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### Indicators For Evaluating Consulting Services in Library and Information Institutions

#### Abstract

*Modern libraries are not only places where information resources are stored and presented, but also act as innovative enterprises that provide consulting services for training, management and development. This article analyzes the main indicators that can be used to assess the quality and effectiveness of library consulting services. The evaluation indicators include aspects such as service accessibility, user satisfaction, service quality, result orientation, training and development opportunities, innovation and adaptation. Mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative analysis, user surveys, focus groups) are used as a methodological approach. The application of these indicators will help library management make strategic decisions and ensure the sustainable development of services.*

**Keywords:** Library Consulting, Service Evaluation, Performance Indicators, User Satisfaction, Quality Assessment, Strategic Management

### Kütüphane ve Bilgi Kurumlarında Danışmanlık Hizmetlerinin Değerlendirilmesine Yönelik Göstergeler

#### Öz

*Modern kütüphaneler sadece bilgi kaynaklarının depolandığı ve sunulduğu yerler değil, aynı zamanda eğitim, yönetim ve gelişim için danışmanlık hizmetleri sağlayan yenilikçi işletmeler olarak da hareket etmektedir. Bu makale, kütüphane danışmanlık hizmetlerinin kalitesini ve etkinliğini değerlendirmek için kullanılacak temel göstergeleri analiz etmektedir. Değerlendirme göstergeleri; hizmet erişilebilirliği, kullanıcı memnuniyeti, hizmet kalitesi, sonuç odaklılık, eğitim ve gelişim fırsatları, yenilikçilik ve adaptasyon gibi unsurları içermektedir. Metodolojik yaklaşım olarak karma yöntemler (nitel ve nicel analiz, kullanıcı anketleri, odak grupları) kullanılmaktadır. Bu göstergelerin*



*uygulanması, kütüphane yönetiminin stratejik kararlar almasına yardımcı olacak ve hizmetlerin sürdürülebilir gelişimini sağlayacaktır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Kütüphane Danışmanlığı, Hizmet Değerlendirme, Performans Göstergeleri, Kullanıcı Memnuniyeti, Kalite Değerlendirme, Stratejik Yönetim*

## **Introduction**

In the modern era, library and information institutions play a crucial role in the scientific, social, and technological development of society as one of the main pillars of the information and knowledge infrastructure. Traditionally, library and information institutions have carried the function of preserving and providing access to information resources. However, in the 21st century, their functional scope has significantly expanded. Among these new functions, consulting services hold particular importance. Libraries are no longer merely passive sources of information but have become institutional structures that actively provide knowledge and management support. Consulting services are characterized by libraries offering users and other organizations advice and guidance in various fields—such as information technologies, scientific research methodology, information management, education and training, and the preparation of innovative projects. These services not only enhance the social and academic impact of libraries but also contribute to their sustainable development. However, the issue of evaluating the effectiveness of these services still lacks a broad methodological foundation. It is necessary to establish specific assessment indicators to systematically measure the value and outcomes of libraries' consulting services. Such indicators should reflect not only the results of the service but also its quality, user satisfaction, sustainability, and innovativeness.

### **1. The main part**

The main goal of this article is to identify, classify, and analyze—on a methodological basis—the indicators that can be used to evaluate the consulting services of libraries. Additionally, the mechanisms for applying these indicators and their potential impact on library management will also be assessed. The main objectives of consulting services in libraries can be evaluated as follows:

Library consulting services, by expanding their traditional function of providing information, aim to offer flexible, strategic, and advisory-oriented support tailored to the evolving demands of modern users (Ismayilov & Bayramova, 2022b; Ismayilov, 2022). These services enable libraries to act not only as providers of resources but also as partners in the areas of knowledge, training, and management. The primary objectives of consulting services can be grouped under the following directions:

*\*Formation of Information Culture*

In today's information society, information culture is considered a key competency. Libraries provide users with practical advice and training related to information search, evaluation, usage, and the principles of ethical citation (Qasımlı & Məhəmmədli, 2024a). Consulting services are aimed at the systematic transfer of this knowledge and the development of individual user skills.

