

Performance Indicators for Public Libraries – Developing a National Model

ARL Assessment Conference 2014

**Presenters: Denise M. Davis
Mary Hirsh
Joe Matthews**

Overview

- Outline purpose and strategy for the PLA initiative
- Describe methods for establishing a scalable model of performance measurement for public libraries
- Present the results to date

Presenters

- Denise M. Davis - speak to the overarching work of the task force
- Mary Hirsh - context of work and significance of establishing a model of performance measurement adopted by PLA
- Joseph Matthews - outline the PLA survey design and methodology, and findings to date

Vision Statement

- *To develop standardized measures of effectiveness for widely-offered public library programs and promote the training for implementation and use of the measures across public libraries.*
- Develop methods for establishing a scalable model of performance measurement for public libraries

PLA Performance Measures Task Force – Goals and Objectives

Overarching work of the task force

- Launched through an open meeting at ALA 2013 with invited libraries and any other interested individuals
- TF built across three groups with membership from a broad specter of public libraries, state libraries, and assessment researchers

The group works in-person and virtually, utilizes the ALA Connect space to communicate and post work products

Researchers – Joe Matthews and John Carlo Bertot

Carl Thompson, Counting Opinions, also is on the project team

Public Library Association - Context

- Libraries traditionally measure outputs
 - Circulation, gate counts, program attendance
- Outputs do not reflect what libraries actually do
- Outputs do not tell a compelling story
- Some confusion output vs. outcome in field

Public Library Association - Context

- Outcomes show real difference library makes in the life of the customer
- Some libraries already measuring, but spotty, inconsistent
- Field needs simple to collect, meaningful measures
 - Training and Communication

Important Distinction

- Outcomes in the lives of people
- Not the outcomes that may occur in the library itself

“What is needed is a set of measures that can capture the services public libraries are currently providing in their communities, with guidelines for conducting the measures to ensure consistency and validity. When PLA developed Output Measures for Public Libraries in the early 1980’s, a frequent consideration was for measures that were “good enough” to capture the desired information without being so difficult or time-consuming that staff would be unlikely to carry them out as intended. Public libraries need data to accompany the anecdotes they relay to funders regarding the outcomes of services offered and the resultant impact on the community.”

Other Projects

- Project influenced by
 - PLA outputs
 - Edge
 - Impact Study
 - Other research.....

Framework

1. Pick a target population & service objective to study
2. Why is that target population & service objective selected
3. How do libraries know this service objective makes a difference
4. Determine what data is to be collected
5. List some things libraries might want to know
6. Provide examples of how libraries can find out

Data Strategy and Early Results

The annual PLA Public Library Data Service has an optional section that the Task Force used this year

