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It is generally held by organizations that partnering with other organizations with similar or complementary interests is a positive venture. This idea is no different among libraries, whether public, academic, special, or school. Collaboration and partnerships between libraries and outside organizations is a common activity, with the literature suggesting that organizational collaborations can often result in several kinds of benefits, apart from economic advantage. However, what much of the literature does not suggest is how to measure success and failure between libraries and the organizations with which they partner or collaborate. The research in this study will attempt to define guidelines by which public libraries could analyze the services they provide through collaborative partnerships.

Headings:

      Public Libraries -- Collaborations – Evaluation

      Public Libraries – Cooperation –Evaluation

      Libraries – Collaborations – Evaluation

      Libraries – Cooperation -- Evaluation

EVALUATION GUIDELINES FOR COLLABORATIVE LIBRARY PARTNERSHIPS

by
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INTRODUCTION

Public libraries are now in an important era of change where they have to rethink and re-evaluate services they offer and the roles they play in the communities they serve. In this mode of restructuring and re-evaluating, many public libraries are attempting to reassert and justify themselves to their communities and reach underserved populations by creating programs and working in conjunction with organizations with similar missions and goals. Supporting this in *Community Collaborations at Work and in Practice Today: An A to Z Overview*, Todaro states that "The constant 21st century changes in the public arena are forcing public library librarians to rethink their vision and mission and institutional role, restructure their image or "re-brand" themselves, reposition themselves within city and county government and community life. Public libraries, longtime supporters of the "whole" community, are now finding they must partner with others in order to offer complete up-to-date services" (Todaro 152).

For example, the Public Library of Charlotte & Mecklenburg County (PLCMC) of North Carolina and the Children's Theatre of Charlotte have come together to form ImaginOn, a youth services facility dedicated to formal educational and recreational pursuits, technological tools, literacy, imagination, and library research. Within the building, "there are four other classrooms—to be used for rehearsals or workshops with budding playwrights, as well as a dance studio and another for art classes" (Kenney 55). ImaginOn, unlike many public libraries, also has a space dedicated specifically for

teenagers which has been named the Teen Loft. A population that can be notoriously difficult to reach, over 600 teenagers were attracted to ImaginOn and its programs within its first two weeks of opening.

Though often not to the same degree of collaboration between the Public Library of Charlotte & Mecklenburg County (PLCMC) of North Carolina and the Children's Theatre of Charlotte, many public libraries are collaborating with other organizations creating specific programs for their community with varied results. Generally perceived as something positive to pursue, results of collaborations between public libraries and outside organizations vary depending upon the equality of roles of each organization participating, passive or active participation, staff participation, and community perception of the benefits of the collaboration to name a few.

Collaborating with outside organizations whose goals are complementary or similar is widely accepted by public libraries as a positive way to market themselves, reach underserved populations, and provide services their budgets cannot completely cover (Todaro 143-144). Though thought of as beneficial, there is not clear information or guides on how to measure the benefits of public library collaborations with outside organizations other than program attendance. For this reason, the following research will address the question of "How are collaborative partnerships evaluated by public libraries and their partnering organizations?"

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reasons to Collaborate

Andrew Carnegie considered public libraries to be one of the few places where members of the general public could educate themselves and have access to a variety of resources at no charge. The idea of public libraries existing as the public's university was started by The Carnegie Corporation in the late 1800's and early 1900's as it contributed to public libraries nationally and has been wholly embraced up to the present.

From this perception, public libraries have grown beyond simply including educational materials for adults to also including materials for recreational reading, children's educational and recreational reading materials, programs for education and entertainment, computer and internet access, and recreational video games, CD's, and DVD's. Libraries no longer only provide adult educational books, but collect resources for their entire community that may span a wide range of subjects, educational degrees, and formats. Public libraries also now provide educational, recreational, and informational services and programs, attempting to address the needs, wants, and interests of the community they serve.

To promote and complement the wide range of resources, services, and programs offered, many libraries collaborate with other local organizations that have similar goals and missions. For example, the Alameda County Public Library in California and the Alameda County Jail have instituted a prerelease program named "Reading for Life" for low literacy level incarcerated students. In her article, "Public Libraries and People in Jail", Kathleen de la Peña McCook addresses this and similar collaborations between public libraries and jail systems. Many public libraries have formed equally beneficial

relationships interconnecting their services with organizations in their local communities, attempting to satisfy the needs of the population both organizations serve. One example of this is The Association of Library Service to Children (ALSC) that promotes collaboration among libraries, educators, and community agencies.

