



Advocacy for sustainable public computer access programs: using evidence of library impact on users

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Abstract:

Using evidence of public libraries' impact on their users is essential in efforts to advocate for sustainability of library services. When advocating at the national level, statistical data and empirical evidence can demonstrate that public libraries contribute to stakeholders' goals. Such data can include technology skills that users have gained and how users improve their businesses, become better educated, and access government services. In this paper, five grantees of the Global Libraries initiative of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation will discuss their use of evidence of impact on users to advocate for their programs.

Section 1: Introduction

Advocacy encompasses actions to influence decision-making at the local, regional, state, national, and international level. Public libraries can use advocacy to secure ongoing support and funding and encourage a positive public policy environment that enables them to meet users' changing needs. Through advocacy, public libraries can also attract new users, draw attention to new services, raise visibility, highlight the power of success stories, demonstrate impact and their potential to solve community problems, attract public and private support, and forge partnerships.

This paper discusses the ways public libraries and programs that support them use evidence of their impact to prove to stakeholders that they are meeting the users' needs. Impact evidence is shared with decision-makers to demonstrate public libraries' contribution to users' improved social and

economic well-being, such as providing assistance in finding jobs, building businesses, enhancing education, accessing government services, and improving their health. The authors show that through a combination of data and stories, libraries illustrate how they meet local needs and priorities to justify continued resources.

The authors of this paper are advocacy and impact assessment specialists representing programs in Botswana, Chile, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland.¹ The following are the grantees involved in this paper:

1. In Botswana, the African Comprehensive HIV / AIDS Partnerships, Inc. (ACHAP) in partnership with the Botswana National Library Service. The program is called Sesigo.
2. In Chile, the Directorate of Libraries, Archives, and Museums (DIBAM), under the Ministry of Education. The program is called BiblioRedes.
3. In Latvia, the Ministry of Culture. The program is called Father's Third Son (3td).
4. In Lithuania, the Ministry of Culture in partnership with the Martynas Mazvydas National Library. The program is called Libraries for Innovation.
5. In Poland, the Polish American Freedom Foundation (PAFF). The program is implemented by the Information Society Development Foundation (FRSI) and is called the Library Development Program.

The author's programs use a common methodology to collect impact evidence in persuading decision-makers to support public libraries. Importantly the programs identify funders' priorities or goals, such as bridging the digital divide, developing the economy, or improving health care. They identify the national or local government priorities as they most commonly fund public libraries. In some instances, a specific company's priorities are determined since businesses also contribute to a public library's ability to provide relevant services.

Evidence from primary sources, including surveys and case studies, and secondary sources, such as government statistics and reports is then collected to demonstrate the ways public libraries contribute to those goals. Program implementers also use this evidence to demonstrate their program's effectiveness, including whether the program achieved its objectives.

Finally, various means are used to communicate that evidence, such as media, public relations materials, and collaborative working groups. Building relationships of trust with decision-makers is a critical foundation in ensuring that the evidence is well received.

This paper provides information on programs in Botswana, Chile, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland that are planning to use or already using impact evidence to influence stakeholders to support public libraries. It explains the different goals and priorities identified, the evidence used to demonstrate that public libraries contribute to those goals, the methodology used to collect that evidence, and the ways in which that evidence was or will be shared to persuade decision makers to fund public libraries.

¹ While not involved in this paper there are similar stories from all the countries engaged with Global Libraries. They include: Bulgaria, Mexico, Romania, Ukraine, and Vietnam

Section 2: Botswana

One of Botswana's national goals is to be an "informed, educated nation by 2016". Through the Sesigo project, started in 2009, public libraries will contribute to national goals by providing access to computers and information. Impact study results will be used to advocate to national and local government to designate public libraries as the information access points and platform for all e-government services, including access to information in the areas of health, education, and agriculture.

Botswana's national government priorities include economic diversification, employment creation, poverty reduction, and responding to and reducing the impact of HIV/AIDS. To sustain its socio-economic development agenda, the government has made access to information a core tenet of its strategy. This central element is embodied as one of the pillars of *Vision 2016*, a government manifesto that articulates specific, long-term socio-economic goals for the country and the strategies to meet them, which calls for Botswana to become an educated, informed society by 2016. The policy framework elaborates on this goal by noting that the country must "recognise the importance of information and of developing efficient information systems and networks for the support of research, education, development and communication...." *Vision 2016* urges that information "must be harnessed to the best advantage of all citizens." The aim is that by 2016 all citizens of Botswana can use the power of computers and the Internet to access information and services that will bring benefits to the various aspects of their lives and their communities.

However noble the intentions of *Vision 2016* may be, Botswana faces considerable challenges in ensuring equitable access to information and technology by all citizens. Private ownership of computers and subscriptions to Internet services is overall very low in the country and is likely to remain low due to a variety of prohibitive factors, from availability of electricity to high costs. Public access to technology must necessarily play a crucial role if the country is to make any significant inroads in achieving these national goals. Yet, like most African countries, Botswana lacks widespread public access to computers and the Internet, particularly in rural areas where public access technology is virtually non-existent. So even though policies, business developments, and technology advances are driving increased online access for government services and information that could help improve people's lives in areas such as education, health, business and agriculture online, most Botswana (and particularly the rural populace) are not able to use them.

Botswana's public libraries offer great potential as a platform through which Botswana can gain access to computers and the Internet, because they represent government-supported infrastructure that already operates across the country, bringing trained staff with a mission to support information access. The Botswana National Library Service (BNLS) manages 95 public libraries with a mandate to provide information services to citizens, including 24 branch² and three community³ libraries and 68 village reading rooms⁴. BNLS currently offers books and periodicals and is not

² Branch libraries are the traditional public libraries built at all major population centers of the country, covering all the towns, cities, and rural district headquarters.

