CHAPTER SIX

BRITISH COUNCIL'S LIBRARY POLICY: ANALYSIS

6.0 Introduction

Policy is about choice. Policies are deliberate choices or decisions that guide actions and influence outcomes. Organizations have policies, which guide such matters as personal decisions and interactions with the media. Libraries typically have internal policies, which guide collection development and service priorities. Library policies are traditionally informed by principles or intellectual freedom and by their own facet or implicit mission statement. In other words, choices made by library decision-makers are presumed to facilitate, rather than restrict, access to information and to advance the library's ability to serve its clients.

In this section, the researcher tries to analyze the policies being followed or adopted by the British Council in general and by the British Council Libraries in particular. It is also attempted to critically examine the purpose and the stated aims of the Council and to see if they are different from country to country and from one unit to another. This section also tries to find out (1) whether the aims are designed to meet developmental needs of India and the regions; (2) how the basic aims behind establishing the library network and the Indian needs are balanced; (3) whether there is an apparent prominent shift to any side; (4) whether the aims reflect policy orientations in terms of developmental priorities, economics, operational modalities and subject priorities and finally (5) the changes that have come, over the years, in the category of target groups. It is not the easiest of tasks to draw together so many disconnected threads into a pattern both comprehensible and accurate. Statistics not cited in this section come from internal British Council Library and Information Services documents (unpublished). The analysis is based on the Corporate Plan (British Council Worldwide), Country Plans (India), Code of Practice, reliable information and materials gathered from interviews with former British Council officers (Appendix II) and other internal documents.
6.1 Aims & Purpose of the British Council

Founded in 1934, granted a Royal Charter by Parliament in 1940 and with 7000 staff working in 110 countries worldwide, the British Council operates in three broad areas: Learning, Creativity and Society.

- **Learning**: The British Council increases international recognition of the range and quality of learning opportunities available from the UK, promotes the learning of English and strengthens educational co-operation between the UK and the other countries.

- **Creativity**: The British Council builds appreciation of the UK’s artistic creativity and scientific innovation among people overseas and strengthens their engagement with diversity of UK culture.

- **Society**: The British Council aims to enhance awareness of the UK’s democratic values and process and works in partnership with other countries to strengthen good governance and human rights.

Nevertheless, the British Council’s library and information services all over the world are currently facing a major challenge, due to the political (9/11 syndrome), social (the divide between Islamic countries and the rest of the world), economic (recessions in the UK and elsewhere) and technological (the move away from traditional books to ICT-enabled services) changes. The British Council is certainly not unique in being required to respond to change in this way. On the contrary the Council may well have had a longer period of grace than many Library and Information Services in Britain, due to the fact that its libraries are all abroad and are perceived, to some extent to be elements of British cultural diplomacy.

Still, the overwhelming force of change for the Council, as for many other publicly funded organizations, has been economic. Funding has fallen considerably over the past 23 years, starting with an 18% reduction in the period 1979-84, 12% between 1996 and 1999 and it is still continuing. As a consequence, many Council Library and Information Services are now being obliged to reconsider the core service they offer, with a view to making savings and redirecting diminishing resources to achieve the impact still possible.
Kemp defines the overall purpose of the British Council in one sentence: “To help create abroad an enduring understanding and appreciation of Britain”. This may appear too simple, too general and perhaps too commonplace. But the implications are manifold.

1. Presentation of Britain abroad should be politically disinterested, independent, truthful and objective.
2. There should be the maximum possible freedom of action for the Council since the Council is not a political instrument of the government of the day.
3. There should be mutuality – in order to further an understanding and appreciation of Britain, the cultures, knowledge and skills of the partner countries are also to be understood and appreciated.

From 1934, the British Council has taken care to project only the image of cultural diplomacy and in fulfillment of this purpose, activities have been taken up by the Council in its partner countries.

6.2 How the British Council Operates

The British Council seeks to achieve maximum impact in fulfilling its purpose and strategic objectives by supplementing its core funding of the government grant through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) – through paid services. Such services include teaching English and administering, British examinations through the overseas network of offices (Enterprises work) and managing development and training contracts for a wide range of clients (Development and Training Services (DATS). These overseas operations are supported by corporate services including finance, HR, Resource Planning, Communications etc.

