If museums and libraries are to compete for both public and private funds in an accountability-driven environment, they must develop evaluation practices that provide the most compelling picture of the impact of their services. The two essays in this document present clear arguments for the adoption of a specific approach to evaluation known as outcome-based evaluation. They define a system of evaluation that replaces the question, "What have we done to accomplish our goals?" with the question "What has changed as a result of our work?" Taking their lead from evaluation practices adopted by the United Way in 1995, both authors suggest practices that focus on measuring the effects of an institution's work on its public (outcomes) rather than on the service provided (outputs). The first essay, "Transformed from a Cemetery of Bric-a-brac..." (Stephen E. Weil) describes the "second revolution" that is taking place in the American museum and the shift in focus on the collection as sole resource to the provision of a range of educational and other services available to be used for the accomplishment of a larger public purpose. The essay examines misconceptions and consequences that have emerged as museums cope with this second revolution. The second essay, "Documenting the Difference: Demonstrating the Value of Libraries through Outcome Measurement" (Peggy D. Rudd) describes the United Way's outcome measurement model, illustrating its usefulness for the library setting. In addition to the benefits libraries can gain from outcomes measurement, the essay outlines the potential problems. At the end of the document, a list of selected resources on formal program evaluation methods is provided. (AEF)
Evaluation for Libraries and Museums: Perspectives on Outcome Based Services and Library Services of the Institute of Museum and Library Services
Introduction

Transformed From a Cemetery

Documenting the Difference: Demonstrating the Value of Libraries Through Outcome Measurement

Resoures

Transformed From a Cemetery, Stephen E. Weil

Documenting the Difference: Demonstrating the Value of Libraries Through Outcome Measurement, Peggy D. Rudd

Introduction
INRODUCTION

Beverly Sheppard
Acting Director, Institute of Museum and Library Services

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is a steady champion for the role of museums and libraries in our society. As the primary source of federal funding to libraries and museums, we are frequently called upon to tell their stories and to share the impact of their work as community leaders, educational resources, and guardians of our cultural heritage. Our funding programs support a remarkable range of services, strengthening programs, particularly with peer-reviewed grants, to enable each of our programs to expand their specific role.

The passage of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) in 1993 requires every government agency to establish specific performance indicators and report on their level of achievement on an annual basis. This requires every government agency to establish specific performance indicators and report on their level of achievement on an annual basis. The effects of GPRA are also trickling down to state and local government agencies, which are using the lead of the federal government to require evidence that all public dollars are well spent.

In an era of increasing demands for accountability, such demands are not just a government issue. A similar emphasis on accountability is being incorporated into the funding guidelines of major foundations. From all sides, museums and libraries are being called upon to tell their stories and to share the impact of their work as community leaders, educational resources, and guardians of our cultural heritage. The work of museums and libraries makes a true difference in the lives of individuals, families, and communities.

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are receiving a clear message. If they are to compete for both public and private funds in an accountability-driven environment, they must develop evaluation practices that provide the most compelling picture of the impact of their services.

In the following two essays, Stephen Weil and Peggy Rudd present clear arguments for the adoption of a specific approach to evaluation known as outcome-based evaluation. They define a system of evaluation that replaces the question, "What have we done to accomplish our goals?" with the question "What has changed as a result of our work?"

Taking their lead from evaluation practices adopted by the United Way in 1995, both writers suggest practices that focus on measuring the effects of an institution's work on its public (outcomes) rather than on the services provided (outputs).

The Institute of Museum and Library Services shares both authors' conviction that outcomes-based evaluation holds great promise for museums and libraries. As a systematic measurement of impact, it may be employed at many intervals during and after the delivery of service, providing short- and long-term indications of a project's effectiveness. Outcome-based evaluation is not pure research, nor is it simple data collection. It joins both of those essential processes, however, as a powerful tool in reporting the kinds of differences museums and libraries make among their users. It helps both institutions identify their successes and share their stories with a wide range of stakeholders.

Outcome-based evaluation is also a highly useful management tool. It does not occur within a vacuum, but is part of the core process of project development. Program planning, implementation, and evaluation are all parts of the whole that is driven by an institution's purpose and vision. Evaluation provides the critical feedback that tells what is working, what must be changed, and how a program may be improved. It helps inform difficult decisions. Realigning staff or reallocating financial resources are far more palatable when supported by evidence that these investments are making a difference.

