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Information and documentation — Methods and procedures for assessing the impact of libraries

Information et documentation — Méthodes et procédures pour évaluer l'impact des bibliothèques

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Foreword

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

Introduction

This International Standard provides guidance to the library community on methods for assessing the impact and value of libraries. It was developed in response to worldwide demand for specifications of library impact assessment.

The methods described in this International Standard do not reflect all possible methods or evaluation techniques, but are those seen to be most heavily used and that have proved most effective for assessing library impact. This International Standard is not intended to exclude the use of assessment methods not specified in it.

There are many different types of libraries, with different tasks and populations, having a range of unique characteristics (structure, funding, governance, etc.), and affected by a number of situational factors. Since there is such a wide variation around the world, it is important to understand that not all methods described in this International Standard are useful to all libraries.

Annex A of this International Standard gives examples of impact surveys. Annex B recommends a choice of methods for different purposes. Annex C describes the case that library impact is assessed within broader institutional and organisational assessment.

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Information and documentation — Methods and procedures for assessing the impact of libraries

1 Scope

This International Standard defines terms for impact assessment of libraries and specifies methods for such assessment

— for the purpose of strategic planning and internal quality management of libraries;

— to facilitate comparison of library impact over time and between libraries of similar type and mission;

— to promote the libraries' role and value for learning and research, education and culture, social and economic life;

— to support political decisions on levels of service and strategic goals for libraries.

This International Standard considers the impact of libraries on individuals, institutions and society. It is applicable to all types of libraries in all countries. However, not all methods described in this International Standard apply to all libraries. Limitations on the applicability of individual methods are specified in the descriptions.

2 Normative references

The following documents, in whole or in part, are normatively referenced in this document and are indispensable for its application. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 2789:2013, *Information and documentation — International library statistics*

3 Terms and definitions

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

3.1
academic library
library whose primary function is to cover the information needs of learning and research

Note 1 to entry: This includes libraries of institutions of higher education and general research libraries.

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, definition 2.1.1]

3.2
access
ability of reaching and using a service or facility

3.3
accessibility
ease of reaching and using a service or facility

[SOURCE: ISO 11620:—, definition 3.2]

3.4
active user
registered user who has visited or made use of library facilities or services during the reporting period

Note 1 to entry: This may 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 assessed with the help of surveys.

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, definition 2.2.3]

3.5
anecdotal evidence
evidence based on anecdotes or stories, obtained informally from personal observations and experiences, not collected systematically nor empirically tested

3.6
availability
degree to which content, documents, facilities or services are actually provided by the library at the time required by users

[SOURCE: ISO 11620:—, definition 3.6]

3.7
benefit
helpful or good effect, or something intended to help

3.8
consumer surplus
amount of money by which consumers value a product or service above its purchase price

3.9
contingent valuation
method for assessing the economic value of non-profit institutions and projects of public utility depending on potential users' responses to survey questions, such as what they are willing to pay for a benefit or feature (willingness-to-pay), or what they would accept as financial compensation if a certain benefit or feature was missing (willingness-to-accept)

Note 1 to entry: The method is used in environmental protection and health care, for example.

3.10
cost-benefit analysis
process that assesses the relation between the cost of an undertaking and the monetary value of the resulting benefits

3.11
critical incident technique
CIT
research approach designed to draw out the most memorable aspects of an event or experience

Note 1 to entry: Critical incident technique can be used in individual interviews, focus group interviews or surveys.

3.12
cultural economics
branch of economics that studies the relation of culture to economic outcomes and explores cultural phenomena as economic factors

3.13
data mining
computational process that identifies patterns by analysing quantitative data from different perspectives and dimensions, categorizing it, and summarizing potential relationships and impacts

3.14
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, definition 2.3.15]

3.15
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, definition 1.2.02]

3.16
economic impact
effect of a policy, institution, programme, or event on the economy of a given area

Note 1 to entry: Economic impact is usually measured in terms of changes in economic growth (output or value added) and associated changes in jobs (employment) and income (wages).

3.17
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.

[SOURCE: ISO 11620:—, definition 3.15]

3.18
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.

[SOURCE: ISO 11620:—, definition 3.16]

3.19
electronic collection
all resources in electronic form in the library collection, whether born digital or digitized

Note 1 to entry: The electronic collection includes databases, electronic serials, and digital documents. Free Internet resources which have been catalogued by the library in its online catalogue or a database should be counted separately.

Note 2 to entry: The resources can be networked, installed on stand-alone workstations or stored on physical carriers.

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, definition 2.3.21]

3.20
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, the library website, the electronic collection, 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, definition 2.2.8]

3.21
evaluation
process of estimating the effectiveness, efficiency, utility and relevance of a service or facility

[SOURCE: ISO 11620:—, definition 3.19]

3.22
event
pre-arranged activity with cultural, educational, social, political, scholarly, or other intent, e.g. exhibitions, author visits, literary discussions, workshops, etc.

Note 1 to entry: Only events arranged by the library on its own or in partnership with other institutions are included, whether inside or outside the library premises. Events inside the library premises organized by institutions outside the library without the library's cooperation are excluded.

Note 2 to entry: User training lessons and library tours are excluded.

Note 3 to entry: Ongoing programmes are included. Each session of a programme is counted as one event.

Note 4 to entry: Virtual events are included.

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, definition 2.2.9]

3.23
focus group interview
focus group discussion
group interview in the form of a moderated discussion among a small number of selected individuals on topics introduced by the moderator

3.24
goal
desired state of affairs to be achieved by the implementation of agreed policies

[SOURCE: ISO 11620:—, definition 3.24]

3.25
impact
difference or change in an individual or group resulting from the contact with library services

Note 1 to entry: The change can be tangible or intangible.

3.26
information literacy
the ability to recognize a need for information and to identify, retrieve, evaluate, and use information effectively

Note 1 to entry: Literacy in the sense of being able to read and write with a minimal level of proficiency is fundamental for information literacy.

Note 2 to entry: This includes the skills for using information technology to access and retrieve information.

3.27
informational question
directional and/or administrative inquiry delivered to library staff

Note 1 to entry: This includes e.g. questions for locating staff or facilities, questions regarding opening times and registering procedures and questions about handling equipment such as printers or computer terminals.

Note 2 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 communication mechanisms).

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, definition 2.2.13]

3.28
input
contribution of resources in support of a library (e.g. funding, staff, collections, space, equipment)

3.29
Internet access
Internet connection by a user from a workstation owned by the library or from a user's private computer in the library via the library's network

Note 1 to entry: Internet accesses can only be counted if users have registered or authenticated themselves when accessing the Internet.

Note 2 to entry: Internet access via a user's private computer (e.g. laptop or hand-held) via the library's wireless network inside the library should be counted and reported separately.

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, definition 2.2.17]

3.30
interview
oral questioning technique which results in a transfer of information from the interviewee to an interviewer or researcher

Note 1 to entry: This technique obtains direct reactions to questions, in contrast to written questionnaires or self-assessment (self-recording).

Note 2 to entry: Interviews can be subdivided according to the number of interviewees into one-to-one interviews and group interviews.

Note 3 to entry: Interviews can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured.

Note 4 to entry: Where semi-structured or unstructured interviews are used with a group of respondents, these are usually described as focus groups or group discussions.

3.31
library
organization, or part of an organization, the main aim of which is to facilitate the use of such information resources, services and facilities as are 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, definition 2.1.6]

3.32
library collection
all documents provided by a library for its users

Note 1 to entry: Comprises information resources held locally and remote resources for which access rights have been acquired.

Note 2 to entry: Access rights can be acquired by the library itself, by a consortium and/or through external funding.

Note 3 to entry: Acquisition is to be understood as deliberately selecting a document, securing access rights and including it in the online catalogue or other databases of the library. Interlibrary lending and document delivery are excluded.

Note 4 to entry: Does not include links to Internet resources for which the library has not secured access rights by legal agreements (e.g. legal deposit right), license or other contractual and/or cooperative agreement. Free Internet resources which have been catalogued by the library in its online catalogue or a database should be counted separately.

Note 5 to entry: Documents in institutional repositories are not included, but should be counted separately, if the library is involved in collecting the items and/or operating the repository.

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, definition 2.3.28]

3.33
library of an institution of higher education
library whose primary function is to serve students, academic and professional staff in universities and other institutions of education at the third (tertiary) level and above

Note 1 to entry: It may also serve the general public.

