PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN THE SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY
OF LOCAL ADMINISTRATIONS

By Ilaria Giglio and Maria Maiorano

1. *A general view*

Actually Italian public libraries are in a disparate situation: some examples are close to the best European experiences, but the most of them are not able to stand the international standards. Computerization and disintermediation characterize our society, they tend to reduce librarian institution's value and to cause the underestimation of its social role from local administration to which it is related. For these reasons, public libraries need to find a way to validate their position relating to their stakeholders.

A possible solution could be to implement self-assessment and communication, using the social accountability and especially the social report.

According to the *Direttiva sulla rendicontazione sociale nelle amministrazioni pubbliche*[1]of 2006, social accountability is the tool that public administrations can use to satisfy the informative needing of their stakeholders, giving the chance to evaluate their value and the effects of their own administration: so it is the main tool for the relationship with the stakeholders and especially with the local community.

The tools through the public administration carries out the accountability are final documents that have the role to inform the community about its own action in a specific time lapse. The main documents are:

- balance of mandate: it covers the time of administrative mandate ended;

- social report: it is the tool that communities use to get information about the politics, the administration's choice and about results achieved on the interested area, described in an accurate and specific way.

Public administrations can get some advantages from an effective social accountability that can be extended to all the institutions involved by the pass of the social report (so even the libraries). These advantages are relating to the integration and revitalization of accounting dimension across a major clearness in the report of the economic-financial resources; optimization of the outgoing streams toward to the stakeholders; empowerment of institutions' responsibility by focusing on

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[*]The work has been planned and organised commonly such as the final conclusions, while specifically paragraphs n. 1, 3, 4 are from Maria Maiorano, the n. 2, 5, 6 by Ilaria Giglio.

[1] Dipartimento della funzione pubblica, *Direttiva sulla rendicontazione sociale nelle amministrazioni pubbliche,* 2006.

administrative clearness and evaluation by the side of citizens; better working of administrations and responsible consciousness of public expenditure; bodies' structural reorganization considering planning processes and users needs; valorisation and development of expertise and professionalism; increasing of motivation and satisfaction of the employees.

Public bodies can be accountable regarding their actions and give to the users the chance to evaluate it by using some indicators, as they are suggested by the same *Direttiva*: goals pursued (quantifiable and measurable changes that are attended compared with the starting situation); undertook actions (plans, projects, services and regulatory interventions), making the process' indicators (activities, times, progress ranking) clear; used resources; final outcomes (quantity and quality of them); efficiency (used resources / final outcomes); effectiveness (capability of producing a desired result); effect (social re-entry of achieved interventions); judgments from the beneficiaries; future commitments.

The social report is the main tool that public administrations can use for the social accountability and it could be used at the same time for inner management and for outer communication. It is the last step of accountability process and its "social" characterization could be related to the impact and the immaterial results that the presence of the local body have had on its related community, but also to a participate constitution of the score card, created with the support of the citizens or of others stakeholders. Public administrations should use the social report as the only for evaluation, self-evaluation, communication of their social re-entry. Nowadays in Italy social report's editing isn't compulsory[2].

2. *Methodology*

Public Italian libraries should look to the public administrations and use the social report to be accountable of their actions and to get more value forward their stakeholders.

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[2] For an in-depth analysis about accountability and social report, it's possible to refer to these texts: LUCA ANDRIOLI, CRISTIANA SERAFINI, *Il bilancio sociale: obiettivi, principi e principali esperienze in atto*. Roma: Enea, 2002; LUCA BARTOCCI, *Il bilancio sociale negli enti locali: fondamenti teorici e aspetti metodologici*. Torino: Giappichelli, 2003; LUCIANO HINNA, *Il bilancio sociale nelle amministrazioni pubbliche*. Milano: F. Angeli, 2004; ILEANA STECCOLINI, *Accountability e sistemi informativi negli enti locali: dal rendiconto al bilancio sociale*. Torino: Giappichelli, 2004; ANGELO TANESE, *Rendere conto ai cittadini: il bilancio sociale nelle amministrazioni pubbliche*. Napoli: ESI, 2004; Gruppo di Studio per il Bilancio Sociale, *La rendicontazione nel settore pubblico*, in *Il bilancio sociale: standard di base e documenti di ricerca*. Milano: Giuffrè, 2005; *La nuova comunicazione dell'ente locale: organizzare l'ascolto, l'informazione e la partecipazione degli stakeholder*, di Alfredo Alessandrini e altri, Milano: F. Angeli, 2006; Gruppo di Studio per il Bilancio Sociale, *Gli indicatori di performance nella rendicontazione sociale.* Milano: Giuffrè, 2007; Gruppo di Studio per il Bilancio Sociale, *La rendicontazione sociale nel settore pubblico.* Milano: Giuffrè, 2007; Ministero dell'interno, Osservatorio per la finanza e la contabilità degli enti locali, *Linee guida per la rendicontazione sociale negli enti locali*, 2007; ALBERTO ROMOLINI, *Accountability e bilancio sociale negli enti locali*. Milano: F. Angeli, 2007; PAOLA ORLANDINI, *Rendicontazione e responsabilità sociale*. Torino: Giappichelli, 2008; Gruppo di Studio per il Bilancio Sociale, *Il bilancio sociale. Standard : principi di redazione del bilancio sociale*. Milano: Giuffrè, 2013.

