Quality management service at the University of Malaya Library

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to describe the steps in attaining the ISO 9001:2000 quality management system certification at the University of Malaya Library.

Design/methodology/approach – This article includes description of the planning, implementation and maintenance of the quality management system by the library, along with continual improvement efforts to provide quality service to the library clientele.

Findings – Finds that the move towards a quality management system within quality standard requirements, such as the MS ISO 9001:2000 proved challenging to obtaining the management commitment and the reorganization of services. Customer feedback becomes the focus of on-going planning to fulfill customer requirements. A quality management system has brought about informed decision making and increased customer satisfaction.

Research limitations/implications – The study is limited to only four university libraries, thus generalization to Malaysian academic libraries is premature at this stage.

Practical implications – This paper will be helpful to libraries planning to implement a quality management system to improve its quality service and increase customer satisfaction.

Originality/value – This paper will be helpful to libraries planning to implement a quality management system to improve its quality service and increase customer satisfaction. As libraries strive to provide quality services to their clients, it is important that their quality standards be accepted globally, therefore the implementation of a quality management system based on ISO 9001:2000 may be helpful in providing clear guidelines on measuring performance.

Keywords Academic libraries, Quality assurance, Quality management, Malaysia

Paper type Case study

A brief overview of ISO 9001:2000 at the University of Malaya

The University of Malaya’s MS ISO 9001:2000 certification has instituted a quality management system (QMS) which is internationally recognized. The quality program and the implementation of the QMS in the University of Malaya (UM) is the result of the vision (turned to reality) of the former Vice-Chancellor, Prof Dato’ Dr Anuar Zaini in an effort to address the criticisms from the public and the mass media regarding the quality of graduates produced and comments on poor management and services offered. Increased student enrolment, increased market forces and competition, the need for greater accountability, stringent financial control and rapid technological developments, enhanced the need for UM to be more consistent and competitive and thus to be internationally recognized (Fauza et al., 2003). Though other quality assurance measures such as accreditation and benchmarking are available, UM decided on MS ISO 9001:2000 certification as the groundwork towards building her quality management system.
University of Malaya’s core processes are:

- Teaching and learning;
- Research, whereas the eight supporting processes constitute;
- Management of human resource;
- Estate development and maintenance;
- Management of finance;
- Management of commercialization;
- Management of student affairs;
- Management of library services;
- Management of residential colleges; and
- Management of sports and cultural services.

The implementation of QMS cuts across the main campus covering 27 responsible centres, including the University of Malaya Library.

**Quality management system at the University of Malaya Library**

The success of QMS is guaranteed only if each responsible center at UM strives to achieve relevant quality objective(s). The University of Malaya Library contributes to its parent organization mainly through its three major core processes; acquisition, service provision and user education. How does the library manage this? Let’s reflect upon what Peters (1999) believes. According to him quality management is driven by two broad ideas; first is customer satisfaction and second is efficiency. If the organization can figure out what the customer wants and need, it can than deliver it in the same way each time there is a demand, (fitness for purpose). The other important step would be to figure out the most efficient way to produce or service, and reduce time and resource wastage. The Library is using the ISO 9001:2000 quality management system requirements as a tool to achieve this. Basically, it assists to establish policies and objectives and to achieve those objectives. The management system can be considered as an interaction of people, processes and procedures, as illustrated in Figure 1.

The scope of the library is to support teaching, learning and research by providing adequate current resources, quality service and user education to its clientele, consisting of students, faculty and the university community. The expanding student intake, rising cost of print materials and the proliferation of electronic resources has increased the pressure of demand on the library to provide high quality resources and services. The QMS provides the library a means of streamlining its processes to achieve consistency and desired customer satisfaction. The library consists of a main library, 13 special libraries situated at various faculties and two libraries off campus. It was important for all staff to be involved so that the processes could be consistent and efficiency in service be achieved with minimum resource wastage. Initially, the success of the QMS at the library was guaranteed by certain factors:

**Management commitment**

As early as 2000, when the university began its quality program, the library’s management showed their commitment by carrying out various in-house workshops to introduce all library staff to the general requirements of MS ISO 9001:2000. Dato’ Dr
Zaiton Osman, the then Chief Librarian, referred the QMS as a “jigsaw puzzle” made up of ten pieces, (the identified core processes) of which the library was a significant piece, especially to the teaching, learning and research component (Osman, 2003). Every member of staff underwent the team building programs and continuous workshops were held to instill commitment to the University’s mission and vision. Relevant staff were involved in the documentation of processes so that it reflected the actual tasks carried out and at the same time identify critical changes to be made for efficiency of work. Efforts were made to provide the necessary infrastructure and facilities needed to carry out the task. Staff were also given training on the requirements of the standard and auditing processes.

Communication
Clear, consistent communication of values, expectations and focus made staff realize their role and contribution to every process of the library activities that ensured quality library services to all. The input of staff during the documentation and verification provided a communication channel which allowed staff to discuss real problems faced at service counters and needs of customers become more apparent. To ensure QMS is carried out effectively, a number of workshops related to QMS have been held for the staff from all categories.

