Economic Benefits of a Public Library

Assignment 6

Team 4
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Abstract

This study explores the methods applicable to evaluating the economic benefits a public library generates. Assessing a library’s economic value is particularly important for justifying its fiscal budget, as well as to acquire information necessary for enhancing the library’s funding options. This paper identifies over nine assessment approaches valuable in capturing data on the economic benefits a public library provides to the range of stakeholders it serves. At the core of all these methods of evaluation is a cost-benefit analysis that is used to determine the costs at which a library delivers identified benefits. Each assessment approach has its strengths and weaknesses; therefore, it is optimal to utilize a combination of methods to develop a balanced view of the economic benefits that a library offers.
Introduction

Public libraries play a remarkably important role in society. As respected cultural and social institutions, they “collect and disseminate information; they provide comfortable and convenient places for people to read and learn; their physical spaces form meeting places for community groups; free and open for all they help to create a fairer society” (Duncan, 2008, p. 140). The American public has, for many years, funded facility improvements, service enhancements, and technological advancements in libraries. Today, due to funding competition, libraries have been driven to account for these resources in concrete terms and to determine the overall impact of the products and services they provide to the community. “To put the matter simply, library assessment, like public school assessment and higher education accreditation, is shifting from measuring outputs to measuring outcomes” (Holt & Elliot, 2003, p. 424).

Identifying benefits and establishing economic value related to library offerings, however, is complicated.

No single method of evaluation may be employed to capture the whole extent of the economic impact that a public library creates. A library provides a variety of direct and indirect benefits to its stakeholders, thus, it is imperative to rely on a combination of approaches to identify the range of economic benefits that a particular library’s resources and services collectively generate. Gathering and analyzing information pertaining to a library’s economic value contributes to the library’s ability to obtain the funding needed to sustain its operations and develop its services. Funding bodies tend to prefer having library valuation demonstrated in quantified terms. Therefore, library scholars and professionals have developed a number of statistical methods for assessing a library’s economic impact. The cost-benefit analysis (CBA) is
of particular use in this context (Holt & Elliott, 2003). The CBA approach is reflected in a number of different economic valuation methods examined in this study.

**Literature Review**

Public libraries undeniably benefit their communities in multiple ways. Several of these benefits impact the communities they serve directly. For example, libraries offer users a variety of resources that are largely available for free or at incredible discounts. Many public libraries sell older materials, such as books and magazines, at bargain prices. A majority of libraries provide free access to research databases (e.g., LexisNexis) that would be too expensive to subscribe to individually. Countless libraries provide after school tutoring services for children, and larger library systems even offer online homework and tutoring assistance that would otherwise be quite costly (Morgan, 2003). Thus, library product and service offerings have become invaluable to a variety of public segments.

According to Duncan (2008), “A direct benefit represents the value of the item, information, or entertainment provided by the library service itself” (p. 143). There are a variety of direct benefits libraries provide. Some descriptions of those benefits are:

1) Cost savings from avoiding the purchase of materials,

2) Free or low-cost access to computers, photocopiers, audio and video equipment,

3) Access to trained professionals for assistance in finding information,

4) Economic impact of library spending on jobs, supplies, and so forth in the local community,

5) Economic spending by library users in nearby business establishments.
Direct benefits primarily signify tangible benefits that can be counted to demonstrate a library’s value from a material perspective.

“An indirect benefit represents the value derived from the use of the item, information, or entertainment provided by the library service” (Duncan, 2008, p. 143). Indirect benefits involve “improving skills…, educational programs, library as a community amenity, community interactions, support for a democratic society, [and] social welfare” (Matthews, 2007, p. 299). Although indirect benefits are valuable, they are qualitative and, therefore, relatively difficult to measure. According to Levin, Driscoll, and Fleeter (2006), “The reasons for this inability to measure indirect benefits include the absence of a standard of measurement and the absence of any knowledge of relevant incomes” (p. 7), and “where no method exists to quantify the value of public library services, narrative descriptions of library activities document the many ways in which the libraries add value to their communities” (p. i).