*\*Academic and Research Support*

Effective use of library resources by researchers and students requires specific competencies. Consulting services support these users in areas such as research methodology, effective use of databases, bibliometric analysis, and prevention of plagiarism (Balginova, Maydangalieva, Satygalieva & Mahammadli, 2018). In this way, library and information institutions play an essential role in enhancing the quality of scientific activities.

*\*Consulting on Management and Strategy*

Improving management processes is a critical issue for large organizations, academic institutions, and library branches (Ismayilov, Ismayilov & Mammadova, 2019). Through consulting services, libraries can provide guidance on resource management, strategic planning, digitization, and organizational restructuring. This strengthens the position of libraries as institutional knowledge centers.

*\*Implementation and Integration of New Technologies*

The rapid development of information technologies requires the implementation of new services and tools in libraries. Consulting services assist users in selecting, applying, and adapting technological solutions (Kazimi & Mahammadli, 2021). For example, the use of open scientific resources (Open Access), electronic catalogs (OPAC), and information management systems is supported within the scope of these services.

*\*Development and Support of Innovative Projects*

Libraries, especially academic and public libraries, can act as partners in various social, educational, and scientific innovation projects (Qasımlı & Məhəmmədli, 2024b). Consulting services play a vital role in the development of these projects, establishing connections with donors, drafting technical documentation, and conducting monitoring. These services enable libraries to use their resources not only for information provision but also as mechanisms for social impact (Kushzhanov & Mahammadli, 2019b). To assess the impact and quality of library consulting services, it is essential to define specific, objective, and measurable indicators. Through these indicators, the sustainable development of services can be ensured, optimal allocation of resources achieved, and strategies aligned with user needs can be formulated. The

evaluation indicators listed below have been systematized based on international practice and scientific literature:

- *Service Accessibility* (Muhammadli, 2023).
- *Infrastructure Accessibility*: Whether consulting services are available in both physical (in-library) and digital formats (online platforms, video meetings).
- *Frequency of Service Usage*: The number of users accessing consulting services on a monthly or annual basis.
- *Diversity of Access Channels*: Availability of different channels to access the service, such as email, web forms, live chat, etc.

In this area, User Satisfaction is key, and includes:

- *Survey Results*: The level of user satisfaction based on surveys conducted after receiving consulting services (Kushzhanov & Dashqin, 2019a).
- *Net Promoter Score (NPS)*: The likelihood that users will recommend the service to others (Kenzhebayeva, Urmurzina & Mahammadli, 2018).
- *Repeat Usage Rate*: The percentage of users who return to use the service again within less than a year, indicating the service's reliability and perceived value.

User satisfaction is one of the most important and direct indicators for evaluating the quality of library consulting services. This indicator is used to measure how well the service met the user's expectations, its usefulness, and the user's willingness to use the service again in the future (Ismaylov, 2015). Since consulting services respond to the specific needs of individual and organizational users, a balanced approach between subjective impressions and objective outcomes is necessary in evaluating their effectiveness (Mahamadli, 2018). To assess user satisfaction, the following specific parameters are used. The first among them are measurement parameters.

The main characteristic of measurement parameters is the user's perception of service quality (Bayramov & Məhəmmədli, 2025). Here, key aspects include the professionalism of the consultants, their ability to provide clear explanations, and the accuracy of their responses. The second parameter is the usefulness of the outcome. This refers to whether the user's problem was fully or partially resolved as a result of the consulting service. The third quality indicator is communication and contact. This includes the availability and effectiveness of various communication channels (email, phone calls, live chat, meetings).

The fourth is timeliness of service delivery. This refers to whether responses to inquiries are provided in a timely manner and how quickly the service reacts when a request is received. (Ismayilov, Mahammadli & Gasimli, 2023b). The fifth parameter is the user's intention to reuse

the service. It reflects whether the user would want to request the same or a similar service again in the future. The final parameter is the user's willingness to recommend the service. This reflects the likelihood that a satisfied user would recommend the service to friends, relatives, or classmates. (This can be measured using the Net Promoter Score.) Various methodological approaches are applied to measure user satisfaction: The most important among them are quantitative methods. These include online surveys, feedback forms, and evaluations based on a five-point or Likert scale. Such methods allow for the collection of users' overall evaluations of the service. Another group is known as qualitative methods. These include open-ended responses, focus groups, and semi-structured interviews. This approach helps to understand users' deeper experiences and individual feelings. As an example, the following survey question can be asked: "To what extent did the consulting service you received meet your information needs?"

