Reader Development Evaluation Framework

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Contents

1. Introduction

In 'Developing an outcomes approach to Strategy 2010'[1] the British Council discusses the importance of the achievement of measurable outcomes in proposing its strategic development for the first decade of the twenty-first century. The purpose and role of the British Council is defined as such:

To develop and nurture lasting, mutually beneficial relationships with people of other countries in order to win recognition abroad for the UK's values, ideas and achievements.

The identification of high-level outcomes will assist accountability of the British Council to its paymasters in the UK government, and also help to change the philosophy of the organisation to one which focuses on outputs rather than routine inputs. As such the British Council has identified the following primary outcome objectives:

Outcome 1	Outcome 2	Outcome 3
Improved perceptions of the UK among wider audiences of young people overseas seeking global knowledge and opportunity	The UK has stronger influence on current and future leaders in social, cultural and educational spheres overseas	Greater tolerance and mutual understanding between young people in the UK and other countries

British Council and the Centre for the Public Library and Information in Society

The Centre for the Public Library and Information in Society (CePLIS) at the Department of Information Studies, University of Sheffield, has been commissioned to advise on the monitoring and evaluation of a Reader Development programme for the British Council.

The Information Services Management division has summarised its vision for Reader Development in the British Council as such:

'By March 2004, Reader Development will be recognised as a key means for achieving international understanding and appreciation, and form an important cultural relations tool for the British Council… The British Council has a clear framework and clear direction for reader development which incorporates various means of engagement… and which features a multilateral, and mutual approach, and the strong use of partnership'.

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[1] British Council News June – July 2003

Reader Development

> "Proponents of the public library service believe that reading has an intrinsic value to all citizens, not only in a formal educational setting, but as a means of informing and enhancing the lives of all who choose to use it." (Train, 2003, pp. 30)

The concept of reader development focuses upon the reading experience itself rather than the development of actual reading skills. Objectives of reader development initiatives are to improve participants' enjoyment and confidence in the act of reading for pleasure (The Reading Agency, 2003). Confidence can be improved by connecting readers with one another, in order to share reading experiences, communicate reactions to particular books and learn more about reading choices. Such objectives require some kind of intervention, for example, by the formation of public library reading groups and promotions. Reader development is not the sole domain of the public library services however, as private, independent reader promotion initiatives in the UK such as Opening the Book and The Reading Agency have shown (Train, 2003). Reader development seeks to recruit a variety of target groups, including children, young adults, and specific sections of the community in a bid to embrace social inclusion, and with respect to the role of the public library, improve its cultural image as a centre of community learning.

Cultural services, accountability and outcome measurement

Cookman and Haynes (2002) identified key government policies and strategies to which libraries, museums and archives have a substantial contribution to make. Cultural services are becoming increasingly accountable to policy makers with reference to the need to provide evidence of impact in priority areas. National political priorities for which the cultural services have a real contribution to make include themes such as lifelong learning; social inclusion; neighbourhood renewal; building of the knowledge economy. This has placed a growing emphasis on the importance of evaluation research in providing evidence of impact and positive outcomes. In turn, existing evaluation studies within cultural services and the public sector have raised discussion on evaluation effectiveness and the need for professional evaluation research skills.

CePLIS aims and objectives

This report presents an evaluation framework for reader-centred initiatives, for use by British Council staff overseas in relation to the organisation's objectives (representing *phase 1* of the 2003-4 consultancy agreement between CePLIS and the British Council).

The framework aims to provide an introduction to the theory behind evaluation research; provide examples of previous reader development evaluation studies with reference to their objectives, methodology, quality of evidence and methodological effectiveness in achieving objectives; make recommendations for a 'best practice' approach to reader development evaluation research.

The framework contains the following components:

- **Literature review:** providing an introduction to the theory of evaluation research

- **Case studies:** representing a critical analysis of a varied sample of reader development evaluation studies

- **Recommendations:** further to literature review and case study evidence, recommendations are made for a best practice approach to reader-centred evaluation

- **Glossary of key research terms:** a glossary of research terms referred to within the text is included to assist definition and conceptual clarity

- **References:** a full list of references is included to aid further reading and research on evaluation approaches and techniques

- **Appendices:** including a list of useful resources (including relevant professional bodies) and a concise Evaluation Planning Checklist

2. <u>Literature review</u>

"Evaluation is the systematic assessment of the operation and/or the outcomes of a program or policy, compared to a set of explicit or implicit standards, as a means of contributing to the improvement of the program or policy". (Weiss, 1998, pp. 4)

2.1 Evaluation research theory

Where issues of efficiency, effectiveness and impact are raised, evaluation has a significant role to play in many spheres of activity. It has a '*transdisciplinary*' function, and has developed as an important and legitimate field of social research (McCoy and Hargie, 2001). In comparison to other forms of research, evaluation is distinguished by its *intent* rather than its method; evaluation is *utilised* rather than conducted to make a contribution to theoretical knowledge; it adopts a judgemental quality in an action setting (Weiss, 1998).

Patton (2002) states that evaluation methods should be guided by purpose of enquiry; primary audience for the findings; questions to be answered; resources; criteria used to judge the quality of findings. A decision needs to be made on the most suitable data to answer and illuminate enquiry questions; qualitative data gathered by interviews, field observations and documents, or quantitative data revealed by surveys, tests and experiments. Patton gives the following examples of appropriate evaluation approaches to qualitative enquiry; outcome evaluation; process studies; personalizing and humanizing evaluation; developmental applications including action research, action learning, reflective practice and learning organisations.

In a review of quantitative time series data collection systems for museums, libraries and archives, the Cultural Heritage Consortium (2002) recommended that such data be strictly comparable, have consistent definitions and headings, consistent sample sizes, bases or returns. Such strict requirements facilitates effective data on service inputs and outputs, but enables little gathering of evidence on long-term outcomes of service performance. Quantitative user surveys can inform us about use and satisfaction but little about actual outcomes (for example, consequences and results of library use). This is perhaps more suited to a flexible qualitative approach.

2.2 Evaluation in the public sector

"… in the management of public resources, outcome has come to have a very specific connotation, referring to the *impact on society* of a particular public sector activity. The purpose of measuring outcome is then *to assess the valuation placed on the activity*" (Smith, 1996, pp. 1)

Hylan and Postlethwaite (1998) describe the use of quantitative evaluation methods to test the effectiveness of a pilot teacher-pupil school mentoring scheme in raising standards of achievement. In order to quantify academic gains as a result of the mentoring schemes, linked questionnaires were completed by mentored pupils and a control group of non-participants. Rowley (2003) questions the effectiveness of standardised student feedback questionnaires in evaluating higher education courses and modules; it is suggested that different forms of learning experience may require different approaches to evaluation, and that every module has its own learning outcomes and needs its own tailored evaluation instrument. McPherson and Nunes

(2002) recommend an Educational Management Action Research Model for use in higher education, based on organisational context; pedagogic model; educational setting; and the evaluation process

In a study of service evaluation of residential services for people with learning difficulties, Chung (1997) observed certain methodological challenges to effective data comparison across studies, including: differences between standardized and self-constructed research instruments; the way in which researchers recorded information; issues surrounding operational definitions and their misinterpretation (resulting in different information being observed and recorded). In a study evaluating the contribution that young people's sexual health services make to the prevention of teenage pregnancy, Peckham (1997) observed that the monitoring of services seemed to focus on output figures such as the number of people attending and standards of service such as waiting times. It was recommended that evaluation criteria should focus upon issues such as training, counselling, quality of advice, accessibility and equity.

Public libraries rely on effective evaluation of pilot projects such as the formation of reading groups and homework clubs. The latter are established to achieve objectives with participants such as improving educational obtainment; promoting library and learning skills; establishing the role of the library as a core community resource; providing help and guidance (Bevin and Goulding, 1999). Identifying successful impact is vital for securing further funding or establishing centres on a permanent basis. Libraries experience problems in providing evidence of impact due to time, resource and expertise restraints. In his study 'Realising the Potential of Cultural Services – the case for libraries', Coalter concludes:

"To 'make the case for libraries' there is an urgent need to address issues relating to the definition and measurement of both intermediate and final outcomes and to prioritise more clearly the areas to which they wish to make a contribution (i.e. the social and economic impacts, educational impacts, community development)" (Coalter, 2001, pp. 7)

2.3 Why evaluate?

Reasons for public sector evaluation include a need for policy makers to exercise control over the services for which they are responsible, and to inform judgements about the past performance of public sector programmes and about future resource allocation. As such, evaluation research and outcome measurement has both a retrospective and a prospective role. In its retrospective role, outcome measurement can be used to determine whether the expected benefits of a public sector programme have materialised. In its prospective role, it assesses the feasibility of continued success (Smith, 1996).

Weiss (1998) defines two broad incentives for conducting evaluation research; decision making and organisational learning. Evaluation findings can help to make decisions on midcourse corrections and recommendations; continuing/expanding or cutting/editing the project; choosing the best of several alternative (adopting the 'best practice' approach to continuing the project); deciding whether or not to continue funding. Evaluation encourages organisational learning by recording project history;

feeding back to practitioners; highlighting project goals; proving accountability; understanding social intervention.

As discussed in the introduction, a range of external influences, which inspire a greater internal focus on accountability, can initiate evaluation research. As economic and political factors drive the need for impact evaluation, within the research process the political, economic, social, technological and environmental factors that may affect a programme or project should also be considered (McCoy and Hargie, 2001). Outcome evaluations must also take into account the cultural and private prejudices which may affect respondent opinion and attitudes (Seadle, 2003).

2.4 Uses of evaluation data

Evaluation data helps to assess the sustainability of a service or project and as such, particularly within large-scale organisations, can help projects to be embedded within the mainstream. For example, the HyLiFe for Health project was run on a pilot basis at the University of Northumbria (Hutton and West, 2001) but was eventually rolled out as an operational service following positive evaluation findings. The project developed a hybrid (digital) library and information service for health studies students and practitioners. The successful model interface was rolled out into HyLiFe for Geographers, HyLiFe for Sport and HyLiFe for Psychology.

From a policy making perspective, evaluation results can guide funding and resource allocation decisions, and the best ways in which to implement policy on a local, regional and national level (Smith, 1996). However, it would be naïve to assume that evaluation data is always taken on board and applied in a positive way. Suggested factors affecting the utilisation of evaluation data have been described as evaluator approach and inconsistent levels of commitment; the negative reaction of potential enforcers or staff; circumstances under which the evaluation is conducted, for example, inappropriate timing; characteristics of the evaluation itself, such as the quality and communication of findings (Clarke, 1999).

3. <u>Case studies</u>

The case studies presented in this chapter have been chosen to illustrate a varied sample of previous reader development evaluation projects. Examples include a range of initiatives, both small and large scale that have been conducted at local, regional and national level and aimed at different target groups, including children, library staff, and male readers. Evaluations that have used a variety of approaches and methods to measure different outcomes are also considered. In chapter 4, recommendations are made for a 'best practice' approach to reader development evaluation further to points raised within the literature review (chapter 2) and case study evidence (chapter 3).