The British Council’s network of overseas offices draws on different sources of income and different modes of delivery to achieve country and regional objectives. Almost all offices have operations that utilize more than one mode of delivery and individual staff jobs often reflect the overall mix in the office. As for corporate planning, a hierarchy of plans governs all Council activities. The Council’s planning year runs from April to March. At the higher level the British Council has a corporate plan which is
updated every year and covers a four-year period. It sets out the strategy that the Council intends to follow and all staffs are encouraged to contribute to improving the procedures. Offices in individual countries and headquarters departments follow the planning cycle and provide the operational detail summarised in the corporate and regional plans.

All plans contain performance indicators, both quantitative and qualitative, as appropriate, to allow performance to be measured against agreed targets. Performance indicators at the corporate plan level are developed according to the balanced scorecard devised by the Council. Strategic objectives support overall Council objectives meet the requirements of Regional frameworks.

Though there is a corporate plan, each country will have a plan of its own, concentrating on its priorities. In India, the thrust is upon information provision to help the developmental needs of the country. Thus the libraries occupy the centre stage and DFID has collaboration with various agencies in the fields of primary education and health. Since English is almost the first language in India, English language teaching which is a money spinning and the most sought after activity of the British Council in countries like Iran, Hong Kong, China, Russia and Japan, is not given the priority. This will be clear when we look at the stated country aim for India.

6.3 British Council's Library Policy: Historical Perspective

The history of the British Council Libraries, as outlined in the previous chapter, shows that Flood was uttering a potent half-truth when he once claimed that the Council has never had a conscious policy in library and printed word matters. “What it has achieved is the total of individual initiative by the professional librarians on its staff.” It is certainly true that one will look in vain, in this sphere, for a statement of objectives agreed with sponsoring departments, together with financial targets and appropriate resource allocations.
However, the Council does have a ‘printed word policy’, which has been maintained with notable consistency ever since the days of Ann Ormrod. There is more than one strand to this policy. The first takes the form of giving precedence to the Council Libraries as the preferred means of cultural projection by way of the printed word. Secondly, there has been the provision of assistance to the book trade in the ‘promotion’ of British publications. The other has been assistance to library development in the Third World. Like the building up of the library network, the Council’s deep involvement in such activities originated from deliberate policy decisions. The move to give pre-eminence in ‘printed word’ projection to Council libraries came from headquarters but participation in library development resulted initially from pressures from overseas.

During the immediate post-war years, it seems to have been ‘policy’ to establish at least one Council library in each representation. But this was never achieved. However, this aim was taken off the agenda and for many years, the Council had operated with some success in such countries as Norway and Sweden without having its own libraries and without feeling the need for them. In the developing world, this was different. Libraries provided greater visibility to the Council, as they did in the days of Barnicot’s ‘second-growth libraries’.

It is certainly difficult to make out much in the way of ‘conscious policy’ behind the almost bewildering kaleidoscope of change in the number, distribution and nature of the Council libraries over the years. This is because a good deal of it resulted from budgetary or political factors outside the Council’s own control. Yet, even here it is possible to trace some patterns. In those parts of the developed world where the Council library gradually lost some of its post-war surrogate value for students, scholars and specialists, an attempt was made to build up an enhanced ‘information’ role. A similar search for a changed identity has been visible in some parts of the developing world, though for various reasons. In Nigeria, it was prompted by the final loss of ‘surrogate’ function; in India it was by a desire to escape from the demands and restrictions of this very function. Where the surrogate role has been lost, it has not proved easy to replace.
with a viable alternative. But where the surrogate role has survived and flourished, as in India, it has given rise within the Council to feelings of frustration and dissatisfaction and to attempts to dispense with it, when it comes to targets and provision of information services.

