

Evaluation of Public Libraries: The 2001 IFLA Standards and the 2003 Standards for Provincial Libraries in China

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The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), guided by the interests of UNESCO in assisting libraries to improve their services, continues to develop statements on standards for public libraries. The most recent statement was adopted in 2001. IFLA, while working tirelessly at the international level to develop standards, also recognizes the importance of national, regional and local standards. The diffusion world wide of knowledge and information about library standards development has been useful in the preparation of standards at the regional and national levels. This paper summarizes and compares the com-

ponents of the current IFLA standards for public libraries, adopted in 2001, and the new standards for provincial public libraries in China, adopted in 2003. The comparison attests to the similarities in the evaluation of library services around the world. The continuing work on library standards at the international level is very important as it identifies the critical variables needed in evaluation of library services. While setting the general direction for such standards work, it also enables the important issue of values, and the consideration of those values in the evaluation of library services, to be made at the local, regional, and national levels.

Introduction

The establishment of public libraries standards has a long history of activity and development (Withers, 1974; Public Library Services 2001; Lynch 2004b). As has been well chronicled, the early work emphasized the issues of the measurement of important variables pertaining to size of the library – its physical facility, collections, budgets, and staff. As standards development continued, attention shifted from these quantitative measures to issues of measures of performance. By the 1990s most quantitative standards efforts in the U.S. and in Western Europe had been put aside as the profession began its search for meas-

ures of performance. The profession's interest in performance measures was guided by the questions posed by Orr (1973): "How good is the service?" and "How much good does it do?" Orr's questions continue to dominate the discussions of evaluations of libraries and library services. In the last thirty years or so, great attention has been paid to "output" measures (the early quantitative measures are referred to as "input" measures), to seeking the right measures of performance and agreeing upon them and to finding ways to assess outcomes. Issues of the quality of libraries and how to measure that quality have been complicated by the expansion of new services made possible by the new information technologies. The

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profession continues to struggle with efforts to find measures with which to assess the adequacy of library service.

While the input measures often were assailed as being inadequate, the profession has begun to acknowledge that good performance requires appropriate resources to ensure quality of service (Public Library Service 2001, 11–12). Particularly as libraries have adopted new technologies in the library services and library management, the matter of resources in terms of the expense of equipment, operating costs and personnel costs again become important.

The profession also has become genuinely interested in the users' attitudes about the service provided by libraries. Librarians around the world now are unwilling to make the assumptions of earlier days that buildings, budgets, collections and staff, as determined by professional bodies, are the best ways and the only ways to evaluate the libraries. The attitudes of users now are an important consideration.

IFLA (The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions), guided by interests of UNESCO in assisting libraries in the improvement of their services, has continued to develop statements on standards for public libraries. IFLA published its first *Standards for Public Libraries* in 1973 (IFLA 1973). The 1973 statement presented a number of quantitative standards on size of collections, size of administrative units, staffing levels, and building standards. No substantive changes were made to the document, which then was reissued in 1977. The 1986 edition, however, did present major changes in content and emphasis (IFLA 1986). Recommendations as to desirable levels of service were abandoned and the 1986 document, by design, offered advice, not standards. Its title also was changed to exclude "standards" and include "guidelines". The 1986 document was guided by the work on standards being carried out in the United States, the United Kingdom and Western Europe where input measures were abandoned and output measures emphasized.

In 1994 the third version of the *IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto* was published (IFLA/UNESCO 1994). It was recognized immediately as an important statement of the fundamental principles of public library service. Upon its publication it became apparent that there was a need

for and a demand for a detailed statement of practical standards and guidelines that could be used by librarians and by policy makers in developing public library services. The 1986 IFLA *Guidelines for Public Libraries*, eschewing standards, was not useful in the development of services at the local level; it became apparent that the 1973 document, while supposedly superseded by the 1986 document, was still being used. The range of quantitative standards provided in the 1973 statement was still found to be useful. So, beginning in 1998 and using an elaborate, consultative process, IFLA developed and subsequently published its current standards for public libraries in 2001 (Public Library Service 2001).

