

Library Outcomes and Measures: Project update

The Library Outcomes and Measures project supplements the work of the eVALUEd project in supporting the management of electronic information services (EIS) in higher education libraries in the UK. It consists of two inter-related strands, the e-measures project and outcomes assessment.

e-measures project

The aims of the project are to:

- To assist libraries in decision-making and user support
- To develop a new set of current statistical and performance indicators for EIS and to work with SCONUL (Society of College, National and University Libraries) to pilot, refine and roll them out to the sector as standard performance indicators for EIS.

Activity

Phase 1: Set-up stage and data collection (October 2003-June 2004)

The project is working closely with SCONUL through its Advisory Committee on Performance Indicators (ACPI). For many years, SCONUL has conducted annual statistical surveys of the activities and costs of UK higher education libraries. The e-measures project aims to devise a set of e-measures that will supplement the existing SCONUL return and to investigate the possibility of developing further e-measures.

In addition to support from SCONUL, the project is drawing on work already done for the e-metrics project for the US Association of Research Libraries (ARL). Professor Charles McClure is a consultant for the project.

A total of 25 UK higher education institutions are taking part in the pilot project. Three briefing days were held in October and a draft manual and proposed set of e-measures were introduced and discussed. Prior to the briefing days, participants had completed a survey on the range of e-resources held and their approach to the existing questions on e-resources in the SCONUL annual return. These provided valuable background information for the project and for the discussion at the briefing days. As a result of the workshops, some changes were made to the draft manual and the list of e-measures, and revised versions were issued in November.

In preparation for the data collection that will start in February 2004, pilot libraries are currently setting up the templates and lists of e-resources they will need. Regular progress reports are being issued and further guidance notes produced on particular aspects that have raised queries. An e-mail discussion list has been set up for the pilot institutions and the amount of interest generated is testimony both to the importance that the institutions place on the work they are doing and to its complexity.

The data collection phase will provide a good opportunity for a group of higher education libraries to test and reflect on the usage data supplied by a range of vendors and aggregators, several of whom are now COUNTER compliant.

Initially, data will be collected from pilot institutions during a four month period (February-May 2004). These will relate to a list of 21 e-measures agreed for the pilot project, relating to holdings, usage and costs of electronic services. A range of methods will be used, depending on the e-measures themselves and the approach already taken by each library. Sample templates which libraries can adapt to their own needs have been produced to help with data collection. The project will be particularly interested in the methods of data collection and any difficulties encountered by the pilot libraries. Further discussion at a workshop in June will provide the lead-in to phase 2 and will also form the basis of recommendations to SCONUL for e-measures to be included in the annual returns from the academic year 2004/05.

Phase 2: Review and further data collection (June 2004-March 2005)

During phase 2, preparatory work will take place to revise and refine the e-measures tested in phase 1, with a view to a second data collection phase in September 2004-January 2005. This will enable the project to extend the range of e-measures and associated performance indicators available.

Outcomes assessment

A second strand of this project will look at aligning institutional outcomes with library/information outcomes. Preliminary research on institutional mission statements and strategies has highlighted areas for further investigation using survey and case- study approaches. This work will run alongside the e-measures project.

Project dissemination

The number of higher education institutions involved in the project and the importance of the subject for the future development of academic libraries places a particular responsibility on the project team to disseminate the findings widely. The Manual for pilot institutions and other material will be made available on the project web-site. Regular reports will be presented to SCONUL ACPI.

For preliminary information on the e-measures project, see:
Conyers, A. and Dalton, P. (2003) 'Introducing e-measures.' *Relay: the journal of the University College and Research Group*, (forthcoming)

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The research team is at the University of Central England in Birmingham, UK (UCE).

The project URL is <http://www.cie.uce.ac.uk/emeasures>

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