³ Community libraries are the newest type of libraries, located in medium-sized localities and founded with the active involvement of community members and leaders, they have been established since 2007 under an initiative of the Robert and Sarah Rothschild Foundation.

⁴ Village reading rooms are community-owned structures built through funding from the Ministry of Local Government's drought relief program, which offer newspapers and book lending services through the BNLS.

keeping up with the demands of the information age, thus limiting public libraries' contribution to attainment of the national vision. A community needs assessment study conducted in October 2008 confirmed that Botswana public libraries are merely warehouses of books, which do not meet users' information needs.

The Sesigo project is a countrywide program to install free public access to computers and the Internet in public libraries, provide training for librarians and users, and raise awareness of the opportunities offered.⁵ The program will fill the information gaps communities often experience due to lack of access to affordable information and communications technologies and resources necessary for their social and economic inclusion. The vision of success for the Sesigo Project is a Botswana transformed into an information society with effective modern public libraries that meet the information needs of citizens. A strong public library system and improved access to information are integral to this transformation, and as such, they significantly contribute towards the attainment of the country's socio-economic goals.

Project implementation includes key areas of technology rollout, training, advocacy, and capacity building. The project's impact assessment efforts track progress and gauge the benefits that the project brings to the country and its citizens. To launch the assessment, the Sesigo project conducted a baseline study in 2009. The main purpose of the study was to set a reference point against which future assessments can be compared to measure project progress and benefits.⁶ The study not only focused on public libraries, but also looked at other public access venues, including private Internet cafes and government-run Kitsong Centres⁷, to determine the status of public access to information and communications technology in Botswana. The baseline study was comprised of six components:

1. A national level study inventories all public access venues in Botswana. There are 167 public access venues with a mission to provide public access to information.
2. A survey of libraries and other venues providing public access to technology gathered data on the state of information and communications technology services available. A sample of 83 venues participated.
3. A survey of librarians and other "infomediaries" collected data on the roles they play in supporting public access to information and communications technology. A total of 117 librarians and infomediaries were interviewed.
4. A survey of users of libraries and other public access venues gathered information on their communication-seeking behaviors and perception of the use of libraries, librarians, and public access technology. In total 1,450 respondents were interviewed.
5. An examination of the library and public access environment looked at the development of local content by organizations; Botswana websites containing local information and services; media reporting, newspaper, or media policy on technology access and use; and library coverage in the media.

⁵ The Sesigo Project is funded by a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Global Libraries Initiative in partnership with the Government of Botswana. The project is implemented by the Botswana National Library Services (BNLS) a department at the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture and the African Comprehensive HIV/AIDS Partnership (ACHAP).

⁶ The Sesigo project plans to undertake annual studies in 2010, 2011, and 2012 to measure impact as part of its impact assessment activities.

⁷ These are multi-use business centers that operate on a cost-recovery basis charging a small fee for computer, Internet, and other services and are run by BotswanaPost, a postal services parastatal.

The following findings and reflections were drawn from the baseline report.

The Sesigo Project is well positioned to help the country take advantage of the library system venues that are already providing information to communities, and move them toward more technology-based services. Understanding where people go for information is important groundwork for the Sesigo Project to build on in its work to help Botswana become an informed, educated nation. Right now, the physical places where people access information are libraries, village reading rooms, and the various venues that offer public access to technology. Of the 167 venues identified in this study, 55% of them are libraries and village reading rooms, which illustrates the important role that the library system plays in information access.

The Sesigo Project should take active steps to reach out to Kitsong Centres and Internet cafés and build on commonalities, so the project is viewed as a collaborator and partner, and not a competitor, in bringing Internet access to Botswana. Forty five percent of the places people are going for information and communications are non-library venues (and 62% of those are commercial Internet cafés), which also have a role to play in building the information society. The government is a major player in the information access space now (representing 71% of the market, between libraries, village reading rooms, and Kitsong Centres), but it must wield its power carefully in that other public access venues offer other kinds of commercial services that public libraries may not be able to provide. Moreover, public libraries offer a different service, not only free, but with trained staff.

In highlighting its differences with other public access offerings, the Sesigo Project should focus on its value to reach the underserved, noting that public access to technology is more likely to be offered through library system venues if it is to go beyond the urban areas and reach people in rural and remote areas. Libraries and other public access venues share common goals to promote the information society in Botswana. Many non-library venues feel that cultural events are important to their work, but few actually engage in cultural activities. This is a strength of libraries and village reading rooms, which could collaborate with these venues

The Sesigo Project could help create a spirit of “being in it together” among information workers in all venues, so library staff and other infomediaries feel that they are working toward common information society goals. This may be especially valuable because Botswana is so small. Library staff and other infomediaries are similar – usually young, female, and educated – and their jobs are not that different. There is an opportunity for library staff to connect with colleagues and peers in other venues.

There is a great need for libraries, perhaps in collaboration with other public access venues, to outreach to the communities where they are located. Library staff and other infomediaries consider social services, active community involvement, and protecting Botswana’s cultural heritage to be important to their jobs, and yet they do not do much of it. In terms of information-seeking behaviors, cell phones and radio together represent 50% of reported daily use – this represents an opportunity for information dissemination through public libraries.

Users placed a disproportionately higher value on computers and the Internet as compared to their actual daily use of these tools, suggesting that users perceive the value of computers and Internet to be high, even though they are not actually regularly using them. Users admitted having trouble finding information and indicated that some information they need is too expensive. Yet, they are not afraid to ask for help. Again, this is an opportunity, for providing low-cost (or free, in the case of libraries), relevant information, and for intermediaries to play a role.