The Lane Cove research project endeavored to determine the value of library services by modifying the theory of time allocation and relying on it to examine the reasons why people use libraries (Norman, 1997). Economic and social planners “worked together to find out what a public library represents and what it stands for in the lives of those who pay for it and use it” (Norman, 1997, p. 77). To ascertain the social role and economic benefits of the library, public opinion was utilized. Library notices and announcements in local newspapers invited community members to participate in discussion groups, which later provided the basis for customer assessments of library use (Norman, 1997). Discussion questions were designed to connect both economic (quantitative) and social (qualitative) values. Participants were asked to identify financial benefit and other rewards they had obtained related to library use (Norman, 1997). This
study’s findings revealed, “library use for leisure and recreation was the dominant, possibly the only purpose, of most adult users” (Norman, 1997, p. 3). Though, “use of publications offering consumer advice, do it yourself guidance, books on health, cooking, gardening, all of which have clear ‘production’ purposes” were among the next major reasons why the respondents sought library services (Norman, 1997, p. 3).

Library valuation is a developing discipline. Thus, research methods, borrowed from the field of economics, have been used in an attempt to determine the dollar value associated with various program and service offerings provided by libraries (Imholz & Arns, 2007). Over the past decade, various studies have attempted to assess the value of the library using such methods as consumer surplus, contingent valuation, and/or cost of time (Levin, Driscoll, & Fleeter, 2006). A 2005 study of nine Southwest Ohio libraries, prepared by Levin et al. (2006), used the consumer surplus method of valuation to assign a value for each library service using market alternatives. Results indicated that:

The libraries directly returned $2.56 per dollar invested in them. The application of appropriate multipliers to this return of $2.56 per dollar invested yielded an estimated additional return of about $93 million ($1.25 per dollar invested). The combination of the direct benefit value and the multiplier effects derived from those benefits yielded a total return of about $283.6 million on an investment of about $74.4 million. This outcome represented a $3.81 return for each dollar invested in library operations (Levin et al., 2006, p. 23).

According to Holt and Elliot (1998), “cost-benefit analysis (CBA) is an economist’s tool for evaluating public investment in arenas ranging from education to pollution control” (p. 42). “Cost-benefit analysis is a form of measurement that considers both direct and indirect cost in
the allocation of resources” (Stueart & Moran, 2007, p. 422). And, it is a methodical technique used to:

1) Determine whether or not a particular program or proposal is justified,

2) Rank various alternatives appropriate to a given set of objectives,

3) Ascertain the optimal course of action to attain these objectives.

(Stueart & Moran, 2007, p. 422).

Ideally, the purpose of the cost-benefit analysis method is to identify an option that provides the maximum benefits at minimum cost. But, occasionally a service cost may not “outweigh its direct benefit, but there may be an intangible benefit that must be considered as well” (Stueart & Moran, 2007, p. 422). Now utilized in the United States, Norway, and New Zealand, the cost-benefit analysis method is becoming more accepted as an important outcome-measurement tool in libraries (Holt & Elliot, 2003).

A 2005 study, released by the Florida Department of State, State Library and Archives of Florida, relied on the use of the contingent valuation method to determine the returns related to public library investments. Researchers, led by Jose-Marie Griffiths, Dean of the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, examined the connection “between taxpayer dollars invested in libraries and the benefits from the use or the existence of public libraries in the state” (Monroe, 2005, p. 12). According to Griffiths (as stated in Monroe, 2005), the results of the study showed that “the public libraries in Florida have a tremendous economic impact on the state and benefit all taxpayers through considerable contributions to education, the economy, tourism, retirement, and quality of life” (Monroe, 2005, p. 12).
Furthermore, Holt and Elliot (2003) used funding from the Public Library Association to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of the operations of the St. Louis Public Library in 2003. Results of this study revealed that service outcomes could be measured using the CBA method (Holt & Elliot, 2003). The researchers then perfected the process and applied it to four more library systems: Baltimore County Library System, Birmingham Public Library, Phoenix Public Library, and King County (Seattle) Public Library (Holt & Elliot, 2003). The results of the new study “demonstrated the robustness and sensitivity of CBA methodology in the library setting” (Holt & Elliot, 2003, p. 427).

