

Connecting Resources, Goals, Statistics, and Stories: Exploring Logic Models as a Means of Valuation in Youth Library Services

ALA Emerging Leaders 2015
Group D Project

Prepared for



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Table of Contents

Continuing the Journey: ALSC Emerging Leader Group 2014 & 2015	2
ALSC Community Forum on the Value of Youth Services	2
ALSC Valuation Task Force Survey	3
What is a Logic Model?	5
Reasons to use a Logic Model	5
Points of Difference Between Logic Models and Other Valuation Tools	6
Why use Logic Model Builder?	7
Defining Outputs and Outcomes	8
Components of a Logic Model Builder	8
Advantages of a Logic Model Builder	9
Challenges of a Logic Model Builder	9
What We Learned	10
Recommendations/Next Steps	10
Resources	12

Continuing the Journey: ALSC Emerging Leader Group 2014 & 2015

The 2015 ALSC Emerging Leaders Team has continued the work of the 2014 ALSC Emerging Leaders Team, to investigate methods of demonstrating valuation in Library Youth Services Programs. Last year's team submitted a [final report](#) to the ALSC Board of Directors calling for more research in the area of valuation in youth library service.

Utilizing their initial findings and recommendations, feedback from the ALSC Community Forum on the value of Youth Services, and survey data from the ALSC Valuation Task Force, the 2015 EL Team focused much of their research on the use of Logic Models in a Library Youth Services Program.

Nonprofits are increasingly required to demonstrate the effectiveness of their program activities through outcome-oriented project evaluation. Logic models are a widely used tools to help organizations articulate their goals throughout the program planning process, and are sometimes required by prospective program funders.

Beyond the fundraising tie-ins, logic models provide clear deliverables for librarians to share with community stakeholders as an advocacy tool. They are an effective starting point for librarians to translate “stories” into outcomes.

ALSC Community Forum on the Value of Youth Services

The ALSC Community Forum focused on the valuation of youth services focused on the big picture, thinking about what is done in Youth Services every day and how to make the case to customers, potential customers, and stakeholders. Valuable Research was defined as the process of determining whether a social intervention has produced the desired result.

Questions Posed During Community Forum:

- How do you currently measure your work?
- What are examples of outcomes that members have been asked to provide?
- What tools/resources would be helpful in responding to those for use in advocacy?
- How effective do you feel your assessment measures are in accurately capturing your efforts and success?
- What is the role of assessment (or valuation research) and advocacy in sustaining funding for libraries?

Our Take-Aways:

- Youth Services librarians want to speak in outcomes but feel they must report in outputs.
- There was still an interest in a value calculator, but there is one on ALA's website that could be modified by individual Youth Services programs to meet their needs.
- Outcomes need to speak in ways that translate to those who speak in outputs. Much talk about the interplay of outcomes and outputs.

- Example of Outcomes may be oaklandreads.org - “levelers of change” that were being measured in multiple ways over time can be viewed as examples of Outcomes
- Outcomes show a change in behavior. Don’t confuse Outcomes w/ all qualitative data.
- If funders, library board members, and library administrators are the audience, finding what information is important to them is critical.
- Outcomes reporting may help libraries “stand out” in a sea of community reports as well as engage the community

ALSC Emerging Leaders Questions Raised:

- Who is the intended audience? Community? Program administrators? Library Boards?
- If “yes” to all, is there a danger in trying to be all things to all people?
- What outcomes do we (Youth Services Programs) focus on/value to share?

ALSC Valuation Task Force Survey

In conjunction with the Valuation task force, the Emerging Leaders team administered and interpreted a survey. Responses suggest a clear need for training to help librarians distinguish between program outputs and outcomes (see: “Defining Outputs and Outcomes, page 8.

A number of participants requested that ALSC commission research on the topic of library services valuation, or training from ALSC in this area. The following areas were determined to be potential areas of focus for future valutive training and professional development for ALSC:

Member’s perceptions of confidentiality in valutive research

A few respondents expressed concerns about patron confidentiality:

“[Our librarians] have found that partnering with organizations that already do some kind of assessments has the best bang for our buck, so that the public library does not have to get involved in confidential areas.”

“I’m not crazy about [program evaluation] because while it’s something people like to hear about, I find it invasive to gather such data.”

In order to embrace valutive research, librarians will have to be convinced that this evaluation does not compromise our professional commitment to privacy. ALSC has a clear role to play in articulating the value of program data and in providing a framework to reconcile confidentiality with the need to quantitatively demonstrate the value of library services.

