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Performance Evaluation in European National Libraries: State-of-the-Art

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Abstract

During the last decade the need for evaluation and measurement of services has become more and more acute also in public not only in economic sector. As well, in the filed of librarianship and information science, certain methodologies for the measurement of efficiency, effectiveness and quality of the services have been developed (especially those measuring satisfaction of the users with library services as the whole). Among the first that launched measurement and evaluation of their services were public libraries, followed by dynamic academic and university libraries. They were forced into it by the circumstances and conditions, as well as competition on local and state level, and by the requests of their funding providers to whom libraries have constantly to prove that they are efficient, that they use the invested funds to the best avail and offer to their community services of high quality. It is therefore not unusual that the majority of recommendations and handbooks for library performance measurement come from the above mentioned types of libraries. It seems that national libraries lag behind in this area, as they have the most privileged and somehow untouchable position in their respective countries. The authors of the present paper do not agree with this view and point out that also national, as well as other libraries quickly adapt to changes in local and international environment and that many of them have clearly defined strategic goals and strategies for their attainment while their organization and operation follow the principles of modern management.

European national libraries coordinating their activities in the frames of CENL (Conference of European National Librarians) are launching many common projects the goal of which is above all to attain certain uniformity of starting points and bases for the operation of national libraries. Among them is also the need to measure and evaluate their activities and services and their mutual benchmarking. In the framework, an initiative was raised in the frames of

CENL that national libraries should prepare a list of suitable performance indicators and prepare collective recommendations for performance measurement. The task force which was named in 2001 prepared a questionnaire the goal of which was to find out the state-of-the-art of performance measurement in national libraries and to ask about their propositions and preferences. The authors of the paper analyse the results of the questionnaire which could turn out to be useful for further work on the project of identification of performance indicators appropriate for European national libraries.

Key words: *national libraries, CENL, performance indicators, performance measurement, state-of-the-art questionnaire*

1 Introduction

Especially in the last decade many managers, especially from the field of economy, pay special attention to the theory and practice of evaluation of the performed work or offered services. The decision for the evaluation of the performed work and for the establishment of effectiveness and efficiency of the performed services is taken from several reasons, above all to state expenditure and balance cost-effectiveness of services and products. After that the expectations and requests of the users of services or buyers of goods is ascertained. Positive results of the evaluation of work processes and products are also a warranty for the customer to expect quality of the services or products. The introduction of total quality management (TQM) has become a need for many profit companies if they wanted to be competitive.

From the economic sector the need and wish for the measurement and evaluation of services moved into the public sector. Several methodologies for performance measurement and quality of specific tasks and services and for the measurement of users satisfaction of different services have been designed. In recent years the interest for the measurement of information services and other tasks in library and information field, as well as satisfaction of users of library and other information services. This shift was, as in the economic field, influenced by globalisation of the market. Global offer and demand and unlimited competition depend on reliable and promptly accessible information. The demands on such kind of information influenced and upsurge of different providers of information services among which also libraries had to find their niche. It is understandable that libraries started to behave in a marketing way. They had to ascertain their potentials and deficiencies, strengths and weaknesses, and, above all to measure their expenditures and costs.

Among the first measuring and evaluating their services have been the dynamic university libraries. They were forced into it above all by circumstances and conditions as well as competition on the state level. University libraries have very demanding users on one side, i.e. university professors, researchers and students, while on the other hand they have to offer more and more expensive information sources and enable the use of the ever improving information technology. Both requires substantial funding. Therefore, they have to prove again and again to their financers that they efficiently use the invested funds and what are the benefits of their operation for their community.

On the contrary, national libraries are supposed to have a privileged position in their respective countries. Only they can obtain the complete national collection of published materials on the ground of legal deposit law and they take care of the national heritage on the same basis. This provides them with a somehow untouchable status while at the same time they have no competition within their country borders as in each country there is only one national library. Such a black and white view is not appropriate, and there are certainly exceptions among national libraries. One could say that especially in the field of national libraries there are as many exceptions as there are national libraries. Maurice Line wittily commented in the *Alexandria* a couple of years ago: "...national libraries are in fact rather like

dogs: dogs also exhibit an enormous variety, but we somehow recognize them all as dogs. If you wish to take the analogy further, national libraries range from mastiffs to chihuahuas, from sleek thoroughbreds to starving mongrels – it is safe to say that there are no greyhounds or pit bull terriers among them. Some are very old dogs, some mere puppies. Some are moderately friendly, some have to be approached with care. Most do not like children" (Line, 2001, p. 44). National libraries differ among each other more than any other libraries, or else, they are mostly non-comparable. They differ as to foundation and size, as to criteria for the selection of different kinds of library materials, as to the number and contents of the services they offer, as to the functions they perform etc. As well we can not overlook the fact that some national libraries perform the roles of university or parliamentary libraries, some have the leading role in the library system of the whole country, and others are tightly connected to the operation of public libraries.

For a long time, an opinion that national libraries are *mastodons* who are best avoided prevailed among the users. However, the above mentioned changes in the economical field have shaken those *fortresses.* First moves in the field of national libraries could have been notice twenty or so years ago. Libraries had to account for enormous funds needed for their operation, and started to open up for their users. The use of information and communication technology has thoroughly shaken their activities, in the field of library material processing as well as in the offering of services and permanent preservation of the national cultural heritage. As well, the organization of work also changed, and the need for a different library space based on a different concept emerged, as well as the need for new professional profiles of library workers. New media have had a deep influence on the access to cultural heritage which a short time ago could be accessed only by few privileged individuals and mostly in its original form.