A feature of British Council Libraries over the years has been perhaps an ‘unconscious policy’ of flexibility, of a readiness to adapt them within reason to meet customer demand. But there are those in the Council who feel that undeniably the ultimate object of the Council is not to satisfy customer demand but rather to ‘promote an understanding and appreciation of Britain in other countries through cultural, educational and technical cooperation.17

The nature, problems and defects of the various library development programmes with which the Council has been associated like those in Jamaica, the Eastern Caribbean, the Gold Coast and Nigeria, show that these are the results of adverse national or international economic developments. Another reason is that it failed to give direct assistance to the library needs of rapidly developing educational systems. Such assistance would have been more likely to ensure effective and continued support from host governments.8 British aid to public library development has often been offered on condition that the recipients establish a public library service which would operate in accordance with British ideas of what a public library service should be.9

The situation has changed of late with the introduction of new management techniques and also as a result of the 1998 Vision survey.10 The Council now has a Strategy, Corporate and Country Plans and geographical priorities, all clearly defined and mapped out.
6.4 Corporate Plan

Given below are some of the salient features of the latest Corporate Plan of the British Council with reference to the libraries. Corporate Plan 2003-04 to 2005-06\textsuperscript{11} defines the role of British Council thus:

- British Council is UK's principal agency for cultural relations with other countries; and

- British Council enhances UK's reputation among target audiences overseas through programmes in education, English language teaching, libraries, the arts, science and technology.

As per the Council's Strategy 2005\textsuperscript{12}, its purpose is aligned with the public diplomacy strategy of the FCO, which is to make a positive difference to how individuals and organisations overseas perceive and engage the UK. It focuses on three areas of UK capability - creativity, learning and society. During 2002, a great deal work was carried out to define clearly their target audiences and place them and their needs at the heart of the Strategy 2005. As a result a four stage strategy has been chalked out:

i. To increase awareness of the UK in wider informed public using information, web based services and 'media coverage;

ii. To build an appreciation of the creativity, innovation and diversity of the UK by offering programmes and services targeted at wider educated public, especially the young;

iii. To engage with a small number of people interested in English language, study in the UK, British examinations and such enterprises followed with provocative, often virtual information;

iv. To influence in each country a small number of people who are key opinion formers and decision makers who act as advocates for the UK in their professional fields.
All this is done with the objectives of maximising the impact and effectiveness of British Council's operation, exploiting the new media and strategic partnership to reach wider audiences and deliver new services, creating a substantial network.

6.4.1 Salient Features of the Corporate Plan

With relation to the library and information work, the implications of this strategy assume new dimensions proportions and orientation. Given below are some of the salient features of the latest corporate plan of the British Council with relevance to the libraries.

i. Funds have been invested only in those countries where there is often great demand for the experience and know-how that UK can offer. This resulted in Russia and China receiving substantial new funds and also in new programmes and services like Knowledge & Learning Centres (KLCs), the first of which was opened in New Delhi.

ii. After the 11th September attack on the World Trade Centres in USA, a conscious effort has been taken by the British Council to bring about greater intellectual understanding especially with the younger people from Islamic countries. This has resulted in the Connecting Futures programmes and also a shift in the target audiences to below 35 groups.

iii. Programmes and services that attract the successor generation and wider, younger audiences are being developed in a medium they commonly use - viz., Information Technology\(^\text{13}\).

Again this has shifted the emphasis to young professionals and postgraduate students and several initiatives like Education UK, British Council web presence and
new information service content and portals are being developed to attract them to the British Council and to the UK.

Naturally these new programmes and services have resulted in a change in the operational priorities and also redeployment of funds from lower priorities. Additional funding had to be received in 2000-2002. For e.g., the KLCs and the British Council’s web- two key programmes implemented in 2003-2004, accounts for nearly 42% of the total funding (£ 4200,000 out of £ 10815,000)\(^{14}\)

All this has not been without dividends. Early indications are that these programmes and policy changes are having significant impact on the British Council’s operations. In countries like India there has been a gradual move towards younger people using British Council’s information services; the use of video conferencing has stimulated new areas for cooperation and partnership. The following chart shows planned levels of grant funded operational expenditure in each of the British Council’s core Sectors in 2003-04\(^{15}\).

