

## Systematic performance measurement for university libraries in Vietnam

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### Abstract:

**Purpose:** Higher education reform in Vietnam has recently required university libraries to improve their quality, to evaluate their performance, and to be accountable for the purpose of quality assessment and accreditation. Systematic performance measurement is an integral part of this process. The aims of this paper are: to provide an overview of the current state of performance development in Vietnamese university libraries; to address issues related to the measurement of library performance; and to propose an approach to evaluation for university libraries in Vietnam.

**Design/methodology/approach:** The paper reviews the literature on library performance measurement, with particular focus on university libraries in Vietnam. Relevant documents relating to performance measurement were examined, and two case studies of performance measurement in university libraries in Vietnam were carried out.

**Findings:** It is critical that university libraries in Vietnam develop systematic performance measures and apply different methods and tools for performance measurement. To succeed, cooperation between the administering authority, university administration and library management is essential.

**Research limitations/implications:** This paper reports on the first phase of a doctoral research project at Monash University. Further research is being undertaken to develop a framework for quality assurance and performance measurement for Vietnamese university libraries. The efficacy of this framework is yet to be tested through its deployment in practice.

**Originality/value:** While performance measurement is well established in western countries, it is less so in Vietnam. The current research is seeking to develop a performance measurement framework for university libraries that is attuned to the Vietnamese context. The

paper stresses the urgent need for the development of effective performance measures and systematic performance measurement systems amongst this sector.

**Keywords:** Performance measurement, Performance indicators, University libraries, Vietnam

## **Introduction**

Performance measurement of library and information organizations is an important managerial activity. This activity is defined as “the process of systematically assessing effectiveness against a predetermined norm, standard or expressed goal” (Cronin, 1982). In other words, performance measurement is the comparison of actual levels of performance with pre-established target levels of performance (Slizyte & Bakanauskiene, 2007).

The roles of performance measurement are widely recognized as: supporting the management process (Nuut, Lepik & Liivamagi, 2001); demonstrating institutional effectiveness and accountability (Baker, 2002); tracking quality achievements of an institution (Baba & Shukor, 2003); supporting decision making and improving library and information services (Booth, 2006); and comparing different sources of data and planning strategy (Nuut, 2006). Libraries need to measure their performance in order to:

- (1) Demonstrate their results and quality to stakeholders. (With university libraries, for example, increasing accountability requirements of their parent institutions is placing pressure on libraries to demonstrate that funding is used appropriately and effectively. If this is done, libraries can maintain their services, justify their role and existence, and increase funding from their parent institutions).
- (2) Identify their current strengths and weaknesses for the purposes of planning, monitoring progress and finding better ways to improve service quality.

In Vietnam, from 2004, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) began to accredit the quality of university institutions, based on its set of requirements (Vietnam. MOET, 2004b). Under MOET’s criteria, the university library is a crucial element of a university’s quality assessment. As never before, Vietnamese university libraries have to focus on providing quality services and on providing evidence of their success.

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holistic quality assurance and performance measurement framework for Vietnamese university libraries. This paper concentrates on one aspect of this research—performance measurement.

The paper firstly elaborates on the requirements of library performance measurement in Vietnamese university libraries, and then explores current practice through two case studies, highlighting performance measurement issues in these libraries. Wider challenges of performance measurement amongst the Vietnamese university library sector are raised. The latter part of the paper outlines several models of library performance measurement as discussed in the literature, and recommends one useful framework for performance measurement.

### **The requirement for measuring performance of university libraries in Vietnam**

Higher education in Vietnam has recently developed rapidly. Table 1 below illustrates this increase.

**Table 1: Higher education statistics for Vietnam, 2003-2008**

*Source:* Vietnam. MOET (2007a; 2008)

	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
<b>No. of universities</b>	87	93	104	139	160
<b>No. of students</b>	898,767	1,046,291	1,016,276	1,173,147	1,180,547
<b>No. of lecturers</b>	28,434	33,969	34,294	38,137	38,217

The rapid expansion in the number of universities, students and lecturers has increased the urgency of establishing formal quality management and performance measurement practices in higher education. Several government documents were issued in 2004 in order to affirm the importance of quality, quality assurance and assessment in higher education. These include:

- *Resolution No 37-2004/QH11 about education*, issued by the Vietnamese Parliament. This document indicates that educational institutions and schools must focus on quality management as a central function, and implement quality accreditation of education annually (Vietnam. Parliament, 2004).

