

The Concept of Benchmarking in Librarianship

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Abstract. In the research the adaptation of the benchmarking methodology for the study of information services is suggested. The types of benchmarking in the projection on librarianship are presented and discussed in detail. The ways of introduction of various types of it for improvement of processes and technologies of library work are offered. Scientific research provides the results of the initial stage of research in the declared direction. The benchmarking methodology was used for comparative analysis of information services provided by the university libraries in such leading countries as: USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand.

Keywords: benchmarking, types of benchmarking, library science, library, social institute, information services.

1 Introduction

In the past decade, a quantitative approach was used to evaluate the library's performance. Today, with the transition to new standards of work of library institutions and forms of service, a qualitative aspect of their work plays an important role. This is mainly about quality: information and library services; information services provided both by traditional (internal) and virtual (external) users; use of the library fund, qualifications of library staff; material and technical base.

In the economic field, a modern approach, called "benchmarking", is used to determine the quality of an enterprise's operations.

2 Background

The analysis of sources in the study of benchmarking has shown that the western scholars were the first to analyze the concept of benchmarking: R. Venetucci [1], G. Watson [2], R. Kemp [3], V. Krokovsky [4], D. Leydin [5], J. Shetty [6]. However, the mechanisms of its application in the context of the librarianship are not detailed.

In this article the peculiarities of the use of benchmarking tools for improving the work of the library are analyzed.

Benchmarking ("start of countdown", "notch") is a mechanism for comparative analysis of the efficiency of one company with the performance of other, more successful, firms. In foreign terminology, "benchmarking" means the following: a standard obtained expertly and used as a standard, as well as a standard, based on

which one can give an estimate for some reason and has no unambiguous translation. Employees of consulting company Bain & Co analyzed that for the last two years benchmarking has been one of the most widely used methodology of business management in large international corporations due to achievement of effective results with the least expenses. There is currently no methodology for using benchmarking in librarianship. We believe that in library science, benchmarking should be used for comparative analysis of the investigated library institute with the library-leader selected as a standard for the purpose of borrowing work experience and its use to improve the efficiency of the library institute. Even if economists often identify benchmarking with a simple comparison of indicators or with competition analysis, librarians will have some time to defend the validity of its application. The question of analyzing the quality of services provided by libraries has long consideration in librarianship. The tasks of developing a single integrated methodology for assessing the quality of service have not been resolved, although some attempts have been made in this regard, in particular, with the help of sociological studies, the evaluation of users of some library services has been studied. But it remains open to analyze the parameters of such an assessment. Studies conducted are irregular, and to improve the library's work, it is the tools of benchmarking that are needed as a systematic activity aimed at finding, evaluating and learning on the best examples of work organization. What is expected to be achieved using the benchmarking methodology in the library business. First, benchmarking enables the library to "look at oneself from the outside" - objectively analyze its strengths and weaknesses. Secondly, the analysis of the activity of libraries leads to strategic planning of "its library". Thirdly, it allows you to explore and implement new ideas in the organization of information and library work, as well as in marketing services. Fourthly, regular benchmarking allows you to keep up to date with innovations in library business and apply them actively. Fifthly, benchmarking can overcome the conservative principle – to plan from the achieved, providing the opportunity to be based on the analysis of the activity of libraries constituting a certain competition. Benchmarking used in the management of social institutions aims at studying, borrowing and implementing in its own activities the best technologies, innovative processes and methods of organizing work to create and further dissemination of analytical and synthetic information products among its users. In the projection on librarianship, benchmarking is a systematic search of the standard, training on the best examples of libraries as social and information centers, regardless of their specialization, areas of operation and geographical location, adaptation of the experience to its specificity and its application. We believe that the use of this methodology allows developing algorithms, promoting understanding and analysis of the work of library leaders, and achieving the same, and possibly even higher, results. A distinctive feature of the methodology can be considered conducting with its help research over a period, and the usual comparative data analysis is applied mainly to one time parameter. Benchmarking is close to competitive intelligence. In the activity of modern library institutions, a significant place is paid to the study of the work of competitors and, as a result, the use of tools of "competitive intelligence" or "consolidated information", whose task is to quickly find the necessary information