Information and communication technology not only has a revolutionary impact on the life of libraries but also played an important role in linking processes. Linking and cooperation on international level has become a *modus vivendi* for national libraries without which they could have hardly followed trends of development. The demands of European Union as an important fund provider for the development of national libraries, professional needs of libraries themselves, cooperative projects, more and more often performed by national libraries, as well as the emergence of the European digital library are those processes and events that demand uniformity of starting points and bases for the operation of national libraries.

The path to uniformity also leads over the measurement and evaluation of present modes of operation and services of national libraries. Therefore, national libraries inside CENL (Conference of European National Librarians)[1] have decided to embark on a difficult task of evaluation operation and services of European national libraries. For this purpose a task force was formed in 2001 consisting of members from 6 European national libraries (Estonia, Italy, Belgium, Slovenia, Portugal, Croatia), and was later joined by a librarian from the National Library of Sweden. The task force decided to ascertain the state-of-the-art of library performance measurement in European libraries and prepare a bibliography of relevant sources from this field. The analysis of the situation should serve as the foundation for the preparation of common recommendations for the use of performance indicators relevant for national libraries and the possibility of their benchmarking.

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[1] The Conference of European National Librarians is a foundation under Dutch law with the aim of increasing and reinforcing the role of national libraries in Europe. Members are the national librarians of all Member States of the Council of Europe. The conference consisted of 41 members from 39 European countries at the end of the year 2002.

2 Methods

For the analysis of the situation an investigation method was used, and as the technique a written questionnaire. In the beginning the questionnaire had 26 multiple choice, closed and open-ended questions. The first version of the state-of-the-art questionnaire composed by the task force was sent to 41 European national libraries, members of CENL, in November 2001. The libraries were asked to comment upon the questionnaire and send in propositions, as well as bibliographies of sources published on the problems of library performance measurement in national libraries in their respective countries or could have been, in their opinion, relevant for national libraries. Some libraries sent in the proposed changes of the questionnaire, others returned already filled in questionnaire, and some did not answer the invitation to participate.

On the basis of the comments to the questionnaire (some could not have been taken into account as they were in complete opposition with the comments from other national libraries), the final version of the questionnaire containing 29 questions[2] and sent again to all European national libraries in August 2002. Those libraries which had already filled in the test version of the questionnaire were asked to return answers to additional and changed questions to the task force until the end of 2002 or to return complete questionnaires again. From 41 national libraries included in the research filled in questionnaires were returned by 21 (51 %)[3]. The national libraries of Russia, Austria and Spain the answers to the test version of the questionnaire had to be taken into account because they never returned the changed versions; in case of others, final form of the questionnaire was analysed. That is the reason why some answers are missing in case of the above mentioned three countries and they fall into the *no answer* column.

Some libraries returned meticulously carefully completed questionnaires with elaborate additional explications (for example the British Library, the National Library of Lithuania, Die Deutsche Bibliothek, the National Library of Estonia etc.), while the answers of others were incomplete. In the returned questionnaire from the Danish National Library one page was missing and so were the answers to some questions.[4] In the case of the question asking about the adequacy of performance indicators from standard ISO 11620, performance indicators ranked 4 were taken into account as none of them were ranked 5.

In the questions where performance indicators should have been ranked, some libraries followed the instructions and some did not. The results were taken into account in the following sense: in cases of questions asking about performance indicators, recommended by ISO standard and about performance measurement most typical of national libraries, those ranked as the most important (ranked 5) and those rated by libraries themselves as the most important were taken into account. In questions asking about core functions which should be evaluated, those ranked 2 or labelled as important by libraries themselves as those functions which should be evaluated continuously, were taken into account.

For the present paper we did not manage to analyse all the answers in depth, and especially not the enclosures forwarded together with the questionnaires (for example strategic plans, mission statements, operative plans etc.). All gathered material will be usefully made use of in further studies of the problem.

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[2] In fact, there were 28 questions, but the numbering was wrong and number 14 has been left out.
[3] The Slovak Republic answered our letter but was not included in the analysis because they did not return the filled in questionnaire but sent a list of projects and publications dealing with library performance measurement. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana replied that they could not fill in the questionnaire because they are not concerned themselves with such problems (yet).
[4] Unfortunately it was noticed too late and the required information could not have been obtained in due time.

3 Results

In the first place, we were interested whether national libraries perform strategic planning and whether they have a written strategic plan. It was evident from the answers that national libraries are aware of the importance of strategic plans. The majority of them (12 or 57 %) do have a strategic plan, and 8 libraries (38 %) do not have it (Table 1).

Table 1: Do the national libraries have a strategic plan?

Strategic plan	Number of libraries	%
No	8	38
Yes	12	57
No answer	1	5
Total	21	100

All of the libraries answered the question about a written mission statement. The majority of them (16 or 67 %) have a written mission statement while 5 or 24 % do not have it (Table 2). It seem rather surprising that the number of libraries having a mission statement is higher than the number of libraries having a strategic plan as a mission statement is usually deriving from the strategic plan and not vice versa.

Table 2: Do the national libraries have a written mission statement?

Mission statement	Number of libraries	%
No	5	24
Yes	16	76
No answer	0	0
Total	21	100

Table 3: Did libraries' mission statements start from a vision and values?