![Figure 6.1 British Council's Core Sectors: Planned Levels of Grant-Funded Operational Expenditure, 2003-04.](image)

Data given in Figure 6.1 shows that the Council’s priority areas are education, information and arts.
The British Council's geographical priorities have been revised taking into account not only the importance of each country to the political economical and historical terms but also the Council's ability to achieve long term influence and impact for the UK thereby reshaping the Council's overseas network. Under Strategy 2005, grant in aid has been increasingly directed towards transitional countries and shift in the resources during its implementation is as given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of country</th>
<th>2000-01</th>
<th>2003-04</th>
<th>2005-06</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developed</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional (especially in Eastern Europe &amp; Central Asia)</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
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Table 6.1 Strategy 2005: Proposed Grant-in-Aid

It is seen from Table 6.1 that the transitional countries get the major chunk of the grant in aid - this shows an increase from 56% in 2001 to 62% in 2005-06 where as in the case of other two types there is reduction from 32% to 27% for the developed countries and from 12% to 11% in the case of developing countries. Even then, the cut in the allocation for the developing countries is minimal and is more or less stable.

For the sake of ease of administration and also on the basis of their nature, the British Council has divided the countries into six regions- Europe, Middle East and North of Africa (MENA), Sub Saharan Africa, South Asia, East Asia and Pacific and Americas. India comes under the South Asian region and" with its aspirations to become a global player", is with China and Russia that are the primary focus for UK public diplomacy.
The British Council's main target audience in India is seven million young professionals spread over 25 identified cities. The extensive market research and opinion surveys carried out have shown that the target audience attitudes to the UK are mixed, but, overall positive. There is a high level of appreciation for the UK education and active promotion of UK higher and further education has translated into a large increase in South Asia students going to the UK. This is reflected in the number of educational queries received at the British Council's libraries in India and the number of students going to UK for higher studies.

For the British Council, the challenge in this region is to find ways to scale up its engagement and its publications. To do this the British Council needs the support of its physical network, which is the library network, through which it can extend its services to a wider audience. For this the British Council has to find and negotiate licenses for appropriate content and develop reliable online delivery systems. Through its KLC, New Delhi, it is expected to lead the region on developing innovative online services providing language and work place skills, degree level online study and high quality information. This is being offered alongside an upgraded library network which is benchmarked with best UK practice. That India is the only country in the region to have had an increase in the allocation - it has been increased to £563 million shows the strategic importance and relevance of the British Council operations in India.
## Country Aim & Strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>South India Regional Management Plan 1992/93* (1)</th>
<th>Draft Country Plan for India 1999/00 to 2000/02 (2)</th>
<th>India Country Plan 2003 -04 (3)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>To sustain and reinforce Indo-British relationships by collaboration between institutions and individuals, especially in education, Science and Technology, the Arts and Humanities by managing joint projects for ODA (now DFID) which directly meet India’s developmental needs and by providing access to British ideas and achievements.</strong></td>
<td><strong>To enhance the reputation of the United Kingdom in the world as a valued partner providing the best network for information and knowledge exchange in India as a gateway to international opportunity.</strong></td>
<td><strong>To win recognition in India for the UK’s values, ideas and achievements and nurture lasting, mutually beneficial relationships between India and the UK by</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The regional aim derived from this is effectively to deploy the resources of the Madras office and library and of the British Libraries in Bangalore, Hyderabad and Trivandrum in support of the Country Aim. Priority subject areas in South India include medicine, natural resources and English studies.</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>• developing and expanding both off and online services to reach much larger numbers of a target audience in more cities in India;</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>• by increasing opportunities for engagement with our target audience by developing our offline services in 11 cities as well as an online membership offer for young professional people living in 25 first and second cities in India; and,</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>• by continuing to research the needs and requirements and of these people, develop appropriate new products and services but at the same time focus on providing excellent customer relationship management.</strong></td>
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*prepared by AN Sanderson (MAD/680/16 26 March 1992)*

Table 6.2 Country Aims & Strategies, 1992 & 2003/04

### 6.8 Strategy 2005 & India

A key feature of the strategy is a reduction in the overall size of the Council’s overseas estate in order to free up funds for the operational activities. Many offices were closed down. The second key element is the development of new and expanded programmes and services. This means that the Council will be giving increased emphasis...
to targeting the successor generation especially those who are expected to be in positions of influence in future - such as young professionals and post graduate students, at the same time not neglecting the authority generation either.

