

# Introduction

Evaluation is an activity in which all of us engage informally and without hesitation every day. However, evaluation as a formal assessment of individual performance in the workplace is the source, at best, of ongoing discussion and, at worst, of cynicism, anxiety, and frustration.

The following articles examine performance appraisal in the context of the library, reluctantly affirming the need for the process. The authors caution against the pitfalls of faulty appraisal systems and identify the benefits of effective systems. Guidelines for establishing effective systems are also delineated.

Jonathan Lindsey emphasizes the eventual effect all personnel decisions have on the appraisal process. Patsy Hansel and Renee Taylor present the perspectives of the two groups often assumed to be at odds in the appraisal process, administrators and the employees whose work they evaluate. John Lubans discusses the library as a service industry and defines the distinctive characteristics of performance appraisal in this type of organization. Ilene Nelson looks to the for-profit sector for insights into performance appraisal and translates the experience there into recommendations for libraries.

It is the human element in performance appraisal that makes it so difficult. Each library must develop a unique system that will take into consideration its administrative structure, its staff, and its institutional goals. These articles are offered as the first step in creating a formal appraisal system where one does not exist or in evaluating the effectiveness of one already in place.

**Ilene Nelson**  
February 1984

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