Julie B. Todaro describes collaborations being created and necessary when, "There appears to be no one person or group responsible for the issue, it doesn't seem possible to solve the problem or address the situation by just one group due to magnitude, lack of knowledge, or amorphic nature of the issue there is a high cost of solving the problem or addressing the issue, and/or it is important to have a large number of people involved to educate and have a good buy-in to the process" (Todaro, 138).

Collaborations have become an important asset for public libraries because of the advocacy it creates among non-users or non-supporters of public libraries. In times where public library funding is not increasing, it becomes important to spread the knowledge of what services public libraries offer to people who would not normally recognize that public libraries are more than places to check out books, and who would have the connections to help support the library's mission and goals. Networking is an informal way to begin collaborations with organizations in a local community. Expressing to community or group leaders the kinds of assistance, services, and programs the public library offers can begin to bring in groups and organizations that would not normally visit or advocate the library and services it offers.

Benefits of Collaboration

In their study, "Partnerships and Collaboration Among Public Libraries, Public Broadcast Media, and Museums: Current Context and Future Potential", Roger, Jorgensen, and D'Elia note that "there is little reported in the research literature specifically examining these types of collaborations." They also recognize that "very little is known about the variables that contribute to the successful implementation of cooperation in the development of education for librarianship and information sciences (LIS), let alone their significance" (Rodger et al, 12). Though literature or case studies on how to evaluate library collaborations and partnerships are scarce, there is literature on the benefit and need of library collaborations with outside organizations.

To understand the types of services that would benefit the community they serve, librarians first have to be active listeners to notice patterns of voiced and non-voiced needs. Other more active ways for librarians to determine the kinds of collaborations that would benefit the community include using surveys and other forms needs assessment. Without performing a community needs assessment, it is difficult to create any partnership the community would view as beneficial and acknowledging needs by demographics of the area that is served. Other essential concepts for creating successful partnerships is to communicate with organizations within the community and to evaluate partnerships that could potentially be created between the library and other community organizations.

The positives, negatives, and reasons why libraries do or do not collaborate with other organizations have been documented, though not written about in detail as a part of many empirical studies. Discussing international collaborative projects in his case study,

In the Middle of Difficulty Lies Opportunity – Using a Case Study to Identify Critical

Success Factors Contributing to the Initiation of International Collaborative Projects, Ian

M. Johnson discusses benefits of collaborations between organizations that could be

related to public libraries and community organizations. He suggests "…these are mutual

benefits for all parties that include:

- Improved quality of teaching

- New opportunities for research

- Extended professional networks

- Additional funding

- Enhanced prestige and influence

- Improved access to publications

- Possible assistance in translating texts and/or interpreting their contextual

  significance

- Potential stimulus for change" (Johnson 11).

Todaro suggests the following among others as benefits of collaboration between

organizations: maximize resources, indicate worth for services within an environment,

give good/better customer service, meet a need, serve the un-served and underserved, and

build a community. Todaro also suggests that collaborations are not only for the benefit

of the collaborating institutions, but also for the customer, user, or patron. All of these

benefits could be applied to a public library that networks with other organizations to

extend services and programs it offers. Marcum describes collaborations as having

"…helped libraries establish new constituencies, build wider support, and, in some cases,

broaden and diversify sources of funding". She also states that "Whatever form they

take, these partnerships have proven to be advantageous for those public libraries that have pursued them with vigor and diligence and with a certain creative imagination" (Marcum 195).

In relation to creating partnerships and the factors that helped form those relationships, Roger, Jorgensen, and D'Elia state that "The most important forces were as follows: to expand educational opportunities, to meet community needs, to expand-diversify an audience or user base, to enhance the institution's stature, to enhance use of collections-programs, to be a good civic player in the community, and to leverage or expand resources" (Rodger 51). This speaks to the public libraries' general desire to put their community's needs first, making them conscious of the effect their collaborations will have on the community they serve. It is not in the interest of a library to collaborate or form a relationship with an organization that does not directly benefit the local community.

Barriers to Collaboration

It is unquestionable that some collaborations between public libraries and outside organizations are not successful. Todaro describes failed collaborations or partnerships as projects that,

> "… don't go anywhere, … come from ignorance…, … are forced on one partner or collaborator, … are delivered as ultimatums…, … began and fizzled out due to lack of interest, … began but organizational elements such as management failed, … began but collaborator/partner leaders changed and new leadership was not committed to continuation or success, … failed because patrons/customers didn't use allor part of the services or activities offered, … began but support from partners was pulled such as financial support" (Todaro 146).

