
**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 Criteria and descriptive framework.....	10
3.1 General.....	10
3.2 Criteria.....	11
3.3 Descriptive framework.....	12
4 Uses of performance indicators.....	14
4.1 General.....	14
4.2 Selection of performance indicators.....	14
4.3 Limitations.....	15
Annex A (normative) List of performance indicators for libraries.....	17
Annex B (normative) Description of performance indicators.....	21
Bibliography.....	99

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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.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

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. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see www.iso.org/patents).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation on the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the WTO principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see the following URL: Foreword - Supplementary information

The committee responsible for this document is ISO/TC 46, *Information and documentation*, Subcommittee SC 8, *Quality — Statistics and performance evaluation*.

This third edition cancels and replaces the second edition (ISO 11620:2008), which has been technically revised.

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 regarding the quality of library services in libraries and to spread knowledge about how to conduct performance measurement.

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

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

This International Standard provides a standardized terminology and concise definitions of the performance indicators. Furthermore, this International Standard contains concise descriptions of the indicators and of the collection and the analysis of data needed. Detailed information concerning methodology and analysis is provided in the publications listed in the Bibliography.

Every 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 indicators.

The performance indicators included in this International Standard are either in widespread use, well documented in the literature, or sufficiently field-tested and validated through national efforts. Some of the descriptions of indicators incorporate modifications of indicators described elsewhere; these reflect the 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 indicators. In addition, electronic services will continue to develop and evolve, and such evolution will require monitoring as related to the indicators in this International Standard. The library and information community is encouraged to establish mechanisms and to give high priority to developing relevant indicators for existing and emerging library services and resources.

This International Standard will be maintained by a working group that will monitor developments and incorporate additional indicators as they are tested and validated.

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Information and documentation — Library performance indicators

1 Scope

This International Standard is applicable to all types of libraries in all countries. However, not all performance indicators apply to all libraries. Limitations on the applicability of individual performance indicators are listed in the scope clause of the description of each indicator (see [Annex B](#)).

Performance indicators can be used for comparison over time within the same library. Comparisons between libraries can also be made, but only with caution. Comparisons between libraries will need to take into account any differences in the constituencies of the libraries and library attributes, with a good understanding of the indicators used, limitations to comparisons, and careful interpretation of the data.

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. Results from the use of performance indicators in this International Standard are intended to be interpreted with regard to these factors.

Performance indicators are not specified for all services, activities, and uses of the resources of the library, either because such indicators have 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](#)).

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

This International Standard is not intended to exclude the use of performance indicators not specified in it.

This International Standard does not include indicators for assessing the impact of library services either on individuals, the communities that libraries serve, or on society at this time. Library impact assessment will be dealt with by a specific International Standard (ISO 16439).

Throughout the text, the names of indicators are printed with initial capitals for significant words, e.g. Library Visits per Capita. This helps to distinguish the names from supporting text.

2 Terms and definitions

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

2.1

access

successful request of a library-provided online service

Note 1 to entry: An access is one cycle of user activities that typically starts when a user connects to a library-provided online service and ends by a terminating activity that is either explicit (by leaving the database through log-out or exit) or implicit (timeout due to user inactivity).

Note 2 to entry: Accesses to the library website are counted as virtual visits.

Note 3 to entry: Requests of a general entrance or gateway page should be excluded.

Note 4 to entry: If possible, requests by search engines should be excluded.

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, 2.2.1]

**2.2
accessibility**

ease of reaching and using a service or facility

**2.3
active borrower**

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

Note 1 to entry: This count underrates the number of active users, but is still for many libraries the only manageable measure.

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, 2.2.2]

**2.4
active user**

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

Note 1 to entry: This includes active borrowers.

Note 2 to entry: This can include the use of electronic library services, if it is possible, to identify electronic use and virtual visits of the individual user, or if data can be obtained by means of surveys.

Note 3 to entry: If a library identifies non-registered active users, e.g. by surveys, these should be counted separately.

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, 2.2.3]

**2.5
appropriateness**

suitability of any given indicator for evaluating a specific activity

**2.6
availability**

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

**2.7
content unit**

computer-processed uniquely identifiable textual or audio-visual piece of published work that can be original or a digest of other published work

Note 1 to entry: This includes documents or parts of documents (e.g. articles, abstracts, content tables, images) and descriptive records.

Note 2 to entry: Adapted from COUNTER code of practice, Release 3:2008.

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

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, 2.3.9]

**2.8
database**

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

Note 1 to entry: 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 to entry: Licensed databases are counted separately even if access to several licensed database products is effected through the same interface.

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Note 3 to entry: 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 should be counted as serials or digital documents.

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, 2.3.10]

2.9

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 to entry: A collection of descriptive records is usually published in the form of a database.