Case studies include:

1. The Reading Planet (2002)
2. Chatterbooks (2003)
3. Mind's Eye (2001)
4. Branching Out (2001)
5. Reading Our Future (2002)
6. The Vital Link (2002)
7. Impact Evaluation of Museums, Archives and Libraries (2002)

Case studies are discussed using the following headings:

- Title
- Project description
- Evaluation objectives
- Methodology
- Examples of evaluation findings/data
- Quality assessment of data obtained
- Methodological effectiveness in achieving evaluation objectives
- Summary of key points

CASE STUDY 1:

Title:

The Reading Planet
Survey of Participants: Report on Pilot Study and Evaluation against Learning Outcomes
Product Perceptions Ltd on behalf of The Reading Agency
November 2002
http://www.readingagency.co.uk/html/research_downloads_detail.cfm?e=6

Project description:

The Reading Planet was the title of the Summer Reading Challenge, run by the Reading Agency and conducted annually, for 2002. The overall aims and objectives of the Summer Reading Challenge are to encourage (predominantly) primary school age children to read and visit their public library during the summer holidays. Specific objectives include:

- The introduction of new members, particularly children and families, to consistent library usage, beyond the Summer Reading Challenge period
- Enhancing the role of the librarian in the development of children's reading skills
- To promote social inclusion and family learning in partnership with literacy projects
- Develop social and interpersonal skills via the conventions of library usage
- Library staff development in relation to reader development
- To promote the cultural impact of libraries

Evaluation objectives:

Guidelines for evaluation of the Summer Reading Challenge are to follow criteria as defined by:

- Learning Impact Research Project (LIRP) Generic Learning Outcomes[2]
- Their Reading Futures (TRF) Audit Framework[3]

The evaluation of 'The Reading Planet' (2002) was designed as a pilot study to inform the full evaluation of the Summer Reading Challenge in 2003. It was decided that a pilot study would be appropriate due to the complex nature of data collection, and to ensure methodological effectiveness prior to applying the study on a national basis. The objectives of the pilot study, therefore, were not to measure the project outcomes themselves, but to:

- Evaluate the proposed methodology for collecting data from participating children
- Assess how well the approach will enable outcomes to be measured

Methodology:

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[2] Five specific learning outcomes including: Knowledge and Understanding; Skills; Values, Attitudes and Feelings; Creativity, Inspiration and Enjoyment; Behaviour. For more information see page **?**
[3] Four specific outcomes based on: People; Places; Planning; Partners.

The evaluation originally used a longitudinal 'before and after' approach, in seeking to establish the success of the programme. As such, 'phase 1' and 'phase 2' (post-challenge) interviews were conducted with participating children:

- Phase 1 interviews – these were conducted by library staff with participating children as they joined the scheme. Interviews were canvassed and therefore structured, in that a questionnaire was administered in person by an interviewer. In accordance with Market Research Society standards, parental (and interviewee) consent was obtained in advance, and children were accompanied by a parent or guardian during the interview. Problems with the phase 1 study were identified immediately; the questionnaire administered proved to be too long, which resulted in problems with satisfactory completion rates. The numbers obtained were insufficient to allow a pre to post challenge evaluation, thus the results of *Phase 2* fieldwork constitute the findings of this report.
- Phase 2 interviews – post-Challenge interviews were conducted by market research company Product Perceptions Limited in accordance with market research standards[4]. Interviews were held in libraries with children completing the Reading Planet.

Interview questions sought to establish quantitative data on the effects of the programme, and respondents were asked to select multiple choice responses, or to rate their responses to particular questions. Questions included instructions to interviewers as to how to ask the question and record responses*, for example:

Q8b Why do you think you are a better reader now than before you did the Reading Planet?
DO NOT READ OUT, PROBE. RING ALL MENTIONED
I'm older…………………………………………………………………………………...……1
I've had more time to read………………………………………………………………….…..2
I've read more books/had more practice………………………………………………………...3
I can read harder words ………………………………………………………………………….4
I can read longer books ………………………………………………………………………….5
I've had more books to chose from …………………………………………………………..…..6
I've had more chances to get books ……………………………………………………………….7
I know more about what there is to chose from ………………………………………………...8
Something else *(write in details) _____ 9
I don't know ……………………………………………………………………………………….0

The questionnaire followed during interviewing did not contain space for qualitative questions and responses, within which respondents may be asked to explain their answers in more detail. Questionnaires would then be coded for analysis, allowing researchers to measure the frequency of certain responses.

Sample: 114 children (all aged between 5-11, mean age 7.8) were interviewed, using two libraries, Braintree and Chelmsford, from the Essex area. The pilot sample is not representative of the desired sample for the full project evaluation, which would

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[4] For researchers who may be considering a similar study, market research standards can be viewed at:
http://www.mrs.org.uk/standards/child.htm

include library staff and parents of participating children. As such the pilot study is not sufficient to measure project outcomes themselves.

Example(s) of evaluation findings/data:

The evaluation assessed the effectiveness of the methods employed under the following criteria:
- The ease with which interview questions, length and complexity could be understood and received by participating children
- The extent to which specific LIRP and TRF outcomes can be measured using the selected methods

It was felt that all participating children were able to complete the interview, having been able to understand the questions asked with relative ease. This was in large part due to the way in which interviews had been administered, in that interviewers were encouraged to make the children feel comfortable and at ease, and that flexibility was allowed in how questions were phrased in order to aid interviewee comprehension. The evaluation team were able to highlight issues with specific questions, such as the benefits of adding or changing multiple choice answers, or rephrasing questions.

Specific questions were mapped to correspond to LIRP and TRF outcomes, and as such their effectiveness in retrieving relative data could be assessed. For example, children completing The Reading Planet were asked if the experience had improved their reading ability, and were asked to rate the extent of improvement on a scale of 'No different', 'Not much different', 'A bit better' and 'A lot better'. Over 75% of the sample believed there had been some improvement, which can be identified as a positive outcome within the LIRP 'Skills' category. Many other examples are included. Evidence such as 98% of respondents like going to the library and intend to continue to use the library is used as a positive 'Values, Attitudes and Feelings' outcome.

Quality assessment of data obtained:

The study has provided a very useful indication as to the effectiveness of the questions asked, and how well the method was received by the participating children, particularly in establishing the limitations of the original Phase 1 study. Due to the limitations of the sample, the findings are not representative of the library staff and parent population which will be represented in the final evaluation study.

Many of the findings in the report can only imply a direct, causal relationship between learning outcomes and participation in the reading challenge. For example, some findings are reported as such:

"For a third of children their Reading Planet books were the only books they read during the Summer holiday. *It is possible* that this group would not have read these books had they not joined the SRC".

Where the validity of evaluation data is uncertain, recommendations are made in the report including the use of control groups, larger samples and a more thorough approach to questioning. Other recommendations are made for the next stages of project evaluation. Such recommendations are evidence of the effectiveness of

conducting a pilot evaluation study, as this will make for a more rigorous approach when conducting the actual evaluation on a much larger scale.

The quality of the data is limited as no real qualitative evidence has been obtained. While percentages are useful indicators of particular outcomes, this could perhaps be better explained, and substantiated, by a complimentary qualitative study.

Methodological effectiveness in achieving evaluation objectives:

The canvassed questionnaire approach adopted when administering evaluation interviews is particularly effective when working with children, as they are made to feel at ease and questions can be rephrased accordingly to assist the respondent's understanding. By issuing guidelines for interviewing, and including prompts for questioning, the quality of data and questionnaire responses can be maintained. The structured approach allows consistent analysis and reliable data.

Providing that questions are mapped specifically to correspond to a generic outcome framework, the interview method is a valuable tool for measuring specific learning outcomes. However, to establish a causal relationship between input and outcome (i.e. the success of the project or scheme itself) respondents should be encouraged to directly relate the experience to the benefits they have received. For example, questions should explicitly mention project participation when asking questions relating to impact:

"Has coming along to The Reading Planet encouraged you to read a wider variety of books than you perhaps would have done before?"

A more qualitative approach to interview questioning would help to establish such a causal relationship, as would a more thorough longitudinal approach which tracks the same respondents from the beginning of the project to its completion. If adopting such a longitudinal approach, it is important that adequate consent is received, and that fieldwork is consistent, for example, the use of the same interviewer for each study, in order to facilitate a sense of trust and comfort for the respondent.

Summary:

This study highlights the benefit of conducting a pilot evaluation for large-scale projects. It has proved to be effective in assessing the appropriateness of a chosen method for use with a particular sample group, and has facilitated recommendations for a more effective approach for the next stages of evaluation in terms of the structure and phrasing of questions asked. However, a pilot study which is representative of the full desired sample may have been more effective, but obviously subject to time and resource restrictions. The methods have proved to be effective in following a generic outcomes-related framework, and recommendations are made as to assuring the quality of data obtained. A more qualitative approach, including a more consistent longitudinal perspective, may be of greater benefit to the larger study.

CASE STUDY 2:

Title:

Chatterbooks Report
The Reading Agency
November 2003
http://www.readingagency.co.uk/html/research_downloads_detail.cfm?e=18

Project description:

Chatterbooks is a national network of reading groups run in partnership with the public library network and Orange (communications company). It began as a pilot project in 2001 consisting of three library authorities and now has 3000 participants from 96 authorities. The reading groups are for children aged 4-12 years old, many of which are from socially excluded groups, and they seek to develop the children's' enjoyment of reading and their skills in talking about their reading with other children and adults. The Orange partnership is an example of a major Reading Agency strategy which aims to build partnerships with the business community to create a more vibrant library service for readers.

Evaluation objectives:

The evaluation report completed in November 2003 uses case study evidence to substantiate quantitative data retrieved form a previous evaluation study (2002). The objectives of the study are to present the experiences of groups from the library staff perspective, following individual evaluation projects. Staff were asked to document their knowledge of the impact of Chatterbooks upon children and families attending the groups during Summer 2003.

Objectives for the evaluation conformed to outcomes identified by the 2002 evaluation, including:
- Chatterbooks children are reading more
- Enjoying reading and talking about books
- Growing in confidence about reading
- Growing in confidence socially

Methodology:

Evidence was collected from 69 reading groups, contained within 32 authorities, who had been running for a year. When asked to document their knowledge, library staff were able to provide evidence from:
- Session records and observations recorded by staff running the groups
- Self (or parent) completion questionnaires for children
- Collection of personal statements and reports from children, parents/carers, library staff, teachers
- Survey of library service aims, target groups and potential partners
- Partnership review

- Three in-depth case studies from authorities of Brent, Cambridgeshire and Calderdale
- Feed-back from Chatterbooks training seminars
- MA dissertation consisting of evaluation of one particular group

As can be seen, much of the evidence collected is anecdotal in nature, and derives from a system of reflective practice on behalf of individual groups. Thus much of the evidence will be qualitative, and may be relatively inconsistent in terms of structure and comparability, as no formal standardised approach to data collection has been adopted.

Where quantitative data has been collected via questionnaires, the exact content and quality of questionnaires administered has not been reported, and it is suggested that different questionnaires, designed to measure different outcomes, had been used by individual groups. Where possible, some data are reported cumulatively, and approximations and inferences are made about the population as a whole (the total number of children participating in Chatterbooks) based on the probable numbers of children affected. No firm conclusions can be drawn however in terms of statistical data due to the inconsistency in methodological approach, and a lack of information on sample size(s) and key variables (such as age and gender). Quantitative data are also provided for individual groups.

