Sample List of Quantitative Metrics for Libraries


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Library Size and Patron Base

- Number of library staff
- Number of items in collection
- Percentage of actual patrons to potential patrons
- Year-over-year increase in patrons
- Percentage of library staff to patrons
- Percentage of patrons seeking assistance in person, via email, via phone, or via web
- Percentage of patrons by patron type

Transactions: Circulations and Reference

Circulations
- Total number of checkouts per year
- Average number of checkouts per patron
- Percentage of checkouts by patron type
- Average duration of checkouts
- Average length of a hold
- Total number of ILL requests per year
- Average number of ILL requests by patron type
- Percentage inbound vs. outbound ILL requests

Reference
- Total number of requests per year
- Percentage of ready reference, in-depth, and known-item requests
- Number of requests by patron type
- Average time spent per request
- Average time spent per type of request (ready reference, known-item retrieval, in-depth question)
- Average time spent per request by patron type

Budget, Resource Allocation, and Value of Print & Digital Materials

Overall Budget
- Percentage increase or decrease in overall budget over time
- Percentage of budget spent on staff vs. materials over time
- Average amount spent per patron

Notes
- This list of metrics is a good start but is not comprehensive.
- Pick and choose from this list like a menu.
- Combine metrics in ways that are meaningful to your library.
- Use the Case Study at the end of this document to see how one hypothetical library combines and analyzes metrics to defend against staff cuts.

Combine & Analyze Metrics
- Take simple measures.
- Use ratios to compare two measures.
- Use trends to see changes over time.
- Use benchmarks to compare to like libraries.

Combine benchmarks and trends to compare to like libraries over time.
Sample List of Quantitative Metrics for Libraries

April 9, 2013

- Allocation of materials budget by patron group

Print and Digital Materials Spend
  - Percentage of budget spent on print resources vs. digital resources
  - Change in print vs. digital resource budget allocation over time
  - Percentage of budget recapture from chargebacks

Print Materials Value
  - Number of print acquisitions per year
  - Average price per print acquisition
  - Change in average price per print acquisition over time
  - Average number of circulations per item per year vs. average price per item

Digital Materials Value
  - Average cost per database or e-journal session
  - Average cost per full-text article downloaded
  - Average cost per unique user
  - Change in database and e-journal costs over time

Facilities and Physical Foot Traffic
  - Number of patrons entering library, year over year
  - Number of square feet of library
  - Number of square feet to patrons entering library
  - Average number of hours public computers are in use
  - Average duration of a library visit
  - Average duration of use of various physical spaces (reference desk, conference rooms, tables, carrels, nooks, public computers, stacks, exhibits, etc.)

Virtual Foot Traffic

Library Website Analytics:
  - Average number of library website visits per day
  - Average number of library website visits by day of week
  - Most used pages on library website
  - Most used link clickthroughs on library website
  - Average visit duration on library website
  - Number of searches per user on library website
  - Average number of repeat visits on library website

Database Usage:
  - Total number of database sessions per year
  - Average number of online sessions per database
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- Total number of full-text downloads per year
- Average number of full-text downloads per database
- Percentage of database use by patron type
- Percentage of database use by library staff vs. patrons
- Increase in database users over time

**Education & Outreach**

- Number of database trainings and attendees per year
- Average number of attendees per training
- Increase in database users after database trainings
- Number of library orientations attendees
- Number of new library users after attending orientation
- Number of special events and attendees per year

**Operations**

- Average minutes to process, catalog, and shelve an item
- Average minutes to copy catalog vs. original catalog an item
- Average daily library staff time spent on core work (completing work, planning new services, useful meetings, etc.) vs. non-core work (troubleshooting computers, looking for passwords, etc.)
Case Study: Analyzing and Combining Metrics

In this example, a hypothetical corporate library is under pressure to cut 3 of their 10 staff. They need to build the case that they’ve already been doing more with less, can’t afford to lose a single staff member, and that the company would in fact benefit from hiring more librarians.

