USING BENCHMARKING, NEEDS ASSESSMENT, QUALITY IMPROVEMENT, OUTCOME MEASUREMENT, AND LIBRARY STANDARDS

A How-To-Do-It Manual®
with CD-ROM

Rosalind Farnam Dudden

A Medical Library Association Guide

HOW-TO-DO-IT MANUALS
FOR LIBRARIANS

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NEAL-SCHUMAN PUBLISHERS, INC.
New York London
I dedicate this book to all hospital librarians.

Hospital librarians work every day
to organize and locate information to
increase the knowledge of biomedical professionals
so that they make a difference in the health of people.

Hospital librarians serve the people who serve the sick.
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The Medical Library Association (MLA) has long been recognized in the library community for its exceptional professional development program, which encompasses both continuing education and credentialing. In 1999, the MLA launched a new program to define, develop, and evaluate a coordinated and comprehensive Web-based medical library benchmarking tool. This initiative was designed to provide opportunities for hospital, academic, and specialty health libraries to learn more about the benchmarking process, compare data, establish best practices, and identify and work with a benchmarking partner. Now known as the Benchmarking Network, the program began with hospital libraries and now includes libraries in research institutions, libraries serving health sciences programs, consumer health information services, veterinary libraries, and other related corporate and association libraries.

Almost 400 libraries participated in the second benchmarking survey, launched in 2004. In the increasingly competitive healthcare environment, benchmarking studies are excellent advocacy tools. Librarians have successfully used study results to increase library materials, budgets, staffing, and even space.

In 2004, Rosalind Dudden, an MLA fellow and a distinguished member of the Academy of Health Information Professionals, received the National Library of Medicine Grant for Scholarly Works in Biomedicine and Health to enable her to write a comprehensive book about evaluating library services for librarians in small-library settings. Using Benchmarking, Needs Assessment, Quality Improvement, Outcome Measurement, and Library Standards is an outgrowth of her work on the MLA Benchmarking Network project. She chaired the outcomes team for the first study and has been a tireless promoter of the Benchmarking Network both regionally and nationally.

Using Benchmarking, Needs Assessment, Quality Improvement, Outcome Measurement, and Library Standards provides an overview of related literature and theory. It also serves as a how-to guide for analyzing the results of measurement and evaluation techniques and for cogent communication of these results to your parent institution’s administration. As such, it is an important contribution to the literature of evaluation and assessment. We encourage you to use this guide to measure, sustain, and improve the quality—and the relevance—of your library’s services.

Carla J. Funk, CAE, Executive Director, Medical Library Association
Betsy L. Humphreys, AHIP, Deputy Director, National Library of Medicine
In library school, we learned that effective evaluation can help a library run smoothly, offer improved services and programs, and prove its worth and value to administrators. But in real life, in busy, often-understaffed work environments, assessment can become a low priority. Even doing the necessary background reading is daunting. Though there are many valuable works on the subject, they are often highly theoretical and lack practical application. As a result, librarians often come up short when searching for a book that will quickly teach them what they need to know.

I wrote *Using Benchmarking, Needs Assessment, Quality Improvement, Outcome Measurement, and Library Standards: A How-To-Do-It Manual for Librarians* as a “real-life” guide to results-oriented library evaluation. My primary aims for this book are to explain the most important and popular assessment techniques in straightforward language and to use uncomplicated step-by-step instructions to teach the reader how to perform evaluation studies with skill and competence.

This book combines my 35 years of experience, including more than 10 years of work with the MLA Benchmarking Network Initiative, with two years of intensive research, supported by a grant from the National Library of Medicine (NLM). This grant gave me the time to read widely from the extensive literature available on the subject of library evaluation. From the beginning, my intent was to create a bridge between the theory of evaluation and the practicalities of execution by writing a book that would speak to the concerns of working professionals. As I wrote, I asked myself: Could I do this project in a reasonable amount of time? Would I have the necessary skills? Could I follow the examples? I have tried to provide a set of tools that any reader, no matter how busy, can use to assess his or her services.

Librarians in any setting can learn from the explanations and use the workbooks and checklists. Because evaluation can seem even more challenging in a small library, I have made sure that the advice can be used even with the smallest staff. Librarians in single-staff settings often have the most to gain from evaluation. Changes in economic climate and technological advances have put small libraries in danger. Technical skills alone will not necessarily save a library from closure or downsizing. Effective evaluation adds another layer of defense in a librarian’s battle against downsizing and closure. If a library is threatened, showing proof of its positive impacts may be the needed ammunition to save it. My goals for *Using Benchmarking, Needs Assessment, Quality Improvement, Outcome Measurement, and Library Standards: A How-To-Do-It Manual for Librarians* were to make evaluation practical and easy for librarians to implement.
Improvement, Outcome Measurement, and Library Standards will have been achieved if readers can answer two vital questions about the basics of assessment and the five core methods: How do I do it? and How do I apply the results within the time constraints of a full-time job?


Part II, “Working with Evaluation Methods,” details five core methods (needs assessment, quality improvement, benchmarking, library performance standards, and outcomes measurement) and their real-world applications, followed by a quick overview of other quality improvement and evaluation systems. Each chapter contains background information and a step-by-step explanation, illustrated through real-life examples. The workbook found at the end of each chapter is also reproduced on the accompanying CD-ROM.