and properly analyze it, using in its practice legal methods collecting and processing information, focusing on open sources. For most organizations, benchmarking is not an innovation, since it has often been used as part of a competitive analysis. The use of benchmarking is more effective, because it represents a more detailed, formalized and well-organized technique in comparison with the method or approach of competitive analysis. In addition, benchmarking involves the voluntary provision of information and knowledge sharing. Simultaneous use of comparative and procedural approaches to benchmarking effectively implements the potential of benchmarking as a tool for increasing the competitiveness of the library. It should be noted that benchmarking promotes the use of external standards to improve the quality of the internal processes of the library. Possible ways to implement benchmarking in libraries is to create a variety of consortia, associations with the involvement of competitor partners. The research of information services of Ukrainian libraries with the help of benchmarking is presented in [7].

3 The Types of Benchmarking

Economists distinguish the following types of benchmarking: strategic benchmarking, benchmarking activity or competitiveness, benchmarking processes, functional or general benchmarking, internal benchmarking, external benchmarking, international benchmarking [8]. Each of these types can be used in librarianship.

Strategic benchmarking is used to improve the library's overall performance by exploring long-term strategies and common approaches that have helped librarians succeed. It includes aspects of the development of new products and services, a radical change in the activities of the library. The results of this type of benchmarking are quite difficult to implement and they become tangible only after some time.

Strategic benchmarking is a comprehensive methodology for strategic planning and benchmarking processes to find the unique capabilities needed to bring tangible benefits to the library, and increase the effectiveness of management, project implementation based on benchmarking results.

Benchmarking of activity or competitiveness can be used by libraries to consider their positions on the characteristics of providing key services. In this case benchmarking benchmarks are chosen for the analysis of the same indicators, but often unnecessary confidentiality becomes an obstacle to such an exchange of experience.

Benchmarking of processes are used in the analysis of specific processes and operations of the library. Standards are selected among those with the best performance and are more likely to perform similar work or similar services. Benchmarking processes are invariably carried out by mapping library technological processes so that comparisons and analyzes are made clearly and easily. This kind of benchmarking can have positive results for a fairly short time.

Functional or general benchmarking is used when a library needs to be benchmarked with partners from different fields of information activity or better functional operations of individual libraries to improve the same function or

workflow. It can be used for training on the example of various branches of library libraries, which involve borrowing similar functions or workflows. Standards of this type of benchmarking are usually partner libraries with a number of similar technological or informational characteristics. Since this kind of benchmarking does not affect direct competitors, the benchmarking library library is more than willing to share information and participate in the study. This type of benchmarking contributes to significant innovation breakthroughs and a sharp improvement in the work of the library.

Internal benchmarking involves searching for a reference in a library, for example, in another structural unit. The main benefits of internal benchmarking are easier access to information for analysis, and less time and resources are required to obtain it. When internal benchmarking is much easier to implement, experience is transmitted within a single library.

External benchmarking involves searching for libraries known as the best, but not every best practice can be applied. This kind of benchmarking may take more time and resources to compare data and information, validate data and make recommendations.

International benchmarking is used when the search for a benchmark occurs in other countries. However, it may take more time and resources, and the results may require careful analysis through mental differences.

