

Measuring Social Impact of Public Libraries

Measuring the Impact of BC's Public Libraries

BC Public Library Partners



Welcome & Introductions

BC Public Library Partners

Presenters:

- Rob Bennie, Director, BC Libraries Trustee Association; Trustee Gibsons & District Public Library
- Cari Lynn Gawletz, Chair Assoc of BC Library Directors; Library Director, Grand Forks & District Public Library
- Sarah Felkar, Interim Executive Director, BC Libraries Co-operative; Director BC Library Association
- Heather Evans-Cullen, Vice-Chair, Assoc of BC Public Library Directors; Library Director Gibsons & District Public Library
- Jessica Aldred, Executive Director, Assoc of BC Public Library Directors

Today's Presentation

Introduction to public library impact measurement

Why

What can be measured

Two Different Types of Models:

Project Outcome - framework any library can use

Toronto Public Library - deep-dive done by an outside firm

Discussion

What do your community members value about your public library?

What would you want to measure about your local library?

What information would help your local government understand the impact libraries have on residents?

Why do Impact Measurement of Public Libraries?

“Library statistics are important but... lending numbers, downloads and foot traffic say something about the use of libraries but they don't really say something about the value and impact that libraries bring to communities.”

[A haven in our community: The impact and value of public libraries – The Library Lab \(christianlauersen.net\)](http://christianlauersen.net)

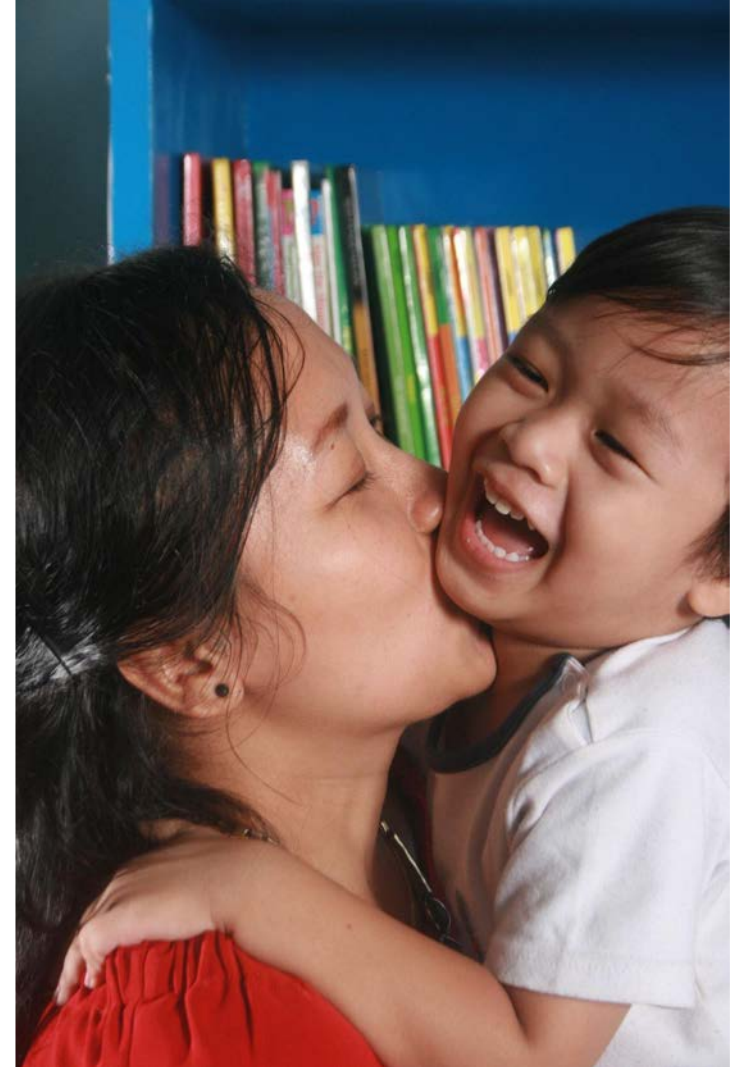


Why Measuring Impact Matters

There are 71 library systems across BC - small rural to large urban - each improving the lives of residents in many ways.

