

equal to one QALY one year in bed yet without pain or discomfort might be 0.4 QALY, while death is equated to zero.

In order to transfer the QALY approach to collection care issues, the ‘quality’ of an object or collection needs to be defined and assessed. When looking at collection management from a utilitarian point of view, ‘quality’ refers to the ability to use collections. This is derived, on the one hand, from their meaning, values and significance for present and future generations, and, on the other, from their accessibility: physical (visibility and handling); conceptual and contextual (access to knowledge and information about the objects); and/or virtual (often as an alternative to physical accessibility). Hence quality can be defined as ‘accessible value’.

To quantify ‘collection quality’, criteria for significance and accessibility need to be defined and a scale to assess them needs to be designed. Data and knowledge from conservation science and risk assessment enables the estimation of ‘life expectancy’ of objects and collections. Quality and life expectancy can then be combined to plot a ‘quality graph’, showing the progression of quality over time. The area under the curve represents the number of QALYs. A care intervention will change the graph, increasing life expectancy and slowing down the decline of quality over time, and hence the area under the graph changes through the addition of QALYs. Thus a treatment can be compared with the zero option (no treatment), or with an alternative treatment. The effectiveness of a treatment, expressed in terms of the number of added QALYs, can then be weighed against its costs. This enables cost-effectiveness analysis to be incorporated into the overall decision-making process at collection management level.

**Figure 1.** The collection management triangle (adapted from Waller, 2003) and the five dimensions that determine collection quality: primary criteria for significance, comparative criteria for significance; finding - to locate an item in the collection, retrieve - to deliver it to the user and present - to proactively share it with the user for accessibility.