\*Fully met

\*Partially met (Heydar, 2023).

\*Did not meet (Additional space for open-ended response)

To increase customer or user satisfaction, evaluation results should not only serve the purpose of measurement, but also be used to improve the service. For this purpose, the following steps are recommended:

- *Strengthening individual feedback systems* – After each consulting service, a short evaluation survey should be presented to the user. (Kushzhanov & Dashgin, 2019a).

- *Organizing user panels or forums* – Platforms should be created at regular intervals for broader discussions of satisfaction levels (Məhəmmədli, 2024).

- *Systematization and analysis of collected feedback* – For this purpose, statistical reports should be prepared, and the results should be taken into account at the management level. (İsmayilov & Məhəmmədli, 2024).

- *Identifying the main reasons for dissatisfaction* – The causes behind low ratings should be analyzed, and concrete steps should be taken to address them.

- *Feedback-based re-planning* – Consulting services should be continuously updated and adapted based on user suggestions.

If we investigate this issue based on international experience by monitoring internet resources, we can see that the British Library (BIPC) measures user satisfaction through online surveys after each service and shares the results in its annual reports (İsmayilov & Khalafova, 2023; İsmayilov & Aliyeva, 2023). When the satisfaction level exceeds 90%, new service modules are launched into a testing phase. The National Library of Singapore, on the other

hand, collects user satisfaction feedback in physical spaces through “Real-time Feedback Kiosks”, thereby monitoring user behavior in real time and evaluating the results accordingly. Thus, user satisfaction is not only a means of measurement for the continuous development of library consulting services but also serves as a strategic information base for development. Through satisfaction indicators, the degree of alignment between user expectations and the services provided is determined, and this alignment strengthens the library’s accountability to society. If we analyze how service quality is defined, we can identify its impact mechanisms: Number of qualified specialists: The qualifications, experience, and professional preparation of staff providing consulting services.

Relevance of recommendations: The alignment of given advice with current technologies and research methodologies (Ismayilov & Khalafova, 2022a; Mammadov, 2022b). Effectiveness in problem-solving: The degree to which consulting services solve specific problems. If we summarize the research from an outcome-oriented impact perspective, we can express the following:

*Tangible results:* Changes implemented after the consulting service, execution of projects, and improvement in the quality of user decisions.

*Project support:* The likelihood of users or organizations initiating new projects as a result of consulting services (Ismayilov, Mahammadli & Khudiyeva, 2022).

*Improvements in academic or managerial indicators:* Positive changes observed in research quality, organizational structure, or management processes.

If we determine the training and development opportunities that affect the evaluation of library and information institutions' consulting services, we can identify directly related factors: Number of trainings held: Statistical tracking of seminars, webinars, and training sessions with a consulting focus organized by the library throughout the year.

*Participant feedback:* Study of evaluations and feedback submitted by participants after the trainings (Mahammadi, 2024).

*Professional development indicators:* Observable improvements in the professional skills of those who benefited from the consulting services.

Innovation and adaptation play a crucial role in the evaluation of consulting services in library and information institutions. This includes... (Text ends here — let me know if you'd like to continue or expand this section.)

*Contribution to the adoption of new technologies:* The number of new technologies implemented by the library or users as a result of consulting services.

*Level of digitalization:* The efforts made to transition services into digital format and their effectiveness. (Karabalina, Maydangalieva, Satygalieva, Ahmetalina & Mahammadli, 2018).

*Success of pilot projects:* The number and outcomes of experimental or pilot projects developed based on consulting services.

The evaluation of library consulting services should be based on a systematic methodological framework for the development and application of indicators. The aim of this evaluation is to objectively measure and analyze the quality of these services, their relevance to user needs, their outcomes, and their development potential. For this purpose, the following methodological approaches can be used:

*Mixed-Methods Approach:* The study integrates both quantitative and qualitative methods. This approach allows for an in-depth analysis of both statistical data and user experience (Askerova & Mammadov, 2025).

