



What is impact assessment and why is it important?

David Streatfield,

Information Management Associates, UK; Sharon Markless, Senior Lecturer in Higher Education,
King's College, London, UK
streatfield@blueyonder.co.uk

This paper offers a definition of impact assessment and discusses some of the implications of this and other definitions. A particular approach to impact assessment is introduced, as developed for use in a variety of library and information service settings (Markless and Streatfield, 2006) and the principles underpinning this approach are outlined. This approach has been adapted by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's Global Libraries Initiative when providing impact planning and assessment support to grantees through their 'IPA Road Map'. The approach was also adopted by IFLA in devising its impact assessment strategy for evaluation of its future Free Access to Information and Freedom of Expression (FAIFE) work.

The importance of impact assessment in a variety of settings is outlined: from school libraries to university researcher support and from public libraries to electronic information services. Some 'unofficial' observations are offered on the relationships between impact assessment, advocacy and service sustainability, particularly in relation to major service development programmes such as the Global Libraries Initiative.