This change in policy has resulted in significant changes both to the nature of the Council's activities and to the way in which it operates. The changes include an increase in work in governance and human rights and in education especially the education promotion, distance learning and vocational education and the reshaping of information services in response to the changing requirements of target audiences with emphasis on the electronic delivery of information services. Strategic partnerships have also been developed with the organizations that have similar objectives like the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and World Bank. This has resulted in mutual advantage like KLC, a joint programme developed with World Bank in support of the global knowledge agenda.

For the last four or more years, the single most important area of investment in programmes and services has been the development of new IT services which have been used to complement and enhance the Council's core people to people activities like the library and the information centres. The internet is a particularly important vehicle for the Council's work in information provision and this has enabled the Council to reach a much larger audience than what conventional programmes can. Another offshoot of this shift has been the establishment of KLCs that provide a range of facilities including internet access, support for distance learning courses, video conferencing multimedia and book collections. This is again targeted at the young professionals giving them access to resource materials from the UK and supporting the development of professional networks both with UK contacts and with similar groups in other countries.

The implementation of the strategy has involved a substantial amount of change for all Council offices - changes to programmes, to the delivery of the services and to the way in which the Council operates. Given the scale of change, some adverse reaction is inevitable especially from those who are users of services or who have participated in
programmes which were discontinued as a part of the policy change. Still the British Council of the future strategy represents an ambitious programme of change and modernisation. Building on the Council's recognised strength, it aims to ensure that the Council is equipped to meet the opportunities and challenges of the 21st century. It is hoped that over the next few years, the Council's operations around the world will be reshaped to create a stronger more effective organisation capable of achieving significantly greater impact for the UK.19

Accordingly in India, the country aim is to sustain and reinforce Indo-British relationships by collaboration between institutions and individuals, especially in education, science and technology, the arts and humanities, by managing joint projects for DFID which directly meet India’s developmental needs and by providing access to British ideas and achievements.20 From this the Regional Aim is further derived. For e.g. for South India it is “effectively to display the resources of the Madras office and library and of the British Libraries in Bangalore, Hyderabad and Trivandrum in support of the Country Aim”.

This is in fact narrowing of the Country Policy relating it to libraries and education. The policies are thus to contribute to India’s development in the fields of education, health, natural resources, management, public administration, science and technology; to provide target groups with what they need and wish to know about Britain through the maintenance of a visible and widespread library network, in itself a prime access system for British information and ideas and through projects and exchanges activity; to increase the number of Indian students in Britain who will, on return, effectively promote Indo-British relations; to promote the use of English for the purpose of technological, economic and social development and to encourage an appreciation of English literature; to satisfy a desire for contemporary interactive British drama, music, painting and sculpture and film events as a means of demonstrating and publicising Britain’s cultural vitality to influential Indian target groups. Of these policies stated above, only (2) concerns itself directly with the Council’s most successful library network with over 1,00,000 members but constrained by resources like finance, space.
and present number of locations in the face of potentially limitless demand. The general objectives of the British Council libraries in India and be stated as:

- to provide a ready, comprehensive, up to date book stock for reference and lending service of subjects falling properly in the Council’s field in a developing country

- to keep students, postgraduates particularly, in priority areas such as medical services, technology, management, behavioural sciences etc, who use libraries, in touch with recent British development in their fields and

- to support the Council’s important work in the teaching of English, conducting British examinations and Indo-British collaborative programmes

The country objective in relation to the libraries is to provide target library with a professionally acceptable level of service by the completion of a stock replenishment programme; concentrating resources on libraries where they are most needed and used by priority groups; to be funded by increased subscriptions, the size of the annual increase depending on an assessment of market opportunities.