These current IFLA standards embrace the "UNESCO Public Library Manifesto". IFLA and UNESCO have jointly issued the most recent edition of the Manifesto. In it UNESCO encourages "... national and local governments to support and actively engage in the development of public libraries."

In the 1990s local public libraries, particularly in the U.K. and the U.S., were influenced by their local governments' interests in the management practices of the for profit sector. Papers describing benchmarking practices and their applications to libraries appeared (Garrod and Kinnell 1997), important work on quality management in libraries was undertaken (Brophy and Coulling 1997; Poll and Boekhurst 1996), and other descriptions emerged on various assessment practices in business and the appropriate applications of these practices to the library scene (Lynch 1998, 2004a). In the U.K. many libraries prepared customer/user charters, which included standards for service that users would expect.

While this activity was going on in the U.S. and the U.K., other countries were taking a different approach. Some countries adopted national legislation on the provision of library and information services by municipal public libraries (e.g. The Finnish Library Act (904/1998). Many librarians continued to look to international bodies such as IFLA for help in developing the kinds of standards these librarians believed would be useful in their countries. For example, in the university library community in 1983 a resolution on university library standards was adopted at an IFLA pre-session seminar urging IFLA to develop standards for university libraries. IFLA ultimately

did (Lynch 1986) but the document did not contain the kinds of prescriptive standards with quantitative standards on inputs that resolution drafters wanted. In subsequent activities to meet the demand from librarians in regions outside the U.S. and Western Europe, IFLA attempted to prepare quantitative standards for particular geographical regions in Africa. For a variety of professional and political reasons, some relating to varying cultural values, this activity was unsuccessful (Lynch 1988).

IFLA has worked on standards for public libraries, school libraries, and university libraries. None of these, however, seem to meet the needs of all librarians in all parts of the world. One of the reasons, of course, is that IFLA is a professional organization, not a governmental one. In many countries unless the government is interested in assessing and supporting the continuous development of quality in the libraries in the country, standards developed by professional bodies will have little, if any, influence (Withers 1974). Another reason is that while people around the world emphasize the need for high quality public library service, the values and judgments will differ from community to community and nation to nation. Professionals have taken the position that standards, developed and adopted by professional organizations – those people who presumably have the best knowledge about what is required for good library service – would be found useful to governmental agencies that fund libraries. The general assumption has been that the profession would be influential in getting the professionally prepared standards adopted by governments and then implemented by governments. Despite efforts by the library and information science profession world wide, the adoption by governments of standards prepared solely by the profession has not been widespread. IFLA's influence, however, is strong and growing. So statements on standards prepared in the careful, consensus building way, and adopted and then promulgated by IFLA have a major and growing influence.

Why is the government so important to the development of public libraries? As the IFLA/UNESCO Manifesto states so directly:

The public library shall in principle be free of charge. The public library is the responsibility of local and national authorities. It must be supported by specific legislation

and financed by national and local government. It has to be an essential component of any long-term strategy for culture, information provision, literacy and education. (IFLA/UNESCO 1994)

Issues in evaluation

The two questions raised by Orr in 1973, "How good is the library service? And "How much good does it do?" are important questions for a government to ask as it determines the funding levels for libraries and seeks to find out about the quality of the library. These questions inevitably lead to evaluations designed to serve decision-makers, administrators, policy makers and practitioners.

Evaluation experts in the library and information science field have offered various definitions of evaluation. The most comprehensive definition in the library and information science field is that of Herson and McClure. They define evaluation as

... the process of identifying and collecting data about specific services or activities, establishing criteria by which their success can be assessed, and determining both the quality of the service or activity and the degree to which the service of activity accomplishes stated goals and objectives. (Herson and McClure 1990, 1)

Most definitions emphasize process, the assumption being made is that decision-makers then take the outcomes of the process and use those outcomes to make decisions relating to the programs under evaluation. Values and judgments are assumed, as is a desired outcome. What is omitted in much of the discussion of evaluation in the library and information science field is the need for agreed upon standards and a consideration of the nature of the values at play in the program's design and the evaluation of it. Herson and McClure include in their definition the need for established criteria against which success is measured. The efforts by librarians around the world to create standards for library service have been efforts to get professional agreement on the criteria to be used in measuring the quality of library services and operations. Once professional agreement is reached, the standards are promoted to other groups, particularly governmental agencies, for use in making judgments and decisions about funding.