The Italian professional literature hasn't yet make its point about the importance of libraries' social accountability[3] and it has not been a standardization of needed practices, even if there are some cases usable as reference[4].

However, before the proposal of a specific model of application of the social report, that libraries could use to express their identity, it' interesting to verify which is actually the Italian perception about libraries' role.

From the analysis of the national recent professional literature it seems that contemporary library is always more compound and needing of flexibility to be able to convert itself to the contexts and sets that is has to be related with. The result is a cultural structure, seen not "only" as a place of information access and conservation, but as a makerspace in which users can feel as an active and creative part.

So there's the chance for public libraries to start the competition not only with conform cultural structures but also with instruction and formation world, to introduce itself as an educational lab where the creative experience could involve librarians and users in the same way[5].

To this account it's possible to add library's social vocations as they are described in the recent ISO 16439:2014 (E)[6]:

Social impact, by influence on social inclusion and unity.

Attendance to information and education, by giving free access to information and internet; education and life-long learning; local culture and identity.

Cultural diversity, by giving to different groups the change to preserve their cultural heritage and by promoting community identity.

Community development, they are a focus point for many activities and programs that support the community or the society in general.

Individual well-being, library are not only a quiet place where it's possible to read and to study, but also a meeting place where is possible to share events.

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[3] It's possible to refer to: PIERALDO LIETTI, STEFANO PARISE, *Il bilancio sociale della biblioteca*, "Bollettino AIB", 46 (2006), n. 1/2, pp. 9-21, <http://bollettino.aib.it/article/view/5131/4898>; STEFANO PARISE, *Il bilancio sociale come strumento di progettazione e valutazione in biblioteca*, in *Vitamina biblioteca: quanto cresce la città: impatto sociale delle biblioteche, valutazione costi/benefici degli interventi culturali, domanda di cultura*, atti della giornata di studio (Scandicci, 3 aprile 2009), redazione e editing Serena Borgi e Stefano De Martin, Firenze: Centro stampa Giunta Regione Toscana, 2009, p. 26-31; GIOVANNI DI DOMENICO, *La responsabilità sociale nella gestione delle biblioteche*, "Bibliotime" 14 (2011), n. 1, <http://www.aib.it/aib/sezioni/emr/bibtime/num-xiv-1/didomenico.htm>.

[4] The reference is to the social reports edited by the Biblioteca San Giorgio di Pistoia, by the Fondazione per Leggere and by the municipality of Pordenone.

[5] Cfr. GIOVANNI SOLIMINE, *Nuovi appunti sulla interpretazione della biblioteca pubblica*, «AIB studi», 53 n. 3 (2013), p. 269, DOI: 10.2426/aibstudi-9132.

[6] ISO 16439:2014 (E), *Methods and procedures for assessing the impact of libraries*, p. 14.

Preservation of the cultural heritage, the potential value of libraries for the next generations by preserve the documentary heritage.

These are the profiles that actually professional world acknowledges for libraries, but it could be interesting to understand how they are really recognized by stakeholders and above all by the public administration with the libraries have to regard.

3. *Accountability in Italy: analysis, answers and cases*

To get a realistic point of view of Italian situation it has been done a specific analysis of the accountability tools used by the municipalities of the province capitals.