A large barrier for libraries as well as other organizations to initiate collaborative effort is funding. Not having the funding to begin or sustain collaborative relationships or hire additional staffing for extra programs and services deters many libraries whose funds may already be restricted.

Some libraries are hesitant to begin extending themselves to establish collaborative relationships and networks for other reasons than funding. Some of the reasoning behind the hesitation is staff involvement within the library and within the partnering organization. When staff on either side does not care to be involved in a partnership between organizations, the organizational relationship itself falters. Another risk that is taken is the relationship being only beneficial for either the library or the partnering organization. Organizations that collaborate will generally only be interested if there is an equal exchange.

Another barrier to successful collaboration between libraries that has not been thoroughly researched is the lack of communication between school, academic, and public librarians. Many avenues of collaboration can make themselves available when librarians in specific areas attempt to assess their common needs and abilities to serve the population.

Library size plays an important role when considering possible organizations with which a library would collaborate. Rodger, Jorgensen, and D'Elia note that "…size is an indicator of incidence of collaboration, that is, larger libraries are more likely to be involved in collaborative projects than smaller libraries" (Rodger 49). Because of available resources, it is more feasible for an urban or larger library to have the ability to be involved in collaborations or partnerships. Larger libraries potentially have an

advantage over smaller libraries because of their budget, staff, and visibility. Larger libraries could possibly have the ability to venture out and initiate several relationships with local and distant organizations with small repercussions if the partnership does not prove to be fruitful.

With a greater budget comes the potential ability to have a greater range of services to different groups in the community they are able to offer. Having larger groups such as friends of the library makes the idea of reaching a wider range of organizations in the community through social networking more likely. Without a similar budget of a large library, a smaller or rural library would potentially be more likely to have to be careful on how it allocates its funding. Taking risks on forming relationships with organizations that may or may not work out would not be a likely scenario for a small library. The smaller library would have less to offer in programs and services and would therefore have less to offer a larger organization. Small libraries are able to form relationships with local organizations, but only where the cost and the risk of losing extra funding is minimal.

A smaller library would also have staffing issues not allowing for extra time or energy to be devoted to large scale projects such as partnering with outside organizations. With a limited professional staff, it would be difficult to perform one's regular duties on top of having to be involved with networking with another organization. Also, a small or rural library would likely not be located in an area where there are a great number of organizations whose partnership would be overly beneficial. This is an obvious issue when considering collaboration, but one that must be researched to supply alternatives for small libraries to reach out to their community.

Public Libraries and Their Collaborators

The American Library Association recently surveyed 1000 adults in 2006 on the subject of attitudes towards public libraries. In this survey under question 5 where the question was "Again, thinking back over the last year, which one of the following did you most use the library for:" (ALA 3), education purposes ranked first. Rodger, Jorgensen, and D'Elia noted in their study that public libraries more often collaborate with other museums and libraries as opposed to any other organizations. Part of the reasoning behind the collaboration of museums and libraries and libraries and libraries is because they share similar missions and goals. These institutions both measure themselves internally by their collections and informational output, suggesting it is easier to align themselves with each other without having to change or manipulate their already established mission and goals. When there are similar missions and goals there is a greater ability to focus more on the services to be provided as opposed to having to spend a lot of time or energy on deciding how to make different missions and goals complement each other without compromising the individual organizations' mission and goals.

As mentioned previously, public libraries are often regarded as universities for the public or as a place to educate oneself. Because of this perception, it is commonplace for a public library to collaborate with local schools and local school librarians. A simple article database search for "collaboration and public library*" will result in a generous amount of articles on school libraries and public libraries. This relationship is natural, since many school libraries find it economically beneficial when collecting resources to not duplicate items held by the public library. As mentioned earlier it is also an easy relationship because of the similarity of mission and goals of school and public libraries.

It is more rare, however, for a public library to be in collaboration with an academic library. Perhaps the concept of the benefits of collaboration between academic and public libraries should be researched.

It is often difficult for librarians to look outside of the normal scope of community it serves when considering with which organizations to partner. For example, Kathleen de la Peña McCook suggests in her article Public Libraries and People in Jail that inmates are an overlooked population that should be served if libraries are to hold true to their mission statements of equal access to information and information literacy. Creating a greater sense of community by assessing unconventional relationships and collaborations with outside organizations begins to fulfill public library policy of serving the needs of all members of its community.