Connecting valuation projects and ALSC's advocacy work:

Effective valuation practices have the potential to empower ALSC members to increase visibility and funding. Division members have experienced phenomenal success through valuation initiatives:

"We market the ROI and the 'good for the public' aspects of Youth Services. This was a principle reason we passed our levy for the last two times... albeit be it by a close (two dozen votes) margin."

"We have used outcomes to successfully increase programming budgets and allocated staff."

"I used a lot of my statistics to advocate for getting an assistant - and it worked!"

"Hot topics" in library valuation

Although our survey didn't explicitly ask librarians which types of programs they were evaluating, a few common program types emerged:

- Summer lunch programs (and subsequent improvements in children's health)
- Early literacy programs
- Summer Reading programs

Librarians described valuation efforts as reliant on self-reported changes in behavior collected via surveys. There is a perceived need among members for training in the area of "outcomes for public library children's services relating to national education initiatives (i.e., education issues many of our stakeholders are focused on) and how to evaluate/measure progress towards those outcomes."

Librarians love stories

A common thread among survey respondents was a commitment to storytelling. Respondents focused on qualitative, rather than quantitative, assessment, and spoke about how quantitative data is often used to "tell the library's story." Our class of Emerging Leaders believes that Logic Models can help librarians craft valutive plans around stories: ultimately, a Logic Model is a tool that is grounded in storytelling and gives a central role to narrative.

What is a Logic Model?

A Logic Model allows organizations to illustrate how their group works and offer clear simplistic direction on where it is headed. Some may have heard the term Logic Model used in a different context, such as a roadmap for change, mental model, framework for action, etc. No matter the term used, these models provide organizations with a structure for building their plans and allowing change to occur. Based upon logic itself, Logic Models illustrate the logic of how change happens. Logic Models can also simplify large, wordy, written plans using simplistic illustrations.

For example, a non-profit organization may create a Logic Model using flow charts and tables in an attempt to garner more stakeholder support. This model will provide vital statistics, goals and stories in simplistic ways that support their current state and future plans. On the flip side, a logic model may be used by a health organization to layout the plans and steps used to prevent the spread of an infectious disease.

Logic Models should be created with certain questions in mind:

- Why must change occur?
- What is the motivation behind the change?
- What inputs will be used when creating the Logic Model?
- What will the organization do on their end to help the change occur?
- What are the outputs of the plan?
- What effect does it have, i.e. consequences, outcomes, results, etc.?

When used properly, Logic Models provide clean, simplistic, illustrative and effective roadmaps for change. They also show the value of an organization and can be used to measure services and effectiveness.

Reasons to use a Logic Model

Depending on the structure of development, creating a Logic Model can encourage a Youth Services Librarian to bring stakeholders into the fold. Through the inclusion of staff, patrons, board members, funders, and evaluators, among others, the creation of a Logic Model can encourage a breadth of perspective to inform the expectations of the Youth Services program.

The Logic Model itself can be a powerful tool to assist the Youth Services Librarian in advocating for his/her program. The connection between resources, goals, statistics, and stories within a Logic Model allow the Librarian to know where their library program is and where it is headed. It also is a powerful tool to share the story of the Youth Services Library Program, connecting those stories to the goals of the program.

A Logic Model is a living, breathing document. As a program changes over time, Youth Services librarians will revisit their Logic Model to adapt and respond to the changing goals and resources of the program.

Benefits in using a Logic Model to a Youth Services program include:

- **Advocacy:** ALSC's Everyday Advocacy campaign (www.ala.org/everyday-advocacy) encourages Youth Services Librarians to engage key stakeholders to tell the story of their libraries using stories and statistics. Logic Models can be an important resources in sharing the successes of reaching program goals, using stories and statistics to demonstrate those successes.
- **Program Planning:** The structure of a Logic Model encourages development of a clear Youth Services program. Not only does it connect resources with goals, but a Logic Model also connects the current reality of a Youth Services program to the vision of what it can become.
- **Program Management:** Because the structure of a Logic Model is to connect those dots from reality to vision by showing how resources connect to goals, it naturally allows the Youth Services Librarian to track the progress of those operations. The Logic Model itself can provide the initial structure for elements of budgeting and other resource allocation.
- **Communication:** When Logic Models are laid out well, there is a level of detail that informs all about a Youth Services program. Not only can it show what activities are taking place within the program, but also what the program itself is achieving. Most importantly, the link between activities and achievements of a Youth Services program can be emphasized and clarified.
- **Consensus Building:** Developing a Logic Model with those connected to the Youth Services program can not only inform those involved of the importance of every element of your program, but create active support among those involved for the goals the Youth Services program is working to achieve and the steps they are taking to achieve those goals.
- **Fundraising:** Whether a Youth Services Librarian is requesting funding through the public library system, other local funding, or grant writing, a Logic Model clearly defines your purpose, laying out your goals and what resources the librarian needs to achieve those goals.