The study has been divided in three phases: the first characterised by a preliminary search focused on the accountability tools usable by public administrations; during the second the documentary tools used by them have been chosen and analytically verified; in the third the data from social reports edited have been analysed systematically.

On the total of 110 municipalities examined, the 31,18 % has edited the social report, while the 61,82 % hasn't (Fig. 1).
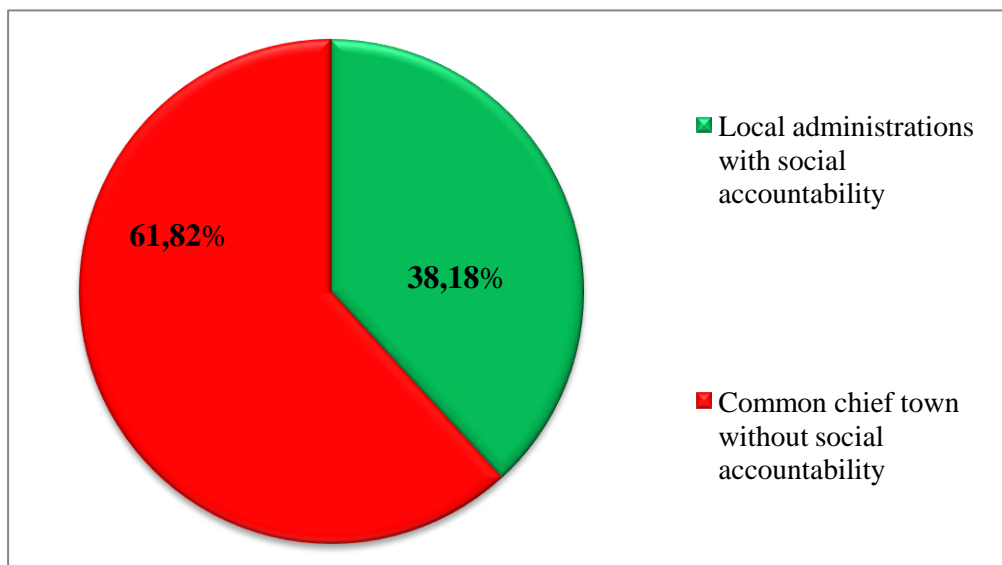

Fig. 1

Of this 38,18 % , the 67,28 % has not included references to public libraries in the social report, while the 32,72 % has included informations even enough specific about librarian institutions, their activities and about the eventual attendance of the community (Fig. 2).
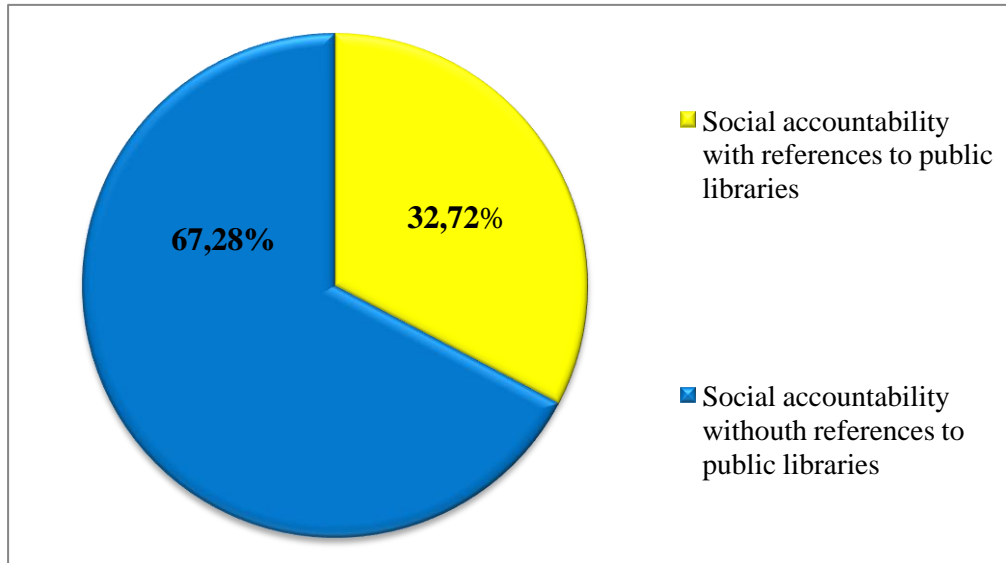
Fig. 2