Program evaluations in libraries can be guided by an assessment of the library's objectives. A rel-

atively straightforward assessment of the success or failure in achieving objectives has been a major approach to program evaluation since the 1930s both in the U.S. and elsewhere (Madaus and Stufflebeam 1989) and has been used widely in program evaluations of libraries. Assessment of objectives in determining value or worth certainly is important to an evaluation of the library, but it is not the whole picture.

The IFLA standards for public libraries include several statements on evaluation:

- Qualified librarians will undertake ... Evaluating library services and systems and measuring their performance (p.63);
- [The library's operational plan should include] a programme for monitoring, evaluating and amending the plan at regular intervals (p.74);
- [The library's management tools should include those for] monitoring and evaluation (p.78);

One entire statement in the standards is devoted to evaluation, Standard 6.10.2, "Monitoring and evaluation":

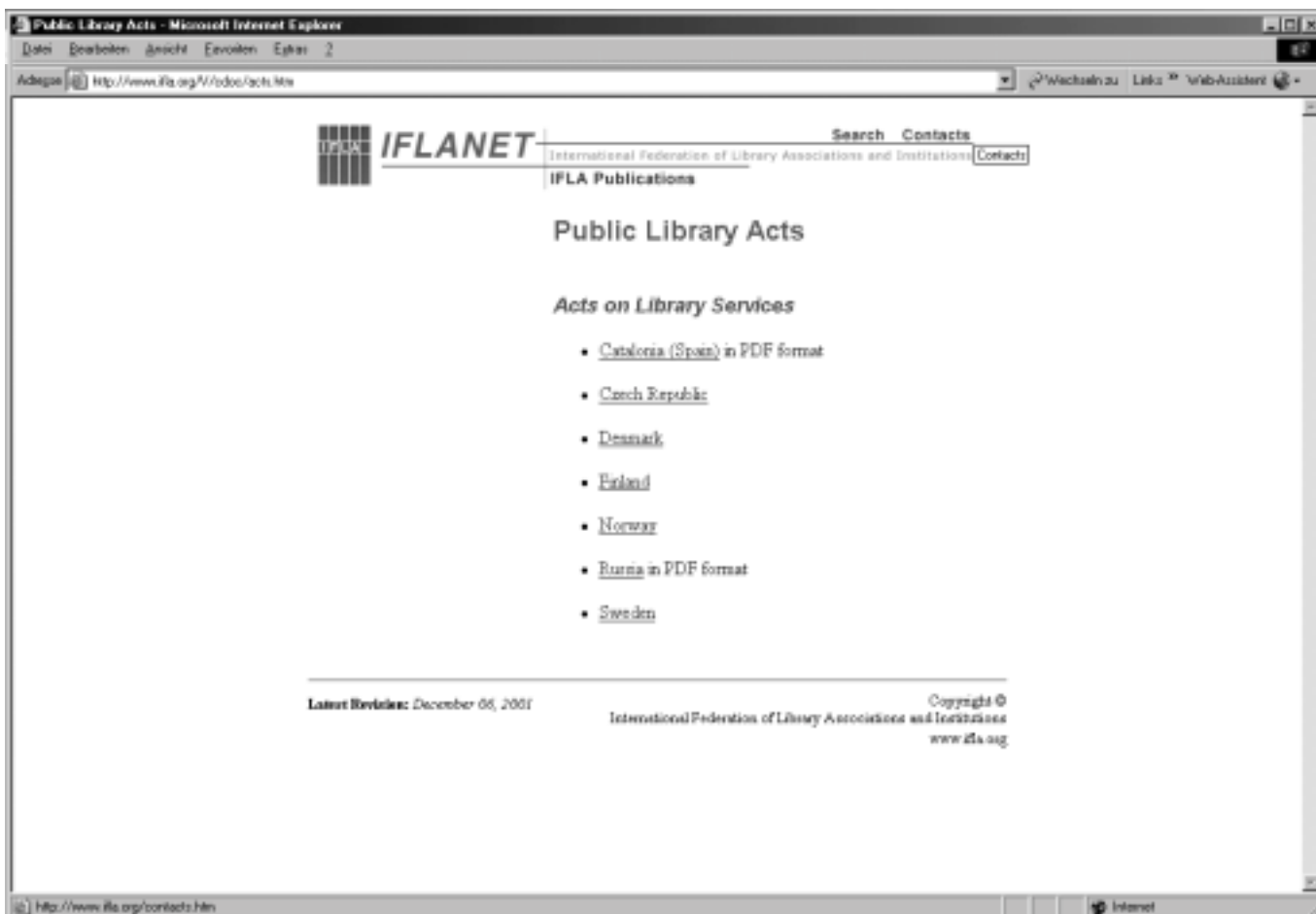
As the library service moves towards its goals, management must be accountable in terms of financial control and the monitoring and evaluation of library activities. Management must continually monitor the performance of the library service to ensure that strategies and operational results are achieving the set objectives. Statistics should be collected over time to allow trends to be identified. Community needs and satisfaction surveys, and performance indicators are valuable tools in monitoring the achievements of the library. Techniques should be developed to measure the quality of the services provided and their impact on the community. All programmes and services should be evaluated on a regular basis to ascertain whether they are:

