

Reviews

Ellis, Debbie and Norton, Bob

Implementing BS 5750/ISO 9000 in libraries. London: Aslib, 1993. £14.00. (ISBN 0-85142-315-9).

Jackson, Peter and Ashton, David

Implementing quality through BS 5750 (ISO 9000). London: Kogan Page, 1993. £25.00. (ISBN 0-7494-0797-2).

Brown, Tony

Understanding BS 5750 and other quality systems. Aldershot: Gower, 1993. £14.95. (ISBN 0-566-07455-9).

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'Quality' is one of those concepts which should have vanished without trace in the early part of this decade. Nowadays, the use of the word as a prefix to a number of other words eg assessment, assurance, audit, circles, control, manager, policy, systems is a growth industry in many public and private sector organizations. One of the reasons for its continued survival and blossoming lies in its apparent simplicity. This simplicity stems partly out of a misunderstanding that quality must mean a Rolls Royce when in fact it could mean a Skoda. On closer inspection BS 5750, which is about the quality assurance of the organization's processes and about measuring the consistency of the organization's systems, has the potential to trip up the unwary.

At the outset the myth that the standard is directed only at the manufacturing sector should be dispelled. Many schools, colleges, prisons and leisure centres are pursuing registration. The British Standards Institution, in recognizing this particular Standard's linguistic and terminological problems, has produced BS 5750 Part 8 to help interpretation within the service sector.

The three titles reviewed provide evidence that a considerable market exists for clear and concise guides to this minefield which (hopefully) lead to accreditation. All five authors have brought considerable experience (libraries, public and private sector management and consultancies) and empirical research to the implementation of quality systems and, in a number of ways, these books are similar. Firstly, they are aimed primarily at practitioners and use the plain language required by those who have little or no knowledge of 'quality' matters. Incidentally, only the Jackson and Ashton book has no glossary of terms. Secondly, all three take a systematic and logical approach to the accreditation process which has as its central core the formalization of organizational procedures in meeting the needs of the customers. Thirdly, each title contains detailed synopses of the various elements which make up BS 5750 together with useful lists of certification bodies

and other contacts. Lastly, and probably most importantly, all three are eminently readable, incorporating easy styles with copious illustrations (particularly effective are the flowcharts), lists, bullet points and headings.

Having explored the similarities, what are the essential differences between the titles? Whilst Ellis and Norton is obviously directed at library and information services, its succinct (the shortest of the three at 123 pages) and practical nature reduces discussion of the underlying principles. These are well covered in the Jackson and Ashton title, which is not only peppered with detailed examples drawn from real case studies but generally puts more flesh on the bones of the other two titles. Brown differs from the others in his objective explanation of the accreditation process and the book's stated aim to allow readers, following this enlightenment, to make their own well-informed judgements about implementation.

The content of the jointly-authored books is fairly linear - from the quality system requirements through planning, drafting and documentation of procedures, building and implementing the system to the final assessment. Both put forward a convincing and well-argued case for pursuing BS 5750. In addition, Understanding BS 5750 and other quality systems which is written as a report with numbered sections, covers industry and sector relevance, specific problems with ISO 9000 and contains a chapter on other systems (including TQM which gets thankfully only brief mentions in all three).

My only criticism - and it's a minor one - is the minimalist nature of the further reading. Although these are practical guides, the very process of implementation often motivates those involved to read more deeply into the subject.

I would suggest that any library manager contemplating taking the accreditation route could do worse than read these three titles and utilize their combined strengths to facilitate the successful implementation of BS 5750.

Baird, Nicola

Setting up and running a school library. Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1994. £3.50. (ISBN 0435-923048).

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This book has been written under the VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas) book publishing programme. Known as 'The ECOE Programme' it aims to publish practical texts based on the experience of its overseas volunteers, in this case a non-librarian teacher wishing to set up and run a library in a low-resource school in the developing world. It is important that it is seen in this context because the title on its own could be misleading.

The book is divided into sixteen chapters. After asking 'What is a school library?' in chapter 1, chapters 2-11 are a practical step-by-step guide on how to set up a library from organizing a library committee and making book shelves through to stock selection and classification, producing

catalogue cards and setting up a lending system. Each procedure is linked to its suitability or not from a primary, secondary or formroom library and is illustrated with simple but clear diagrams. This is followed by three chapters covering the preservation of books [against such things as insects and tropical rainfalls], teaching students how to use the library and how to further enhance these skills through displays, events, quizzes etc.

A useful checklist of the main tasks covered in chapters 2-11, together with suggestions for daily, weekly and termly library routines, are given in Chapter 15. This is complemented in Chapter 16 with the names and addresses of organizations which donate books to school libraries and library suppliers, advice on how to order and pay for stock selected and a small section on professional development. A copy of the Dewey Junior Colour Code Classification Schedule, a Key word list and Index complete the book.

