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Smart Tools for the Evaluation of Information Products and Services: A Collaborative Initiative

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Smart Tools for the Evaluation of Information Products and Services: a collaborative initiative

The LEAP IMPACT community of practice is working on the production of smart tools to help others in the evaluation of information-related products and services.

Karen Batjes and Sarah Cummings

INTRODUCTION

Managers of information services and projects are increasingly expected to evaluate their own information products without a firm grounding in evaluation and without suitable tools to help them on their way. In addition, this lack of understanding of the difficult model of impact assessment makes their job much more difficult. This is reinforced by the multiplicity of approaches and lack of clarity of concepts. Hence, the need for working methodologies and comparative tools that are specific to the information sector. Without agreement on the choice of performance and impact indicators and evaluation procedures, it is difficult to draw meaningful and comparable lessons from any evaluation exercise. To try to fill this gap, CTA and ISNAR have worked on developing the manual 'Evaluating information: a letter to a project manager' (Mook, 2001) which goes some way in demystifying the process of evaluation for information professionals.

In the LEAP IMPACT community, there was a general feeling that the manual (Mook, 2001) should be further complemented by simple tools which guide the practitioner through the process of evaluation. LEAP IMPACT, a 'community of practice', is motivated by a common commitment to improving evaluation practices in the information sphere. Key events in the life of this community have been two workshops: the Technical Consultation on 'Assessing the Performance and Impact of Agricultural Information Products and Services' which was held in Bonn, Germany, in October 2001; and the 'Smart Tools for Evaluating the Performance of Information Products and Services: a writing and validation workshop' which was held in Amsterdam in November 2002. These workshops will be referred to throughout this text as the Bonn and Amsterdam workshops, respectively. For LEAP IMPACT, the need for the development of 'best practice' in the field of evaluation of information was first noted at the Bonn workshop. The need to 'facilitate the development

and use of practical and cost effective methods for evaluating the performance and impact of agricultural information products and services' was also seen as important (CTA, 2001). The creation of the toolkit is being informed by a joint understanding of the CTA/ISNAR manual, which is perceived as being the starting point for the toolkit.

The idea of producing a toolkit was settled on for a number of reasons. Firstly, a number of the lead institutions had experience with the design and publication of toolkits. Secondly, there is no doubt that information managers in both South and North are being increasingly expected to practice self-evaluation on their information services. For both groups, time and access constraints make it very difficult to come to grips with the complex and diverse literature on the evaluation of information. The idea of the 'toolkit' was to combine the experience of the community, comprising both stocks of explicit knowledge and access to undocumented and experiential implicit knowledge. As Saunders argues in his article on developing evaluation practice:

A worthwhile goal is therefore to enable such implicit knowledge to become accessible, enter the public domain and initiating a learning spiral through some kind of learning process. (Saunders, 2000)

Thus the toolkit would achieve a number of objectives at the same time: packaging the practical consciousness and experience of those working in the field for use by others; stimulating joint learning and indeed understanding; and facilitating the development of joint practices. A further objective was to stimulate professional and methodical approaches to evaluation in the field of information. The focus of the toolkit is on performance evaluation rather than on impact assessment, because it was felt that a more comprehensive performance evaluation would prepare the ground for the evaluation of impact.

In the Amsterdam workshop, a group of information practitioners and evaluation experts came together to write and validate tools to help information managers effectively evaluate their information products and services. Prior to this workshop, many of the participants worked on producing draft versions of these tools which were further discussed and amended. During this workshop, the participants agreed to work further on a full-scale toolkit which would be formally published after testing and

validation. The toolkit is an ambitious collaborative project. It requires commitment from the lead institutions (CTA, KIT and IICD) but also from all other individuals and institutions involved.

This paper will describe the background to the 'smart tools', as well as the format and content. Guidelines for writing smart tools are also described. Finally the review process and eventual path to publication will be outlined. An example of a draft tool will also be included in the annex. The toolkit represents work in progress and these plans are subject to amendment as the project develops. However, there is no doubt that the production of the 'smart tools' calls for a great degree of cooperation, commitment and trust from the partners involved.

