

The 11th Northumbria International Conference on Performance Measurement in Libraries and Information Services was held at Our Dynamic Earth, Edinburgh, UK between 20 and 22 July 2015. The conference was the last of three run under the auspices of the University of York, on this occasion in partnership with the National Library of Scotland. The event was the largest in the overall series to that point, attracting 200 delegates from 24 countries to experience 90 papers, short papers, presentations and workshops.

This second issue from the conference allows the publication of eight further stimulating long and short papers from that event. As Guest Editor, I am pleased to present these to a wider audience. In the previous special edition the focus was on the main themes of the conference reflecting its range and depth. This edition also selects papers across these themes but with a focus on the application of novel techniques and approaches in the field that the conference revealed. Whilst the conference has always attracted papers from a broad range of measurement subjects, the techniques of research and investigation applied have become increasingly sophisticated. The creation of specialist posts in the assessment field, in North America particularly, and the trend towards doctoral study amongst practitioners as well as researchers has increased the range of methods employed in investigating all aspects of library performance. Of course these applications do not always necessarily bear the expected fruit, perhaps raising some fundamental questions about our assumptions of library cause and effect. The papers here help extend the boundaries of our understanding, and should provide stimulus to further research efforts.

One of the methods that have revolutionized our understanding of library quality from the user perspective has been LibQUAL + TM. The body of statistics created across a decade and a half of use includes the views of more than two million library patrons, and provides a fertile source for library research. Guder's paper draws on this data in a distinctive way with the aim of offering a novel and sophisticated technique to link the survey's Information Control dimension results with patron and institution types. The insight in considering Carnegie classifications of US universities as akin to potato dressings provides a touch of humour, but the paper seeks to achieve evidence of some key relationships for academic libraries. Statistical variation is also at the heart of Gariepy's paper, which introduces sensitivity analysis into the quest for evidence of the link between library instruction and student success.

Resource issues and the economy are a serious issue for many libraries, but the impact of these environmental drivers is not always reflected in the performance measurement literature. Malapela and De Jager's paper takes us into the reality of information provision for agriculture faculty staff at the University of Zimbabwe. The Northumbria Conference has a good record of providing a platform for participants from a range of international contexts, and this paper provides a perspective on the gap between need and access to the journal literature in Africa. In the following paper Casselden and co-authors present further evidence about the use and effect of volunteers in the UK Public Library Service; a response to the pressures of austerity closer to home.

The evaluation of library space continued to form a significant theme at the conference. In her paper, Corrall reports on the experience of involving graduate library students in space assessments, providing some novel ideas and developments of existing work from these new professionals. Ruleman's contribution seeks clearer understanding of the use and value of study rooms in a university library, a question that those investing in new library space often raise.



The final two papers are from Canada, reflecting that country's support of the conference from its inception. Fournier and Sikora provide the results of a nationwide academic librarians' survey on the provision of individualized research consultations; another service of contested value. Having started my career in a small medical library made less isolated through membership of a regional network, I am also pleased to include Hamasu and Kelly's paper. The use of the logic model has been a central feature of the understanding of performance measurement for many years, but reports of its continuous long-term use as a management tool in libraries are a rarity.

Library performance, and its presentation to stakeholders and paymasters, requires not only reliable and valid data but also a sense of what is meaningful to our audiences. The best of our data still requires translation into effective advocacy to prove that we still support our communities in an effective and virtuous way. This issue shows that performance measurement and assessment continues to move forward and develop through the community of practice created around this conference. The Northumbria Conference itself now becomes simply the International Conference on this subject, and I look forward to papers from the 12th Conference appearing in this journal later in the year.

Stephen Town

The York Management School, University of York, York, UK