*Quantitative methods:* Includes formal surveys and statistical analysis of performance indicators (e.g., number of service requests, repeat usage rate, etc.).

*Qualitative methods:* Includes focus groups, semi-structured interviews, observation, and content analysis.

The combination of these methods ensures that the indicators can be measured not only quantitatively but also in terms of understanding social and behavioral aspects. In the evaluation process, the following tools are used to measure user and staff satisfaction:

*Online surveys:* Tools like Google Forms and Survey Monkey are used to collect information on satisfaction and service effectiveness from users.

*Focus groups:* Service aspects are evaluated through discussions conducted with various categories of users.

*Interviews:* Interviews conducted with library administrators and those delivering consulting services allow for the evaluation of the service strategy and operational mechanisms.

The following criteria were taken as a basis when selecting the indicators used in the evaluation:

*Accessibility* (ease of access to information about the collection or service);

*Reliability and objectivity;*

*Measurability;*

*Practical applicability* (practical value in a real context);

*Sustainability and comparability.*

These criteria ensure that the indicators conform to a repeatable and comparable evaluation system. The data collected during the research is analyzed using the following methods:

*Descriptive statistics* – analysis of survey results using key statistical indicators (mean, median, variance, etc.);

*Ordinal and categorical analysis* – comparison of indicators across different user groups;

*Thematic analysis* – identification of key recurring themes based on open-ended responses and interviews;

*Benchmarking* – comparison with international practices (Khalafova & Ismayilov, 2024 b).

During the research process, the confidentiality of participants' personal data and the principle of voluntary participation must be respected. All surveys should be conducted anonymously, and the collected data should be used solely for analytical purposes.

*\*Let us examine examples of international libraries based on internet resources*

*\*British Library (United Kingdom) ("Business & IP Centre" BIPC).*

Through its "Business & IP Centre" division, the British Library provides consulting services for startups, individual entrepreneurs, and small businesses in business planning, intellectual property, market research, and digital transformation (İsmayilov, Mahammadli & Gasimli, 2023a). Looking at the indicators, we can observe the following results: Over 100,000 users annually; more than 90% user satisfaction; support for the establishment of over 4,000 new businesses is planned. The consulting services conducted in the library ensure the library's integration into the economy.

*\*Let us review the activities of the Library of Congress (United States) based on internet resources*

The library provides a "Researcher Orientation and Consultation" service. The U.S. Library of Congress offers personalized consultations for researchers, training on the use of archives and databases, and guidance services. It can be said that the library responds to hundreds of inquiries weekly and conducts specialized training sessions for researchers. The consulting services act as a high-level academic support model that directly impacts the quality of scientific research. If we investigate the activities of the National Library Board (Singapore), we see that the library organizes modular consulting services on digital literacy, career development, and technological innovations under "Advisory Services for Lifelong Learning," conducting over 400 trainings annually with participant satisfaction exceeding 85%. The



consulting services at the Singapore National Library create a bridge between information literacy and labor market

*\*The German National Library (Deutsche Nationalbibliothek, Germany)*

Provides technical and methodological support to academic institutions and libraries in the areas of open science, data management, and bibliometric analysis through “Metadata and Data Management Consultancy” (Nadir & Sevda, 2022; Mammadov, 2013). The consulting function in open science initiatives and data integration enhances the library’s innovative capacity. Helsinki University Library (Finland) offers intensive consultations for researchers and doctoral students on information retrieval, citation systems, open scientific publications, and research management (“Information Skills and Research Support Services”). The library has developed a model that supports scientific staff at every stage of the research process. The experience of developed countries in evaluating library consulting services is extensive and systematic. The evaluation indicators used in these countries can serve as examples for Azerbaijan’s library system. For instance:

*United Kingdom:* University libraries have developed user-centered KPI (Key Performance Indicator) systems (Ismayilov & Khalafova, 2022b; Khalafova & Ismailov, 2024). At York St John University, the effectiveness of consulting services is measured through user surveys, real-time response systems, and digital analytics. This practice shows that user feedback and suggestions play a key role in the continuous improvement of services.