A lot of inter-library collaboration can be witnessed through the creation of regional library systems. Regional library systems are the result of collaborations of libraries within a specific region. There is often a larger central branch that carries out all of the larger tasks such as cataloging and administrations. Smaller libraries in the surrounding area would generally not be able to operate without the assistance of the larger branch to remove some of the more expensive aspects of maintaining a library. Recognizing this, libraries form regional systems often receive additional funding from the government to help sustain its services that they would not normally receive if they remained as individual libraries.

In conclusion, much is obvious in the literature that has been presented on the subject of collaborations and partnerships between public libraries and community organizations. Primarily, there needs to be more research to evaluate the success, failure, and cost of collaborations or partnerships between public libraries and outside organizations. There is a large amount of literature describing why partnerships and collaborations are beneficial, but many organizations already recognize those reasons.

What has been highlighted seems fairly obvious. Small libraries cannot afford to collaborate with organizations on the same scale as large libraries. Collaborating is beneficial when both organizations are actively participating. When contemplating providing services through collaborations, a community assessment must be performed. Most libraries feel that collaborating is a good idea, but there are deterrents. Those deterrents include funding, unbalanced organizational relationships, passive involvement of partner organizations, lack of staff involvement, and lack of community interest.

In light of literature that is available on collaborations between pubic libraries and outside organizations, there is not much information for public libraries to understand how their collaborations and partnerships are evaluated. Knowing how their collaborations and partnerships are evaluated provides the possibility for public libraries to better serve their community and present programs made possible through collaborative ventures to library boards and other decision makers in the community.

METHOD

Description

The primary purpose of this study is to provide a means by which public libraries

can plan and evaluate the success of their collaborative programs. This information will

be of use to library staff and parties interested in public libraries and the services public

libraries provide, especially when attempting to describe a library's collaborative

activities for the purpose of garnering library support.

Concepts for this research will be discussed considering the following themes:

statistics, the use of data collecting tools, public reaction to collaborative partnerships and

programs, and attainment of the stated goals of the collaborating institutions.

Importance of Study

Using an explanatory method for this study is appropriate for this research

because it lays the foundation for researchers who would be interested in further studying

the topic of libraries and their collaborating institutions and who would also be interested

in using a survey to gather information. Discussion of statistics, the use of data collecting

tools, public reaction to collaborative partnerships and programs, and attainment of the

stated goals of the collaborating institutions provides preliminary themes and the general

framework a researcher could consider when developing an evaluation initiative.

A program evaluator needs to know several things. How do public library directors, staff, and patrons generally measure the success and failure of the collaborative ventures in which their library takes part? How might these measures differ among large, medium, and small libraries? What are the characteristics of strong and weak collaborations -- indicators of quality that suggest success and failure?

Several populations have a stake in how collaborative partnerships are evaluated, including library directors, general library staff, the population served by the collaboration, and the organization with which a library has partnered. Surveying library staff and the community the collaboration/partnership serves would provide a perception of success and failure from those who are more directly involved and affected by collaborations in which libraries are involved. Library directors would also be useful to survey because it is they who will generally have the authority to provide descriptions of collaborations to parties who may be interested in supporting the library. Surveying an independent (i.e. non-library) organization with which a library has collaborated would provide a perspective of the collaboration that is not from a library or library science point of view which could potentially affect the understanding libraries have of their collaborations/partnerships for the better.

It is likely that most useful information about library partnerships will be derived from larger libraries because they would likely be involved in more collaborations and have more experience with collaborations, thereby enabling their staff to have more significant measures by which they consider the success and failure of collaborations than staff from small libraries. Size would also affect the ability for a library to collaborate with outside organizations because with a smaller staff, there is less personnel available

to dedicate time and energy to pursuing collaborative ventures. With limited resources to spend on collaborative partnerships, smaller libraries would have less experience with collaborations/partnerships that have both failed and succeeded. This type of research could potentially be applied nationally and be useful to all types of libraries, providing a system by which they can evaluate their current and potential collaborative partnerships. The research could also prove useful as models of partnerships and collaborations are described or attributed as failed or successful relationships.

Libraries frequently have to reassert their importance and relevance within their community by adjusting their goals and scope. For example, libraries are looking beyond the services they have traditionally offered, and have begun to consider the future of information, technology, and their relationship to their community. To further address the problem of a growing feeling of obsolescence of libraries among the public, libraries and librarians should consider three areas to solidify their relationship with the community they serve. These areas include image, services offered, and community involvement, all of which are interrelated. When a library and its librarians become actively involved in its community and adjusts the services it provides, its image is affected in relation to the feeling of importance and need its community, government officials, and potential library supporters have toward the library. For this reason I find it interesting to consider the question of how public libraries measure the success or failure of their collaborative relationship with other public service organizations. Being able to explicitly describe how a collaboration has been successful is a way to market the library and services it provides to populations outside of the library community.