Well-designed evaluation further enables advocacy and partnership. Good stories become convincing and forge the basis for ongoing funding, support, and collaboration. Keeping their lead from the "expanded evaluation" literature, both writers offer a model for developing their work. In addition to measuring outcomes and impacts of programs, Weil and Rudd advocate a more participatory approach to the design and implementation of evaluation. They suggest that libraries, museums, and other organizations should work with partners to develop evaluation plans that reflect the goals and priorities of the organizations themselves. This approach helps to ensure that evaluation is a meaningful process for all stakeholders.

In the following essay's conclusion, the authors reflect on the challenges and opportunities presented by the adoption of outcome-based evaluation. They argue that while there are many obstacles to implementing this approach, the potential benefits are significant. By focusing on the outcomes of their work, institutions can better understand the impact they have on their communities and ensure that their programs are effective.

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is pleased to offer this publication as part of its support and encouragement for the adoption of outcome-based evaluation in the library and museum fields. Through our grants and awards, IMLS has supported the idea that museums and libraries have a profound capacity to make a difference in their communities. Now, in our support of outcome-based evaluation, we are committed to documenting the impact of these practices that focus on measuring the effects of an institution's work on its public (outcomes) rather than on the services provided (outputs).
Transformed from a Cemetery of Bric-a-brac...

Stephen E. Weil

Emeritus Senior Scholar
Center for Education and Museum Studies
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This paper was first delivered as a keynote address for the 1999 British Museum Annual Meeting. Among the perennially favorite stories in my country is Washington Irving's tale of Rip Van Winkle, the amiable New York farmer who fell into a profound sleep as a loyal subject of King George III and waking up some 20 years later was astonished to find that he had meanwhile become a citizen of the United States. What had happened while he slept, of course, was a revolution. If we could shift that frame just slightly and conjure up instead an old-fashioned curator in a New York museum—a sort of tweedy Rip Van Recluse—who dozed off at his desk some 50 years ago and woke up only today, would his astonishment at the museum in which he found himself be any the less? I think not.

During the past 50 years there have been not just one but two distinct revolutions in the American museum. The first—a revolution specific to the museum—was in its focus.
When Rip Van Winkle awoke, the American museum, which had been oriented primarily inward on the growth, care, study, and display of its collection, was now an outwardly oriented organization engaged primarily in providing a range of educational and other services to its visitors and, beyond its visitors, to its community. The collection, which had once been its raison d'être, was now simply one of a number of resources available to be used for the accomplishment of a larger public purpose.

This change of focus, as Rip would quickly discover, was in no way peculiar to the American museum. Common virtually everywhere today is the conviction that public service is central to what a museum is all about. How that is expressed may differ from one country to another, but almost nowhere is there anybody now who believes as did many of Rip's colleagues before his long sleep that the museum is its own excuse for being.

The second revolution is considerably more complicated. By no means specific to museums, it's a revolution raging across the entire not-for-profit or so-called third sector of American society—a sprawling conglomeration of more than one million privately governed cultural, educational, religious, health care and social service organizations to which most American museums belong. The collection, once so important to these organizations, was now only one of a number of resources available to be used for the accomplishment of a larger public purpose.

When Rip Van Winkle awoke, the collection, once so central to his vision, was now just one more of many roles the museum could fill. It could be a research tool or a place to display art, but its primary focus was now on public service. The old-time museum, which was no longer under any obligation to care for objects as old objects are cared for, was now an educational institution whose primary mission was to serve the community. The museum, once seen as a place where the public could come to look, to wonder, and to enjoy a high degree of convenience in the purchase of works of art in the museum, was now seen as a place where the public could come to learn, to discover, and to enjoy the highest degree of convenience, and where the museum was expected to provide, not only with integrity, but with a high degree of competence, an educational experience that would demonstrably enhance the quality of individual lives.
fluttering chair ladies, and absent-minded professors is today being transformed into a dynamic system of social enterprises, a system in which the ultimate institutional success or failure of each constituent enterprise is to be judged by its capacity to articulate the particular results it is seeking to achieve and by its ability, in day-to-day practice, actually to achieve the results it has so articulated.