- achieving the objectives and declared goals of the library
- actually and regularly provided
- meeting the needs of the community
- able to meet changing needs
- in need of improvement, new direction or redefinition
- adequately resourced
- cost effective. (Public Library Service 2001, 79)

And another section, 6.10.3, identified key performance indicators useful to evaluating and monitoring the achievement of the library's objectives. These include usage indicators such as

loans per capita and total library visits per capita; resource indicators such as total stock per capita; human resource indicators such as ratio of professional staff to population; qualitative indicators such as user satisfaction surveys; and cost indicators such as unit costs for functions, etc. For comparative purposes benchmark statistical data are recommended. The authors of the standards document recognize the importance of measurements of inputs (the necessary resources devoted to library services) and outputs (what is achieved by the library). They point out that measurements compared over time can indicate the effectiveness of the library's service, and comment that comparing key input and output measurements with other libraries of similar size and characteristics can be useful in indicating the library's successful service.

In general there are two major aspects to evaluation. The first is a description of what is being evaluated, including the collection of data that describes that. The second is the criteria or standards used to make a judgment about "value or worth." In recent years much effort in libraries has been to find methods to describe what is being evaluated. So once agreement on definitions of input measures had been reached, the profession then turned its attention to seeking measures and getting agreement on what would be measures of output (Van House et al. 1987). Once that work was done the profession began to consider the issues in assessing outcomes. And current work seeks to find agreed upon measures for networked information (Blixrud 2002; Bertot, McClure, and Ryan 2001). The work continues on developing the criteria for assessment and the standards against which to measure performance. Much work in the U.S. and the U.K. has emphasized providing advice to local communities about how they might go about developing their own local standards to be used in determining value or worth. Work in other countries, however, has continued to develop standards and to determine the criteria against which performance is to be measured, while including in such statements guidelines for undertaking such assessments. And the IFLA work with UNESCO in developing standards for public library service internationally has been useful in many countries and localities that are interested in the measurement and evaluation of public library service.

Figure 1: Screen shot of URL: <http://www.ifla.org/V/cdoc/acts.htm>

The Public Library Service; IFLA/UNESCO Guidelines for Development

The current IFLA/UNESCO statement on *The Public Library Service* includes six sections: 1, "The role and purpose of the public library"; 2, "The legal and financial framework"; 3, "Meeting the needs of the users"; 4, "Collection development"; 5, "Human resources"; 6: "The management and marketing of public libraries".

The importance of resources to the success of the library is stated in the beginning:

To fulfil its roles satisfactorily the public library must have adequate resources, not just when it is established but also on a continuing basis, to enable it to sustain and develop services that meet the needs of the local community. (p. 11)

Resources are identified as materials in all formats, adequate levels of staff with appropriate training, and sufficient funds for the delivery of

the library's services. No specific numbers of resources are included. These international standards assume that national and local variations will lead to local differences in the resources criteria.

