
**Information and documentation — Library
performance indicators**

*Information et documentation — Indicateurs de performance des
bibliothèques*

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Contents

Page

Foreword.....	iv
Introduction	v
1 Scope	1
2 Terms and definitions.....	1
3 Notation	8
4 Criteria and descriptive framework.....	8
4.1 General.....	8
4.2 Criteria	9
4.3 Descriptive framework	9
4.3.1 General.....	9
4.3.2 Balanced Scorecard Approach	9
4.3.3 Description of performance indicators.....	10
5 Uses of performance indicators	12
5.1 General considerations	12
5.2 Selection of performance indicators	12
5.3 Limitations.....	13
5.3.1 Optimizing scores on performance indicators	13
5.3.2 Degree of accuracy.....	13
5.3.3 User skills versus library performance	13
5.3.4 Linking resources to services	14
5.3.5 Comparability of performance indicator data.....	14
Annex A (normative) List of performance indicators for libraries	15
Annex B (normative) List of descriptions of performance indicators	19
Bibliography	85

Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

International Standards are drafted in accordance with the rules given in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2.

The main task of technical committees is to prepare International Standards. Draft International Standards adopted by the technical committees are circulated to the member bodies for voting. Publication as an International Standard requires approval by at least 75 % of the member bodies casting a vote.

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights.

ISO 11620 was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 46, *Information and documentation*, Subcommittee SC 8, *Quality — Statistics and performance evaluation*.

This second edition cancels and replaces the first edition (ISO 11620:1998), its Amendment 1 (ISO 11620:1998/Amd.1:2003) and ISO/TR 20983:2003, which have been technically revised. The revision incorporates performance indicators for electronic and traditional library services and resources into a single document, and includes technical updates to performance indicators of electronic and traditional library services and resources.

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Introduction

This International Standard is concerned with the evaluation of libraries of all types.

The main purpose of this International Standard is to endorse the use of performance indicators in libraries and to spread knowledge about how to conduct performance measurement.

This international library community has expressed its commitment to the development of an International Standard for library performance indicators. By the establishment of this International Standard, the use of performance indicators can be advanced and libraries in developing and developed countries will benefit from the knowledge and skills associated with formal planning procedures and data collection processes.

The quality of library services is related to the broader topic of quality management and quality assurance. This International Standard acknowledges and supports the standards prepared by ISO/TC 176.

Every performance indicator in this International Standard is given a unique name. This name sometimes differs from the literature upon which its description is based. Such differences are documented in the descriptions of the performance indicators.

The performance indicators included in this International Standard are either in widespread use or well documented in the literature. Some of the descriptions of performance indicators incorporate modifications of performance indicators described elsewhere: these reflect practical experience or the need to generalize. Input and resource based ratios are very well documented in the literature and provide a context for library performance indicators as defined in this International Standard.

There are some library activities and services for which, during the development of this International Standard, there was a general lack of tested and well-documented performance indicators. These include outcome and impact measures for libraries. Electronic services will continue to develop and evolve, and such evolution will require monitoring as related to the performance indicators in this International Standard. The library and information community is encouraged to establish mechanisms and to give a high priority to developing relevant performance indicators for existing and emerging library services and resources.

This International Standard does not include performance indicators for the evaluation of the outcomes of library services either on individuals, the communities that libraries serve, or on society at this time. This is an evolving area of performance measurement for libraries. This International Standard will be maintained and developments monitored. Additional performance indicators will be incorporated as they are tested and validated.

Performance indicators may be used for comparison over time within the same library. Comparisons between libraries may also be made, but only with caution. Between library comparisons will need to take into account any differences in the constituencies of the libraries, with good understanding of the performance indicators used, and careful interpretation of the data (see 5.3.5).

There are other limitations to the performance indicators in this International Standard that depend on local factors such as the community the library serves, service mandates, and technology infrastructure configuration. It is advisable that results from the use of performance indicators listed in this International Standard be interpreted with regard to these factors.

The performance indicators included in this International Standard do not reflect all possible measures or evaluation techniques. The International Standard offers accepted, tested, and publicly accessible methodologies and approaches to measuring a range of library service performance.

This International Standard is not intended to exclude the use of performance indicators that have not been specified within it (see Clause 5).

More detailed information concerning methodology and analysis in establishing performance indicators in libraries can be found in References [1] to [30] listed in the Bibliography.