From this it would appear that the general objective is to provide a service useful to a developing country. Though the aims of library activities are described satisfactorily in this sort of generalised statement, it does not provide a sufficiently practical tool for the setting of objectives in relation to needs because of insufficient knowledge of these elements and the difficulty in distinguishing between them when allocating resources. In the case of India, the British Council has always misjudged initially but once their assumption is proved incorrect, all steps are taken to set it right. For instance, in the 1980s, when there was a drastic change in the policy, it was decided to close down children’s section and downsize the collection in sections like fiction. It was pointed out then that this would not be received well by the Indian users and it was wrong to suppose
that the satisfaction of needs could be measured adequately in simple terms such as the number of requests for information or the number of books borrowed.\(^{21}\)

When we look at the history of the British Council, it will be seen that over the years, the library and information work lost out to ‘Enterprises’ due to the compulsion on the Council to be more and more self sufficient and self supporting. The grants- in-aid were being reduced year by year and this naturally affected the libraries more than any other. But in 1980, the Council’s new Director - General, John Burgh, faced with an 18% cut of the core budget spread over four years, had to start to take difficult decisions but his conclusion that one of the Council’s two “core activities, in all countries, large or small, developed or developing was the provision of information about Britain”, led directly and speedily to a substantial redeployment of resources to library work.\(^{22}\) This more or less restored the swinging reductions of 43% in the books grant and 42% in the periodicals grant. But this did not mean that the Council’s libraries went unscathed.

Cavaliere conducted a Policy Review of the Council in India at the end of 1979 to find out how these cuts could be affected in India which accounted for well over half of the Council’s measurable library activity. His report\(^ {23,24}\) was produced under the twin pressures of deep cuts and of the increasing desire of Overseas Development Authority (now DFID) to ensure that its share in the Council’s funding was used to satisfy ‘developmental criteria’. What gives it particular interest in the context of library work is its attempt to apply what might be called the Saunders –Broome\(^ {25}\) approach to the Indian context and even today there seems to be a conflict between the information work and development work.

“Libraries are of many kinds and exist to fulfill many purposes but if I were asked what was the one thing we have constantly attempted to achieve through our libraries, I think I would say that it is to provide services relevant and helpful to the needs and wishes of its users and in that sense to confer on Indian readers a shared responsibility for the adequacy or otherwise of what we wish to do. We work in partnership and there is abundant evidence of the co-operation”\(^ {26}\).
“Even though the emphasis of the Council’s work has since then gradually changed to meet the demands increasingly made on it by developments in the educational, scientific and technical fields, the library is no less important now than it was 25 years ago - important for scholars, scientists, professional men and women and creative artists”\textsuperscript{27}

This takes us to the policy regarding membership and who the target audiences are. From the beginning, there were worries about the nature of readership. Smeaton, who was the Librarian at the initial stages, felt that the target in Delhi should be senior civil servants and specialists and membership subscriptions were fixed at a level deliberately intended to discourage the general reader and the student population.

Even so, Council libraries proved to have a magnetic attraction for both these categories; in 1965, almost a third of the Bombay membership were ‘students’ and more than a third were ‘employed white collar’ a category which can be equated with ‘general readers’. Teachers and technical professionals were counted separately\textsuperscript{28}.

But by 1975, a shift in emphasis has began to be felt - from a general library to a specialist library, with importance to postgraduate and research material, which meant the number of books under fiction would be cut down gradually. Another change was the winding up of the children’s section. But around this time a sample of the membership of British Council Library, Chennai shows that out of the total membership of 13,032, 20% were students 25.4% from the technical and professional class and employed white collar, 23.3%\textsuperscript{29}. 

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### Objectives Relevant To Libraries & the Targets

#### OBJECTIVES RELEVANT TO LIBRARIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>South India Regional Management Plan</th>
<th>Targets &amp; Strategies</th>
</tr>
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1. To provide target library members with a professionally acceptable level of service by the completion of a stock replenishment programme, concentrating resources on library where they are most needed and used by priority groups, to be funded by increased subscriptions, the size of the annual increase depending in an assessment of market opportunities.

