

## ***Methods for the Evaluation of Working in the Library***

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### **Abstract**

Assessing performance is one of the main functions of the management process. The managers of libraries have adopted late the managerial tools and techniques (particularly the assessment tool) used on a large scale in other professions. Although there are no standard procedures for evaluating work in the library they have a variety of such methods. Unfortunately these methods are not known and therefore are not used. This article describes some of the most commonly used methods of assessing work, in general, but that can also be adopted by libraries.

**Keywords:** library management, job evaluation, assessment methods

The appreciation of the work of employees is necessary in any organization. It is a systematic evaluation of achievements and shortcomings in the work of each employee (1).

The main objective of work assessment is to determine how well an employee performs his tasks and to help him find out how he works, so, if needed to improve his style of work.

Also, performance appraisal is a useful tool to stimulate employee development: it enhances confidence in its abilities, it increases motivation

through salary raises and prizes, it opens prospects for promotion, it increases the ambition to raise the level of training.

For evaluating the work in the library there are no standard procedures; for this purpose a variety of methods can be used. In general, institutions should not opt for a single method, but for combinations of diverse methods.

The most used methods of assessing the work in the library are: the essay method (descriptive assessment), comparative methods (ranking, pairwise comparison and forced distribution), graphical method of assessment and appraisal schemes based on behavioral determinations. Other methods rarely used in the library are: self-evaluation, evaluation by the equal, evaluation of subordinates. Also, management by objectives is a means of appreciation.

1. **The essay method** involves the (written) description of the employees' activity by a manager or another person who can appreciate. Although the text is free, the one who makes the appreciation must relate in particular to problems concerning the employees' knowledge of the jobs' implied tasks, the qualities and the defects, as well as its potential for promotion.

Although the method is simple and easy to apply, it has some drawbacks:

- the length and content of the text varies from one evaluator to another;
- based on the text it is difficult to obtain an unity in evaluation, as some authors highlight some issues, while others something else;
- the author's style may affect the assessment;
- the person who carries out the assessment has no talent for writing, which may affect the objectivity of the assessment.

To be effective, experts recommend that this method is used in combination with others.

2. **Comparative methods of evaluation** are part of the subjective methods category and include: hierarchization, comparing pairs and forced distribution.

a. **hierarchization** consists of arranging employees in categories, from the highest to the lowest, from the best worker to the poor. A variation of this method is alternative ranking. This involves choosing the best and the weakest worker. The second place worker based on its performance is being chosen and the one before the weakest, thus establishing the ranks in an alternative way, up and down, until all employees are classified.

b. **pair comparison.** The method consists in comparing each employee with everyone else successively, one by one. The number of possible pairs of staff shall be fixed by:

$$P = n(n - 1) / 2$$

where:

P – number of possible pairs

N – the number of employees

The assessment is carried out based on a table that includes all possible pairs. The assessor determines which employee is best in each pair, marking the superior performance in bold characters.

c. **forced casting.** The method assumes that the level of performance in a group of employees is distributed according to Gauss's curve. Hierarchy's major disadvantage is that many employees are ranked at the top of the scale. Forced distribution is designed precisely to prevent this situation. The assessor, by using this method, distributes employees based on a certain percentage, in groups placed at different levels of performance (Table 1).

*Table 1*

**The appreciation of performance through forced distribution**

Level	Categories of performance	The share of each level in total employment
1	The lowest category	10%
2	Below average	20%
3	The average	40%
4	Over the average	20%
5	The best	10%

The comparative method's advantage is simplicity; they are easily explained and used. However they have some disadvantages such as:

- they do not reveal the degree of differentiation between the employees on nearby categories;
- people with similar results are placed in different categories;
- they do not allow a comparison between different groups of employees from different services;
- forced distribution is difficult to use when assessing small groups.

3. **The graphic method** (scales of assessment in graphic form) is the most used method of assessing the work in the library. The appreciation of employees is based on factors such as: the work quality, the volume of work, the confidence in that person, the spirit of initiative, competence, and scrupulousness. Some libraries use simple evaluation forms, including the factors mentioned (sometimes explained), and followed by a scale of

assessment in graphic form. They contain points that express the division of scores (from 5 for very good, 1 for poor or unsatisfactory). The total score for each employee is calculated by adding together the points awarded (fig.1).

1	2	3	4	5
Poor	Enough	Average	Good	Excellent

Fig. 1. Scale assessment on scrupulousness

Lately some libraries have improved their graphic scales of assessment eliminating qualifiers with short appreciation of the different levels of performance (Table 2).

Scrupulousness means rigor in work.