A group operating under the auspices of ISO/TC 46/SC 8 is responsible for maintaining this International Standard. Newly developed performance indicators are vetted by an appointed group of experts and descriptions are published as amendments to this International Standard as rapidly as possible after ballot submitted to the national committees.

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Information and documentation — Library performance indicators

1 Scope

This International Standard specifies the requirements of a performance indicator for libraries and establishes a set of performance indicators to be used by libraries of all types. It also provides guidance on how to implement performance indicators in libraries where such performance indicators are not already in use. The list of performance indicators are summarized in Annex A and details given in Annex B.

This International Standard provides a standardized terminology and concise definitions of the performance indicators. Furthermore, this International Standard contains concise descriptions of the performance indicators and of the collection and the analysis of data needed.

This International Standard is applicable to all types of libraries in all countries. However, not all performance indicators are applicable to all libraries. Limitations on the applicability of individual performance indicators are listed for each performance indicator in Annex B.

This International Standard does not specify performance indicators for all services, activities, and uses of the resources of the library, either because such performance indicators had not been proposed and tested at the time of formulation of this International Standard, or because they did not fulfil the criteria specified (see 4.2).

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2 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

2.1

accessibility

ease of reaching and using a service or facility

2.2

active borrower

registered user who has borrowed at least one item during the reporting period

2.3

active user

registered user who has visited or made use of library facilities or services during the reporting period

NOTE This may include the use of electronic library services.

2.4

appropriateness

suitability of any given performance indicator for evaluating a specific activity

2.5

availability

degree to which content, documents, facilities or services are actually provided by the library at the time required by users

2.6
computer file
data or software program, e.g. computer game, language course and other application software that is available on computer-readable disks, tapes or other storage media to users for loan or in-house use

NOTE Adapted from ANSI/NISO Z39.7:2004.

2.7
content downloaded
content unit that is successfully requested from a database, electronic serial or digital document

[ISO 2789:2006, definition 3.3.3]

2.8
content unit
computer-processed uniquely identifiable textual or audiovisual piece of published work that may be original or a digest of other published work

NOTE 1 Adapted from **item** in COUNTER code of practice, Release 2:2004.

NOTE 2 Descriptive records are excluded.

NOTE 3 PDF, Postscript, HTML and other formats of the same content unit will be counted as separate items.

[ISO 2789:2006, definition 3.2.9]

2.9
database
collection of electronically stored descriptive records or content units (including facts, full texts, pictures, and sound) with a common user interface and software for the retrieval and manipulation of the data

NOTE 1 The units or records are usually collected with a particular intent and are related to a defined topic. A database can be issued on CD-ROM, diskette, or other direct-access method, or as a computer file accessed via dial-up methods or via the internet.

NOTE 2 Licensed databases are counted separately even if access to several licensed database products is effected through the same interface.

NOTE 3 A common interface providing access to a packet of serials or digital documents, usually offered by a publisher or vendor, is also to be counted as database. Additionally, the single serials or digital documents need to be counted as serials or digital documents.

[ISO 2789:2006, definition 3.2.10]

2.10
descriptive record
computer-processed bibliographic or other individual record in a standard format that references and/or describes a document in any physical form or a content unit

NOTE 1 A collection of descriptive records is usually published in the form of a database.

NOTE 2 The record can include elements such as title, author, subject, abstract, date of origin, etc.

[ISO 2789:2006, definition 3.2.11]

2.11
digital document
information unit with a defined content that has been digitized by the library or acquired in digital form as part of the library collection

NOTE 1 This includes eBooks, electronic patents, networked audiovisual documents and other digital documents, e.g. reports, cartographic and music documents, preprints, etc. Databases and electronic serials are excluded.

NOTE 2 Items incorporated in databases are covered by 2.9.

NOTE 3 A digital document can be structured into one or more files.

NOTE 4 A digital document consists of one or more content units.

[ISO 2789:2006, definition 3.2.12]

2.12

document

recorded information or material object, which can be treated as a unit in a documentation process

[ISO 5127:2001, definition 1.2.2]

NOTE Documents may differ in their physical form and characteristics.

2.13

download

successful request of a descriptive record or content unit, e.g. for displaying, printing, saving, or e-mailing

NOTE For web server logs, successful requests are those with specific return codes, as defined by NCSA (National Center for Supercomputing Applications).