The overall positive response on the role of libraries, village readings rooms, and librarians is a sign that there is support for libraries. Notably, users feel libraries are important to Botswana's development. This is an indication that Sesigo has the hearts and minds of the communities and this should help them build momentum for the library project. Similarly, Sesigo can build on the fact that users feel computers and the Internet are an important function of libraries and are useful. The overwhelming interest in using technology in libraries and in training is important.

Sesigo has taken note of the factors that limit technology access in other venues, and is working to address them in the library context, such as users who said they do not know how to use technology or do not feel it meets their needs. Sesigo is also paying attention to the priorities for technology use seen in other venues and ensure libraries are ready to meet these needs in their programs as well as influence change in this area to drive and promote the use of technology for social programs – accessing information on health, business, government, culture.

There is a significant need – and an opportunity – for the Sesigo Project to play an active role in promoting the creation and dissemination of local, relevant content and services by Botswana-based organizations and through local websites.

Public and media have a symbiotic relationship – public perceptions can be influenced by media coverage and media coverage can be a gauge of public interest in a given topic – and an understanding of how this is playing out in Botswana could be of use to the Sesigo Project as it goes forward. The paucity of news coverage on either libraries or technology also represents an opportunity for Sesigo to build public interest in the program and its role in transforming libraries and building the information society in Botswana.

Sesigo is using baseline study findings to inform project implementation and to advocate for the use of libraries as channels for public access to information. The project team reaches out to the public through its website (<http://www.sesigo.org.bw/>) and newsletter to build momentum for computer use in libraries. The Sesigo Project steering committee reviewed the study's findings and will draw on them as it continues to build and gain stakeholders' support. With the help of Sesigo, at the local level, public librarians can also use this information to shape their work with library users and the communities they serve.

Section 3: Chile

In Chile, BiblioRedes used the results of its impact assessment studies to advocate for government funding for public access to computers and the Internet in libraries. The results of the first impact study had particular importance as the data allowed BiblioRedes to demonstrate that libraries, through public computer and Internet access and training services, contributed to bridge the digital divide. BiblioRedes went from being a three-year project, financed in part by a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, to a government program, ensuring its sustainability with a dedicated government budget.

From 2001 to 2004, the Directorate of Libraries, Archives, and Museums (DIBAM) in Chile implemented a project, called BiblioRedes, to provide public access computers, Internet, and information technology (IT) training services in public libraries, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Chilean government. One of the most important components of the project was the study, the first of its kind in Chile, to assess the program's impact. BiblioRedes used the results of the impact assessment study to advocate for continued government support and to gain greater visibility of public libraries before decision-makers.

The project's first impact study results were particularly important as they laid the foundation for BiblioRedes to be included in the government's annual evaluation of social programs, allowing BiblioRedes to demonstrate that public libraries, through public computer access and IT training, contributed to bridging the digital divide. This allowed BiblioRedes to transform from a three-year project to being a government-funded program, ensuring its sustainability with a dedicated annual budget.

BiblioRedes' impact assessment model consisted of three stages. First was the baseline, which assessed the situation before the implementation of the project. Second was the intermediate stage during which BiblioRedes evaluated the processes and changes during program implementation. Finally, BiblioRedes assessed the program's effects and impacts on users. BiblioRedes integrated and articulated quantitative and qualitative approaches to evaluate impact.

The study demonstrated how the project increased social and cultural capital in public library users and bridged the digital divide, generating greater integration of public library users in the information society. The study also confirmed that public libraries were better positioned in the political agenda and in cultural and economic life because of this project.

The study evaluated both the project's effectiveness, whether project achieved its objectives, and its impact, the project's influence on individuals and communities. Thus, the evaluation put into perspective and was able to pinpoint the effect of project implementation and the benefits of this intervention in the local community, mainly in its contribution to bridging the digital divide among public library users. The following are the factors that the study described and analyzed:

1. Access and usage level of information and communication technologies (ICTs) by users and the community surrounding the public library
2. The effects of ICT use in increasing the ICT competencies of public library users and at the community level

3. The innovation in the management of public libraries, as a consequence of the incorporation of ICT use

The impact study data was shared constantly with the country's decision makers and staff of various ministries and private companies through press conferences, reports, news articles (or other media), brochures, and publicity campaigns, to name some of the most effective activities. BiblioRedes demonstrated how it was able, within three years, to implement activities to contribute to the decline of the digital divide, increase the social and cultural capital, and enable a process of inclusion in the information society for people who had no other possibilities but the ones provided through public libraries.

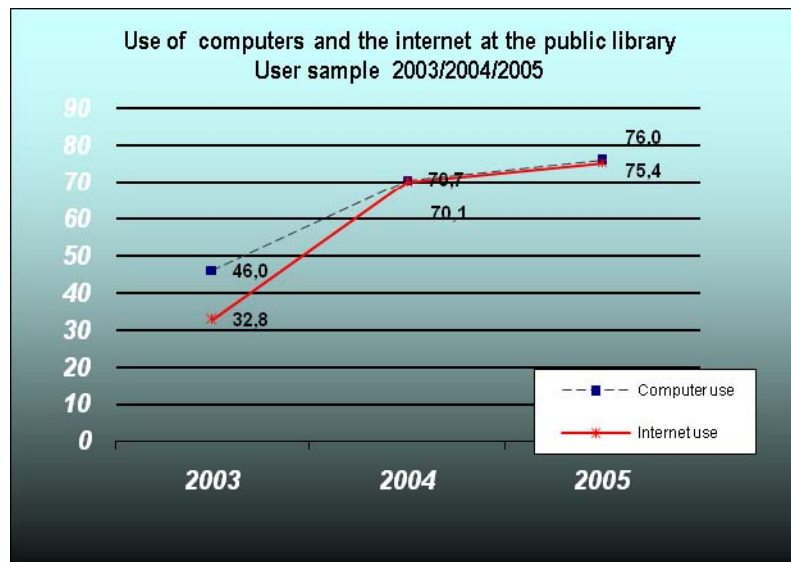
Data that was most effective in demonstrating the project's success were the following:

Use of Computers and the Internet

At the end of the evaluation period in 2005, 67.2% of users reported using computers at the public library. In 2003, only 19.9% of users reported a frequent use of computers at the public library (on all or almost all of their visits) whereas in 2004 it was 65.4%. This implied that, besides the high level of computer use, the frequency of such use was also high.

