

## Werk

**Titel:** Quality Management in Relation to Electronic Resources: Some Observations

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## **Quality Management in Relation to Electronic Resources: some Observations**

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Pursuing quality in the sense of an acceptable or higher level of service is, first of all, a question of selection and evaluation.

- Selection of adequate staff (A)
- Definition of the users (B)
- Evaluation of information resources for the end users (C)

### **A. Staff**

1. An adequate staff is one that is willing to cooperate in the process of automation. This process requires schooling and reschooling, training, and instruction of staff members to acquaint them with the technique and the use of automated systems.

2. Many staff members when confronted with the electronic library are eager to learn the new techniques, their applications and practices. It offers them the opportunity for a welcome reorientation in their work. Technical abilities bestow new prestige, and prestige is one of the best motivators.

3. The Groningen University Library started automating library process in 1980. Now, 15 years later, a small group of staff members is running the library's automated systems. The systems management is divided into several different parts and each staff member within the group has his own specialisation.

4. This specialisation has its advantages, but it also makes you vulnerable. Too few people know too much about too many things. Spreading the knowledge and expertise concerning your library system may not be so good for the prestige of a few, but it improves the performance of the library.

5. Why is that so? In the first place expertise must be shared so that more than one or two people know what to do when the system is not working or working poorly. In the second place the users need information about what is

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going on. These users are not only people from outside, but also colleagues working in the different sections of the library: the lending department, the information desks, the reading rooms, etc. ... The transfer of information about the ins and outs of the systems with which the whole library is working needs extra attention. Training in communication, for instance, is therefore indispensable.

6. The traditional functions of the library are changing. Most of them are more or less automated. The basic tasks have become routine which has stimulated many library workers to seek a different job, either temporarily or for good. In our library a policy giving employees the opportunity to work in another department for a short period has met with great success. A combination of part time work in more than one department has become very popular, also. We see that more mobility is improving work motivation, which improves quality.

7. In our library we see that the more ambitious staff members move toward the automation sections of the library, like the systems management department. Special projects like management information systems, expert systems for bibliographical help and for Internet, are scoring highly. These new activities, sophisticated as they are, are pulling high quality capacity away from what we call the more daily activities: buying books and periodicals and serving the public.

## **B. Users**

1. That brings me to my second point: the users of our libraries. Our task is it to provide them with quality service.

We see three groups of users:

- a) One group who does not seek special attention: part of the staff members of the university, keen students who are using the systems and the service the library gives. They go information shopping via their PC's and are critical sometimes, but see the library as one of the many ways for getting the information they need.
- b) The second group are the users who, with some help and instruction, learn to master the OPAC and the automated procedures.
- c) The third group is formed by the users who, in general, are seen as hopeless... Instruction and help spent on them cost much time and is not very effective. They prefer to let the necessary things be done by the library staff. They need a book or an article but see no way to get it themselves.

2. It is clear that the service towards these three user groups has to be differentiated. It is a scale from zero to hundred, or nearly hundred. It is

understandable that most libraries concentrate their activities on the second group, which also includes all kinds of levels and degrees of expectations, wishes, abilities, interests and... appreciation for the helpful staff.

### **C. Selection of adequate information sources for the end users**

1. Automation in our library has had, and still has, the effect of diminishing the number of staff members. Automation has brought new quality to the library processes and the library services. We try to maintain the collection budget in order to keep the collection level as high as possible, but automation is expensive and the money we save in the personnel sector is spent on new machinery, new software, new networks etc. etc...

2. Quality is also: trying to find a good balance between the ways to inform - the electronics in the broadest sense - and the information itself. In the past we in Groningen have been rather conservative regarding the new information technology. We still have, I dare say, hard copy bibliographies and catalogues. We still have hard copy periodicals, even. And books. Some of our users are still using them.

On the other hand, we buy CD's, subscribe to online databases, have connections with national and international networks and so on, and so on. After subscribing, the use is evaluated, as far as possible.

3. For a faster expansion of the electronic sector we need extra funding, and, as a state university library, have sought and found external financing. Offering our services to industry has given us some of the means to finance the electronic library which we need to maintain quality.

4. Improvement of quality - this is my last statement - can also be reached by developing (when not already available) expert systems. The UL Groningen developed for instance an expert system for bibliographic instruction which is now online available for end users. Besides this, a project for an expert system meant for users of internet started this spring. A special room with some 50 extra PC's can be used by our students. They can be trained there in the use of all kinds of software: statistical programs, PC word processing, CD-Rom data bases, and the like.

With this short paper, I hope I've given you an idea of our ideas on quality management.