[ISO 2789:2006, definition 3.3.4]

2.14

effectiveness

measure of the degree to which given objectives are achieved

NOTE An activity is effective if it maximizes the results it was established to produce.

2.15

efficiency

measure of the utilization of resources to realize a given objective

NOTE An activity is efficient if it minimizes the use of resources, or produces better performance with the same resources.

2.16

electronic book

eBook

digital document, licensed or not, where searchable text is prevalent, and which can be seen in analogy to a print book (monograph)

NOTE 1 The use of eBooks is, in many cases, dependent on a dedicated device and/or a special reader or viewing software.

NOTE 2 eBooks can be lent to users either on portable devices (eBook readers) or by transmitting the contents to the user's PC for a limited time period.

NOTE 3 Doctoral dissertations in electronic format are included.

NOTE 4 Documents digitized by the library are included.

[ISO 2789:2006, definition 3.2.15]

2.17

evaluation

process of estimating the effectiveness, efficiency, utility and relevance of a service or facility

2.18

external user

user of a library who does not belong to that library's population to be served

[ISO 2789:2006, definition 3.3.8]

2.19

facilities

equipment, study places, etc., provided for library users

NOTE Includes photocopiers, online terminals, CD-ROM workstations, seats for reading and study carrels, but excludes toilets, cafes and public telephones.

2.20

free internet resource

internet resource with unrestricted access

[ISO 2789:2006, definition 3.2.18]

2.21

full-time equivalent

FTE

measurement equal to one staff person working a full-time work schedule for one year

EXAMPLE If out of three persons employed as librarians, one works quarter-time, one works half-time, and one works full-time, then the FTE of these three persons would be $0,25 + 0,5 + 1,0 = 1,75$ librarians (FTE).

NOTE Not all libraries may use the same number of hours per year to determine an FTE. Thus, any comparative measures between libraries may need to consider any differences in hours.

2.22

goal

desired state of affairs to be achieved by the implementation of agreed policies

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2.23

performance indicator

expression (which may be numeric, symbolic or verbal) used to characterize activities (events, objects, persons) both in quantitative and qualitative terms in order to assess the value of the activities characterized, and the associated method

2.24

library

organization, or part of an organization, the main aims of which are to build and maintain a collection and to facilitate the use of such information resources and facilities as are required to meet the informational, research, educational, cultural or recreational needs of its users

NOTE 1 These are the basic requirements for a library and do not exclude any additional resources and services incidental to its main purpose.

NOTE 2 Where a library has more than one function (e.g. school library and public library), it generally either decides what is its primary function or, in extreme cases, divides its functionality and report data accordingly.

[ISO 2789:2006, definition 3.1.5]

NOTE 3 This may include virtual and/or electronic libraries provided that they adhere to the primary definition of a library.

2.25**library website**

unique domain on the internet consisting of a collection of web pages that is published by a library to provide access to the library's services and resources

NOTE 1 The pages of a website are usually interconnected by the use of hypertext links.

NOTE 2 Excludes documents that fit the definitions of electronic collection and free internet resources that can be linked from the library website.

NOTE 3 Excludes web services in the library's domain that are operated on behalf of other organizations.

2.26**loan**

direct lending or delivery transaction of an item in non-electronic form (e.g. book), of an electronic document on a physical carrier (e.g. CD-ROM) or other device (e.g. eBook reader), or transmission of an electronic document to one user for a limited time period (e.g. eBook)

NOTE 1 Loans include user-initiated renewals as well as registered loans within the library (on-site loans). Renewals need to be counted separately.

NOTE 2 Loans include copied documents supplied in place of original documents (including fax) and printouts of electronic documents made by library staff for the user.

NOTE 3 Loans of documents in physical form to distance users are included here.

NOTE 4 Mediated electronic transmission of documents is counted as electronic document delivery if their use is permitted for unlimited time. This includes transmissions to members of the population to be served.

[ISO 2789:2006, definition 3.3.14]

2.27**metadata**

structured data about data, including data associated with either an information system or an information object for purposes of description, administration, legal requirements, technical functionality, use and usage, and preservation

NOTE Adapted from Dublin Core Metadata Initiative.