Vision and values	Number of libraries	%
No	8	50
Yes	8	50
Total	16	100

16 libraries having a mission statement responded to this question, half of them affirmatively (Table 3). Some libraries sent a copy of their mission statement enclosed. One of the most remarkable and comprehensive ones came from Estonia. 14 national libraries (67 %) reported that they have developed goals and objectives, 6 of them (29 %) do not have them yet (Table 4).

Table 4. Have the goals and objectives been developed?

Developed goals and objectives	Number of libraries	%
No	6	29
Yes	14	67
No answer	1	5
Total	**21**	**100**

National libraries were also asked to describe the main (strategic) goals of their library or to enclose a document containing them.

Table 5. Do the national libraries develop tactical (operational) plans (short term planning)?

Operational plans	Number of libraries	%
No	4	19
Yes	14	67
No answer	3	14
Total	**21**	**100**

As can be seen from Table 5 67 % of the national libraries have tactical (operational) plans while 19 % of them do not. Some libraries also enclosed their operational plans to the questionnaire. Here, may be the British Library could have exposed: their planning documents can be a good example for those libraries having some problems with the shaping of their planning documents.

Table 6. How are documents like mission statements, visions and strategic plans prepared?

Library documents preparation	Number of libraries	%
Based upon data obtained by measurement	5	24
In an "ad hoc" way	4	19
Both	2	10
Other	5	24
No answer	5	24
Total	**21**	**100**

The answers to the question about the way in which strategic documents are being prepared are heterogeneous that they can not be summarized (Table 6). Nobody seems to be very concerned with the preparation of a methodology for the preparation of these documents. Only about 25 % of the libraries use objective data in this process. Among answers labelled as *other* the National Library of the Czech Republic wrote that they always evaluate the realization of objectives from the previous year.

Table 7. Which body encouraged the preparation of the strategic plan?

Body which encouraged the preparation of the strategic plan	Number of libraries	%
The parent institution	3	14
Responsible ministry	5	24
Other, who	5	24
No answer	8	38
Total	**21**	**100**

Many respondents (38 %) did not answer the question about which body encouraged the preparation of the strategic plan (Table 7); the results show that only 5 (24 %) libraries were encouraged to make a strategic plan by the responsible ministry and 3 (14 %) by parent institution. Strategic plans of 5 (24 %) libraries were initiated by the library itself or by the parliament (answer *other).*

Table 8. For which functions are national libraries responsible?

For which functions are libraries responsible	Number of libraries	%
National library's function (only)	8	38
National and university function	3	14
National, university and other types of libraries function	3	14
National and other types of libraries function	6	29
No answer	1	5
Total	**21**	**100**

8 libraries (38 %) perform only the national function, 3 libraries (14 %) perform the national and university function and 6 libraries (29 %) perform the national and other library functions. The results show that only a small part of the libraries perform only the national function while majority of them perform other functions as well (Table 8). Libraries also responsible for the functions of other types of libraries, perform the following functions:
- public research library
- public, special and school library
- parliament library and research library for humanities and social sciences
- research library in humanities
- parliament library (2 answers)
- public and special library
- general scientific or research library (2 answers)

Table 9. The main functions for which libraries are responsible?

Main functions of national libraries	Number of answers
National bibliographic centre	16
Preservation and conservation of manuscripts	13
Legal deposit	10
National agency for ISBN, ISSN, ISMN	5
National reference centre	4
Union (shared) cataloguing	4
Research and development centre for lib. & inform. sc.	3
National centre for library network development	2
Lending and ILL	1
Library projects on the national level	1
National centre for continuing education and training	1
No answer	1

Among the main functions of the libraries, the function of the national bibliographic centre occupies the first place (76 % of the libraries), followed by the preservation function (62 %) and legal deposit function (47 %), national agency for ISBN, ISSN, ISMN (24 %), national reference centre (19 %) and responsibility for the union catalogue (19 %). Some other functions were mentioned as well (Table 9).

Table 10. Which are the core functions of national libraries, which should have first priority?

The most important core functions of national libraries	Number of answers
Building the national archival collection	10
National bibliographic centre	9
Legal deposit	8
National heritage collections	7
Preservation and conservation of the materials, digitisation	7
National centre for librarianship	4
Managing library statistics database on the national level	3
Promote the use of library	2
Building representative collection of foreign literature stock and databases	2
Coordination of national library infrastructure	2
Training and education of librarians	2
Museum functions	1
Library performance measurement and evaluation	1
National reference centre	1
Special collections digitisation	1
Creation of the national integrated library information system	1
National union catalogue	1
ISSN centre, ISBN agency	1
Media laboratory	1
Development and application of common rules, standards and norms	1

The results showed the following sequence of five core functions (Table 10):
1. the building the national archival collection,
2. the function of the national bibliographic centre,
3. legal deposit,
4. the function of collecting and preservation of the national heritage collection,
5. the function of preservation and conservation of materials, digitisation.

It seems rather surprising that only one library considers performance measurement and evaluation to be one of the core functions of a national library. Development and application of common rules, standards and norms are also mentioned by one library only.

Table 11. What are the subjects covered by the analysed libraries (responsibilities area of acquisition resources)?

Subjects covered by national libraries	Number of answers
Humanities, and/or social sciences	15
Law	2
Natural sciences	1
Culture, arts	1
General research	1
Theory of science	1
Library and information science	1
Theology	1
Economics	1

Answers to this question are heterogeneous (Table 11). Libraries stated that they should have covered all subjects because they are in charge of collection the entire national

production. However, some of them mentioned the following priorities: humanities and/or social sciences prevail in most national libraries (15 or 71 %). Some libraries listed more than one subject and the British Library listed types of library materials it collects and not subjects.