- *Decision No 25/2004/CT-BGD&ĐT*, issued by MOET. This requires higher educational institutions to develop and implement a quality accreditation system (Vietnam. MOET, 2004a).
- *Decision No 38/2004/QĐ-BGD&ĐT*, issued by MOET. The document provides the provisional regulations on accreditation of higher education institutions, which include a set of objective indicators for quality assurance and accreditation of higher education institutions (Vietnam. MOET, 2004b).

These documents reflect a shift of emphasis in government direction from the mere quantitative expansion of services to the improvement of service quality. The regulations prescribe a quality assurance process comprising both self-assessment and an external assessment of university performance. Self-assessment is a process of self-examination, study and report by the individual university concerning its existing quality situation, and the effectiveness of its education and research processes (Vietnam. MOET, 2004b). External assessment involves experts from the outside the university, who assess the extent to which the university meets its stated goals (Vietnam. MOET, 2004b). To be accredited, universities in Vietnam first have to evaluate themselves, and then be assessed externally by a quality accreditation organization, such as MOET, which issues a quality certification for the university.

To pilot the new quality accreditation system, an initial group of twenty universities was selected by MOET. These universities, and their libraries, conducted self-assessments, and then were assessed externally in 2008 (Vietnam. MOET, 2007c, p. 75). By 2010, it is anticipated that at least 80 percent of universities will have completed the process of quality assessment by external organizations.

Within this framework, university libraries are acknowledged as an essential unit of the higher education system, and one of the major factors affecting the quality of higher education. Libraries are required to evaluate themselves and to be accountable for how their performance contributes to institutional goals and success, based on the MOET criteria.

*The Regulations of organization and operation of university libraries* (2008a) issued by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (MCST) also requires that university libraries report their activities annually to the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), MCST or other

ministries. The regulations indicate that libraries need to have a unit which has responsibility for library statistics and reporting.

Recently, in the first meeting of academic libraries in Vietnam, it was stressed by MCST that academic libraries must report annually on their operations to the Department of Higher Education (MOET) and the Department of Libraries (MCST) (Vietnam. MCST, 2008b). With these requirements from MOET and MCST, performance measurement and evaluation have, as never before, become essential for university libraries.

## **Current practice of performance measurement and evaluation in university libraries in Vietnam**

### *A national standard for evaluation in university libraries*

As a university library is a significant contributor to university quality, quality of the university library has become one of the key criteria for the accreditation, assessment and ranking of Vietnamese universities. In its preliminary regulations for accreditation, MOET provided various criteria to evaluate the library, focusing on library staff, resources and infrastructure. These criteria are grouped by level, reflecting the stage of maturity in the quality journey. This is illustrated in Table 2.

**Table 2: Selected MOET criteria for evaluating a university library**

*Source:* Vietnam. MOET (2004b)

<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Description</b>
5.10 Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Level 1:</i> The library has sufficient staff to support students, lecturers and university staff members.</li> <li>• <i>Level 2:</i> Library staff are trained in librarianship, and have the ability to serve well the needs of students, lecturers and university staff members.</li> </ul>
9.1 Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Level 1:</i> The university has a library, reading rooms, books, journals and other materials to support learning and research. The library has from 60 to 105 book titles for each subject in the areas of technology and economy; and from 70 to 122 book titles for others.</li> <li>• <i>Level 2:</i> The library applies information technology systems, and has electronic resources. The library has Internet connection, and collaborates with other libraries in sharing materials. The library acquires new documents regularly and has methods to encourage patrons to use the library collection effectively. The proportion of the university population who use the university library is high.</li> </ul>

Unfortunately, these measures do not reflect all dimensions of library performance, nor do they provide systematic performance indicators for the evaluation of university libraries. Although the official regulations of the MOET assessment standard for universities were published in 2007, there are still few specific indicators which assist libraries to evaluate their performance in detail (Vietnam. MOET, 2007b). While the MOET standard can be applied at a high level for benchmarking across universities, it offers insufficient guidance for the individual university library, and needs to be supplemented by a systematic performance measurement system.