Note 2 to entry: The record can include elements such as title, author, subject, abstract, date of origin, etc.

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, 2.3.12]

2.10

digital document

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

Note 1 to entry: 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 to entry: Items incorporated in databases are covered by 3.8.

Note 3 to entry: A digital document can be structured into one or more files.

Note 4 to entry: A digital document consists of one or more content units. Before digitization, the library has to decide which content units should be searchable afterwards, e.g. articles in serials or songs on records.

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, 2.3.13] <https://standards.iteh.ai/catalog/standards/sist/655b8a6-5331-47f3-9820-26bfbbc18a26/iso-11620-2014>

2.11

digitization

process of converting analogue materials into digital form

Note 1 to entry: Digitization for document supply from the library collection to a user or institution is excluded.

Note 2 to entry: Digitization for preservation purposes is included.

Note 3 to entry: Mass digitization is included.

Note 4 to entry: Purchase of electronic copies for replacing print copies is excluded.

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, 2.3.15]

2.12

document

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

Note 1 to entry: Documents can differ in form and characteristics.

[SOURCE: ISO 5127:2001, 1.2.02]

2.13

download

successful request of a content unit from a library-provided online service or other Internet service

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, 2.2.6]

2.14

eBook
electronic book

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

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

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

Note 3 to entry: Doctoral dissertations in electronic format are included.

Note 4 to entry: Documents digitized by the library are included.

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, 2.3.20]

2.15

effectiveness

measure of the degree to which given objectives are achieved

Note 1 to entry: An activity is effective if it maximizes the results it was established to produce.

2.16

efficiency

measure of the utilization of resources to realize a given objective

Note 1 to entry: An activity is efficient if it minimizes the use of resources, or produces better performance with the same resources.

2.17

electronic document delivery, mediated

electronic transmission of a document or part of a document from the library collection to a user, mediated by library staff, not necessarily via another library

Note 1 to entry: Electronic transmission of documents to members of the population to be served is included. Fax transmission is excluded.

Note 2 to entry: Can be split up as to transmission with or without charge to the user.

Note 3 to entry: Unmediated downloading by users from the electronic collection of the library is excluded.

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, 2.2.7]

2.18

electronic service

library service delivered via electronic means, whether from local servers or provided via networks

Note 1 to entry: Electronic library services include the online catalogue, library website, electronic collection, electronic lending, electronic document delivery (mediated), electronic reference service, user training by electronic means, services for mobile devices, services for interactive use (including services on social networks), and Internet access offered via the library.

Note 2 to entry: This does not include booking physical services (e.g. rooms or library tours) by electronic means.

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, 2.2.8]

2.19

evaluation

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

2.20**external user**

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

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, 2.2.12]

2.21**facilities**

equipment, study places, etc. provided for library users

Note 1 to entry: Includes photocopiers, online terminals, CD-ROM workstations, seats for reading, and study carrels, but excludes toilets, cafes, and public telephones.

2.22**free Internet resource**

internet resource with unrestricted (open) access for which no payment is required

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, 2.3.23]

2.23**full-time equivalent****FTE**

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

Note 1 to entry: For 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 2 to entry: Not all libraries can use the same number of hours per year to determine an FTE. Thus, any comparative measures between libraries might need to consider any differences in hours.

2.24**goal**

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

2.25**indicator**

expression (which can 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

2.26**in-house use**

documents taken by a user from open access stock for use on the premises

Note 1 to entry: In-house use includes browsing at the shelves in the sense of a short investigation of the contents, but excludes looking at the side or spine titles only for selecting material.

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, 2.2.14]

2.27**institutional repository**

open access repository for storing the publications of an institution, or a group of institutions, such as e-prints, technical reports, theses and dissertations, datasets, and teaching and learning materials

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, 2.3.26]

2.28

interlibrary loan

loan of a document in its physical form or delivery of a document, or part of it, in copied form, from one library to another which is not under the same administration

Note 1 to entry: Mediated transmission of documents in electronic form is counted as electronic document delivery.

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, 2.2.16]

2.29

library

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

Note 1 to entry: The supply of the required information resources can be accomplished by building and maintaining a collection and/or by organizing access to information resources.

Note 2 to entry: These are the basic requirements for a library and do not exclude any additional resources and services incidental to its main purpose.

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, 2.1.6]

2.30

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 to entry: The pages of a website are usually interconnected by the use of hypertext links.

Note 2 to entry: Excludes documents that fit the definitions of electronic collection and free Internet resources that can be linked from the library website.

Note 3 to entry: Excludes web services in the library's domain that are operated on behalf of other organizations.

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, 2.2.18]

2.31

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 to entry: Renewals are excluded, but could be counted separately.

