

Public Libraries

– a good investment



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TRICK OR TREAT -

Using Economic Impact Analysis in Demonstrating Value of Public Libraries

Everywhere in Europe, the situation of public libraries is almost similar. Neither national nor local politicians give much attention to the public libraries, and they are rarely on top of the political agenda.

Thus, libraries are having an ever-increasing need to demonstrate their value and impact on society. The libraries are in need of new advocacy arguments – user satisfaction and statistics on book loans is far from enough, Activity – which can be measured – is one thing; value is quite another. Therefore new methods have to be found.

Economic Impact studies are the new black in library advocacy in many European countries. Because the power of numbers gives access to the political agenda and offers a new story to the public, the professionals and politicians. This could lead towards a positive change in the general perception of public libraries as a sound economic investment for the society.

But using economic impact data is not a quick fix, it's hard work, lots of planning and communication. For numbers, however effective they are, cannot stand alone – it needs a good story!

Based upon three different economic impact studies in UK, Barcelona and Denmark, the most important key learnings are presented in order to qualify and inspire other libraries to enter the battlefield of economic argumentation.



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Key Learnings



Find your 'why' – It's important to know what you want to achieve with your data



You can't tell it all – chose a case



Assure robust evidence and use recognised methods – It's important to have a recognized method to avoid/minimize discussion about the facts!



Use recognised partners – It increases credibility and eases the way from data to political agenda!



Decide your strategy to communicate – how do you want to use your data - is a tool for library professional (corridor strategy) or a "direct way" to politicians?



Expect resistance from both enemies and friends (professionals, journalist and politicians) - your communication needs to be resistant and prepare Q & A's for the different groups



Working with a communication strategy using new arguments is a full time job and requires hours and hours of planning, preparation, contacting journalist etc.



When you are prepared and willing to take some risks, and you invest the necessary time and resources, economic impact data is a very efficient way to increase the awareness of public libraries but

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