THE SMART TOOLS

Focus

Following the deliberations of the Amsterdam workshop as mentioned above, the toolkit focuses on performance evaluation and not impact assessment. It aims to facilitate performance evaluation for self-assessment, motivated by self-learning and not by external donors. The main emphasis will be on good project management practice. The tools are designed to form part of an easy-to-use toolkit, which will encourage information managers and practitioners to incorporate evaluation into projects to act as a guide and management tool in the first instance. Later as the culture of evaluation is developed, it is envisaged that practitioners will then be better placed to tackle the longer-term and more complex issue of impact assessment. The toolkit aims, in particular, to meet the needs of isolated information managers or practitioners located in small or resource poor information services, who do not have access to specialised evaluation expertise or experience. The toolkit also aims to help those practitioners in the North and South who are interested in carrying out performance evaluations.

Although the toolkit aims to support self-evaluation it will be useful for information managers whose projects and programmes are undergoing evaluation by an outside agency. It will help them to understand the approach taken by the evaluators and the complex terminology – and will hopefully assist in an empowering process related to the evaluation.

One of the sub-themes related to the toolkit was the need to develop a terminology accepted by the community which could be used by others in the information field. The problems of this difficult terminology have been identified elsewhere (Khadar, 2002). To overcome these problems, it was decided that a glossary would be a key component.

Format

The conception of the smart tools came from a number of publications in the development field. These include the 'RAAKS resource box' (Engel and Saloman, 1997) and a manual and tools developed by the African Network on Participatory Approaches (2000). Both of these are boxed sets which comprise a manual or methodology in book form, together with a set of cards called windows or tools. This model was also chosen for the 'smart tools' with the idea that users could pick up the tools which would be on card and apply them without any background reading. Support materials and background information available in the associated box would back up the tools with background reading and case studies.

General Tool Guidelines

The individual tools are designed to represent a clear guide to potential approaches and strategies for information practitioners and managers who are using the toolkit. The main emphasis will be on clarity. Efforts will also be made to coordinate the tools so that they can be integrated into a systematic and coordinated whole.

The tools should generally cover the following areas:

- The purpose of the tool should be clearly explained, couched within the context of performance evaluation.
- What are its objectives?
- How should the tool be used and how does it link to other tools in the kit?
- The conditional element should be built into the tool. For example, there may be other approaches or different ways of applying the tool.
- Methodology and procedures involved in this tool.
- Possible problems that may be encountered in using the tool.
- What are its advantages? What are its disadvantages?
- Timelines and responsibilities: who is doing what.
- Next steps should be explained. For example – who is responsible for the distribution of output.
- Examples of how the tools can be applied should be brought out in the case studies.
- Key terms and concepts and their definitions should be identified (to be fed into the glossary).

The language used in the toolkit should be clear and simple, so that the steps involved in the evaluation

process will be easy to follow. The use of bullets is encouraged to facilitate easy reading and enhance the presentation of the document. For each tool, contact details of writers, as resource persons, should be given. In addition, all collaborators on the tool will be listed, giving recognition to each individual's work.

Contributors

Most of writers contributing to the development of each tool are information specialists with a wide range of experience in the evaluation of information products. They are drawn from South and North, and generally hold management functions in governmental, non-governmental and private sector organisations.

CONTENTS OF THE TOOLKIT

At the Amsterdam workshop, it was decided that the toolkit would contain five main modules of tools. These would comprise the 'Introductory Module', 'Preparatory Work Tools', 'Process Tools' and 'Activities Tools' and 'Case Study Tools'. In addition, a new 'Data Collection and Analysis Module' has recently been proposed. The currently proposed structure and the status of the individual tools can be found in Table 1.

Introductory Module

The Introductory module aims to provide an overview of the toolkit. Based on the conception of project management, it will aim to present an overview of the role of evaluation as well as putting the toolkit into its proper context. There is a need also to look at the scale of the evaluation and the management context of the programme, including what has come out from the overall programme, the project, or the service.

This module will also outline the conceptual approach, explaining how performance and impact assessment fit into the whole process. Users should be able to get a clear idea about performance and impact evaluation at the different levels and how they are related. This should be linked to the operational framework for information management, the Evaluation Road Map for Information, developed by Ibrahim Khadar and to be found in his paper in this Special Issue.

The module will discuss how to implement an evaluation. In addition, particular attention will be paid to the role of indicators, the need to select 'good' indicators and pitfalls in going about it in the wrong

way. This module will also discuss the scheduling of the tools. For example, placing the 'SWOT analysis for preparing your evaluation' in front of 'Writing a terms of reference for your evaluation'.

An important part of the introductory module is the glossary. All the terminology from the tools will be defined, making it possible for users to have access to one or two precise definitions.