In the case of Internet, the percentage of users who always or almost always used the Internet when visiting the public library was 68.2% in 2005, as compared with 14.6% in 2003. In addition to a high percentage of computer use, there were also a high percentage of users who used the Internet.

The following graph shows the increase of the use of computers and Internet in the three years of the impact study:



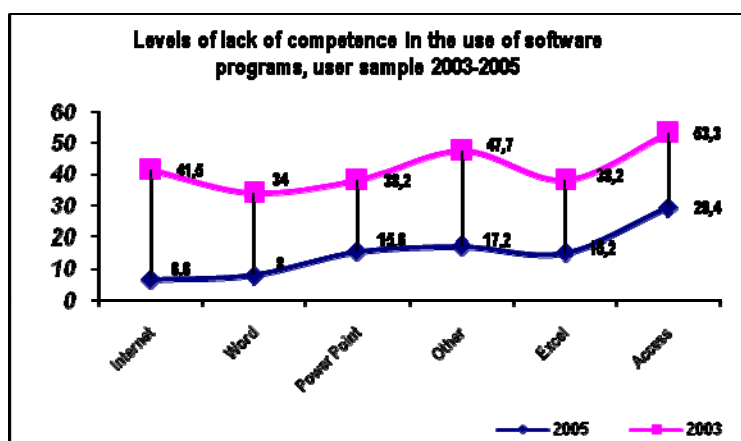
In addition, the study results showed that rural public library users reported using computers at a higher percentage rate than urban public library users. In 2005, the percentages were 83.2% for rural users and 69.3% for urban users. Similarly, the results indicated a higher percentage of users in suburban areas (81.3%) than in centrally located areas (74.3%), which implied that ICT access in

these public spaces contributed significantly to greater social inclusion in the most isolated areas that often lacked such services, such as the rural areas of the country.

ICTs competence level

The impact study also surveyed the users' self-perception of their different ICT competence, which proved to be powerful data for advocacy activities. In 2003, at the time BiblioRedes conducted the baseline study, nearly 70% of those surveyed did not reach a medium competence level, while 66.8% of them reported having no ICT competence level whatsoever. With this information, an index was generated where zero meant there was no ICT competence and 21.4 was the highest competency level. The average index for ICT competence in 2003 was 3.7. In 2004, the index averaged 7.6 and increased to 9.4 in 2005. This supported the conclusion that public library users had greatly improved their ICT competence, as by 2005, only 14.8% of the surveyed users reported having no ICT competence. By 2005, the Internet was cited as the tool that most users, 51.5%, were able to use satisfactorily in contrast with the 37% in 2004.

The following graph shows the drop in the percentage, from 2003 to 2005, of public library users who lack ICT competence. In addition, the percentage of users who were unable to use different software programs dropped by at least 20 percentage points.



BiblioRedes publicized this information to demonstrate the library's impact on bridging the digital divide, which resulted in the Ministry of Education recommending that the government select BiblioRedes as one of the projects the Ministry of Finance evaluate as a part of its annual evaluation program. Having this evaluation by the Ministry of Finance was one of BiblioRedes' goals in its sustainability strategy, since the State was the only possible entity capable of absorbing the costs associated with the operation of the program in its entirety.

Following the initial evaluation in 2006, the evaluation panel recommended that BiblioRedes become a government-funded program and identified a series of recommendations for improvement for BiblioRedes to fulfill by June 2007. BiblioRedes satisfactorily implemented those recommendations and continues to receive significant government funding today. For more information <http://www.biblioredes.cl>.

Section 4: Latvia

The Father's Third Son (3td) project in Latvia is assessing the impact of public library services through quantitative and qualitative evidence. Public libraries receive government funding; however, librarians must advocate for support to provide and sustain services. Impact study results can help librarians demonstrate the value of libraries to government, funders, and decision makers. 3td demonstrates how they:

- *Use impact data in communication with public and private partners to convince them to advocate for libraries*
- *Disseminate impact evidence to different government bodies, funders, and decision makers by using different advocacy tools*
- *Raise involvement of community into advocacy and support for public libraries*

The goal of the Father's Third Son (3td) project is to improve people's quality of life by strengthening and using the capacities of public libraries to facilitate better and proactive use of resources offered by free access to information and communication technologies (ICT) and the Internet. All local government authorities and their 874 public libraries are participating in the project, which is co-financed by the government of Latvia and the Global Libraries initiative of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. In late 2006, when the 3td project started, the concept of impact assessment and the idea of measuring the social and economic impact of library services on library users and local communities was a novelty in Latvia.

3td project objectives included raising the prestige and image of public libraries in society and improving the value of public libraries in local communities. The project is beneficial to many people in Latvia, especially rural populations, and in many ways, including improving their social and economic status. The project aims to motivate existing library users and to attract new ones who could benefit socially and economically from new technologies and free Internet access in public libraries.

