. Reference Transactions
    a. Total and Total Per Capita
       i. Not for comparisons to other libraries, but for identifying trends in your library

    b. By Department
       i. Trends changing? More in Children, less in Adult?

11. Registered Users
    a. Resident users (library-card holders)
       i. Is the % of town population with library cards increasing?
       ii. Don’t compare to other libraries unless you share their expiration date and purge date

    b. Non-resident users (borrowIT CT and out-of-state users)
       i. On the increase?

    c. Registered users by age group categories
       i. Any trends? Is the % of the total changing in these different age groups, more children, more older adults?

    d. Registered users by neighborhoods or other geographic features (zip code?)
       i. Are you reaching your entire community?

12. ILL Transactions
    a. “Filled” requests per 1000 population
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i. Is the trend upwards (especially with patron-generated holds)? Can your staff handle increasing work-load?

ii. Do low numbers mean you aren't publicizing the service or you aren't allowing patron-generated holds or you have a low fill rate?

b. Lending to other libraries
   i. Is the trend upwards (especially with patron-generated holds)? Can your staff handle increasing work-load?

c. Unfilled requests (as a % of all requests)
   i. Trending upwards? Do you know why and can you do something about it?

d. Out-of State requests
   i. Few or none? Is this an option for decreasing unfilled requests?

13. Web-Site Usage – “Analytics”

a. Page Views
   i. Trending upwards?
      ii. Identify more popular pages

b. Visits, and Unique Monthly Visitors
   i. Trending upwards?

c. “Single Access” or “Bounce Rate” for entry web pages (the % of initial visitors who "bounce" away to a different site)
   i. Should be under 50% - you want people to stay on your website, not bounce away

d. Most Common Searches
   i. Can help identify problems and successes with your web-site

e. Catalog searches
   i. Trending upwards?
      ii. Use search reports to identify catalog problems

14. Building Use

a. Hours Open (weekly, annual)
   i. Hours per week has changed over time?
      ii. How do hours compare to other towns of similar population and wealth?
         iii. How do hours compare to other libraries with similar budgets?

b. Meeting room use
   i. Trending upwards?
      ii. Are you meeting community demand?
         iii. Any change in % used by library vs. community in general?

c. Study room use
   i. Is this space being used efficiently?

d. Square footage per capita
   i. Is your library below average compared to other towns your size?
      ii. Can you use this statistic to help lobby for expanded space?

Collection Measures (to assist with collection evaluation):

15. Acquisition Reports
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16. Dusty Book Reports
   a. To identify non-circulating material
   b. Primary tool for weeding collections

17. Age of Collection Reports (examine each part of the collection)
   a. To identify areas needing weeding and/or additional purchasing

18. Turnover Rates for various parts of the collection (i.e. Circulation divided by Collection size)
   a. Do you have parts of your collection that are heavily used and therefore have a high turnover rate?
   b. To identify where additional purchasing may be necessary

19. Percentage of items circulating at a particular time
   a. Use with Turnover Rate
   b. Does a particular part of the collection have a large % of its items in circulation?
   c. High turnover and high % means this collection needs more resources
   d. High turnover and low % may mean this collection needs more weeding

20. Percentage of collection that is Juvenile, YA, Adult
   a. Is the makeup of your collection changing over time?
   b. Is this change part of a plan? Should you re-think your funding allocations if some parts of the collection are inadvertently growing larger at the expense of other collections?
   c. Are you adjusting your materials purchasing in response to increased turnover, or are you just accepting the status quo each year in your purchasing?

21. Percentage of collection that is Print, Audio, Video, Other
   a. Is the makeup of your collection changing over time?
   b. Is this change part of a plan? Should you re-think your funding allocations if some parts of the collection are inadvertently growing larger at the expense of other collections?
   c. Are you adjusting your materials purchasing in response to increased turnover, or are you just accepting the status quo each year in your purchasing?

22. Percentage of collection that is electronic (e-book and digital audio)
   a. How is this trending over time?
   b. Is the turnover sufficient to suggest purchasing more electronic material, and if not, is it because you aren’t getting the word out?

23. Percentage of collection that is shared (e.g. digital books shared with network) vs. not-shared
   a. How is this trending over time?
   b. Is this the most cost-efficient alternative which still satisfies your user demand?
   c. In shared collections, what is your circulation vs. other libraries in the group – are you helping pay for a service that other libraries are using more?