The IFLA/UNESCO standard section two emphasizes the relationships between public libraries and governments and states that public libraries should be based on legislation. It is the legislation that will assure the continuation of the public library and identify its place in the government's structure. Several examples of public library legislation can be found on the IFLA Web site (URL: <http://www.ifla.org/V/cdoc/acts.htm> [viewed August 25, 2004]). Also included in statement two are discussions of various national information policies important to public libraries such as copyright and the public lending right, statements on funding, acknowledging that resources will vary depending on local factors. Following the directions of the IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto, the document states flatly:

“Charging users for services and membership should not be used as a source of revenue for public libraries, as it makes the ability to pay a criterion in determining who can use the library.” (p. 19)

Standard three on meeting the needs of users identifies many types of services provided by the public library to its many categories of users. It mandates user education: “The public library should help its users develop skills that will enable them to make the most effective use of the library’s resources and services.” (p. 37) It discusses the importance of the various co-operative and resource sharing programs in providing service. A statement on library buildings is included with a list of important elements to be taken into consideration when planning a building: the function of the library; its size, the designated spaces, accessible shelving, design features, electronic and audiovisual equipment, ambience, safety and parking. (p. 43)

It is in Standard 4, the standard on Collection development, where specific quantitative standards for collections are presented:

- As a general guide an established book collection should be between 1.5 and 2.5 books per capita.
- The minimum stock level for the smallest service point should not be less than 2500 books. (p. 56)

It refers to standards for electronic information facilities, acknowledging that the developments of such standards are in the very early stages and referring to standards adopted in Canada, England, and Queensland, Australia:

- A standard of one computer access point per 5000 population has been used in Canada.
- A recently developed standard in England recommends that the total number of workstations, including those for online catalogues, that are available for public use, should not be less than 6 per 10 000 population,
- In Queensland, Australia it is recommended that the following be provided:
 - For populations up to 50 000 – one PC per 5000 population.
 - For populations over 50 000 – one PC per 5000 population for 50 000 population and one PC per each additional 10 000 population.

These standards recommend that at least half the public PCs should have access to the Internet and all should have access to a printer. (p. 57)

Quantitative standards also are provided for collections in newly established libraries: “Ideally a new library should be established with a minimum base stock of 1.0 book per capita.” (p. 58) Acquisitions and discard rates are presented for established libraries; three scenarios with statements of appropriate median book stock and annual acquisitions rates are offered based on the total population served. (p. 59)

In chapter 5, “Human Resources” skills needed by librarians are identified as are four staff categories: qualified librarians, library assistants, specialist staff, and a support staff category which includes caretakers, cleaners, drivers, and security staff. While acknowledging the importance of local differences, the standards recommend:

- One full-time equivalent member of staff for 2500 population
- One-third of staff (excluding support staff) should be qualified librarians. (p. 66)

Recognizing the importance of continuing education the standards recommend that 0.5%–1% of the total library budget should be earmarked for training purposes. (p. 67)

The final section of the IFLA standards includes information on the management and marketing of public libraries. It states the necessary skills needed by the library manager; the need to provide leadership and motivation of staff. It points to the need for planning and the development of a strategic plan for the library. Financial planning and management is emphasized, as is good staff management. As mentioned above, the management tools of monitoring and evaluating the library’s performance and adopting performance measurements are emphasized along with the importance of undertaking community needs assessment.

The 2003 Standards for provincial public libraries in China [1]

Standards prepared in 2003 for public libraries in China offer a good example of an important collaboration between a government Ministry and a professional body in developing standards for libraries. The document reflects much of the work done worldwide over the past thirty years on in-

put measures, output measures and patron satisfaction. It also illustrates how standards can be used to encourage new services and new social policies. The standards document has strong statements regarding the qualifications of the staff, the need for the library's staff to further their professional education, and to undertake research and publication projects.

In China an important partnership exists between the China Society for Library Science, the main professional body in China, and the Ministry of Culture in China, which is responsible for the funding of the National Library and the management of the national libraries in China. The director of the agency in the Ministry responsible for libraries usually assumes the position of president of the China Society too. In this way the government and the professional are uniquely entwined. The Ministry authorized the China Society to prepare standards for public libraries at the provincial level and the local level. The Ministry, working together with the Society, then approved the standards and has promulgated them. The Cultural Ministry of the Central Government and the Cultural Bureau of each Provincial Government organize the actual evaluation of libraries against these standards. They determine the libraries to be evaluated, select the people to sit on the evaluation panels that carry out the evaluation, receive the reports from the libraries and from the panels and make the final determinations and decisions.

