



Role of the University Libraries in National Development

SEJAL R. PATEL

Ph. D. Scholar, H.N.G. University, Patan
Gujarat (India)

DR. KANAKBALA A. JANI

Research Guide, H.N.G. University, Patan
Gujarat (India)

Abstract:

The role of the University library can be defined within the framework of the university's mission and the library development programme can be undertaken accordingly; whether designed for the purpose of initial library development in a new university or for the improvement of services in an existing one, the library programme should reflect the means by which the library will advance the objective of the university.

Keywords: Faculty-library relationships, Functions of University library, Instructional services of the library, Library's role in Education, student library handbook, University library

1. University Library

University library is an integral part of an institution of higher education. Thomas Carlyle has rightly



stated that “the true university of these days is collection of books.” University is an institution where teaching and research are conducted in more than one discipline of universe of knowledge, and which has authority to award degrees, diplomas and certificates in their respective subjects. Students, research scholars and teachers are using library for their advancement of knowledge in their subject of interest. It is also true that, in the academic sense no effective work can be developed without a strong library as its heart. S.R. Dongerkery, emphasizing the importance of library in an

academic institution in his own words, writes, A well stocked and up-to date library is a sine-qua-non for every modern university. It is the central workshop if the university which provides the students, the teachers, the scholars and the research worker with the tools required for the advancement as well as the acquisition of knowledge.

2. Library's Role in Education

Library's role in education is not confined to elementary and secondary only. Rather, it is much more important in higher education. It would not be an exaggeration if it is said that a higher education. It would not be an exaggeration if it is said that a library is an essential pre-requisite for successful implementation of higher education programmes in knowledge. Without the help and cooperation of a library, no formal educational programme can fructify. In order to achieve the aims of a university, it has to take help of its library.

In India, commission after commission has emphasized the importance of libraries in higher education. The Calcutta University Commission (1917-1919) recommended that, it is right and proper that the universities should provide great libraries and great laboratories of research with great scholars to direct them. It further recommended that, the university librarian ought to be functionary of great importance, ranking with university professors, and having a place in the supreme academic body of the university. In this respect the Radhkrishnan University Education Commission (1948-49), observed that the library is the heart of all the university's work; directly so as regards in research work and indirectly as regards its educational work which derives its life from research.

Scientific research requires a library as well as laboratories, while for humanistic and social science research the library is both, library and laboratory. The Kothari Education Commission (1964-65) was found very much conscientious about the importance of a library in an education institution stating that, "nothing could be more damaging to growing department than to neglect its library give to it a low priority. On the contrary, the library should be an important centre of attraction on the college and university campus." From the above experts opinion there is no doubt about the importance of library in the educational institutions. In almost the same Manner University Grant Committee of the U.K (1921) observed that, the character and efficiency of a university may be gauged by its treatment of its central organ, the library. It regards the fullest provision for library maintenance as the primary and most vital need in the equipment of a university.

University library directs its activities towards the fulfillment of the university, which are as follows: conservation of knowledge and ideas teaching, research, publication, extension and service, and interpretation of research. The library exists not merely to help instructional function at the university, it dose also a good deal in aid of research, which is another major function of the university. The library therefore, performs a variety of functions, by way of helping students with text books, reference books and periodicals; by providing a large number of bibliographical tools and up-to-date literature on every subject for students, teachers and research workers, as well as by maintaining an efficient reference and information service. The university library server as an important link in the chain between research and practice. It remains more than a library a laboratory and a workshop.

3. Functions of University Library

Keeping in view the objectives of university education, the Kothari Education Commission (1964-65) report defines the functions of university libraries, as under:

- (a) Provide resources necessary for research in fields of special interest to university;
- (b) Aid the university teacher in keeping abreast of development in his field;
- (c) Provide library facilities and services secondary for success if all formal programmes of instruction;
- (d) Open the door to the wide field or books that lie beyond the borders of one's own field of specialization; and
- (e) To bring books, students and scholars together under conditions which encourage reading for pleasure, self discovery, personal growth and sharpening of intellectual curiosity.