Table 12. Which are the financial resources for library operation (the budget structure)?

Library budget	Number of libraries	%
State (government)	8	38
Own income + ministry (ministries)	8	38
State, own income, sponsors	2	10
Ministry (only)	1	5
State + funds of different projects	1	5
No answer	1	5
Total	**21**	**100**

38 % of the libraries are financed directly by their respective governments, 38 % by ministry and by themselves, 10 % are financed by the state, their own income and sponsors, one library receives funds exclusively from the ministry and one library receives funds from the state and different projects (Table 12).
The proportion of different funding source vary from state to state and it is not possible to draw any conclusion from the answers.

Table 13. Do financial authorities finance libraries according to any performance indicators and which ones?

Financing	Number of libraries	%
No, financing of the national library is not Dependent on performance evaluation results*	17	81
Yes, it depends on performance measurement	4	19
Total	**21**	**100**

Denmark: responded no, yes only for the university library division.

Only in 4 countries (19 %) the funding of the national library depends on performance indicators (Table 13). Estonia is the only country receiving its complete funds on the basis of LIBECON performance indicators. Some other countries use the following indicators:
- Norway – increase of acquisitions and other materials, data on preservation and conservation, number of catalogue entries and data on the use of the library;
- Estonia – financial analysis and matching the results against LIBECON – CEE national libraries;
- Iceland – service indicators as agreed with the Ministry of Education (acquisitions, services offered to the University of Iceland, data on bibliographic control, preservation of documents, information technology) and considered by the financial authorities;
- Great Britain – indicators on financial performance, quality, efficiency and data on throughput.

Statistical data regularly gathered by libraries gave us most heterogeneous answers form which any results can not be drawn (libraries gather data on the number of administrative units and service points, stock, users, visits, library staff, expenditures, loans per day, users per day, interlibrary loan, consultations, number of requests, number of workstations for

users, etc.) Different statistical data are available either in print version or on the Web – of the libraries investigated, statistical data of 14 (67 %) can be accessed on the Web.

Table 14. Is the international standard on library statistics ISO 2789:1991 recognised as the national standard?

ISO 2789 as the national standard	Number of libraries	%
No	9	43
Yes	11	52
No answer	1	5
Total	21	100

11 libraries responded (52 %) that ISO 2789:1991 has been accepted as their national standard while in 9 libraries (43 %) that is not so (Table 14). Although 11 libraries stated that ISO 2789 has been adopted as their national standard, only 8 (38 %) of them comply with it in collecting and interpreting data and 11 libraries (52 %) do not comply with it.

Table 15. Is the international standard on library performance indicators ISO 11620:1998 respected as the national standard?

ISO 11620 as the national standard	Number of libraries	%
No	11	52
Yes	8	38
No answer	2	10
Total	21	100

11 (52 %) libraries responded that ISO 11620 has not been adopted as their national standard while 8 (38 %) responded positively (Table 15). Although 8 libraries responded that ISO 11620 has been adopted as their national standard, only 4 (24 %) comply with it in the process of performance evaluation, 9 libraries (43 %) do not comply with it at all and 7 libraries (33 %) did not answer the question.

Table 16. Do libraries think that performance indicators which are suggested in the above-mentioned ISO standard are applicable in national libraries?

Applicability of ISO perf. indicators	Number of libraries	%
No	5	24
Yes	14	67
No answer	2	10
Total	21	100

14 libraries (67 %) are of the opinion that performance indicators recommended by the ISO 11620 standard are suitable for national libraries while 5 libraries (24 %) answered negatively (Table 16). The National Library of the Czech Republic expressed the opinion that the above mentioned standard is not suitable for the national function.

Table 17. If ISO performance indicators are applicable, which of the suggested indicators are the most important for national libraries?

ISO performance indicators	The highest ranked indicators
Correct Answer Fill Rate	13
User Satisfaction with the Library Services as a whole or with diff. services of the library	12
Speed of Interlibrary Lending	12
Automated Systems Availability	10
Title Catalogue Search Success Rate	9
Subject Catalogue Search Success Rate	9
Median Time of Document Acquisition	9
Median Time of Document Processing	9
Required Titles Availability	8
Median Time of Document Retrieval from Closed Stacks	7
Facilities Availability	7
Facilities Use Rate	7
Cost per User	6
Titles Availability	6
Seat Occupancy Rate	6
Percentage of Required Titles in the Collection	5
Median Time of Document Retrieval from Open Access Areas	5
Cost per Loan	5
Cost Per Title Catalogued	5
Required Titles Extended Availability	4
Loans per Employee	4
Cost per Library Visit	3
Document Use Rate	3
Collection Turnover	3
Loans per Capita	3
Library Visits per Capita	2
Documents on Loan per Capita	2
Percentage of Target Population Reached	1
In-library Use per Capita	0

National libraries were asked to rank each ISO performance indicator from 0 to 5, 0 meaning not important at all, 1 meaning less important, and 5 meaning most important.
Some libraries did rank the indicators, some only indicated ones they considered most important. The frequency of rank 5 or the frequency of performance indicators indicated as the most important were analysed (Table 17). Following indicators were ranked the highest:
1. Correct Answer File Rate
2. User Satisfaction with the Library Services as a whole or with different services of the library
3. Speed of Interlibrary Lending
4. Automated Systems Available
5. Title Catalogue Search Success Rate

However, libraries thinking that ISO performance indicators are not suitable for the measurement of their performance did not suggest any other indicators for performance measurement (like, for instance, indicators suggested by the IFLA guidelines for the measurement of academic libraries quality – Poll, R. & Boekhorst, P., 1996).