Since all public libraries in Latvia receive government funding, librarians must advocate for support to provide and sustain services to their changing communities. The 3td project assesses the impact of its activities in part to provide evidence for those advocacy efforts. The following are the main goals of the 3td project's impact assessment:

1. To study social and economic benefits arising from ICT use, services, and content in public libraries
2. To use impact data and evidence in advocacy efforts to change attitudes and actions towards libraries
3. To demonstrate the value of public library services within communities to government bodies, funders, and decision makers
4. To support efforts towards sustainability of public library services to changing communities in Latvia

Results from the multi-perspective, longitudinal, and nationwide impact assessment studies are a powerful tool in the advocacy efforts of the project implementers and librarians.

The first step to measure the value and impact of ICT-related public library services was to develop a model in close collaboration with different project stakeholders. The 3rd project then implemented the impact assessment model, starting with a baseline study in 2007, and will continue to measure impact until 2011. These efforts will culminate in a final report on the main social and economic benefits and impacts of library services and activities.

The impact study examines the potential impacts in the areas of employment and income, education, communication, culture and leisure, health, and e-governance. The 3rd project uses both quantitative and qualitative methods to survey library directors, librarians, library users, library non-users, children, local government leaders, and other stakeholders and opinion leaders. After the project completes the impact assessment study, the important indicators will be incorporated into the national statistics and data will be collected on an annual basis, resulting in significant improvement in national library statistics. Besides the main impact assessment studies, several in-depth studies are planned that will supplement the main studies with more specific in-depth data and evidence (see Figure 1). The 3rd project uses the impact study results to advocate for public libraries at the national level, distributes the information within the public library community, and uses it to further develop and change library performance strategies.

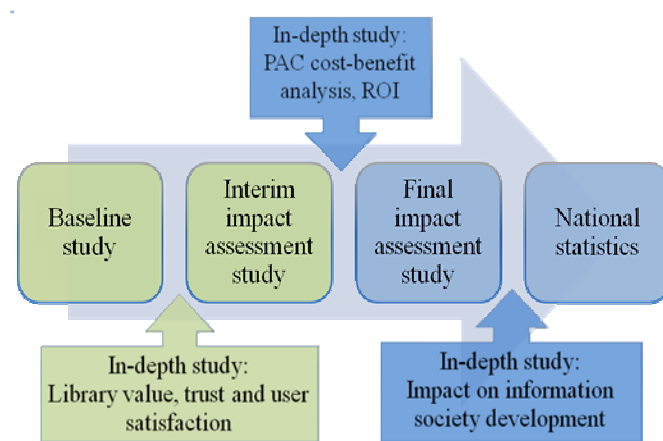


Figure 1: Impact assessment plan

Use impact data to cause an impact

The 3rd project conducted a representative survey of inhabitants as a part of the baseline study to evaluate the situation prior to implementation of the main project activities. That study indicated:

1. Free Internet access in the public library is used by 28% of the Latvian population, almost half of all Internet users in Latvia (61% in 2007).
2. Public library services are actively used by 38% of the population.
3. Less than a half of the population, including public library users and non-users (48%), is aware of free Internet access in public libraries.

4. Social benefits include more meaningful leisure time (64%) and improved education (59%) and communication (58%), while 10% reported economic benefits such as saving or earning money and dealing with employment issues.⁸

The 3rd project conducted an in-depth study on public library value and trust in the second quarter of 2009 after 4,000 free public access computers were installed, Internet connectivity was improved, and librarians were trained to consult users. Data from that study showed:

1. The number of active library users decreased by 4% (34% of population has used public library services during the year prior to the survey). However, public libraries are visited more frequently than other cultural and recreational institution in Latvia.
2. Public libraries demonstrate a high level of trust. Forty-three percent of respondents said they never needed to verify information received from library. This level of trust is even higher than for personal networks, which are the most used information sources.
3. The social value of the new public library services is seen in improvement of leisure (67%) and education (63%). The economic value remains lower than the social value but is increasing in comparison with the baseline. Nineteen percent reported that the public library helped them to save or earn money or to find a job.⁹

To promote the new services available in public libraries, the impact study results were communicated through the travelling exhibition “The World – a Click Away in Your Library”, which consisted of eight double-sided posters designed to tell about public library services. Those services included e-services, employment issues, life-long learning possibilities, socializing, services for people with impaired eyesight, options of library e-catalogues, content of Latvian Digital Library, and available databases. The posters were displayed in innovative public places, such as supermarkets, bus and railway stations, and sport centers, where as many people as possible would be exposed to them.

In addition, an exhibition campaign was implemented to achieve the following advocacy and public relations objectives:

1. Call upon people to use opportunities provided by the 3rd project at public libraries.
2. Inform target audiences about the benefits people can get using ICT at libraries.
3. Motivate existing library users and encourage those who have not yet come to libraries.
4. Involve local authorities and thus create their awareness about libraries’ impact and need to support them.

An exhibition-opening event was held in each of Latvia’s 26 administrative regions to draw the attention of the local community, to assure publicity in the mass media and to establish a personal dialogue with every visitor.

⁸ Findings from the baseline study are described in: Paberza, K., Rutkauskiene, U. (2010), “Outcomes-based measurement of public access computing in public libraries: a comparative analysis of studies in Latvia and Lithuania”, *Performance Measurement and Metrics*, Vol.11 No.1, pp. 75-82.

⁹ Findings from the in-depth study of public library trust and value are described in: Paberza, K. (2010), “Towards an assessment of public library value”, *Performance Measurement and Metrics*, Vol.11 No.1, pp. 83-92.

In the third quarter of 2009, the 3td project conducted an interim impact study that demonstrated the advocacy efforts' impact. The number of active public library users increased by 6% and number of those who have never been to public library decreased by 10% (Figure 2).