Quotes and tips from volunteers working in the field pop up throughout and these really bring home the challenges - to both librarians and non-librarians - of working in the developing world. 'We were so proud of our bookshelves ... and then the white ants moved in ... In less than two months all our journalism books ... had become food for insects.'

A few quibbles such as limiting the use of the Junior Colour Code to 'a secondary school library with fewer than 500 information books'; the use of FN ['F' for Fiction and 'N' for author's surname] to classify fiction books instead of the clearer 'F' with the first three letters of author's surname underneath; and why not include what 'ISBN' stands for in addition to explaining what it is. Some of the photographs could be clearer.

Other resources such as tapes, films and videos are mentioned but computers are not. However, for anyone needing to set up a library with limited resources in the developing world this is an easy-to-follow, down-to-earth guide and as such the book fulfils its purpose.

Pickering, Helen and Sumsion, John

A survey of library services to schools and children in the UK 1992-93. Loughborough: Library and Information Statistics Unit, Loughborough University of Technology, 1993. £19.50. (ISSN 0967-4896) (ISBN 948848-58-8).

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This report, the fifth in this series of LISU publications, gives detailed statistics of public library services to children and to schools in the UK during the period 1992-1993. The aim of this and earlier reports is to provide a body of statistics which are consistent with other statistical sources, such as the CIPFA Public Library Actuals, and against which meaningful comparisons can be made, questions asked and options displayed.

Based on a questionnaire survey carried out by LISU in the Spring of 1993 - with a response rate of 94% - the report covers book and other resources provided either *in* the public library or *by* support services to schools such as the Schools Library Service (SLS). There is very little

information on the third area of library services provision, the school or school library.

The report, which is divided into eleven sections, begins with a set of graphs showing how much local authorities have spent on materials, per capita, for their public library and to children over the past five years 1989-1994 [three years 1991-94 in the case of Scotland]. Similar graphs are also given for total budgets spent on the SLS. The overall trend shown by these graphs is one of increased spending from year to year but with sufficient cases of a reverse trend, particularly in the English Metropolitan Districts, to warrant anxiety.

Each of the eleven sections begins with a summary on the data provided followed by tables and footnotes which give individual variances. Sections 1-4 cover population statistics for the age group 0-14, the extent of schools library service provision and professional staffing and salaries; Sections 5-9 cover service provision and service statistics in the public library and SLS to children; Section 10 looks at the effect of the Local Management of Schools (LMS) on SLS and Section 11 gives data on performance measurements used in the two library services.

The most significant changes highlighted in this report are to be found in Sections 9 and 10 and concern the effect of recent government legislation, in particular the LMS policy, involving the delegation of budgets and spending to schools. This does not apply to Scotland where LMS has not been implemented.

Figures show that while the total budget for SLS has shown a slight increase in 1993-94 over the previous year in 37% of authorities that provided both figures, falls are recorded in 57% of authorities. Most of these falls are due to moving expenditure out of SLS through delegation and many more authorities in England and Wales have plans for delegation over the next two years.

However, even more important is the extent of buying back into the SLS; out of 23 authorities twelve report buying back at 90-100% while others are buying back at a high level. Exceptions are Lancashire and Kent where buying back is very low.

In the bulk of the report, which looks at the type and level of services provided, wide variations exist between regions and individual authorities. While public library materials funds in Northern Ireland are lower than elsewhere in the UK, the English Metropolitan Districts spend even less per head. Orkney remains the highest spender at £4.36 per child, followed by Berkshire (£3.87), Dundee (£3.57) and Stirling (£3.47). Wakefield is the lowest at £0.27 per head. Organizational changes and LMS delegation make comparisons of per capita SLS figures difficult but Berkshire is the top spender at £6.41 per child while Salford spends £0.12.

Class visits are still the most popular service provided by the public library services to schools but there has been an increase in project loans and the provision of teachers' tickets. The most highly rated services are storytelling, teenage collections and seasonal and holiday events. There has been an increase in the number of authorities charging for requests, 26% as against 20% last year.

An important area of development in the services provided by SLS is the increase in the number of Book Purchasing Schemes, particularly in the English counties where 19 schemes against last year's six have been reported. The most commonly provided services are project loans, advisory services, promotion for schools, bulk exchange loans and in-service courses.

Staffing levels are substantially better in Scotland than most other areas, with librarians in schools

almost four times the level achieved in England while the Metropolitan Districts, Wales and Northern Ireland show low levels of professional librarians in schools. London staffing levels, particularly Inner London, are closer to Scotland - influenced perhaps by the past traditions of the ILEA.

Concern is voiced in the report that only 62% of UK authorities publish an annual account of the Schools Library Service at a time of uncertainty for the future of the SLS nationally. While the SLS continues to serve most LEA schools, in the Secondary/6th Form College sector the total served is only 80%.

