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SI 623:
Outcome Based Evaluation (OBE) of
Programs and Services

Winter 2009--Week 1

January 13, 2009

Introduction & Changing Evaluation Landscape

Toward effective outcome evaluation

Joan C. Durrance

What We'll Do In This Class

- Explore the outcomes picture
 - Look at the perspective “on the ground” across practicing professionals
 - Examine a number of outcome studies, exploring their strengths and weaknesses
 - Look at methods and how they influence outcomes
 - Become familiar with current theories
 - Put all this to work in several real settings that fit your interests
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Outcomes Assessment May Give Librarians Long-Awaited Tools to Tell the Library Story



“Why is it that we have not impressed ourselves, as an important and essential institution, upon the governing body or upon intelligent authors and scholars? Is it in the very nature of our work that it should be so, or is it in ourselves?”

Gratia Countryman, ALA President: 1932. (Preer, 2001. p. 62)

Source:

[http://www.alumni.umn.edu/The Broom Brigade.html](http://www.alumni.umn.edu/The_Broom_Brigade.html),

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The Changing Evaluation Landscape--Rapid Move starting in the 1990s toward Outcome Assessment

- Movement toward accountability-The reinventing government movement (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992)
 - Government Performance Results Act (1993) mandates development of accountability measures by all agencies. GPRRA requires every government agency “to establish specific objective, quantifiable, and measurable performance goals for each of its programs. Each agency must annually report to Congress its level of achievement in reaching these goals.”
 - Pressure from an array of funding agencies including charities (like United Way) and foundations (like Kellogg).
 - Rush to implement outcome assessment--sometimes by choice sometimes mandated (No Child Left Behind)
 - Today there is still a great deal of confusion “on the ground.”
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The Outcomes Mandate

- “Service providers, governments, other funders and the public are calling for clearer **evidence** that the resources they expend **actually produce benefits for people.**” IMLS 2000
 - Evaluation must focus on “the **effect** of an institution's **activities and services on the people it serves** - rather than on the services themselves (*outputs*).” IMLS 2000
 - “Those of us who have committed our life’s work to the improvement of libraries are continually frustrated with our **lack of ability** to effectively ‘tell the library story.’ While it would be more convenient if the worth of libraries was simply accepted on faith by university presidents, county commissioners, city managers, and school boards, that is frequently not the case.” Peggy Rudd, Director of the Texas State Library and Archives Commission, (IMLS 2000)
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All Publicly Funded Organizations Are Affected

- All organizations must move toward identifying effective—and relevant—outcomes that show their contributions.
 - If agencies do not take the responsibility for developing their own set of credible indicators, **they risk having someone else do it for them.**
 - Outcomes are, indeed, being forced on agencies. Sometimes such outcomes--e.g. **“No Child Left Behind”** may have **unintended consequences.**
 - All agencies are **moving away** from **output** metrics that reflect only broad, undifferentiated use
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An early outcome study that failed: 'Counting On Results'

- An early outcome study that failed to serve librarians
 - Well-documented study of public library outcomes.
 - Candidate outcomes developed around hybrid PL "service responses" --Steffen et al. *Public Libraries* 2002
 - Study Design:
 - Outcomes identified by librarians
 - Study team developed survey instruments--oversized postcards with pooled librarian developed candidate outcomes and demographic information.
 - Outcomes tested in multiple libraries
 - Most widely reported outcome: **"read for pleasure"**
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Image of
General Public
Library Postcard
Survey removed

Above was a General Public Library Postcard Survey used in the Counting on Results study conducted by Lance, et al. The survey can be found on page 77 of the instruction manual at <http://www.lrs.org/documents/cor/manual2.pdf>.

open

Table 16.
General
Information
Outcomes
removed

Above was Table 16. General Information Outcomes from the Counting on Results study conducted by Lance, et al. The table can be found on page 66 of the report at http://www.irs.org/documents/cor/CoR_FullFinalReport.pdf

Image of Basic
Literacy
Postcard Survey
removed

Above was a Basic Literacy Postcard Survey used in the Counting on Results study conducted by Lance, et al. The survey can be found on page 74 of the instruction manual at <http://www.lrs.org/documents/cor/manual2.pdf>.

