
BROPHY, Peter. *Measuring library performance: Principles and techniques*. London: Facet Publishing, 2006. 244 pages. ISBN-10 1 85604 593 5. £39.95

I expected nothing less than a five star performance from Peter Brophy with this book on measuring library performance, and I was not disappointed. This is a comprehensive text giving a good and thorough overview of the challenges facing libraries dealing with accountability, service quality and performance measurement.

The book is suitable for students, researchers or library practitioners who need to understand this complex and challenging aspect of library management. Brophy's style, means that the content is easily readable, a feat in itself with this complex topic. The structure of the book aids that readability as the chapters are fairly short, have good clear headings, and are supported by clear figures and tables where appropriate. The chapters follow a very logical sequence for anyone needing an overview of the topic, but the book can just as easily be dipped into for those who need a guide to a specific topics. Each chapter has a clear conclusion, useful resource lists and references.

There are fourteen chapters in all covering a wide range of performance issues such as impact, staff performance, benchmarking, and library standards. The context is set clearly within a good background to the topic in Chapter One which eloquently argues the case for performance management. Chapter Two gives an overview of the theoretical considerations supporting performance measurement which is rightly considered as a form of research. The ability to show the very clear relationship between academic research and performance measurement is strength of this book and is critical to understanding later in the text, the foundation of the different qualitative and quantitative tools available to the performance manager.

There are very useful appendices that consider the collection, analysis and presentation of data. This material would also be very useful to students carrying out research projects for the first time.

The text is very firmly grounded in the literature with a wealth of references for further reading. It draws from a number of disciplines, management, marketing, social sciences which is again strength of the text. Some issues, such as statistical analysis and linking the balanced scorecard into the strategic planning framework, Brophy acknowledges are beyond the scope of the text, but the excellent references provide ample scope for further reading.

I would advise anyone reading this book to read the preface by Brophy. He warns of the dangers of 'attempting to manage without measuring performance' and the danger of measuring what is easy because the information happens to be there. He also outlines key terminology which gives a brief but useful debate on describing those who use the library service; 'users', 'customers' or 'patrons'.

Overall, this is a good and useful text, the scope of which covers all sectors and draws from the wider research literature. It definitely achieves its purpose to

provide an accessible account of ‘thinking and research on the evaluation of library services’

Of course one problem is that this is a fast moving profession and performance management is being reviewed in a number of sectors including the health sector and public libraries. So although this book gives an excellent overview, readers are advised to check developments in their particular sector.

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