Example(s) of evaluation findings/data:

Results are presented under headings such as 'Increased confidence and self-esteem', 'Enjoyment of reading' and 'Improved reading skills'. Each section has a headline quantitative statement, followed by quotations, or anecdotal qualitative evidence, from participating library staff (quoted by authority). Quotes include comments from staff, and repeated comments from parents or children themselves. For example:

Enjoyment of Reading
47% said children enjoyed reading more – 1410 children

A positive change in perception about reading i.e. seeing it as a fun thing to do. (Knowsley)

One of the parents at Boney Hay said that she and her daughter had found Chatterbooks particularly useful because it made reading fun. She said her daughter had disliked reading at school because the teacher made reading a chore. (Staffordshire)

Parent comment – 'She loves it!' Another girl sacrifices football when it is Chatterbooks week. Parent of one participant – 'He went with his friend and now he is tackling longer books on his own'. (Leeds)

Additional qualitative data is presented as anecdotal evidence in terms of children's, parents' and staff's stories, and illustrate particular examples of benefit and development. The three case study authorities report in terms of authority demographics and target groups; session management and delivery; impact and individual success stories.

Quantitative data is presented as headline figures as in the example above, and where appropriate and available, individual group statistics are presented graphically.

Quality assessment of data obtained:

In pure research terms, the quantitative data provided is inappropriate due to the lack of definition in terms of data collection, the design of research instruments and relative inconsistency across the sample. It does however provide interesting headline figures, and where diagrams are used, offers some respite from the otherwise 'wordiness' of the report. No real confidence can be placed in the validity of the actual figures.

The qualitative data however has more substance, and would serve as worthwhile evaluation evidence further to the data retrieved by the 2002 report. The qualitative data provides evidence of how the outcomes identified by that report (in terms of children's enjoyment of, and confidence in, reading) are still being achieved.

Methodological effectiveness in achieving evaluation objectives:

Reflective practice as a qualitative evaluation method can be an effective approach to the measurement of less tangible outcomes such as personal enjoyment and confidence. The qualitative data obtained via staff observation, personal statements and retrospective reporting has provided valuable evidence of continuing successful outcomes as identified by previous studies. However, problems may occur in terms of consistency and the successful replication of further evaluation evidence. The variety of methods adopted by different groups/case studies causes disparity in the quality of data. A 'best practice' approach should be adopted from this study i.e. the areas of qualitative data collection that have been most effective should be formalised and appropriate guidelines given to reading group staff. A more consistent approach to data collection will improve the self-evaluation skills of staff involved and therefore the reporting process for future reference.

Similarly, a standardised research instrument should be formalised for the benefit of quantitative data collection, to be used regularly across the population as a whole, which will give statistical evidence a bit more substance. Qualitative and quantitative methods can then more adequately compliment one another.

Summary:

The evaluation of Chatterbooks 2003 used the principles of reflective practice and adopted a rather ad hoc approach to data collection and research methods. Qualitative data collection methods over time, such as staff observation, children's personal statements and retrospective case studies have provided valuable qualitative data which allows some degree of outcome measurement. The inconsistent approach to quantitative data collection and analysis has resulted in largely insignificant data which can only really serve as 'headline figures' within the report. No real confidence can be placed in the statistics and they are not therefore reliable outcome measures.

CASE STUDY 3:

Title:

Mind's Eye – Evaluation Report
Train, B.
Centre for Information Research
University of Central England in Birmingham
August 2001
http://www.cie.uce.ac.uk/cirt/projects/past/minds_eye.htm

Project description:

The Mind's Eye project was funded by the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS)/Wolfson Public Libraries Challenge Fund[5] in 2000/2001 in relation to its reader development objectives in public libraries. It was a stock promotion event, targeted at male readers under the age of 50, and aimed to improve the target group's reading and library experiences in relation to narrative non-fiction books. The initiative was run on a national and pilot platform and involved the promotion of two specially chosen stock collections via a process of high quality point of lend promotional materials (dump-bins, post cards, stickers, mouse mats) which emulated marketing strategies employed by project-partner booksellers; a dedicated Mind's Eye website; the exploration of innovative approaches to circulation, including special loan periods, stock reservations and delivery options.

Evaluation objectives:

Conducted by the Centre for Information Research at the University of Central England in Birmingham, the overall aim of the project evaluation was:
- To examine the impact of the Mind's Eye pilot project on library staff knowledge of and confidence in promoting non-fiction.

In order to achieve this objective, it was important to consider:
- The project impact on library users
- The project impact on library staff

Further to these initial objectives, it was considered to be appropriate to investigate the impact upon participating booksellers and their customers to provide a comparative element to the library evaluation.

Methodology:

The Mind's Eye promotion was open to any authority in the UK, and some 64 English authorities had participated at the time of writing the report. The evaluation sample consisted of five pilot authorities which varied in size, type and geography, and who

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[5] National policy intended to enhance public libraries' in promoting reading as a skill and pleasure: www.resource.gov.uk/action/dcmswolf/00dcmswo.asp

had each adopted different approaches to publicising the Mind's Eye promotion.

Three **interviews** over a period of three months were conducted with a key contact from each authority. Contact was maintained between interviews to enable monitoring of the development of the project, and to sustain a working relationship with the authorities.

The first interview was of a predictive nature and addressed issues such as:
- Expectations of project
- Perceived benefits of involvement
- Potential issues to address
- Anticipated impact on staff of participation in project

Second and third interviews were more reflective, and gave a consistent longitudinal quality to the evaluation. Issues covered included:
- Reflections on the success of the project
- Difficulties encountered during the project
- Perceived impact on staff of project participation
- Issues concerning sustainability and future development

Supplementary data, particularly with reference to reader responses to the promotion, was available from the project website in the form of readers' surveys, covering topics such as reading habits and perceptions of the promotion itself. Other additional information was made available such as staff training evaluation feedback in the form of self-completed questionnaires.

Booksellers evaluation – Interviews were conducted with representatives from a branch of a large chain bookstore and an independent bookseller who were both running the promotion, with contact being maintained throughout the pilot project. The following issues were addressed:
- The Mind's Eye book collections: potential differences in stock selection between libraries and booksellers; pre and post promotion comparative sales figures
- Customer feedback
- The impact of the promotion on staff knowledge of and confidence in promoting non-fiction; changes in current practice as a result of participation
- Difficulties experienced
- Plans for sustainability

Example(s) of evaluation findings/data:

The qualitative evidence yielded via the interview method is presented under headings which reflect aspects of the promotion and its impact, such as 'Mind's Eye stock issues', 'Mind's Eye and library membership' and 'Library staff: attitudinal change'. Analysis includes direct quotations from interview transcripts. For example:

Library staff: attitudinal change
Pilot authority representatives noted that the initial reactions of their colleagues to the concept of Mind's Eye were not entirely positive?

> "Initially, the local reaction on the ground was *no thank you*"

> However, as the concept became a reality and library staff were more actively involved in the daily operation of Mind's Eye, opinions were undoubtedly beginning to change:

> "Now that it's gone up they're quite fond of it"
> "The responses are becoming more positive all the time"

This example reflects the benefits of a gradual, longitudinal approach to evaluation research, as it reflects a marked change in staff attitudes as a direct result of project participation, which has positive implications for the future of such projects. This evidence is supported by data collected via the staff training evaluation questionnaires, which provides evidence that staff confidence in promoting non-fiction to library users had increased as a result of attending the training session.

The qualitative evidence illustrates many benefits to staff attitudes towards and confidence in promoting non-fiction titles, particularly in encouraging creativity and innovation and an openness to reader development responsibilities:

> "It has increased the number of in-house converts to reader development. There had been a feeling generally that there was too much change going on"

> "The staff were so enthused by the training day that they were falling over themselves with ideas"

Quality assessment of data obtained:

The selection of verbatim quotes from participating staff give the study a 'real world' essence which is complemented by the readability and appropriateness of selected headings and patterns of analysis.

Methodological effectiveness in achieving evaluation objectives:

The evaluation objectives of establishing the effects of the promotion upon staff knowledge and confidence have been easily met by the qualitative methods used, including interviews and supplementary document analysis. The interview data provides 'real world' evidence of the impact of the project, and the longitudinal approach adopted throughout the pilot period provides evidence of change and causal relationships.

The process of using multiple sources of evidence (formally known as *methodological triangulation*) such as interview responses and internet surveys has helped to validate evaluation findings and can instil greater confidence in results.

Summary:

The interview method has provided detailed qualitative responses which effectively illustrate the positive impact that the promotion has had upon staff attitudes. The selection of a representative and manageable sample has also contributed the evaluation's success. Clearly defined and concise evaluation objectives have aided the development of effective research instruments. The consistent interview schedule

used across the five case studies has facilitated effective comparison of promotion management and impact and helped to establish causal relationships. The structured approach to fieldwork, with constructive questioning, has facilitated a very thorough and concise report. The additional study of the impact within bookselling provides a multi-dimensional perspective and helps to contextualise evaluation findings.

CASE STUDY 4:

Title:

Branching Out
Overview of Evaluative Findings
Train, B. and Elkin, J.
Centre for Information research, University of Central England, Birmingham
2001
http://www.cie.uce.ac.uk/cirt/projects/past/branching.htm

Project description:

Initiated by the Society of Chief Librarians and funded by the Arts Council of England, Branching Out was a national reader development project which ran for three years until September 2001. The project was managed by Opening the Book Limited, and 34 participating librarians worked together on reader development subjects such as:
- Selection policy and methods
- Targeting promotions
- Working with reader groups
- Fundraising

Evaluation objectives:

The Centre for Information Research at the University of Central England (UCE) in Birmingham undertook the project evaluation. UCE had been the academic partner for Branching Out since its inception. The main evaluation objectives included:
- Investigation of the personal and professional development of the participating librarians
- Investigation of the extent to which the work of the project had an impact on colleagues and senior managers both within and beyond participating authorities
- Investigation of the extent to which the outcomes of the project affected reader development service provision
- A longitudinal study (through observation and interview) of two of six projects devised during the second year of the project

Methodology:

The evaluation research spanned the three year duration of Branching Out. As such, methods were varied and flexible in order to develop and change alongside the project. Methods included:
- Observation: conducted throughout the project and included attending training days; planning meetings; consultancy days.
- Learning Reviews: including initial exercises; agents of change; project based work; best value; regional networks; personal changes; overall impact of branching out
- Skills audit

- Evaluation of year 2 group projects
- Evaluation of the views of Heads of Service

Skills Audit – A 'skills audit' was distributed to all Branching Out participating staff to allow a self appraisal of their own skills and competence in the reader development discipline, including the following five key areas of project work:
- Book-based skills
- Promotional skills
- ICT
- General management
- Research and evaluation

The audit was repeated towards the end of the third year in order to measure the extent of skills development that had taken place. Audit questionnaires asked respondents to rate their skills and confidence numerically and also to explain their choices in writing, providing both quantitative and qualitative data.

