How to work together on an international project

Experiences from a benchmarking project of three European health libraries

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Benchmarking should been seen as the **beginning of a journey of discovery** – not as an end it itself.

The aim should be to **learn** more about your service by **comparing** its **impact** with that of the others – not to secure a place in a table of merit.

Markless & Streatfield
Benchmarking project of three European health libraries

- Proposal and plan 2012
- Project started 2013
- Mainly worked online
- Hardly no costs
- No project leader
What is benchmarking?

• First, shoemakers used the term benchmarking
• Now, used to **measure** performance using a specific indicator
• Our project is a **best-practice** benchmarking project
  • Used in strategic management
  • Organisations evaluate activities in relation to best or better practices
  • To make improvements
  • May be a one-time event, often a continuous process
Getting ideas, solutions and examples

• Planning library space
• Teaching IL
• Marketing and promoting
• Integrating services in users’ work
• Collaborating with other services
Methods of the project

- Collaborative collection of **data**
- Observation and shadowing
- User and staff **interviews**
- EAHIL colleagues **focus group**
- Collaborative **blog** writing
- Learning by doing
Tools for cooperation
Collecting data

• Library areas, facilities and equipment
• Services for the public, including loan, ILL and user training
• Collection management, bibliographic records
• Institutional repository
• Library staff, both number and staff training
• Financial data

How to compare?
Library visits

• Discussing with library directors
• Interviewing library users about library space
• Interviewing library staff members
• Looking at the physical space and collection organisation
• Learning about staff organisation
• And relationships with hospital and university
Interviewing users about library space

• What do you use this library for?
• Why do you (study/read/work/group work) right here?
• Where would you study if the library did not exist?
Similar user activities in libraries

• Reading lecture notes and other study material
• Discussing, talking, working in groups
• Writing lab reports and research papers
• Searching for information
• Using library’s and their own books
• Working on their own laptops and library computers
If the library did **not** exist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instead of it</th>
<th>Users would choose to work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BMH (Norway)</td>
<td>home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSS (Belgium)</td>
<td>campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KUH (Finland)</td>
<td>campus/home</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Insights from user interviews

- Spaces for both individual and collaborative work
- Both silent and semi-silent work or study
- Access to computers and Wi-Fi
- Natural daylight
Interviewing staff about roles and value

• What is your role in this library?
• Why do you work here?
• What is the meaning/purpose of your work here?
• What value does the library (and your role in it) add to the university?
• What would it mean if the library did not exist/provide the services?
• In your opinion, is the library doing the right things/providing the right services?
Reflections on library work

• Staff members were willing to invite us to take part in processes where they reflect on the meaning of their work and the value of library

• We found the value of the library together

• If libraries did not exist, they would have to be invented
Takeaways from the staff discussions

Connect
user needs with staff views
to develop
a more **user-oriented** service
Focus group with EAHIL colleagues
Advice from the focus group

• What could **non-users** tell us
• Main focus on **marketing**
• EAHIL Special Interest Group (**SIG**) on marketing
• How the project should **proceed**
  • focus on fewer topics
  • decide what to measure
  • use indicators
International benchmarking

• Aims at providing good services
• Involves
  • Working hours and personal interest
  • Support of the supervisors and organisation
  • Constant evaluation and continuing development
  • Draws attention to different ways of managing a library
• Provides tools and suggestions
• Is challenging but rewarding
Thank you for your attention!

References and links can be found in the full text.

Take a look at our blog!

https://benchmarkingthreehealthlibraries.wordpress.com