Points of Difference Between Logic Models and Other Valuation Tools

A Logic Model may contain many elements of other valuation tools. Its potential comes from the inherent ability to connect those elements, demonstrating the interconnectedness of resources, goals, statistics, and stories. These connections make for more purposeful planning and more powerful advocacy.

Other valuation tools or manner in which to show valuation include:

- **ROI/Value Calculator:** focuses on resources, program activities, and outcomes (translating to market value). A ROI/Value calculator can provide a direct comparison of monetary resources and translated usage of those resources. Often, attendance of program activities are given a market value so that stakeholders can compare resources used to perceived monetary value of usage itself. A ROI/Value Calculator does not address the goals of the Youth Services Program or the outcomes that can demonstrate those goals being met. This valuation tool also struggle to share qualitative/non-numeric data with the stakeholders.
- **Anecdotal Stories/Impact Statements:** Anecdotal stories and impact statements can be strong tools in demonstrating outcomes of library programming. They can show a change in behavior or change in thinking for patrons of a Youth Services Library Program. Anecdotal stories and impact statements on their own struggle to connect those outcomes with the goals of the library program itself, unless directly connected to goals. These stories and statements can also be less meaningful to some stakeholders when not connected with outputs that show what the program produced. For example, a large number of attendees for an ongoing library program shown through numeric output data coupled with anecdotal stories and impact statements related to the same program can imply wider change beyond the individuals making the statements.
- **Reporting Out Numeric Data:** The reporting of numeric data can show that program activities are being attended and that resources are being utilized. It is an effective way to show growth of outputs or compare outputs; more people are attending an activity or one activity is more highly attended than another. Numeric data may also show how resources are allocated, showing the number of program activities offered with the resources available or the number of times a resource, a Youth Library Services Librarian for example, is accessed. These numeric data points can also be given descriptors to further define how resources are utilized (e.g. grouping types of questions asked) or the individuals attending program activities or accessing resources (e.g. adults and children of program attendees). Similar to the ROI/Value Calculator, reporting of numeric data does not address goals of the Youth Services Program or the outcomes that can demonstrate those goals being met.

Why use Logic Model Builder?

Logic Model Builders are used to evaluate programs and decide their effectiveness. The benefits of using Logic Model Builders are in their flexibility, transparency, adaptability and simplicity.

Logic Model Builders can be applied to all programming and are simple enough to create that using them is not an undue burden on those having to implement them for program evaluations. Logic Model Builders have clear components that are easy to understand and provide accountability for those in charge of implementing programming. The evaluations provide transparency on both ends, those performing programming and evaluating it.

Defining Outputs and Outcomes

Outputs: Outputs are the direct numerical results of the program. These are the statistics Youth Services Librarians currently keep for other kinds of program evaluations. These can be: programs held, patrons served, outreach events, length of programs, and other statistics. Outputs are all about numbers. According to our survey, the most popular outputs being tracked by youth service librarians are: children’s materials circulated, number of youth programs, attendance at youth programs and number of school visits and outreach programs.

Outcomes: Outcomes are the qualitative results of the program. Essentially, these are what changes the program brings forth or what difference the program makes for the audience, presenter, or institution. It is important when recording outcomes to make sure they indicate change, are measurable, and are a good representation of the results. In our survey responses, the repetitive outcomes that were documented by library staff were: Increase in early literacy skills among pre-kindergarten children, improved quality of life for community, bridging the digital divide for access to technology and multiple learning styles supported by educational environment/accessibility to special needs children and youth. Collecting evidence of these outcomes was done mostly with program attendance data, anecdotes, and connection to school’s curriculum and community.

Components of a Logic Model Builder

According to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the basic components of a logic model include:

Resources	Program Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Goals
Human, financial, organizational, and community resources	What is done with the resources to bring about intended change	Direct products of the program activities	Changes in participants' behavior, knowledge, skill, level of functioning (can be short and long term)	The change happening in the community because of the program activities

Resources: The means available to the program that help it to achieve its goals. This may include human, financial, organizational, and community resources.