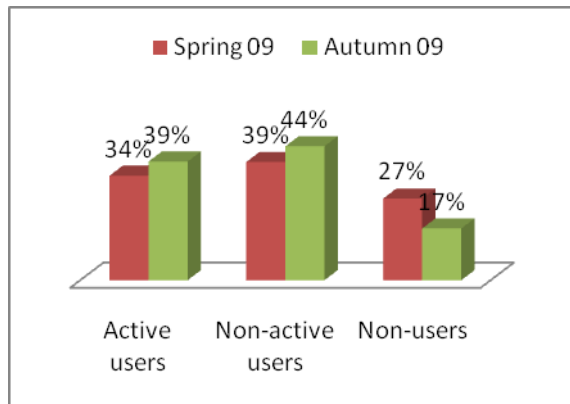


Figure 2: Public library use

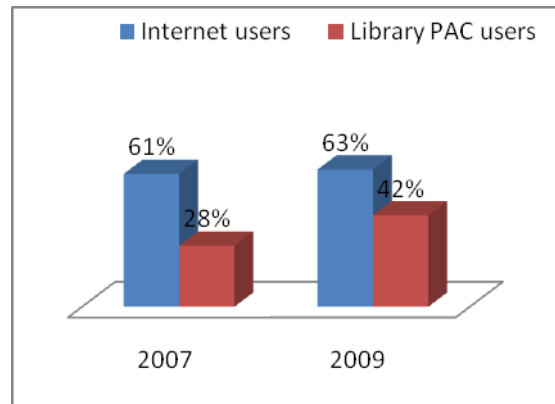


Figure 3: Library PAC users

The study also demonstrated that after two years of implementation of the 3td project the importance of free public Internet access in public libraries has increased (Figure 3). The 3td project team heavily uses this data to advocate to local and national government officials, funders, and decision-makers.

Innovative approaches and different advocacy tools

When advocating for public libraries various tools and techniques are used by the 3td project team, public library supporters, and public libraries. In 2009, the 3td project produced and distributed a desk calendar, rather than a study report or formal newsletter, to share the latest impact data from the interim impact study. The comments and data integrated in the calendar were selected to:

1. Demonstrate how the role of libraries has changed through the 3td project (2007-2009)
2. Provide evidence that libraries supply useful services that are valued and demanded by community
3. Raise librarians' confidence about the job they perform
4. Promote libraries and express gratitude for their efforts implementing the 3td project
5. Build awareness among stakeholders about importance of libraries
6. Link the calendar and other advocacy tools as part of a comprehensive advocacy plan

The 3td project implementers have learned that promoting impact data in such an unconventional way as a desk calendar attracted more attention than traditional methods could.



The 3td project produced nine video stories¹⁰ of delighted lives, fulfilled dreams, and personal wins that they used to advocate more effectively and communicate success stories taking place in public libraries around the country. The videos demonstrated how libraries help people improve their quality of life, proved the importance of the services that libraries provide to the community, and showed how libraries respond to the needs of different social groups. The 3td project and public libraries used the videos for the following advocacy and communication goals:

1. To address potential library users and encourage them to come to the library and take advantage of library services, especially the free access ICT
2. To motivate current library users to discover new opportunities at the library
3. To inspire libraries to be more active in promoting their services
4. To address municipalities and other decision makers, improving their understanding of the role of libraries

All the advocacy tools created by the 3td project are made available for all public libraries and are used by public library directors and librarians in their advocacy efforts at the local level. The tools have been in effective in demonstrating the value of public libraries and convincing government stakeholders to support and invest in public libraries. For more information:
<http://www.3td.lv/index.php/en/par/>.

¹⁰ Videos are available at the official YouTube channel of the Father's Third Son: www.youtube.com/tresaistevadels

Section 5: Lithuania

The Libraries for Innovation team in Lithuania conducted a nation-wide impact study that provided quantitative and qualitative evidence of the impact from the use of ICTs in libraries and society. The study results are used for advocacy and to adjust library advocacy plans, such as:

- *Planning new advocacy activities targeted at and involving government and private sectors*
- *Shifting library advertisement campaign from informing about the public Internet access availability in libraries to librarians communicating the benefits of Internet use*
- *Shifting library outreach campaigns from targeting narrow hard-to-reach target groups to reaching out to the masses, focusing on people living in rural areas, older workers, and senior populations*

One of the Libraries for Innovation (L4I) program goals is to increase public demand for public libraries and publicly accessible computers and Internet access. To achieve this goal, L4I has implemented a numbers of activities to advocate for public libraries and to increase libraries' abilities to advocate on their own. These activities include, among others, events in the libraries, national outreach activities, contests to engage journalists to tell the public about libraries, and newsletters to the local and central government officials.

To advocate more effectively by using hard data, a wide-scale impact assessment study is performed annually. The goal of the study is to investigate outcomes and impacts arising from the use of public libraries and public access computers, content and services that can be accessed through public access computers, library staff facilitation and support, and advocacy activities performed or initiated by the project.

The impact assessment study integrates both quantitative and qualitative methods. The methods used include surveys, structured in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions. L4I designed research instruments for each target group and used various data collection mechanisms, including Web tools. The study integrates the perspectives of nearly all groups that are related with public Internet access at public libraries: library managers, librarians, library public Internet access users, general population (including those who do not use the library), local government leaders, government officials, media representatives, entrepreneurs, and nongovernment and professional association representatives. The study measures the change in perspective over time and therefore will be performed with the same target groups several times during the life of the program as well as after its implementation.

The initial study showed the following results:

1. Internet in public libraries is used most often by adults who are at social risk, such as unemployed (24%), retired (15%), and low-income individuals (26%).
2. Around half (47%) of library public Internet access users do not have the opportunity to use the Internet at home or at work. Groups at social risk, such as the retired, the disabled, and the unemployed, do not have the opportunity to use the Internet either at home or at work at a slightly higher rate (73%, 69%, and 71%, respectively).