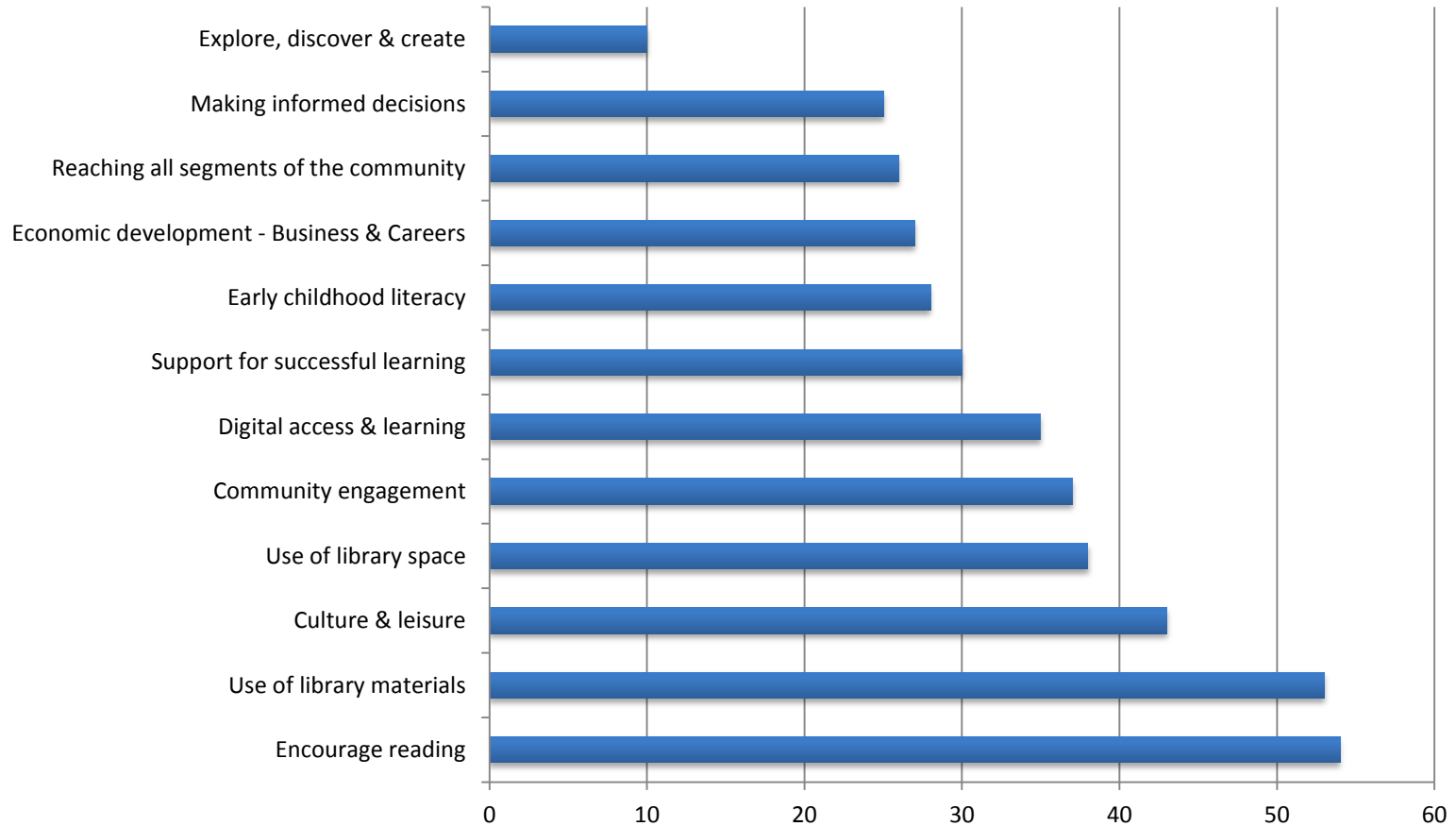
And the Survey Said

- Slightly more than 1,500 responses to the PLDS survey
- 942 answered one or more of the optional Outcomes questions
- About 200 indicated they collected outcome measures – follow-up candidates