### **Case studies of current performance measurement and evaluation at university libraries in Vietnam**

This section presents two examples of current performance measurement practice—at the Vietnamese National University in HoChiMinh City Libraries (VNU-HCM Libraries), where T.K.T. Ninh has worked for many years; and the CanTho University Learning Resource Center (LRC Cantho), one of the biggest university libraries in Vietnam. Data reported here is derived from library documents, personal experience, observation and conversations with university librarians.

#### ***The Vietnamese National University HoChiMinh City Libraries (VNU-HCM Libraries)***

VNU-HCM Libraries is a system of nine libraries, including: the Central Library; the libraries of the University of Technology, the University of Science, the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, the International University and the University of Information Technology; and the libraries of the Faculty Library of Economy and Law, the Institution of Environment and Resources, and the Talent School. (The Talent School is a high school which offers enrichment programs to its students based on student talent and ability). These libraries operated almost independently until February 2009 when VNU-HCM decided to establish a library system. The system is under the administration of the VNU-HCM Libraries Committee, and the Central Library is the leader in organizing and deploying collaborative activities across the library system (Vietnam. National University in HCMC, 2009). VNU-HCM Libraries have established consistent practices to support the collection of library statistics, evaluation and reporting requirements (Vietnam. National University in HCMC, 2009). They have designed a standard form to collect statistical data from library members. The data cover a range of areas, as summarized in Table 3.



**Table 3: Areas of library statistics at the VNU-HCM Libraries**

*Source:* Vietnam. VNU-HCM Libraries (2009)

<b>Collections:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Books: Number of book copies and book titles</li><li>• Periodicals: Number of periodicals in terms of types and languages</li><li>• Multimedia: Number of cassettes, videos, CDs, DVDs, VCDs</li><li>• Electronic documents: Number of subscribed electronic databases and in-house databases</li><li>• Others documents: Number of dissertations, conference proceedings, lectures online, etc.</li></ul>
<b>Facilities and infrastructure:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Total area of each library (m<sup>2</sup>)</li><li>• Number of seats</li><li>• Number of computers (for staff and users) and average computer use (number of times used per day)</li><li>• Number of other machines such as photocopiers, printers, etc.</li><li>• Expenditure for different type of material/acquisitions, electronic document subscriptions, and digitizing materials.</li></ul>
<b>Service and usage:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Different services provided by the library</li><li>• Number of books loans per year</li><li>• Number of times electronic databases were accessed, and number of full-text articles downloaded</li><li>• Number of times library websites were accessed</li></ul>
<b>Staff:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Total number of staff</li><li>• Number of staff categorized according to their qualifications</li></ul>
<b>Users:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Total number of users</li><li>• Number of users served per day and per year</li></ul>

One of the initial pilot group of 20 universities to be assessed and accredited by MOET, VNU-HCM Libraries conducted a self-assessment in 2008 and was then subjected to external assessment based on the MOET criteria. Several data collection methods were used to assess library performance. These included the routine collection of statistical data, surveying, and collecting user feedback via an opinion drop box or notebook. For example, a survey of library users was conducted at the library of the University of Technology in HCMC in the academic year 2008-2009. The survey covered a range of aspects, eliciting information on library user needs, and ascertaining the level of library resource usage, and user satisfaction about library resources, services, facilities and infrastructure (Vietnam. University of Technology in HCMC, 2009). The survey results and other opinions collected from library users were synthesized and analyzed in order to find out solutions for improving library services.