The experience of firms shows that a library that is just beginning to engage in benchmarking should usually begin with internal benchmarking, but the most comprehensive use of different types of benchmarking is considered to be most effective. This will allow for systematic study of all factors and reasons that determine the position of the library leader. Despite the variety of definitions, the use of benchmarking methodology involves: regular comparisons of activities (functions or processes) with library libraries; deficiencies in the activity of the library under study; search for new approaches for improving the work of the library under study; monitoring innovations in the work of libraries leaders. Moreover, benchmarking is not a blind imitation, its main task is the development of a better experience and its adaptation in the library under study, but not everything analyzed can work effectively in it: sometimes ideas that at first glance did not seem worthy of imitation, after some rethinking and refinement can be overestimated. The sequence of the reference comparison was determined by R. Kemp, for studying the library, it can be used in several stages:

1. Detection and definition of objects of reference comparison.
2. Selection of standards and experts on conducting benchmarking.
3. Determining the appropriate method for collecting information and data collection.
4. Detection of existing inconsistencies and backlogs of the library under study from competitor libraries according to selected indicators.
5. Establishing the desired results and levels of library performance.
6. Information about the results of the benchmarking of the representatives of all interested parties and obtaining consent for their application.

7. Establishing a certain goal and objectives for increasing the efficiency of the library.
8. Develop an action plan for achieving goals.
9. Planned activities and analysis of their results. Experience is fully integrated into processes.
10. View previously selected strategies for benchmarking.

4 Sequence of Steps of Implementation of Benchmarking Research

This methodology involves conducting research in several steps:

Step 1. Analysis of the sites of leading libraries. Studying library sites is one of the key stages of the study. This requires constant monitoring of the information resources of partner libraries presented on their site and tracking ideas worthy of imitation. Practice shows that thus it is possible to save time and resources on creating something unique. Innovation may well have already been introduced in another library.

Step 2. Study the achievements of libraries leaders. Studying sites involves getting acquainted with the achievements of not only partners, but also libraries leaders. This contributes to maintaining a high-level library web-system.

Step 3. Implementation of the received information about innovations in the practice of the library. It should be borne in mind that after receiving information about new technologies or information innovations, it is necessary to analyze them and outline the ways of implementation. Only using the knowledge gained in practice can one achieve a certain result.

Step 4. Testing the new one. Testing innovation is one of the most important processes in Internet marketing. Only those things whose effectiveness can be foreseen are subject to the introduction into the practice of the library. Application for benchmarking processes in social networks, contributes to the achievement of fast competitive advantages by borrowing advanced technologies. Benchmarking interaction allows you to take advantage of the resources of a large number of libraries presented in networks. Between libraries there is a relationship of trust and partnership that involves voluntary participation in improving partners and exchanging information.

5 Research of Information Service of Foreign University Libraries According to the Methodology of Benchmarking

In the study of the university libraries websites in the United States of America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand were analyzed.

5.1 The Research of Information Services of the USA University Libraries

Within the research, 19 library websites of higher educational establishments of the United States of America were analyzed. For comparative analysis, the amount of the libraries was divided into several groups. Binghamton University Library took the first place among the libraries in the group A (fig. 1).

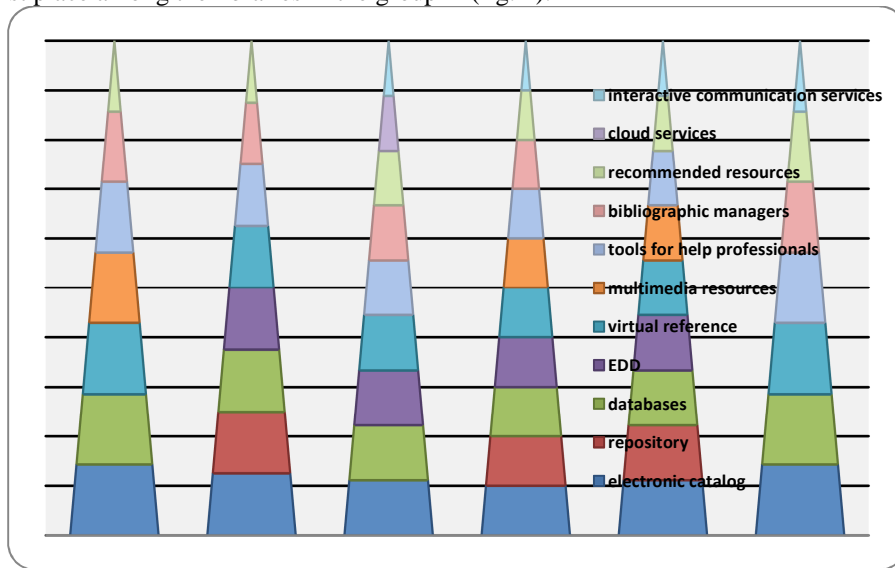


Fig. 1. The comparison of the libraries in the group A.