University library serves as a valuable aid in the conservation of knowledge and ideas. If it is well organized and properly administered by acquiring and processing reading materials for their clientele. It also serves as an active force in the teaching and research programmes by direct assistance to the teachers, research scholars and students. The university library is one of the best agencies for collecting and organizing knowledge for effective use, and for providing the services and physical facilities to encourage it. The library exists not merely to assist the instructional functions of the university; it also helps as an aid in research, which is another major function of the university. Thus, university library performs a variety of functions, by way of helping students in their education with

text books, reference books and periodicals and so on. It also helps teachers and research scholars by providing a large number of bibliographical tools and up-to-date literature on every subject.

In the formulation of the programme three classes of people are involved: those who will use the library, those who will operate the library; and those who are responsible for authorizing and financing library development. The university librarian should be the chief architect of the library programme and he should present it to the governing authority for approval.

4. The Library Programme

Whether designed for the purposes of initial library development in a new university or for the improvement of services in an existing one, the library programme should reflect the means by which the library will advance the objectives of the university.

In the formulation of the programme three classes of people are involved: those who will use the library, those who will operate the library; and those who are responsible for authorizing and financing library development. The university librarian should be the chief architect of the library programme and he should present it to the governing authority for approval.

A library development (or improvement) programme should provide first for the foundations of effective service: a statement of library service objectives, a competent staff with authority as well as responsibility for developing library services, a plan of organization and administration and adequate financial and administrative support; secondly, for the physical facilities, library resources and services which will be required; thirdly, for continuous maintenance and development, and for co-operation and co-ordination of library services within the university and with libraries and other information agencies outside. Finally, it should provide for periodic evaluations of the service to ensure that the library is fulfilling its mission effectively.

5. Educational Functions of the Library

The fundamental role of the library is educational. It should not be operated as a mere storehouse of books attached to a reading-room but as a dynamic instrument of education. It should feed the intellect of the student, encourage the researches of the faculty, and invite all who enter its house to partake fully of its intellectual and cultural fare. In this context library use becomes a method of teaching, taking its place beside the time-honoured lecture and the discussion group. The librarian serves as a teacher-guiding the student in the ways of investigation and research-and the library actively serves the teaching and research needs of the faculty.

This point of view has many implications: the library collections need to support not only every course in the curriculum and every research project of the faculty, but they must also extend beyond these to include a good representation of major subjects that are not in the curriculum and strong holdings of general and specialized bibliographies; the collections must be organized to permit easy access to their contents; borrowing privileges should be free and generous; students and faculty should be informed about library resources and services; the library should conduct programmes of instruction in library use; the library building should be designed to facilitate these functions; the professional staff, together with its faculty colleagues should co-operate and collaborate in every possible way to achieve the aims of the university. Above all, a competent staff will be required to give permanent direction and vitality to this educational enterprise.

6. Faculty-Library Relationships

There should be conscious co-operation between the faculty and the library to promote effective independent use of the library by students. In such a relationship, the faculty and the library staff each have individual functions.

Good teaching supplies the student with the basic motivation to make effective use of the library. Regardless of the method-whether it be lecture, class discussion, laboratory demonstration, tutorial conference-the end result should be students whose minds have been challenged, whose curiosity and critical faculties have been aroused, and whose innate desire to learn has been encouraged. Such students will quickly find their way to the library. To them it will be an intellectual necessity.

The teacher may find the library an extraordinarily helpful source of assistance in his teaching and research. He will, therefore, want to acquaint himself thoroughly with its resources and services. He may be encouraged to give his students assignments which will involve their use of the library. He may want to invite a library staff member to his lecture room to discuss bibliographical tools which may be of use to the students. He may find it profitable to consult the librarian about providing special materials for his teaching or research. The relationships between the faculty and the library may be very fruitful indeed, if they are reciprocal.

