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## Evaluation of Public Libraries in Gyeonggi Province, Korea

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## I. Introduction

## 1. Evaluation Background

In the 21$^{st}$ century, public libraries in Korea have rapidly increased in quantity. There were 168 public libraries nationwide in 1986 and 462 by 2003.  The number of library users has also rapidly increased from 17 million in 1986 to 97 million in 2003.  Book circulation increased from 9,790,000 volumes in 1986 to 11,007,000 volumes in 2003(Kwak, 2004a).

Rapid expansion of our public libraries has been due to government support and changes in recognition of libraries by local governors.  Specifically, Gyeonggi Province where a fourth of the Korean population live, is showing rapid growth in various fields such as economy and society.  At the same time, it shows far more interest in public libraries than other provinces.  In late 2003, it had 67 public libraries even though there were less than 39 in 1994.  Such increase has been achieved since 2000.  In late 2000, there were 52 public libraries and in late 2002, the number of public libraries increased to 62.  In late 2004, 47 additional libraries were under construction.

Rapid increase of public libraries caused Gyeonggi Province to have different characteristics from other provinces and they are presented as follows: First, public libraries of our country are operated by three subjects such as city or county governments, provincial education departments and private institutes. Gyeonggi Province has more libraries operated by local governments than any other province.  In 2004, 67 public libraries were operated in Gyeonggi Province, 59 of which were managed by local governments.  According to the Korean Library Statistics (2003), the number of public libraries managed by local governments nationwide was 212 while the provincial education departments managed an additional 220 as of late 2002.  Since public libraries managed by local governments have little opportunity to exchange staff with each other, there are many differences in library operation within the province. Second, though the number of public libraries is rapidly increasing, the number of collection does not reach the national means compared with its entire population.  Although many public libraries are being constructed and there are financial supports from the provincial government, as the population is rapidly increasing, the number of collection per person has not reached the national standard.

Third, as most of the public libraries in Gyeonggi Province are managed by the local government, the number of librarians is relatively lower than the number of librarians in public libraries managed by the Gyeonggi Provincial Office of Education.  In October 2004, the number of librarians working in public libraries managed by the Gyeonggi Provincial Office of Education was a mean of 7.9, but the local government managed libraries was less than 4.6(Kwak 2004b).  It is assumed that this phenomenon is worsening.  As most of the public libraries that are being constructed would be managed by the local government, for more effective operation of public libraries, more librarians should be actively recruited.  However, it will be difficult to employ more librarians due to a variety of conditions.

To overcome problems and to promote balanced service at public libraries, Gyeonggi Province decided to evaluate all of their public libraries.  This paper will present the results of the public library evaluation in Gyeonggi Province.

## 2. Purpose of Evaluation

Library evaluation includes the following steps: first, measuring specifically and positively input factors such as quality and quantity of library materials, the staff, facilities, and budget, and output factors of the library service for appropriate service of public libraries; second, analyzing problems and presenting alternatives for further development.  In this aspect, library evaluation is an instrument to fulfill the role of libraries and to direct ideal library service.  It has been carried out every year since 2001 and has targeted public libraries within the province for development purposes.  These purposes include setting up minimum standards for balanced development of all public libraries in the province, encouraging outstanding libraries to do better service, identifying outstanding examples of library management and facilitating implementation at

other libraries, encouraging outstanding staff to have higher morale and to contribute to active service.

## II. Evaluation Method

## 1. Categorization of Subject Libraries

To identify various service programs according to the size of the public library in Gyeonggi Province, this study roughly identified them into three groups, from which outstanding libraries were selected.  The standards for group categorization were decided according to the number of librarians, information resource expenditures, library building size, and city or county budget where the libraries were located.  As a principle for categorization, three factors such as professional staff, information resources and budget were reflected.

In respect to the standards, though librarians are very important for service to users, cities or counties do not recognize it and non-librarians were employed in the libraries. Size of library buildings has a great meaning as a basic factor to provide various kinds of services.  The budgets of cities or counties can be used as a standard to judge how much interest they have in their libraries.  The reason why total budget of libraries was not applied as a standard of categorization is that budgets of branch libraries were not divided from main library of each different region.

Most of the public libraries in Gyeonggi Province are managed by the local government and the service is greatly influenced by the director of the government.  So, this evaluation committee set up four different standards for categorization to overcome differences in external environment and identify what services have been developed for community people.