3. Nineteen percent of public Internet access consumers have the opportunity to use the Internet only in the public library.
4. The majority (52% on average) of public library Internet access users use it for social benefit, such as enriching leisure time (72%) and improving communication with friends and relatives (57%). In addition to enriched leisure time, older users also value the ability to find health-related information, while youth use it mostly to help with studying. Rural residents use it primarily to enrich their leisure time, whereas urban users use it primarily to save money or find a job.
5. On average, 21% of users feel the financial benefit. Forty four percent saved money while using the Internet, 7% earned money, and the same number increased their income. The financial benefit cited most (20%) is that it is free of charge.
6. Most (81%) of the public Internet access users have asked for library staff help. Every fifth user consults library staff often (23%) and 19% do not ever ask for help. The vast majority (92%) of users are satisfied with the help staff provided.
7. Forty one percent of people use public library services. From all culture and leisure related services, residents were the most satisfied with the services provided by public libraries. If residents were able to determine the level of funding to provide to culture and leisure services, public libraries would be allocated a quarter of the budget.

The qualitative study of public Internet access users demonstrated that they felt positively about the changes that took place in public libraries over the last year:

1. The importance of the library as a cultural/social/community centre has been gradually increasing (this trend has been particularly apparent in rural areas).
2. The perception of the social benefit provided by public Internet access has been strengthening.

Hard-to-reach social groups highlighted other important changes related to the development and improvement of public Internet access service, such as:

1. Public Internet access has contributed to the image of the library as a more attractive, modern, and open place. The library is increasingly perceived as a modern information centre and a place to spend one's free time.
2. Elderly and new visitors were attracted to the library by the Internet service, which resulted in an increased flow of library visitors.
3. Due to the financial situation of Lithuanian residents, high levels of unemployment, and reduced financing for the press and books in libraries, visitors were encouraged to use the opportunities offered by modern services (for instance, read the press online).
4. New ICT services and the assistance provided by the librarian created favorable conditions for the development or improvement of users' computer literacy skills.

The studies suggest that to maintain the positive image of libraries and keep services modern and relevant to potential and current users, it is essential to continue advocacy, advertisement, and outreach campaigns. In addition, long-term programs targeted not only at hard-to-reach groups but also at other potentially new public Internet access users should be developed. These services could include:

1. Computer literacy courses of different advancement levels, which would be organized in response to the skills and needs of each visitor group
2. Campaigns increasing community members interest in the Internet
3. Events during which opportunities and benefits of public access computing would be introduced in a practical and comprehensive way

Based on the study results, L4I concluded that continuous advertising of public Internet access in libraries is needed to attract more users. By putting a stronger emphasis on its social benefits, public libraries will be able to attract residents who do not use public libraries. L4I also determined that current public Internet access users need to be encouraged to publicize the service, as they are often the best advocates for its use.

L4I uses impact study results to make management decisions, including ones concerning advocacy activities. For example, L4I shifted its free Internet marketing campaign from targeting the public in general to addressing specific groups: elder working populations and seniors, unemployed people, and people living in rural areas. L4I shifted its outreach campaigns towards the same groups, from specific and smaller target groups targeted last year. L4I developed communication tools targeted to involve and interact with local government representatives.

To improve the library's image in society and to increase libraries' ability to advocate on their own, this year L4I is starting a new initiative in which they will develop and disseminate the concept of a modern library, train librarians to increase their skills and confidence to advocate, and create a toolkit of advocacy materials for local libraries. L4I expects that this activity will lead to the improved use of the impact study results at the local level and enable local libraries to use the results to advocate more effectively. For more information: <http://www.bibliotekospazangai.lt>.

Section 6: Poland

Forty percent of rural libraries in Poland do not have access to Internet due to the “last mile” problem. The Library Development Program convinced national telecom operator, Telekomunikacja Polska SA (TP SA), and the national government to connect all public libraries to the Internet for free. Arguments used were based on evidence on how libraries contribute to national goals:

- *Role of libraries in developing knowledge-based society*
- *Statistical data on the scale of the problem, including financial estimations*
- *Reducing the digital gap between Poland and the European Union*

The Library Development Program, which began in April 2009 and is implemented by the Information Society Development Foundation (FRSI), is designed to expand development opportunities for small town and village residents in Poland by modernizing libraries. Rural and small-town libraries are to become modern facilities offering universal and free access to reliable information and knowledge through various media, in particular information and communication technologies (ICT) and Internet access.

As part of the LDP, libraries receive computer hardware, but they have burden of providing Internet access, which is a significant challenge as approximately 40% of rural libraries in Poland lack the necessary broadband infrastructure (the “last mile” problem). In addition, many libraries with Internet access face the problem of insufficient bandwidth. The cost of connecting to the Internet, or significantly increasing connection throughput, exceeds the financial capacities of libraries and local authorities. It is unprofitable for Telecom companies to bear the relatively high infrastructural investment costs to bring the Internet to one library in a small village, where there is little hope to acquire other customers.

The LDP faced the challenge of most libraries being unable to benefit from the program due to lack of Internet access. Therefore, the main advocacy goal in the initial phase of the program was to support the provision of broadband Internet to all libraries by developing a systemic solution in close cooperation with relevant central authorities.

The LDP addressed their advocacy efforts to three entities:

1. The Ministry of Culture and National Heritage (MKiDN), which is responsible for public libraries and implementation of the library modernization program Biblioteka+, which is developing Internet-based library management software to support library operations.
2. The Ministry of the Interior and Administration (MSWiA), which is responsible for the modernization of ICT and implementing the information society development strategy.
3. Telekomunikacja Polska SA (TP SA), which is the largest telecom business in Poland and the national operator with the required infrastructure and extensive investment capabilities. It is also interested in maintaining good relations with the central government, as it is in a long-standing dispute with the telecoms market regulator, and has a focus on the social responsibility of business.