VNU-HCM Libraries also utilized information technology tools to evaluate their performance. For example, the Central Library used the eVALUED evaluation tool to assess the usage of



subscribed electronic databases. VNU-HCM Libraries also utilizes the statistical reporting functions of their integrated library systems, which enable them to calculate the usage of libraries resources such as number of books which are used frequently, books which are not borrowed, and overdue books. Gradually, VNU-HCM Libraries is building a systematic performance measurement system for assessing the quality of its operations and systems.

***The CanTho University Learning Resource Center (LRC Cantho).***

LRC Cantho is the biggest university library in the Mekong Delta region of Vietnam. The LRC was developed as one of four projects funded by Atlantic Philanthropies (which construct new buildings, equip them with modern facilities and information technology infrastructure, and train staff members). The goals of LRC Cantho are: to excel in knowledge management; to promote and sustain professional development; and to support research and training. For several years, the LRC has conducted performance measurement in four main areas: facilities and infrastructure; library and information services; collections; and application of information technology (Huynh, 2008). For example, statistical data of facilities involves the ratio of computers per student, ratio of books per student, number of seats, and LRC area (m<sup>2</sup>) for staff and for students. The LRC also counts the number of textbooks and reference materials serving each course provided by the university. Data is recorded pertaining to each library service area—including circulation, reference, liaison librarians, bibliographic instruction, multimedia service, and conferences and training. For example, in circulation services, the LRC records number of users, number of books for loan, and number of renewed books. With the reference service, data about number of training courses, and programs and training results are collected. The LRC also reports the size of its collections by format—books, journals, electronic databases, etc.

To collect data for evaluation, the LRC uses both self-assessment and external assessment methods. For its self-assessment, it applies a number of methods, such as: surveying; using statistical functions of the automated library information system software to collect related data automatically; collecting user opinions from library forums and user meetings; and discussions with library users and staff. Its external assessment involves reviews and evaluation from project experts and professionals to identify areas for future development (Huynh, 2008; Robinson, 2006).

## **Performance measurement and evaluation for university libraries in Vietnam: Issues**

As can be seen from these examples, university libraries in Vietnam are starting to recognize the importance of library statistics and evaluation. Besides the initial 20 university libraries which conducted self-assessment and were evaluated externally, other libraries are also beginning to undertake self-assessment with a focus on library statistics (H. Nguyen, 2008). For example, some university libraries involved in the Programme for the Enhancement of Research Information (PERii) have applied the eVALUED tool to assess the usage of electronic databases. Many university libraries with library integrated information systems are utilizing the statistical functions of their systems to produce necessary data for evaluation of their resource usage and for managerial purposes.

Thus, although university libraries in Vietnam have conducted performance measurement to some extent, compared with their western counterparts, such activity is still in its initial stages of development and implementation.

Vietnamese university libraries face a range of performance management and evaluation issues. The first of these relates to definition of mission. As “educational quality of universities is the meeting of university missions...” (Vietnam. MOET, 2007b), it is crucial that universities clearly define their vision, mission and strategic goals. As a university component, the university library has to contribute to the achievement of university quality. University libraries, therefore, have to define goals which align with the university vision and mission, and then assess how well they reach those goals. In the Vietnamese context, developing and planning university library strategy, including goals, is inadequate, claim H. Nguyen, Trần and Mai (2004). Therefore, establishing goals which identify what the library needs to achieve, and then designing appropriate services and activities to meet those goals are prerequisites for university libraries (H. Nguyen, Trần & Mai, 2004). This can help ensure that libraries closely follow and support the development and requirements of university policies.

Vietnamese university libraries also experience problems because they have no systematic and standardized performance indicators and evaluation methods. National bodies such as the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, and the Department of Libraries primarily focus on collecting statistical information for the public library system (T.T.M. Nguyen, 2008). The Department of Higher Education (MOET), which has direct responsibility in administering academic institutions, has given little specific attention to the management of university

libraries. Academic library associations (including the Vietnamese Library Association of Southern Academic Libraries (VILASAL), and the Vietnamese Library Association of Northern Academic Libraries) have not developed or implemented any systematic performance measurement tools for university libraries. Although VILASAL has collected statistical information of some university library members, the information has not been synthesized and organized systematically. As there is no common standard, library performance measurement and evaluation remain very subjective (Huynh, 2008; T.T.M. Nguyen, 2008). Each library makes its own decision on which data should be collected; how to collect that data; and how to use the data. Consequently, it is also difficult for university libraries to benchmark against each other.

