

# Foundations of Evaluation in Public Libraries

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April 16, 2019

# Overview of the session

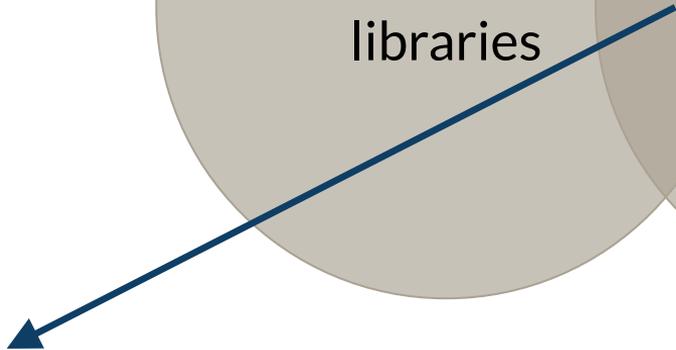
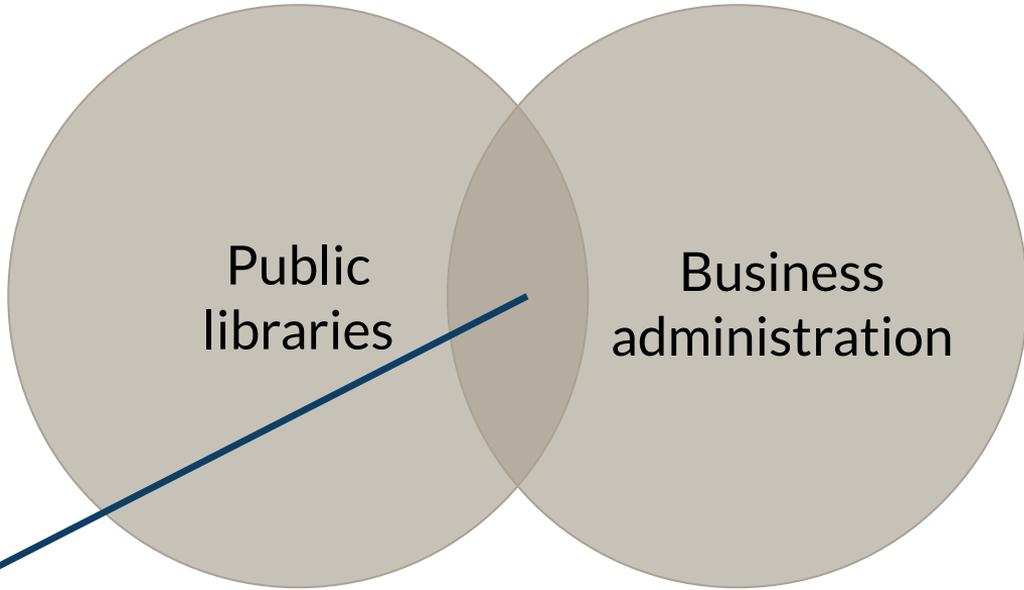
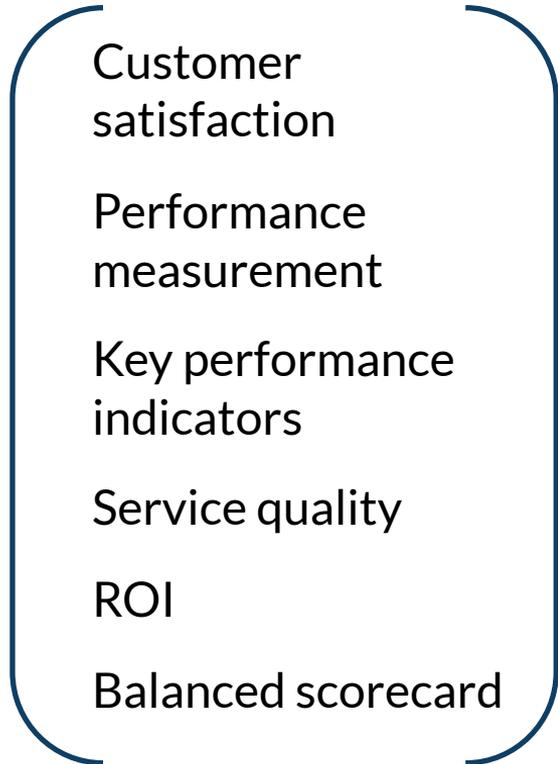
Warmup