24. Databases available
   a. What is the number of different databases you provide users via researchIT CT, locally, or by other means?
   b. Are other similar libraries offering more?


Income and Expenditures:

25. Operating Income - % coming from the town, % coming from other sources (gifts, donations, endowments, fees, etc.)
   a. Where does your income come from?
   b. How does this make your library different than other towns? Be aware of differences when comparing town support.
   c. Is your town/city providing services that aren’t reflected in your budget and/or reported as expenditures? If yes, then be careful when comparing your library budget to other towns that do not enjoy this unreported income/expenditure. If not, be careful comparing with towns that do enjoy this.

26. Operating Income Per Capita (adjusted for inflation)
   a. How does it differ from other towns with similar wealth and population?
   b. How does it differ from state average?
   c. How is this trending over the years? Be sure to adjust for inflation to get an accurate picture of trends over time.

27. Percentage of Municipal Revenue that goes towards the Operating Expenditures of the Library
   a. This helps measure the town/city commitment to the library. A library may suffer from a low tax base and have limited funds for town services, but to also commit a smaller % of those town funds to the library than other towns is an indication of low town commitment.
   b. This statistic is meaningful only for libraries that get nearly all their funding from their municipality.
   c. How is this trending? If downward, this is bad.
   d. Is the percentage lower than libraries in similar towns that also get nearly all their funding from the town/city?

28. Community Commitment Index – a measure of a community’s financial commitment to the Library, regardless of income source
   a. Take your Total Operating Expenditures and determine what percentage of the Total Town Tax Revenue that represents? (i.e. Library operating expenditures divided by the Total Municipal Revenue).
   b. This is the best measure of a town or city’s commitment to the library because (as above) it accounts for a low tax base and it measures how much of a town’s resources (no matter what their source) are being committed to the library. Many poor towns commit a larger % of their resources to the library than do wealthier towns. Where does your town fare?
   c. How is this trending? If downward, this is bad.
   d. Is the percentage lower than libraries in towns of similar size?

29. Operating Expenditures Per Capita (same as Operating Income Per Capita, above)

30. Program Expenditures (adjusted for inflation)
   a. Do increases lead to greater program attendance?
   b. Is your library’s program expenditure and program attendance lower than in similar towns?
   c. Be careful when making comparisons to other libraries when those libraries outside organizations (e.g. Friends groups) paying directly for programming.

31. Materials Expenditures (adjusted for inflation)
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a. Is the % of total operating expenditures spent on materials high compared to similar libraries? Normally, the higher the better.
b. Is the trend upwards or downwards?
c. Do overall materials expenditure increases lead to higher circulation? Do decreases lead to lower circulation?
d. Do increased materials expenditures in certain collection areas lead to more circulation in those areas?
e. Do you know what % of your materials expenditures are going to Juvenile, YA, Adult? Is this part of a plan?
f. Do you know what % of your materials expenditures are going to Print, Video, Audio, Electronic? Is this part of a plan?

32. Salaries Expenditures (adjusted for inflation)
   a. What percentage of total operating expenditures goes to salaries? Is this trending higher or lower? If the trend is downwards, is it because of salary reductions, reduction in staff, or just greater productivity?
   b. How is this trending as compared to trends in the number of hours open, to circulation, to visits, etc.? Are you doing more for less over time? Or are library services suffering as staffing expenditures decline?

Personnel
33. Full-time Equivalent Employees – Both for Professional, and All FTEs
   a. Has the Total FTE been changing over time? Does the change correlate to changes in open library hours or other changes in services? Are you doing more with less, more with more, less with less, or less with more?
   b. Has the mix of Professional vs. Other staff changed over time?
   c. Does your library have less professional staff than other similar libraries?

34. Number of Part-Time vs. Full-Time Employees
   a. Is this changing over time? Is this for fiscal reasons or in response to service needs?

35. FTEs per 1000 of population served
   a. What is this figure’s trend?
   b. Is this figure falling just because your town’s population is increasing or also because of staff reductions?
   c. How does this figure compare with other similar libraries?

36. Volunteer hours
   a. How is this trending over time?
   b. How does it compare to trends in FTE?
   c. How does it compare with other similar libraries? More volunteers are often found in libraries with active recruitment and training programs for volunteers.

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