## 2. Contents of Evaluation

1) Statistical Measures
To identify the current condition of library service, this evaluation committee decided nine measures and used data collected by the Gyeonggi Provincial office.

2) Document Evaluation
Document evaluation focused on outstanding examples of service that could be introduced to other libraries.  Most of the public libraries in Gyeonggi Province did not have enough opportunities to exchange of human resources and service programs.  Thus, the evaluation focused on identifying various services, introducing them to other libraries as it was believed to contribute to service development of public libraries, and identifying what Gyeonggi Provincial office has to support its public libraries.  It was roughly divided into four parts: planning, staff, resources and service.

3) Online Service
All library web pages were visited and evaluated to identify what services were provided.  The evaluation committee decided nine measures.

4) Library Monitoring
This evaluation committee hired students who were majoring in Library and Information Science as monitors to identify how users evaluate libraries.  The students were paired and organized into six groups and each group investigated all the public libraries in the province.  They were to reflect feelings users have on libraries involved in the whole services of public libraries.  However, in 2004, the results were used only as basic data but were not included in direct evaluation.

5) Committee Member Library Visits
The evaluation committee visited public libraries ranked high based on statistical measures, document evaluation, online services, and identified actual implementation of services and the library environment.  It was intended to identify actual conditions of public libraries and listen to voices of the library staff.

## 3. Evaluation Results

This evaluation committee summed up statistical measures, documents, online services data and visiting evaluation, and selected a total of 15 libraries in five of each group.  From the fifteen, three outstanding and another five good ones were selected in the evaluation committee.

For the selected ones, a certain amount of project grants were provided, which can be used for convenience of users such as replacement of library facilities and purchasing of information resources.  One librarian from each of the 15 libraries selected was given a chance to visit libraries in Australia or Japan.  It was intended to provide an opportunity for the librarian to visit advanced overseas libraries in order to learn better library services, apply them to their libraries and provide new and advanced service to other libraries.

## III. Results and Analysis

The results of evaluation were described with a focus on statistical measures, documents, and online service.

## 1. Statistical Measures

The statistical index was used to identify the current status of public libraries in Gyeonggi Province and the standards of full marks are presented as follows:
- Volumes per person in the legal service population: more than 1 volume per person
- Volumes added 2004 year to total volumes: More than 20,000 volumes
- Ratio of librarians to total staff: more than 50% of the total staff

- Information resources expenditures per librarian: more than 50,000,000 Won (about $50,000)
- Execution rate of information resources expenditures: more than 80% executed as of late October
- Number of circulation per person in legal service population: more than 3 volumes per person
- Number of library use per person in legal service population: more than 3 times
- Ratio of library registration to total population in legal service area: more than 20% of total population
- Increased ratio of library registration: more than 100% increased

## 2. Documents Evaluation

Fifty-nine libraries of the 64 libraries targeted accepted the document evaluation (92%) and compared with 50% acceptance in 2003, it showed a rapid increase. It was assumed that as four of the five which did not accepted were branch libraries, and that one of them which is a county library, gave up the evaluation because it had very poor conditions in various aspects. It was assumed that the reason response rate was high was that the paperwork in document evaluation remarkably decreased compared with those of 2003.

1) Medium and Long-term Library Development Plans

The medium and long-term development plans specify medium and long-term strategies, tactics, procedures and programs to achieve visions and goals of library development. In this aspect, whether the plans were prepared can be an important precondition for development of library.

The evaluation committee was to identify whether a 3-year general development plan was prepared and is being implemented. However, according to the history, size and characteristic of each library, this evaluation reflected individual and specified innovative management strategies, service specification strategies, and collection development policy.

As a result of the analysis, it was found that Group 1(larger-size libraries in librarians, information resource expenditures, building size and budget) and Group 2(medium-size libraries) had poorer performances of specified programs including the medium and long-term development plan than those in Group 3(small-size libraries). Considering that libraries in Group 1 have to take charge of the future development of libraries as representatives of their region, Gyeonggi Province or a specific city, unorganized and short-term management plans should be improved because they may limit further development of libraries in a digital environment.