Program Activities: Actions or strategies undertaken by the program utilizing the Resources to bring about intended change. These may be ongoing or short-term.

Outputs: Observable indications that the Activities are being implemented.

Outcomes: Desired results of the program implementation. Outcomes are focused on individuals and changes in their behavior, knowledge, skill, or level of functioning. Outcomes can be short or long term.

Goals: The goals or purpose of the program that is utilizing the logic model. Impact is large in scope, for example, change happening in a community.

Measures: Data, quantitative or qualitative, that underlie Outputs, Outcomes, and Goals that demonstrate the degree to which each element has been achieved.

Advantages of a Logic Model Builder

A Logic Model can make explicit what is already planned. Creating a Logic Model does not force Youth Services Librarians to create new programming or implement new strategies. It simply provides a structure to explain the intentional decisions that they are already making.

Logic Models are infinitely flexible to provide varying level of detail to plans. They can be customized to fit existing programs or used to contemplate how to implement change, both minor and major. Logic Models are continually adaptable to new information and insights, both from the creator and the evaluator/funder.

Logic Models provides a transparency that allows everyone, including the creator, to see gaps in planning and implementation that inhibits achievement of goals. While Youth Services Librarians may “just know” that something is working, the Logic Model encourages them to fully envision what they see from their goal to the resources at hand, and everything inbetween. The process of creating a Logic Model can give them insight that makes them more well spoken about their every aspect library program as a whole.

Challenges of a Logic Model Builder

Logic Models, when collecting measures, ask us to find *evidence* to support Outputs, Outcomes, or Impacts. Evidence may be found at different levels and is not as black-and-white as *proof* in determining success. This may not sit easily with funders and evaluators that are looking for “success” or “failure” but are instead faced with shades of grey.

Measurements also are challenging for those enacting the Logic Model. While someone may want to *prove* that they have succeeded in accomplishing an Output, Outcome, or Impact, the design of a Logic Model asks that they gather the most important *evidence* to inform themselves and others to what degree the Output, Outcome, or Impact has been achieved.

We are lacking the common vocabulary that Logic Models utilize to function. Even more challenging, some misuse the vocabulary. Educational outreach can be done, not only in the goal of utilizing Logic Models, but in having the common language to speak about valuation of Youth Library Services.

What We Learned

- Librarians often focus on specific areas of their programming when collecting output data (e.g. summer reading program)
- Librarians, when showing value of their Youth Library Services, often report outputs.
- Youth Services Librarians may have not fully understand the terms *outputs* and *outcomes* when referring to valuations of Youth Services
- Youth Service Librarians have concerns of patron confidentiality when gathering data for valuative research
- Despite the offering of a ROI/Value Calculator on the ALA site, Youth Services Librarians are asking for a Value Calculator to demonstrate value of their programs.
- There seems to be little or no writings, research, or best practices on Logic Models used in Library Youth Services although some ALSC members do utilize them.
- Logic Models could allow Youth Services Librarians to demonstrate the connection between allocated resources and goals set by the program.
- Logic Models allow Librarians to use statistics and stories in conjunction with each other to display outputs and outcomes of a Youth Services Program

Recommendations/Next Steps

The 2015 ALSC Emerging Leaders recommends the ALSC Valuation Task Force continue work on valuation of Library Youth Services by:

- ALSC might focus on how to measure outcomes in specific areas that multiple librarians are working within (for example, the nuts and bolts of working with school districts to map summer reading participation and test scores), or offer training on the tools that librarians are using to gather outputs and outcomes (i.e., how to design effective surveys).
- Providing opportunities for Youth Services Librarians to learn about the vocabulary, structure, and benefits of a Logic Model through face-to-face and online learning environments.
- Acknowledge and determine best way to address Youth Library Services Librarians' concerns of patron confidentiality when collecting data for valuative evaluations including Logic Models.
- Seeking out examples of Logic Models used in Library Youth Services.
- Examining those examples to begin to determine best practices.

- Promoting the use of Logic Models and other valuation tools through ALSC online and print publications.
- Encouraging and identifying research in Library Services on valuation methods.
- Investigating the benefits, drawbacks, and desire from Youth Services Librarians for a customizable ROI/Value Calculator.
- Determining whether further in-depth work could be accomplished by a future Emerging Leaders team.

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