

Making Your Case with Library Statistics *(by Patience Frederikson, Alaska)*

Use Stats to Justify Your Programs and Services

Scenario: You convince the powers-that-be to fund a new service at your library. You keep statistics to prove that this new service is reaching the intended audience and that this audience has used other related library services. You present numbers from the previous year (before the service was initiated) and the current year (after the service was initiated.) You continue to receive more money.

Use Stats to Measure Effectiveness

Scenario: You decide to weed your collection, despite misgivings from the powers-that-be. You use output measures (per capita measures, shown as a factor of population) to show that the circulation of items per capita increased **after** the weeding project.

Use Comparisons to Lobby for Increases

Scenario: You think that your library receives less funding than comparable libraries. You use statistics to create a list of comparable libraries (frequently based on population of area served) and rank your library's total income in comparison with your peer libraries. You notice that your library circulates more items per capita than your peers, but has the lowest total income in this group. You use this data to prove that your library is effective despite low funding levels. You urge the powers-that-be to increase your funding so you can provide even better service to your patrons.

Use Stats to Highlight Your Library

Scenario: You are asked to do a presentation on your library at the chamber of commerce. You gather statistics to show how heavily the library is used. You focus on the business materials in your library and present circulation statistics showing how often these materials are checked out. You present anecdotal evidence about a case in which a recently-established business used your library to develop a business plan and do research on the economics and demographics of your community.

Use Stats to Write Grant Applications

Scenario: You notice that certain materials are being used heavily and are falling apart. Upon investigation, you discover that an under-served segment of your population is using these few materials. You gather demographic statistics about this under-served population and library usage statistics to show the need that exists. You write a grant application and use both sets of numbers to prove that your library needs additional funding to meet the needs of these patrons.

Use Stats to Create an Annual Summary or Brochure for the Library

Scenario: You are asked to provide a brief summary describing the library for a budget presentation. You use statistics that highlight your services to develop a brochure that lists the major projects of the library for the past years, its volunteer program, and statistical comparisons between your library and peer libraries in your region or state. This brochure is so effective with the powers-that-be that you decide to make it available as a handout at your circulation desk.

Use Stats to Create "Snapshots"

Scenario: A bond issue has been proposed for the library. You decide to fertilize the grassroots by using fun 'bites' of information to educate the public by printing this info on bookmarks. You compare your library statistics to other statistics to make your numbers more meaningful and to grab the attention of the local media. For example: Circulation of books and other materials by Anchorage libraries outnumbers total attendance at the Sullivan Arena by more than two to one.