Although many libraries undertake some performance measurement, this activity concentrates primarily on traditional measures of inputs and outputs, while outcomes, and statistical information about modern services such as electronic resources and the usage of these resources, have not been investigated significantly (T.T.M. Nguyen, 2008). Library evaluation chiefly focuses on quantitative measures, to the detriment of assessing library service quality, including level of user satisfaction (Huynh, 2008; T.T.M. Nguyen, 2008). Setting goals and measuring the extent to which those goals have been attained does not yet seem to be a widespread practice amongst university libraries in Vietnam.

Traditionally, Vietnamese university libraries have had a weak culture of assessment—evidence and data have not been routinely collected, kept, processed and analyzed systematically for the purpose of making decisions, assessment and accreditation (V.H. Nguyen, 2007). The group of twenty university libraries involved in the first stage of MOET quality assessment and accreditation had to spend much time and effort in identifying appropriate performance measures to serve as evidence of quality to meet the requirements of MOET. Many libraries lack the information technology tools for effective evaluation (T.T.M. Nguyen, 2008).

With increasing demands for quality assessment in the higher education sector in Vietnam, a systematic performance measurement framework for university libraries is urgently needed. Such a framework would help Vietnamese university libraries:

- (1) To identify their limitations and assess the relative effectiveness of their resources and services;

- (2) To justify their quality and value to the university and other stakeholders; and
- (3) To benchmark with other libraries and learn from best practice.

### **Performance measurement for university libraries in Vietnam**

Several approaches to the measurement and evaluation of library services have been proposed, including: (1) the target achievement approach (Cameron, 1978, 1981; Goodall, 1988; Kebede, 1999; Pritchard, 1996); (2) the internal process approach (Cameron, 1978; 1981); (3) the system resource approach (Broady-Preston & Preston, 1999; Cameron, 1978; 1981); (4) the participant satisfaction approach (Cameron, 1978, 1981; Goodall, 1988; Kebede, 1999; Pritchard, 1996); and (5) the standards approach (Goodall, 1988; Kebede, 1999; Pritchard, 1996).

The first three approaches represent a traditional view of measurement, which focuses on organizational internal process from inputs, activities/ processing to outputs. The target achievement approach is the method which an organization measures the extent to which its stated goals are attained. Authors such as Broady-Preston and Preston (1999) and Calvert (2008) add that this method also embraces the assessment of *how* outputs are achieved. This means that libraries identify goals of their services, and then measure how these goals are achieved in a certain period of time. The internal process approach looks at performance measurement and evaluation as an aspect of efficiency, especially concerning how inputs are converted into outputs (Broady-Preston & Preston, 1999; Cameron, 1978; 1981). The system resource approach views library performance and effectiveness in terms of its inputs (Calvert, 2008). Data on the size of library collections, expenditure, staff and infrastructure are major concerns of this type of measurement.

While the above approaches concentrate on the measurement of internal library operations and resources, the fourth approach, the participant satisfaction approach has emerged as a new way to measure the degree to which libraries meet user needs and expectations (Calvert, 2008). From this point of view, library performance is good if the library can satisfy library users. Understanding library user needs and expectations, and estimating the degree of user satisfaction are primary emphases of this approach.