We cannot see the role libraries play in making life more affordable, helping newcomers with the support they need to thrive in their communities, reducing isolation for seniors or building the foundations of literacy from a spreadsheet.

We need insights and understanding beyond usage to have a sound and constructive debate about why libraries matter.



Project Outcome

Helping libraries to capture their impact in the communities they serve.

To develop standardized measures of effectiveness for widely offered public library programs and to promote the training for implementation and use of the measures across public libraries.

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, resulting in a three-year, \$3 million grant.

Examples:

- measure the knowledge a patron gained after taking a job skills or résumé writing class
- quantify the patron's value of early childhood literacy programming, a bookmobile, or a cultural learning activity.

Why

To better measure and improve upon impact on community.

To support planning and assessment over time.

To help better manage services and resources.

Accountability to funding and substantiate additional investment.



Areas of Impact Measured



Civic/Community Engagement

Services to inform, enrich, preserve, and promote community engagement, ranging from government issues to recreational activities. Examples include: Cultural Activities, Government Services, or Civic Engagement services and programs.



Digital Learning

Services to access technology, build technology-related skills and confidence, and make beneficial use of digital resources and services to meet patron needs. Examples include: Technology Usage Skills, Internet Education, or Computer Education services and programs.



Early Childhood Literacy

Services to improve early literacy and learning skills to prepare children ages 0-5 for school. Examples include: Storytime, Parenting/Child Development, or Every Child Ready to Read services and programs.



Economic Development

Services to improve business start-up and development skills. Examples include: Business Development or Starting Your Own Business services and programs.



Education/Lifelong Learning

Services to gain and impart new knowledge and skills, improve academic performance, and engage in a variety of lifelong learning activities. Examples include: Book Club Reviews, Author Discussions, Education Classes or Labs, or Bookmobile services and programs.



Health

Services to improve the health of patrons and their families. Examples include: healthy cooking, healthcare information, exercise, or health and wellness services and programs.



Job Skills

Services to improve the skills needed to find and apply for jobs and advance careers. Examples include: resume help, job fairs, or job search services and programs.



Summer Reading

Services to provide fun, engaging, and continuous reading opportunities throughout the summer and limit learning gaps for school-aged children. Examples include: Summer Reading for Adults, Teens, and Children.

Toronto Public Library

Moves beyond traditional statistical measures such as number of visits and uses of services.

Aim is to help better understand how the library impacts people's lives: how vital the library is to the City, enabling residents to grow and thrive.

The study was funded through donations.

Toronto Public Library



Toronto Public Library Programs

Profile average: 3.7

5 = all respondents have replied "To a very large extent"