Note 2 to entry: Loans include registered loans within the library (on-site loans).

Note 3 to entry: 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 4 to entry: Loans of documents in physical form to distance users are included.

Note 5 to entry: 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.

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, 2.2.19]

2.32

metadata

structured data about data

Note 1 to entry: The data are 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 2 to entry: Adapted from Dublin Core Metadata Initiative, 2005.

2.33

mission

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

2.34

objective

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

2.35

opening hours

hours in a normal week when the main physical services of the library (e.g. reference and loan services, reading rooms) are available to users

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, 2.4.7]

2.36

operating expenditure

ordinary expenditure

expenditure incurred in the running of a library

Note 1 to entry: Money spent on staff and on resources that are used and replaced regularly. This includes expenditure on employees, rent, acquisitions and licensing, binding, computer network (operations and maintenance), telecommunication, building, maintenance, utilities (electricity, water, sewage, heating, etc.), repair or replacement of existing furnishings and equipment, and events, etc. This can also be termed "current" or "recurrent" expenditure. When applicable, local and national sales/purchase taxes [e.g. Value Added Tax (VAT)] are included.

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, 2.6.3]

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2.37

partnership

ongoing, formalized cooperation between a library and one or more other organizations, including other libraries, usually concerning particular services or activities

Note 1 to entry: A partnership will usually have a contractual basis. Partners can make different contributions, e.g. expertise, funding, training, materials in kind, premises, etc.

Note 2 to entry: Cooperation between two or more libraries within a single administrative unit is excluded.

Note 3 to entry: Time-limited cooperation on a specified project is excluded and counted as a cooperative project (see 2.5.2).

Note 4 to entry: A one-way relationship, whether paid or unpaid, where one partner is only supplying, the other only receiving services, is excluded.

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, 2.5.5]

2.38

performance

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

2.39

performance indicator

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

2.40

population to be served

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

Note 1 to entry: 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.

2.41

project

unique process, consisting of a set of coordinated and controlled activities with start and finish dates, undertaken to achieve an objective conforming to specific requirements, including the constraints of time, cost, and resources

Note 1 to entry: An individual project can form part of a larger project structure.

Note 2 to entry: Adapted from ISO 9000:2005.

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, 2.5.6]

2.42

quality

degree to which a set of inherent characteristics fulfils requirements

Note 1 to entry: The term “quality” can be used with adjectives such as poor, good, or excellent.

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

[SOURCE: ISO 9000, 3.1.1]

2.43

reference question

information contact that involves the knowledge or use of one or more information sources (such as printed and non-printed materials, machine-readable databases, the library’s own and other institutions’ catalogues) by library staff

Note 1 to entry: Adapted from ANSI/NISO Z39.7-2004.

Note 2 to entry: Can also involve recommendations, interpretation, or instruction in the use of such sources.

Note 3 to entry: One reference question can address several issues.

Note 4 to entry: The question can be delivered personally or by means of telephone, regular mail, fax, or electronic media (via email, the library website, or other networked communications mechanisms).

Note 5 to entry: It is essential that libraries do not include informational (directional and administrative) questions, e.g. for locating staff or facilities, regarding opening times, or about handling equipment, such as printers or computer terminals.

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, 2.2.26]

2.44

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 1 to entry: Users can be registered upon their request or automatically when enrolling in the institution.

Note 2 to entry: The registration should be monitored at regular intervals, minimum of every three years, so that inactive users can be removed from the register.

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, 2.2.28]

2.45
rejected access
turnaway

unsuccessful request of a licensed online service provided by the library by exceeding the simultaneous user limit

Note 1 to entry: Request failure because of wrong passwords is excluded.

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, 2.2.29]

2.46
reliability

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

2.47
special grant

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

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, 2.6.4]

2.48
staff training

formal pre-planned training which can be held in-house or externally, and delivered by library staff or external experts

Note 1 to entry: Informal training, e.g. point-of-use training, is excluded.

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, 2.7.6]

2.49
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

2.50
title

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

Note 1 to entry: 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.

[SOURCE: ISO 5127:2001, 4.2.1.4.01]

2.51
user

recipient of library services

Note 1 to entry: The recipient can be a person or an institution, including libraries.

Note 2 to entry: Library services include electronic services, physical services, and visiting the library premises.

2.52
user place

place provided for users for reading or studying, whether with or without seating or equipment

Note 1 to entry: Includes places in carrels, in seminar and study rooms, and in the audio-visual and children's departments of the library, and informal seating in lounges, group areas, etc.

Note 2 to entry: Excludes places in halls and lecture auditory theatres intended for audiences of special events. Also excludes floor space and cushions on which users can sit.

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, 2.4.11]