The fifth approach, the standards approach, measures library performance against standards or norms (Kebede, 1999). A number of library performance measurement standards have been

created, such as ISO 11620 (*Information and documentation—Library performance indicators*), ISO 2789 (*Information and documentation—International library statistics*), and ISO TR 20983 (*Information and documentation—Performance indicators for electronic library services*). The *International guidelines for performance measurement in academic libraries*, which were published by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (the *IFLA Guidelines*) is also an applicable tool for university libraries. ISO 11620 and the IFLA Guidelines were developed based on the Balanced Scorecard approach and embrace indicators which are categorized into four groups: resources, access and infrastructure; use; efficiency; and potential and development (ISO, 2003; Poll, 1996). For library statistics, ISO 2789 *International library statistics* outlines measures for inputs and outputs, focusing on collection size, users, services, staff, finance, and infrastructure (Poll, 2006). In the newest version, ISO 2789 also provides standards to assess and measure the use of electronic services, such as the electronic collection, the online catalogue, the library web site, online reference services, user training on electronic services and Internet access offered via the library (Poll, 2006). While the above standards and guidelines provide measures for all aspects of library performance, from traditional to modern services, ISO TR 20983 is primarily used to measure electronic library functions.

The above approaches show that measurement of library performance is multi-dimensional. Each approach evaluates the library from its own particular angle. Using a single approach, therefore, may not help libraries to evaluate their performance comprehensively. It is possible for libraries to adopt one approach or to combine several of these approaches (Broady-Preston & Preston, 1999) in order to reflect all dimensions of library performance. As different types of libraries have different kinds of users, any measures developed and implemented must also be appropriate to the services being provided (Goodall, 1988). Therefore, it is necessary to adopt the above standards and guidelines to meet the characteristics of libraries at both a national level and at the level of the individual library. These points of view are equally applicable to university libraries in Vietnam.

Setting a uniform standard for library performance measurement is now an urgent need for university libraries. In the library context, a standard is defined as “an acceptable level or criterion according to which something is compared, measured, or judged” (Reitz, 2007). Applying standards will help libraries to achieve uniformity and control quality (Lam, 1998). As there are currently no established standards or guidelines for evaluating university library performance in Vietnam, standardization of performance measurement is essential. It involves a “process of establishing uniform procedures and standards in a specific field of endeavor,

usually to facilitate exchange and co-operation and to assure quality and enhance productivity” (Reitz, 2007). In Vietnam, an initial activity that should be a priority is establishing common performance indicators or guidelines for the evaluation of university libraries. International standards and guidelines (as mentioned above) can be used for reference in developing an appropriate tool for measurement. On the one hand, the indicators should cover a range of aspects—from inputs, library activities/ processes to outputs; from the size of library resources, budget and facilities, and library efficiency to the usage of library resources and services; from statistics of traditional library resources to electronic resources. Each indicator should clarify its objective, scope, main data to be collected, and methods for measurement. On the other hand, the number of performance indicators should not be excessive, so that university libraries can apply them readily for their self-assessment or benchmarking. Once a standard is developed, it will not only apply in university libraries in Vietnam, but also in academic libraries generally—or at least be a reference for other types of libraries.

Another concern is who will be leaders to direct and manage the compilation of standards. Huynh (2008) asserts that the development of standards or guidelines should be undertaken by the Department of Libraries. However, as this department is administered by MCST, its management is more focused on the public library system. Therefore, the involvement of professional associations such as the Association of Libraries in Vietnam, especially VILASAL and VLANAL, is essential to ensure the direct applicability of indicators to university library practice. The Department of Higher Education (MOET) should also play a role to direct and collaborate with other agencies to develop such standards/ guidelines. A committee which involves participants from these organizations should be established to take primary responsibility in establishing the standards/ guidelines. Once performance indicators are developed, libraries will have a quality control tool to measure their performance consistently and to report their operations to their administering bodies in a uniform way.

Another possible approach to measuring university library performance is from the user perspective. Traditionally, teachers have occupied the central position in higher education in Vietnam; universities have not paid much attention to meeting the needs of students and the marketplace. This situation also applies with university libraries, as they have devoted little effort to identifying what user needs are; whether libraries meet those needs; and how to satisfy library users (H.C. Nguyen, 2008). Recently, higher education reform in Vietnam has aimed to increase

the quality of education, and transform the central focus of education from teachers to learners. A student focus is considered as a primary principle and direction for practice. Course evaluation by students is gradually becoming popular in universities. This trend also requires libraries to listen to user voices by using various methods. Using user opinion to measure library performance, therefore, needs to be undertaken regularly by university libraries. Applying tools such as SERVQUAL<sup>1</sup> or LibQUAL<sup>2</sup> to assess the extent of user satisfaction with libraries is one possible method.

