

## SURVEY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF LIBRARY PERFORMANCE MEASURES IN FRANCE

By Pierre Carbone

**Abstract:** The author gives information on performance measurement under the technical, methodical, and financial points of view in public as well as in academic libraries and documentation centers. He points out differences and common trends, mentions working groups studying on this subject and comes to the conclusion that since the eighties an evolution has begun which will lead to more experimentation and research.

Since the eighties, library evaluation works have progressed in France for several reasons linked to libraries' evolutions. Beyond the institutional distinctions between the different types of libraries (public, academic, and so on), common trends developed.

The mother institutions of libraries (universities, towns, departments, ...) experienced an institutional evolution and became more autonomous. In this context, public service is modernizing its management methods. This change brought the decision-makers to adopt a management view on libraries, and the promotion of evaluation studies.

Inside the libraries, another evolution was beginning, libraries providing a greater variety of services to their users. Near the traditional services (lending), they experienced the explosion and complexity of their products and services, and the increasing of their running costs. For instance, they have to see problems of copyright for audiovisual productions or for photocopies; they have not only to purchase traditional documents but also to buy information, either bibliographic (when they buy notices) or factual (when they search in datafiles); they develop electronic document delivery; they provide the same information by several supports: printed documents, microforms, CD-ROM and so on; with automation, libraries have to pay maintenance of hardware and software, and they are interested in determining the real costs of the services they provide.

This induced an evolution of the librarians' roles and of their tasks. We can recognize three stages in the librarians' evolution: an erudition stage, with a major

preoccupation to the content of documents; a technical stage, with a major specialization of the job and emphasis of experts on procedures and techniques; a responsibility stage with a major preoccupation on choice and major link between contents and procedures. Technically, the gap between the documentation world and the library world reduced, the increasing information bringing nearer documentation and library techniques, managements methods and language. However there is a difference: documentation centers have more preoccupation for costs and developed value analysis, they are product-oriented and provide mainly reference and information; libraries place emphasis on services to a large range of users, mainly by lending, and they develop services evaluation.

Inside the library world, the different types of libraries, mainly public and academic became closer, overcoming institutional barriers. The complementarity between the different categories of libraries created the need for each library to define publicly in collaboration with its mother institution, its role and missions and its place in local, regional, or national network.

If we did observe common trends for the different types of French libraries, the development of library evaluation would not have the same rhythm.

First, university libraries did work on this subject, in the early eighties, because they knew in the same time budget cuts and a change in their institutional situation: they became more integrated in their university and acquired the status of common services of documentation so as to link all the libraries existing in the campus.

The different steps of evaluation studies were as follows: an international conference of AUPELF in Nice in December 1982 about university libraries evaluation; in 1982-1984, development of studies in some libraries about the use of collections, the non-satisfaction of the users, document delivery delays, the automated retrieval services, the cost of photocopies; in 1984-1986, a working group elaborated a "tableau de bord" (log) tested in eight libraries in 1986-1988. Libraries were not obliged to apply this set of indicators, but got accustomed progressively to this method and use it more frequently, their resources being now fixed by a contract policy on the basis of the negotiation of quantified objectives and of evaluation indicators. Generally, evaluation studies in these years are orientated to a better knowledge of the public.

Department mobile libraries (Bibliothèques centrales de prêt) are interested in this subject, they held a workshop in 1990 and established a working group.

Town libraries are less advanced in this domain. The evaluation manual of Nick Moore was translated in French, but has not yet been tested. There are little publications on this subject.

Otherwise, evaluation studies have developed since the first eighties at the National libraries and informatzcion science school (ENSSIB) and in the context of research programs on information science (see publications of Ducasse and Ram-bujhun at Bordeaux, of Salaün at ENSSIB) but there have not been joint programs in partnership between librarians and researchers, yet.

So, library performance measures are not very much developed in France, but with the recent evolutions of all types of libraries there is a real interest, and the situation is maturing for more research and experimentation on this subject.

Pierre Carbone  
Ministère de l'Education Nationale  
Direction de la programmation et du développement  
universitaire  
Sous-direction des bibliothèques  
DPDU 10  
61-65, rue Dutot  
F-75015 Paris  
France