Year 2 projects – this evaluation used two project-based case studies, *Open Ticket* and *Unclassified*. Methods included observation; obtaining 'before and after' feedback on training sessions via qualitative interviews including both trainees, trainers and senior managers; quantitative data such as number of book issues.

Learning Reviews – in an evaluation model devised by staff at UCE, staff are asked to reflect and comment upon their learning experiences with respect to different stages of the project. Reviews were self-completed, and included a series of qualitative questions, focusing on particular themes, with limited spaces to write responses. Five such reviews were completed throughout the project by all participating staff.

Example(s) of evaluation findings/data:

Skills audit data reveals a distinct improvement in the perceived levels of skills and competence. The 'before and after' approach to data collection can suggest a link between project participation and such an improvement, but the use of qualitative responses within the audit has substantiated this relationship, as responses indicate that improved confidence can be attributed to project participation:

"Some of the increases in my skills levels are as a direct result of becoming a senior manager and thus being involved on a daily basis in writing policy documents etc. However, becoming a senior manager was largely as a result of being the Branching Out representative, as this gave me the confidence to apply and be successful"

Individual year 2 project data contained evidence of improvements at service level, and adopted comparative methods such as comparing the number of book collection issues when shelved in a standard a-z sequence and when separated to form an attractive, accessible display (a reader development strategy adopted by the Unclassified project). This quantitative data illustrated a marked increase in the number of book issues, representing project impact at service level.

Learning review evidence shows a gradual improvement in staff attitudes and feelings towards the project and of the personal benefits achieved. Evidence of improved

team-working, professional identity and morale is also included in the report:

> "The personal and professional benefits that I have gained through my work on Branching Out has come as a pleasant and great surprise. Professionally it has enhanced my standing within and outside the borough as an authority on contemporary literature".

Quality assessment of data obtained:

The many 'before and after' longitudinal aspects of the Branching Out evaluation have ensured the quality of the data, in providing evidence to substantiate any claims of improvement and development. Where positive impact is recorded, it is not merely an inference or a suggestion of improvement, as progress can be clearly illustrated using the rich qualitative evidence provided by participants.

The quantitative evidence provided has a valid, complimentary role in the evaluation report. Questionnaire data, such as that used in the skills audit study, is clearly representative as it was distributed to the population as a whole (i.e. every participant) with what appears to be a 100% response rate (although this is very unusual!). The ratings recorded can be justified and validated by the qualitative responses also used in the questionnaire. Additional quantitative data such as the number of book issues at a particular project can support evaluation finding by indicating improvements at service level. This data is easily obtainable and reliable.

Methodological effectiveness in achieving evaluation objectives:

The professional and personal development of project staff is clearly illustrated by this report because of the thorough and consistent approach to qualitative investigation. Conclusions are well supported by actual quotes from respondents and causality is established by the effective longitudinal approach.

The effective sampling of participating, 'front-line' staff, trainers, senior management and Heads of service has provided illustrative comparable evidence which re-enforces the positive impacts of training upon staff, and validates data received from each group. Objectives have been met in establishing impact on all groups of staff involved in the project.

The effects upon reader development service delivery are adequately defined by both qualitative and qualitative evidence, by examples of staff commitment to reader development sustainability and examples of impact at service level.

Summary:

The Branching Out evaluation illustrates the benefits of adopting a flexible, multi-faceted approach to large-scale project evaluation. The longitudinal aspects of some elements of the study have ensured the quality and validity of evaluation evidence. Sampling is highly effective and representative and the marrying of quantitative and qualitative methods have provided a thorough examination of project outcomes and impact.

CASE STUDY 5:

Title:

Reading Our Future: Evaluation of the DCMS/Wolfson Public Libraries Challenge Fund 2000-2001
Wallis, M., Moore, N. and Marshall
Social Informatics Research Unit
University of Brighton
2002
http://www.resource.gov.uk/documents/dcmswolfeval.pdf

Project description:

The overall aim of the DCMS/Wolfson programme was to enhance public libraries' traditional strength in promoting reading as a skill and pleasure, involving the stimulation of new and innovative approaches to reader development in public libraries. The Reader Development Programme was established in 2000 with the following four main objectives:
- To stimulate short term reader development initiatives
- In the longer term, to stimulate reader promotion work in public libraries
- To promote reading to new audiences
- To develop innovative services

Evaluation objectives:

The evaluation, commissioned by Resource: the Council for Museums Libraries and Archives on behalf of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, had three overall objectives:
- To monitor and evaluate the value and impact of individual reader development programmes
- To share good practice in the development of innovative reader development programmes
- To provide guidance in the development of effective performance indicators

Methodology:

Evaluation objectives were to be achieved in four stages:
- Creation and determination of the evaluation model
- Agreement of evaluation criteria
- Project evaluation visits
- Post-project evaluation

Creation and determination of the evaluation model:
The programme consisted of 33 individual reader development projects. Due to time and resource limitations, an evaluation model was devised to enable each individual project to conduct their own evaluation. It was anticipated that the use of a common approach would facilitate comparable results and allow conclusions to be drawn.

The evaluation model specified three distinct measures of *achievement, impact* and *outcome*. Achievement measures were concerned with ascertaining whether or not concrete activities had been carried out as specified in project proposals. These may include the appointment of staff, purchasing of equipment, number of groups formed, number of sessions held etc. Impact measures related to events having occurred as a result of the activities undertaken. Again, these were mainly quantitative in nature, and included such figures as the number of new library members, number of book issues, people attending sessions etc. The objective was to measure the difference since the project had begun. Outcome measures went a step further and sought to examine the long-term, more qualitative, impacts such as staff attitudes, participants' confidence and self-esteem, sustainable community partnerships etc.

Agreement of evaluation criteria:
The application forms for individual projects were analysed, and individual target indicators were written for each project, which then formed the basis of the evaluation undertaken by that individual project, in accordance with the evaluation model defined above. Each project submitted a final report based on these criteria, which formed the basis of the overall assessment of the programme.

Project evaluation visits:
Ten projects were selected as case studies in order to facilitate a more detailed evaluation of value and impact. Methods within the case study approach included qualitative interviews and documentary analysis of evidence collected so far. Projects were chosen in order to be representative of the wide range of activity within the programme, including small, medium-seized and large projects, local regional and national and projects that covered a full range of target groups.

Post project evaluation:
Each project had to submit a final report[6] on the outcomes of the project, and the extent to which original objectives had been met. The final reports were generally consistent, although some were incomplete, and some had commissioned independent researchers whose reports did not necessarily comply with the evaluation model criteria. Due to the extent of qualitative data made available, the evaluation team were still able to draw their own conclusions.

Example(s) of evaluation findings/data:

The relevant achievement and impact measures are well reported, especially with regard to the project objective of stimulating short term reader development initiatives, and how these initiatives have been managed and delivered. Many examples are given of successful reading groups, book clubs, homework clubs that were established, the varying target groups that have been reached and the range of quality materials that have been produced. Project successes are attributed to the appointment of a designated project manager, which has enabled libraries manage the project and budget, monitor performance targets, spread good practice and generate publicity.

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[6] For examples of individual project reports, please refer to
http://www.resource.gov.uk/documents/rdp2001

Case study research has provided evidence of outcome measures, in providing qualitative data to contextualise and validate achievement and impact evidence. Staff have expressed opinions on changes in staff attitudes, project sustainability and the sharing of good practice, enabling the evaluation team to make recommendations based on project longevity, including staff training issues, prolonged funding periods, advice on publicity and dissemination and the allocation of project 'lead time' to enable sufficient staff recruitment and training to take place:

"Training is the key to mainstreaming reader development work and changing staff attitudes. It is often difficult because it means staff have to unlearn traditional routines and take on board a totally different approach".

Quality assessment of data obtained:

The evidence presented in the report is methodical and informative in accordance with the 'type' of data associated with achievement and impact measurement. The projects are well described and defined, and the extent of the success of the programme as a whole, particularly with reference to short-term objectives, is well communicated in light of the information provided by individual projects.

The long-term impact, in terms of benefits derived by those taking part in the individual projects, is not well represented, but as this was not a major objective of the evaluation this is perhaps to be expected. For further detail on individual projects, it is possible to consult project reports, though the quality and extent of information provided within such reports is relatively inconsistent.

Methodological effectiveness in achieving evaluation objectives:

In terms of 'monitoring and valuing the value and impact of individual reader development programmes', the approach of summarising individual project reports following the design of an evaluation model has resulted in adequate information for this purpose, particularly with respect to the more quantitative achievement and impact measures. The evaluation is structured and informative, and case study examples provide a 'real world' context. However, as a more reliable measure of project impact, more qualitative data from the reader's perspective may have been beneficial.

The report has facilitated the sharing of good practice to a certain extent, and recommendations are made as to effective publicity and dissemination techniques. The achievement of effective performance indicators is a little unclear, possibly due to the disparity of individual projects.

Summary:

The report provides an example of how to evaluate a national programme which contains lots of varied individual projects. The design of an evaluation model to be followed by individual evaluators can provide an effective vehicle for full evaluation. This would appear to be especially true when measures are quantitative in nature, and do not require extensive analysis and interpretation.

When more detailed evidence is required, it may be appropriate to take an evaluation model a stage further, and contain guidelines for actual data collection methods and techniques. If individual projects are using the same approaches, this may facilitate more effective comparison and analysis. A specified approach to qualitative evaluation would produce richer data on the long term impacts of a programme. However, specifying data collection methods to a group of projects may be unfeasible if they are disparate in size and nature, and/or have differing objectives. Such issues must be taken in to consideration.

CASE STUDY 6:

Title:

The Vital Link
Train, B., Usherwood, R. and Brooks, G.
Centre for the Public Library and Information in Society, Department of Information Studies, University of Sheffield
2002
http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/vitallink/evaluation.html

Project description:

The project was funded by an award from the second year of the DCMS/Wolfson Public Libraries Challenge Fund and was run over a twelve month period. A consortium of nine library services from four English regions collaborated on the project in partnership with The Basic Skills Agency, Books for Students and London Libraries Development Agency, who were managed by a project team including representatives form the National Literacy Trust, The National Reading Campaign, The Reading Agency and two independent co-ordinators[7].

The overall aim of the project was to link adult literacy and libraries, which included six objectives:
- To develop a major partnership programme harnessing libraries' reader development work to support adults trying to improve their literacy skills
- To inspire, support and motivate emergent adult readers and recruit new 'hard to reach' learners
- To establish effective links between the library service and adult basic education sector
- To identify, evaluate and articulate the unique contribution libraries' reader development work can make to the Government's plans to improve basic literacy skills
- To research, implement and disseminate replicable local models at regional and national level
- To provide a range of support strategies and materials collections during and following the programme

Evaluation objectives:

The evaluation was conducted by the University of Sheffield, and its main objectives were to assess the impact of library support and reader development approaches on:
- Increasing adult learners' confidence and enjoyment of reading
- Motivating people to improve their basic skills
- Supporting progression to other learning opportunities
- Building the capacity of libraries to support basic skills development (for example through staff training, more appropriate stock collections and ICT provision)

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[7] Please see Appendix 1 – Useful resources for websites of all relevant organisations

- Developing integration of library support into basic skills provision

Evaluating eight library services involved in the project, the report would provide '*a framework to enable professionals and policy makers to come to an informed judgement about the value and impact of public libraries and reader development on people who are seeking to attain basic skills'*.