This case study shows how this hypothetical library’s management can collect, combine, and analyze metrics to prove their point objectively. They will follow these steps to make their case:

- Take simple measures.
- Use ratios to compare two measures.
- Use trends to see changes over time.
- Use benchmarks to compare to like libraries.
- Combine benchmarks and trends to compare to like libraries over time.

### Step 1: Measure and Analyze the Amount of Staff per Patron vs. Like Libraries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Metric</th>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Sample Data/Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measure</td>
<td>Number of library staff</td>
<td>10 librarians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure</td>
<td>Number of patrons</td>
<td>5,000 patrons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio</td>
<td>Number of library staff/patrons</td>
<td>500 patrons/librarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benchmark</td>
<td>Number of library staff/patrons vs. like libraries</td>
<td>500 patrons/librarian at our library vs. 400 patrons/librarian average at like libraries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trend</td>
<td>Percentage increase or decrease of library staff, year over year</td>
<td>Number of librarians has remained flat from 2007 to 2012.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benchmarked Trend</td>
<td>Percentage increase or decrease of library staff/patrons, year over year</td>
<td>Number of librarians has remained flat from 2007 to 2012 at our library and at like libraries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trend</td>
<td>Percentage increase or decrease library staff/patrons, year over year</td>
<td>20% increase in patrons/librarian from 2007 to 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benchmarked Trend</td>
<td>Percentage increase or decrease library staff/patrons, year over year, vs. like libraries</td>
<td>20% increase in patrons/librarian from 2007 to 2012 at our library vs. 15% average decrease in patrons/librarian at like libraries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Step 1 Analysis:** “In the last five years, we’ve been serving 20% more customers with the same amount of staff while our colleagues at similar organizations have lost customers but retained their staffing levels.”

### Step 2: Measure and Analyze the Amount of Research Requests per Patron vs. Like Libraries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Sample Data/Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measure</td>
<td>Number of research requests</td>
<td>40,000 research requests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure</td>
<td>Number of patrons</td>
<td>5,000 patrons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio</td>
<td>Number of annual research requests/patron</td>
<td>8 annual research requests/patron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benchmark</td>
<td>Number of annual research requests/patron vs. like libraries</td>
<td>8 annual research requests/patron at our library vs. 6 at like libraries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trend</td>
<td>Percentage increase or decrease in annual research requests/patron, year over year</td>
<td>30% increase in annual research requests per patron from 2007 to 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benchmarked Trend</td>
<td>Percentage increase or decrease in annual research requests/patron, year over year vs. like libraries</td>
<td>30% increase in annual research requests per patron from 2007 to 2012 at our library vs. 20% increase at like libraries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Step 2 Analysis:** “In the last five years, the number of questions we’ve been answering has grown 30% while it’s only grown 20% for our colleagues at similar organizations. This means that because they have more time to answer each question, librarians at our competitors can give more in-depth and thoughtful answers.”
Step 3: Measure and Analyze Projected Changes at the Organization and Its Impact on the Library

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Type of Metric</th>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Sample Data/Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measure</td>
<td>Number of new hires at organization next year</td>
<td>1,000 new hires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure</td>
<td>Number of expected new patrons from new hires</td>
<td>500 expected new patrons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure</td>
<td>Number of total patrons next year</td>
<td>5,500 total patrons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure</td>
<td>Number of librarians after proposed cut</td>
<td>7 librarians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio</td>
<td>Number of library staff/patrons after proposed cut</td>
<td>786 patrons/librarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benchmark</td>
<td>Number of library staff/patrons vs. like libraries</td>
<td>786 patrons/librarian at our library vs. 400 patrons/librarian average at like libraries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure</td>
<td>Number of expected additional new research requests</td>
<td>4,000 new research requests</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step 4: Put It All Together
"We can already barely handle the current volume of requests, which has grown rapidly in the last five years. With the economy rebounding, management expects to hire 1,000 new staff, 500 of whom are likely library users. Our competitors have seen the importance of retaining good research staff, even in down economy. If we cut staff, these competitors will have an edge on the latest information. In fact, to get us to the same level as our competition, we need to hire 2 new librarians rather than lose the proposed 3. We already answer more questions than librarians at our competitors, and with more staff than us, they are able to provide more relevant, timely, and accurate information."