2) User and Community Studies

This means the collection of data on the community and users for improvement

of library services.  It was intended to identify whether community study was institutionalized.  The results show that 70% of all the libraries answered that they have never conducted a study, and 56% in Group 1 answered that they had.  It was judged that such results were obtained as larger libraries with more professionals and budgets had better conditions to conduct surveys

3) Users' Charter of Rights

The users' charter of rights was intended to declare the present practice standards of services provided by libraries by describing the rights of all library users.  This study investigated whether each library had a users' rights charter.  69.5%(41) of the public libraries were equipped with users' rights charters.

4) Self-Evaluation for Improved Library Services

For improvement of library services, users should evaluate the services directly so that libraries can make an effort to deal with complaints.  Therefore, a series of processes  which reflect feedback from users for improvement plans should be systemized by customizing the results of users' evaluation.
As a result of the analysis, it was found that no library had evaluations customized or conducted by external institutions.  Eleven libraries showed outstanding appended data while conducting various evaluations even though they were not customized.  Twenty-six libraries conducted evaluation in some form, and 22 did not conduct evaluations at all.  In particular, 37% of the libraries in Group 3 had not conducted any evaluation.  It was believed to be due to a lack of human resources and budget.

5) Education/Training of Staff

For service improvement of libraries, regulations to institutionalize education and training of librarians should be prepared, and education and training evaluation systems in which education results can be applied for task performance and merits evaluation should be established.  As a result of the analysis, 44% of the libraries institutionalized education and training systems.  75% of Group 1 showed good results while 61% of Group 3 did not have their own institutionalized systems and only participated in education programs provided by external institutes.

6) Library Volunteers

Investigation of the number of volunteers was conducted to identify how many people in the community supported the libraries.  The libraries in Group 1 were active in use of volunteers while those in Group 3 were poor in their use.  It was assumed to be due to management systems of voluntary human resources.

7) Library Committees

The library committees can be a foundation to support libraries by identifying

needs within the community and promoting libraries targeting toward representatives of communities.  So, existence of any committee in each library and its active operation were investigated.  As a result, it was found that libraries in Group 1 were active in committee programs and no libraries operated committees in Group 3.

8) Local Information Resources

As a result of analyzing local information resources from local government and various institutes in each local area, it was found that 89.9% answered that they collected them, which indicates that they were relatively faithful in collection of community data as public libraries.  In a long prospect, through institutionalized local information resources published by local government or institutes, public libraries should be faithful to public duties to provide basic data for legislative and administrative activities of local administrative institutes and committees.

9) Exemplary Cases of Library Services

It was an objective of this evaluation to identify superior service examples of library which would enable improved quality of library services through benchmarking of such examples.  It was necessary to find exemplary cases that are unique to the libraries and deserve special attention by the other libraries rather than usual events and repetitive examples commonly witnessed from other libraries.

As a result of the analysis, it was found that libraries in Group 1 showed more examples than those in Group 2 and 3.  Especially, it was believed that they can be used as data for benchmarking by Group 2 and 3 as 56% of the Group 1(9 of 16) presented many exemplary cases.

10) Range of Circulation

The goal of this part was to ensure that users may borrow any book desired from any public library.  As a result of the analysis, 15 libraries which is a quarter of the whole libraries in this area expanded the range of their circulation service to the whole population of  Gyeonggi Province, and 17 (more than a quarter) expanded their services to the people in neighboring cities and counties.  Libraries in Group 1 were not active in expanding of the range, but small and medium-sized libraries tended to expand the range of their services.  As they were smaller, resource sharing was a bigger priority.

11) Information Literacy Instruction Program

Forty-eight(81.4%) of fifty-nine libraries executed information literacy instruction programs for users, which is sharply higher compared with the execution rate (65.8%) of the program in 2003 evaluated by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism(2003).  Considering that seven of ten libraries which did not have this program belong to Group 3, it indicates that the execution of the program is

closely related to library budget and size of human resources.

12) Culture/Education Programs

The culture or education programs were executed by 96.6% (57 libraries). In early 1980s, some of the public libraries in our country opened reading or culture program courses targeting users of libraries to expand a functional role of public libraries as a key point of regional culture. It was found that public libraries consider providing various culture and education programs as one of their important services.