It's also interesting to note inside the 38,18 % municipalities with social reports which is the percent distribution geographically. Cases of social accountability are present in Italy for the 71,42 % in the north, for the 16,66 % in the middle, for the 4,77 % in the south and for the 7,15 % in the islands (Fig. 3).
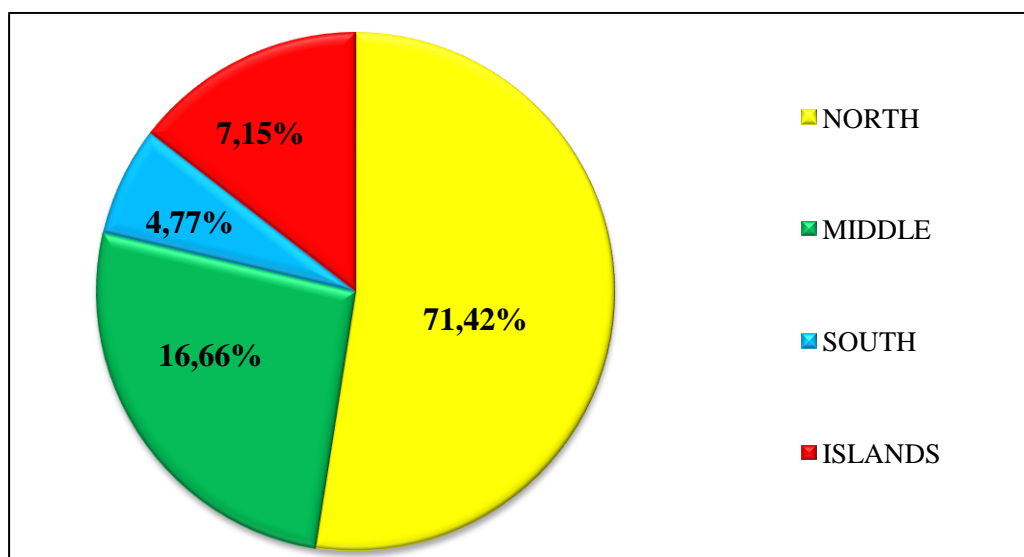

Fig. 3

4. *Italian best practices*

Considering data appeared form the analysis, it has been chosen to consider some examples of social reports complete of many of the parameters earlier pointed and cases selected are the

documents of the San Giorgio of Pistoia library, of the Fondazione per Leggere and the social sore card of Pordenone municipality.

The San Giorgio of Pistoia has edited its social report[7] in the 2011, focusing on efficiency and effectiveness, with the will to offer to the community a public library with collections and services; as a day care centre and as a place of sharing, characterized by free access to news technologies; as a promotional centre for reading, culture and information, for local identification.

In the document's editing some parameter regarding the structure and its operation, the offered services but also regarding satisfaction of users and their relation with the library has been considered. These data are referred to:

- Structure: total area; accessible area for users; total seats for reading/ reference/ audio-video;

- Employees;

- Resources: kinds of documents; purchases and gifts; periodicals; pictures; multimedia materials; *desiderata*; editorial news; rejected and restored documents.

- Services: registered; journals and periodicals reading; loans; interlibrary loans; collection's use; advices and claims; events; web portal and social media.

- Activities: reading promotion; educational projects; bibliographic expositions; publications; cinematographic expositions and projections; library promotion; conventions and seminars; guided tours.

- Costs: employees; paper and stationery; subscriptions; purchases; furnitures; promotional initiatives; restores; communication and signage; employees training; maintenance and cleaning; electricity, warming, water, telephone and garbage; policy; fundings and refunds. Even the savings created from the San Giorgio for the local community and its administration have been explicated.

- Appreciation: expressed by users, employees, friends and fellows of the library.

The mission of this document is to underline the social, cultural and economic role that the San Giorgio has inside Pistoia city.

Differently than the accountability model of Pistoia, the social report edited in the 2013 by the Fondazione per Leggere – south-west libraries of Milan[8]- is more focused on economic perspective founded on the activities of the libraries involved. Indeed in the document there are references to the accounting period, to the relating incomes and savings got by foundation's projects, to the commercial aspects as sponsorships, courses, workshops, merchandising, etc.… are highlighted, with a view to results-oriented economic-financial.