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Table 13. Basic
Literacy
Outcomes
removed

Above was Table 13. Basic Literacy Outcomes from the Counting on Results study conducted by Lance, et al. The table can be found on page 50 of the report at http://www.irs.org/documents/cor/CoR_FullFinalReport.pdf

Image of
Business &
Career
Information
Postcard Survey
removed

Above was a Business & Career Info Outcomes Postcard Survey used in the Counting on Results study conducted by Lance, et al. The survey can be found on page 75 of the instruction manual at

<http://www.lrs.org/documents/cor/manual2.pdf>.

Table 14.
Business &
Career
Information
Outcomes
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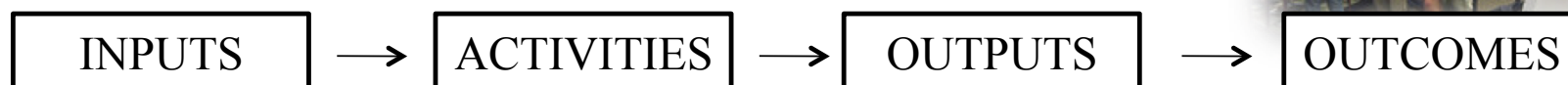
Above was Table 14. Business & Career Information Outcomes from the Counting on Results study conducted by Lance, et al. The table can be found on page 51 of the report at http://www.irs.org/documents/cor/CoR_FullFinalReport.pdf

The Outcomes Logic Model Approach

- Logic Model: “A Theory of action” that describes the program is and what it does/will do, including:
 - **INPUTS:** resources, contributions, investments that go into the program
 - **OUTPUTS:** documentation of activities, services, events and products that reach participants or those who are targeted
 - **OUTCOMES:** results or changes for individuals, groups, communities, organizations, communities, or systems
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The First Outcomes Logic Model: Developed by United Way

Project Outcome Model

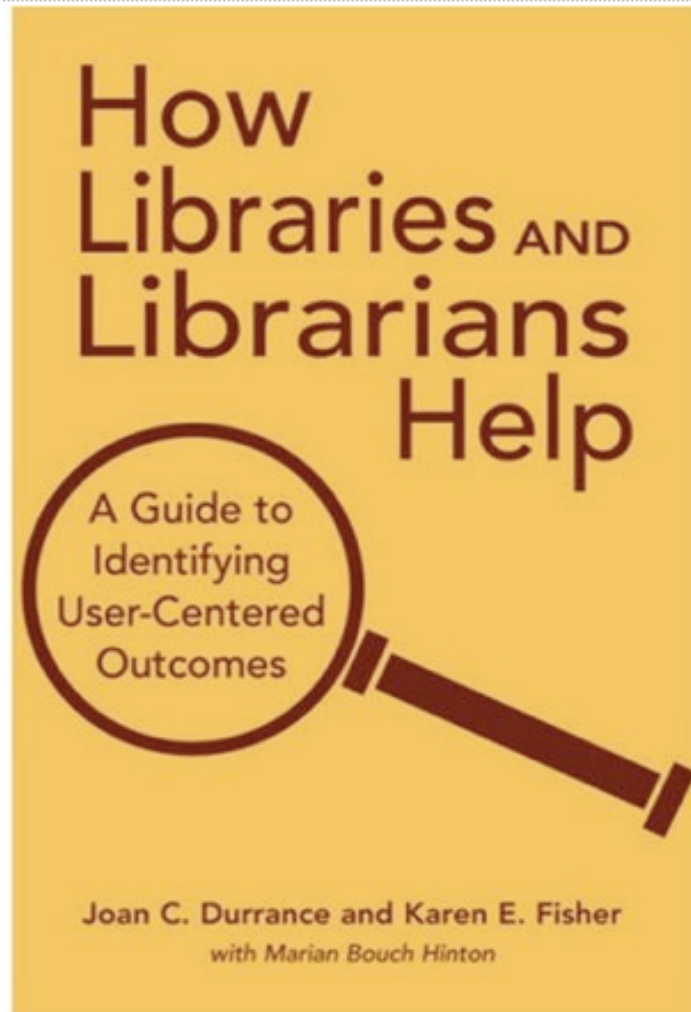


<http://national.unitedway.org/outcomes/resources/mpo/>

Outcomes Reflect Personal, Family, Community Gains:

