Perceived outcomes of public libraries in various countries

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The main entrance of Tampere city library
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Introduction

• Developing indicators for what good the library brings about for its patrons, their communities and society at large
  – Outcome measurement
  – Impact assessment
  – Value assessment
  – Social return of investment assessment
• It has been typical to assess individual programs or libraries, but scarce to survey the benefits derived from public library use on a national scale
Introduction

- **Outputs** are the products delivered by a system, whereas **outcomes** are the benefits the system produces to its users (Rossi & al. 2004)

- In evaluating systems or services it has been typical to count the # of outputs
  - # of book loans, # of relevant documents retrieved

- Increase in one’s knowledge or recovery from daily responsibilities are examples of benefits (outcomes) produced by the (outputs of) libraries
Research questions

• How frequently do people benefit from public library services in various areas of life in the countries compared?

• Does the structure of benefits vary between these countries?

• If so, which factors could explain the possible variation in perceived benefits between the countries?
Data

• A random sample of population aged 15(18)-80 years in each country
• Finland: Postal survey 5-6/2010 (N=1000)
• Norway: Web panel 9/2011 (N=1001)
• The Netherlands: Web panel 9/2012 (N=1502)
• The US: Web panel 12/2012 (N=1010)
• South Korea: Web panel 2013 (N=1000)
• For the analysis 18-80 years old library users were included
The samples compared to the population in the countries observed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>The Netherlands</th>
<th>The US</th>
<th>South Korea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geographic region</td>
<td>Representative</td>
<td>Representative</td>
<td>Representative</td>
<td>Representative</td>
<td>Representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Representative</td>
<td>Representative</td>
<td>Representative</td>
<td>Biased &gt; younger</td>
<td>Biased &gt; younger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Biased &gt; females</td>
<td>Representative</td>
<td>Representative</td>
<td>Representative</td>
<td>Representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Biased &gt; highly educated</td>
<td>Biased &gt; highly educated</td>
<td>Representative</td>
<td>Biased &gt; highly educated</td>
<td>Biased &gt; highly educated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library use</td>
<td>Biased &gt; users</td>
<td>Biased &gt; users</td>
<td>Biased &gt; users</td>
<td>Representative</td>
<td>Biased &gt; users</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Measurement

• Major areas of life: 1) education, 2) work and business, 3) everyday activities, and 4) leisure time were differentiated into 19 sub-fields in total based on earlier studies

• The respondents were asked how frequently they have benefited from public library services in the 19 segments of life listed
  – Scale: often - sometimes - seldom - never - cannot say
  – For the analysis “never” and “cannot say” collapsed
  – Scoring: often = 4, ---, never = 1
Areas of life 1-2

• Work and business
  – Finding jobs
  – Executing specific work tasks
  – Developing job skills

• Education
  – Finding educational opportunities
  – Completing formal education (obtaining a degree)
  – Work related educational development
  – Self-education during leisure time
Areas of life 3-4

• Everyday activities
  – Household
  – Childcare and schooling
  – Housing including home repairs
  – Consumer issues
  – Health
  – Travel and vacation
  – Social relations

• Cultural activities
  – Reading fiction
  – Reading non-fiction
  – Cultural activities (e.g. going to theatre or a concert)
  – Creative activities (e.g. playing an instrument or singing)
  – Outdoor activities, exercise, sports
  – Interest in nature (e.g. picking mushrooms or bird watching)
  – Interest in history or society
  – Participating in and following current events
## Basic data on public libraries in 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>The Netherlands</th>
<th>South Korea</th>
<th>The US</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>5 347 269</td>
<td>4 920 305</td>
<td>16 655 799</td>
<td>50 734 284</td>
<td>311 591 917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP per capita €¹</td>
<td>28900</td>
<td>47500</td>
<td>32900</td>
<td>22666</td>
<td>36486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipalities</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>3141 Counties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main libraries</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>9050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Branch libraries</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>736</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>7654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libraries in total</td>
<td>794</td>
<td>744</td>
<td>899</td>
<td>786</td>
<td>16704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book mobiles (stops)</td>
<td>153 (12378)</td>
<td>29 (1272)</td>
<td>³⁻ (927)</td>
<td>1126</td>
<td>696 (⁻)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening hours</td>
<td>1 399 355</td>
<td>805000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3 050 268</td>
<td>36 399 173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manpower years</td>
<td>4756</td>
<td>1 783</td>
<td>5030</td>
<td>7369</td>
<td>137 364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operation costs per capita €</td>
<td>58.03</td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td>33.90</td>
<td>8.65</td>
<td>25.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection items⁴ per capita</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection books per capita</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loans per capita</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% borrowers in population</td>
<td>39.2⁵</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>24.1²</td>
<td>35.3²</td>
<td>55⁵</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visits per capita (physical)</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Differences in library statistics