By the composition of library information services, the championship got Case Western Reserve University, and Brown University of Washington (fig. 2)

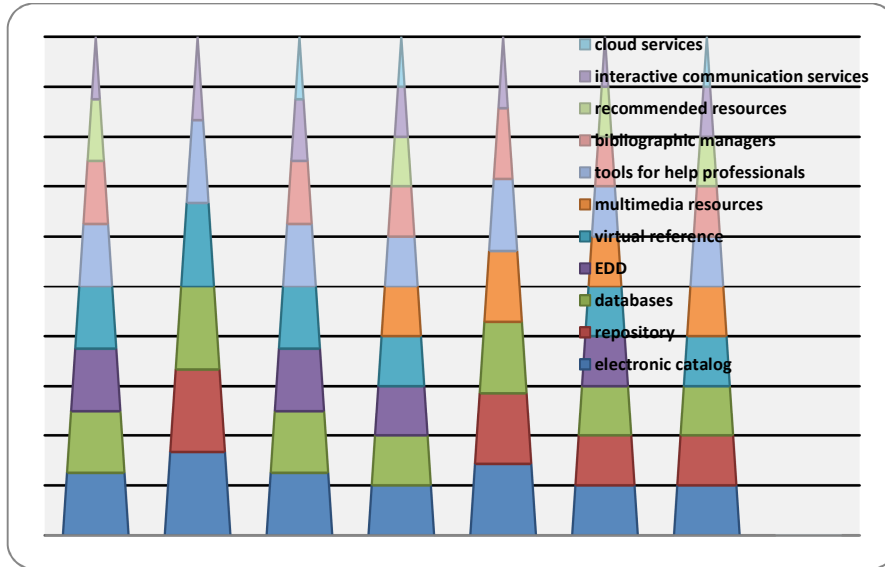


Fig. 2. The comparison of the libraries in the group B.

Among this list of the libraries, the leader is Rutgers University library (fig. 3).

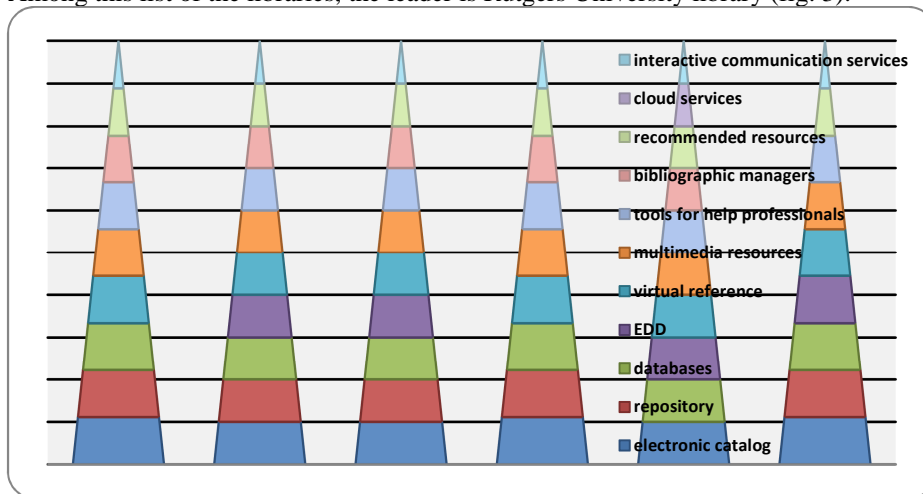


Fig. 3. The comparison of the libraries in the group C.