As gateways to information and education libraries should be involved in the community and finding ways to support it. Collaborating with other services in the community serves this purpose. By creating services that are inter-related with other public service organizations, the importance of the library in the community's mind increases. Awareness of the library could also be increased by reaching out to other public service organizations and forming a relationship in an effort to help the public. Being active in the community and forming relationships with other public services could possibly change the way libraries are perceived and increase patronage.

I feel this is an important concept to pose in light of changing perceptions of the public towards libraries. Because libraries are often under funded and generally not considered to be absolutely necessary, libraries must find ways to solidify their perceived importance to the community they serve. Libraries must find ways to bring themselves and their services to the forefront of people's minds as an organization that is relevant to the community's needs.

Determining how the success and failure of collaborations with other public institutions are evaluated could potentially change the role of libraries and expectations librarians have for the profession. My research could affect the services libraries offer and how we think about and interact with the community we serve. It could also possibly reinforce the importance of libraries even in the light of "everything being on the internet".

Discussion

There are many methods of evaluation to consider when attempting to determine whether a partnership or collaboration in which a library is involved has succeeded or failed. In light of all possible options, I feel that evaluative methods can be focused into four main categories. I have designated these categories as the use of statistics, the use of data gathering tools, public reaction to collaborative partnerships and programs, and attainment of the stated goals of the collaborating institutions.

As these themes of evaluation are being discussed, several concepts must be kept in mind before a library is able to evaluate its collaborative relationship with another organization or institution. First, one must consider where, how and to whom the partnership and resulting programs have been advertised. Without proper advertisement or reaching out to the population for whom a partnership has been initiated, a collaborative partnership is unlikely to succeed. It's apparent that if no one knew about or was able to gather information about the partnership and the programs/information it is offering, there would be little to no interest or participation from the public. The success and failure of a partnership and the programs the institutions offer also potentially hinge on how often services are provided. It is more likely that populations would take advantage of programs and services more often when they are offered on a regular and recurring basis. If there is too much guesswork involved concerning the partnership and its services, it is likely for public interest to be minimal. Collaborating institutions must also maintain internal as well as public interest before attempting to evaluate their partnership. Without library employees' continued interest in a partnership, the public would likely not have an interest in the partnership or the programs it has made possible.

Lastly, to fairly evaluate a program both institutions must take part in the evaluation process. A one sided evaluation could not possibly grasp the total effect of a collaboration when two institutions are involved. With both parties involved and communicating in the evaluation process, it is more likely for a more complete picture of the collaboration and its success or failure to be presented.

Data collecting tools

Using data collecting tools provides quantifiable information directly from the public, that when gathered would paint a picture of the impression the general public has of the partnership between the library and collaborating institution. Two such tools that would prove beneficial to gathering this type of information are surveys and suggestion boxes, both of which would require the public to record their impressions of the collaborative services offered. The value of using data gathering tools when evaluating a partnership or collaboration is in having a description written in the words of the public. Results from these tools could potentially be used in official reports or other documents used to prove the effectiveness of services a library provides. Results could also be presented to parties interested in the library and services the library provides, or to anyone who is considering the library as a candidate for donated monies.

Surveys can provide quantitative or qualitative information, depending on the preference of the evaluating personnel and can offer unexpected insight into the collaborative partnership. They also offer information that can be published in official reports and referred to by other institutions. An optimal time to distribute surveys to gather impressions of a partnership would be after a program made possible through the

collaboration of the library and another institution, since there would already be a captive audience. The option of filling out surveys as soon as the program or service concluded or to bring the survey back at a later date could be given in case some people were not able to stay and complete the survey. Surveys could also be strategically placed around the library for patrons to fill out as they are passing by.

Suggestion boxes can provide valuable information in a way surveys cannot, if they are clearly labeled and purpose clearly stated. Suggestion boxes allow the public to write in their own words without a specific format to which they have to conform. There is less pressure to write one's impression when they can be well thought out and written at one's leisure. Suggestion boxes would not be able to provide quantitative information like a survey, but they can provide important qualitative information that is more expressive and descriptive of a person's impression of the collaborative partnership.