To translate that second revolution into museum terms: the institution in which Rip Van Recluse fell asleep was generally regarded as an essentially benevolent or philanthropic one. During the years that Rip slept, its supporters were biannual and worthy people, and it was, above all, respectable. During the years that Rip slept, other ways of looking at the museum began to surface. For some observers, resources replaced respectability as the measure of a museum—a good museum in their view was one with a fine collection, an impressive staff, and a solid endowment, and a solid endowment, and a solid endowment, and a solid endowment, and a solid endowment. For others, a museum was better measured by what it did with those resources—by what it did with those resources—by what it did with those resources—by what it did with those resources. For still others, a museum was best measured by its processes and procedures—by its processes and procedures—by its processes and procedures—by its processes and procedures.

As the coming of this second revolution, however, all of those other measures are today being subsumed into two overarching concerns. These concern, first, that the museum has the competence to achieve the outcomes to which it aspires—outcomes that will positively affect the quality of individual and communal lives—and second, that the museum employs its competence in such a way as to assure that such outcomes are in fact demonstrably being achieved on some consistent basis. Among the forces driving this second revolution have been the emergence, primarily in the graduate schools of business, of a new organizational concept—the "social enterprise"—as well as the recent implementation, at an everyday working level, of several new modes of organizational assessment. Among the most forceful proponents of the social enterprise concept is Professor J. Gregory Dees, formerly of the Harvard Business School and now at Stanford. As envisioned by Dees, a not-for-profit organization (which he calls a "social enterprise") and a commercial enterprise (which he calls a "commercial enterprise") can both be understood as basically similar organizations that principally differ (1) in how they price the products and services that they distribute and (2) in how they price the products and services that they distribute and (3) in how they acquire replacement resources to make up for those depleted through distribution. In terms of the bottom line, the commercial enterprises operate to produce a bottom line result by adding value to the resources which they acquire and process. To think of a museum as "entrepreneurial" in that sense is by no means unprecedented.
The second major difference between these forms of enterprise involves pricing. The commercial enterprise traditionally distributes its products and/or services at a market-determined price. By contrast, the social enterprise most frequently distributes its products and/or services either without charge or at less than their true cost. Dees again argues that this does not change their basic similarity. It simply has implications for the third difference between them: how the social enterprise must acquire replacement resources. Unlike the commercial enterprise which has the capacity to buy what it needs in order to be productive, the social enterprise may be dependent in whole or in part upon contributed goods, funds, or services. In most operational respects, however, the social enterprise is still conceptually parallel with the commercial one. "Managing for results" to use a Canadian phrase is no less essential to one form of enterprise than to the other.

United Way in 1995. Henceforth the focus would be on the recipients of services, not their providers. Henceforth the test would be outcomes, results, program performance. By what percentage had the reading scores of those participants improved? How did that improvement compare with the improvement recorded in earlier years? How did it compare with the record of other literacy programs in similar circumstances? Put bluntly: neither was the program well-designed nor highly regarded but... DID IT REALLY WORK?

Central to this new United Way approach were such concepts as "change" and "difference." A 1996 publication suggested how flexibly those concepts could be applied without violating the boundaries of what might still be strictly defined as outcomes. "Outcomes," it said: "...are benefits or changes for individuals or populations during or after participating in program activities. They are influenced by a program's outputs. Outcomes may relate to knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, behavior, condition, or other attributes. They are what participants know, think, or can do; or how they behave; or what their condition is, that is different following the program."

Although United Way's funding is primarily directed toward social service agencies, its full-scale embrace of outcome-based evaluation has nevertheless had a pervasive influence throughout the American funding community: among foundations, corporate donors, and government agencies. To a greater degree than ever, federal agencies are asking applicants of every kind—cultural organizations as well as social service agencies and health services—detailed questions about just what outcomes they hope or realistically expect to achieve through a proposed program and about just how they intend to determine whether or not those particular outcomes have, in fact, been achieved.

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In essence, GPRA will raise the level of public accountability to a new height. Prior to GPRA, United States government agencies were already responsible under earlier legislation for controlling fraud and abuse. Professor Peter Swords of the Columbia University Law School has referred to this lower level of scrutiny as "negative accountability"—making sure that nobody was doing anything wrong. With GPRA, however, government will be held accountable. Under the Government Performance and Results Act or GPRA, each such agency will be responsible for establishing, preferably in objective, quantifiable and measurable terms, specific performance goals for every one of its programs and, second, for thereafter reporting annually to the Congress on its success or lack of success in meeting those goals and, accordingly, with the funds for which you are asking—will be measured, in full, as knowledge, performance, and achievement. To a greater degree than ever, federal agencies are asking applicants of every kind—cultural organizations as well as social service agencies and health services—detailed questions about just what outcomes they hope or realistically expect to achieve through a proposed program and about just how they intend to determine whether or not those particular outcomes have, in fact, been achieved.

