The IMPACT Survey Project
Helping U.S. public libraries evaluate the impact of public access technology services

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Introduction
Background: The U.S. IMPACT Study

- Conducted in 2009 with funding from IMLS and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (Becker, Crandall, Fischer), 1st large-scale investigation of the ways U.S. library patrons use computers and the Internet at public libraries, why they use it, and how it affects their lives.
  - Case studies: 4 libraries, 280 interviews
  - Telephone survey: 2,045 users, 1,131 non-users
  - **Web survey:** 401 libraries & 44,881 completed surveys
U.S. IMPACT Study findings

- U.S. population: 245 Million
  - Age 14 and Older
- Library visitors: 169 Million
  - 69% of population
- Public Library Internet Users: 77 Million
  - 32% of population
  - 45% of library visitors
U.S. IMPACT Study findings in context

Annual Use of Public Libraries

= 169,268,956
(unique visitors)

= 77,016,182
(unique users)

Annual Attendance at Professional Sports Events

= 73,402,524

= 21,549,238

= 21,475,223

= 17,469,552

= 133,896,537 total combined attendance
(not individuals)
Top uses of public access technology in libraries

- Do email: 72%
- Learn about illness: 45%
- Visit social networking site: 31%
- Learn about a political activities: 31%
- Learn about diet or nutrition: 29%
- Get government forms: 27%
- Pursue hobbies: 27%
- Work on resume: 24%
- Get help from a government official: 22%
- Get in touch with old friends: 21%
- Learn about a college admissions: 20%

Source: 2009 U.S. IMPACT Study telephone and web survey
Asked of public library technology users
Patrons are making it happen...

Area of user activity

- Social connection: 60%
- Education: 42%
- Employment: 40%
- Health and wellness: 37%
- Government and legal: 34%
- Community engagement: 33%
- Managing finances: 25%
- Entrepreneurship: 7%

Percent of all users

Source: 2009 U.S. IMPACT Study telephone and web survey
Asked of public library technology users
Outcomes

Employment

31% of PAC users looked for a job. Of these:
- 68% submitted an application online
- 33% were interviewed
- 16% were hired for a new job.

In all, 4 million people found jobs using public library computers.

Education

Overall, 42% of users did educational activities. Of these:
- 37% learned about college programs
- 37% did homework
- 24% took an online class

Over 64% of adult users were accepted into an educational program.

Source: 2009 U.S. IMPACT Study telephone and web survey
Asked of public library technology users
More outcomes!

Health

37% of PAC users did health-related activities. Of these:
• 60% learned about diet
• 48% learned about exercise

Of the people who learned about diet or exercise, more than 80% made a change in their health practices.

Civic Engagement

Overall, 33% of users engaged in civic activities. Of these:
• 80% learned about a political activities, candidates, or causes

Of users who learned about politics, 76% said they were able to make a decision to support a candidate or cause.

Source: 2009 U.S. IMPACT Study telephone and web survey
Asked of public library technology users
Taking a step back: theoretical frameworks

Moore’s Strategic Triangle

- Are we supporting or increasing the **substantive value** of public access?
- Are our services **operational and administrative feasible**?
- Will our decisions **earn political support and legitimacy** for library services?

Creating Public Value (Moore, 1995)
Theoretical frameworks

Situated Logic Model

Where does the library’s work contribute to a larger public policy objective?

(Naumer, 2009)
The IMPACT Survey

- Enable public libraries to collect **local** patron-level data about the impact of providing free access to public access technology services for purposes of **evaluation** and **advocacy**.

  **How?**
  - Revise and refine the U.S. IMPACT Study web survey instrument
  - Create sustainable platform for taking libraries through the process of successfully running the survey (impactsurvey.org)
  - Provide communication and advocacy tools to help libraries generate participation and put their findings to use
  - Test!
The IMPACT Survey instrument

- Criteria used when refining U.S. IMPACT survey questions:
  - Outcome creates value
  - Outcome fits within the situated logic model framework
  - Librarians care about the outcome
  - Patrons demonstrate desire to share around this outcome
  - Anticipated response rate for this question reasonably strong

- Significantly reduced length of instrument (10-15 min)
IMPACT Survey domains

- Civic Engagement
- eBusiness
- eCommerce
- Education
- eGovernment
- Employment
- Health & Wellness
- Social Inclusion
The web survey: logistics

- Worked with UW Social Development Research Group (SDRG)
- Each public library system has unique survey URL based on FSCS key
- Matrix to facilitate domain-level skip logic
- Available in Spanish
- Patrons connected via links on library website
Web Survey extras

Branch location selector
Paper survey + data entry option
(thanks to the FCSC key)
The IMPACT Survey process

10 step process:
1. Library creates a system-level user account at impactsurvey.org
2. Provide background information about your library (confirm IMLS data, complete Intake Form)
3. Select your survey fielding start and stop dates
4. Download buttons and banners to connect patrons to library’s unique URL
5. Use provided communication materials to inform staff of survey purpose, process
6. Promote the survey!
7. Install links to the survey on library website
8. Remove survey links at the end of designated survey fielding period
9. Download your library’s customized report within 24 hours
10. Use report & provided advocacy tools to communicate value of services
impactsurvey.org

The IMPACT Survey enables your public library to collect patron-level data about the impact of providing free access to computers and the Internet for purposes of evaluation and advocacy.