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[7] *La San Giorgio risorsa per la città. Bilancio sociale della biblioteca anno 2011*, final report 22/01/2013, pp. 2-18. It's possible to download the report from the link:
< http://www.sangiorgio.comune.pistoia.it/assets/files/download/files-vari/bilanciosociale2011.pdf >.

[8] It's possible to download the report of the Fondazione per Leggere - Biblioteche sud-ovest di Milano – from the link: <http://www.fondazioneperleggere.it/docs/istituzionali/Bilancio_2013.pdf>.

More detailed information regarding the libraries are present only in small part and concerns mainly the normal service charges and management of the structure and activities performed daily in its interior.

A further example of reporting, that it is distinctly different from the two previously analysed in which libraries are included in economic-financial contexts that are defined with the prospect of gain/revenue that would justify its existence and the social budget and environmental promoted by the Municipality of Pordenone in 2011 and covering the five 2006-2010. The document analyses all the areas affected by the action of the municipal administration and is structured in three sections.

The first has an introductory character, or rather describes the reference templates and the structure of the document; in the second section are communicated the mission of the institution and the social and environmental policies carried out during the five years 2006-2010; in the third section are presented the actions undertaken by the Municipality in the different areas of family, knowledge, common goods, economic activities, networks, communication, resources, organization.

Within the sub-section "knowledge" are analysed the museums, libraries, historical archives, the University, the Verdi Theatre and cultural initiatives.

The partition inherent libraries presents the objectives that the administration has reached during the reference period or to make the library a place open to the city and its territory, capable of accommodating the demand for culture and information, to provide answers and propose, finally, new stimuli and interests.

Among the priority decisions made by the Administration was inserted the establishment of the new headquarters of the central library (opened in June 2010), and the creation of an institute librarian at the cutting edge, both from the point of view multimedia, with the entrance in SBN and the use of RFID technologies, both from the point of view of the services provided that took into consideration all the types of users. In order to improve the quality of the librarian offer present in the territory was created the connection online of some of the assets of 5 district libraries, and other cultural realities present in the territory.

The librarian institution of Pordenone has promoted numerous initiatives of a cultural nature having also a social relevance. They were created special sections such as that of children and young people, young adults, the music and the archive of the comics. In addition to the cultural activities linked to the book and the promotion of reading are also numerous initiatives aimed to immigrants and to the inmates of the prison.

The budget is accompanied by tables that reproduce the data of the increments in the course of the years of attendance; active cards; loans; average of loans per user; opening days; attendance for

opening day; volumes in the bloodstream; guided tours; students participating in the guided tours; cultural meetings; participants in the cultural meetings. The investigations concern the libraries also district of Tower, Mary della Schiava, Jolanda Turchet constituency, North and South constituency and their users; opening hours; Animated readings; participants animated readings and multimedia library with their opening days; accesses; books supplied in consultation; requests made.

5. New proposals

Every library that wants to try their hand at writing a social accountability must take into consideration some mandatory steps. The elements that characterize the social accountability are:
  - voluntariness;
  - statement of commitments, results and effects social products;
  - identification and construction of a dialog with stakeholders.

The social accountability, after an initial presentation of the document and a methodological note on the reporting process, contains information related to:
  - reference values, vision and program administration;
  - policies and services rendered;
  - resources available and used.

The process of implementation of the balance presupposes the prior definition of the areas examined and is divided into:
  - definition of the accounting system, through informative elements and indicators;
  - collection of information;
  - drafting and approval of the document;
  - communication of social report.

The social accountability must: express the sense of the action of the administration, by describing the decision-making processes and operational that characterise it and their impact on the community; be made on a regular basis, allowing you to compare cyclically objectives planned with the results achieved by favouring the definition of new objectives and commitments of the administration; be integrated with the system of planning and control and with the entire system accounting information; have for its object the different types of speeches delivered by the administration in the exercise of its functions and in the context of their own skills; have for object the different types of speeches delivered by the administration in the exercise of its functions and in the context of their own skills; give an account of the activities of public and private entities that contribute to the implementation of the objectives of the administration; be directed to the interlocutors of the administration.

In the carrying out of each of the phases of the process, it is necessary to ensure:

- the involvement of the internal structure;

- the connection with the programming system and control[9].

The drafting of the final document must express essentially the communicative character of the social accountability, making it important for the recipients information contained in it.