Table 18. Which performance measurements are the most typical of a national library?

Type of performance measurements	The highest ranked indicators
Speed of release and consistency of record in the national bibliography	19
legal deposit's effectiveness	16
use and quality of online services (e-resources such as e-serials, union catalogue)	15
Library collection assessment	13
Speed of delivery of printed and other documents	13
effectiveness, efficiency and quality of electronic interlibrary loan services	12
Speed of interlibrary loan	11
users' opinion on opening hours, reference services, catalogues, search tools, etc	10
cost per loan, per title catalogued, per information, per user, per staff, etc.	10
quality of reference services offered	10
study places and PCs available	9
ratio of academic researchers or postgraduate users to students or non-specialist users	7
use and quality of online services (catalogues, union catalogues)	5
on line services and on line use rate	1
organisation of exhibitions	1
Digital collections	1
research and development	1
continuing professional education	1
number of digitised items compared to earlier years or to number of employees	1
number of preserved items compared to earlier years or to number of employees	1
number of microfilmed items compared to earlier years or to number of employees	1
number of exhibitions and other presentations compared to earlier years or to number of uses	1

National libraries were asked to rank each of the following assessment statement from 0 to 5, whereupon 0 means not typical for national libraries, 1 means least typical and 5 means most typical. The following 5 assessment statements seem to be most typical:
1. speed of release and consistency of record in the national bibliography
2. effectiveness of the legal deposit legislation
3. use of quality on-line services (e-resources like e-serials, union catalogue)
4. library collection assessment
5. speed of delivery of print and non-print documents

Table 19. Have the libraries a clearly defined and working decision/management information system (MIS)?

MIS system	Number of libraries	%
No	15	71
Yes	6	29
No answer	0	0
Total	**21**	**100**

Only 6 of the researched national libraries (29 %)have a clearly defined and working decision and management system (MIS) (Table 19), half of them automated and half of them not.

Table 20. Do the libraries conduct performance evaluations systematically?

Systematic performance evaluations	Number of libraries	%
No	6	29
Yes	14	67
No answer	1	5
Total	**21**	**100**

14 libraries systematically perform performance evaluations and 6 libraries (29 %) do not perform them at all (Table 20). We also asked about which services are evaluated, how frequently and in what way (by collecting library statistics data, by the use of library performance indicators, by benchmarking, peer-review, external review, etc.) Some libraries did not even respond to that question, some misinterpreted it: it seem therefore safe to assume that systematic evaluation is not carried out in the majority of libraries and that only a few use performance indicators in the process. Some answers can be found in Table 21. However, no conclusion was possible.

Table 21. Which services, how frequently and in which way are evaluated?

Which services?	*How frequently?*	*In which way?*
Acquisition, interlibrary loan, users satisfaction, catalogue use	Yearly	Library statistics
Bibliographic processing, information retrieval, lending, interlibrary loans	Yearly	Library statistics
Legal deposit efficiency	-	-
International library loan	Systematically	Library statistics
Users' satisfaction with e-services	Occasionally	Questionnaire
Preservation and access of cultural heritage	-	-
Titles of periodical publications requested	Systematically	Library statistics
National bibliographic service, training and education, automation and digitisation	-	-
CIP and bibliographic control functions, processing of documents, user services, electronic services, special collections, preservation and conservation, educational activities	Monthly	Library statistics
Number of units added to the collection, created records, library users, loans, international library loans, reference queries	Quarterly	Library statistics
Number of published items	Annually	Library statistics
Parliament services, services of reading rooms	Yearly	Performance indicators, users questionnaires
Reference services	Yearly	Performance indicators, users questionnaires
Library use: visits, loans, transactions, usage frequency, frequency of attendance, users per librarian, loans per librarian, the proportion of requests supplied by ILL	Yearly	Library statistics
Collections: the coefficient of average additions rate, acquisition rate, additions rate, withdrawals rate	Yearly	Library statistics
The librarians qualification	Yearly	Library statistics
Cost analyses: cost per user, cost per visit, proportion of expenditure The costs of acquiring documents for collection per use, cost per document etc.	Yearly	Library statistics
British Library: all services are evaluated as part of the Internal Audit Programme	-	-

Table 22. Which core functions of a national library should be evaluated and how frequently?

Functions that should be evaluated continuously	No. of answers
functioning as national bibliographic centre	16
legal deposit library	15
producing the national bibliography	15
collection and preservation of manuscripts and rare documents	15
development and maintenance of bibliographic databases	14
library automation and digitalisation	13
central library for collection and preservation of cultural heritage	12
compilation of indexes to national literature	9
acting as the national reference centre	9
responsibilities as national archive	9
development of libraries and librarianship	8
being a symbol of nationhood and identity	8
library services planning	7
development of library network	7
making library studies and research work	6
training and continuing education of librarians	6
co-ordination of developments in information technology in libraries	6
promotion of reading, and information literacy	6
copyright library	5
preparing library standards and library legal acts	5
providing leadership among nation's libraries	4
central library offering services for Parliament and Government members	1

National libraries were asked to rank core functions of national libraries as to whether they should or should not be assessed (0 = not necessary at all, 1 = periodically, 2 = continuously). In Table 22, only that functions which, according to the results, should be evaluated continuously, are listed. Five functions which should have been evaluated on a continuous basis are:
1. national bibliographic centre
2. legal deposit library
3. production of national bibliography
4. collection and preservation of manuscripts and rare documents
5. development and maintenance of bibliographic databases

Table 23. Have libraries a benchmarking programmes?