Methodology:

The approach adopted by the evaluation team combined quantitative and qualitative methods, including:
- Review of the literature: this contextualises evaluation findings by discussing topics such as the development of adult basic skills provision; the history of the relationship between basic skills provision and the library service; examples of previous research
- Questionnaire: two brief, quantitative questionnaires were administered to measure the impact on participants' confidence in using literacy (completed upon entry to a course, and towards the end). Each learner was allocated an identifier code to allow statistical analysis using a computer with the aim of testing any statistical significance in changes to learner's average self-ratings.
- Participant profile questionnaire: used to gather background information on participants, such as age, gender, previous experience of basic skills, qualifications etc. This was intended as supporting information, and also to aid analysis of questionnaire data based on key variables.
- Social audit: an evaluation technique previously used by the Department of Information Studies at the University of Sheffield, which seeks to crosscheck the views and perceptions of selected stakeholders in order to determine to what extent these objectives had been achieved. The social audit was conducted using the qualitative interview method.
- Focus groups: at least one focus group was conducted within the eight participating authorities, consisting of basic skills course participants. Sampling and selection was entirely random, and areas for discussion included use of the public library; views on the book collection/titles used; changes in reading habits
- Project interviews: semi-structured interviews ere conducted with all key stakeholders including representatives of: library services; project management; library staff; basic skills sector. Interviews were staged throughout the project to cover impact at mid-stage, objectives, perceived barriers, partnerships and full-term impact.
- Post-audit workshop: a workshop was held between project management, the evaluation team, library staff and basic skills tutors to discuss evaluation findings prior to the writing of the final report. Discussion and findings on the day was used to inform the final evaluation.

Example(s) of evaluation findings/data:

Evaluation data is presented under three key themes:
- The role of the public library in basic skills education
- Partnerships

- Reader development and the reading experience

Qualitative interview and focus group data is used to discuss the role of the library in basic skills education in terms of its suitability as a venue, perceptions and awareness of library services, suggested changes and service issues such as charges and stock display. There has been a very positive response to the library as a basic skills venue. Many important elements which are relevant to basic skills students were raised, concerning the library as a welcoming, learning environment:

"I think you want that secure environment, and I think it's a lovely welcoming environment full of facilities… It's just a whole environment that's conducive to learning... I think that libraries now have become so resourceful, in every sense of the word"

"I mean if you're coming to a place that's got a hostile environment, because the staff are hostile to you, you wouldn't use it"

Evidence illustrated that the effectiveness of partnerships varied, but had been mutually beneficial overall. It was felt that partnerships were sustainable, but the project objective of developing a sustainable, transferable model for ways in which libraries can support basic skills delivery had not been achieved, due to time and resource limitations across the partnerships.

The participant questionnaire helped to substantiate qualitative perceptions of reader development and the reading experience, which had illustrated that students were now reading more and gaining confidence in their abilities. Respondents (basic skills students) were asked to rate their responses to particular statements concerning reading and visiting a library, for example:

1. *When I think about going to the library, I feel…*
Not at all confident – Not very confident – Fairly confident – Very confident

208 respondents completed the original questionnaire, though only 64 respondents completed the second. This relatively low response rate means that reliable inferences cannot be made about the population as a whole, but the data provides an indication of the changes in attitudes within that group of 64 respondents. A test was conducted to investigate the significance of the differences between the two responses, but such a test was limited because of the small sample size, and although results show some increase, this was not statistically significant enough to establish a relationship between attendance of a basic skills group and improved confidence.

Quality assessment of data obtained:

A literature review can be effective in contextualising evaluation findings and prescribing a structure for data collection and analysis; the literature review in this case has helped to formulate a greater understanding of reader development and its societal role. It will also give the report an element of academic rigour, which will improve large-scale reports funded by major clients.

The extensive qualitative evidence provides clear examples of staff, stakeholder and student perceptions of the project from each of the objective perspectives. This has

helped the evaluation to formulate clear summaries of audit findings and constructive recommendations.

Although a highly structured and methodological precise (in terms of coding and analysis) approach was adopted for the quantitative study, this fell short of its objectives due to the low response rate.

Where disparities in participating services have occurred, and any subsequent differences in the quality and range of services provided, this is clearly defined within the report and it is recommended that this be taken in to account when considering evaluation results. It is essential to consider and define any evaluation limitations as in this example; failure to do so could harm evaluation credibility.

Methodological effectiveness in achieving evaluation objectives:

There is much evidence to suggest an improvement in learners' confidence and enjoyment of reading, and the qualitative methods of interviews and focus groups have been effective in achieving this objective. The same can be said of motivating people to improve skills and pursue learning opportunities.

The evaluation has facilitated consensus and recommendations with regards to the role and integration of public libraries in the support of basic skills development. This was aided by the multi-agency approach to evaluation fieldwork, which included key stakeholders, relevant staff and beneficiaries.

Summary:

The Vital Link research represents an example of a large-scale, multi-agency project evaluation, which incorporates a variety of methods. Quantitative data was affected by a poor response rate. This did not however dilute the value of the qualitative data obtained, which facilitated the meeting of evaluation objectives. Some consideration, therefore, should be given to the appropriateness of quantitative research to reader development, in light of its dependency upon large sample sizes.

A strong feature of the Vital Link evaluation is the collaborative nature of evaluation fieldwork and feedback, with project management and all key stakeholders playing a visible, advisory role, as illustrated by the post-audit workshop. Appropriate communication is an important aspect of ensuring that evaluation objectives are met, particularly when evaluation is undertaken on a consultancy basis.

CASE STUDY 7:

Title:

Impact Evaluation of Museums, Archives and Libraries: available evidence project
Wavell, C. et al
Aberdeen Business School, The Robert Gordon University
2002
http://www.resource.gov.uk/documents/id16rep.pdf

Project description:

The report was commissioned by Resource: The Council for Museums, Libraries and Archives, in response to growing demands for public sector services to demonstrate accountability and the need to measure impact. Public organisations are increasingly accountable to all their stakeholders, including users, staff and funding bodies. Government policy is putting increased pressure on library sector evaluation, as priority issues necessitate a demonstration of impact on society, learning and economic growth. Effective impact evaluation however, is still in its early stages across the sector.

Evaluation objectives:

The main objectives of the review are to:
- Identify what evidence already exists on impact evaluation for museums, archives and libraries[8]
- Synthesise the available evidence at a general level in order to provide a coherent picture of the impact that museums, archives and libraries have had
- Identify and describe critically the different evaluation methodologies that have been used to date in the sector
- Identify gaps and provide recommendations for next steps

Methodology:

The study utilises, in effect, a large-scale literature review, which encompasses a five-year retrospective period and includes impact evaluations conducted across the domain in the UK. This covers all types of museum and library; evaluations conducted on a local, regional and national basis, and studies that have evaluated specific projects, services and initiatives across the three domains.

Example(s) of evaluation findings/data:

When considering the learning impact of libraries upon their members, many evaluation studies have illustrated positive outcomes in terms of library contribution, especially in the areas of reader development and the role of academic libraries. Issues surrounding the evaluation of learning impact and evaluation methods include the appropriate language and terminology of learning impact; individual project timescale being insufficient to measure long-term outcomes; the varying quality of rigour in the

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[8] For the purpose of this study, only the evidence concerning libraries will be considered

evaluation and reporting procedures make it difficult to draw reliable conclusions; qualitative anecdotal evidence helps to establish a cause and effect relationship between individual projects and learning outcomes, but do not define the overall impact of or upon a clearly defined sample or population.

Quality assessment of data obtained:

A summary of 'methods used for impact evaluation' offers an interesting insight in to large-scale organisational surveys, including surveys of the public and of sector staff and project workers. Perhaps of more relevance to reader development evaluation is the raising of some common issues within evaluation research within the sector, including:

- The training and understanding of practical applications of research techniques is often limited with the domain, which often necessitates external evaluation by trained professionals
- Qualitative should be integrated within a rigorous framework which addresses issues of validity and reliability, and is representative of the sample under consideration
- Only longitudinal research conducted within an extended time-scale can measure true long-term impact – often project timescales do not allow this
- A standardised approach is needed if regional or national comparison is to be made possible, allowing for local variations in aims and objectives

Methodological effectiveness in achieving evaluation objectives:

In essence, the literature review is the only real research method that would facilitate such a report. Objectives have been met in terms of identifying existing evidence and critically assessing the methods used. The recommendations can be somewhat repetitive, but this is perhaps in part reflective of the quality of existing data.

Summary:

There is little comment on how to effectively use quantitative evaluation within the sector, and most commentary is dedicated to the use of qualitative measures. It is recommended that quantitative instruments should be based on sound academic research, and if conducted on a large scale, may require external funding and expertise. Reader development projects often may not have access to such expertise and pure academic standards, which again raises questions over the appropriateness of quantitative survey methods to reader development evaluation

The study provides a useful introduction and overview to those practitioners that are relatively new to library project and impact evaluation.

Summary of key points

The most effective evaluation methods in achieving research objectives in the individual examples cited appear to be qualitative methods including interviews, focus groups and observation. Quantitative methods have potential for measuring impact and long-term outcomes upon participants, but are dependant upon large sample sizes and academic rigour to achieve statistical confidence. Quantitative evidence such as library membership and book issues can help to substantiate findings from a service level perspective. A 'before and after' longitudinal approach is most effective in establishing project and outcome relationships.

Case study evidence illustrates the following key issues for effective evaluation research:

1. Consistency
2. Representative sampling
3. Appropriate research instruments
4. External/internal evaluation
5. Evaluation models and generic outcomes
6. Evaluation limitations

1. Consistency

It is important to maintain consistency, especially when evaluating projects that might contain several sub-projects or initiatives, and when the researcher is seeking to obtain comparable data. Such consistency can apply to sample sizes, the design of research instruments (such as interview questions), personnel, and reporting structures and formats.

2. Representative sampling

Where possible, samples should be representative of the population as a whole in order to assure validity of data, and to enable the effective writing of results in terms of inferences made, and conclusions drawn, about the impact of a project upon the total participating population.

3. Appropriate research instruments

When seeking comparable data, appropriate research instruments should be designed that will facilitate effective comparison, for example, if using interview and focus group methods, questions should follow a similar pattern in terms of subject investigation if the responses are to be compared effectively. This is especially true if using multiple case studies, or a variety of projects.

4. External/internal evaluation

There is evidence to suggest that evaluation projects conducted by external agencies (such as academic departments and private consultancies) offer an objective approach and can often offer the assurance of professional evaluation experience and skills. Whether an internal or external evaluation is undertaken,

appropriate consultation and communication with the relevant staff, stakeholders, beneficiaries and professionals is integral to a project's success.

5. *Evaluation models and generic outcomes*

The design of evaluation models and/or a series of generic outcomes can be beneficial to some large-scale schemes that may include a number of individual projects. However, such generic models and outcomes should be clearly defined, and appropriate training given to those members of staff responsible for carrying out individual evaluations. Generic outcomes must be relevant to all participating projects, and relevant research instruments should be designed and used across the board where possible. This will ensure consistency in data collection and reporting.