The editorial setting, the choice of language, the description and representation of information content of the social accountability should be designed as a function of the specific recipient.

In general terms, it's necessary to use a simple language, sliding and non-redundant; to avoid the use of concepts, terms, and references its own language administrative, technical and sectorial; in the case of foreign words and acronyms, and be appropriate to specify the meaning; use mainly, where possible, a quantitative data, exposed with the help of tables and graphs accompanied by explanations that would make clear the interpretation.

Before the diffusion, the social accountability must be approved or however, made its own by the governing body of the administration[10].

After these general considerations, it's possible to find a series of parameters that could drive public libraries in the preparation of the respective social accountability.

The comparison of information provided by the rules ISO 2789:2013, *International library statistics* and the ISO 11620:2014, *Library performance indicators* has allowed us to devise a prototype evaluation scheme, functional to public libraries to justify their existence and to communicate the value they have for the community of reference.

	ISO 2789		ISO 11620	
Code	**Required statistical data**	**Code**	**Name of the indicator**	
6.3.2	*Books and serials (printed material)*	B.1.1.1	*Required Titles Availability*	
6.3.3	*Manuscripts*			
6.3.4	*Microforms*			
6.3.5	*Cartographic documents*			
6.3.6	*Printed music documents*			
6.3.7	*Audiovisual documents*			
6.3.8	*Graphic documents*			

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[9] Cfr. G. U. n. 53, of March 16 2006, *Direttiva del Ministro della Funzione Pubblica sulla rendicontazione sociale nelle Amministrazioni Pubbliche*, p. 4-5.

[10] *Ivi*, p. 14-15.

6.3.9	*Patents*		
6.3.10	*Other library documents and items*		
6.3.11	*eBooks*		
6.3.12	*Other digital documents*		
6.3.13	*Database*		
6.3.13	*Catalogue records*		
6.4.7	*eBooks readers*		
6.2.12.2.1	*Number of rejected accesses*	B.1.1.3	*Percentage of Rejected Accesses*[11]
6.2.4.1.1	*Interlibrary loan requests received from other libraries*	B.1.2.4	*Percentage of Successful Interlibrary Loans*
6.2.4.1.2	*Interlibrary loan requests made to other libraries*		
6.4.8.1	*Net usable area for library functions*	B.1.3.1	*User Area per Capita*
6.4.8.2	*Net usable area by function*		
6.4.8.3	*Gross floor area of library buildings*		
6.4.8.4	*Shelf counts*		
6.4.3	*User places*	B.1.3.2	*User Places per Capita*[12]
6.4.4	*Public access workstation*		
6.4.1	*Opening hours*	B.1.3.3	*Hours Open Compared to Demand*
6.4.2	*Days open*		
6.7.2	*Total staff*	B.1.4.1	*Staff per Capita*
6.7.2.1	*Professional staff*		
6.7.2.2	*Qualified staff*		
6.7.2.3	*Other staff*		
6.7.3	*Volunteers*		
6.7.6	*Staff allocation to service areas/working areas*		

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[11] The standard ISO 11620:2014 at p. 25 specifies the mode of calculation of the indicator as $\frac{A}{B}$ x 100 in which A: *is the number of rejected accesses on a licensed database during a specified time period*, and B: *is the total number of rejected and successful accesses on the electronic database during the same time period.*

[12] The standard specifies at p. 41 the method for calculating the indicator as $\frac{A}{B}$ x 1000 in which A: *is the number of available user places*, and B: *is the number of persons in the population to be served*.

6.7.7	*Staff allocation to special services*		
6.2.12.1	*Number of searches*	B.2.1.4	*Number of Content Units Downloaded per Capita[13]*
6.2.12.2	*Number of accesses*		
6.2.12.4	*Number of Internet accesses*		
6.2.12.3	*Numbers of downloads*	B.2.1.5	*Number of Downloads per Document Digitized*
6.2.12.5	*Use of the digitized collection*		
6.2.2	*Users*	B.2.2.2	*Percentage of External Users[14]*
A.2.1.1	*Types of users*	B.2.4.1	*Percentage of the Target Population Reached[15]*
		B.2.4.2	*User Satisfaction*

The indicators inside the table, are the result of a selection from set of statistical data and performance indicators suggested within the two standards.