Benchmarking methodology allowed to identify the library leaders of the United States of America that provide a wide range of the remote library services (fig. 4).

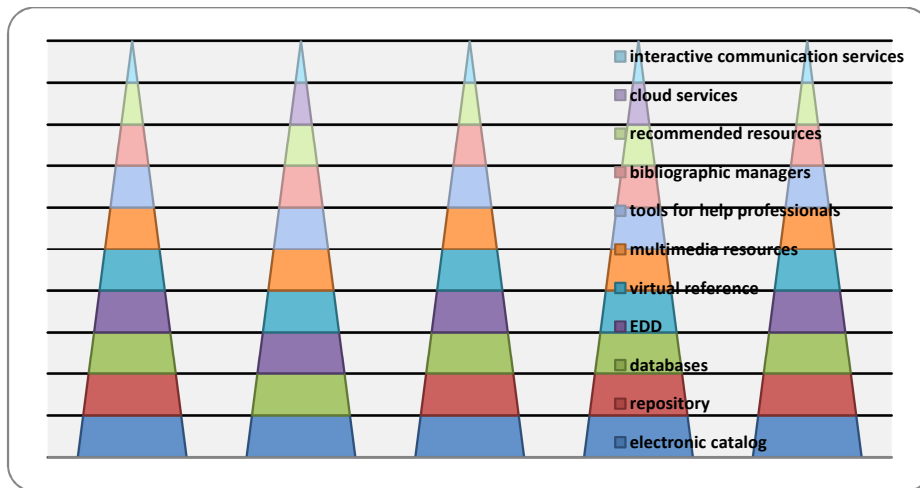


Fig. 4. The comparison of library leaders.

It was found that USA universities libraries provide users with the ability to use the system of electronic catalogs; repository, which stores theses, articles, abstracts of the university employees; and a wide range of pre-paid and free of charge databases. The decisive fact is that the USA library practice the individual approach to assist the researchers – the curator of a particular area of knowledge, which is guided in an appropriate range of information resources is used. The website provides supervisor (subject guide) contact information: the phone number, e-mail and skype. This provides powerful information support of scientific staff of the university. The users are suggested to use the open reference resources, on-line journals collections that are available on the Internet. Cloud services include provision of access to full texts of documents from the library collections via OverDrive service for a certain period of time, which essentially plays the role of an electronic loan. It is proposed to use bibliographic management tools, access to which is provided from libraries websites to improve the efficiency of information support of scientific researches. The weak point is the lack of promotional library multimedia materials. However, the audio and video documents are hosted in the library catalog collections. There is an electronic document delivery service (EDD) – the user is given the opportunity to receive the electronic documents on his own email. Every library website includes a virtual reference service and chat – instant messaging users with a contact person in the library.

The Research of Information Services of the University Libraries of Canada

The websites of Canadian university libraries provide the following range of distance services: search in the electronic catalog; search in the institutional repository; access to prepaid databases; virtual reference; interactive communication services (Skype, on-line assistant, etc.); electronic delivery of documents (EDD);

multimedia resources; funds to help a specialist; bibliographic managers; cloud services; recommended resources (directing to open information resources on the Internet, databases, on-line magazines, web-services). 15 Universities libraries of Canada were selected for research. In this group, the first place was taken by the University library of Manitoba for completing the provision of library and information services (fig. 5).

