

18. Keeping Track of Progress

Imagine your library one year after you have opened it. Perhaps you have had some difficulties along the way, but you now know that it is running smoothly and being used by many people. How can you demonstrate that your library is working well? Unlike a shop, you cannot show monetary profits. Unlike a farm, you cannot point to your harvest. Your product is intangible. And yet it is still important to keep track of your progress, which is sometimes called measurement and evaluation or monitoring and evaluation (M&E).

Why should you keep track of the activity at your library?

You will be able to identify areas that need improvements. This will help to address any needs that are currently not being met. As a result of improving these areas, there should be an increase in the use of the library.

Taking evidence of your library's success to your chief, headteacher, or district office will be a powerful signal that you are serious about wanting to improve the library and may result in additional financial support (for librarian wages, books, furniture, supplies, etc.). These numbers can also help when requesting more books.

With this information, you will be able to celebrate your accomplishments!

How should you keep track of activity at your library?

Recording how many books are being checked out is a great way to see how much reading is a direct result of the library. Recording which books are checked out will help to assess which subjects are of interest to the readers who come into your library. If you are lending books and using a lending register (exercise book), you already have a system for recording this information (see chapter 11). At the bottom of each page, total the number of books

lent on that page. Then at the end of each month, total all the pages for that month. If you are using the book ticket system or not lending books, you could have a reading log where students record the books they read (see chapter 14 for more on this idea).

Keeping a record of how many people are coming in will also help you to assess the impact on the school or community in general. You might notice some patterns in usage that suggest you need to do more outreach to particular teachers or particular groups in the community (perhaps women). A good way to record who is using the library is to keep a Visitor Log (see figures 18.1 and 18.2). Use an exercise book or ledger and enter headings as shown. Each person who enters the library should fill in the Visitor Log. Students, parents, teachers, and community members should all enter their information. If someone leaves and then returns later the same day, that person should write their name again. If an entire class comes to visit, you can just record them all on one line (e.g. 'Mrs. Maliro's class, 43 students'). At the end of each page, write the total number of visitors, and at the end of each month, total all the pages for that month.

Figure 18.1. Visitor log for a school library

Date	Name	Age			Time In	Time Out
		0-13	14-20	21+		

Figure 18.2. Visitor log for a community library (visitors can tick their age category)



Figure 18.3. A student selects a book to read (Ghana).