Though using data collecting tools can be useful when evaluating a collaborative partnership, there are disadvantages to using these types of tools. Both surveys and suggestions boxes run the risk of only representing a small population from the public. This can be a problem if only certain people are filling out the surveys or using the suggestion box, especially if it is not the population on which the collaborative partnership is attempting to focus. Though from a different perspective, entries made mostly by people outside the intended population of the collaboration would also provide useful information on the services that are being provided.

Both surveys and suggestion boxes also run the risk of a lack of participation. When using these methods it is always possible to not have enough information returned, leaving the evaluating institutions with ambiguous results of people either not returning

surveys or using the suggestion box because the services were not of value or the service being of value and people simply not participating in the evaluation efforts. Surveys in particular that are distributed after a program can leave the participant feeling pressured, especially when they have limited time or other obligations after the program, to say only good things or write curt, non-descriptive answers on the survey. If offered after programs that are recurring, surveys can potentially be filled out by the same people each time the program is held, providing redundant information that is of little use. Those interpreting the results of the survey would also have to keep in mind imperfections the survey may present such as leading and close ended questions.

Statistics

Using statistics can be an effective way to evaluate positive or negative trends created by a collaborative partnership in which a library has become involved. Statistics can be and are usually kept in several departments and library services to provide a rough estimate of library use. It is routine for a library to record walk in traffic, reference questions, and circulation statistics each day. Statistics have been deemed important because they represent the raw number of patron usage and interactions with library staff and services which are in turn represented in monthly and yearly reports. These numbers play vital roles in the distribution of monies, the focus of a library's collection, services offered by a library, and daily operation. For these reasons, I feel that statistics can also be used to assist in the evaluation of a collaborative partnership between a library and another institution. I have grouped statistics that can be related to the evaluation of a

collaborative partnership into two central categories: direct and indirect results of the collaboration.

Direct results of an institutional collaboration can be immediately traced to the collaboration itself or to a program it has made possible. This category includes reference statistics and program attendance. For a reference department to know how its statistics were being affected by a library's collaboration with another institution it would have to create an area on its statistics tracking tool for questions related to the collaborative partnership and the topics it attempts to address. Tracking statistics in this way would allow the library to see what percentage of questions were related to the collaboration and what type of affect the partnership is having on the information need of the population. The numbers could also potentially affect collection development in specific areas if the number of questions and general interest increase. As with data gathering tools these numbers could be presented to demonstrate how a library can address the information needs of the community it serves and the effectiveness of the services it provides.

Though gathering direct statistics in this way can be beneficial when evaluating a partnership, there are several disadvantages that should be considered. When relying on staff to keep track of statistics related to a library's collaborative partnership, one must keep in mind that as staff becomes busy with several questions at once, exact statistics may not kept. There could also be some confusion about when to place a question in the correct area when complicated questions are asked at the reference desk. Another disadvantage of keeping statistics in this way is that they cannot be compared with the statistics from the months before the collaboration was initiated. This causes the problem

of not knowing whether there have been more or less questions related to the focus of the collaboration in the past and how they relate to the current statistics.

A second way to gather direct statistics is through program attendance. This is the most common and simple way used when most libraries are evaluating their collaborative partnerships. Gathering statistics from program attendance is an effective way to gauge interest of the community. When people are attending programs made possible through a collaborative partnership, then it becomes obvious that the partnership has been a success. However, gathering statistics in this way does not reflect causes of low attendance which could be necessary to explain when presenting the results of a collaboration to a review board. Often low attendance can be attributed to bad weather, other events in the community, and holidays, to name a few.

I have defined indirect statistics as statistics that could potentially change as a result of the collaboration, but are not tied directly to the public's interaction with the collaborative partnership or the services it provides. This category includes circulation statistics and walk-in traffic. A change in either of these statistics could be the result of a collaborative partnership and the community's change in interest with the library. At the same time the change in statistics could be a result of something else occurring in the community or within the library. Or it could be a change that is not linked to any single phenomena. The problem is that there is no absolute way to determine who is or isn't using the library because of the partnership in which it is involved. Though it stands to reason that walk-in traffic would increase as interest in a library and its services increases, these statistics should always be used in conjunction with other evaluative

methods because of the loose association between indirect statistics and the success or failure of a partnership.

Public Reaction

One of the more important methods a library can use to measure the success or failure of its partnerships is through the opinion of the population the library serves. To gain an interpretation of public opinion, library employees who interact with the public on a daily basis could be consulted. Employees who interact with the public on a daily basis have often developed relationships and trustful bonds with patrons, allowing patrons to feel comfortable discussing library related issues. These relationships and discussions can provide insight other methods of evaluation are not able to gather. Staff who interact with the public are also able to gather insights through observances they make of the community's perception of the library and its collaborative efforts.