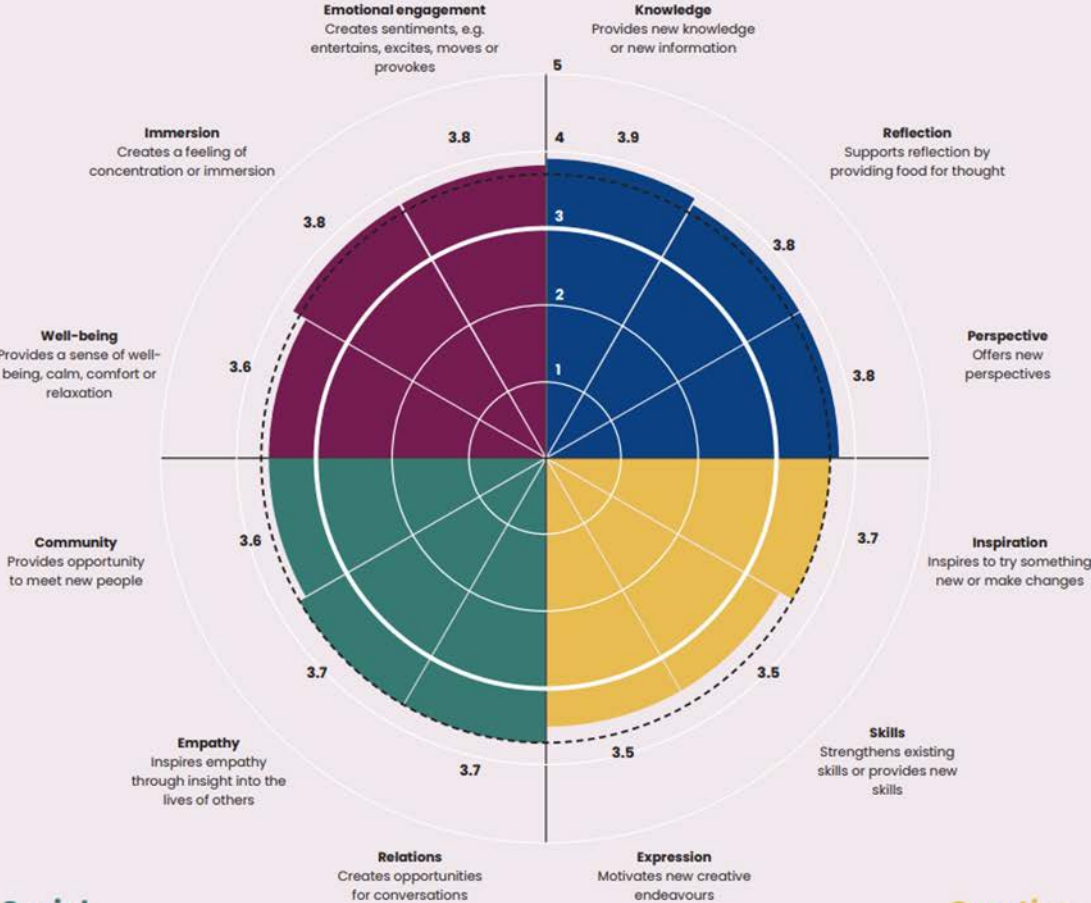
The probable outcome space

1 = all respondents have replied "Not at all"



Emotional Impact

Intellectual Impact



Social Impact

Creative Impact

Toronto Public Library's Impact

The study found that the library is:

An incredible force to combat social isolation

A place where people can better themselves

A critical portal to resources and services for most vulnerable



How was Impact Measured

The methods were:

2,800 TPL customers via online survey, 65 percent of whom were library users in the past year.

Conducted 64 qualitative interviews.

Held three focus groups in five branches across the city to dig further into survey results and help contextualize the data.

Discussion

BC's public libraries are critical to the vitality and resiliency of our communities.

They are funded primarily through a combination of local and provincial funding.

Public libraries remain steadfast in their commitment to serving their communities.

How that looks in each community will have common threads and differences depending on identified needs and capacity of the library to provide programs or services.

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Conclusion

BC's public libraries are deeply appreciative of a one-time, three year grant from the province that is enabling public libraries to enhance services in their communities:

Extending hours, improving air quality systems to be cooling centres, increasing summer reading program supports, building out services for newcomers, upgrading technology and digital access...

However, one-time funding doesn't support the kind of long term planning and ongoing services that have the impacts we've been discussing.

We are asking the Province to increase annual provincial public library funding to \$30 million.

Thank You

Thank you for your time and contributions to today's conversation. Your perspectives will inform our work which we see as key in creating understanding of the value of public libraries.



Resources

[Project Outcome | Public Library Association \(ala.org\)](#)

[Measuring the Social Impact of Toronto Public Library : Toronto Public Library](#)

[A haven in our community: The impact and value of public libraries – The Library Lab \(christianlauersen.net\)](#)

Contact BC Public Library Partners: ed@abcpld.ca

The Spirit of the North Healthcare Foundation

In appreciation of our speakers today and with thanks for your contribution, UBCM has made a donation to The Spirit of the North Healthcare Foundation. The Foundation works collaboratively with its Donors, Healthcare Partners and has been instrumental in contributing over \$40 million towards essential equipment, enhancing facilities, and supporting the ongoing education of healthcare professionals and medical staff.