6. *Evaluation limitations*

Any evaluation limitations such as poor response rates, inadequate representation within samples, limited resources etc, should be reported, clearly defined and where appropriate, reiterated when concluding and/or summarising the report. This will help to modify and contextualise any evaluation results and conclusions, and reduce the risk of misinterpretation.

Reader development evaluation reports:

The Reading Planet
Product Perceptions Limited for The Reading Agency
Available from:
http://www.readingagency.co.uk/html/research_downloads_detail.cfm?e=6

Chatterbooks
The Reading Agency
Available from:
http://www.readingagency.co.uk/html/research_downloads_detail.cfm?e=18

Mind's Eye
Train, B.
Centre for Information research, University of Central England, Birmingham
Available from:
http://www.cie.uce.ac.uk/cirt/projects/past/minds_eye.htm

Branching Out
Train, B.
Centre for Information research, University of Central England, Birmingham
Available from:
http://www.cie.uce.ac.uk/cirt/projects/past/branching.htm

Reading our Future
Wallis, M., Moore, N. and Marshall, A.
Available from:
http://www.resource.gov.uk/documents/dcmswolfeval.pdf

The Vital Link
Train, B., Usherwood, R. and Brooks, G.
Centre for the Public Library and Information in Society, Department of Information Studies, University of Sheffield
Available from:
http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/vitallink/evaluation.html

Impact Evaluation of Museums, Libraries and Archives
Wavell, C. et al
Aberdeen Business School, The Robert Gordon University, 2002
Available from:
http://www.resource.gov.uk/documents/id16rep.pdf

4. Recommendations

The following recommendations are made in order to assist a 'best practice' approach to reader development evaluation, and will build upon examples given by the literature review and case study sections. A glossary of key research terms is included at the end of the report which will help to clarify definition and understanding (where key terms are shown in **bold** these will be included in the glossary).

4.1 Evaluation project management and advisory groups

Consultation and communication with key stakeholders, all relevant personnel and in some cases beneficiaries is essential for evaluation success, particularly in the planning and research design stages. This is the only way to ensure that evaluation objectives are clearly defined and that they are supportive of the purposes of the study from each stakeholder's perspective. Chosen methods should be approved by all relevant personnel, especially where consent and assistance may be required, for example, with the organisation of interview and focus group fieldwork. All relevant parties should be in agreement that the chosen methods are adequate for the purposes of the study.

A suggested vehicle for ensuring comprehensive consultation is the formation of an *evaluation advisory group*. Members should include representatives of all relevant parties, including the evaluation team, project personnel and key stakeholders. The group should meet regularly throughout the project evaluation (frequency depending on size and scale of project). Even for a relatively small research study, this can be an effective and professional method for communication and dissemination. If groups cannot be formed due to issues such as geographical distance or conflicting schedules, then communication with all key partners should still be maintained, for example, by regular e-mail updates.

4.2 Importance of definition and conceptual clarity

> ***Prior to planning an evaluation, ensure that project outcomes are measurable and clearly defined***

The anticipated outcomes of the project (be it short or long term) should be clearly defined in order to aid effective measurement. The evaluation researcher should have a clear understanding of project aims and objectives and expectations in terms of impact if they are going to construct reliable measures, interpret the evidence appropriately and demonstrate the relative successes of the project's outcomes and performance. This will also enable the researcher to make effective recommendations having developed a good sense of the issues involved.

> **Remember to clearly state your evaluation aims and objectives when starting your project**

Once all partners are in agreement on evaluation objectives, they should be clearly defined for the benefit of effective research instrument design. Appropriate data collection will be difficult to achieve if objectives are vague and/or ambiguous. The feasibility of the evaluation as a whole cannot be decided without clearly determined objectives.

> **Be conscious of the need to establish causality when designing research instruments**

Causality, or a direct relationship between project and impact, can only be investigated and illustrated if outcomes and objectives are clearly defined, and if conceptual clarity has been achieved. The relationship between project input and beneficiaries' outcomes should be clearly articulated during data collection within the chosen research instruments if a causal impact is to be proven. This should also be clearly stated within the final report with supporting evidence.

4.3 Objectivity

> **Consider the use of an external agency or consultant to conduct your evaluation**

The use of external agencies, such as private research consultancies or university departments, can help to ensure an objective, professional approach to project evaluation. Agencies should have a proven track record in evaluation research within similar sectors and domains. This will help to give the research professional credibility and academic rigour.

> **Consult appropriate professionals and practitioners for guidance on evaluation research**

In the case of internal or 'in-house' evaluation, consultation with relevant professionals and practitioners may help to inform research and equip evaluation staff with the confidence and motivation to conduct research with appropriate objectivity.

> ***Always be conscious of your audience and who you are conducting the evaluation for***

The emphasis and perspective of a research project should reflect its intended audience. The style of the written report should meet the expectations of its readers, for example, a professional or academic audience may expect the report to follow a conventional format with clearly defined chapters and headings. The researcher should ensure that they have enough material to meet such requirements. Similarly, research instruments such as questionnaires and interview questions should be pitched at the right level and have enough substance to meet reporting requirements.

4.4 Approaches

> ***How to choose between a quantitative or qualitative approach –
> selecting your criteria***

The important definition to make when deciding upon a quantitative or qualitative approach is the identification of what is actually being measured and evaluated; project *outputs*, *outcomes* or *impact*. By convention, the 'output' of an activity can be measured quantitatively in terms of the goods or a service provided (such as numbers of books issued by a library), and does not refer to any broader social impact (Smith, 1996). An outcome usually represents the less tangible societal ramifications of a programme, or the short to medium term results of applying outputs (such as increased reading for pleasure in children further to increased book issues). The impact of an activity has been defined by Resource as such:

"The effect of the outcomes on the environment… using that term very broadly to include people and society at large – and is usually long-term. An example here might be the growth in literacy (or even improvements in mental well-being) as a result of reading library books" (Cultural Heritage Consortium, 2002)

Quantitative methods

Service statistics – service statistics, particularly in the library sector, are a useful and valid measure of service or project *outputs*. For example, as illustrated in the case study evidence, book issue statistics can be compared before and after a promotional reader development event or stock promoted using event publicity material (such as book displays and dump bins) can be compared to stock shelved conventionally in terms of the number and frequency of individual book issues. Other statistical output evidence includes library membership figures; volume of enquiries; library traffic (gate count); PC usage etc. Statistics are available from library management systems and general house-keeping records, and as such constitute reliable evidence.

Survey methods - quantitative questionnaires may be used to measure project *outcomes*. Scaled responses act as output measures in determining the extent of

outcome upon respondents. For example, on a basic quantitative level respondents may be asked to assess their own development and will be given a choice of responses:

Since participating in the scheme, have you visited your local library:

Not at all - Less frequently – More frequently – No change

Responses are coded numerically, and researchers can record the number of times a response is selected, resulting in evidence such as:

56% of respondents stated that they visited the library more frequently after participating in the scheme

Effective and quite sophisticated quantitative analysis can be conducted using statistical analysis software such as Microsoft Excel or SPSS for the more seasoned researcher. Tests can be conducted, using a number of **variables** such as age and gender, to test the statistical significance of proposed outcomes, but such analysis relies heavily on large, representative sample sizes and applied academic rigour. Such methods and analysis may benefit the evaluation of a large, long-term project that has appropriate resources and personnel with the relevant skills and experience, and a substantial accessible respondent sample.

Participant demographics – quantitative questionnaires are very useful for establishing the demographics of a **sample** and defining sample representation. They can be used to provide simple data such as gender, age, employment status, qualifications etc. Providing that such quantitative information concerning the **population** as a whole, i.e. the total number of participants, this can be used to determine how representative the sample actually is. It also helps to provide comparative data, in that responses can be compared with respect to key variables. For example, different levels of outcome may have occurred between male and female respondents or respondents from different age groups. Such demographic data may be included in outcome measurement questionnaires, or may be used to substantiate qualitative data, for example, a brief questionnaire containing demographic questions may be distributed amongst focus group members.

Qualitative methods

Qualitative methods are well represented within the case study evidence, and provide effective measures of outcome and impact when conducted thoroughly and in accordance with evaluation objectives. Interpersonal methods such as interviews and focus groups provide a personal touch which allows the consideration of less tangible outcomes such as improvements in confidence and self-esteem. Where sessions are tape recorded and fully transcribed, the inclusion of direct verbatim quotes from respondents gives evaluation evidence a sense of realism and validity. Other more **ethnographic** methods such as observation allow the researcher a 'real world' perspective in being able to see the impact of a project in its natural setting.

Issues to consider include the appropriateness of qualitative methods to the sample being studied, especially in terms of any ethical issues which may arise. It is standard for confidentiality and anonymity to be assured to respondents, yet the physical act of tape recording a session may still be a little disconcerting to some respondents. When

working with children or other sensitive groups, it may be appropriate to have a parent, tutor or somebody who is familiar to the group present. This shouldn't however interfere with the research process. In light of these issues, certain skills and qualities are required of the qualitative researcher, including the ability to empathise with the sample being studied, and the ability to conduct fieldwork in a polite, sensitive and friendly manner whilst maintaining professional research standards and conventions.

Still not sure? Evaluating your chosen evaluation methods – the benefits of a pilot study

When considering appropriate research methods, a **pilot study** can be a valuable exploration of their effectiveness in light of evaluation objectives and target groups. A pilot study would test the chosen methods on a microcosm of the required sample, although this should also be representative where possible. Conclusions can be made about the appropriateness of the study in light of the evidence and data obtained. Pilot studies are subject to time and resources, and as such are perhaps more suited to large long-term projects.

Other approaches to pilot studies include the gathering of supplementary, indicative data using a brief research instrument on a small contained sample. For example, library staff working on the 'Loud and Proud'[9] book promotion as part of the Branching Out campaign issued brief customer comments sheets to 100 library borrowers by placing the sheets inside general borrowed books. This provided a concise, accessible measure of promotion outcomes. The sheet contained 6 simple questions including:

Have you looked at the Loud and proud display?
☐ Yes
☐ No

What do you think encouraged you to choose a book?
☐ A known author
☐ The book jacket
☐ It easy to choose from a display
☐ The books are new
☐ I wanted to read a lesbian/gay book
☐ Any other reason – please explain:

Remember to sample effectively to ensure appropriate representation of your study

There are many different approaches to **sampling** which are generally informed by project and population size and scope. Large scale evaluation projects, such as the

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[9] Loud and Proud reader survey: http://www.branching-out.net/branching-out/print.asp?idno=484

National Evaluation of Sure Start[10], will adopt strategic sampling techniques to reflect the range and scope of Sure Start initiatives and objectives. In this example, different stages of evaluation was conducted to represent the evolution of the Sure Start project, and strategic sampling was undertaken to facilitate the multi-dimensional approach to evaluation. For example, for a cross-sectional stage of the impact study a subset of 150 (out of 260) Sure Start communities were selected on the basis of their geographic, demographic and ethnic characteristics; their approach to Sure Start; their initial progress in implementing Sure Start.