Preparatory Work

The preparatory work tools (PW tools) will lay the basis for the evaluation, identifying planning tasks such as determining the purposes, questions and methods of the evaluation. Some three tools are currently placed in this category. These tools cover work which needs to be done before the evaluation starts. PW1 'Planning your evaluation' describes how the logical framework – or log frame – of a project or activity can be used to structure an evaluation and assist with the identification of indicators. This is however based on the user already having a log frame of the project – an appendix in the resource book will deal with how to construct such a framework if the user does not already have one.

PW2 'SWOT analysis for preparing your evaluation' looks at how to use a 'strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats' analysis to assess challenges facing the evaluation. Originally there was one tool dealing with SWOT analysis but, after discussions in Amsterdam, it was clear that there needed to be two: one dealing with a SWOT of the evaluation itself and one dealing with SWOT as an approach to collecting data about the project or programme. Thus, a SWOT analysis tool will also now appear in the 'data collection and analysis module'.

Process Tools

There are currently some four process tools (P tools) being envisaged. These tools are currently in a far stage of development with second or third versions currently under discussion. P1 'Indicators' will offer some basic guidelines for determining and formulating appropriate indicators. In order to be effective, indicator formulation has to be fully integrated as a part of the evaluation design. Indicators are seen as the 'yardsticks' of change. P2 'Strategies for writing and dissemination of the evaluation report' is complemented by P3 'Strategy for the utilization of the evaluation report (feedback)'. Together these two tools offer guidelines on report writing, dissemination and utilization. P4 'After Action Review' provides a methodology for joint learning from the evaluation.

SMART TOOLS FOR EVALUATION

Tool category	Tool number	Tool name	Description and aim of the tool
Introductory Module	n.a.	Glossary	This will give an overview of the toolkit. Aspects of project management will be looked at to give the bigger picture with respect to the role of evaluation as well as putting the toolkit in context. The conceptual approach will be explored, explaining how performance and impact assessment fit into the whole process.
	n.a.	Overview and scheduling	
	n.a.	Conceptual approach	
	n.a.	Role of indicators	
Preparatory work module	PW1	Planning your evaluation	This tool will document how the logic model, logical framework and service models are used in planning and carrying out an evaluation. The approaches presented and related terminology are regularly used so it is important to at least to be aware of their meanings and uses, even if the approaches are not applied during the evaluation in question.
	PW2	SWOT analysis for preparing your evaluation	This tool will examine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the evaluation. It will not include SWOT analysis as a means of data collection for the project which is dealt with in the 'Data collection and analysis' module.
	PW3	Writing a terms of reference for your evaluation	This tool will provide a step-by-step approach to writing a ToR for your evaluation.
Process tool module	P1	Indicators	This tool will give advice on how to select appropriate indicators as well as some examples for different products.
	P2	Strategies for writing and dissemination of the evaluation report	This will give tips on how to write an evaluation report and how to present it to different target audiences, taking into consideration sensitive issues and encouraging the use of the findings.
	P3	Strategy for the utilization of the evaluation report (feedback)	This will look at ways in which the evaluator can use to his or her advantage to get the key decision makers and stakeholders to read the report and act on it.
	P4	After Action Review	This methodology will facilitate learning by the evaluation team after the evaluation has been completed. This is a knowledge management tool, originally used by the US military.
Data collection and analysis	n.a.	Introduction to the module	This will provide an introduction to the module, outlining the qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis tools which can be applied.
	D1	Questionnaire design	Guidelines on how to produce an effective questionnaire are being developed. Examples of questionnaires used in actual evaluations will be provided.
	D2	Focus groups	Three varied methodologies for data collection will be outlined.

Table 1. The proposed structure of the toolkit.

Continued

Tool category	Tool number	Tool name	Description and aim of the tool
	D3	Case studies/stories/anecdotes	This tool will examine the external and internal environment of the organisation in which the evaluation will take place. It looks at the strengths and weaknesses which can be exploited to further promote the performance of the product or service.
	D4	Interviews	
	D5	SWOT for data collection	
	D6	Data analysis	This tool will outline different approaches to data analysis
Activities	n.a.	Introduction to the module	This introduction will consider the nature of information activities and introduce the various tools.
	A1	Seminars	This tool will describe an approach for evaluating a training seminar.
	A2	Newsletters	This tool will help in the evaluation of local, regional and international newsletters.
	A3	Websites	This tool will provide basic steps for evaluating a website taking the following into consideration: architecture, technology, style, content, strategy and management.
	A4	Question & Answer services	This tool will look at how information centres can evaluate their response to questions on demand.
	A5	Libraries/resource centres	This tool will help managers evaluate the performance of small libraries and information centres.
	A6	Networks	To be developed
	A7	Radio	To be developed
	A8	Databases	To be developed
	A9	Multimedia	To be developed
	Case Study	CA1-CA9.	This module will look at specific case studies related to the different information programmes identified in the Activities module. The case studies will allow managers to judge whether the lessons learned would apply in another context.