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our museums are not being operated with the ultimate goal of improving the quality of people's lives, on what other basis might we possibly ask for public support?
Effectiveness is the measure of "DID IT REALLY WORK?" In the for-profit commercial enterprise, there is a substantial overlap between efficiency and effectiveness. Waste can undermine profit, the basic point of the enterprise. Not so in the social enterprise, where efficiency and effectiveness remain distinct. A museum might conceivably be effective without necessarily being efficient.

A related misconception is that the pursuit of effectiveness is somehow analogous to benchmarking. Benchmarking, as the term is generally used in the United States, is about something else: an effort to improve how you perform a particular task by seeking out the most exemplary practice in some other organization with the intention, so far as may be practical, of then adopting that practice for yourself. Specific procedures within a museum, like timely payment to vendors, might be approached in this way, but the overall operation of the museum itself, for example, cannot be benchmarked. Museums are so extraordinarily varied in their origin, discipline, scale, governance, collections, sources of funding, endowment, staffing, facilities, and community setting that one can hardly serve as a model or be the basis of any meaningful comparison for one's own museum. Instead, one can learn from examples of other museum activities, sources of funding, and community engagement, but one cannot learn from the operations of another museum.

In fact, America's two great flagship art museums—the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, both founded in 1870—were conceived as alternative to the Smithsonian Institution. Their founders sought to create a museum that was not just a repository of art, but also a place of education and community engagement. This model of a museum that is both educational and community-focused, with an outwardly directed mission, is the essence of what we mean by "social enterprise." It is a model that has been developed over the years and is a fundamental part of the American museum tradition.

Finally, there are those who think that what is being asked of American museums by these combined revolutions is something wholly novel or unprecedented. From almost its very beginning, however, the mainstream museum movement in the United States has had running beside it a slender but vigorous alternative movement—what we might call a "counter-current" that envisioned the museum not in terms of such inward activities as the accumulation and care and study of its collections but, rather, in terms of what impact it might have on its community. In fact, America's two great flagship art museums were originally modeled on the South Kensington Museum in London, which was founded in 1870, and intended from their inception to be primarily educational and to be primarily significant in educational performance. The Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, which were both founded in 1870—were conceived as alternatives to the Smithsonian Institution. Their founders sought to create a museum that was not just a repository of art, but also a place of education and community engagement. This model of a museum that is both educational and community-focused, with an outwardly directed mission, is the essence of what we mean by "social enterprise." It is a model that has been developed over the years and is a fundamental part of the American museum tradition.

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The museum of the past must be set aside, reconstructed, transformed from a cemetery of bric-a-brac into a nursery of living thoughts. The museum of the future must stand side by side with the library and the laboratory, as part of the teaching equipment of the college and university, and in the great cities cooperate with the public library as one of the principal agencies for the enlightenment of the people.

Nobody has made these arguments more pungently, however, than John Cotton Dana, the early champion of community museums and the founder, in the early 1900s, of one of America's most notable examples: the Newark Museum. In a 1917 essay, written as the Metropolitan Museum of Art and other East Coast museums were accelerating their quest for the previously unobtainable works of fine art flowing out of Europe, Dana was scornful of the marble palaces filled with those so-called emblems of culture, rare and costly and wonder-working objects. Such museums, he said, "which kings, princes, and other masters of people and wealth had constructed" would give the common people neither pleasure nor profit. Nor could such museums accomplish what Dana took to be the first and obvious task of every museum: "adding to the happiness, wisdom, and comfort of members of the community."

Most remarkably of all, Dana understood as early as 1920 that the public's support of a museum was at bottom an exchange transaction that it, the public, was due a measure of value in return. Moreover, he foresaw that some type of positive accountability would be required in order to assure the public that the museum was actually providing the public what the public had paid for.

"All public institutions (and museums are not exceptions to this rule) should give returns for their cost; and those returns should be in good degree positive, of a character which makes it possible for museums to appeal to the people's support of a museum as a positively accountable public service organization. The goodness of a museum is not in direct ratio to the money spent on it, but is a positive account of the public service it renders. The measure of value in return is in the public's increased happiness, wisdom, and comfort. A museum is good only insofar as it is of use....Common sense demands that a publicly supported institution do something for its supporters and that some part at least of what it does be capable of clear description and estimation."