Library login
Username or e-mail
Password
Reopen login password
Login

Home
The IMPACT Survey collects outcome-focused data about general use of library and online resources, as well as use across the following domains:
- Civic Engagement
- eGovernment
- eBusiness
- Employment
- eHealth & Wellness
- Education
- Social Inclusion

As a participating library, you can:
- Sign up online
- Customize your survey and add questions
- Run the survey annually or biannually per your reporting needs and to monitor change

As a participating library, you will receive:
- A color-coded, ready-for-distribution report of your library’s data: [see a sample report]
- Customized communication materials to help you promote the survey to patrons: [see a sample flyer]
- Advocacy materials you can use to make the case for public access technology to a variety of audiences: [see a sample PowerPoint presentation]
- Training videos designed to launch your advocacy efforts at the library level
- Technical and administrative support from the IMPACT Survey team at every step

Find out more!
Download a PDF of the survey questions for reference. The online survey takes approximately 15-18 minutes to complete and is available in English and Spanish. Patrons must be 14 years of age or older to take the survey.
Find out what it takes to run the IMPACT Survey at your library. Visit the How To page
Libraries self-manage their survey process

With support from:

- How To page
- FAQ
- Downloadable Fielding Guide
- Contact Us form

Goals:
- Scalable
- Sustainable
Connecting Inputs to Outcomes

What inputs influence user outcomes?

- Step #1: Confirm IMLS data
  - # outlets (branches, bookmobiles)
  - # residents in legal service area
  - # patron visits during past year
  - Hours library open during past year
  - Total operational expenditures in past year
  - # FTE staff
  - # public access Internet terminals
  - # public access terminal uses in past year
Connecting Inputs to Outcomes

*What inputs influence user outcomes?*

- Step #2: Additional Intake Form variables
  - Source of IT support
  - Source of IT connection
  - Maximum download speed (advertised)
  - Wireless?
  - Assistive technologies for people with impairments?
  - Session management software?
  - Staff training around PAT available during working hours? For volunteers?
  - Appointments for 1-on-1 technology training, help?
  - Classes on online safety?
  - PAT included in library strategic plan?
  - Engage community partners in delivery PAT services?
  - Way to track expenses related to PAT?
  - Hardware replacement plan?
  - Standard maximum daily time limit on public access terminals
  - Library staff able to extend session time?
  - Dedicated public access terminals for specific uses?
Okay... go!

- Choose survey start and stop dates (2-4 weeks)
  - Option to extend fielding period length mid-course
- Download buttons, banners, pop-up
- Advertise to patrons, community
Report and Advocacy Tools

Advocacy toolbox:
- Talking points
- Presentations
- Training videos
- Letter to the editor template
- Op-Ed template
- Drop-in article template
- Patron comment cards
Testing

- 2-part Testing
  - Beta-test
    - 5 public library systems
      - 1 tested branch selector page
      - 1 tested paper surveys
  - Pilot
    - 282 public library systems
    - 2 state library agencies
    - 30,680 respondents

- Original Intake Form too difficult
- Paper survey option of value
- Branch selector landing page worked
- Completed November 7th
- Program evaluation being conducted by ORS
Top takeaways

- Libraries find this information **valuable**

- Designing an multi-step online tool to be used by all 9,000 U.S. library systems is challenging. Wide range of technology resources, skills, support. But majority of libraries could do this – it worked!

- Helps libraries to start thinking about the relationship between public access technology inputs and community outcomes
What’s next?

- Project will serve as example in IFLA (International Federation of Library Assoc.) advocacy training
- Gates Foundation Public Access Technology Benchmarking Project
  - Working to link public access technology inputs with user outcomes
    - Linking U.S. IMPACT Study data with IMLS Public Library Survey & ALA/Bertot Public Libraries and the Internet Survey
    - Trying to identify input levels critical to outcomes
      - How many computers per capita?
      - Help or training?
    - Establish benchmark targets
  - IMPACT Survey tool key in linking inputs and outcomes
- Evaluation feedback coming – survey and interviews with participating libraries will help us identify priority changes
  - There’s a lot we’d like to do!
    - Branch-level data, domain surveys, more sophisticated advocacy materials, state-level portal, survey translated in additional languages, 1 system/multiple accounts
Thank you!

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http://impactsurvey.org
http://tascha.uw.edu/research/usimpact/

http://youtu.be/yJvPsOFOVcU