Table 1. Continued.

Data Collection and Analysis

This module on data collection and analysis (D tools) currently comprises five tools. It started out as one single tool and has grown as the need for more methodologies for data collection have been identified. Data collection and analysis comprises the procedures used to gather information for an evaluation and the methods used to analyse the data in responsible way. Data collection and analysis follows after the evaluation design.

The main issues dealt with by this module will include:

- Integrating quantitative and qualitative techniques
- Participatory data collection techniques
- Data analysis techniques.

Excluding the introduction to the module, the toolkit currently comprises:

- D1 Questionnaire design
- D2 Focus groups
- D3 Case studies/stories and anecdotes
- D4 Interviews
- D5 SWOT for data collection
- D7 Data analysis.

An example of the 'questionnaire design tool' can be found in Annex 1.

Activities Module

This module (A tools) is the most substantive part of the toolkit. It aims to offer practitioners a clear route

to follow in an evaluation of a particular information activity, including short seminars (A1), newsletters (A2), websites (A3), question and answer services (A4), and small libraries and resource centres (A5). In addition to these tools which are in the process of being improved and designed, it is suggested that other tools will be constructed for networks, radio, databases and multimedia.

In developing these tools, careful attention will be paid to the context in which the product or service is being evaluated. As with all the tools, graphics and matrices will be used where possible to increase readability and understanding of how to perform the evaluation. The methods used to evaluate the activities should be based on the ones already provided in the toolkit – no new methods should be introduced at this stage. There will be flagging and signposting of the tools for easy referencing.

Case Study Module

The final module in the toolkit will be a range of case studies (CA1-CA9) which will give concrete examples of actual evaluations. These studies also offer a detailed application of the tool and will test the activity tools developed in the previous section. Some of the case studies have already been derived. For example, there are currently three case studies to support the newsletter activities tool.

The suggested guidelines for these case studies comprise:

- Title of the product/service and its location
- Situational analysis: summary of why the product or service was developed, what it was expected to achieve (objectives)
- Components of the product/service
- How it achieved its results
- Lessons learned: what factors were crucial to its success and why?
- What did not work and why?
- How would you have done it differently based on the lessons learned.

Editing, Consolidation and Validation

The tools as they now stand are currently going through an editing process by the Editorial Committee which was appointed at the Amsterdam workshop. When the process of editing and consolidation is completed, the tools will be tested and validated in the field during the summer of 2003. Testing will be undertaken in the information projects and programmes of the partners, although it is also expected that some cases will be commissioned. When this experience has been compiled and presented to the wider LEAP IMPACT community for comment, it is

currently envisaged that the tools will be published. The form of publication is not yet definitively decided but it is expected that it will take place in print and electronic (web) format so that it can be accessible to all potential user groups.

CONCLUSIONS

Although the smart tools represent an ongoing project, this paper provides an overview of their complexity and diversity. On publication, they should provide a 'state of the art' guide and handbook for those wishing to undertake their own evaluations. This toolkit represents the combined output of a considerable number of people working in the field of the evaluation of information in the North and South. This combination of documented explicit and experiential, implicit knowledge from these experts and practitioners should serve to make it a relevant and useful tool in evaluation. Nevertheless, challenges lie ahead, the tools still need to be tested and validated in the field, and mechanisms still have to be developed to promote continuous interactive feedback to further refine the tools. The LEAP IMPACT community is, of course, the place to start.

<i>D1: Questionnaire design</i>	
Date of update	16/11/03
Version	1
Writers	
Collaborators	

Annex 1

Questionnaires are an inexpensive way to gather data from a potentially large number of respondents. Often they are the only feasible way to reach a number of reviewers large enough to allow statistically analysis of the results. A well-designed questionnaire that is used effectively can gather information on both the overall performance of the activity as well as information on specific components of the system. If the questionnaire includes demographic questions on the participants, they can be used to correlate performance and satisfaction among different groups of users.