The choice was made on the basis of information regarding the value and the social impact of library services, derivable from the intersection of the data. In particular, the table provides for the correlation between performance[16] (ISO 2789) indicators and data corresponding quantities (ISO 11620). The aim is to obtain data that can enrich the set of information regarding the social impact of the work of the library. This set of the quality and quantity should be added analysis methodologies resulting from impact assessment.

6. Methodologies for the measurement of social impact

If balances evaluated are characterized by a use generally widespread of the "classics" indicators, notably quantities, very limited, however, is that the methodologies necessary to express the value of public libraries and communicate their impact on the community of reference.

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[13] The standard ISO 11620:2014 at p. 51 specifies the mode of calculation of the indicator as $\frac{A}{B}$ in which A: *is the number of content units downloaded from a specified electronic resource during a specified time period*, and B: *is the population to be served*.

[14] The standard specifies at p. 57 the method for calculating the indicator as $\frac{A}{B}$ x 100 in which A: *is the number of external active borrowers*, and B: *is the total number of active borrowers*.

[15] The indicator provides for the administration of a questionnaire which polls the user with respect to the visits to the library in a given period of time. The standard specifies at p. 63 the method for calculating the indicator as $\frac{A}{B}$ x 100 in which A: *is the number of persons answering "Yes"*, and B: *is the total number of persons answering*.

[16] With regard to the performance indicators and the measurement of the quality please refer, among others, to: ROSWITHA POLL, PETER TE BOEKHORST, *Measuring quality : performance measurement in libraries*, München: K. G. Saur, 2007.

Among the documents in question, there are few in which dealt with the issue of the evaluation of the impact, including the social accountability of the library San Giorgio of Pistoia, inside which is law:

> Molte sono le metodologie per misurare l'impatto sociale ed economico dei servizi culturali sulle comunità di riferimento […] tutte di provenienza anglosassone e di scarsa frequentazione in casa nostra. In assenza di modelli italiani applicati alle biblioteche pubbliche, abbiamo scelto di servirci di due tipi di strumenti […] capaci di far emergere con evidenza gli elementi più significativi nel rapporto tra la San Giorgio e la città: il risparmio che i suoi servizi producono a favore dei cittadini ed il livello di gradimento – diremmo quasi di affetto – di cui gode da parte dei suoi frequentatori. Per ottenere il primo dato il metodo usato è stato quello del ROI (Return On Investment), […] per cogliere il grado di apprezzamento e l'apporto critico, con l'indispensabile corredo di indicazioni e suggerimenti, sono stati intervistati utenti, stakeholders e dipendenti[17].

To highlight the social impact of its work, the San Giorgio has resorted to some interviews that were carried out at all of the subjects which are in some way interact with the structure. From the Balance, it's possible to note that they have been produced three different questionnaires, facing respectively: personnel, associations friends and users.

Regarding the users, the questions were: reasons for using the library; frequency of use; request to express a judgment with respect to certain aspects of the service provided; level of satisfaction with respect to coverage of the various disciplinary areas; indication of the activities of the library known and related level of satisfaction.

Regarding the staff: survey on the sense of pride and belonging; judgment of the relationship with the management staff, with the other members and users; identification with the mission of the library; judgment with respect to the attempts of the library to place themselves on the side of the user; judgment in respect of transparency; judgment with respect to the effectiveness and efficiency of services rendered; influence of the experience of working on his own baggage of professional skills; adequacy of their formative experiences past.

Regarding friends and allies: efficacy of their work respecting the library's objectives; quality of the relationship with the staff, with the other members of the group, with users; identification with the objectives of the library's community; judgment with respect to the attempts of the library to place themselves on the side of the user; judgment in respect of transparency; judgment with respect to the effectiveness and efficiency of services rendered.

To the interviews are then added direct testimonies of relevant stakeholders of the different groups with respect to the value of the library and its actions on the territory[18].

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[17] Cfr. *La San Giorgio risorsa per la città*, cit. p. 26.
[18] *Ivi*, p. 12-21.

The model presented by the balance of the San Giorgio is a good point from which is possible to start to add some of the ways social impact assessment, as well as suggested by ISO 16439:2014. A public library that wants to evaluate the impact that has on the referring community, should first choose the sample of population on which orient its analysis. Therefore it's necessary to choose between real users and potential, individuals or belonging to certain groups, certain demographically or through criteria that are suitable to the situation.

