

Library administrators' uses and perceptions of performance measurement information in the strategic development of services and competitive responses

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1. Purpose

As the service environment that libraries operate in becomes more evidence (i.e. data) driven, competitive for customers and operating resources, and facing increasing requests by stakeholders to generate responses that produce greater levels of strategic benefit, value and impact, library administrators must be effective users of performance measurement information to respond to these strategic needs in their service environments. To date there has been little evidence to support how library administrators are using performance measurement information therefore it is unclear how effectively library administrators are responding to these service environment needs to keep their libraries strategically effective.

The purpose of the study is to examine library administrators' uses and perceptions of performance measurement information as it applies to the collection, use, and application of performance measurement information in developing services and strategic responses. The study population includes the head library administrators (directors, deans, etc.) of the seventy-five public library systems, seventeen state university libraries, fifty-eight community / junior colleges, and over 50 private academic libraries within the state of North Carolina. This population is being used in the study to provide an adequate sample size that is representative of the wider library environment, and due to limitations of time, travel support, and other limiting factors.

In addressing this topic, the following research questions are being used to frame the study:

Research Question: How do library administrators use performance measurement information to develop new services or competitive responses?

Sub-question 1: How is performance measurement information collected by library administrators?

Sub-question 2: How do library administrators use the collected performance measurement information?

Sub-question 3: What are library administrators' perceptions of using performance measurement information?

Sub-question 4: How is performance measurement information used in developing new services and strategic responses?

2. Design – Methodology

The design overview of the study will use a mixed methods approach in a grounded theory study:

Qualitative methods including: interviews of key stakeholders, library administrators, and the supervisors of the library administrators, i.e. local government officials, college/university officials, etc., (interviews will be conducted by telephone and email); review of the library

professional literature; and case studies of libraries with effective performance measurement practices (as identified and available).

Quantitative methods including: survey of library administrators' use and perceptions of use of performance measurement information including data collection methods, resource allocations in support of performance measurement, how performance measurement information is used, and library administrator's experience, education, and knowledge skills and abilities (KSA) with performance measurement information (surveys conducted online using Qualtrics software).

Data analysis will include:

Qualitative: direct and inductive content analysis

Quantitative: descriptive, inferential statistics using Qualtrics and SPSS software.

3. Findings

This study is currently being implemented; results are not expected until late spring or early summer. Expected findings include data to address the research questions.

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Sub-question 3: What are library administrators' perceptions of using performance measurement information?

Sub-question 4: How is performance measurement information used in developing new services and strategic responses?

Data analysis will also provide specific evidence of how effectively library administrators are responding to their service environment needs to keep their libraries strategically effective.

4. Practical Implications – Significance

The practical implications and significance of the study are listed below.

- The practical implications include:
 - Development of improved models, best practices, etc. of the use of performance measurement information in decision making in libraries.
 - Development of more effective strategic responses and improved benefit, value and impact being generated by libraries.
 - Identification of educational or continuing education needs of library administrators in the areas of performance measurement collection, analysis and use.
- The study is significant due to:
 - There is only one previous study similar in nature and research topic in the library science literature. That study is the author's 2001 study completed as part of his dissertation.
 - The current study is a repetition of the author's 2001 dissertation study with a wider population scope to determine the effectiveness, reliability and validity of the survey instruments, processes, and data collection / analysis tools. If the evidence of the 2010 study supports the findings of the 2001 study using a different statewide audience, the results could lead the author to a wider national study of performance measurement

information use and perceptions to determine the scope and extent of the evidence associated with this question.

- A previous study on this topic was performed by the author in 2001 using a study population of public library administrators in the state of Florida. While the 2001 study identified how public library administrators in Florida used performance measurement information in general, this study is seeking to more fully uncover how library administrators are using performance measurement information in strategic development of services and responses, which was not previously covered in the 2001 study and has become strategically significant in today's library service environments.