The present statement on public library standards for the thirty-one provincial level public libraries in China was adopted in 2003. It supersedes the earlier standards adopted in 1992. It is this statement of standards for public library service in the provincial libraries, which is discussed here.

The standards are divided into six main categories: 1, Resources; 2, Technical Services; 3, Readers' Services; 4, Professional Research and Development; 5, Management; and 6, Overall assessment. To assist in the evaluation, points have been assigned to each standards category and to the various sections within each category, thus providing information as to the values guiding each standard. Evaluators use the point system in making their evaluations. The total number of possible points that a provincial library can receive is 1000. The on-site evaluating panel appointed by the

Cultural Ministry assigns the points. Panel members usually include government officials who are in charge of library affairs, professionals who have senior professional titles (research librarian or assistant research librarian) and some other managerial staff.

The China Standards

Part 1: "Resources to Run the Library"

This first section presents statements about many of the elements required in the administration of the library: facilities, equipment, finance, staff, and collections. This standard is basically the "inputs" or "resources" standard. It includes all of the essential resources necessary for library service. The first section on facilities includes size of building, size of the reading rooms, and number of seats for readers and specific points are assigned to specific quantities. A maximum of 30 points out of the possible 210 is assigned to these input variables. 60 maximum points are assigned to Modern Technology Equipment. This section assesses the number of computers in an electronic reading room available to users (maximum number of points: 20), the quantity of computers used in the on-line public catalog area (maximum: 10), and the number of web connections and broadband connections (maximum: 10 points each). A total of 55 points are assigned to finance with two areas to be evaluated, the first being governmental financial subsidy averaged over a period of years (maximum: 35 points), the second being funds for the purchase of new materials for the collections (maximum: 20 points).

Fifty possible points are assigned to staff. Included in the assessment are factors relating to educational background of all staff, professional titles with a section on the qualifications of people in various leadership positions; 10 maximum points are assigned to the category of post degree training and continuing education of professionals. The maximum number is assigned if the average per person hours of continuing education per year is 85 hours. The final category in this first standard is the size of the library's collection; 15 maximum points are assigned to those libraries with 3,000,000 items in the collection. Based on the allocation of points, the highest value

(60 points) is assigned to Modern Information Technology.

Part 2: "Technical Services"

Standard 2, with a total possible point count of 260, is the general technical services standard. It includes assessments of the annual additions to the collections in all formats including foreign language literature collections and Web resources; the quality of the collection including an examination of the acquisitions policy and the library's assessment of its implementation, the amount of local publishing that is collected and whether a special collection has been established for local publishing; an evaluation of the quality of the cataloging and classification, the organization and management of the book collection. There is a section on database building (45 points maximum are assigned to this section) including an assessment of the digitalization of the collection catalog. Thirty points are assigned to the evaluation of the library's Web site and the quality of the internal local Web resources.

Part 3: "Readers' Services"

Standard 3 contains standards on Reader Services with a total possible number of points of 280. This section has the largest number of points assigned to it, thus acknowledging the important value assigned to Readers' Services. The first statement rates the satisfaction of the users on the quality and effectiveness of the library's services. The evaluation panel, guided by the recommendations of the Ministry of Culture, is expected to sample the user population and distribute a questionnaire to the sample in order to survey user opinion. A maximum of 20 points is assigned to user satisfaction. Like the technology measures which appear in the first and second standards, the user satisfaction measures are new to the 2003 document; no statement on the opinions of users about the library's service was included in the 1992 document. How to carry out the measurement of user satisfaction is not discussed in the document. Each evaluation panel is expected to identify its sampling frame, develop its own user satisfaction instrument, and design and implement its methodology. As the expertise on these matters is likely to vary from panel to panel, it seems

likely that the China Society and the Cultural Ministry will continue to work on these issues and provide guidance to the various evaluation panels, building on the knowledge and experience of past panel members and the profession at large.