**Methodology**

By adding both use (i.e., direct and indirect) benefits and nonuse benefits, the total value of the library can be established (Matthews, 2007). Over the years, a variety of methods have been used in an effort to calculate a library’s economic value. According to Matthews (2007), these methods include “the direct survey, the client value model, contingent valuation, consumer surplus, shortcut method, the formula approach, return on capital investment (ROI), an economic impact analysis, and a data envelopment analysis” (p. 300). Each method has its own attribute(s) of measurement, and advantages and disadvantages that are important to consider when determining what method(s) to use. See Table 1 for the pros and cons of each method.

**Table 1: Pros and Cons of Each Evaluation Method**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Measurement</th>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Direct survey</strong></td>
<td>Accomplishments, time, money</td>
<td>Determines relative and consequential value</td>
<td>Commissions, omissions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Client value model</strong></td>
<td>Relative value index</td>
<td>Allows for comparison between offerings and alternatives</td>
<td>Time to find common &quot;Value vocabulary&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Advantages</td>
<td>Disadvantages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingent valuation</td>
<td>Willingness to pay and accept</td>
<td>Directness, highly applicable</td>
<td>Time-consuming and expensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Determines direct and indirect benefits from library use</td>
<td>Answers likely based on self-interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Stated preferences capture use and nonuse values</td>
<td>Willingness to pay likely to be conservative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assesses specific library service</td>
<td>Willingness to accept yields high benefit estimates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer surplus</td>
<td>Customer-assigned values to services and goods</td>
<td>Represents implicit price/transaction cost to customer</td>
<td>Does not measure perceived financial benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Readily adapted</td>
<td>Costly and time-consuming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Measures direct and indirect benefits to the users and economic benefits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shortcut method</td>
<td>Substitute price x output measures per category</td>
<td>Not costly and not time-consuming</td>
<td>Substitute price is an estimation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pricing of outputs of service</td>
<td>Finds inconsistencies between principles and actions</td>
<td>Value based on assumption that items are new</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Measures value to community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formula approach</td>
<td>Value in equation form</td>
<td>Formula is simple to use</td>
<td>Only circulation of materials is valued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return on capital investment</td>
<td>Annual benefits vs. tax-supported budget</td>
<td>Easy to determine</td>
<td>Time to find value of physical assets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic impact analysis</td>
<td>Local economic conditions with library vs. without</td>
<td>Uses a basic input-output model</td>
<td>Time and money to find economic indicators</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Economic Benefits of the Library

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data envelopment analysis</th>
<th>Shows direct and indirect economic benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inputs and outputs</td>
<td>Inputs and outputs can be different units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finds correlation between variables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Allows for peer comparison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time-consuming and expensive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Other observations about the methods for determining the economic value of the library include the following (Matthews, 2007):

- *Direct survey* measures how much time and money using the library is saving clients or improving their productivity.
- *Direct survey* also shows the value of using the library in time, effort, and money saved compared to alternative information sources (the relative value).
- *Contingent valuation* measures stated and revealed preferences for using the library by asking customers how much they are willing to pay for services or willing to accept in the reduction of services.
- *Contingent valuation* further can measure people's motivations for using a library including direct, indirect, nonuser, and potential use values.
- *Consumer surplus* is based on the amount of implicit effort (time and money) customers are willing to expend to use the library in lieu of other alternatives and measures, direct and indirect benefits to the users and direct and indirect economic benefits.
- *Consumer surplus* estimations of the price of library services and goods are based on the
market value.

- The *shortcut method* prices library services and goods on substitute market services and goods.

- The *shortcut method* can include the V+LM (value added library methodology) approach, to determine a more accurate market value, which measures market price proxy, replacement cost, and opportunity costs.

- The *formula approach* uses the formula, \( V = 0.15IP \) (where \( V \) = value, \( I \) = circulation, and \( P \) = average price of acquiring book).

- The *formula approach* attributes greater value to circulation of materials over all other library services.

- The *return on capital investment model* compares a library's annual benefits vs. annual tax-supported budget to determine the annual percent return on taxes paid.