- Learning
 - Intellectual, emotional & social growth
 - Personal health and safety
 - People's confidence
 - Individual skill building
 - Safe, thriving neighborhoods
 - Civic engagement
 - The quality of life in the community
 - Building the community
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Outcomes Mandate & HLLH-2005



- Built on IMLS-funded study
- Presents a 4 step model designed to help identify the outcomes of specific services.
- HLLH Includes a variety of case studies showing the outcomes of specific programs (such as literacy, afterschool technology programs for teens, immigrant services, community information programs).
- Premise: Outcome data must be collected from users.
- Premise: Outcomes are specific to a program but not unique to it.

Some Ways HLLH Found that Libs & Librarians Help

Access: Increase access to information, knowledge, culture

Savings: Save people time, money, & energy

Place: Provide a safe, comfortable, accommodating, and nurturing environment

Attitudes: Change attitudes and perceptions about libraries, librarians, community, etc.

Personal Efficacy: Foster personal efficacy gains (self esteem, confidence, etc.)

Problem-solving: Help people progress toward a goal or solve a problem

Skills: Facilitate increased skills (Internet, literacy, language, communication, social, coping, etc.)

Learning: Foster learning or knowledge gains (including fostering active involvement in learning—“lifelong learning” “information literacy”)

Connections: Help people make connections (with ideas, people, to a larger world)

Engagement: Foster community connectedness (increased social capital, become more informed or involved as a citizen)

Advancement: Facilitate status changes (people prepare to get a job, become a citizen, decide to return to school)

Community: Foster community building (civic problem-solving, partnerships, collaboration)

Understanding Context: A key to Identifying Outcomes

A contextual approach builds on what is known now and helps evaluator find out:

- **Who** uses what specific services and their component activities
- **The needs** that participants bring to the program/service
- **How many** use this service/program?
- **In what ways** (how) do they use it?
- **What** is it about this service, activity, resource (including the staff or the building itself) that **makes a difference** (including hunches)
- **What differences** does it make? (hunches, stories---> outcomes)

Lesson: Approach the Logic Model Wisely

Contextual Factors of Teen Technology Programs: The teen users

- Users: **Teens** in Flint & **pre-teens** in Austin (ages 8-12) who live in poor 'digital divide' neighborhoods.
 - Flint and Austin participants sought program to gain skills they thought they needed.
 - Flint teens:
 - were nominated by school counselors as underachievers
 - made an academic year commitment & received a stipend for participating 5 hours/week
 - Austin pre-teens.
 - Drop-In after school.
 - Latch-key kids who come and stay (and stay) requiring librarians to devise non-computer activities while kids wait for computer availability.
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Contextual Factors of Teen Technology Programs: Library Activities and Staff

Flint—CIAO

Intensive academic year computer training program.

- **Inputs:** Multipurpose computer lab for after-school & 1 Sat AM session;
- **Food.**
- **Model:** Number of teen participants limited;
- **Activities:** Intensive hands-on interactive technology training. Project learning. Community focused activities & project. Periodic celebrations.
- **Staff:** Skilled youth librarians. Instruction, coaching; interaction w community leaders. Mentors. Admired by participants.

Austin—WFY

Drop-in use of computers

Inputs: Six computers/branch devoted solely to kid use. Adjacent to homework center.

- **Food.**
 - **Model:** Computer time limited to 30 minutes. First come-first served. Can't save work.
 - **Activities:** Informal environment; 'drop-ins' after school; hands-on instruction as needed; Staff developed activities for those waiting.
 - **Staff:** Newly hired staff. Mentors. Admired by participants.
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