Common output measures are included in this standard related to the amount of materials circulated, the availability of books on open shelves, the number of hours opened during the week (it should be noted that if a library is not open on the weekend, it is scored zero points out of 15 on this item), services available for the elderly and disabled, and the number of branch libraries. A maximum of 10 points is assigned to branch libraries. The standards pertaining to branch libraries, services for the elderly and disabled, and book delivery to the home (or sometimes to the office) are new to the 2003 standards document and reflect the Ministry's interest in these new approaches to public library service.

Reference and consulting services also are included in Standard 3. A possible 30 points are assigned to the category of information retrieval. This category requires an examination of the various records of the information retrieval operations, including user's demand and the retrieval results; if records are not kept, this item is allocated zero points. The importance of record keeping thus becomes a value useful to understand by the provincial library and by the evaluation panel. A maximum of 15 points is assigned to reference services provided by library on site, over the phone or by mail. The evaluation is on the amount of the service provided; no effort is made to determine quality. A separate section is on information services provided to the local government and to various other agencies; 25 possible points are assigned to this section. A maximum of ten points is assigned to the publications of the library and another ten points maximum is on use of the library's Web site (use is determined by counting the number of hits on the Web site). Library programs including lectures, exhibitions, and other reading activities are assigned a possible 40 points. Ten maximum points are assigned to the number of people taking part in various reading activities during the year. The number of people attending various public education or training classes held in the library also is included in the standard, with 10 possible points assigned.

Part 4: "Professional Research and Development"

Standard 4 includes activities of the staff in research and publication activities and activities related to inter-library cooperation. A total of 135 points are assigned to this standard. Points are assigned on the number of papers published during the year, the number of library and information science monographs published by the library's staff from 1998–2002, and the number of research projects approved. Also included in this standard are the amount of professional guidance the library has provided to other libraries in towns and villages and the amount of cooperative activities undertaken such as a union catalog activities, a coordinated cooperative collection development program and the operation of inter-library lending, etc. Standard 4 identifies criteria on which staff research and publications activities are evaluated, acknowledging the importance of continuing staff development.

Part 5: "Management"

Standard 5 includes elements on library management. A total of 95 points are assigned to issues relating to personnel management, financial management, archival management, facilities management, the operation of a statistical program, and the presence of fire prevention and security measures.

Part 6: "Overall assessment"

The final standard (20 points maximum) is an assessment of the library by the Central or Provincial Party Committee or government.

Total Scoring

The six standards have these total scores:

- Standard 1 (resources) = 210
- Standard 2 (technical services) = 260
- Standard 3 (readers' services) = 280
- Standard 4 (professional research) = 135
- Standard 5 (management) = 95
- Standard 6 (praise) = 20

Discussion

The 1973 IFLA public library standards provided some specific guidance for libraries in developing countries (Withers 1974, 408–411). Certain standards on the appropriate levels of stock were proposed as were statements regarding the numbers of qualified staff. It was recognized that a sufficient number of qualified libraries might be difficult for some countries to achieve in the early stages; in fact, it was acknowledged that some librarians might have to take their training in other countries. The 1973 statement indicated that countries would vary on their adoption of particular standards and even on their particular level of library service. A general agreement and a common understanding of the purposes and the goals and objectives of libraries would be necessary in order for the most useful distribution of scarce financial, material, and human resources. It was agreed by those developing the 1973 document that the general objectives for public library service are the same around the world, the differences come in the pace at which development can occur.

As the 2001 IFLA/UNESCO standards are compared with the 2003 China standards, the influence of the IFLA/UNESCO standards is apparent. The profession around the world has recognized the need for resources to ensure the satisfactory performance of the library, the need to identify appropriate levels of service, and the importance of seeking the opinion of users about that service. The profession has matured; it has a point of view about library services and operations that has been adopted generally. It agrees that the library needs systematic evaluation on various aspects of the operation and identifies standards against which operations can be measured.

As the public library profession in the U.S. and Western Europe developed, it solved its early issues relating to inputs or resources necessary for library operations. The social functions and the performance of the library then began to attract attention. In this situation there was little need to emphasize input factors so the emphasis shifted to output or performance factors. Input factors are emerging again, however, as we see in the China standards, with the adoption of the new information technologies and the cost of equipment. And performance standards also may be changing as the nature of the collections in libraries changes.