2. To increase library or membership by target groups to 80% Target categories to be attracted and retained by usage of IT and distance membership.

3. To increase by 20% the number of Indian students in Britain through the proactive education counseling service by the Council and to build and educational promotion element into 20% of incoming exchanges.

#### Targets & Strategies

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<th>Targets &amp; Strategies</th>
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<tr>
<td>(It is known as strategic theme)</td>
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<tr>
<td>i) To project the UK’s creativity, cultural diversity and recent achievements and to challenge outmoded stereotypes of the UK abroad. For this the Library and information network is to provide access to latest information from and about Britain to the present and future leaders in India’s department (Targets library service to 80,000 personal members and 4000 corporate members in Year 1, 75% of personal members from the target audiences by end of Year 2, proactive information service to reach 2000 key contacts in Year 1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ii) To build the UK’s role as a leading provider of educational opportunity for people overseas; for this, to sustain the 20% increase in student recruitment through counselling etc. (Target 2000: 6000 Indian students in UK); to expand the range of BEC and other ELT exams in India through out India; to fully administer PLAB for the GMC throughout India, to deliver exams for at least 2 more professional bodies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>iii) To position the UK overseas as a committed partner in tackling key reform agendas and promoting sustainable development. For this library and information network to provide comprehensive access to development information pertaining to India.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv) To refocus book collection in 11 centres</td>
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<tr>
<td>v) To improve customer service and enquiry management.</td>
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</table>

Table 6.3 Library Objectives & Targets, 1992 & 2003/04
6.9.1 Target Groups: The Present

In order to do away with the vagueness or incompleteness in defining target groups, Strategy 2010\(^\text{30}\) comes out with a set of new definitions about who the targets are:

**Group 1 (T1)** High-level decision makers and leaders overseas and in the UK

**Group 2 (T2)** Lead professionals (group/network leaders, policy shapers and implementers, Chevening scholars and alumni; Business partners overseas (current and potential)

**Group 3 (T3)** Aspirants, achievers and their main influences (young Opinion formers in the 16-35 age group; potential successor generation including prospective creative scholars (16-35) larger, diverse groups of young people in the UK and overseas).

**Group 4 (T4)** Income generating customers (and potential customers), Intermediaries which include parents of and influencers of the above and who play a significant role in the young persons decision making (any age) and teachers (any age), specified publics (wider groups of educated people).

This is a total shift from the earlier categorisation of memberships in the British Council Libraries. (Table 5.2)

Now, in an attempt to increase the membership and thus bring in more outreach and more income, anyone who has attained the age of 16 is a target member of the library. For children below the age 16, children’s sections, under the new name ‘Junior Junction’ or Young Learner’s Centre have been brought back into the Council libraries.

Moreover, of the groups, Group (1) is a small group known individually. For the same reason, only a global definition is required for them and there is no need for global taxonomy for further segmentation. The greatest benefits from a standard taxonomy for
segmentation would come from Group (3), followed by Group (2). The latter, however, would benefit from a common basis of segmentation to facilitate bilateral links and multilateral working and also to ensure that corporately, the British Council has appropriate expertise in place to help product (service) development, which will be mostly local or sub-regional. Group (3) also requires a common basis of segmentation so that the British Council can benefit from the economies of scale of developing or buying global products, particularly on-line. The last group is about broad categories the British Council wishes to reach.

6.9.2 Book Selection/Collection Development

When the British Council was first established, there was a four-man Books and Periodicals committee under the Chairmanship of John Masefield. This committee refined and defined the guidelines for selection policy in the British Council Libraries worldwide. But not much work was required at that time since most of the books and periodicals were either gifted or presented to the Council and there was nothing much in the way of financial encouragement. But with the outbreak of war, the freedom of choice of books was no longer the privilege of all institutions abroad. It rested with the Council Representative or with Books and Periodicals Department. Towards the end of the war, however, a new Libraries subcommittee was formed with Unwin as Chairman, to advise Books Department on library policy. But in practice most books were selected at the headquarters. Throughout the war and until about 1948, Barnicot’s Office Circular No.156 was considered the ‘bible’ on book selection.