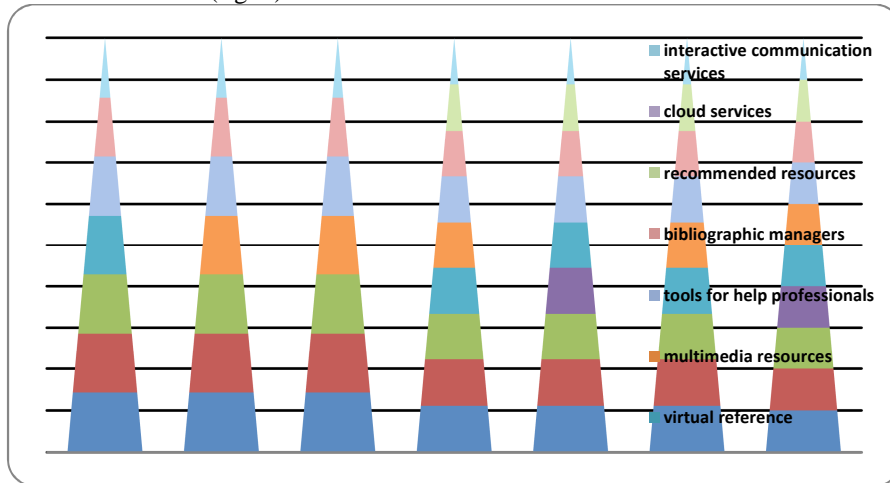


Fig. 5. Comparison of libraries in group A.

Among the list below of libraries, the leader is the University of Waterloo library (fig. 6).

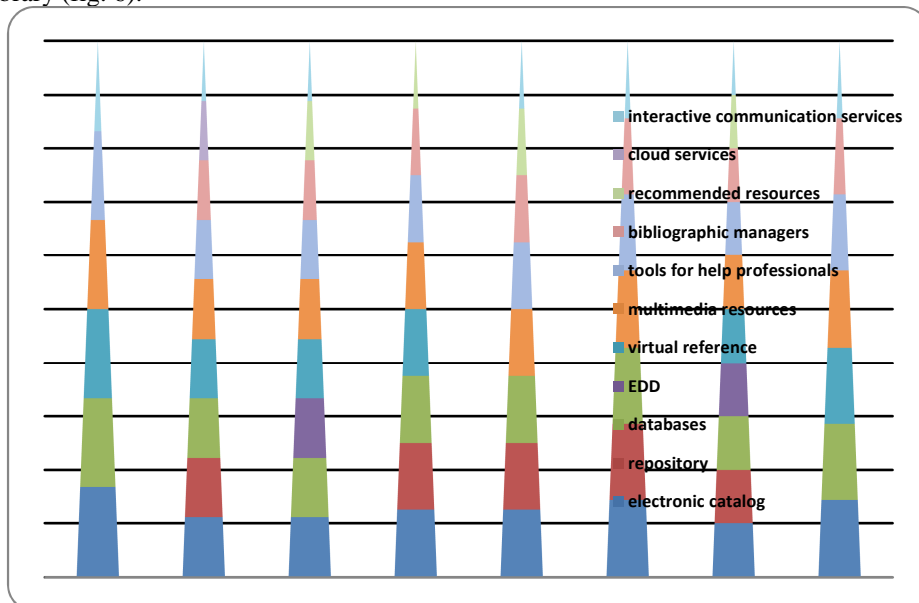


Fig. 6. Comparison of libraries in group B.

As the charts show, the libraries of the University of Manitoba and the University of Waterloo take precedence over the completeness of the provision of distance services by the libraries of higher education institutions in Canada. It is established that the libraries of higher educational institutions of the given country provide users with a system of electronic catalogs; repository, where theses and abstracts are kept; a wide range of prepaid and freely accessible databases. The determining factor is that, in Canada's library practice, as in the previous country, an individual approach is used to assist the researcher-curator (subject guide) from a certain area of knowledge, which is guided by the appropriate spectrum of information resources. Users are encouraged to take advantage of open source resources, in particular attention to open electronic repositories. It is proposed to use the means of bibliographic managers provided from the libraries' websites to increase the efficiency of scientific research. Not all web site collections provide a remote service for electronic document delivery (EDD). Each website library is equipped with a virtual reference service and chat - instant messaging of users with a contact person from the library.

The Research of Information Services of the University Libraries of Australia.

The libraries of 11 higher education institutions of Australia were selected for research. It is determined that the Australian University libraries websites provide the following assortment of distance services: search in the electronic catalog; search in the institutional repository; access to prepaid databases; virtual reference; interactive communication services (Skype, on-line assistant, etc.); electronic delivery of documents (EDD); multimedia resources; funds to help a specialist; bibliographic managers; cloud services; recommended resources (directing to open information resources on the Internet, databases, on-line magazines, web-services).