In a sense, this once alternative movement, this counter-current, is now in the course of itself becoming the mainstream. Astounding as the concept of the museum as a positively accountable public service organization may be to the newly awoken Rip Van Winkle, that concept does, in fact, have deep roots in the American museum tradition.

Moving on, then, I want to turn to what seem to me some of the major consequences that these two revolutions may potentially have for American museums. Five seem particularly noteworthy. The first pertains to disciplinarity. According to the last survey data—unfortunately, not very recent—only 15% of American museums are truly interdisciplinary. That 15% includes children's museums, art museums, and general museums. The remaining 85% are closely tied to one or another academic discipline. When collection was central to a museum's concerns, that kind of specialization might have made a certain kind of sense. But when collection is no longer central to a museum's concerns, and when the focus is转向 public service, the traditional museum education model no longer makes sense. Moreover, the museum as a positively accountable public service organization requires of all museums, and the public in general, a measure of accountability that is not possible in those many small American communities that may have only a single museum, or even two.
As the museum redefines its central purpose from inward to outward—from amassing a collection to providing a public service—it finds itself being drawn into collaboration with, or at times even exchanging functions with, a broad range of other community-based service organizations whose purposes are similar.

Museums should better be able to liberate themselves from these disciplinary constraints and to broaden the range of their programming even to the extent of blurring if not actually breaking down the traditional boundaries between disciplines. In that regard, a revival of John Cotton Dana's case for the community museum could not be more timely. For Dana, the proper way to shape a museum's program was not by recourse to some academic discipline—art, history, or natural science—but through an ongoing conversation with the community. "Learn what aid the community needs," he said, and "fit the museum to those needs."

A second and related consequence pertains to a blurring of boundaries around the museum field itself. When the museum's principal activities were the highly specialized ones of accumulating, preserving, and displaying a collection—activities virtually unique to the museum—it tended to do its work more or less in isolation and alone. Not so today. As the museum redefines its central purpose from inward to outward—from amassing a collection to providing a public service—it finds itself being drawn into collaboration with, or at times even exchanging functions with, a broad range of other community service organizations whose purposes are similar.

Whatever loss that might entail, however, may be more than compensated for by the increase in effectiveness it can thereby achieve. Here, I think, our American experience in working collaboratively is very much in accord with the British experience as described in A Common Wealth, David Anderson's 1997 report to the Department of National Heritage:

"Partnerships allow museums to extend the boundaries of what is possible: to share risks, acquire resources, reach new audiences, obtain complementary skills, improve the quality of service, achieve projects that would have otherwise been impossible, acquire validation from an external source, and win community and political support."

"If the museum is to become a community-based service organization, it must continuously be reviewed and redefined in terms of its relationship with the community. The museum is not an autonomous institution but a partner in the community. The museum must be seen as a service provider, not just a place where people go to see art. The museum must be seen as a place where people come to learn about their community, to participate in community events, and to aspire to a better life for themselves and their families."

The museum's mission must be clearly articulated, and its goals and objectives must be measurable and achievable. The museum must be responsive to the needs and interests of the community it serves, and it must be able to adapt to changing circumstances. The museum must be a dynamic institution, not a static one. The museum must be a place of learning, not just a place of art.
but also to certain other public service organizations—religious bodies, liberal arts colleges, environmental lobbyists—whose program outcomes may not be readily susceptible to statistical or other measurement.

In contrast, for example, to a drug rehabilitation program or a prenatal nutrition program both of which might produce clearly measurable outcomes within less than a year the impact of a museum tends to be subtle, indirect, frequently cumulative over time, and often intertwined with the impacts of such other sources of formal and informal educational experiences as schools, churches and various social and affinity groups. Museums will not only have to educate themselves as to how their impact can be captured and described. They will also have to educate those to whom they may be accountable as to what may and may not be possible in rendering their accounts. Daunting as those tasks may be, they will be essential. It is precisely because the value of what a museum can add to a community’s well-being may not be as self-evident as that provided by the drug or prenatal program that developing a credible means to report that value is so important.