Other sampling strategies include random and purposeful sampling. Random probability sampling will be representative, whereby the sample size is a function of population size and desired confidence levels. A simple random sample (containing proportionately representative numbers of participants as a whole) will permit generalization from sample to the population it represents. Stratified or cluster samples will be representative of particular sub-groups (for example, male/female, age and ethnicity) and will increase confidence in making generalizations to particular groups. Purposeful sampling involves the strategic and purposeful selection of information rich cases, dependant upon study purpose and resources (Patton, 2002).

Define your sample concisely within your final report to ensure reader confidence in your findings

It is important that your sample is clearly defined within the report in order to clarify representation and to avoid misinterpretation of results. Where instruments have been used to establish demographics of the sample (such as participant questionnaires) it is important to include details of how this was done, or maybe include a copy of the questionnaire used as an appendix. Such an approach gives your report, and the evidence obtained substance and demonstrates a thorough understanding of research methods. This will encourage reader confidence in the findings.

Consider the use of a control group to help to establish cause and effect

The use of **control groups** can validate evaluation data and help to establish a causal relationship between project participation and impact; an important element of evaluation research. Control groups should be as demographically similar to the sample as possible. For example, if evaluating a children's reading group, a control group could consist of children of the same age and from the same school(s)/area that have never attended such a group.

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[10] National Evaluation of Sure Start: http://www.ness.bbk.ac.uk/documents/Methodology.pdf

> ### *When designing research instruments, pay due attention to evaluation objectives*

Research instruments, their structure and content, should correspond directly to evaluation objectives if they are to be effective. For example, interview/survey questions should be easily mapped to specific outcomes, and their relationship to evaluation objectives clearly defined. This will ease data analysis and give a structure to evaluation findings and ultimately the final report. Research instruments can be approved by key stakeholders in advance, providing this would not affect data collection and neutrality, for example, giving respondents leading information which may affect the instinctive validity of responses.

Where possible, copies of research instruments should be included within the report as appendices, or at least clearly defined and discussed within the methodology chapter.

> ### *Make sure that research instruments can be easily understood and followed by respondents*

Research instruments should be appropriately written with respect to the relevant respondents. This also applies in terms of length, complexity, and the way in which research instruments are administered. For example, when working with children, language should be accessible and easy to understand, methods should be relatively short and concise, and the canvassed approach, whereby researcher goes through a questionnaire with a child or delivers an interview is perhaps the most suitable. Web-based questionnaires would only be suitable for respondents who are confident in their IT skills.

Ethical issues

Ethical issues should be considered at the point of research design, such as the acquiring of consent; parent/peer attendance; confidentiality and anonymity; data protection; the tackling of sensitive issues; empathy when dealing with different target groups etc. Confidentially and anonymity issues should be clarified with respondents and stakeholders prior to conducting the research. Ethical issues should be defined within the reports, along with how any problems or barriers have been overcome. Some ethical issues will require experience and competence from the researcher conducting the evaluation.

Limitations of study

Any limitations of an evaluation study should be clearly defined, for example, poor **response rates**, inadequate representation of sample, limited time and resources etc. This will help to contextualise the research for the reader, who can then rationalise evaluation findings in light of the limitations encountered. It is important to stress

how limitations have impacted upon the study, for example, by not allowing assumptions to be made about project impact as a whole, or by not evaluating certain aspects of a project.

Perhaps first and foremost, due consideration must be given to the available time and resources when planning and designing an evaluation study. If a project is beyond available resources in terms of the skills, expertise, materials and time required to conduct the research, then results will suffer in failing to meet the desired objectives. It is important to keep things in perspective, and contain evaluation objectives to compliment available resources.

4.5 **Triangulation** and data validity

When using a variety of methods, it is important to compare and contrast resulting data in order to validate or question issues that may emerge (*methodological triangulation)*. For example, if focus group and interview respondents have expressed the same positive opinions on the outcome of a project, then this gives the evaluation more substance and provides sufficient evidence to draw relative conclusions. Existing project data, such as mid-term internal reports, committee meeting minutes, student learning logs and original funding bids may also help to substantiate evaluation findings. It may be helpful to confirm access to such documents in the research design stages.

4.6 Small/Large scale – longitudinal perspective

As previously stated within the case study evidence, a **longitudinal** before and after approach is effective in establishing causal relationships and the feasibility of such an approach should be considered for both small and large scale projects. If time and resources allow, a repeated use of similar research instruments at significant stages within a project lifespan will help to reveal gradual changes in respondents' behaviour and attitudes, and to attribute such changes to the impact of the project itself.

4.7 Local and national objectives

Sharing your results – what can be learnt, who will benefit, and can we develop a 'best practice' evaluation resource?

Some consideration should be given to evaluation research **dissemination** and a pooling of data with other projects and authorities which may have shared similar experiences. This will help to establish 'best practice' evaluation policy within sectors, and to encourage projects to learn from one another.

Sectoral benefits and compatibility

Research should be undertaken in to similar projects within the domain with the objective of ensuring consistency and compatibility. Where individual evaluations are undertaken under a single project 'umbrella', similar approaches and reporting styles should be adopted to ensure the development of a consistent evaluation resource which is of mutual benefit to key stakeholders and other professionals within the sector. This will help to develop an effective pooling of resources which will contribute to the development of evaluation skills and expertise within sectors and practicing professions.

4.8 Staff development and training

Do your evaluation team have the appropriate evaluation expertise and skills?

Staff training and development in evaluation research skills will not only benefit immediate evaluation results in the short-term, but will equip the organisation with the relevant expertise to conduct future evaluation projects with improved flair, innovation and confidence. It is important that staff have comprehensive skills in all areas of project evaluation, including the design of research instruments; data collection techniques; data analysis; dissemination skills, including skill and confidence in writing reports and presenting results in alternative formats, such as conference presentations and journal articles.

This may not necessarily require expensive training courses or prolonged periods of time. Studying relevant evaluation research texts and previous projects, or consulting with relevant practitioners in the field can help to inform evaluation approaches and build confidence in the researcher.

4.9 Reporting

Your report is the evaluation 'fait acomplis' – make sure that it adequately reflects the work put in to both the project and its evaluation

Structure and format of report

The structure of a report should reflect the evaluation approach taken and contain conventional chapters and headings which communicate effectively the research undertaken, its analysis, results and recommendations. A thorough and structured evaluation report will usually include the following sections[11]:

a. Title page
Including title, authors, date, collaborating/funding organisations

b. Contents page

c. Abstract
This will be a short summary of the *whole* report, usually no longer than a few paragraphs, including project background, objectives, methods, findings and recommendations.

This may be replaced by an *executive summary* for larger projects, which will follow the headings of the main report and summarise key points.

Sometimes a *foreword* may be written by the funding body, or by a key project stakeholder. This will briefly describe the project history from their perspective, and their expectations of the report.

d. Introduction
This literally introduces the reader to the report and will include the rationale behind the project, key objectives and how the report will be structured.

e. Project background
It may be necessary to briefly describe the actual project that is being evaluated, including its history, key stakeholders, timescale, target group and main objectives. This will help to contextualise the evaluation.

f. Evaluation objectives
As previously mentioned, evaluation objectives must be clearly defined, hence a separate chapter in which the author describes what exactly the evaluation is seeking to find out, prove and measure is appropriate.

g. Literature review
This is not always necessary, but may be beneficial to larger projects, to trace the history of the project/initiative being evaluated, and to contextualise project objectives. This provides background information and 'sets the scene' for the reader.

h. Methodology
A methodology chapter should clearly define methods used and why they were chosen; sample sizes and definitions; when and how fieldwork was conducted; ethical issues and how they were addressed; potential/actual limitations of the methods used. Where multiple methods have been used, remember to explain their

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[11] Report headings are given as guidelines only. Report structure will ultimately be dependent upon project size and scale and researcher style and approach.

relationship to one another, and how this will be reflected in research findings/analysis (*triangulation*).

i. Evaluation findings

Findings and analysis should be clearly presented, preferably following headings or a structure that have been predetermined by evaluation objectives or a literature review. Where a lot of information is being presented, it may be appropriate to summarise the key findings of each section/heading. There should be a concise summary of all key findings and observations at the end of the chapter.

j. Recommendations

These will be made based on evaluation findings, and as such should be cross-referenced and referred back to. Recommendations should be numbered or bullet-pointed so that each point can be made separately. Recommendations may cover subjects such as project sustainability or the need for further research to substantiate evaluation findings.

k. Appendices

These may include copies of research instruments; other key documents such as interim reports; contact details relevant organisations etc. Any supplementary data which bolsters the report may be included as appendices.

Appropriate length and representation of evidence/data

Your report should do justice to the extent and quality of data gathered throughout the evaluation. For quantitative studies, all measures and statistics should be reported in order to reflect the range of available data. Although you may not think that some results are especially interesting, some readers may disagree. In qualitative studies, ensure that quotes from all interview and focus group respondents are adequately represented, and remember to balance the number of quotes used with appropriate comment and analysis. Don't be afraid to include as many quotes as possible, as long as they provide evidence of the point you are trying to make and that they are coherently presented and discussed.

Consistency

It is important to maintain consistency in writing style and quality when writing individual reports, or when writing a series of reports for one project. For example, some stakeholders may require mid and full-term reports if an evaluation is being conducted over an extended period of time. Consistency in reporting style will ensure confidence in evaluation credibility.

Dissemination

As suggested earlier, reports should be written appropriately for their intended audience. It is worth clearing with project stakeholders and funding bodies the copyright status of your final report, and whether or not further dissemination is possible. Elements of your report may make an interesting article or paper for professional or academic journals and conferences. Project stakeholders may be open

to this as it would provide valuable publicity for the projects itself. The acceptance of such papers is highly dependent upon their quality and substance. It can be beneficial therefore to adopt as much of a professional approach to report writing as possible. Reading the professional press will give an indication of the quality and content required.

4.10 Evaluation model based on outcomes and measures – developing evaluation research

Case study evidence gave examples of generic approaches to data collection and outcome measurement, such as the generic learning outcome system[12] devised by Resource. This is intended to prescribe a methodology for evaluation across the cultural domains (libraries, archives and museums). The generic learning outcomes identified will in theory enable any museum, library and archive to research and measure learning impact within their organisation. This is till dependant, however, on their own individual approach to data collection, analysis and interpretation according to individual requirements and objectives.

Such a generic approach is a contentious issue because of the potential lack of methodological consistency. Some larger projects, which require the evaluation of smaller, individual initiatives, may embrace a generic outcomes approach. The design of such a system however would rely upon extensive knowledge of the sector and its impact, and eventually upon advanced data analysis and reporting skills due to the likely disparity in approaches used and quality of data produced.

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[12] The Learning Impact Research Project:
http://www.resource.gov.uk/documents/insplearn_lirp_rep.pdf

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Glossary

Analysis (strategies of): including describing; counting; factoring; clustering; comparing; finding commonalities; examining deviant cases; finding co-variation; modelling; telling the story

Applied research: understands the nature and sources of human and societal problems, and will usually result in policy-making/problem-solving programmes or interventions. Is not just an academic or theoretical study but seeks to be applied in real, practical terms.