Table 2

Scale assessment on scrupulousness (without qualifications)

Makes repeated mistakes	Inattentive, often makes mistakes	Usually correct. Average number of committed mistakes.	Does not need too much supervision. Works accurate and rigorous in most of the time	Requires only a minimum supervision. Almost always is rigorous and precise
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The graphic method of assessment has many advantages:

- is relatively easy to develop and use;
- may include evaluation of several features;
- the scores of employees can be compared;
- it is an accepted method by assessors;
- if properly developed, it can be as effective as complex methods.
- However the method has drawbacks and it is often criticized:
- does not prevent the commission of errors of assessment;
- the levels of performance of each characteristic are not sufficiently precise defined;
- the halo effect (the tendency to give a person high or low qualifications at all the factors based of general opinions about the assessed person)

4. **Schemes of appreciation** based on behavioral determination (BARS) or scales of behavior observation were created to correct the graphic method's deficiencies. They have recently appeared and are not yet used in many libraries.

The determinations are specific descriptions of behaviors at work, listed as the specific levels of performance. To make an assessment based on this method, the assessor runs through a list of several samplings of each scale of assessment, until identifying the appropriate employee behavior determinant

and marks that specific value. The assessment is obtained by adding together the chosen values for each level. Table 3 shows a BARS scheme created to evaluate the parameters of the program planning projects, which is a task specific to many managerial positions.

Table 3

Assessment scheme based on behavioral determination (BARS)

Values	Determinations
7. Excellent	He formulates a detailed plan of the project, with proper documentation, obtaining necessary approvals and sends the plan to all those involved.
6. Very good	He plans, communicates and tracks targets and deadlines; he establishes weekly how to conduct the project over the planning. Keeps up to date charts of the achievements and he uses them to optimize the necessary changes. He has sometimes minor operational problems, but he communicates effectively
5. Good	Sketches and deducts all parts of the project, programming the achievement of each one; he strives to outgo the schedule and has the precaution to leave a margin for the periods of weakening the rhythm. He resolves the customers' problems related to time limits, he rarely has problems of overcoming the deadlines or the cost.
4. Average level	He makes a list of terms and reviews it as the project progresses, usually including unforeseen events; he is causing frequent complaints from customers. He can have a solid plan, but do not keep track of targets and deadlines; he does not communicate programming failures or other problems once they occur.
3. Below-average level	The plans are not well defined, deadlines are usually unrealistic. He cannot plan action on more than two or three days before, as he doesn't have the concept of realistic term of achieving a project.
2. Very bad	He does not have a plan or programming segments of activity to be carried out. No plans at all or insufficient planning for given projects.
1. Unacceptable	Hardly ever finishes a project because of the lack of any planning and gives the impression that the problem is unimportant. He always has failures because of his lack of action planning but he doesn't show any interest in the way he can improve his work.

The schemes have many advantages:

- are based on a careful analysis of the job;
- the validity of the content of determinations is directly assessed;
- are useful in providing the rewarding of employees, because they use frequency scales;

- they provide a greater depth of information performance than other methods;
- the method is accepted by both managers and subordinates because the schemes are created together

However, researches have not demonstrated the superiority of this method.

In the Central University Library from Bucharest the assessment is based on a method of the graphical category in which the total score is calculated on the basis of qualifications from 1 to 5 given by many assessors and employees (self-evaluation) and on criteria for evaluation with a certain share.

The total (PT) is calculated by the following formula:

$$Pt = (p1 \times C1) + (P2 \times C2) + (P3 \times C3) + (p4 \times C4)$$

Where:

p1...p4 = points awarded for each grade, noted from 1 to 5

C1...C4 = share for each set of assessment criteria

Criteria for evaluating the individual professional performance are: the degree of fulfillment of performance standards (50% share), responsibility (25% share), the adequacy of the complexity of work (15% share), initiative and creativity (10% share). Annex 1 contains the schedule of evaluation.

The method has the advantage of simplicity but it also has the specific graphical methods' disadvantages: subjectivity especially in self-evaluation, the halo effect. Therefore we recommend the use of combined methods.

The appreciation of work is often an obligatory condition for taking decisions on knowing the quality of personnel, its training needs, possibilities for development and promotion, credit for rewards and also decisions regarding the job.

The presented methods in circumstances which are the criteria for a good system of performance evaluation and are properly developed and implemented, allow making the best decisions.

## References

- (1) STUEART, R.; MORAN, B. *Management for libraries and information centers*. Bucharest: ABBPR, 1998, p. 120.
- (2) *Ibid.*, p. 130.
- (3) Burloiu, P. *Human Resource Management*. Bucharest: Lumina Lex, 1997, p. 594.

Annex 1

**SPECIAL ASSESSMENT**

Job sheet no.....

Name and surname of holder:

Assessment period:

Evaluation criteria	Self-evaluation	The evaluation of the chief of compartment	Evaluation of chief of human resources management compartment	Evaluation of the hierarchical leader of the compartment chief	Score criterion (score assessment multiplied by the weight criterion)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The degree of fulfilment of performance standards</li> <li>• Weight 50%</li> </ul>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Responsibility</li> <li>• Weight 25%</li> </ul>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adequacy of the complexity of work</li> <li>• Weight 15%</li> </ul>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initiative and creativity</li> <li>• Weight 10%</li> </ul>					

Total:

Comments:

Head:

Employee: