Chapter 8
Application of Selected Software Tools for Data Collection and Analysis in Library Management and Their Effectiveness Assessment: Results of the Research Conducted at Polish Academic Libraries

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, the authors present the results of research on the use of software tools for data collection and analysis in strategic and current library management. Special attention has been paid to StatuS and Performance Analysis for Polish Research Libraries (AFBN) — the tools most frequently used by Polish academic librarians. StatuS is used by the academic libraries of Krakow Library Group and several other libraries in Poland. Performance Analysis of Polish Research Libraries (AFBN) is a national project. Its main objective is to create standards for Polish libraries based on a set of performance indicators. AFBN consists of the e-survey, a database and special software for the collection and analysis of data. The surveys are submitted by academic and public research libraries once a year. The research on the application of selected software tools for data collection and analysis in library management in Polish academic libraries was conducted in February and March 2009. Results of the research reflect attitudes of managers toward usability of such tools to support various aspects of managerial processes.

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1. ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN POLAND – CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

In Poland there are 457 higher education institutions, including 132 public and 325 non-public ones. They operate on the basis of the Law on Higher Education of 2005. Public high schools sector comprises universities, technical universities, pedagogical universities, universities of economics, universities of agriculture, medical universities, academies of physical education, artistic high schools, maritime and military high schools, theological high schools and 30 vocational high schools. Out of nearly 2 million students, over 1 300 000 students study at public high schools (Ministry of Science and Higher Education, 2009).

According to the Act of 27 July 2005 Law on Higher Education, Article 88, “a higher education institution shall have a library and information system based on the library. Organizational and operational arrangements of the library and information system in a higher education institution, including the rules on access for persons other than staff, doctoral students or students of the institution, shall be laid down in the statutes”.

In the process of accreditation of university units, the library and information system of the university is verified by the State Accreditation Committee which is the only statutory legal body entrusted with the responsibility of evaluating the quality of higher education. Its opinions and resolutions have a legally binding effect. Since 23 January 2009 it has status of a full member in the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

In 1997 rectors representing those Polish institutions of higher education which have the right to award the doctor’s degree (or equivalent) in at least one scientific discipline, established the Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland (CRASP). It is a voluntary association of rectors of universities, technical universities, universities of agriculture, pedagogy, economics, medicine, and fine arts. Currently, CRASP has 106 members (including 10 non-public schools) and 4 institutions have the status of an associated institution. The Conference of Rectors of Public Vocational Schools (CRPVS) has the status of an associated conference.

Directors of libraries of Polish institutions of higher education associated in CRASP form a Conference of Directors of Academic Libraries in Poland. In 2008 the Conference consisted of 63 members including one member from the associated institution. Members of the Conference of Directors of Academic Libraries in Poland communicate on their closed dedicated discussion list. That list was used to conduct a survey on the application of software tools to support managerial processes in academic libraries.

2. SOFTWARE TOOLS FOR DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS IN LIBRARY MANAGEMENT AND THEIR EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT IN VIEW OF THE SURVEY

Library performance measures have been widely discussed in literature (Poll & te Boekhorst, 2007; Poll, 2007). This paper focuses on the application of selected software tools for data collection and analysis in library management at Polish academic libraries. It is based on the results of the on-line survey conducted in February and March 2009 at Polish research libraries. Directors of all the academic libraries associated in the Conference of Directors of Academic Libraries in Poland were invited on a dedicated professional discussion list to fill in the on-line survey form accessible on the server of Cracow University of Technology (CUT) Library. The on-line survey was conducted between 24th February and 6th March 2009. Out of 65 members registered on the list 38 members filled in the form.

A questionnaire [see Appendix 1] had two tracks of questions. Selection of the track depended