Due to the LDP’s advocacy efforts a memorandum of understanding to provide Polish public libraries with Internet access was signed between the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, the

Ministry of the Interior and Administration, Telekomunikacja Polska SA (TP SA) and FRIS, the organization implementing the LDP. TP SA provides all local public libraries in Poland with free connection to the Internet for three years. TP SA does not charge libraries for Internet installation, activation, or subscription fees.

Impact evidence: data used in advocating for that goal

Advocacy efforts in Poland are most effective when supported by evidence of recipients needs and demonstrate the potential results they can achieve. Therefore, to argue successfully for the necessity to equip all public libraries in Poland with broadband Internet, the LDP emphasized the following issues:

1. Poland's digital lag compared to Europe. Only 48% of Polish residents use the Internet, compared to as many as 60% in Europe. Only 13% of households have Internet access compared to 23% in Europe.
2. The deepening social and digital exclusion of rural residents. Almost 39% of the population (38 million people) lives outside mainstream social and economical life. In rural areas, only 23% of residents use the Internet and only 15% have Internet access at home, compared to respectively 60% and 58% in cities. Digital exclusion results not only from lack of physical access to ICT, but primarily from psychological barriers, such as the lack the skills and motivation to use ICT. Using ICT is necessary to fully participate in economic and social life and pursue personal and social development opportunities.
3. Library potential. Poland has a stable network of 8,500 public libraries, 6,600 of which are located in villages and small towns. They employ 9,600 well-educated librarians (41% with tertiary-level education) who enjoy public trust. Libraries are truly universal and available (free of charge) places for everyone in impoverished rural communities. Even today, the social impact of libraries is strong, and it could become stronger and play a crucial role in generating social and human capital and building citizenship. 29.5% of rural and small-town residents (i.e. almost 5 million people) declare that they visited a public library at least once in the last 12 months, and a further 21% had contact with the library in a different form (e.g. participation in events organized by the library).
4. The libraries' ICT needs, which, if fulfilled, could satisfy the residents' need for access to information and knowledge. Sixty percent of libraries have publicly available, Internet-enabled computers, but the Internet connection throughputs are also relatively low, usually less than one megabyte per second, and they are often old, three and a half years on average.
5. The libraries' potential role in overcoming digital lag. The LDP will support libraries to develop new services, described in the LDP's "Menu-8" framework, which includes eight types of library activities, such as access to multimedia services, local information, and e-administration. Some public libraries already successfully deliver such services.
6. Consistency with national priorities, including:
 - a. Increasing the competitiveness and innovation of the Polish economy by building the information society
 - b. Improving the condition of technical and social infrastructure
 - c. Developing rural areas
 - d. Increasing regional development and territorial cohesion

7. Other partners' contribution to library modernization:
 - a. The LDP will provide ICT hardware and training (IT and management)
 - b. The MKiDN will provide small infrastructure grants and MAK+, an Internet-based library management software
 - c. Local government will ensure appropriate conditions for the supplied computer hardware, extend library-opening hours, cover the costs of travel to training courses, and upgrade equipment, as required by their participation in the LDP

Methodology: the ways in which the data has been collected the data

The LDP conducted a series of studies that were used in its advocacy efforts. The LDP's analysis of the program context demonstrated how the LDP relates to similar projects undertaken so far, including various initiatives aimed at delivering access to ICT in rural areas and obstacles they encountered. A quantitative study of libraries examined existing IT infrastructure, such as computer and peripherals; Internet access; legal status; and public library financing. The study also analyzed librarians' IT skills, the ways in which rural residents used library services, and rural residents' needs. This study covered 902 libraries, 500 librarians, 1,021 rural residents, and 615 library users. A qualitative study used case studies to illustrate how libraries function in their 78 communities. This included interviews with librarians, local government representatives, teachers, local activists, and group interviews with residents. Additionally, the LDP used the following sources:

1. Data from the Central Statistical Office, which collects information, such as computer availability, from all libraries in Poland
2. Connection costs assessed by TP SA, initially on a FRSI-selected sample of 100 libraries then on a group of 2,500 libraries
3. Data on all libraries collected by regional libraries to enable TP SA to develop offers and integrate data with their client database
4. Other data from external sources, such as Eurostat and Social Diagnosis, which collect statistics on Internet access in Poland and Europe

Demonstrating impact: the ways in which impact evidence has been used

The LDP used this evidence in various ways to advocate for free Internet access for public libraries. The data was presented in direct talks and negotiations with TP SA, MKiDN, MSWiA, resulting in the signing of the agreement to provide the free access. The data demonstrated to TP SA the scale of the problem, including estimated investment costs and the potential marketing opportunities. The data was all communicated to the library community, opinion leaders, regional authorities, and through the media to the public.

The data was also used to make the agreement operational. The LDP conveyed knowledge about the functioning of libraries to TP SA and communicated practical information to the workgroup of memorandum signatories' representatives. Finally, the LDP shared the information with a team in TP SA that was responsible initially for defining company commitments and later for connecting libraries to Internet. This information was crucial for internal advocacy within TP SA and necessary for designing the implementation model, such as the guidelines on how to prepare legal agreements with libraries, how to communicate the TP SA offer to libraries, and how to conduct client interviews with libraries. For more information: <http://www.biblioteki.org/en>

Section 7: Conclusion

Effective use of relevant data and statistics that demonstrate the impact library services have on users' lives can persuade decision-makers to support library services that meet users changing needs. Decision-makers' priorities should be identified and evidence collected to demonstrate how libraries can contribute to those priorities. The evidence should be presented to decision-makers through targeted channels and conveyed by trusted individuals. This approach will help public libraries demonstrate that their value and importance.

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