The diagram (fig. 7) shows that the leader in providing distance services in the first group of libraries is the Library of the University of Sydney.

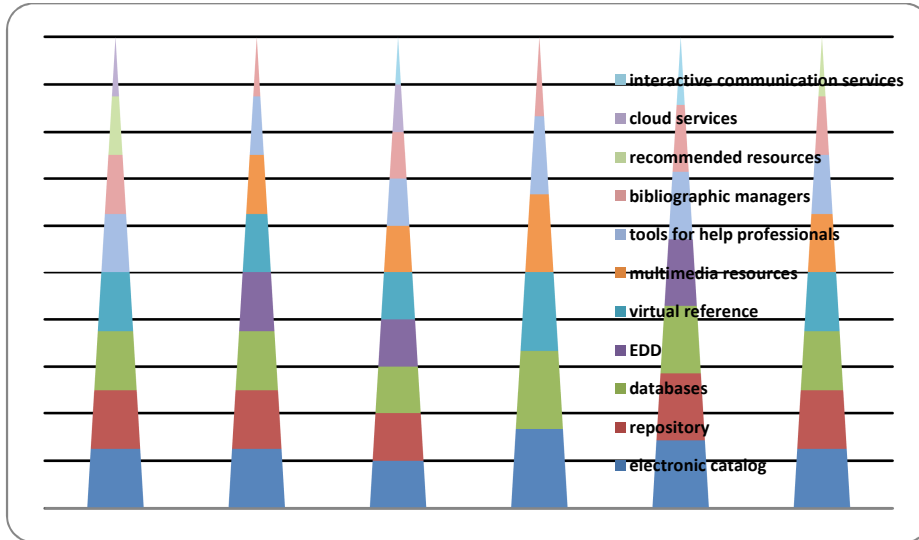


Fig.7. Comparison of libraries in group A.

In the next group, the Library of the University of Queensland occupied the championship (Fig. 8).

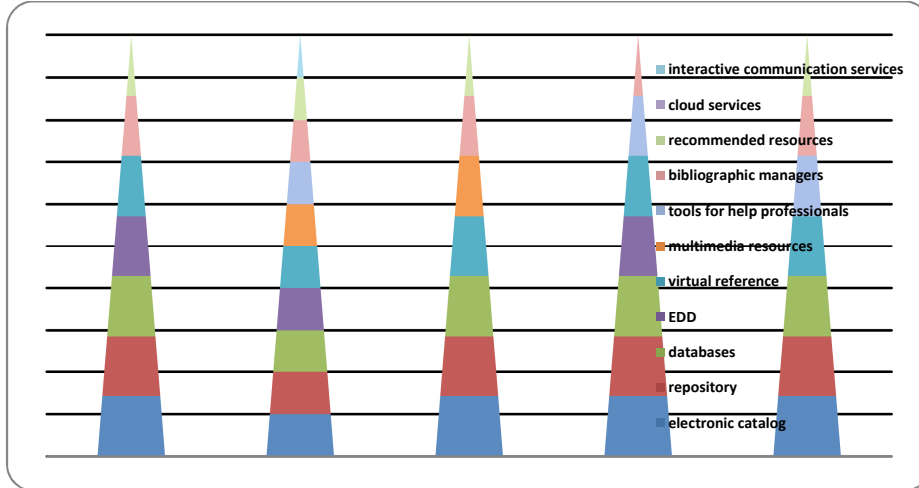


Fig. 8. Comparison of libraries in group B.