It is important to remember that a questionnaire should be viewed as a multi-stage process beginning with definition of the aspects to be examined and

ending with interpretation of the results. Every step needs to be designed carefully because the final results are only as good as the weakest link in the questionnaire process. Although questionnaires may be cheap to administer compared to other data collection methods, they are every bit as expensive in terms of design time and interpretation.

The steps required to design and administer a questionnaire include:

1. Defining the objectives of the survey
2. Determining the sampling group
3. Writing the questionnaire
4. Administering the questionnaire
5. Interpretation of the results

Good question ordering and layout are important because the cost of poorly designed questionnaires is the same as the cost of poorly written questions or a bad sample: the results you get can be biased, insufficient or misleading.

This tool concentrates on guidelines for better survey design. These guidelines follow common sense rather than hard-and-fast principles. They are easy to forget, however, because they are so simple.

Remember, responding to a survey should be an interesting, stress-free experience. If respondents become bored, confused or irritated, the results you get back may be of little use.

Think about the order and layout of the survey as if you had to fill it out. Is the survey attractive and professional looking? Is it easy to read? Are the questions interesting? Are there many questions on the same subject or are the topics varied?

There are some differences in guidelines between self-administered surveys and interviewer-administered surveys. For now, simply keep the following differences in mind.

Self-administered surveys require respondents to be both interested in and capable of filling in the survey. In other words, the questionnaire not only has to motivate recipients in some way through its importance, appearance and questions, but be easy enough to complete to minimize fatigue, boredom or confusion.

Interviewer-administered surveys must be easy for the interviewer to read aloud, and must have instructions that reduce the chance of making a mistake.

Key Preparation

Before you start to design your questions, clearly articulate what problem or need is to be addressed using the information to be gathered by the questions. Review why you're doing the evaluation and what you hope to accomplish by it. This provides focus on

what information you need and, ultimately, on what questions should be used.

Directions to Respondents

- Include a brief explanation of the purpose of the questionnaire.
- Include clear explanation of how to complete the questionnaire.
- Include directions about where to provide the completed questionnaire.

Note conditions of confidentiality.

Wording of Questions

1. Will the respondent understand the wording, i.e. are you using any slang, cultural-specific or technical words?
2. Are any words so strong that they might influence the respondent to answer a certain way? Attempt to avoid use of strong adjectives with nouns in the questions, e.g. 'highly effective government,' 'prompt and reliable,' etc.
3. To ensure you're asking one question at a time, avoid use of the word 'and' in your question.
4. Avoid using 'not' in your questions if you're having respondents answer 'yes' or 'no' to a question. Use of 'not' can lead to double negatives, and cause confusion.

General 'Dos' And 'Don'ts'

Begin with easy general questions. This will put the respondent at ease, establish interest and build rapport.

Keep it simple. Complex questions can confuse respondents and produce inaccurate results. Generally, the more words to a question, the more likely that the wording itself will influence the response. Try breaking up a long question into two shorter ones. Word questions so that everyone can understand easily.

Do not assume knowledge. For example, if you were to ask a difficult or technical question, some (or perhaps many) people will answer without really understanding what that means.

Avoid 'yes' and 'no' answers. These do not adequately measure the range of opinion on a subject. Instead of asking 'Are you satisfied with the newsletter?' ask 'How satisfied are you with the newsletter – very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not too satisfied or not satisfied at all?'

Allowing neutral ground or not? When you design your answer categories, whether in words or in numbers, there is no fixed rule about whether you should allow people to choose from among four (forcing them to choose whether they are more positive or more negative), or whether you should give them five choices (providing them with neutral ground).

Sensitive questions need to go at the end. Some people are uncomfortable being asked about, for example, their income or educational qualifications. By saving these questions until last, you have a better chance of getting answers since the respondent feels more comfortable after answering other questions. It is also helpful to explain that this information is asked for statistical purposes only.

Use careful skip logic. Some questionnaires include questions aimed at a specific group of respondents. In such cases, use 'filter' or 'screener' questions to sort the respondents into appropriate groups. Those who answer 'Yes' should be told also to answer the next question, but those who answer 'No' should be told to 'skip' over to the next questions that are inappropriate for all.

Use filter questions to distinguish informed and uninformed subjects regarding a certain subject. For example, ask a question like 'Have you heard or read about Project X?' and ask follow-up questions only to those who answer 'Yes.'

Open ended questions should be restricted. It's always tempting to ask 'open-ended' questions; that is, instead of including a list of responses from which respondents have to choose, the respondent is asked to explain his or her position. However, you should try not to include many such questions, but try to limit yourself to one or two.

