



Measures for Our Time

The Value of Libraries

IFLA Cape Town

17 August 2015

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My Inspiration

- ***“Taking Our Measure: The Correlation of Metrics and Leadership,”*** by Charles Henry, President of the Council on Library and Information Resources
- Information gathered on a listening tour of fifty Association of Research Libraries (ARL) member institutions
- Strategic Thinking and Design Process at ARL

Confessions of a Misfit

- 1) I worked in a library that was designed in a way that was antithetical to collecting contemporary publications
- 2) I studied the period in which the modern library was created and realized that a primary reason that my library could not handle contemporary publishing was that it had not changed its basic practice in a century
- 3) By being asked to combine together in one organization and in one place all of the pieces of the puzzle of the current information-seeking environment, I learned that no one had thought to study that world as one unified whole



Libraries & The Age of Modernity



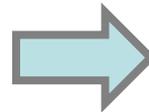
“Opinion is steadily inclining towards making the division of labor an imperative rule of conduct, to present it as a duty..... The categorical imperative of the moral conscience is assuming the following form: Make yourself useful to fulfill a determinate function.”

- Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society* (1893), Pages 42-43

Digital Disruption in Research



The research library used to have a literal, physical monopoly on research – you had to come into our building to access our physical materials



We lost that monopoly over the last 20 years

The world has changed – have we?

On my listening tour, I found that we are:

- **still counting things we can count**
- **thinking about the library as mostly a place**
- **seeing the library as divorced from the larger world of research and higher education**

“We need a new, broader framework for understanding the processes of what learning and knowing look like. Where traditional models of learning have moved from models of direct knowledge transfer to broader notions of skills, we believe that neither of these is sufficient to explain and account for the fundamental epistemic shifts and new affordances that 21st century presents.”

~Douglas Thomas & John Seely Brown, “Learning for a World of Constant Change: Homo Sapiens, Homo Faber & Homo Ludens revisited

A Call for Reform

A future path for library metrics:

- Radical change in the presentation and format of statistics
- Conduct predictive, rather than just descriptive, analysis
- Move from counting inputs to measuring outputs
- More is better is not an underlying assumption of quality – qualitative data should be intertwined with quantitative data to paint an accurate picture of what libraries are producing



My Questions

- ✧ Why do we seem to tackle every new problem with tools that are made for another era?
- ✧ Why do we think more is better?
- ✧ Why do analog models come first to mind?
- ✧ Why don't we measure what scholars actually do rather than concentrating solely on what libraries might provide?
- ✧ Why is there a division in our instruments between computing and libraries?
- ✧ Why do we not move away from descriptive and towards predictive models?
- ✧ Why do we hang on to categories that no longer matter?
- ✧ Why do we present dynamic information in static ways?

Lessons from the Ancients

“But there’s another way of measuring that does not involve placing something alongside a stick or on a scale. This is the kind of measurement that Plato described as “fitting.” This involves less an act than an experience: we sense that things don’t “measure up” to what they could be.”

~An excerpt from “World in the Balance: The Historic Quest for an Absolute System of Measurement” by Robert P. Crease, a professor of philosophy at Stony Brook University

Counting for Counting's Sake?

“Yet, in a world of powerful, networked resources in which information created every three weeks is equivalent to the previous three thousand years of recorded history, the only relevant performance captured by these statistics is the counting itself.”

~ Quote from *“Taking Our Measure: The Correlation of Metrics and Leadership,”* by Charles Henry, President of the Council on Library and Information Resources



Ideas from the Field

Scenario:

We saved the university \$10 million in new construction costs by repurposing a floor of the building for student-facing work areas by removing analog materials that rarely circulated and are available elsewhere. How is that reflected positively in my statistics? It isn't.

- **Could there be instead of an investment index a cost-avoidance index?**

Ideas from the Field

Scenario:

I collaborate with my colleagues so that I do not have to buy as much material and so have more access to more materials for scholarly research – so the less I spend in dollars, the more I spend in building relationships – but it just seems like my investment is going down, not up.

➤ **Could there be a collaboration index?**

Ideas from the Field

Scenario:

I have a wonderful staff of dedicated and well-educated professionals working in my library – it is a small but powerful cadre of people engaged in the research, teaching and learning of my students and faculty. They are efficient and spend their energy in ways that advance the enterprise of higher education.

➤ **Could there be an enterprise fit index?**

Becker Medical Library Model for Assessment of Research Impact

This model is organized into the following pathways of diffusion:

- Advancement of Knowledge
- Clinical Implementation
- Community Benefit
- Legislation and Policy
- Economic Benefit

Find out more:

<https://becker.wustl.edu/impact-assessment/how-to-use>

A Pilot Project

Research and Planning to Develop
New Benchmarks and Methods of Assessment
for the 21st Century Research Library

Mellon funded joint project between the Council on
Library and Information Resources and Stanford
University Library

What the Project wants to examine

1. the relationship of the library's various internal components to the whole organization;
2. its relationship to the university as defined by its response to the primary constituents it serves; and
3. to the world external to the home institution;
4. the response to trends and influences in research beyond the campus;
5. the ability to meaningfully partner and collaborate; and
6. the methods and means used to discover and appropriate resources, tools, and ideas from the wider world.

A New Matrix of Interrelated Activities -- 1

1. Internal context: library services, projects, programs, staffing, physical plant
2. New, additional categories of organizing a new approach to assessment
 - a. Alignment with the mission
 - b. Research and methodologies
 - c. Emerging fields of study
 - d. Macro changes
 - e. Pedagogy
 - g. Strategic development

A New Matrix of Interrelated Activities -- 2

3. Context of the External Environment

a. Innovation

- i. define innovation and innovative efforts
- ii. describe methods of assessing success of innovative programs and projects
- iii. describe failures
- iv. quantify costs of innovation

b. Leadership

- i. give examples of leadership provided internally; for primary constituencies and externally

c. Collaboration and partnership

- i. give examples

Thank you!



Questions? Comments? Thoughts?

Feel free to write to me at: elliott@arl.org