Benchmarking programmes	Number of libraries	%
No	17	81
Yes	4	19
No answer	0	0
Total	**21**	**100**

Only 4 libraries (19 %) do have a benchmarking programme while the rest of them do not (Table 23).

Table 24. Are libraries involved in a quality projects?

Quality projects	Number of libraries	%
No	15	71
Yes	3	14
No answer	3	14
Total	21	100

Only 3 libraries (14 %) are involved in quality projects and 15 (71 %) are not (Table 24). 7 libraries plan to carry out a quality project in near future; the rest have not been yet required to develop quality policy, to provide performance indicators or indicators of users' satisfaction. Quality project in one library is based on EFQM (European Foundation Quality Management), 2 are involved in projects which are not specified in the questionnaire; none of them is based on ISO standards. The most often used instrument for the measurement of quality is user studies (measuring users' satisfaction). None of the libraries involved in quality projects intends to issue a quality manual. Only two libraries provided a short description of quality projects they are involved in (Malta, United Kingdom). Those libraries which are involved in the quality projects firmly believe that the implementation of quality management system definitely influences the life of the institution in a positive way.

Table 25. Do libraries conduct user satisfaction studies?

User studies	Number of libraries	%
No	4	19
Yes	15	71
No answer	2	10
Total	21	100

4 libraries (19 %) do not conduct users satisfaction studies while 15 (71 %) do (Table 25). 3 of them conduct surveys occasionally, 1 of them conducted a survey only once, 1 library conducts a survey every fifth year, 1 library quarterly, 1 library regularly (yearly), 1 library twice per year or monthly, etc.

Table 26. Do libraries carry out cost-benefit analyses?

Cost-benefit analyses	Number of libraries	%
No	13	62
Yes	5	24
No answer	3	14
Total	21	100

Only 5 (24 %) libraries carry out cost-benefit analyses, and 13 (62 %) do not (Table 26). The answers to the question when the last one had been carried out gave the following picture: most such analyses were carried out for the last time during the past two years.

Libraries which evaluate their activities by means of performance measurement and or by the implementation of quality management system also enumerated their objectives and motives: improvement, change, development, analysis of current situation, planning of future goals and tasks, specification of target users' groups, marketing, satisfaction of the needs of their users, complying with internal needs and the needs of the government, challenge the need for certain new services in line with the strategic objectives, effective delivery of services, based on value for money, etc.

Table 27. Did libraries evaluate the "image" of their library?

Evaluation of library image	Number of libraries	%
No	4	19
Yes	12	57
No answer	5	24
Total	**21**	**100**

12 libraries (57 %) evaluated the *image* of their library, 4 (19 %) did not (Table 27). These evaluated mostly stemmed from users' opinion studies (10 answers – 48 %), media analysis (3) and or market research (3). The results of the evaluation were assessed as very good in 4 libraries, good in 6 and satisfactory in 3 libraries.

Table 28. Have libraries ever tried to measure their outcomes?

Measuring outcomes	Number of libraries	%
No	11	52
Yes	4	19
No answer	6	29
Total	**21**	**100**

11 libraries (52 %) have not tried to measure their outcomes yet, and only 4 (19 %) did: Croatia, Malta, United Kingdom and Germany. Which indicators were used? Croatia: quality of reference services, quality of online services, users' opinion on particular services, speed if interlibrary loan services and document delivery, legal deposit effectiveness (which are, in fact, outcome measures). Malta measures outcomes by means of the use of population literacy respective illiteracy. The National Library of United Kingdom tried to develop some robust measures of outcomes for the whole community; they looked also for and received qualitative evidence of the value of the British Library to specific communities and developed indicators of direct benefits to individuals and individual organisations.

Among future perspectives (professional, political, financial) of the national libraries the following are mentioned:
- to become a member of the university
- cooperation with national institutions, mutual agreements among national libraries
- to solve basic financial problems
- public access to information resources
- cooperation in projects
- independency from financial constraints
- more evaluation, financial changes
- cooperation among national libraries and among libraries of other types
- access to digital resources
- continuous education and training
- information literacy
- participation in national information networks
- to build a new library building
- to set up a unified system of information in the state

4 Discussion

A brief survey of the returned questionnaires reveals that nearly 60 % of the national libraries carry out strategic planning and are aware of the importance of strategic planning and

performance evaluation, using different methods and approaches to performance evaluation. However, in one third of the libraries goals and objectives are not clearly defined; as a consequence neither their achievements can not be evaluated. Only 24 % of the libraries prepare their strategic plans on the basis of data gathered by means of relevant measurements or on the basis of working information systems for decision making (29 %). In only 24 % of participating libraries a strategic plan is required by their respective ministries. In as much as 81 % of the libraries the amount of received funds is not dependent upon their performance.

It is interesting to note that 62 % of the participating libraries perform also other functions besides the national one, for example the function of university or other kinds of libraries. Among the most frequently mentioned functions are the following: national bibliographic centre, preservation and conservation of manuscripts, legal deposit function, national agency for ISBN, ISSN, ISMN, etc.