Reorganization
An ISO committee was formed, consisting of 11 library members and six academic staff, to begin on documenting quality procedures. The documentation began in July 2001 and carried on till May 2002. The challenges and demands of drawing up quality procedures are detailed in an article by Sossamma (2002). To ensure the success of QMS, the Library Quality Committee was formed, consisting of the library’s management, a quality manager, a documents controller, internal auditors and representatives of the general staff. Some significant changes to the organizational chart were evident.

Resource allocation
Top management strived to provide adequate resources for the implementation of quality efforts, especially in human and capital resources. As activities were to be
carried out based on documented procedures, adequate supplies and equipment became necessary to accomplish the tasks. The human resource management planning became evident as vacancies were filled and effective utilisation of staff was carried out. Such commitment from the university allowed the library to demand finances for improving its infrastructure; signage, computer facilities, safety and upgrading of workspace. Budget was revised to allocate a higher amount for electronic resources.

After the MS ISO 9001:2000 certification, there are currently two major areas of concern for the library:

1. Stability of the system, in terms of:
   - documentation;
   - management commitment;
   - communication and customer satisfaction; and
   - product realization.

2. Surveillance and continual improvement.

University of Malaya Library has adopted the QMS encompassing the procedures, documentation and people. The documentation structure includes a quality manual, six main documented procedures (required by the standard), three core library procedures (collection development, services, training and user education) with 42 work instruction, external documents and forms/records. The library also prepared ten work manuals to ensure consistency of work done across the main library and 14 of its branch/special libraries. The ten work manuals are:

1. Acquisitions work manual;
2. Cataloguing and classification work manual;
3. Indexing work manual;
4. ICT work manual;
5. Bindery work manual;
6. Microform work manual;
7. Reader services work manual;
8. Laws amendments work manual;
9. Publishing work manual; and
10. Information skills work manual.

The quality policies are underlined in the quality manual, which describes overall commitment and intent towards satisfying specified criteria through the quality objectives. Documented procedures specify ways to perform activities to fulfill those objectives. External documents refer to guidelines, specifications, legislation, etc. Whereas forms/records are formats and documents showing evidence of activities performed and results achieved.

**Achieving the quality objectives**

The library began its quality movement by identifying two main objectives which have been stated in the quality manual:
(1) **Acquisition**: To prepare at least 80 per cent of the resources listed in the reading list of core and elective courses.

(2) **User education**: To ensure 95 per cent of first year undergraduate students and 20 per cent of post graduate students are given training and guidance in the field of information skills through planned information skills programs.

Assessment of these quality objectives as shown in Table I, show that generally the library has achieved the quality objectives. A formal report is sent to quality assurance management unit (QAMU) to be presented in the Management Review Meeting held twice a year.

These quality objectives are currently being reviewed to include service oriented objectives and raise customer satisfaction with the services offered at the library.

University of Malaya Library has managed to adhere to her quality objective through four major areas of QMS:

1. Management responsibility;
2. Resource management;
3. Product (service) realisation; and
4. Measurement, analysis and improvement.

**Management responsibility**
The library has an ISO Committee that meets once a month. It consists of the chief librarian, the quality manager, document controller, internal auditors and members representing branch libraries, special libraries and infrastructure respectively. Responsibilities and authorities of personnel are clearly defined and the appointment of the members of the committee is to ensure the QMS is implemented and maintained effectively. All decisions are communicated to the other staff within the organization and also to the patrons of the library. Among the means of communication are notice boards, e-mails and the library web site.

**Resource management**
Resource management encompasses human resource, infrastructure and work environment of the organization. At the library, the management is committed to continually improve the skills and competencies of the staff through training. A training and competency based matrix has been prepared to facilitate planning for staff development. Currently, the University funds two librarians a year to pursue their Masters degree. Staff competencies are enhanced through participation in various training programs.

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<tr>
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<th>2003/2004 (%)</th>
<th>2003 (%)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Acquisition: To prepare at least 80</td>
<td>82.9</td>
<td>80.6</td>
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<td>per cent of the resources listed in</td>
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<td>the reading list of core and elective</td>
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<td>courses</td>
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<tr>
<td>User education: To ensure 95 per</td>
<td>98.6 per cent</td>
<td>95.6 per</td>
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<tr>
<td>cent of first year undergraduate</td>
<td>under graduate</td>
<td>cent</td>
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<td>students and 20 per cent of post</td>
<td>26.5 per</td>
<td>21.1 per</td>
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<td>graduate students are given training</td>
<td>post-graduate</td>
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<td>and guidance in the field of</td>
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Table I. Achievement of quality objectives
training programmes such as seminars, conferences and workshops. Awareness towards ISO for new staff is held by QAMU every two weeks and the library ensures the relevant staff are sent for these awareness sessions so that they are aware of the relevance and importance of their activities and how they contribute to the achievement of the library’s quality objectives. All record of training, skills and experience are maintained. To date there are two librarians who are certified Lead Auditor for UM, one who is also a member of QAMU. There are also 11 librarians, who are internal auditors for UM, trained by QAMU.