- The *economic impact analysis* considers the benefits of having a library on the local and regional economy, in comparison to not having a library, and reflects indirect benefits.

- The *data envelopment analysis* is used to make a library more efficient based on input and output variables.

Most of the methods use surveys to gather information and measure the library's value based on use benefits and nonuse benefits (Matthews, 2007). Evaluating benefits from all stakeholders’ perspective is important. A cost-benefit analysis (CBA) is involved in the process of determining a library’s worth, whatever the evaluation method used may be. Comparing the costs of providing services and goods to their indirect and direct benefits (cost-benefit ratio) is essential in discovering the library's overall value.
From the approaches available for assessing economic benefits, the *shortcut method*, *direct survey*, and the *return on capital investments* methodologies are most practical and productive to utilize in preparing a public library’s CBA. The advantage of employing these three methods is that they are simple, readily adaptable, fairly useful, less time-consuming and not expensive to implement in comparison with other methods. These evaluation methods can be used to generate a balanced view of the value that the library provides to its stakeholders. The goals that these evaluation methods can be used to achieve are: 1) identify and measure benefits, 2) identify and measure costs, 3) compare costs and benefits, 4) draw conclusions, and 5) publicize results (Holt & Elliott, 2003).

The first step in the *shortcut method* is to find substitute market prices based on market alternatives. Information about comparable market values is available from a variety of sources such as by physically visiting a store to identify average prices or using online sources to determine market value of comparable resources offered in other settings. See Table 2 for a sample list of services and substitute prices.

**Table 2: Services and Substitute Prices Based on Market Sources**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Substitute</th>
<th>Price ($)</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children's books (paperback)</td>
<td>Bookstore</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>Bowker Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books for adults (paperback)</td>
<td>Bookstore</td>
<td>14.00</td>
<td>Bowker Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video/DVD films</td>
<td>Rental</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>Blockbuster Video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio/music</td>
<td>Purchase</td>
<td>13.00</td>
<td>Wal-Mart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazines</td>
<td>Newsstand</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>Local newsstand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>Newsstand</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>Local newsstand</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Matthews, 2007, p. 310*

The next step in the *shortcut method* is to determine output measures that correspond to services, by multiplying the substitute price with the output measure amount to get the estimated value of the service or costs that the customer saves. See Table 3 for a list of recommended
output measures, and sample substitute prices that a library can use to find estimated values based on output amounts specific to their library.

**Table 3: Output Measures, Substitute Prices, and Estimated Values**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Output Measure (Annual amounts)</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Price ($)</th>
<th>Estimated value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Circulation of children's books (paperback)</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>14.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circulation of books for adults (paperback)</td>
<td>14.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>13.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circulation of video/DVD films</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circulation audio/music</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circulation of magazines</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circulation of newspapers</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of people at programs</td>
<td>50.00/hour</td>
<td>50.00/hour</td>
<td>50.00/hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of reference questions</td>
<td>1.00/hour</td>
<td>1.00/hour</td>
<td>1.00/hour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Matthews, 2007, p. 310*

The *direct survey* method relies on surveys to uncover library service values based on the time and costs that using the library saves the customer; therefore, survey questions are designed to query customers on how the library saves them time and money. See Appendix A for a list of sample questions.

Following the study that Steffen et al. performed in 2009 on Colorado libraries, an ideal survey should not consist of more than 22 questions. Survey responses are to be computed and analyzed to determine the library’s value based on a measurement of the time and costs (efforts) that it takes customers to expend outside the library as compared to the time and savings customers garner by using the library. In addition, a survey reveals what alternative sources the customers might utilize if the library did not exist and how much they would be willing to pay, hypothetically, to use the library given the availability of those alternative sources.

To determine the return on investment (ROI), first calculate the library’s annual expenditures. The costs of providing library services consist of operating costs and
capital costs (i.e., collections and computers). See Table 4 for a list of expenditures that should be added to compute a library’s total annual expenditure.