Selecting appropriate methods for measurement is another concern of libraries. Higher education reform has required academic libraries to conduct self-assessment in order to improve their quality and performance. For self-assessment, libraries can apply various methods—quantitative and qualitative, eg estimating the size of library collections, expenditure and staffing; comparing current library collections and usage with past levels; surveying library users about their satisfaction with library services; and individual or focus group interviews. While many Vietnamese university libraries currently use library automated information systems and other technologies to operate and manage their activities, it is an important question to find an effective way whereby library managers at different levels can use such facilities to gain performance data, and transform such raw data into valuable information for quality improvement. In order to make performance measurement successful, libraries need to create a culture of assessment in which decisions are based on facts, research and analysis; where services are planned for the purpose of satisfying customers and stakeholders; and staff and leaders are committed to self-examination and openness (Lakos & Phipps, 2004, p. 352). To build such a culture, the following prerequisites need to be considered: (1) leaders commit to assessment activities; (2) relevant data and user feedback are routinely collected, analyzed, and used to set priorities, to allocate resources and to make decisions; (3) services, programs and products are evaluated for outcomes and efficiency; and (4) each unit within the library has defined critical processes and established measures of success.

Besides self-assessment, benchmarking is another dimension for libraries to meet external accountabilities and promote internal changes (Cullen, 2003). In library benchmarking, it is

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<sup>1</sup> SERVQUAL, developed by Berry, Parasuraman and Zeithaml, is an instrument for measuring service quality, based on the identification of the gap between customer expectations for excellence and customer perceptions of actual service distributed. Survey questions are categorized into five dimensions—tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy.

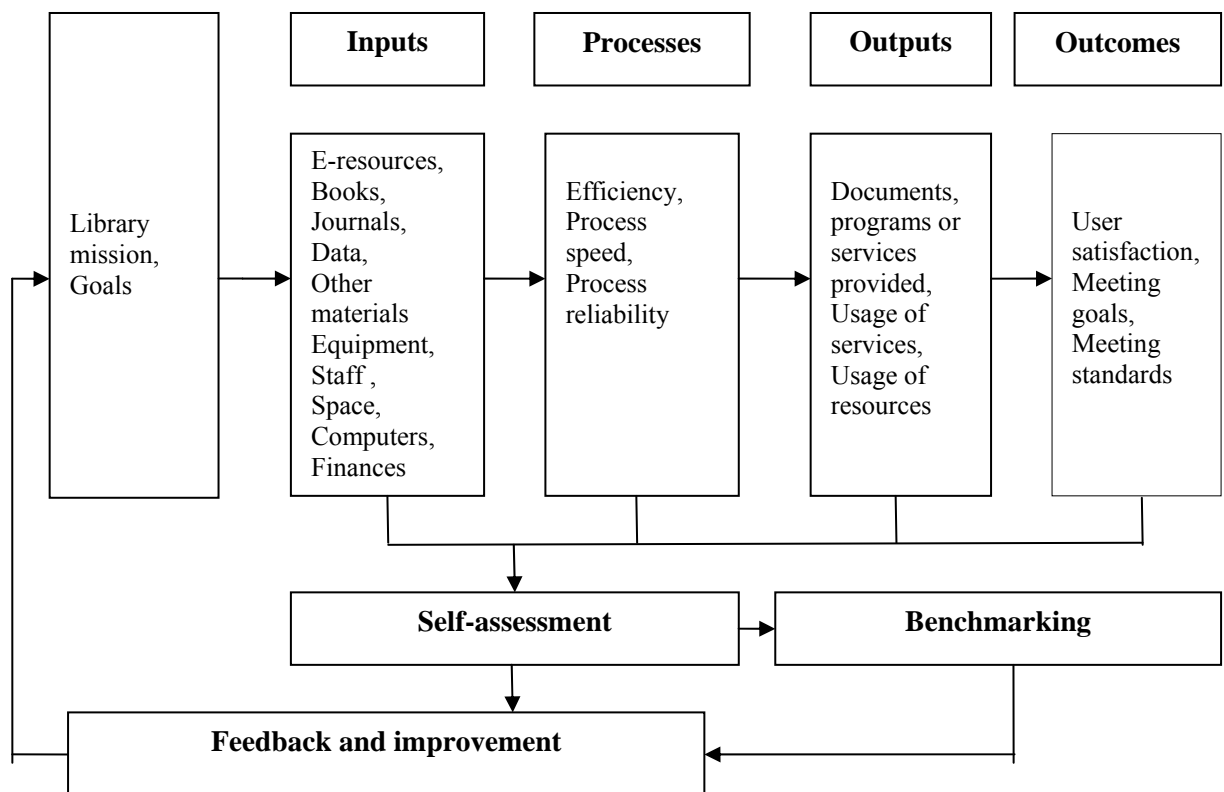
<sup>2</sup> LibQUAL, inspired by SERVQUAL, was developed by the Association of Research Libraries. It is a standardized survey designed to assess library service quality across multiple academic and research libraries. The instrument measures library user perceptions of the value of library services and identifies gaps between minimal, desired and perceived levels of service.