The standards on readers' services in the China document reflect the general agreement within the library and information science profession on output measures. By mandating a user opinion survey China offers direction to the answers to Orr's questions, "How good is the Library service? And "What good does it do?" The user survey will seek information from users on those aspects of the library's service the evaluation team will believe to be important and the team will use those data as it carries out the evaluation.

The China standards statement anticipates some of the direction that other countries may take. The document includes social values and much more detail than is in the international standards developed by IFLA. The values deemed important by the library profession in China, and agreed to by the government, which is an important aspect of these standards, also are reflected in the goals and objectives of public library service in China.

An exemplary model of cooperation is seen in the development of the China Standards. The document, prepared by the library profession in China, through the China Society for Library Science, and adopted and promulgated by Ministry of Culture of the Government of China, offers a good model for others. The two agencies work together in guiding and organizing the entire process of evaluation, from developing policy and procedures, approving and promulgating standards for evaluation, and conducting the actual evaluations. While there is as yet no library law in China, despite the encouragement of UNESCO that specific legislation be adopted, this model of cooperation is invaluable in the creation of quality library services.

This paper has not undertaken a point-by-point comparison of the IFLA/UNESCO standards and the China standards. Rather, it has identified some key factors in each document that is found also in the other, either in a direct way or indirectly. As should be expected, the international standards are not written in the kind of detail the China standards are. While some countries might wish a detailed international standard, cultural values, the stage of library development in a particular country, the amount of resources available for information services at the local or regional level, all will influence the nature of the standards found to be useful locally.

Adequate resources are acknowledged as important in the IFLA/UNESCO document and ad-

equacy of resources is emphasized in some detail in the China standards. The China standards takes the application of new technology further than the international standards do; the IFLA document only acknowledges the importance of information technology and then refers to the approaches in several countries. The difference between those identified by IFLA and those of China is that the general approach used in several countries has been to point to the number of workstations available per unit of population. China refers solely to the total number of workstations. The China standards also refer to database building, digitizing, creating Web sites and the quality of Web resources. Both documents identify the need for Internet access for library users.

User education, mandated in the IFLA/UNESCO standards also is emphasized in the China standards. Cooperative and resource sharing schemes are important in both sets of standards.

Collection size has always been a key variable in library standards documents, be they be national or international standards. The 2001 IFLA/UNESCO document provides the following standard:

- As a general guide an established book collection should be between 1.5 to 2.5 books per capita.
- The minimum stock level for the smallest service point should not be less than 2500 books. (*The Public Library Service* 2001, 56)

China takes an approach to total collection size, reflecting the fact that the China standards being discussed here are written for the 32 provincial libraries in China, not for local public libraries.

The IFLA/UNESCO standards regarding staff also take the historical view of identifying the number of staff essential to provide quality library service, proposing 1 FTE (full-time equivalent) for 2500 population and indicating that one third of the total staff should be qualified librarians. The China standards refer to various categories of staff and discuss qualified staff. The document does not propose a total quantitative figure. Instead it emphasizes the need and the importance of continuing education. The IFLA/UNESCO standards also indicate the importance of training and continuing education and recommend that 0.5%–1% of the total library budget should be

earmarked for training purposes (*The Public Library Service* 2001, 67).

The review of these standards documents show how similar the profession is in its thinking about quality library services. The issues and points of view are the same. Obviously agreement about values will vary from country to country and from place to place, as the public library service will reflect the country's values. Also, the adequacy of a public library's service will depend upon the state of library development and the availability of resources to carry out the plans and objectives of a particular library. Around the world the public library has as its overall objective to serve the public good. Standards have been developed in order to assist people in deciding how best to meet that objective and methods have been proposed in order to determine how good the service is. The profession, the governments, and the library's users all want to know how good the service is. The efforts to develop and implement standards for public libraries go a long way in helping determine the answer to that question.

Note

1. The Standards have not yet been translated into English. The authors prepared the translation used in this paper as part of an ongoing international study of standards for libraries; the Culture Ministry of China P.R has not yet authorized the translation.

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