**Table 4: Library Annual Expenditures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditures</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human resources (other than salaries/wages and benefits for regular staff—include temporary staff costs, and costs associated with recruiting and training staff, including trainers’ fees, workshop fees, individual association dues, and conference registration fees, if paid or reimbursed by library)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library collection (physical formats and electronic information resources, such as licensed databases)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information technology (include hardware, integrated library system, other software, Internet Service Provider—but not licensed databases and other online information resources)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities (electricity, natural gas, basic telephone service)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplies &amp; equipment (e.g., office supplies, photocopiers, postal meters, postage)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities management (custodial, security, bookmobile)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other products and services (e.g., organizational dues and fees, insurance, accountants, lawyers, program speakers’ fees)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Levin et al., 2006, C-1 (from Appendix C)*

Once the library’s total annual expenditures and total estimated annual value are determined, the rate of capital investment is derived by dividing the total value amount (as shown in Table 3 using the shortcut method) by the total expenditures amount (shown in Table 4). The resulting amount represents the dollar amount of return for each one dollar invested (Levin, et al., 2006). According to Duncan (2008), “A return on investment analysis must assign a dollar value to these services wherever possible. Such an assignment generally can estimate only the direct benefit from library services” (p. 143).

**Analysis**

The methods utilized above measure direct benefits and indirect benefits a library generates. In addition, benefits can also be individual or collective. For example, a person who
checks out a book and reads it benefits directly and individually, while a community benefits indirectly and collectively through shared pride in having a local library where community members can interact (Holt & Elliott, 2001). Cost-benefit analysis should demonstrate whether library services generate more value compared to the annual tax support received, and if so, to what extent their value is greater. Also, CBA is employed to identify which library services provide the most benefits to users and how the benefits compare to the costs incurred in providing those services (Holt & Elliott, 2001). Typically, the benefit to cost ratio ranges from 4:1 to 6:1 regardless of method used (Matthews, 2007).

While the shortcut method tends to rely on internal data such as circulation records, other evaluation methods employ surveys in their analysis. The weakness of surveys is in that the “valuation based on… surveys inherently rests more on subjective notions of value rather than market values” and “surveys present patrons with purely hypothetical alternatives, and, as a result, they yield inherently speculative information” (Levin, et al., 2006, p.8). However, the strength of surveys is that they can be used to collect demographic and socio-economic information (in addition to time and cost inquiries) relevant to respondents, which gives insight into the identity and segments of users who benefit most from library services. In general, the use of at least two or more methods is recommended to increase confidence in obtained results (Matthews, 2007).

Since the shortcut method does not treat the materials as if they are new, it also does not take into account the devaluation of a used item. A more accurate approach would be to take into account “…the circulation rate for each item, its price, and the percent of the community that would buy the book if they did not own it…” (Matthews, 2007, p. 312). This indicates that the shortcut method results are estimations.
The fact that libraries receive public funding means they are accountable to the public and, therefore, the importance of quantifying the value of a library is emphasized. The rate of capital investment method of assessment is useful in representing a library’s value in financial terms. Cost-rate benefit analysis is also important in representing the value of a library in relation to benefits derived per dollar spent (Imholtz & Arns, 2007).

Developing a CBA is beneficial in the following ways:

- Board members and administrators are better able to see the relationship between the socioeconomic characteristics of communities and the value they place on library access and services.
- Results help executive directors make more informed budgetary decisions and help with resource allocation by quantifying the benefits of particular services for comparison against their costs.
- Results are informative to library staff and help boost staff morale by demonstrating the value of the library to the community.
- Quantifies the library’s value and serves as a valuable tool in pursuing public relations with the community, in a manner that is persuasive to external audiences such as local governments, donors and foundations, and taxpayers.
- The concept of the return on taxpayer investment magnifies library service benefits to local patrons beyond those paid for by taxes.
- Performing the cost-benefit study may lead the library to reevaluate the effectiveness of its practices.

(Holt & Elliott, 2003, p. 432)
Cost-benefit analysis and other methods used to evaluate a library’s economic value help libraries communicate their benefits to customers and stakeholders in relation to investments they make (taxes paid). However, it is also important to acknowledge “conventional measures of economic activity fail to capture the total contribution libraries make to the economy, quality of life and community well-being” (Duncan, 2008, p. 141). While this study, like most CBA, focuses on measuring direct benefits, there is no doubt that libraries indirectly benefit their users and communities. Libraries have positively influenced their local economies, and improved the quality of life (Duncan, 2008). For example, take the value they deliver by improving literacy that results in higher employment rates and lower crime rates; and consider the value libraries provide by allowing job seekers to find useful information about careers, resume preparation, and building social and professional relationships through the positive events and programs offered by libraries (Duncan, 2008).