The fifth and final of these consequences is, to my mind, the most critical. It concerns the need to define institutional purposes more clearly and, having once defined them, to make those purposes the consistent backbone of every activity that the museum undertakes. The logic here is basic. Under the impact of these two revolutions, institutional effectiveness will be the key to continued public support. In the absence of some clear sense of what a museum intends to achieve, however, it is simply impossible to evaluate how its actual achievements compare with its intended ones. That a clear sense of purpose was basic to a museum’s organizational well-being was something already understood—indeed it will always be—when we first began the study of museums many years ago. It is precisely the outwardly-directed museum that is in jeopardy. In a paper presented to the British museums association when it met in Newcastle back in 1895, the Smithsonian’s George Brown Goode made that very point. “Lack of purpose in museum work,” he said, “leads in a most conspicuous way to a waste of effort and to partial or complete failure.”

One source of difficulty for American museums has been a tendency to confuse museum purposes with museum functions. In the book on mission statements that Gail Anderson edited for the American Association of Museums this past year, she points out that there is no way in which a museum that describes its intentions solely in terms of the activities it plans to undertake—that is, it collects, preserves, and interprets objects in a museum—that it can be evaluated. Without any sense of just what it hopes to accomplish and whom it hopes to benefit through those activities, such a museum simply appears to be spinning in space with no goal. This is where Rip Van Winkle might find himself most particularly puzzled. When he fell asleep in his museum all those years ago, its purpose wasn’t a question. In the mainstream formulation, a museum didn’t need a reason to be. It just was. No more. This second revolution is establishing purpose as every institution’s starting point—the first premise from which every institutional argument must proceed. Once some clear sense of what we hope to accomplish has been established, purposes then flow from them. It is precisely the outwardly-directed museum that is in jeopardy. But to what end? Are there no other measurement or order measureable outcomes may not be really successful if it is precisely the outwardly-directed museum that is in jeopardy. If so, museums will also have to be successful in order to demonstrate that they do have a purpose. If museums can add to a community’s well-being, then they will be successful. If they cannot, then they may not be successful.
Among the most remarkably flexible organizational types that a modern society has available for its use are museums. Museums can provide forms of public service that are all but infinite in their variety. Museums can inspire individual achievement in the arts and in science, they can serve to strengthen family and other personal ties, they can help communities to achieve and maintain social stability, they can act as advocates or play the role of mediator, they can inspire respect for the natural environment, they can generate self-respect and mutual respect, they can provide safe environments for self-exploration, they can be sites for informal learning, and so much more. In every realm, museums can truly serve as places to remember, as places to discover, as places to imagine.

Back in 1978, the American Association of Museums elected Dr. Kenneth Starr, then the head of the Milwaukee Public Museum, as its President. Earlier in his career, Starr had been a scholar of Chinese art and, almost inevitably in the course of a public address, he would remind his listeners that the Chinese ideogram for crisis was a combination of the symbols for danger and opportunity. If these revolutions at which we have been looking from an inwardly focused museum to an externally focused one, from a museum whose worth might be accepted on faith to one required to demonstrate its competence and render a positive account of its achievements, if these revolutions can in any sense be thought to have triggered a crisis, then we might well conclude by asking the two relevant questions in every crisis: Where is the danger? Where is the opportunity?

For the American museum, I think, the danger is that it may slide back into its old Rip Van Winkle collection-centered ways and thereby render itself irrelevant. In our American system of third-sector privately-governed not-for-profit organizations, there are no safety nets for worn-out institutions. Museums can fail: and they will fail if and when nobody wants to support them anymore. The opportunity, I think, is for the museum to seize this moment to use it, first, as the occasion to think through and clarify its institutional purposes and then, second, to go on from there to develop the solid managerial techniques and creative thinking and improvisational capacity that will help the museum to fulfill these purposes. The opportunity I think is for the museum to seize the moment to think through and clarify not only its purposes but the activities and programs that will help it to achieve them. Because many will fail if and when there are no longer uses for consequences.

The fifth and final of these consequence is the most critical. It concerns the need to define institutional purposes more clearly. Before he fell asleep, Rip Van Winkle may well have felt some pride in the good place in which he worked, the important people who supported it, perhaps even about its fine collection and imposing building. Today, though, two revolutions later, the pride that we, as museum workers, can take is of a different and, I think, a higher order. It is the pride of being associated with an enterprise that has so profoundly changed the world for the better. Museums can make a difference in the world—often in remarkably different ways—by providing a consistent and consistent backbone of every activity that the museum undertakes, by having once defined them, making those purposes the consistent backbone of every activity that the museum undertakes. Because many will fail if and when there are no longer uses for consequences.
Documenting the Difference:

