

“The Library Planning Model shows the difference”¹

Resources: print versus electronic

Information use: USA versus Austria

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1. Context

Electronic media play an important role in academic libraries. The expenditure for electronic resources has been increasing for years. While the high costs are well known, the workload for acquisition and maintenance is difficult to determine. This raises the question, what effect the addition of electronic resources has for the workloads and staffing of academic libraries. It is the goal of this contribution to show a possible way, how the ratio between electronic resources and staff dealing with these resources could be measured. Furthermore, it is a long-term goal to add this aspect to the Library Planning Model (LPM).

This paper focuses on the starting point of a larger project, which is called “Information management functions in national economies. An analysis of the information sector in Austria”, funded by the Austrian National Bank. The project is based largely on methodologies developed by Robert M. Hayes (2001), who tried to measure information management function in an industrial context in the United States and other countries. In this project we try to apply these methods in the context of the Austrian national economy.

2. Introduction to LPM

The Library Planning Model (LPM) is a means for estimating staffing requirements to meet identified workloads on library functions like circulation, reference, acquisition, cataloging, etc. Staffing requirements are estimated for two main categories of personnel: technical services and reader services.

LPM is an Excel spreadsheet model with an array of macros that provides means for entry of data related to library functions. The data to be entered include users data (number of university administrative staff, faculty staff, students, institutions, researchers, and general public), holdings and acquisition of materials (number of volumes of monographs, periodicals, microforms etc.), and library publications (pages per year).

LPM then applies “workload factors” to the data entered for each of the functions. These workload factors are the estimated times for library staff to perform a transaction for each function. Given the entered data, LPM then provides estimates of the staff required for each function. Furthermore, it shows the

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distribution of those staff by various categories of personnel. Finally, LPM provides a large number of other results, such as the needs for facilities of various kinds, estimated budgets etc.

The LPM was developed by Robert M. Hayes, when he was also consultant to several, primarily Anglo-American countries, their science information activities and their libraries at a time when electronic resources were still in their initial stage. As a consequence, in order to use the LPM in our project, the following two adaptations have to be made: (A.) Consideration of electronic resources within the LPM and (B.) differences concerning libraries and library use between the United States and Austria.

A. Consideration of electronic resources

The data category which most evidently has greatly changed is the materials data. A new type of material, electronic resources, has to be added to the already existing monographs, print periodicals, AV media etc. Electronic resources are e-journals, e-books and databases provided by publishers on their servers.

The workflow for processing electronic resources is different from the workflow for processing print materials. The characteristics for print media (monographs, periodicals etc.) is the direct relation, between media and workload. This workload could and still can be measured in time units per piece (hours, minutes). Characteristic for the digital age is that a library subscribes to 5000 or 10000 or even more e-journals, e-books and different databases and it is difficult to establish a direct relation between the number of electronic resources and workload or staff required to process these resources. There has to be introduced an additional unit for measuring workloads and staff requirements for electronic resources: number of contracts to negotiate.

When dealing with electronic resources two main categories of workload have been identified: the acquisition of electronic resources and the provision of access to electronic resources. Acquisition basically means negotiating vendor contracts, access means the entry of electronic resources into an administration and research tool and maintaining the electronic holdings.

With a questionnaire we will ascertain the number of vendor contracts to negotiate, the number of electronic resources and the number of people dealing with these resources in Austrian university libraries. At LIDA we will present the respective research results.

B. Differences in library and information use between USA and Austria – Adaptions in LPM

The LPM as already mentioned above was developed for Anglo-American academic libraries. Using it in an Austrian context, means that it has to be adapted to the Austrian situation. The LPM categories identified before “materials data” and “publications” need only small adaptations. It is the third category, the “number of users” and the frequency of use which is different from Anglo-american libraries. We discovered that in Austria there is significantly less use of university libraries than in the US across the entire range of users, from faculty to graduate students, to undergraduates and ILL borrowing institutions. At LIDA we will present the adaptations made to the “Austrian” LPM.