Approximately 40 % of the participating libraries gather their statistical data using ISO international standard while only 24 % of them respect it in the process of performance evaluation. Answers to the question about the use of ISO standard for library performance indicators, are more or less the same. Among performance indicators which are most important for national libraries are the following: Correct Answer Fill Rate, User Satisfaction with Library Services in general or separately, Speed of Interlibrary Loan, Automated Systems Availability, Title Catalogue Search Success Rate, Subject Catalogue Search Success Rate, etc.

14 (67 %) of the libraries claim that they carry out performance evaluation systematically. However, this does not correspond with the answers give to the question no. 17. It can be concluded that users' satisfaction studies are very often used method of performance evaluation (17 % of the libraries conduct them). Libraries have proposed that the evaluation of the following core functions should be carried out on regular basis: national bibliographic centre, legal deposit library, production of national bibliography, collection and preservation of manuscripts and rare documents, development and maintenance of bibliographic databases, library automation and digitisation, collecting and preserving of national cultural heritage, etc.

It is interesting to note that 4 of the participating libraries also measure their outcomes and it would have been very useful for all to examine their experience. But only 19 % of the libraries have benchmarking programs, 14 % are involved in quality projects and 24 % carry out cost-benefit analyses. In the survey of the results the fact that the research pattern (21 libraries or 51 % of the CENL members) was very small should be by all means taken into account. Therefore, the results can not and should not be generalized for all European national libraries but could be useful in the future proposals of the list of library performance indicators for national libraries and their possible use in benchmarking programs.

References

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PERFORMANCE EVALUATION IN NATIONAL LIBRARIES
State-of-the-art questionnaire

1. Data on the library

Country _____

Official name of the library in local language _____

Library name in English_____

Name of the director or chief executive _____

2. Strategic planning

2.1. Does your library have a strategic plan?
☐ no
☐ yes

If yes, please enclose it with this questionnaire.

2.2. Does your library have a written mission statement?
☐no
☐yes

If yes, please append it to this questionnaire (English version would be appreciated).

2.3. Did your library's mission statement start from a *vision* and *values*?
☐no
☐yes

If yes, please describe them in English if they aren't appended.
_____
_____

2.4. Have the goals (broad aspirations, defined in operational terms, leading to measurable objectives or strategies and activities) and objectives (measurable actions to be achieved, objectives specify means of achieving) been developed.
☐no
☐yes

If yes, describe the main (strategic) goals of your library in English if they aren't appended.

_____
_____

2.5. Does your library develop tactical (operational) plans (short term planning)?
☐no
☐yes

If yes, please enclose the last operational (yearly) plan with this questionnaire.

2.6. How are documents like mission statements, visions and strategic plans prepared?
☐based upon data obtained by measurement
☐in an "ad hoc" way

2.7. Which body encouraged the preparation of the strategic plan?
☐the parent institution

        ☐responsible ministry
☐other, who _____

3. For which functions is your library responsible, only for the national ones or also for the functions of other types of libraries (university, public, special etc.)
   ☐national library's function
   ☐university library's function
   ☐library is responsible also for the functions of other types of libraries, which ones:
   _____

4. Please write down the main functions that your library is responsible for as the national library (legal deposit, national bibliographic centre, etc.):

   _____
   _____

5. What, in your opinion[5], are the core functions of national libraries, which should have first priority?

   _____
   _____

6. What are the subjects covered by your (national) library (responsibilities area of acquisition resources)?

   _____
   _____

7. Which are the financial resources for library operation (financial authorities and percentage of budget that they contribute, your own income, etc. – the budget structure)?

   _____
   _____

8. Do financial authorities finance your library according to any performance indicators?
   ☐no, financing of the national library is not dependent on performance evaluation
   ☐yes

   If yes:
   - which indicators do they use?
   _____

   - what amount (in %) of financial resources does the library get according to this way of financing? _____

9. Which statistical data on your library activities, services or products do you collect regularly? Can you please write down a list or enclose the list of these and/or the publication where they are published.

10. Are the statistics about your library available on-line?
   ☐no
   ☐yes
   If yes, please write down the URL of the web page: _____

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[5] *The official opinion of the library and not the personal opinion of the person who is answering the questionnaire is meant.*

11. Is the international standard on library statistics ISO 2789:1991 your national standard?
   ☐no
   ☐yes

  and/or do you respect it in the process of collecting and interpreting data on library performing?
   ☐no   ☐yes

12. Is the international standard on library performance indicators ISO 11620:1998 your national standard?
   ☐no   ☐yes

  and/or do you respect/use it in the process of performance evaluation?
   ☐no   ☐yes

13. Do you think that performance indicators which are suggested in the above-mentioned ISO standard 11620[6] are applicable in national libraries?
   ☐no   ☐yes

If yes, which of the suggested indicators are, in your opinion, the most important for national libraries (please rank each indicator from 0 to 5, where 0 = not important at all, 1= the least important, 5 = the most important)

☐ User Satisfaction with the Library Services as a Whole or with Different Services of the Library
☐ Percentage of Target Population Reached
☐ Cost per User
☐ Library Visits per Capita
☐ Cost per Library Visit
☐ Titles Availability
☐ Required Titles Availability
☐ Percentage of Required Titles in the Collection
☐ Required Titles Extended Availability
☐ In-library Use per Capita
☐ Document Use Rate
☐ Median Time of Document Retrieval from Closed Stacks
☐ Median Time of Document Retrieval from Open Access Areas
☐ Collection Turnover
☐ Loans per Capita
☐ Documents on Loan per Capita
☐ Cost per Loan
☐ Loans per Employee
☐ Speed of Interlibrary Lending
☐ Correct Answer Fill Rate
☐ Title Catalogue Search Success Rate
☐ Subject Catalogue Search Success Rate
☐ Facilities Availability
☐ Facilities Use Rate
☐ Seat Occupancy Rate
☐ Automated Systems Availability
☐ Median Time of Document Acquisition
☐ Median Time of Document Processing
☐ Cost Per Title Catalogued