Similar to the division of categories of statistics, I have divided the public's reaction into two categories: direct interactions between library employees and indirect patron reaction. Direct interactions are categorized by library employees' person-to-person interaction with patrons. These interactions can be connected to statistics, but are generally not counted as questions because they often take place more as conversations and not inquiries. These types of interactions can play a valuable role in the evaluation of an institutional partnership. Patrons often begin conversations about library services or activities with employees whose trust they have gained through numerous interactions. During these conversations patrons often discuss how they feel about the library and services it offers and aspects of the library that they cannot understand. Staff members can take advantage of these moments to take notice and make note (mental or otherwise)

of the patron's perception of the library's partnerships. Employees who daily interact with the public can also take notice of how the public perceives the library's partnership through patron-to-patron interactions. For a staff member who works around and among those they serve, it is fairly easy to overhear, see, or take notice of how patrons react to a library's partnership and its resulting programs and services.

Direct interactions tend to be more informal and often more naturally occurring than formal devices such as surveys. This in turn allows a patron to be more comfortable and likely to truthfully speak of their thoughts and feelings concerning the library's collaborative partnerships. When discussed in this manner, patrons will feel less pressure to make comments and more able to speak freely of their perceptions outside of official forms and institutional expectations. These interactions often occur without the library pushing for impressions from patrons and will be initiated by a patron's own accord, thereby making the experience more valuable and reflective of public opinion.

Though of the more valuable methods to evaluate a library's partnership with another institution, there are disadvantages to evaluating success or failure through direct employee and patron interaction. One of the largest and probably more obvious downsides to gathering information in this way is that the information is filtered through an employee's interpretation of the conversation. In these types of interactions there is no official form to record data gathered and is subject to how an employee determines the point of the conversation. If an employee does not value the opinion of a particular patron, then they would not likely take the conversation into consideration in regard to public opinion of the library's collaborative partnership. The reverse can be said of an employee who holds a specific patron's opinion in high esteem. When using this method

of evaluation one also has to take into consideration whether an employee would report negative and positive opinions equally or at all. If an employee wants to conserve an aspect of a collaborative partnership, regardless of how useful, it stands to reason they would not report any opinions that would negatively affect its role in the library. While a positive aspect, it is also a disadvantage for employee-to-patron interactions to be less formal. There are no forms or official devices to record the conversation, nor are there any official ways to interpret the meaning of the conversation besides the perception of employees involved in the conversation. Lastly, these types of interactions are usually spontaneous and occur at random, unlike using forms and statistics where there is more structure to the process of information gathering.

Evaluating indirect results from public reactions to a library's collaborative efforts is even more difficult to measure and ascertain than the employee-to-patron method. An example of this type of evaluation includes expectations by the public for services offered through the collaboration to be permanent and constant. Another example is how the services and two collaborating institutions are connected or perceived in the public mind. These indicators can hold a lot of weight in the evaluation process, but are difficult to grasp for several reasons. The first is that these types of public reaction are only generally visible over long periods of time. During this time, the library and collaborating institution's staff and goals can go through several upheavals, making it difficult to keep track of information that cannot be easily measured in the first place.

Achieving original goals

Of all possible techniques used to determine the success or failure of a library's collaborative partnerships, attaining the stated goals of the collaboration is the most straight-forward. If a collaborative partnership begins with clear goals and procedures to pursue the stated goals, the participating institutions should ask themselves, "Did we achieve these goals?" However, instead of posing this question near the end of the partnership, it should be while the institutions are collaborating as smaller analyses to make sure they have remained on track and are moving toward the stated goals.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

If applied appropriately, all previously mentioned methods of evaluating collaborative partnerships are valid and can provide substantial results. However, each method is not without its own disadvantages. Consequently, I would recommend using each of the evaluative techniques to gain a full perspective of how the community perceives the partnership and the services it provides. Using qualitative data gathering tools captures the words exactly as a person has described their impression and feeling of the partnership. However, as a result of the data gathering process the results can be easily distorted and not reflective of the broader community's needs. Quantitative numbers provide numbers that can be used for comparison to baseline numbers gathered before a collaborative effort has been made. But these numbers do not represent the impression of the community in their own words and forces them to use descriptions and categories created by personnel from one or both collaborating institutions.