2.28**mission**

statement approved by the authorities formulating the organization's goals and its choices in services and products development

2.29**objective**

specific target for an activity to be attained as a contribution to achieving the goal of an organization

2.30**performance**

effectiveness of the provision of services by the library and the efficiency of the allocation and use of resources in providing services

2.31**performance indicator**

numerical, symbolic or verbal expression, derived from library statistics and data used to characterize the performance of a library

2.32

population to be served

number of individuals for whom the library is set up to provide its services and materials

NOTE For public libraries, this will normally be the population of the legal service area (authority); for libraries of an institution of higher education, this will normally be the total of academic and professional staff plus students.

2.33

quality

degree to which a set of inherent characteristics fulfils requirements

NOTE 1 The term “quality” can be used with adjectives such as poor, good or excellent.

NOTE 2 “Inherent”, as opposed to “assigned”, means existing in something, especially as a permanent characteristic.

[ISO 9000:2005, definition 3.1.1]

2.34

record downloaded

descriptive record that is successfully requested from a database or the online catalogue

[ISO 2789:2006, definition 3.3.19]

2.35

operating expenditure

ordinary expenditure

money spent on staff, and on resources which are used and replaced regularly, excluding capital expenditure such as main capital items, new buildings, extensions or modifications to existing buildings and computer equipment

NOTE Operating expenditure is calculated in various ways in different institutions, authorities and countries, and it does not seem possible to prescribe only one way of doing it. Calculation will have to be done according to normal practice in the context where this measure is applied. This also means that comparisons are only valid when calculations are done according to the same principles. Operating expenditure normally includes: salaries and wages (including employee benefits, social costs, etc.), costs of acquiring documents for the collection, administrative costs, maintenance of buildings, collections, etc., rental costs or depreciation costs of buildings and equipment, and other operating expenses (heating, lighting, electricity, etc.). Value-added taxes, sales and service taxes or other local taxes are normally included, unless a performance indicator is used for international comparisons.

2.36

registered user

person or organization registered with a library in order to use its collection and/or services within or away from the library

NOTE Users can be registered upon their request or automatically when enrolling in the institution.

[ISO 2789:2006, definition 3.3.20]

2.37

rejected session

turnaway

unsuccessful request of a database or the online catalogue by exceeding the simultaneous user limit

NOTE Request failure because of wrong passwords is excluded.

[ISO 2789:2006, definition 3.3.21]

2.38

reliability

degree to which a measure repeatedly and consistently produces the same result

2.39**session**

successful request of a database or the online catalogue

NOTE 1 A session is one cycle of user activities that typically starts when a user connects to a database or the online catalogue and ends with explicit (by leaving the database through log-out or exit) or implicit (timeout due to user inactivity) termination of activities in the database. The average timeout period would be 30 min. If another time period is used, this needs to be reported.

NOTE 2 Sessions on the library website are counted as virtual visits.

NOTE 3 Requests of a general entrance or gateway page needs to be excluded.

NOTE 4 If possible, requests by search engines need to be excluded.

[ISO 2789:2006, definition 3.3.25]

2.40**special grant**

grant of a non-recurrent nature to fund (or partly fund) projects

[ISO 2789:2006, definition 3.5.4]

2.41**target population**

groups of actual and potential users appropriate to an individual library as the object of a specific service or as the primary users of specific materials

2.42**title**

words at the head of a document thus identifying it and normally distinguishing it from others

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NOTE For measuring purposes, "title" describes a document, which forms a separate item with a distinctive title, whether issued in one or several physical units, and disregarding the number of copies of the document held by the library.

2.43**user**

recipient of library services

NOTE The recipient can be a person or an institution, including libraries.

2.44**user training**

training programme set up with a specified lesson plan, which aims at specific learning outcomes for the use of library and other information services

NOTE 1 User training can be offered as a tour of the library, as library tuition, or as a web-based service for users.

NOTE 2 The duration of lessons is irrelevant.

[ISO 2789:2006, definition 3.3.28]

2.45**validity**

degree to which a performance indicator actually measures what it is intended to measure

2.46

virtual visit

user's request on the library website from outside the library premises, regardless of the number of pages or elements viewed

NOTE 1 A website visitor is either a unique and identified web browser program or an identified IP address that has accessed pages from the library's website.

NOTE 2 The interval between two consecutive requests generally is no longer than a time-out period on 30 min if they are to be counted as part of the same virtual visit. A longer interval initiates a new visit.

