
Library performance measures

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Some recent research on quantifying performance.

Recognizing a need for analytical tools with which academic libraries can describe their activities quantitatively, the ACRL Board of Directors created the ad hoc Committee on Performance Measures in December 1984. Establishment of this Committee, chaired by Virginia Tiefel, was a major recommendation of the ACRL Task Force on Performance Measures. Part of the Committee's charge is to plan and advise the ACRL Board of Directors on developing and overseeing a contract for the publication of an initial set of performance measures for academic libraries. The Committee is also charged to identify and publicize existing tools for measuring library effectiveness that can be applied in academic libraries.

It is important to emphasize that "performance measures" are not academic library standards and they are not intended to provide comparative data; nor do they constitute a research methodology. Rather the Committee set out to select a set of quantitative measures related to commonly recurring goals in academic libraries that could constitute a manual. It was determined by the Committee that the measures would be decision-related, easy to apply and use, inexpensive to administer, and user-oriented. The measures will not necessarily fit together to form a comprehensive model of academic library effectiveness. Such a model would certainly be as complex as the array of objectives held by academic libraries and is probably beyond the reach of standardized approaches.

While there is a growing body of literature on evaluation of library performance, and a number of ALA divisions have focused on library effectiveness and performance measures, the Committee

members continue to see a need for a practical manual of performance or output measures for academic and research libraries. In deliberating over the nature and contents of the proposed manual, the Committee examined several recent publications which meet many of the criteria outlined above and should be useful to academic librarians who would like to quantify the library user's experience.

Among these are:

Mary J. Cronin, *Performance Measurement for Public Services in Academic and Research Libraries*. Washington, D.C.: Office of Management Studies, Association of Research Libraries, 1985.

Paul B. Kantor, *Objective Performance Measures for Academic and Research Libraries*. Washington, D.C.: Association of Research Libraries, 1984.

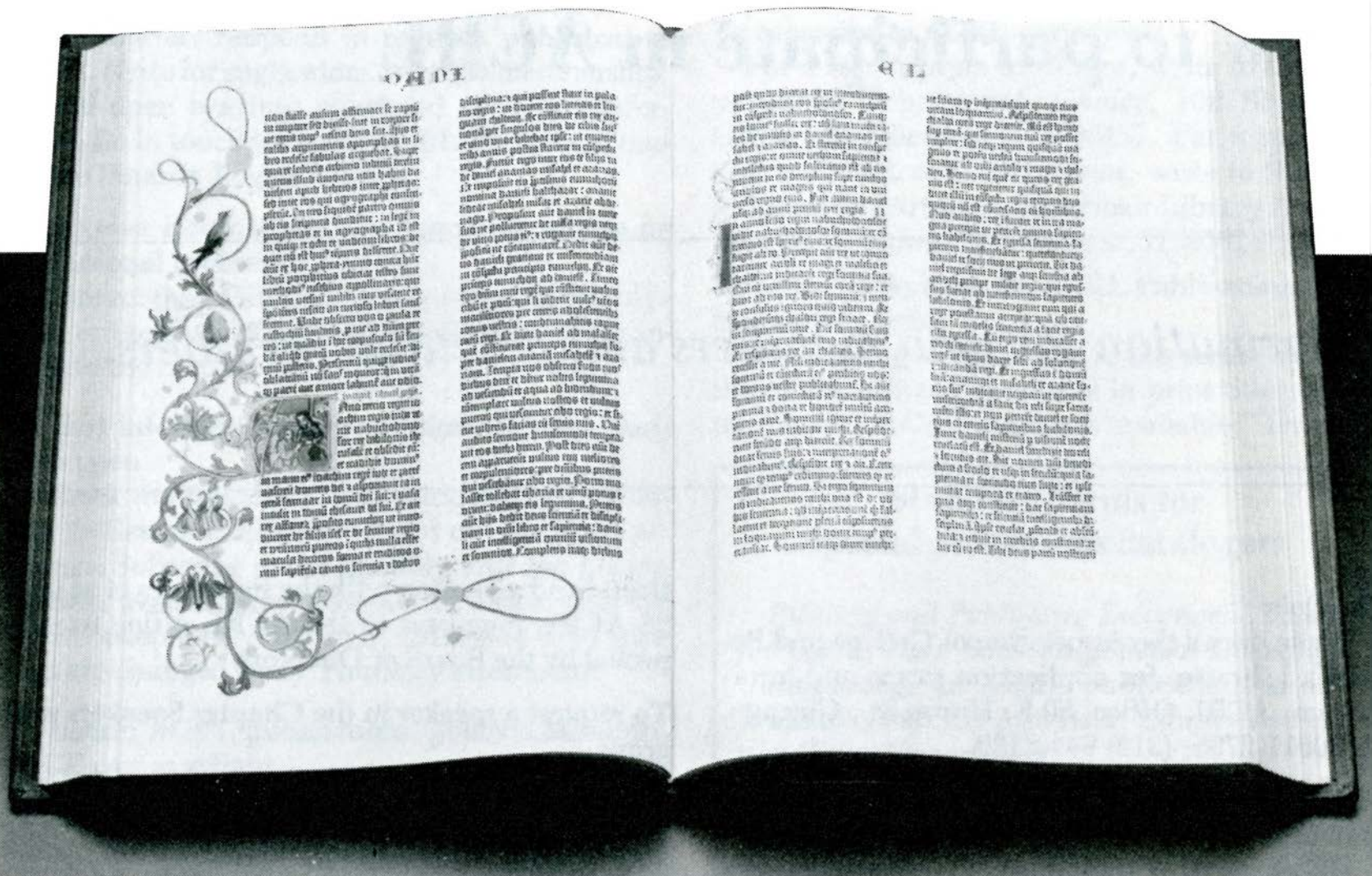
Library Data Collection Handbook. Mary Jo Lynch, editor; Helen M. Eckard, project officer. Chicago: American Library Association, 1982.

Mary Kane Trochim, et al. *Measuring the Circulation Use of a Small Academic Library Collection: A Manual*. Washington, D.C.: Office of Management Studies, Association of Research Libraries, 1985.

Douglas Zweizig. *Output Measures for Public Libraries: a Manual of Standardized Procedures*. Chicago: American Library Association, 1982.

For an example of the application of the availability measures described in Kantor's manual, see "Book Availability at the University of California, Santa Cruz," by Terry Ellen Ferl and Margaret G. Robinson, *College & Research Libraries* 47 (September 1986):501-8. Not only did these librarians

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find through their investigations that widely held assumptions were unsubstantiated, but they look forward to results by comparable availability studies conducted at similar institutions. The validity, reliability, and sensitivity of the output measures for public libraries is examined in "Public Library

Effectiveness: Theory, Measures, and Determinants," by Nancy A. Van House, *Library and Information Science Research* 8 (1986):261-83. This paper confirms that while such measures are less than ideal research tools, they can be useful indicators for management decision making. ■■

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Check the *ALA Handbook of Organization* and read *College & Research Libraries News* regularly (as a member of ACRL, you will receive both publications).

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For information on time, places, and general program content, consult *C&RL News*, *American Libraries*, and the official conference programs and schedules. For additional information, contact the ACRL office.

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Check the procedures listed in "Guidelines for ACRL Chapters" (available from the ACRL of-

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