Case study: a research method focusing on the study of a single case, which can be an individual person, group, organisation or situation. Case studies are often used in conjunction with other methods (*triangulated*).

Causal relationships: a causal relationship is established between two instances if one has caused the other to occur; in evaluation research, this illustrates the impact of the event studied.

Coding: the process of collecting responses into groups and then assigning a code (a number or a name) to that group for the benefit of research analysis.

Collaborative evaluation: evaluator is a collaborator in the project and a co-investigator

Control groups: a procedure used in experimental designs to investigate causal relationships between a group and an event. The control group will not have been exposed to the event being investigated.

Correlation: a measure of relationships between variables describing the direction and degree of association between them.

Credibility: the illustration that research has been conducted which was appropriate to the subject being investigated. Requires thorough definition of methods used and the reasons for their selection.

Data: the results of, or information retrieved by, a research investigation. Can consist of numbers, word or images.

Dissemination: the process of reporting, publishing or sharing research data and findings. Can be conducted through a variety of mediums; reports, project websites, professional journals, academic literature etc.

Documents: written materials which may include organisation or program records; correspondence; diaries and journals; official publications and reports, photographs and memorabilia. Data will contain excerpts that are relevant to the point being made.

Empiricism: the study of experience via the sense being the source of all knowledge. Used in phenomenological studies.

Empowerment evaluation: research undertaken by those responsible for the running of a project with professionals providing and advisory role

Ethical issues: relates to standards and codes of conduct when undertaking research, on a basic assumption of what is 'right' and what is 'wrong'. Issues for consideration include risk assessment for respondents (psychological stress, legal liabilities, political repercussions); confidentiality and data protection; seeking informed consent; data collection boundaries.

Ethnography: the study and understanding of the life and customs of a particular group. Would involve researcher participation in the group's lifestyle and culture for a specified period of time.

Experiment: a research method whereby the researcher actively manipulates what is being studied, such as in the use of a control group.

Focus groups: interviews conducted by a researcher with a group of respondents rather than on a one-to-one basis. Has the added benefit of providing a more relaxed environment for the interviewee.

Formative evaluation: seeks to make recommendations to improve a programme, policy or intervention.

Generalizability: the ability to apply research findings to another group (or population) and situation.

Grounded theory: an approach which stimulates the discovery of theory from research data achieved in a 'real world' setting, so that theory is grounded in the real social world rather than being purely theoretical and abstract.

Holistic: with reference to the case study method, refers to a study which focuses upon a single case.

Homogeneity: using factors that are similar to one another, for example, a focus group containing eight female nurses all aged 18-25 would be a homogenous sample.

Humanistic: an approach used when a more person-centred approach is preferable to a scientific one.

Hypothesis: a predicted or expected outcome of a study, which forms the basis of the main research question.

Inferential statistics: statistics which are used to infer findings for a larger population based on the process of probability.

Internal validity: the extent to which a single study can confirm a causal relationship.

Interviews: person to person research method which facilitates in-depth responses about people's experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings and knowledge. Data will consist of verbatim quotations which should have sufficient context for interpretation.

Longitudinal: a study which is repeated amongst the same sample over a period of time and seeks to investigate gradual changes and establish causal effects.

Measurement: the assignment of numerals to objects or events according to pre-defined rules. It is important to distinguish between measures and concepts – knowledge is a concept; the measure of knowledge has to be specific and appropriately defined. General levels of statistical measurement include: nominal (numbers assigned to categories); ordinal (requires hierarchical ordering); interval (ordinal with equal intervals between items); ratio (anchored by a true zero, e.g. number of children, criminal convictions etc)

Measures: factors to be measured to determine the impact of a project. Examples – programme inputs, resources and environments (budget, staff, methods of service); participants' opinions etc.

Methodology: theoretical, political and philosophical approaches to social research and the selection of appropriate research methods to be used within a study.

Multivariate analysis: analysis of the relationship between three or more variables (as opposed to univariate analysis, the analysis of a single variable).

Naturalistic: a term used to describe the collection of naturally occurring data.

Objectivity: describes a lack of bias or prejudice on the researcher's behalf.

Observation: ethnographic fieldwork description of activity, behaviour, action, conversation, interpersonal interaction, organisation or community process or any other aspect of observable human experience. Data will consist of field notes, descriptions which should describe the context within which the observation were made.

Paradigm: a way of thinking about and making sense of the real world. Paradigms are deeply embedded within the personality and socialization of people who hold those views.

Phenomenology: a study of the meaning and essence of the lived experience of a particular phenomenon for an individual or group of people.

Pilot study: a study carried out prior to the start of a main investigation to test the effectiveness of research design and methods and the quality of data collected.

Plagiarism: the act of presenting the work of another person as your own. Can be avoided in research terms by correctly citing all other work referred to in your study, and acknowledging all collaborators.

Population: the total body from which your sample has been drawn.

Primary data: data collected from original unpublished sources, such as diaries.

Probability: the likelihood that a particular event will occur. Measured in statistical research terms from 0 (never) to 1 (certain).

Reliability: the extent to which a research instrument would produce the same results if used again on the same respondents. Not really valid in flexible research designs.

Replication: repeating a research study to establish reliability.

Response rates: the quantity or proportion of research instrument returns or responses compared to the number distributed e.g. the percentage of returned questionnaires.

Sample: the factors (people, departments, organisations) chosen to be included in a study from a clearly defined population.

Sampling strategies: the approach taken when choosing your sample. Can include purposeful (the selection of information-rich cases); stratified (the inclusion of a number of sub-groups); extreme/deviant (a particular success or failure); homogenous (as similar a sample as possible).

Social constructivism: the view that reality is socially constructed (i.e. in human social interaction)

Stakeholder: each person who has some interest in the phenomenon being studied, the research and its findings.

Statistical significance: refers to the probability or the likelihood that the result of a test could be due to chance factors alone, and not a causal relationship between what was tested.

Summative evaluation: seeks to determine the effectiveness of a programme, policy or intervention.

Triangulation: research that adopts more than one approach. This can be in terms of methods used, theoretical perspectives, analytical techniques or samples used. This gives the added benefit of comparing one approach to another, and any significant differences in the results.

Validity: refers to the honesty and effectiveness of research reports in terms of whether or not the research intentions have been met.

Variables: aspects of a research study and its sample which can be measured, tested against and compared to others, such as gender, age groups, type of organisation etc.

Appendix 1 – <u>Useful Resources</u>

<u>**Organisations**</u>

Arts Council England
14 Great Peter Street
London
SW1P 3NQ
Phone: 0845 300 6200
Text phone: 020 7973 6564
Email: enquiries@artscouncil.org.uk
http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/

Basic Skills Agency
Commonwealth House
1-19 New Oxford Street
London WC1A 1NU
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0) 207 405 4017
Fax: +44 (0) 207 440 6626
Email: enquiries@basic-skills.co.uk
http://www.basic-skills.co.uk/site/page.php?cms=0

Centre for the Public Library and Information in Society
Department of Information Studies
University of Sheffield
Regent Court
211 Portobello Street
Sheffield
S1 4DP
http://panizzi.shef.ac.uk/cplis/
For contact details of individual staff members:
http://panizzi.shef.ac.uk/cplis/contact.htm

Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP)
7 Ridgmount Street
London
WC1E 7AE
Tel: 0 (+44) 20 7255 0500
Fax: 0 (+44) 20 7255 0501
Text phone: 0 (+44) 20 7255 0505
Email: info@cilip.org.uk
http://www.cilip.org.uk/

Cultural Heritage Consortium

Education for Change Ltd.
17A Christopher Street
London EC2A 2BS
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7247 3370
Fax: +44 (0) 20 7247 3371
http://www.cultural-heritage.org/

Department for Culture, Media and Sport
2-4 Cockspur Street
London
SW1Y 5DH
020 7211 6200
Email enquiries@culture.gov.uk
http://www.culture.gov.uk/default.htm

London Libraries Development Agency
35 St Martin's Street
London
WC2H 7HP
Tel/fax (020) 7641 5266
http://www.llda.org.uk/cms/contentpage/home

National Literacy Trust
Swire House
59 Buckingham Gate
London
SW1E 6AJ
Tel: 020 7828 2435
Fax: 020 7931 9986
contact@literacytrust.org.uk
http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/

Resource: The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries
16 Queen Anne's Gate
London SW1H 9AA
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7273 1444
Fax: +44 (0) 20 7273 1404
info@resource.gov.uk
http://www.resource.gov.uk/

Society of Chief Librarians
Honorary Secretary: Catherine Blanshard
Head of Library and Information Service
Leeds City Council - Department of Leisure Services

The Town Hall
The Headrow
Leeds
LS1 3AD
Tel: 0113 247 8330
Fax: 0113 247 8331
http://www.chieflib.org/index2.htm

The Reading Agency
PO Box 96
St. Albans
AL1 3WP
Order enquiries: 0871 750 1207
Training enquiries: 0871 750 1200
http://www.readingagency.org.uk/

Reader development resources

Bookstart
45 East Hill
London
SW18 2QZ
Tel: 020 8516 2977
Fax: 020 8516 2978
http://www.bookstart.co.uk/

Booktrust
Book House
45 East Hill
London
SW18 2QZ
Tel: 020 8516 2977/020 8516 2984
www.booktrust.org.uk.

Lifelong Learning
http://www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/

National Association for Literature Development
PO Box 140
Ilkley
LS29 6RH
Tel: 01943 872546
Email: steve@inck.fsnet.co.uk
www.literaturedevelopment.com

National Reading Campaign
http://www.readon.org.uk/

Opening the Book
181 Carleton Road
Pontefract
West Yorkshire
WF8 3NH
Tel: 01977 602188 / 602988
Fax: 01977 690621
info@openingthebook.com
http://www.openingthebook.com/otb2003.asp

Whichbook.net
http://www.whichbook.net/index.jsp

Evaluation research resources[13]

BUBL Information Service
Research methods
http://bubl.ac.uk/link/r/researchmethods.htm

Department for Work and Pensions
Research Methods for Policy Evaluation
http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/WP2.pdf

Market Research Society
15 Northburgh Street
London
EC1V 0JR
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7490 4911
Fax: +44 (0) 20 7490 0608
http://www.mrs.org.uk/

Research Methods Knowledge Base
http://trochim.human.cornell.edu/kb/index.htm

Resources for Methods in Evaluation and Social Research
http://gsociology.icaap.org/methods/

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[13] Refer to 'references' section for evaluation textbook references

Social Science Information Gateway
Research Methods
http://www.sosig.ac.uk/roads/subject-listing/World-cat/meth.html

Appendix 2: <u>Evaluation planning checklist</u>

Evaluation stages	Options	Suggestions	Feasibility
Identification of measurable project outcomes and impact			
Evaluation aims and objectives			
Evaluation personnel	Lead researcher: Team:		
Resources	Available: Required:		
Timescale	Start: Completion:		
Advisory committee	Key contacts:		
Evaluation methods	Qualitative: Quantitative:		
Sample			
Research instruments	Completed by:		
Supporting data			
Identification of ethical issues			
Fieldwork schedule			
Staff training			
Reporting deadlines	Mid-term: Completion:		
Additional issues			