Statistics are able to gather raw numbers of patrons and their inquiries on or related to the subject of the partnership and the services and programs it offers. The imperfection of gathering evidence of success or failure through statistical information is in the tool itself and the relationship between a change in statistics and the collaborative partnership. Interpreting public reaction is a must, but is difficult to measure and can only be understood through the interpretation of employees. Therefore, the use of outside experts is recommended because of their ability to offer greater objectivity on several aspects of a collaboration. Achieving the stated goals of the partnership is perhaps the most clear way to measure success or failure of a collaboration, but one has to consider if there were other factors that contributed to the success or failure of the collaboration or

whether it was a result of the collaboration itself. Consequently, no one result from one method can be fully trusted, but using the methods jointly can provide a more rich understanding of whether the collaborative partnership has been a success or whether it has failed.

In conclusion, what published literature suggests is that collaborations between public libraries and outside organizations are common. These collaborations are generally considered to be positive pursuits for each organization if the relationship is balanced, with both organizations positively benefiting from the partnership. There is also available literature detailing reasons why collaborations are beneficial, and how to pursue collaborations in one's community. However, what is not detailed in a lot of literature is how public libraries measure the success or failure of their collaborations with other organizations. For this reason, I have found it important to discuss potential ways to evaluate the success or failure of a collaborative partnership.

Each of the four categories I have discussed -- the use of statistics, the use of data gathering tools, public reaction to collaborative partnerships and programs, and attainment of the stated goals of the collaborating institutions -- are fairly effective by themselves, but can create a larger picture of how, why, and in what area the collaborative partnership has succeeded or failed when used in conjunction with one other. No one method is perfect, each must be tailored to specific libraries, and are all open to interpretation. It is foreseeable that there are libraries who would be interested in becoming involved in partnerships with other organizations but would not have the staff or extra resources to fully evaluate the partnerships in which they are involved.

For libraries that are able to devote the time and resources, the benefits of this research are several-fold. One of the most important ways a library could potentially benefit from this research is by using the measures discussed to present their own successful collaborative programs to politicians and potential library supporters. This is a marketing strategy that could be used to sell and promote the services a library provides. In public libraries, marketing strategies are important especially in the face of losing funding and having to rely on grants and donors for a significant part of their budgets.

This research will also be internally beneficial for libraries. Using the measures of collaborative success and failure discussed in this research can be used by libraries when attempting to evaluate the collaborative programs and services they provide. When providing services to a population, it becomes important to constantly evaluate how they are beneficial and whether the services are satisfying a need among the population intended to be served. This can be achieved by gathering qualitative and quantitative data using the techniques I described earlier not only once the collaboration has come to an end, but while a library and its collaborative partner are in the process of providing services their community.

While the planning a collaborative partnership and the services it will provide is important, it is also important for organizations to plan for the evaluative effort they will use in relation to the collaboration. To successfully evaluate a collaboration, baseline data (data that represents numbers or information before the collaboration was initiated) must be gathered before resulting data of the collaboration is gathered. Gathering baseline data is important because it provides information to which the results of the collaboration can be compared. Without baseline data, knowing how the collaborative

partnership has affected the involved institutions would be difficult to assess, regardless of which data collecting technique has been used or how much data has been gathered in relation to the partnership. For example, if it were the goal of a library to increase circulation, then it would be necessary to have data that represents typical circulation statistics. Whatever the nature of the collaboration, having baseline data provides a gauge by which the success or failure of a partnership can be measured.

Ultimately, to effectively evaluate a collaboration, involved institutions should communicate clearly and at regular intervals. A collaborative partnership's purpose revolves around two or more organizations working together, therefore it is necessary for collaborating organizations to work together when attempting to evaluate their partnership. When evaluating a collaborative partnership, results in regard to both institutions must be considered and measured. Collaborating not only in services that are provided to their community, but also collaborating in the evaluation process must be built into the collaborating process. Without collaboration in the evaluation process, only partial success or failure can be measured and will likely have misleading results since the collaborating institutions will likely have different measures of what they consider to be a success or failure. A suggestion to deter miscommunication or partial evaluation would be to have meetings at regular intervals where the partnership can be addressed, reassessed and reconsidered before it has come to an end. Another suggestion is to allow the public to attend these meetings, involving them in the process of evaluating services that are provided by the partnership. Communication in this way would aid in the refinement of services provided and goals of the partnership, enriching the overall evaluation.

Conclusions and hypotheses reached in this research can be applied to other libraries because of the general collaborative nature of libraries. A follow up survey of libraries on the appropriateness of measures found through this research would be complementary if one were interested in probing deeper and discovering what methods public libraries currently use to evaluate their partnerships with other institutions.

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