Use a final open-ended question which can compensate for a question in which the alternatives given may not have satisfied a respondent; it allows those who feel the questionnaire 'missed the real point' to tell you about it; it surfaces new issues you may want to address at other times in other ways, etc.

Things to avoid in the questions:

- Leading questions because they may suggest an answer.
- Ambiguous questions which can easily be misunderstood and misinterpreted.
- Value-laden terms, particularly terms with emotional or political meaning.
- Socially acceptable questions which lead to socially acceptable answers that may or may not be true.

- Overlapping categories. One common mistake in questionnaire design is setting up answer categories this way:

'How many years of education have you received?'

- Under 5 years
- 5–10 years
- 10–15

In this set of answers, someone with 5 years of education could choose 2 categories.

Source

'Guidelines for creating better questionnaires' by Pamela Narins, Manager, Market Research. <http://www.ryerson.ca/~mjoppe/ResearchProcess/QuestionnaireGuidelines.htm>.

George H. Gallup International Institute 'Guidelines for questionnaire design'

<http://coolschool.k12.or.us/courses/190200/lessons/lesson6/polldesign.html>.

David O'Brien 'Questionnaire design'.

http://www.cc.gatech.edu/classes/cs6751_97_winter/Topics/quest-design/

(Draft questionnaire design tool prepared by Sarah Cummings for the Amsterdam workshop, 2002)

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Note

This paper has been produced by members of the LEAP IMPACT community of practice. This open community aims to improve the institutional performance of monitoring and evaluation practice related to information services, information products and information projects. Visit the LEAP IMPACT workspace at: <http://www.bellanet.org/leap/impact>.

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The authors would like to gratefully acknowledge the input of all those who have worked on the toolkit.

Abstract

Contribution to a special issue on 'Developing Evaluation Practice in the Information Sector'. Describes a complex collaborative project to produce 'smart tools' for the evaluation of information services, projects and programmes. The main target group for the tools is information managers in resource-poor settings

who wish to evaluate their information products and services themselves. The toolkit will focus on performance evaluation and not on impact assessment. The focus, format and guidelines for the tools are reviewed. The tools are divided into the following modules: Introductory module; Preparatory work module; Process tool module; Data collection and analysis module; Activities module Case studies. Editing and consolidation of the toolkit will take place in 2003, with publication planned for the beginning of 2004.

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MORE ON EVALUATION TOOLS AND METHODOLOGIES

Evaluation methodologies for information management systems.

E. L. Morse. *D-Lib Magazine*, 8 (9) Sep 2002, No page numbers.

The full text of this electronic journal article can be found at [URL: <http://www.dlib.org/dlib/september02/morse/09morse.html>]. The projects developed under the auspices of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) Information Management (IM) programme are innovative approaches to tackle the hard problems associated with delivering critical information in a timely fashion to decision makers. To the extent that each of the information management systems interfaces with users, these systems must undergo testing with actual humans. The DARPA IM Evaluation project has developed an evaluation methodology that can assist system developers in assessing the usability and utility of their systems. The key components of an evaluation plan are data, users, tasks and metrics.

Toward developing measures of the impact of library and information services.

J. C. Durrance, K. E. Fisher-Pettigrew. *Reference and User Services Quarterly*, 42 (1) Fall 2002, pp. 43–53.

A convergence of factors, both within and outside of librarianship, has created an environment conducive to the development of what has in the past seemed too difficult – measures that will be able to determine the impact of library services. These factors include: advances in research that improve evaluation approaches; demands for public sector accountability; and governmental activities aimed at determining service outcomes. They will influence the development of a new generation of evaluation tools for librarians and other professionals. This article examines these factors within the framework of current, key evaluation issues and identifies and discusses the impacts of library community information services as well as implications for the development of context-centred evaluation tools.

Developing performance and impact indicators and targets in public and education libraries.

S. Markless, D. Streatfield. *International Journal of Information Management*, 21 (2) Apr 2001, pp. 167–179.

Traces recent changes in the idea of evaluating performance in UK education and libraries and examines differences in impact assessment between the two fields. Little attention has so far been given by librarians to service impact assessment. A process model for generating outcome/impact indicators and targets was developed in the course of the research on the effectiveness of further education college libraries. This was then adapted into a development planning model to enable education library managers to work through the processes required to arrive at appropriate impact indicators. Describes the model, explores issues in working with the model and reports its further adaptation for public library service managers through another national research project.

(From Library and Information Science Abstracts)