NOTE 3 Web servers providing services whose statistics are reported at another site are to be excluded from the statistics of the library website.

[ISO 2789:2006, definition 3.3.29]

2.47

visit

person (individual) entering the library premises

[ISO 2789:2006, definition 3.3.30]

NOTE Includes both simple counts and ratios between counts as long as they are used to characterize the performance of a library.

3 Notation

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By convention, throughout the text, the names of performance indicators are printed with initial capitals for significant words, e.g. Library Visits per Capita so as to distinguish the names of performance indicators from supporting text.

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4 Criteria and descriptive framework

4.1 General

4.1.1 The purpose of library performance indicators is

- a) to function as tools to assess the quality and effectiveness of services, resources, and other activities provided by a library, and
- b) to assess the efficiency of resources allocated by the library to such services and other activities.

4.1.2 Annex B presents a set of performance indicators that have been thoroughly tested by widespread use in libraries or through explicit testing by researchers and subsequent documentation in the literature. Some descriptions of performance indicators include modifications which reflect practical experience, or the need to generalize the performance indicators for general application.

4.1.3 All performance indicators included in Annex B fulfil the criteria presented in 4.2 and are specified according to the descriptive framework presented in 4.3. Performance indicators to be added in revisions of this International Standard will have to fulfil the same criteria and follow the same descriptive framework.

4.1.4 New or alternative performance indicators may be developed in order to cover other activities and services or to serve a specific purpose. It is recommended that such performance indicators be evaluated and described according to 4.2 and 4.3 (see also Clause 5).

NOTE Care has been taken to describe the performance indicators individually and independently of other performance indicators. This need not imply that the performance indicators be used in isolation. When collecting data, it will in many cases be possible and practical to collect data for two or more performance indicators at the same time, as is shown in most manuals.

4.2 Criteria

4.2.1 In order to claim compliance with this International Standard, a library performance indicator has to be thoroughly tested, validated, and (preferably) documented in the literature. Performance indicators that are in widespread use in libraries may be accepted although they have not been explicitly documented.

4.2.2 The following criteria should be used to test a performance indicator:

- a) **Informative content.** The performance indicator has to be informative as a tool for measuring an activity, for identifying achievements, and for identifying problems and shortcomings in the performance of the library so that action can be taken to remedy these. It should provide information for decision-making, e.g. for setting goals, budget allocation, prioritizing services and activities.
- b) **Reliability.** A performance indicator has to be reliable in the sense that it consistently produces the same result when used repeatedly under the same circumstances.

NOTE The fact that a performance indicator reflects the underlying variability of the data, such as seasonal variations or fluctuations in loan activities does not in itself mean that the performance indicator is not reliable.

- c) **Validity.** The performance indicator shall be valid in that it shall measure what it is intended to measure.

NOTE The fact that some performance indicators are indirect performance indicators or rough estimates does not in itself mean that they are not valid.

- d) **Appropriateness.** The performance indicator shall be appropriate for its intended purpose. That is, the units and scale shall be suitable and the operations necessary to implement the process of measurement should be compatible with the library's procedures, physical layout, etc.

- e) **Practicality.** The performance indicator has to be practical in the sense that it uses data that the library can produce with a reasonable amount of effort in terms of staff time, staff qualifications, operational costs and users' time and patience.

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If the performance indicator is intended for comparisons between libraries, a sixth criterion [item f)] applies.

- f) **Comparability.** A library performance indicator allows comparisons between libraries if the same score, making allowance for the accuracy of the score, means the same level of quality of services or the same level of efficiency in the libraries to be compared (see also 5.3.5).

NOTE 1 It is vital to ensure that the activities being measured are comparable.

NOTE 2 This criterion is sufficient for ranking libraries according to the score of the performance indicator, but is not sufficient to determine, for example, that a library with twice the score of another is twice as good.

4.3 Descriptive framework

4.3.1 General

The performance indicators included in Annex B are described according to the following framework, which should also be used in developing descriptions of new or alternative performance indicators.

4.3.2 Balanced Scorecard Approach

The presentation of the performance indicators in this International Standard follows the Balanced Scorecard Approach (see Reference [11]). This approach creates a performance indicator framework with four major areas of measurement:

- a) **Resources, Access, and Infrastructure**, which presents performance indicators that measure the adequacy and availability of library resources and services (e.g. staff, titles, public access workstations);