Demonstrating the Value of Libraries Through Outcome Measurement

By Peggy D. Rudd

Director and Librarian, Texas State Library and Archives Commission
For those of us who work in libraries, who educate those who work in libraries, who use and support libraries, who believe the value of libraries positively influence student achievement, who believe they are a public good, who believe the quality of life, further education from cradle to grave and contribute to personal improvement and success is a library means of public funds is in libraries and that the key weak spot of responses when presented with the class question: What difference does it make? But no matter how fervent our beliefs about the value of libraries, our belief system offers the weakest of responses when presented with the classic evaluation question: What difference does it make?
For many years, academic, school, and public libraries have contributed to data-gathering efforts administered by the National Center for Education Statistics. Libraries collect and report a variety of data to meet specific needs: to respond to surveys, to prepare annual reports, to measure progress toward objectives, to assess the extent to which the library meets standards, to support long-range planning and budgeting, etc.

Librarians have also become increasingly adept at measuring programs and services through inputs (resources) and outputs (products). Basic "counting up" processes (e.g., circulation, library visits, program attendance) have been fine-tuned by drawing relationships between outputs and other variables (e.g., circulation per capita, collection turnover rate, registration as a percent of population). But these current kinds and levels of measurement are insufficient to enable librarians to answer this larger question: What is the impact on program participants and service recipients?

Further, as library programs and services continue to evolve, the staples of our measurement system reveal their inadequacies. In a world in which virtual library visits are as important as door counts, electronic documents retrieved are as numerous as circulation and on-line information literacy tutorials are replacing face-to-face bibliographic instruction, measurement must reflect the new order. Even as the "counting up" processes evolve to match the new shape of library programs and services, the question of results remains.

We believe that libraries have a profound impact on individuals, institutions, and communities. How can we engineer a measurement system that will verify our intuition? In my view, we must measure outcomes. The interest in verifying impact and achieving results does not stem merely from an attempt to better understand the effect of library programs and services on people, or from a desire to improve the Federal performance and results-based planning and budgeting processes. The interest in verifying impact and achieving results stems from a need to improve the Federal performance and results-based planning and budgeting processes, which in turn results in an improved capacity to do what the Library as a whole has become an essential aspect of our lives, our programs, our culture. How can we improve the Federal performance and results-based planning and budgeting processes to support our mission and to meet the expectations of our stakeholders?
With expectations for accountability rising and resources being squeezed between demands for reduced taxes and needs for increased services, librarians must be able to demonstrate the difference programs make by measuring the impact they have on the people they serve.

The United Way of America has led the movement toward outcome measurement through a project aimed at gradually bringing all human service agencies and organizations which receive United Way funding into compliance with outcome measurement. It should be noted that the United Way outcome model was crafted with input from a task force that represented local United Ways, national human service organizations, foundations, corporations, academic and research institutions, and experts in the field of human services. Additionally, program directors from twenty-three national human service organizations provided input. The model was tested by local human service organizations and their experience thoroughly reviewed with an eye to improving the process.

The prime motivation for this coordinated effort is best expressed in the article by J. Gregory Dees cited by Stephen Weil. In "Enterprising Nonprofits" Dees speaks to the very core of accountability and outcome measurement: "In an ideal world, social enterprises would receive funding and attract resources and the success of mission-related activities is especially important. In the library world, the level of results is seen by the level of resources and the success of mission-related activities is especially important. In an ideal world, librarians must be able to demonstrate the difference programs make by measuring the impact they have on the people they serve."
While outcome measurement may at first seem very different from the traditional program or service model, in fact it incorporates all of the elements of traditional library measurement (inputs, activities, outputs) while adding only the element of outcomes.

Outcomes can be a tool for demonstrating the effectiveness of programs and services, for articulating the value of a library or an organization, and for describing the impact of a program or service on the community. The logic of outcome measurement is built upon the foundation of traditional library measurement, but it goes beyond inputs and outputs to focus on the impact of programs and services on individuals and the community.

**Inputs**
- **Resources dedicated to or consumed by a program** (e.g., money, staff, volunteers, facilities, library materials, equipment).

**Activities**
- What the program does with the inputs to fulfill its mission (e.g., conduct story times, after-school homework clinics, summer reading programs, parent education classes, information literacy classes).