Evaluation background & challenges

Effective use of evaluation in libraries

Basic 4-step evaluation process

Next steps



# Challenges

Libraries focus on **social benefits** rather than products and profits.

Social benefits are complex and **multi-faceted**, making them difficult to define, identify, and capture

We believe—but **can't assume**—the library is successful in delivering social benefits.

→ Focus on “measuring success” oversimplifies a **complex** process.

# Challenges

Libraries serve **different** people, who have **different** goals, in **different** (self-directed) ways.

Library use unfolds over time through **repeated, short-duration** interactions.

→ Library-related outcomes can be **difficult** to isolate and capture and can **vary** across library users and user groups.

# Challenges

Outcome-related data are **rarely sufficient** to foster organizational learning, adaptation, and improvement of library programs and services.

→ A more **comprehensive** picture of success is required.

# Effective use of evaluation in libraries

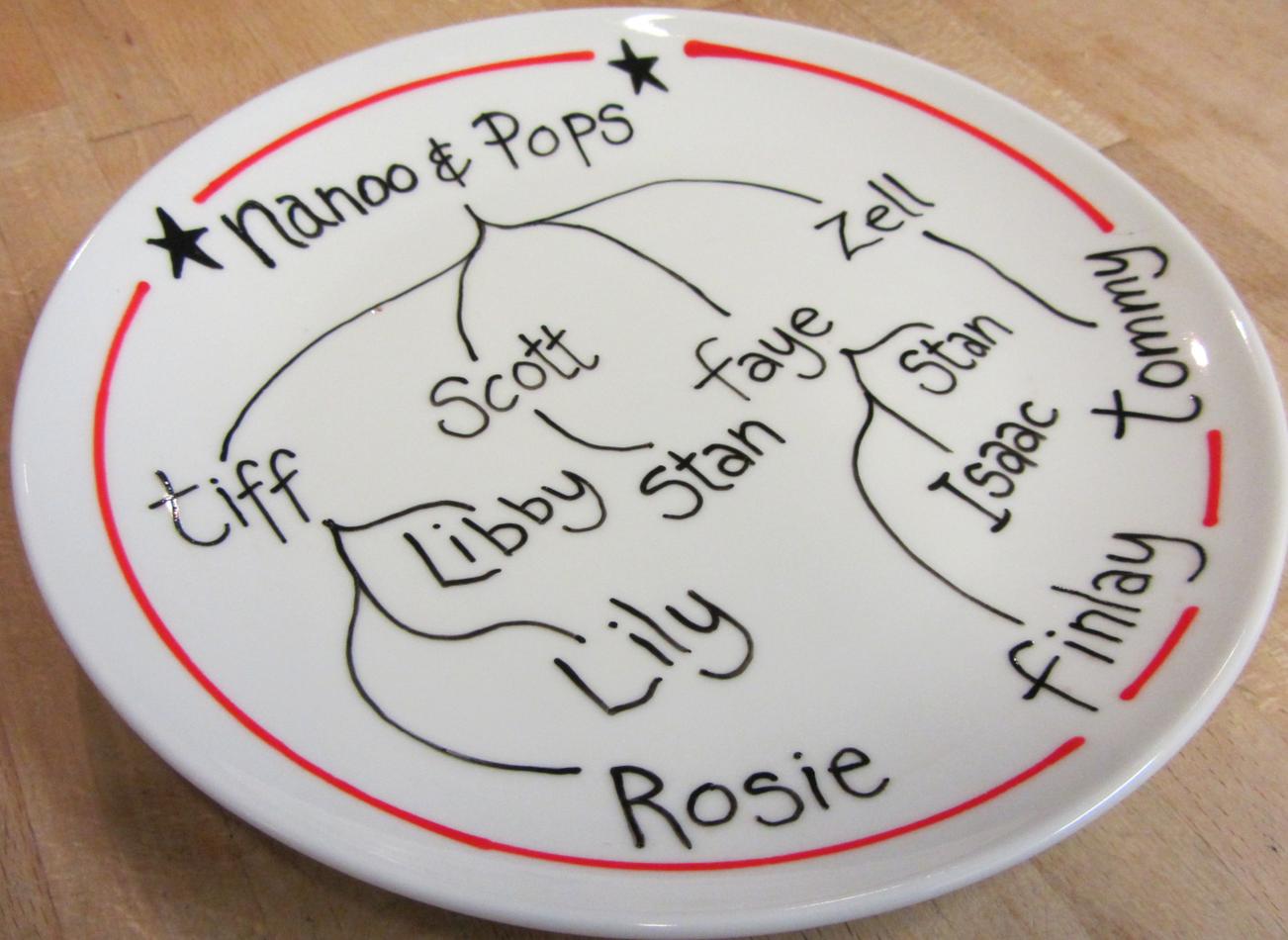
- Systematic process based on data
- Focused and selective
- Time-bound
- Feasible and informative
- Tailored to specific programs/services and definitions of success