• Library resources and supply per capita largest in Finland and smallest in South Korea
  – # of mobile libraries in South Korea is large, while small in Norway and the Netherlands
  – The US has relative good manpower supply per capita
  – Norway has relative large # of collection items per capita

• % of borrowers in population large in the US in particular, and in Finland and South Korea

• Loans and visits per capita largest in Finland
  – Loans per capita largish in the US and smallest in South Korea
The proportion of those who have benefited from the public library at least sometimes in various areas of life (%)

- FINLAND
- NORWAY
- THE NETHERLANDS
- USA
- SOUTH KOREA

Areas of life:
- Finding jobs
- Work tasks
- Educational opportunities
- Formal education
- Self-education
- Household work
- Childcare
- Housing
- Consumer issues
- Health
- Travel & vacation
- Social relations
- Fun in reading
- Cultural activities
- Outdoor activities
- History & society
- Societal discussions
- Creative activities

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The five most popular benefits in the countries compared (% benefited at least sometimes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>The Netherlands</th>
<th>South Korea</th>
<th>The US</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fun in reading</td>
<td>Fun in reading</td>
<td>Fun in reading</td>
<td>Fun in reading</td>
<td>Fun in reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(74)</td>
<td>(44)</td>
<td>(68)</td>
<td>(65)</td>
<td>(74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self education</td>
<td>Self education</td>
<td>Travel &amp; vacation</td>
<td>Educational opportunities</td>
<td>Self education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(64)</td>
<td>(23)</td>
<td>(27)</td>
<td>(64)</td>
<td>(66)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel &amp; vacation</td>
<td>History &amp; society</td>
<td>Self education</td>
<td>Self education</td>
<td>History &amp; society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(50)</td>
<td>(21)</td>
<td>(25)</td>
<td>(61)</td>
<td>(61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural activities</td>
<td>Cultural activities</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Travel &amp; vacation</td>
<td>Educational opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(47)</td>
<td>(21)</td>
<td>(17)</td>
<td>(40)</td>
<td>(57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Formal education</td>
<td>History &amp; society</td>
<td>History &amp; society</td>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(46)</td>
<td>(21)</td>
<td>(16)</td>
<td>(40)</td>
<td>(57)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
% benefiting at least sometimes in the major areas of life by country

- FINLAND
- NORWAY
- THE NETHERLANDS
- USA
- SOUTH KOREA

- All on average
- Work all
- Education all
- Everyday all
- Culture all

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Discussion

• The level of perceived benefits across all areas of life is considerably higher in the US, Finland and South Korea compared to Norway and the Netherlands
  – These differences are largest in education, while smaller in other major areas
• The former group of countries compared to the latter one derived three times more commonly benefits in education, work and everyday life, and two times more commonly in culture
• In Norway and the Netherlands benefits are perceived most in culture and then in education, while in the other countries education comes before culture
  – The role of the public library differs somewhat between these countries
  – In the former ones more emphasis on cultural benefits, while in latter one more on educational benefits
Discussion

• The library users in the US perceived more evenly benefits across all areas of life compared to other countries, in which the variation of perceived benefits was greater between all areas of life

• The library users in the US perceived more commonly benefits almost in all areas of life compared to other countries – i.e. they derived more benefits from the public library compared to library users in other countries

• In South Korea education was clearly the most important area of benefits compared to other areas across countries
Discussion

• In all countries users derived most benefits from the public library in reading, self-education, and in history & society
  – These are the classical and established outcomes of the public library
• Also everyday activities health, and travel & vacation were common areas of benefits
Discussion

• The # of services used per year was the major predictor of benefits in all four major areas of life across all countries
  – Also educational attainment and age contributed significantly to benefits
  – The younger and more educated users were, the more benefits they derived from using the library

• As an exception, everyday life benefits were positively associated with age in Finland and Korea, while negatively associated with education in the Netherlands and Korea
  – In these countries less educated and older people benefited more from libraries in their everyday activities than other groups
Discussion

• The level of library resources and supply does not directly explain the differences in perceived benefits between the countries
  – Compared to others Finland had considerably larger supply of services per capita, but perceived benefits were on the same level than in the US or South Korea
  – If Finland is compared to culturally similar countries like Norway and the Netherlands, the difference in library resources and supply may to some extent explain the differences in perceived benefits
  – A more detailed analysis of resource use for various services in libraries may reveal differences, which may contribute to the differences in outcomes
Discussion

• The proportion of borrowers in population was notably greater in Finland, Korea and the US compared to Norway and the Netherlands
  – Adults in the former countries use libraries more actively, and therefore derive more benefits from using libraries
  – Highly educated use libraries more actively, and therefore derive more benefits than users with low education
  – The proportion of users with low education was considerably larger in Finnish data compared to American and Korean data
  – This explains in part that regardless of better library supply, Finns did not benefit more from library services compared to Koreans and Americans

• Cultural differences between the countries likely influence on the variation of perceived benefits
• The next step is to explore these differences to find out possible explanatory factors
Thank you!