possible to focus on: (1) data collection and comparison of inputs and outputs; and (2) process benchmarking with a review of library functions, processes and collaboration (Cullen, 2003). In Vietnam, the first kind of benchmarking with a limited number of measures can be applied generally for all university libraries as it is easier for libraries to collect and provide quantitative data given their limited budgets, time and staffing. Associations of academic libraries in Vietnam again should play a central role in this kind of benchmarking. However, this type of benchmarking just shows quantitative data and cannot identify causes of problems in library performance (Cullen, 2003). For this, process benchmarking is important—it facilitates a deeper examination of the problem, as it looks at library performance in the light of a library’s characteristics and environmental context (Cullen, 2003). Process benchmarking is appropriate for Vietnamese university libraries that have similar characteristics in terms of their size and subject areas of their parent institutions.

In Figure 1, Jager’s (2006) model for quality assurance has been adapted to provide a useful framework for understanding performance measurement for university libraries in Vietnam.

**Figure 1: Proposed major components of performance measurement for university libraries in Vietnam.**

*Source:* Adapted from Jager (2006)





As presented in Figure 1, each university library first needs to establish its mission and goals. Library performance measurement has four main stages—from inputs, processes and outputs, to outcomes. Input measures focus on quantitative data which relate to collections, facilities and resources. Processes measures evaluate library efficiency. Output measures look at the usage of resources and services. Outcome measures assess level of user satisfaction, proportion of achieved goals, and the degree to which a performance measurement standard is met. Self-assessment and benchmarking are the two main methods of performance measurement. Data collected from the evaluation will be distributed to library managers at different levels for the purpose of improving library service quality and performance. The results of the performance measurement process can be used for the purpose of management, improvement and setting higher level goals for the library.

## **Conclusion**

As part of the push for higher education reform, Vietnamese university libraries are transforming into a new stage of development by focusing on user needs and satisfaction. Libraries must take into account their parent institutions, and stakeholders who are affected by their performance and quality of services. In the current environment, measuring library performance is essential. Although Vietnamese university libraries have made reasonable progress in the assessment of library operations, especially in terms of providing library statistics, performance management problems still exist. To overcome such difficulties, it is necessary to develop library measurement standards/guidelines; to approach performance measurement from multiple dimensions; and to apply a range of methods and tools as necessary. Collaboration between the leading organizations which have responsibility for the development of university libraries, and the deployment of systematic performance measurement, are essential, as is the development of a culture of assessment in which evaluation, feedback and improvement become a normal routine of library work.

## **Abbreviations:**

ISO: International Organization for Standardization

HCMC: HoChiMinh City

MOET: Ministry of Education and Training

MCST: Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism

VNU: Vietnam National University

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