The Evaluation of Library Services Methods: Cost Per Use and Users’ Satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

In these competitive years of continuing change, libraries enrich their services with modern technologies and innovative approaches to satisfy users’ standards. This engagement significantly increases the effects of these new inputs on library budgets as new technology applications demand money and new organization schemes. Consequently, the annual budget has to be increased and difficulties arise due to its efficient allocation. This paper describes a methodology of evaluating offered services by using specific important factors like Users Satisfaction of a Service, Usage, and Cost of this service. Known methods for estimating Costs (ABC method) and estimating Satisfaction (MUSA method) in library fields are used. Also, the multi-criteria method to evaluate a service by correlating the above mentioned factors are used to give the observer the ability to find useful information. Finally, a case study about the evaluation of services using the proposed methodology is presented. The goal of the proposed methodology is to help library decision makers choose the most appropriate services to offer change and improvements according to user needs and allocated budgets.

Keywords: Assessment Indicators, Cost of Services, Evaluation, Information Mining, Multi-criteria Analysis, Strategic Planning, Users’ Satisfaction

1. INTRODUCTION

In this paper is mentioned a methodology that evaluates offered services by correlating three important factors that characterize them: Users’ Satisfaction of a Service, Usage and Cost of this service. These factors are very important as they would be able to express clearly the efficiency and the purpose of a service in a Library organization.

Efficiency of a service could be described as correlation of three above parameters as:

Efficiency of a service = f (cost, usage, satisfaction)

The purpose is to find how we can use and correlate them and find a method to express efficiency of the examined service. Before starting studying these factors, it is necessary to define what services are offered to Library’s users. Below there is a typical list of categorized services offered in a modern Library (Papadimitriou, A. Gkotzamani, K. Tsiotras, G. and Ntinas, I.):
Technology

- Audio/Visual equipment and facilities. Using of a smart interface through Internet to get access to digitized multimedia educational material that Library has in its collection.
- Computers and terminals in Library’s building for accessing online resources like OPAC, Database, e-journals
- Interlibrary Loan software and infrastructure for ILL and document delivery services
- Internet connectivity from Library’s building
- Lockers and Carrels
- Multimedia center
- Portal, Blog or at least Web Site of the Library
- Presentation room: Using of a fully equipped room for presentations
- Printing in the Library: Printings can be made on Library’s printers
- Using of photocopy machines: Copies can be made on Library’s photocopiers
- WiFi at Library’s building

Others

- Gift and donation Policy: Policy for books and other material donated to the Libraries.
- Guide to Locations and Map in Library’s building
- Lost and Found (Circulation Desk)

Collection services

- Access to electronic resources: Access to subscription databases and electronic journals from off and on-campus locations
- Acquisitions List: Recently cataloged library books and other materials.
- Acquisitions Order Forms: Order books, videos/laser discs/DVDs, etc. for the Libraries’ collections.
- Audio/Visual material
- Catalog Status Definitions: Definitions of messages in the “Status” box for materials in the online catalog.
- Catalogues of new books
- Collection Maintenance Department
- Collection of Reserved Material. Circulation of material that is always available for short-time circulation. It is not allowed to leave from Library’s building.
- Digital Resources Library: The Digital Resources Library provides multimedia for use in conference presentations, classroom teaching, and staff training (copyright-cleared for educational use).
- Government Documents Collection and Historical archives
- Micro-text (Microfilm, Microfiche, and Micro-cards) Collection of Newspapers, Magazines, reference material etc.
- Newspapers: Collection with most current issues of many major papers on paper or on microfilm format are shelved alphabetically in the appropriate room
- Online access to union catalogues and to catalogues of other Libraries (e.g., Zephyros system for Greek Academic Libraries)
- OPAC: Access to catalogue of the Library.
- Repository for grey literature and for thesis, master and PhD works
- Technical Services

Users

- Access for Persons with Disabilities
- Articles, How to Find
- Circulation (Borrowing Items Library Owns)
- Consult on topic bibliographies: Reference librarians help locate books, articles, audio-visuals
- Current Awareness Service: Reference librarians are helping users to set up their search parameters in order to receive updated notifications. It helps them for keeping up to date on the subjects they are interested in by using an SDI program.
- Electronic information: Users are able to communicate and apply online with Electronic information department and Interlibrary Loan Department without the need of physical attention in Library.
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