Selective Bibliography on Library Performance Measures

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This selective bibliography is designed to provide a sampling of the vast literature on measures of library effectiveness. This broad topic includes writings on performance measures, output measures, library effectiveness, cost-effectiveness, and library statistics. The subject is closely related to library goals and objectives, against which library effectiveness is often measured. Because of the wide-ranging nature of the topic, a comprehensive bibliography is not feasible. I have chosen to concentrate on the reasons for measuring library effectiveness, specific ways in which it can be done, and how measures have been used in particular types of libraries and for particular services. Note that these categories are not mutually exclusive, thus many of the writings can fall in more than one area. I have also chosen to restrict the bibliography to relatively contemporary writings. With few exceptions, the items included were published in the 1980s.

Review Articles

These two recent review articles provide introductions to the research on performance measurement, showing the development of the topic over time. For additional information on earlier research, see Evans et al. (1972) listed in the “Methods of Analysis” section of this bibliography.


Using Performance Measures for Management Decisions

Performance measures are not made in a vacuum. The writings by Blagden (1980), DuMont (1980) and Orr (1973) discuss the rationale for performance measurement by showing how they may be used by library managers to assist in making decisions and in justifying those decisions. The articles by Allen (1985), Christensen (1988), and Hernon (1989) discuss the collection and uses of statistics. Young (1989) gives an overview of library statistics compiled by federal and state governments as well as by library associations and organizations.

**General Introductions**


**Library Statistics**


**Methods of Analysis**

This section covers specific techniques that have been used to measure library effectiveness. The “Overviews” include general discussions of a variety of measures. The “Specific Measures”
section lists studies of specific ways to measure availability of materials and the degree to which users are able to locate and gain access to them and to satisfy their information needs. Note that the articles by D'Elia (1985 and 1988) and Van House (1988) were written in response to one another and, by reading them in sequence, you can follow the debate on the usefulness of a particular measure called “fill rates.”

**Overviews**


**Specific Measures**


**Public Libraries**

Much of the work on output measures has focused on public libraries. Several manuals have been developed to aid public libraries, and these have inspired much of the discussion on the general topic of output measures. Lynch (1983) compares two of these publications, *Performance Measures for Public Libraries* (1973) and *Output Measures for Public Libraries* (1982). A second edition of *Output Measures for Public Libraries* was published in 1987. Childers and Van House (1989) show the multifaceted nature of library effectiveness by identifying sixty-one distinct indicators that can be classified into eight separate dimensions. They point out that procedures have not been developed to measure many of the most important of each indicators.

**Manuals**


**Discussion**


Jane Robbins, and Douglas Zweizig. *Are We There Yet? Evaluating Library Collections, Reference Services, Programs, and Personnel.* Madison, Wis.: School of Library and Infor-
mation Studies, University of Wisconsin, 1988.


Academic and Research Libraries

Kantor (1984) provides academic libraries with a practical manual demonstrating a series of measures appropriate for evaluating academic and research libraries. A new manual by Van House et al. was published in summer 1990 and is discussed in Tiefel (1989). The article by McClure shows one of the difficulties in conducting these measures: skepticism on the part of library staff regarding the validity and uses of performance measures.

Manuals


Discussion


School Libraries


Special Libraries

The following article stresses the importance of evaluating corporate libraries and recommends modifying public library measures for this purpose.


Reference Services

Evaluating reference services produces special challenges because many aspects of reference are difficult or inappropriate to quantify. These issues are discussed in the sources listed below.


Interlibrary Loan


Cataloging

Measurement in the area of cataloging has focused on two areas, cataloging costs and the relationship between quality and quantity. The best introduction to this topic is Mandel (1988).


Counterpoint

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age each and every one of us to care enough about the job we do to do it well. You can't mandate exceptional performance, but you can achieve it with a lot of hard work and a commitment to excellence. You don't get that commitment with good performance measures, you get it with good management skills.