13) Users Gathering

Fifty (84.7%) of fifty-nine libraries were found to support users' gatherings. Three of them were supporting more than ten gatherings, and 28 were managing more than three types of gatherings. It is suggested that the larger libraries are more active in supporting gatherings. That is, size of libraries and number of users are considered as basic factors of users gatherings.

14) Use of Library Facilities by Community People

Forty-nine (83.1%) of fifty-nine libraries answered that community people have ever used libraries. Compared with the nationwide results investigated in 2003, the current use rate sharply increased, which indicates that libraries in Gyeonggi Province are probably equipped with better facilities and conditions.

15) A Route to Converge Users' Opinions

To identify opinions from the community, this document suggested (1) operation of suggestion corners, (2) periodical meetings with users (3) examinations through questionnaire (4) management of an on-line suggestion corner (5) others, and (6) that there were no procedures to converge users' opinions. As a result of the analysis, it was found that more than a third of all the libraries prepared procedures to bring together users' opinions through more than four routes as presented in the examples, and they were equally distributed to the three groups.

16) Library Promotion Activities

Fifty-four of all the libraries (59), that is, more than 90%, were involved in promotion activities in various ways such as use of community media.

17) Publication of Newsletters or Periodicals for Community People

Thirty-nine libraries (60.9%) published quarterly magazines and other periodicals. Of the 20 libraries analyzed, 14 libraries, 50% of Group 3, did not publish any periodicals. It indicates that small-sized libraries showed very poor results for publications.

## 3. On-line Service Evaluation

### 1) Information on Reading List

Information on reading list published on library homepages for the past ten months was completely insufficient in quantity except 254 cases in Suwon city and 210 in Bucheon city, and the monthly mean number of publications was no more than 4.89.

### 2) Information in Cultural Events

Most of the libraries provided only introduction of library monthly events and its contents were simple.  If information on various cultural events sponsored by regional institutes were provided, it would be useful to users.  In libraries of other provinces, general information on cultural events as well as that of communities was often provided.

### 3) Information to Attract Users' Interest

This evaluation investigated whether libraries provided any information to encourage understanding of users and to promote interests or convenience of users.  However, there were few libraries that provided such information and the amount was insignificant.

### 4) Operation of Bulletin Board

Bulletin board as a service to gather users' opinions is an important measure to judge whether library homepages are useful to users.  As the number of the posts on bulletin board tended to be proportionate to the number of users, the evaluation committee evaluated response rate, speed of response, and faithfulness of response.  Unexpectedly, it was found that there were many libraries which did not use or answer to bulletin boards.

### 5) Use Rate of e-book

The e-book service was actively expanded to public libraries in this province through "Digital Library" project from 2003 to 2004. However, as the e-book service showed insignificant use records, it was considered a new task to be dealt with by public libraries.

### 6) Promotion of Homepages

To increase use rate of library homepages, registering to search engine alone is not enough.  On-line promotion through banners is the most basic, and libraries should be actively engaged in promoting the use of traditional media such as newspapers, broadcasting and newsletters.  This evaluation targeted the efforts to increase the rate of use by libraries through allocation of points to homepage promotion.  As a result of this evaluation, it was found that libraries in Group 3

showed active promotion activities.

7) Library Cooperation Networks

It was investigated Gyeonggi Central Cyber Library banner, lending service links, and banners or links to e-book services provided by Gyeonggi Central Cyber Library.  Gyeonggi Central Cyber Library banner was opened in most of the library homepages.  For lending services, a third of the libraries investigated did not provide services at all, and only a few provided homepages containing additional explanations on lending services.  It was concluded that public libraries in this province were not very active in cooperation with other public libraries or the central cyber library

## IV. Conclusion

The evaluation of public libraries in Gyeonggi Province in 2004 was somewhat complicated compared with previous ones, but it was meaningful in that a new way of evaluation was applied to overcome the problems found in previous evaluations.  First of all, there was a great difference in ways of evaluation.  The evaluation last year was divided into document evaluation and library visiting, but this year, the evaluation summed up four types of marks: statistical measures, documents, on-line services and library visiting.  It was thought that difference in evaluative standards according to sizes of libraries was somewhat effectively dealt with by groupings through division of weights on information resources, human resources and budget.  Specifically, it has a great meaning in that this evaluation prepared its own evaluation measures, breaking from the management evaluation model of national cultural infrastructures presented by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism which was used as a conventional evaluation model every year.

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