Thus, the Library of the University of Sydney and the University of Queensland Library are among the standard among the libraries of higher education institutions in Australia. Australian Higher Education Libraries provide users with the ability to search in electronic catalogs; repositories, where theses and abstracts are kept; A wide

range of prepaid and freely accessible databases. It should be noted that the level of support of educational and scientific processes in higher educational institutions is adequate. This is achieved by providing the library services with distance services: a subject guide from a certain area of knowledge, bibliographic managers and guidance on their use. It should be noted the tendency to reduce the provision of the following services: some e-mail delivery services to the user's e-mail were not found on some libraries web sites; small number of libraries offers multimedia documents from their own websites. The genre composition consists of videos as instructions for using resources; not all libraries' websites are equipped with chat.

The Research of Information Services of New Zealand Universities Libraries.

The web-sites of 7 universities libraries (Fig. 9) are investigated.

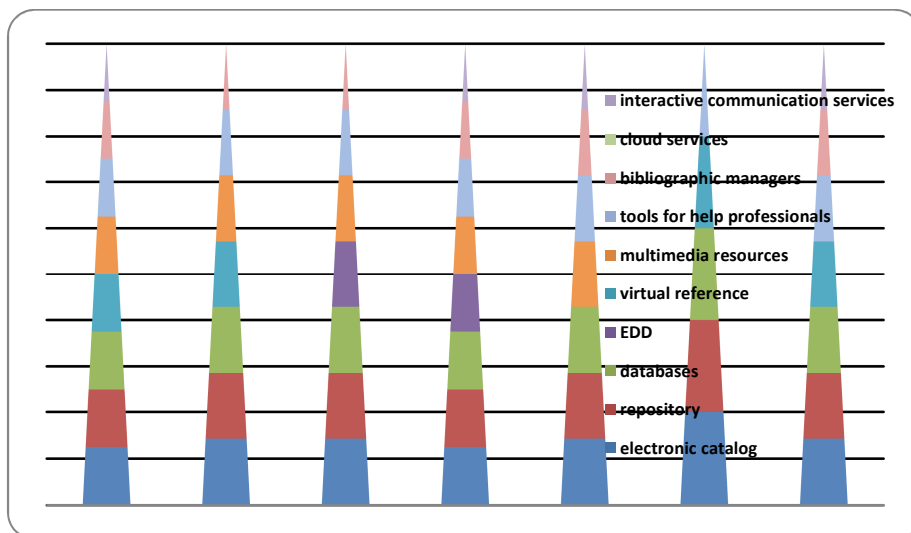


Fig. 9. Comparison of New Zealand Libraries.

Superiority of the provision of maximum facilities won the Library of the University of Waikato. The New Zealand Higher Education Libraries provide users with the ability to search in electronic catalogs; repositories, where theses and abstracts are kept; a wide range of databases (in order to go to databases, you need to get authorization); bibliographic managers and guidance on their use; branch librarians with a set of expert resources. Web sites provide video tutorials to help with the use of library services and information resources: databases, library searches and online resources. However, during the study, there was no virtual tour, virtual exhibitions, multimedia materials that would disclose library funds. Unlike the libraries of previous countries, libraries in New Zealand Supports a list management system designed for teaching staff and students to conduct an optimization of the learning process.

6 Conclusions

Thus, one of the most efficient methodology that allows you continuously conduct a comparative analysis of library resources, skills and abilities of library staff, search for the best methodology for optimizing management processes and, as a result, apply the most advanced and successful operating experience in order to achieve the greatest efficiency – there is benchmarking. Unlike marketing, benchmarking is designed to form an authoritative portrait of the library at the internal level and present the result at the macro level of the socio-communicative space, while forming its image at the external level. The following areas of benchmarking in the library industry can be identified, aimed at: satisfying the information needs of users of the library and the demand for documentary information resources of the library; socio-communicative communication of the library with the external environment; improving the quality of service spectrum; use of modern technologies; traditional areas of library activity built on classical principles; creating a positive image of the institution. Today the actual reason for applying to benchmarking among institutions of social-informational type is the desire to take leading positions in a competitive information environment. It is in the direction of combining the methodology of benchmarking and information technology to improve the functioning of a massive social social institution - libraries, and further research will be conducted.

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