Then there's the location, of the preferred techniques that you prefer to use, between qualitative ones, and then individual interviews, focus group, or even self-assessment of the user.

In the case individual interviews are chosen, the standard trace the path to follow through some indications. From the moment that it will be necessary to emerge the social value of the impact of the library with questions to ask will be focused on: free time, school and learning, healthy information, job search, information for business and commerce. It is important ask the time saved by using the librarian services, and solicit feedbacks on how speed up and make them more efficient. Also part of questions will focusing them onto the role of the library as physical space for reading, studying, but also as a place for socialization.

Some of the questions proposed in ISO concern: obtaining useful information for school or study; receiving relevant information for health and welfare; improving the work efficiency thanks to the library; time saving; approval of the visit; experience of the library as a place in which read and study quietly.

If the questionnaire does not impact affects the whole of the population but a specific group, questions should be related to the needs and interests of that group. The results of the questions as soon as submitted could then be validated by asking respondents their opinion with respect to the possible replacement of the library (or some of its services).

The ISO contains an example questions, with the satisfying alternatives between which the user should choose:

"If this library does not exist, might obtain the same information and aid in some other place?"

- From another library.
- By purchasing relevant material.
- By internet.
- Through teachers, colleagues, friends.
- By medias.
- Perhaps, but it would require more time and commitment.
- No, I don't think I would have the same information.

Questions of this kind should not give the impression that the library is about to close, since their purpose is to demonstrate the importance and perhaps the indispensability of a specified library for an individual user[19].

With respect to the use of focus group instead, the norm suggests different topic on which set the debate, through an exemplary specimen of questions, which should bring out the view of the participants on the general value of libraries (1) and the benefits that users receive from the use of the services offered (2).

Example (1):

-    How do you see the role of education libraries?

-    Do you think that the libraries can influence the economy of its community?

-    Can you suggest how the libraries can support social inclusion?

Example (2):

-    Why do you usually visit the library?

-    What are the advantages (or disadvantages) you've encountered in using the library?

-    Are there other points that you would like us to highlight in relation to the influence of the library on your work or study or moment of leisure[20]?

Also interesting is the point of view of the rule with respect to the use of assessment questionnaires that could, for example, demonstrate the results of training courses for users or even of the reference service and that, in order to have an effect, should be carried out before and after the use of a service by the user.

In the model of the questionnaire proposed by the standard, respondents are asked to indicate their level of familiarity with the different types of services offered, by locating through a value that ranges from 1 to 5. From the comparative analysis of the individual questionnaires and it's possible to highlight the general levels of competencies achieved by the target identified[21].

Finally, for those libraries that are unable to offer a digital and online service such as to have a constant reference target, the rule proposes to use, as a possible tool, also the Log Analysis that can replace the observation made in person with respect to the use of electronic resources and services.

It serves to highlight the interaction between the user and the system and the information that it is possible to obtain are:

-    domain name users;

-    date and time of the transaction;

-    time spent in research or in visit;

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[19] ISO 16439:2014(E), cit., p. 36-37.

[20] Ivi, p. 41.

[21] Ivi, p. 42-44.

- linked pages and visit;
- words of research questions;
- number of searches;
- number of downloads[22].

7. *Conclusions*

This work represents a first reflection with respect to certain issues such as:

- the importance of social reporting, and in particular the use of the social accountability for public libraries Italian in order to communicate more effectively on the outside their values; being generally recognized the effectiveness of the balance for the purposes of reporting, there does not seem to be any reasons why libraries should not take advantage of such an instrument;

- a higher visibility of public libraries, perceived not only by the professionals in the industry, but also by the public administrations, in order to make more significant component the local librarian within the administrations of reference, as agency for change in the community and therefore of necessary service;

- analysis of best practices to recognized today, in order to highlight the methodologies and the main features of some excellent Italian examples;

- Proposal for a methodology of investigation, through which retrieve the information necessary for the preparation of a social accountability, based on standard can also be used in scope librarian, as ISO 2789, 11620, 16489.

The topic is very vast in order to be treated fully in this context, in any case, the contribution is intended as input for the professional research with respect to a field of investigation certainly interesting is that, with time, refined the techniques of drafting of the social accountability, could allow to public libraries Italian to acquire a more significant role, not only within the community of reference but also in the eyes of the bodies which they depend.

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[22] Ivi, p. 48.