The librarian can play his part effectively by making himself thoroughly acquainted with the curriculum and the individual interests and teaching assignments of faculty members. He should keep the faculty well informed about new acquisitions. He should assist students in their use of the library by providing appropriate reference and bibliographical services, and make special provisions for accommodating advanced students and researchers. If circumstances permit, he may prepare special bibliographies in collaboration with the faculty, for student use and offer bibliographic services to the faculty in connexion with their research or writing.

A library handbook for the faculty is a desirable device for informing them about the library and encouraging their support and co-operation. It may include descriptions of: library resources, with special emphasis on collections of unusual significance; library services, including interlibrary loans, photocopying, indexing, abstracting, instruction in the use of the library, preparation of special reading lists; library facilities, including representations of floor plans, mention of seminar rooms and special research facilities for the faculty; agreements and working arrangements among the libraries within and outside the university; rules, regulations and privileges; book selection and acquisition policies and methods; and such additional topics as may have special pertinence. The faculty library handbook will not require frequent revision. It should be printed in an edition large enough to supply copies to every member of the existing faculty, part-time as well as full-time, and to new faculty members for about five years.

7. Instructional services of the Library

All too many students all over the world in highly developed, as well as less developed countries enter the university with a rather limited notion of the universe of books. Like his colleagues in the lecture hall, the librarian has an obligation to assist in the intellectual development of the student. He may meet it in a direct and personal way by offering instructional and informational assistance commonly called 'reference service'. This can be supplemented by the more formal means of instruction in the use of the library and a student library handbook.

Such instruction may take the form of: orientation tours for groups of new students; introductory lectures on basic tools, such as library catalogues, periodical indexes and reference books; advanced lectures and demonstrations in the use of specialized information sources; lectures on compilation of bibliographies and on the writing of reports and theses; films on the use of books and libraries; student library handbooks.

New students should be given information and instruction about library use as soon as possible after their arrival at the university. This may encourage some to make independent efforts to extend their intellectual horizons beyond the minimum requirements of the curriculum. The new student should be taught how to use the library catalogue, how books are arranged and how he may obtain them.

The rules for borrowing books and other library rules should be explained, as well as the hours of opening and the special services and facilities available. Above all, he should know to whom he can go for advice and information about the library. In small institutions, it may be possible to conduct orientation tours and lecture demonstrations for small groups of students. In large ones it may be necessary to conduct large lectures, to show films, or to rely mainly on a good library handbook.

Advanced undergraduates and graduate students should receive instruction in the use of specialized bibliographical tools and in library research techniques.

8. The student Library handbook

In these efforts to assist and instruct students a library handbook can be a valuable device. It may take the form of a brief leaflet or a substantial pamphlet or book. Several good handbooks for the general guidance of university students have been published in recent years. It is desirable to purchase a few of these and some books on research methodology in special fields for the library collection. But these will not take the place of a specially designed publication written in the local language to facilitate the use of a particular library by its own student clientele. A comprehensive handbook is described for illustrative purposes. This is a printed book of 100 pages, with numerous illustrations. It includes a convenient checklist of library resources which lists in outline form the many types of reference materials available in the library. The first chapter gives an over-all view of the library, explains how the collections are organized and describes the physical facilities. A diagram of the main service floor shows the location of principal collections and service points. Succeeding chapters describe such topics as the location and arrangement of books, the method of obtaining books and the regulations and policies of the library, the library collections and its special services. One chapter is devoted to a description of the library card catalogue and detailed instructions in its use, another to periodicals, newspapers and government publications, their use and how to obtain them. In another the reference collection is described in some detail; some of the major works are described in terms of the purposes for which they may be used. There is a separate chapter in which the student is offered some suggestions for a systematic approach in writing a report or a paper.

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