This report contains a lot of detailed statistics and, together with previous reports, forms a useful body of information from which to monitor change and make comparisons. However, as John Sumsion suggests in the Foreword, it is not essential to go into such detail every year. The 1994 survey could usefully limit itself to the four areas suggested - Extent of Service, Professional Staff, Schools Library Service and SLS/Local Management of Schools.

As shown by other recent publications in this area⁽¹⁾, the focus of change is around the Schools Library Services and resources provision in schools themselves. The future value of these statistics in providing an overall picture of library resource provision will, therefore, depend on the availability of information from individual schools and on a more stable position with regard to buying back into the SLS. For example, we need to know how far schools have increased materials expenditure to compensate for services once provided by the SLS. School librarians have a role to play here.

References

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Marland, M. Books in schools. London: Book Trust. 1992.

School book buying survey. London: Educational Publishers' Council, 1993.

Lancaster, F W

If you want to evaluate your library... 2nd ed. London: Library Association Publishing, 1993. £35.00 (£28.00 to LA members). (ISBN 1-85604-083-6).

Abbott, Christine

Performance measurement in library and information services. London: Aslib, 1994. £9.95. (ISBN 0-85142-329-9).

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Nowadays there can be very few organizational activities - in the private or public services sectors - that are not subject to some kind of evaluation. It may be a formal, structured exercise, perhaps as part of a cycle, or a rather more loose, subjective approach. Many of the concepts (customer-orientation, accountability), criteria (economy, efficiency, effectiveness) and methodologies (quantitative measures, performance indicators) originated in the private sector and have made the successful transfer to services such as health, the Civil Service, local government and education.

The literature covering the evaluation of UK library services and their various components has been fairly prolific in the last decade. Particularly challenging has been the quest for measures which (a) are applicable to all library and information services within a sector eg public, academic, government and (b) accurately reflect performance of the library as a whole. In so doing library services would be able to evaluate their performance not only against other similar organizations but also (perhaps more importantly) against their own targets. In theory the library manager is then in a much stronger and suitably informed position from which to decide upon improvements where appropriate.

F W Lancaster has an impressive publishing track record in this area. Its burgeoning literature is exemplified both in the extra 160 pages since the first edition (1988) and in the enlarged list of references (from 19 to the current 30 pages). After a general introduction the book is divided into three sections: document delivery services, reference services and other aspects. The first and most expansive section contains eight chapters covering book and periodical collections, in-house use, obsolescence and availability/failure studies. The second section covers reference and enquiry work, database searching (this takes in library OPACs and CD-ROMs) and, lastly, user education. This latter chapter is a particularly welcome addition. The literature on user education evaluation has gone rather quiet over the last few years. The third short section concentrates on the financial and cost implications including resource sharing, cost effectiveness and cost benefit analysis.

The audience for this hugely readable book is frankly anyone who has the remotest interest in the topic - student, manager or practitioner. It is a model of clarity. It also manages to incorporate elements of the textbook and the "how-to-do" genres (without falling between stools) and is written in a scholarly yet easy style. Its readability is enhanced by the refreshing use of 108 exhibits (these are examples of good practice, sample documentation and other illustrations), study questions and the author's own case studies. The amount and richness of the empirical support evidence, mainly from across the Atlantic, to illustrate various evaluative exercises and programmes is quite staggering.

Performance measurement in library and information services is a very different but equally useful animal. It forms part of a series - the Aslib Know-How Guides - edited by Sylvia Webb. The aim of the series (each title contains some 50 pages) is to give practical guidance on "how to deal with, and resolve, issues of current interest or concern to those working or teaching in the field". Around half the book covers the development and application of performance indicators. The first five chapters (in 14 pages) act as a kind of introduction and include the reasons for measurement, clarification of terminology and the library "as a system". For me the book's strength lies in its no-nonsense approach to performance indicators and their practical application in the workplace. For library managers who want succinct uncluttered advice on the types of indicators, how to involve staff, how to get the process started, how to collect and analyse data, and how to present findings, they need go no further. For each indicator there is a definition and the scope for usage, and also how to measure efficiency, effectiveness, costs, productivity etc for that part of the service. Services covered include acquisitions, information skills training, interlibrary loans and enquiry work.

The book is logically structured and easy to read, with bold type and bullet points for emphasis. Eleven diagrams generally help to support and clarify the text - except Fig 5 (p19) which illustrates a conceptual model of a library. This I found too complex and busy, leaving me with more questions than answers. Quite rightly so in a guide of this kind, the references are kept to a minimum (22 in all) although they do act as a stopping-off point for inquisitive readers.

In their own ways both of these titles are thoroughly recommended. Which is more suitable very much depends on the needs of the reader. Although each purports to be a practically-based text, Lancaster provides an impressive choice of examples and types of exercises which have been successful. Sufficient detail is provided to indicate whether a particular method could be applied in one's own service. For those more interested in down-to-earth advice and with less desire to sift through a range of methods, Abbott will be the preferred choice.