**Outputs**
- Direct products of program activities, usually measured in terms of work accomplished (e.g., number of story time attendees, number of students attending after-school homework clinics, number of parent education classes taught, number of children participating in summer reading program, number of information literacy classes attended).

**Outcomes**
- Benefits or changes for individuals or populations during or after participating in program activities, including new knowledge, increased skills, changed attitudes or values, modified behavior, improved condition, or altered status (e.g., number of children who learned a finger play during story time, number of parents who indicated that they gained new knowledge or skills as a result of parent education classes, number of students whose grades improved after homework clinics, number of children who maintained reading skills over the summer as a result of a summer reading program, number of people who report being better able to access and use networked information after attending information literacy classes).

Outcomes can be a powerful tool for planning and improving programs and services, for communicating program and service benefits to the community, for demonstrating accountability and justifying funding needs, for building partnerships and promoting community collaboration, for evaluating the effectiveness of programs and services, and for identifying opportunities for improvement.
organizations and agencies, it is highly transferable to the library environment. The same elements apply: the need is identified, program options for meeting the needs are evaluated, and resources are brought together to implement the option selected. Despite differences in activities for the library and the human service agency, both intend that participants be better off somehow after participating in the program. Although it is necessary to tailor training materials to library activities and provide relevant examples, the fundamentals of the model are entirely applicable to library programs and services.

While libraries can gain many benefits from outcome measurement, some potential problems must be recognized. Evaluation is not a trivial undertaking, and outcome measurement is certainly no exception. It requires staff skill and attention that may be a challenge for smaller libraries. However, the logic model itself can offer some much-needed support. By bringing together on a single page all aspects of a program or service, it becomes a microcosm into which all program elements have been reduced to their essence. The simplicity of the logic model is perhaps its best feature, especially for smaller libraries.

Some librarians fear that their traditional relationship with users may prohibit the kind of user-based reporting and verification that is needed to demonstrate outcomes. One of the great features of libraries is that they serve people indiscriminately. Librarians are very keen on honoring the privacy of users and asking only for information that helps them accurately negotiate a request for assistance. But in order to find out if changes have occurred in a child who attended a program or fact, requires a careful examination into their educational progress. However, if determining the results of a program will help ensure funding which will then reap benefits for additional users, involving users in voluntary program outcome assessment is a most valuable undertaking and should not be seen as a violation of their right to privacy. However, it is necessary to determine the results of a program will help ensure the focus of the library is on the interaction itself. The focus of the library is on the interaction itself, not a record of the program, or if a record of the program, or if it indicates a program improvement. In library programs, however, some of the issues are different. The focus of the library is on the interaction itself, not a record of the program, or if a record of the program, or if it indicates a program improvement. In library programs, however, some of the issues are different. The focus of the library is on the interaction itself, not a record of the program, or if a record of the program, or if it indicates a program improvement. In library programs, however, some of the issues are different.
longer-term outcomes are
more difficult to define and
measure. When the program is
new, it may be more
appropriate to support
initial outcomes, which can
provide
clear evidence of our
impact. It is important to
remember
how the model
proves it.

Outcome measurement can help us
prove that libraries do make a
change in some way. We know this result
happens (libraries do change lives!); in
some way, we know this result
doesn't mean that it helps people change.
What the library can and should
claim is that it helps people change.

Ultimately, the library should
prove that local programs would
continue to see the results of
outcomes measurement can
help us
prove that libraries do
change lives!; in some way, we know
this result doesn't mean that it helps
people change. What the library can
and should claim is that it helps
people change.
Outcome measurement has the potential to be a powerful tool to help us substantiate the claims we know to be true about the impact of libraries in our institutions and in our society. We know that the worth of libraries in our institutions and in our society has the potential to be measured. Yet, we lack the tools to measure this worth effectively. This is why outcome measurement is so important.

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If outcome-based and other formal program evaluation methods are new to your institution, many excellent publications are available to introduce them. This list is offered as a resource and is not intended to be comprehensive. A few of the titles below are available for free online.

- PC Magazine has published reviews ("Editor's Choice," February 8, 2000) of software tools for Web-based surveys that some programs may find useful. See http://www.zdnet.com/pcmag/stories/reviews/0,6755,2417503,00.html as of April 17, 2000.
- Sage Publications, Inc., 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks, CA 91320, 805-499-0721 or http://www.sagepub.com is a commercial publisher that specializes in publications on evaluation and related subjects. They offer many titles that cover aspects of evaluation in detail.
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