

BOOK REVIEW / CRITIQUE DE LIVRE

Using Benchmarking, Needs Assessment, Quality Improvement, Outcome Measurement, and Library Standards: A How-To-Do-It Manual with CD-ROM. By Rosalind Farnam Dudden. New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, 2007. 461 pages (soft cover) plus CD-ROM. ISBN13: 978-1-55570-604-3, ISBN10: 1-55570-604-5. US\$85.00.

Using Benchmarking, Needs Assessment, Quality Improvement, Outcome Measurement, and Library Standards: A How-To-Do-It Manual with CD-ROM provides an overview of some of the methods used to evaluate library services in the context of a culture of assessment. These methods are based on the author's experience as a health librarian, her involvement with Medical Library Association (MLA) groups looking at hospital library standards and benchmarking, and a wealth of library and business management literature. Although Dudden's book is written mainly with the small health library in mind, she also includes examples from public and academic libraries, which makes this book of potential interest to these audiences as well.

Dudden begins by giving the reader background information on how evaluation of library services has changed over time, shifting from being library centric towards a focus on customer satisfaction and how well a library fits within its parent institution. The book then moves on to discuss needs assessment, quality improvement, benchmarking, library performance standards, and outcome measurement in turn. A very brief account of other methods for evaluation and quality improvement follow, as well as a broad discussion of data collection and analysis, various forms of communication, and a short description of tools of potential use in evaluation and presenting data.

Dudden stresses the ongoing nature of assessment, using different approaches at different times, as a means of ensuring that the library adapts and survives. She asserts that no two assessment projects are truly the same because of varying circumstances for each library, so the librarian must think about what is right for their library at the time and adjust their approach accordingly. Working with departments within your organization that have the expertise required for undertaking research and looking to the literature for assessments of similar libraries is encouraged. The author also emphasizes going beyond report generation to communicating the findings to administration and using the knowledge gained from the project to shape decision making and improve library services.

The primary strength of *Using Benchmarking* is its structure. Useful sidebars are included throughout the book that feature definitions, recommended readings, references to the material contained on the CD-ROM, and various tidbits of advice. The references for each chapter are located at the end of the chapter itself, which is easier to deal with than an all encompassing reference list at the end of the book.

Another major strength of this book is the use of examples and references to other resources that would be useful for undertaking an evaluation project. The needs assessment

and benchmarking chapters are particularly illustrative, with steps in the process clearly laid out, followed by an example project from a real library parsed into the steps required to undertake the project. The examples used in the book point to various projects and initiatives that take place in the public, academic, and health library settings. The accompanying CD-ROM contains electronic versions of the worksheets included in the book, as well as the *2004 MLA Hospital Library Standards*, MLA Vital Pathways Documents, and links to program development and evaluation resources from the University of Wisconsin's Extension Division. The CHLA / ABSC toolkit for benchmarking using ratios and the *Standards for Library and Information Services in Canadian Healthcare Facilities* are granted a brief mention within the text.

Despite the strengths listed above, Dudden's stated intention of creating an evaluation "cookbook" for library professionals misses the mark. There are too many topics included for the author to go into great depth for each of them, and it may have been wiser for her to focus on the few topics she was willing to cover adequately. The chapters "Other Systems for Quality Improvement and Evaluation", and "Tools for Improvement and Evaluation" are particularly disappointing. A number of systems and tools are mentioned, but the author does not provide the reader with any substantial instruction in their use. The cursory look at many of the topics included in this book is somewhat at odds with the topics the author chose to discuss in detail. Dudden assumes very little previous knowledge on the part of the reader, which is normally a good thing, but it is taken to the extreme by explaining what a percentage is in the chapter on data collection and analysis. The chapter on communication is also somewhat mystifying; portions of this chapter pertaining to interviews could, and perhaps should, have been included in the discussion of interviews located in the chapter dealing with data collection and analysis. Meanwhile, topics such as e-mail etiquette and assertiveness may be important in the grand scheme of things, but a book on benchmarking, needs assessment, quality improvement, outcome measurement, and library standards hardly seems like an appropriate venue to discuss them.

Using Benchmarking, Needs Assessment, Quality Improvement, Outcome Measurement, and Library Standards: A How-To-Do-It Manual with CD-ROM is useful for someone who is looking for a starting point that provides a general background on evaluating library services, and points the reader to other useful resources. However, anyone who would like a self-contained, how-to guide should consider purchasing another title.

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