# Definitions of success



# Basic 4-step evaluation process

1. Identify the program or service to be evaluated and definition(s) of success associated with it.
2. Focus the evaluation by posing specific questions that reflect key definition(s) of success.
3. Select data collection methods that can best provide information to answer each question.
4. Collect and analyze data (across multiple sources, whenever possible) to answer each question.



What is “success”  
for a genealogy  
service?

Quality

Usage

Effectiveness

Efficiency

# Evaluation questions: Quality

To what extent does the library provide robust genealogy collections, services, and programming?

In what ways is the library responsive to the needs and interests of local genealogists?

# Evaluation questions: Effectiveness

In what ways do users of the library's genealogy collections, services, and programming deepen their understanding of their family history?

To what extent do users of the library's genealogy collections, services, and programming build connections with other genealogists and with genealogy resources beyond the library?



Your questions drive  
the entire evaluation  
process.

# Data collection methods: Quality

Questions	Data Collection Methods			
	Compare with RUSA Guidelines	Conduct survey of library users	Conduct focus groups with Genealogy Society members	Review Genealogy Division reports
To what extent does the library provide robust genealogy collections, services, and programming?	X	X	X	
In what ways is the library responsive to the needs and interests of local genealogists?			X	X

# Data collection methods: Effectiveness

Questions	Data Collection Methods		
	Conduct survey of users	Conduct interviews with users	Review Genealogy Division reference logs
In what ways do users deepen their understanding of genealogical research?	X	X	X
To what extent do users build connections with other genealogists and with genealogy resources beyond the library?	X	X	

# Data collection

Develop instruments  
(surveys, interview  
guides, etc.)

Test instruments

Select sample

Gather data



# Data analysis: Quality (Question 1)

Findings	Data Sources		
	Comparison with RUSA Guidelines	Survey of library users	Focus groups with Genealogy Society members
Comprehensive reference service is provided by well-trained staff.			
Deeper collections on border states and migration pathways are needed.			
Staff provide appropriate referrals to other genealogy resources.			
More intermediate-level programming is needed.			

# Data analysis: Effectiveness (Question 1)

Findings	Data Sources		
	Conduct survey of users	Conduct interviews with users	Review Genealogy Division reference logs
Users learn to assess the accuracy of sources and materials.			
Users learn to locate research materials in collections beyond the library.			
Users learn strategies for distinguishing between individuals with the same name.			

Questions?

Concerns?

Ideas?





What are your  
next steps—  
as a team and  
individually?

# Thank you!

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