

January 2015

## Managing with Data: Using ACRLMetrics and PLAMetrics [Review of the book]

Ann Agee  
San Jose State University, [ann.agee@sjsu.edu](mailto:ann.agee@sjsu.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/lib\\_pub](https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/lib_pub)



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Agee, A. (2015, Summer). Managing with Data: Using ACRLMetrics and PLAMetrics [Review of the book]. *Reference and User Services Quarterly*, 54(4), 73-74. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5860/rusq.54n4.73b>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Library at SJSU ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty and Staff Publications by an authorized administrator of SJSU ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@sjsu.edu](mailto:scholarworks@sjsu.edu).

*Managing With Data: Using ACRLMetrics and PLAMetrics*. Peter Herson, Robert E. Dugan, and Joseph R. Matthews. Chicago: ALA, 2015. 232 p. Paper. \$85 (ISBN 978-0-8389-1243-0)

Statistics are daunting, but for today's library managers, they are inescapable. Managers need data to guide the decisions they make. They must also provide evidence to library stakeholders of the direct and indirect benefits their libraries offer. *Managing With Data*, a companion volume to the authors' *Getting Started with Evaluation* (2014), provides a detailed approach to how to choose the best metrics for library assessment and how to tell a persuasive story with the resulting data.

Deciding what metrics best prove a library's value can be a manager's first hurdle. Collections, services, staffing, and use are all traditional measures and the book covers these in detail. Lists of possible metrics are provided as well as illustrations of how they can be applied to demonstrate value and reveal important trends. In addition to quantitative measures, the authors cover how to assess the often elusive qualitative ways a library adds value. There are also chapters on the benchmarking process, best practices, and how to effectively communicate results to the community or campus. Closing the loop—using results to improve practice—is often a neglected step in the assessment process. This is tackled in the final chapter with tips on how to use outcomes to enact organizational change.

The most striking feature of this book is its hands-on approach. Step-by-step examples are provided that allow users to manipulate real data from real libraries. The data comes from the Association for College and Research Libraries (ACRL) and the Public Library Association (PLA). ACRLMetrics and PLAMetrics are online, subscription-based services offered by these organizations, and the book comes with free access to a subset of these data collections. (Only one of the data sets—academic or public—may be chosen by the reader as part of the registration process.)

Readers can use these data to solve the realistic assessment challenges posed throughout many of the chapters. In a benchmarking exercise, for instance, readers are asked to compare one library's Interlibrary Loan services to those of a peer institution and are guided through the process step by step. The authors also show how to use data from free services—such as the Institute of Museum and Library Services and the National Center for Education Statistics—to answer assessment questions. Additional exercises found at the end of each chapter are designed specifically for library staff. Some challenge staff to solve assessment problems (an appendix provides the answers); others promote discussion about different aspects of the evaluation process.

Anxiety seems to be an integral part of assessment. But by detailing how to collect data and demonstrating how the resulting information can be applied, *Managing With Data* helps bring the stress under control.

*Ann Agee, School of Information Librarian, San Jose State University, San Jose, California*