*Spain:* Reviewing the experience of the University of Barcelona, the library prepares an annual report including indicators such as the number of service requests, consultation hours related to teaching support, user trainings, and the activity level of online platforms. This practice ensures transparent and accountable library management.

*United States:* Investigating the consulting services model, especially in research libraries, consulting services focus on supporting scientific research. The key indicators include the number of individual meetings with researchers, quality of training on authorship and data management, and frequency of digital resource use (Takhirov & Ismaylov, 2011). The primary goal of consulting services in the U.S. is to increase research efficiency for users. These examples show that consulting services are not limited to information training; rather, they ensure the active participation of libraries in the knowledge economy. Azerbaijan’s libraries can develop their consulting potential in areas such as academic and scientific research support, business and startup advice, digital literacy, and data management based on these experiences. Thus, analyses on the evaluation of library consulting services indicate that these services play a crucial role in strengthening libraries’ strategic position in the information society and

knowledge economy. The effectiveness of the services should be evaluated not only by their existence but also by indicators such as user satisfaction, quality, result orientation, and sustainability. The following conclusions and recommendations provide important criteria in this regard: Interest in consulting services is increasing, especially the demand for research support, the application of digital technologies, and training. The most commonly used channels are online inquiries, advice via email, and short meetings. This shows that users prefer flexible and remotely accessible services. Although user satisfaction is high, in some cases there are differences in service quality and professionalism levels between regions and libraries. Among the weakest indicators are result measurement (for example, monitoring real changes resulting from consulting) and support for innovation, which have been evaluated poorly. This reveals shortcomings in result-oriented evaluation of services. Low professionalism of staff: Many library employees providing consulting services have not undergone specialized training in this field or have limited opportunities for professional development. Based on the research results, the following recommendations can be made:

*\*Standardize evaluation systems*

A unified evaluation framework should be developed for libraries and implemented nationwide.

The KPI (Key Performance Indicators) system should be widely used.

*\*Expand the digitalization of consulting services*

\*Online consultation platforms and virtual consultation capabilities should be developed.

\*Integration with e-library and cloud-based services should be strengthened.

*Strengthen the study of user needs.*

\*User expectations should be identified through continuous surveys and focus groups, and services should be shaped accordingly.

*Ensure professional training of staff.*

\*Certified trainings, webinars, and international experience programs should be organized for employees involved in consulting activities.

*\*Implement a results-oriented monitoring system.*

\*The long-term impact of services—such as changes in user behavior, project productivity, and decision-making—should be systematically monitored.

*\*Integrate the scientific-research component*

\*Empirical research on the effectiveness of consulting services should be encouraged, and results shared in academic journals and professional forums (Ismayılov, Khudiyeva, 2023; Mammadov, 2022a). These results indicate that library consulting is not only a part of

information services but also a strategic function promoting knowledge sharing in social, technological, and managerial fields. Its evaluation directly influences the overall efficiency of library operations.

### Conclusion

The effective organization of reference services in library and information institutions is one of the key factors determining the quality and efficiency of activities in this field. The identification of indicators for evaluating these services plays a crucial role not only in terms of management and planning, but also in implementing a user-oriented approach. Research shows that the indicators used in this area—such as service accessibility, responsiveness, accuracy, the usefulness of responses to user queries, user satisfaction levels, and the professional competence of staff providing reference services—have a direct impact on the overall quality of the service. Regular monitoring and analysis based on these indicators enable library administrators to identify strengths and weaknesses, make relevant strategic decisions, and create opportunities for organizing services in a more flexible and functional manner. Moreover, with the advancement of digital technologies, the format of reference services is also changing. This necessitates the inclusion of new indicators in the evaluation system, such as the use of online services, response time on digital platforms, and levels of virtual user satisfaction. Thus, indicators serve not only as tools for measurement but also as fundamental strategic instruments for development. In conclusion, the development and practical implementation of indicators for evaluating reference services in library and information institutions are of particular importance for improving the quality of these services, strengthening the user-centered approach, and aligning information services with the needs of society as a whole. Future research could focus on the comparative analysis of the application of these indicators across different regions, as well as their compliance with international standards.

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