If no, which other proposal of performance indicators is, in your opinion, the most useful?
(for instance, IFLA guidelines for the measurement of academic libraries quality; Poll, R. & Boekhorst, P., 1996) _____

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[6] *Performance indicators for the evaluation of electronic resources and services will be included in the new version of ISO 11620 standard as its annex.*

15. Can you indicate which performance measurements are the most typical of a national library, for example (please rank each measurement from 0 to 5, where 0 = not typical at all, 1= the least typical, 5 = the most typical):

- ☐ legal deposit's effectiveness
- ☐ speed of release and consistency of record in the national bibliography
- ☐ ratio of academic researchers or postgraduate users to students or non-specialist users
- ☐ quality of reference services offered
- ☐ use and quality of online services (catalogues, union catalogues)
- ☐ use and quality of online services (e-resources such as e-serials, union catalogue)
- ☐ users' opinion on opening hours, reference services, catalogues, search tools, etc.
- ☐ speed of interlibrary loan
- ☐ library collection assessment
- ☐ cost per loan, per title catalogued, per information, per user, per staff, etc.
- ☐ speed of delivery of printed and other documents
- ☐ effectiveness, efficiency and quality of electronic interlibrary loan services
- ☐ study places and PCs available for users

Other, please specify: _____

16. Has your library a clearly defined and working decision/management information system (MIS)?

☐ no   ☐ yes

If yes, is it automated?

☐ no   ☐ yes

17. Does your library systematically conduct performance evaluations?

☐ no   ☐ yes

If yes, which services are evaluated, how frequently (monthly, yearly, etc.), and in which way (collecting library statistics, use of library performance indicators, benchmarking, peer-reviews, external reviewers, etc.)

Which services?	How frequently?	In which way?

18. Can you indicate which core functions of a national library should be evaluated (0 = not necessary at all, 1 = periodically, 2 = continuously)

- ☐ legal deposit library
- ☐ copyright library
- ☐ central library for collection and preservation of cultural heritage
- ☐ central library offering services for Parliament and Government members
- ☐ functioning as national bibliographic centre
- ☐ producing the national bibliography
- ☐ compilation of indexes to national literature
- ☐ collection and preservation of manuscripts and rare documents
- ☐ development and maintenance of bibliographic databases
- ☐ library services planning

- ☐ development of libraries and librarianship
- ☐ preparing library standards and library legal acts
- ☐ making library studies and research work
- ☐ acting as the national reference centre
- ☐ training and continuing education of librarians
- ☐ providing leadership among nation's libraries
- ☐ library automation and digitalisation
- ☐ development of library network
- ☐ co-ordination of developments in information technology in libraries
- ☐ promotion of reading, and information literacy
- ☐ being a symbol of nationhood and identity
- ☐ responsibilities as national archive

_____

19. Has your library a benchmarking programme?
   ☐ no   ☐ yes

20. Is your library involved in a quality project?
   ☐ no   ☐ yes

If yes, please specify

The quality project is based on:
- ☐ ISO 9000
- ☐ EFQM (European Foundation Quality Management)
- ☐ Other _____

Your Audit has been based on:
- ☐ customer (user) satisfaction
- ☐ target population satisfaction (large audience!)

If no, please specify if your library
- ☐ is going to carry out a quality project in the near future
- ☐ has not yet been required to elaborate a quality policy, providing performance indicators or users' satisfaction

21. If your library is involved in the quality project, does your quality project envisage the release of a quality manual?
   ☐ no   ☐ yes

22. If your library is involved in a quality project, can you please give a short description of it, answering concisely each of the following questions:

When did it start? _____

How many phases does it consist of? _____

Does your supervising ministry support it? _____

Does your project rely on private or public expertise? _____

Will there be training courses for enhancing quality attitudes of the staff? _____

23. Does your library conduct user satisfaction studies?
   ☐ no   ☐ yes

If yes, how frequently? _____

When has the last one been conducted? _____

24. Does your library carry out cost-benefit analyses?
　　　　□ no　□ yes

If yes, how frequently? _____

When has the last one been carried out? _____

25. If you use performance measurement or a quality management system in the national library, what were the objectives and motivations of its implementation?

_____
_____

26. If there is any quality management system in the library, did its implementation result in a crucial change in the life of the institution?
　　　□ yes, in remarkable way
　　　□ yes, but not important
　　　□ no, not at all

27. Did you evaluate the "image" of the library in your community?
　　　□ no　　　□ yes

If yes, it was done by the:
　　　□ media analysis
　　　□ users' opinion
　　　□ market research

What was the result?
　　　□ library image is very good
　　　□ library image is good
　　　□ library image is satisfactory
　　　□ library image is bad

28. Has your library ever tried to measure its outcomes (impact that its performing has on the users and community as a whole, for instance on the level of information literacy of the population)?
　　　□ no　　　　　□ yes

If yes, which performance measures and indicators have been used?

_____
_____

29. What are, in your opinion, the future perspectives of your national library (professional, political, financial…)?

_____
_____

****

Can you please enclose a bibliography of publications or articles about performance (or quality) measurements in national libraries that have been published in your country during the last 10 years?

Thank you for your cooperation!