Summer Reading Program: What Should You Measure?

Along with anecdotes and testimonials, statistics provide a picture of how people use and like our programs and services. Statistics are both a planning and an advocacy tool, so we want to think about what we're counting, how we're counting, why we're counting this, and how to use the information we harvest. Below are some options to consider.

Number of participants in each age group

Why? Identify trends in participation so you can come up with plans to address areas you want to grow. You might:

- Change how you're promoting your program to this demographic
- Revamp your program to make it more appealing to this age group

What to collect: age or grade of child/teen

How to use it:

- Identify trends in participation
- Use a focus group to get specific feedback from the target age group(s). (UHLS and MVLS can help.) You will get information you can use, demonstrate that the library cares about its communities needs, create library advocates who can act as positive influences among their friends

Reading materials details

Why? Identify types of resources your community wants your library to provide.

What to collect: include a line or field that asks participants to share title, format, and/or genre of the books they're reading.

How to use it: Compare the aggregated information to your collection makeup. What needs more emphasis in your selection? What needs less?

Circulation statistics

Why? To determine how your programming boosted overall circulation.

What to collect: circulation statistics by day.

How to use it: Consider youth and adult materials, as parents bringing children to programs often check out materials for themselves. Compare circ stats for different material formats to other times of the year.

Door count

Why? To determine how your programming boosted library usage.

What to collect: door count by day.

How to use it: Compare door count to other times of the year, and door count on program days to door count on non-program days.

Prize details

Why? To determine if prizes are useful, which prizes are more popular, and where there are "patron pain points" (obstacles that prevent patrons from easily accessing a service you're delivering - in this case, prizes).

What to collect:

- Comments made by patrons or young patrons about prizes when they are delivered and on post-program evaluation
- Number of prizes earned
- Number of prizes collected

How to use it: Consider popularity of prizes to determine whether to offer prizes in the future and types of prizes to offer. Identify and eliminate or reduce "patron pain points."

Programming and self-directed activities

Why? We want our resource-intensive activities to be effective: motivating attendance and/or participation, engaging and satisfying, promoting relationship with the library, and creating a desire for a return visit.

What to collect: attendance/participation

How to use it: Analyze which programs/activities were most successful and why.

Participant satisfaction

Why? We want to offer activities and programming that are engaging and satisfying to patrons and meet our community's needs.

What to collect: feedback from participants through:

- Surveys to participants. Use close-ended and open-ended questions. Include an opportunity for testimonials, with a choice of the comment being shared anonymously or attached to a name (only with the permission of the commenter). Offer incentives for completing the survey.
- Focus group.

How to use it: identify trends, consider suggestions, make changes, try new things!

-Adapted from How to Demonstrated Your Library's Summer Reading Impact. Demco Software. 2018. https://www.demcosoftware.com/ebooks-guides/how-to-demonstrate-your-librarys-summer-reading-impact/