Evidence-Based Management
USING *PLAmetrics* TO ADVANTAGE

David Cooksey, San Antonio Public Library, TX;
Steve Potter, Mid-Continent Public Library, MO; Sandra Cannon, Austin Public Library, TX;
Linda Raymond, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, NC; Shani Fox, Multnomah County Library, OR;
Anna Amen, Northbrook Public Library, IL

Public libraries are increasingly employing *PLAmetrics* to support a wide variety of local operational and advocacy needs. Some examples follow…

1) San Antonio Public Library, TX
David Cooksey, Performance & Innovation Manager

"*PLAmetrics* has been a great resource for SAPL" advises David. "We use it for a variety of both planned and ad hoc purposes.
In terms of planned, SAPL looks at the data from three primary benchmarking perspectives:
1) libraries with comparable income (revenues) per capita
2) City of San Antonio identified peers and
3) comparable population served libraries.

It is truly helpful having the capacity to simultaneously view these different perspectives. In terms of specific use, the *PLAmetrics* generated reports are used…
a) to inform the Library Board of Trustees
b) as part of the library's annual budget process with the City and
c) for convenient access to data to assist in responding to ad hoc situations with meaningful evidence that before would likely not have been possible or if so, would have taken a lot of staff effort.

We've had a number of successes where *PLAmetrics* has been an important contributor.
It sure works for us!"

2) Mid-Continent Public Library, MO
Steve Potter, Library Director and C.E.O

"One way that we use *PLAmetrics* is to support our budget preparation.

Here is the link to our recently approved fiscal '13 budget:

http://www.mymcpl.org/_uploaded_resources/Proposed_Budget_2013-14.pdf

The following are a few places where we referenced the PLDS data that we harvested from *PLAmetrics*:

a) Page 22 graph comparing MCPL expenses for personnel, material, and overhead versus peer averages.

b) Page 30 and 31 where we talk about MCPL proposed expenses for materials within categories (e.g., books, ebooks, periodicals, etc.) and compare that to our peers based on the PLDS data.

c) Page 44 and 45 where we look at several output measures and compare MCPL with the min, max and peer average."

"All of this data really helps put the MCPL budget in perspective. We are a large library system. In fact, when I first started doing the budget, our library's budget was greater than the total budget of one of the counties that we serve. This was confusing to those county officials. Placing our information in context has helped them a lot.

Additionally, it helps to better tell the story to our public, our staff, our board, and our larger community. Frankly, this is just the start of how we will be using the normative data from PLDS. As we move to more data-driven decision-making and continue to migrate toward outcomes and impacts, putting our numbers in context with other libraries helps our community understand what the data mean."

3) Austin Public Library, TX

Sandra Cannon, Division Manager of Cataloging & Collection Development

"The PLDS data (via **PLA**metrics) is currently used to benchmark the Austin Public Library with other similar sized U.S. public libraries. With this data, we justified an increase in our overall budget to City Council. This has assisted us in requesting an increase in the materials budget, the need to increase our per capita amount, justifying the need of new hires or replacements, etc. and, promoting how well we are doing in other areas by comparing ourselves to the benchmarked libraries.

The ultimate benefit of utilizing **PLA**metrics is that we have been successful in realizing our requests by utilizing the data.

"We consider **PLA**metrics to be the official data representation of our industry."

4) Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, NC

Linda Raymond, Associate Director - Access and Organizational Initiatives

"We use the data gleaned from **PLA**metrics most effectively to tell our story to our stakeholders, showing how we stack up against our peers.

I think it helps to put things in perspective for those who are not familiar with library operations which, in turn, helps them be more open to our needs."
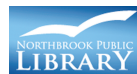
5) Multnomah County Library, OR

Shani Fox, Administrative Analyst

"We use **PLA**metrics to review Multnomah County Library's data, as well as compare MCL to our peer libraries — ten libraries from around the nation that we've identified as leaders in public library service, and that we track in terms of a variety of measures such as circulation, turnover, materials spending per capita, programming and reference per capita, open hours and staffing levels.

PLAmetrics is a cost-effective tool for this purpose and we like the easy online access to the data sets."

6) Northbrook Public Library, IL

Anna Amen, Business Manager

During discussions around a renovation project, our trustees found the **PLA**metrics programming and usage statistics of libraries in the Chicagoland area very helpful.

About PLAmetrics

PLAmetrics is an online public library data management tool for employing historical and current PLDS data for benchmarking, trend reports, analyses, etc. **PLA**metrics also provides access to historical IMLS data.

Note: 1,400+ public libraries across North America annually provide operational data.

The PLA supports **PLA**metrics on behalf of its member libraries and retains Counting Opinions to manage the annual PLDS data collection and the **PLA**metrics data tool.

For more information and to subscribe, go to
http://www.plametrics.org

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