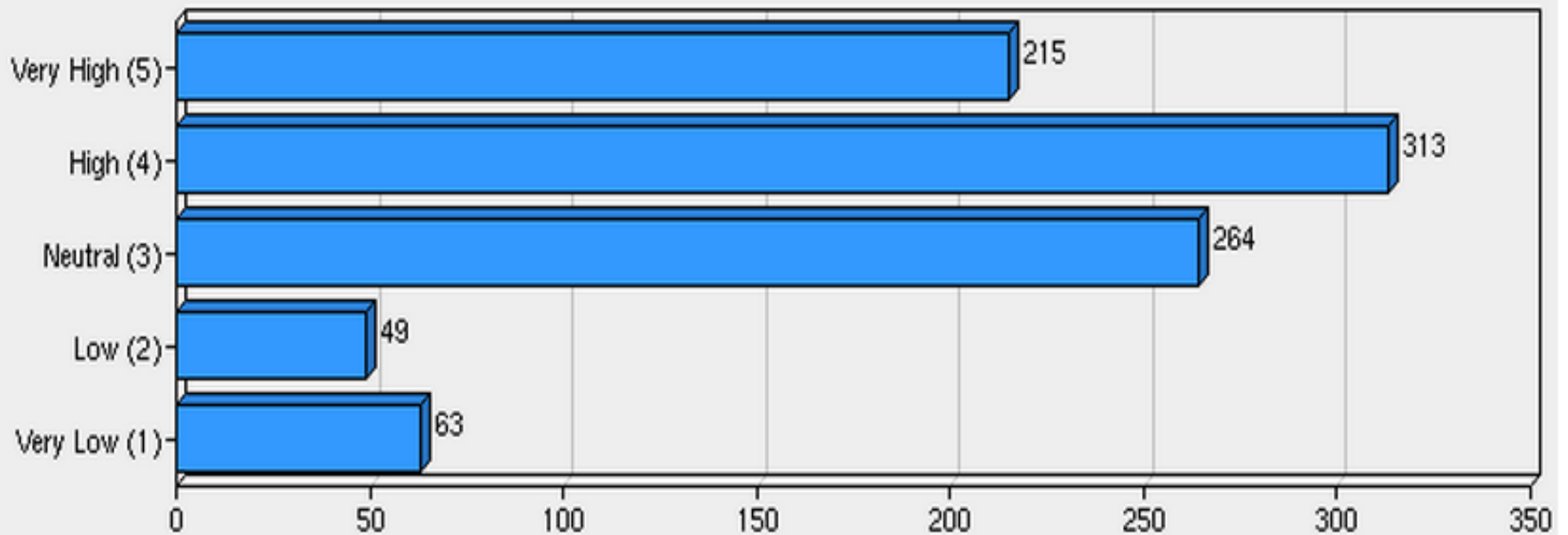
The Outcome Questions

- Please indicate if you currently or plan in the future to capture measures, either Outcomes (effectiveness) or Other (Input/Output/Process)
- Please list any other service area where the library captures outcome measures
- Please describe how the library currently captures and/or uses outcome measures
- Please indicate the importance to and readiness of your organization to capture outcome measures (1 – 5 scale)
- Please rank your top outcome measurement priorities

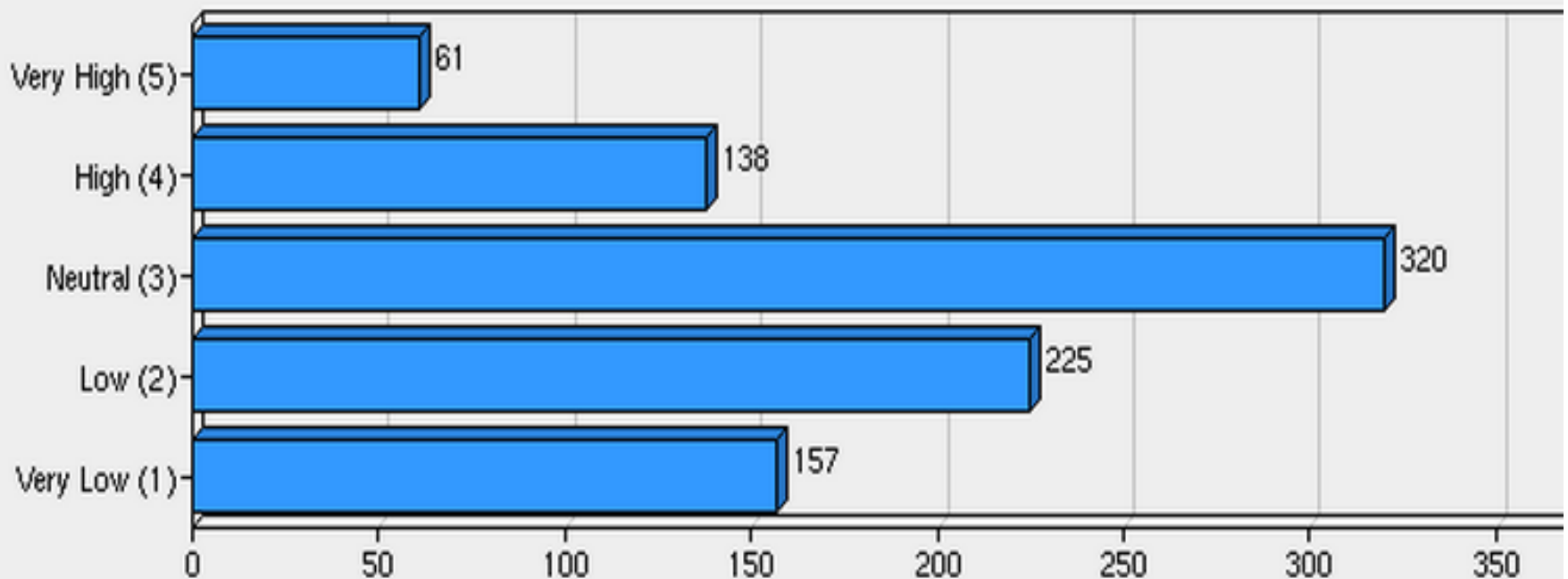
Current Measures



Importance



Readiness



Population

In general, smaller libraries indicated that they felt outcome measures were less important and that they were less ready to embrace outcome measures

Top Six Categories

- Early Childhood Literacy
- Encourage Reading
- Community (Civic) Engagement
- Economic & Workforce Development
- Education/Life Long Learning
- Digital Inclusion

Next Steps

- Task Force is testing measures in the five categories
- Fall 2014 will reconvene to refine/finalize framework
- Determine the best method and timeframe for testing at a national level

Questions?

Thank you for participating!