Chapter 4, “Method 1: Needs Assessment,” discusses the assessment of customer needs, which drives evaluation projects and helps focus future goals. Chapter 5, “Method 2: Quality Improvement,” explains how to improve the processes that serve customer needs, highlighting the differences between efficiency and effectiveness. Chapter 6, “Method 3: Benchmarking,” addresses a common emphasis in industry and health care. This method can help librarians look beyond their own projects and take part in corporate initiatives. Chapter 7, “Method 4: Library Performance Standards,” is particularly important for academic and health sciences libraries. This chapter compares standards for college libraries and hospital libraries to develop a universal set of performance-based evaluation questions. Chapter 8, “Method 5: Outcome Measurement,” demonstrates three strategies for discovering and reporting outcomes: logic models, surveys, and categorization. Since outcomes vary extremely by setting, this chapter discusses the uses of this method for public, academic, special, and medical libraries. Chapter 9, “Other Systems for Quality Improvement and Evaluation,” presents an overview of 11 other industry and library methods of quality improvement measurement.

The accompanying CD-ROM contains a variety of resources, arranged in folders by chapter. The workbooks for the five core chapters, along with supporting materials not printed in this manual, are included for easy editing and use. The glossary and an extensive list of recommended readings with hot links can also be found on the CD-ROM.

The greater message of Using Benchmarking, Needs Assessment, Quality Improvement, Outcome Measurement, and Library Standards is the importance of a culture of assessment, a concept detailed in Chapter 2. Even the smallest libraries can strive to create a culture where evaluation is a valued part of everyday library operations.
I would like to acknowledge the help and support of the institutions and people who assisted me in my effort to write this book. The idea for this book came in the fall of 2003. I thought that if practicing hospital librarians and other librarians in small-library settings could have a guide to use to evaluate their library service, they would have a major tool in their management arsenal to defend against downsizing and closure. But there did not seem to be such a book on the market, at least not one that could be quickly put to use by a practicing librarian. Since 1999, I have been very involved in the creation of the Medical Library Association Benchmarking Network Survey. This survey was intended as a tool for use in defending the hospital library. My idea was to write a “cookbook” to tell me in a few steps how to do the kind of evaluation that would assess the needs of my users or would communicate the value or worth of the library to my administration. I had never heard of such a book, and if I needed one, other practicing librarians might also.

So, being an industrious person, I wrote a research grant application and was awarded a two-year grant that funded 50 percent of my time. I want to acknowledge that receiving this grant (#5-G13LM008520) from the National Library of Medicine made this book possible by giving me the protected time needed to write. These grants are called the NLM Grants for Scholarly Works in Biomedicine and Health. The purpose of the research grant was to prepare a book-length manuscript (or other scholarly work) of value for U.S. health professionals. The reviewers, who felt my idea was worthy and gave me the good score, offered me hope that other people thought the book would be of use to librarians in small-library settings.

I wish to acknowledge the support of my employer, National Jewish Medical and Research Center, located in Denver, Colorado. Not only was I encouraged to seek the grant, but National Jewish also has a system in place that supported me totally in administering the grant and allowing me to hire staff to replace my time spent on writing the book. My thanks go to the dedicated support staff at National Jewish who helped me.

My professional life has been shaped by the associations I have belonged to since 1971, the Medical Library Association (MLA) and the Colorado Council of Medical Librarians (CCML). The members, staff, programs, sections, chapters, and committees of these associations have supported and mentored me in my career all these years, and this book could not have been created without them. I particularly wish to acknowledge the 40 or so hosp-
tal and other librarians who worked on the MLA’s benchmarking committees and continue to do so to bring this important program to the members. The program would not have been so successful had it not been for the over 500 MLA members who entered their data in the two surveys. My hat is off to all of you! Using the benchmarking results to demonstrate evaluation methods has been a major benefit to writing this book.

I must acknowledge those who helped me through this four-year process. First is the staff at the Tucker Medical Library at National Jewish, who kept the place running while I wrote. Shandra Prozko and Barb Griss kept the reference services going, while Carol Miller, Sean Crow, and LaVonne Griffie worked on the daily activities of the library. Without their dedicated and competent support, I could not have gotten this done.

I am also grateful to those who helped me with the technicalities of the book. Adelaide Fletcher, Reference Librarian at the Denver Medical Library, rescued me at the end of the process with the superb editing skills of an English major and the fresh eyes of a new graduate. Jeff Magouirk, staff member at the Biostatistics Department at National Jewish, helped at the beginning of the project with a discussion of statistical concepts and support for what I wrote about them. Thanks also to Sean Crow, staff member at the Tucker Medical Library, who helped with the glossary and benchmarking results. Other editing help in a pinch came from my friend Margi Holcomb; my daughter, Laura Dudden; and my partner, Jim Mills.

A special thanks goes to Margaret Bandy, Medical Librarian at Exempla Saint Joseph Hospital in Denver, whose unwavering support of the idea kept me going through times of doubt.

Any author needs a good meal and the support of his or her family, and I am no exception. Through all my doubts and time constraints, my partner, Jim Mills, and daughter, Laura Dudden, have supported me without question. Thanks for the meals and encouraging remarks!

Last but not least, I would like to acknowledge my late parents, George Bronson and Nancy Farnam, for their belief in quality education and service to the community, which shaped my life and made it possible for me to write this book.