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, definition 2.1.7]

3.34
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 may 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, definition 2.2.18]

3.35
longitudinal study
two or more surveys, in which the same or a similar survey instrument is administered more than once to the same population, after a suitable time period has elapsed, to measure changes in patterns of usage, perceptions, attitudes, etc.

3.36
mission
statement approved by the authorities formulating the organization's goals and its choices in services and products development

[SOURCE: ISO 11620:—, definition 3.33]

3.37
national library
library that is responsible for acquiring and conserving copies of all relevant documents in the country in which the library is located; it may function as a legal deposit library

Note 1 to entry: A national library will also normally perform some or all of the following functions: produce the national bibliography, hold and keep up to date a large and representative collection of foreign literature including documents about the country; act as a national bibliographic information centre; compile union catalogues; supervise the administration of other libraries and/or promote collaboration; coordinate a research and development service, etc.

Note 2 to entry: The definition of "national library" allows for more than one national library in a country.

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, definition 2.1.9]

3.38
nominal group interview
group interview without group interaction where each group member writes down answers to the moderator's questions which are then discussed and prioritized one by one by the group

3.39
non-user
person belonging to a specific library's population to be served but not using that library's physical and/or electronic services

Note 1 to entry: The definition includes former users of the library.

3.40
objective
specific target for an activity to be attained as a contribution to achieving the goal of an organization

[SOURCE: ISO 11620:—, definition 3.34]

3.41
observation
method of data collection in which the situation of interest is watched and the relevant facts, actions and behaviours are recorded

Note 1 to entry: There can be rating scales that the researcher would use when observing the behaviour.

3.42
open access
unrestricted access to information, documents or information services

Note 1 to entry: In a narrower sense, this means that informationcontent is made freely available via the Internet.

[SOURCE: ISO 5127:2001, definition 5.2.11, modified – Note 1 has been added.]

3.43
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, definition 2.4.7]

3.44
outcome
direct, pre-defined effect of the output related to goals and objectives of the library's planning (e.g. number of users, user satisfaction levels)

Note 1 to entry: This includes outcomes that concern the library's institution or community.

3.45
output
products of library processes (e.g. number of titles catalogued, number of loans, number of reference questions answered)

3.46
performance
effectiveness of the provision of services by the library and the efficiency of the allocation and use of resources in providing services

[SOURCE: ISO 11620:—, definition 3.36]

3.47
performance indicator
numerical, symbolic or verbal expression, derived from library statistics and data used to characterize the performance of a library

[SOURCE: ISO 11620:—, definition 3.37]

3.48
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.

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, definition 2.2.25]

3.49
potential user
person belonging to a library's population to be served

Note 1 to entry: This definition includes both users and non-users of the library's services.

3.50
process
set of interrelated or interacting activities which transforms inputs into outputs (e.g. cataloguing, lending, reference service)

3.51
public library
general library that is open to the public and that serves the whole population of a local or regional community and is usually financed, in whole or in part, from public funds

Note 1 to entry: A public library is defined as open to the public, even if its services are primarily intended for a special part of the population to be served, such as children, visually impaired persons, or hospital patients. Its basic services are free of charge or available for a subsidized fee. This definition includes services provided to schools by a public library organization and services provided to public libraries in a region by a regional organization.

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, definition 2.1.10]

3.52
qualitative data
data describing, but not measuring the attributes or properties of an object, in particular the reasons for human actions

Note 1 to entry: The attributes can be categorized into classes that may be assigned numeric values.

3.53
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 9000:2005, definition 3.1.1]

3.54
quantitative data
data in numerical form expressing a certain quantity, amount or range, amenable to statistical manipulation

Note 1 to entry: Quantitative data are usually expressed in measurement units, e.g. number of loans, percentage of interviewees visiting the library.

3.55
questionnaire
a set of questions for a survey or a structured or semi-structured interview

Note 1 to entry: The questions may be closed (answerable by checking one of several predetermined answers) or open (requiring participants to answer in their own words).

3.56
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: May also involve recommendations, interpretation, or instruction in the use of such sources.

Note 2 to entry: One reference question may address several issues.

Note 3 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 4 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, definition 2.2.26]

3.57
reference service
provision of information and assistance, in response to requests, by an information and documentation organization

[SOURCE: ISO 5127:2001, definition 5.5.06]

3.58
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 may 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 every 3 years, so that inactive users can be removed from the register.

[SOURCE: ISO 2789:2013, definition 2.2.28]