The library faces many challenges in the area of infrastructure and work environment. Since computer facilities are essential to the success of the services offered, ISO has provided the appropriate methodology for infrastructure management. One of the support processes identified in UM’s QMS is Estate Development and Maintenance. The commitment towards conformity to standard procedures have brought about radical improvement in the infrastructure management at the library. All complaints are handled through an online complaint centre and attended with immediate effect.

Product realization
The product/service in relation to the ISO 9001:2000 standard for UM has been defined as “the experience of receiving an education”. The library strives to provide quality experience of receiving current information and quality service. The ISO certification standard is one key way of assuring that the service to the library patron (customer) is delivered as promised. Documented procedures are used to ensure every activity promised is carried out to the satisfaction of the patron. Product realization is the sequence of processes and sub-processes required to achieve the product or service. It involves planning, customer related processes, design and development, purchasing, product and service provision and control of monitoring and measuring devices. Therefore every process which involves the library patron, beginning from registration, loans, learning environment, facilities, user education – class schedule, curriculum content, evaluation, monitoring, etc. are streamlined through written documented procedure that ensures work is carried out consistently and towards achieving the quality objectives or quality indicators that have been pre-determined. Information technology (IT) has played a major part in this aspect.

Measurement, analysis and improvement
Customer satisfaction
A suggestion box has been provided at each library for library patrons to be able to channel their suggestion or complaints. Complaints/suggestions/feedback form (UM-PT00-PK08-BR001) and customer satisfaction form for counter service (UM-PT00-PK08-BR002), a formal form (controlled document) is placed at each box to facilitate the management of the suggestions/complaints and to channel them to the right authorities to be handled. Every suggestion/complaint is recorded and action taken is given as feedback to the person concerned. A monthly meeting of the ISO committee discusses the issues and relevant action is decided upon, which are not only corrective in nature but also preventive, so that the re-occurrence of the problem is minimized. At the University level, a monthly meeting with the management
representative (MR) ensures the smooth carrying out of this and action taken is reviewed by the quality manager.

Customer satisfaction is measured at predetermined intervals. The library carried out a customer satisfaction survey in early February 2003 to identify major customer concerns and measure customer satisfaction. This, together with complaints/suggestions/feedback form from users and a separate survey carried out by the reader services division, revealed a 60 per cent negative response rate related to finding and locating books on the shelves. As a result, the library carried out a continual improvement project entitled “Toward a more effective system of supervising staff and a more efficient work procedure for shelving” in August 2003.

Internal audit
The measurement of quality often appears to be difficult. However, in ISO 9001:2000 QMS, an audit is carried out to verify conformity (fulfillment of requirements) effectiveness (extent to which a planned activity is realized and planned results achieved). To date, there have been five first party audits (internal audits) carried out at University level. Before each audit the library conducts its own internal audit to ensure conformity of processes to documented procedures. Detection of non-conformance has two bearings, it is either the process has been carried out not in accordance to the documented procedure or the more important is the realization that procedures need to be changed according to circumstances or changing user needs. It is important to understand that documented procedures are not a hindrance to change, but the standard requires that continual improvement is carried out.

Continual improvement
Quality standards provide requirements for quality management systems and guidance for performance improvement. Continual improvement is not necessarily continuous improvement. It may not be happening all the time but improvement efforts may be intermittently applied to achieve the desired consistency in fulfilling requirements and the activities go beyond requirements. The PDCA (Plan, Do, Check, Adjust) cycle is most useful in describing the efforts of continual improvement.

The objectives of the survey done on February 2003 were to investigate whether students use the library collection and for what purpose; to investigate whether students are aware of and use the services offered by the library; and whether students are aware of the user education programmes offered by the library. Students have also recorded satisfaction with various services provided by the library. The findings show that the majority of respondents (both undergraduates and postgraduates) use print resources more than electronic resources. Among those using electronic resources, the postgraduates use them more than the undergraduates.

Since the findings have shown that electronic resources are not heavily used by post-graduates and undergraduates, the library has come up with another continual improvement project entitled “Promoting the usage of online databases”. In this exercise, the technical, marketing and searching skills of those accessing the databases via the interactive portal in the library homepage will be analyzed. The library aims to increase by 30 per cent as compared to the year 2004, the usage of online databases by postgraduates and academic staff.
The continual improvement project entitled “Toward a more effective system of supervising staff and a more efficient work procedure for shelving” has succeeded in reducing the problem of not locating the books in the shelves. It has also increased the user satisfaction towards the services offered in the library. It is worth mentioning that this project won the Bronze Medal in a competition for continual improvement project organized by QAMU. These surveys also give the library much leverage to prepare its collection and services to meet the needs of its customers.

Conclusion
The University of Malaya Library has over the past few years ventured into the benefits of ISO 9001:2000 as a means of streamlining its processes in order to be compatible and competitive with other institutions at the national, regional and global level. The MS ISO 9001:2000 has certainly provided clearer working procedures, better team spirit among the staff, better control of processes, reduced wastage, and better relations with customers. Though the certification is only a beginning of the quality improvement journey, management commitment, conducive environment and good relations with customers is a definite indication of quality assurance in education.

References


Further reading


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