**Conclusion**

Developments in the economy at large have increasingly compelled libraries to rely on valuation approaches that can enumerate the benefits delivered by a library’s resources and services. “Public and private funding communities are demanding more quantifiable results for their investment” (Imholz & Arns, 2007, p. 34). Thus, libraries have found cost-benefit analysis useful in assessing a library’s value in economic terms. The CBA method of measurement can be successfully adapted in uncovering the economic value of middle-sized and smaller libraries (Holt & Elliott, 2003). Despite their more subjective nature, surveys and focus groups are among other methods applicable to valuating the library’s economic benefits from the customers’ perspective (Holt & Elliott, 1998). Assessing a library’s economic value by examining a variety
of its services and using a combination of evaluation approaches is key to generating persuasive
analysis of a library’s utility (Matthews, 2007).

Thus, librarians can employ research findings to raise public awareness about library’s
utility and to encourage support in response to the economic benefits the library offers (Monroe,
2005). By specifying what amounts of money are used to finance which of the library’s resources
and services, libraries can instill greater trust, among their stakeholders, as economically viable
institutions. Hence, study findings can “provide governments and their citizens with assurance
that funds spent on library programs and services help to strengthen their local economies and
communities” (Monroe, 2005, p. 13).
Appendix A:

Sample Direct Survey Questions

1. Indicate about how many times you have visited a public library within the last year. Mark one:
   - □ 1-4 times
   - □ 5-9 times
   - □ 10-14 times
   - □ 15-19 times
   - □ 20-24 times
   - □ 25 times or more

2. How much time did it take you to get to the library on this particular visit? Mark one.
   - □ Less than 14 mins.
   - □ 15-29 mins.
   - □ 30-44 mins.
   - □ 44-59 mins.
   - □ 1 hour or more

3. Please indicate the primary reason you used the library on this particular visit. Mark one.
   - To meet my needs:
     - □ As a student
     - □ As a home-schooling parent
     - □ As an educator
     - □ Related to job search
     - □ Related to current job
     - □ Related to running a business
     - □ For personal interests and/or recreational purposes
     - □ Other (please specify)________________

4. If the public library had not existed, what would you have done to address your reason for this visit? Mark one.
   - □ I would have tried to get the information from another source
   - □ I would have *not* tried to get the information from another source
   - □ I would not have known where else to go to get the information
   - □ Other (please specify)________________

5. If you would have tried to get the information from another source, which one(s) would you have used? Mark all that apply.
□ Bookstore
□ Fee-based public Internet access (airport, hotel, café)
□ Internet access at home
□ Internet access at work
□ University/college/school
□ Video store
□ Other (please specify) __________

6. If you marked another source in question 5, how much of your time would it have taken you to use this source? If you marked more than one source in question 5, total up the time spent on all of them. Mark one.

□ Less than 15 mins.
□ 15-29 mins.
□ 30-44 mins.
□ 45-59 mins.
□ 1 hour or more

7. Approximately how much money would it have cost for you to use the other source(s) you marked in question 5? Please estimate the total costs if you marked multiple sources. Mark one.

□ If would not have required any money
□ Less than $5.
□ $5-$9
□ $10-$14
□ $15-$19
□ $20-$24
□ $25 or more (please specify amount) __________

8. Considering the same costs listed above, if you paid a price for your public library card each year, instead of paying taxes, how much would you be willing to pay for it? Please check next to the amount that best applies.

□ $1-$19
□ $20-$39
□ $40-$59
□ $60-$79
□ $80-$99
□ $100 or more (please specify amount) __________

(Steffen, Lietzau, Lance, Rybin, & Molliconi, 2009, D-2, D-3).
References


Morgan, C. (2003). Beyond borrowing books: Today's public libraries are brimming with