In spite of the Circular, there were actually some limitations on the subject matter represented in Council libraries and deciding the ‘suitability’ of a book was very difficult. In spite of the very purpose of the British Council Libraries - to support the British Council’s two pre-eminent tasks of educational work and cultivation of personal contacts, the definition of ‘integral subjects’ for selection made no mention of education. But in India, much emphasis was put on science, technology and education.
According to the book selection policy laid down by the Council, the books in the collection should have been published from UK, about UK, its way of life, culture and literature and as far as possible by British authors. Only in subjects like medicine was there a relaxation to this rule. The books purchased for the libraries were procured and processed centrally and then sent to the various regions.\(^\text{34}\)

A rethinking was made necessary when it was found that this type of selection did not satisfy all the members worldwide. There were regional variations and demands and gradually; the regional representatives became responsible for managing their own stock selection along the guidelines to suit the requirements of their target members. This broadened the scope for selection. In India there had always been a demand for more recreational material and this had always resulted in a clash with the Council’s policies. It took more than eight years for the British Council Libraries in India to convert to the policies set out in 1980. Though the libraries were established along the lines of public libraries in UK, the stock and services to be provided were never intended to be that of a public library. Keeping with the British Council’s objective of promoting the best of UK in everything, the collection also shows a concentration of professional material, books about Britain and good fiction. The Council has always stood firm by its decision not to compromise on the quality of the collection especially in India, which is credited with “a discerning membership.”\(^\text{35}\)

However India’s demand for more recreational material has always been a bone of contention. The arguments for and against this are beautifully summed up by Spears\(^\text{36}\) :

“The pressure from members is likely to be towards an increase in the recreational material at the expense of updating targeted professional stock with agreed policy for all library in India”. It appears to be a vicious circle but the problem is not much now, with the introduction of online databases, in which case the originating country, author or the nature of information does not matter or figure. But there is no denying the fact that the Country Plans always advocate for a policy wherein the stock has what the target wants. This is what has made the British Council Libraries popular among the younger audiences. New sections as IT and Indian publications have also been introduced in the
British Council Libraries to cater to and to satisfy the demands of the successor generation.

6.10 Library Policy in a Nutshell

All these clearly show that

1. All Council Library and Information Services (LIS) support the Country Plan (CP) policies and thereby the interests of the Council’s clients/target audiences. No services or materials are provided which do not support CP policies.

2. All Library and Information Services activities are aimed at some or all of the CP priority groups devised in accordance with Management services Department on specifying priority groups. Initially the libraries were used to capture more partner countries. Later the students were the targets. Then it changed to people in key positions and occupational groups. Now the importance has shifted back to the youth in the 18-35 age group and almost all the services that are provided are aimed primarily at these groups. It will be seen from the Corporate and Country Plans that there is no list of Library and Information Services - Specific priority groups.

3. Some Library and Information Services activity is likely to be aimed at users/Customers of other Council activities. This is clearly evident in the case of ECS and Examinations. When the Prime Minister’s Initiative was launched and targets were set, the libraries were also expected to lend support to these activities in those geographical areas with no British Council presence. In such cases, the Library and Information Services support is regularly reviewed by the respective managers of the two services.

4. This also means that Library and Information Services is the main information service for other members of the Council staff whenever it is needed. But care is
taken to ensure that there is no service overlap. Though there is co-operation and mutual support, each division has a clear understanding of what is expected and what it is. This kind of demarcation is what has helped the British Council maintain and sustain good relation with Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) in India. The British Council in India respects the ICCR’s role in the British Libraries and is careful not to mix Council activities like exams and distance education with the BL activities in those cities where there is no diplomatic representation. This speaks for the perfect professionalism exhibited by the Council.

Regional directors carry out some form of Library and Information Services market analysis annually to improve user profiles, explore customer needs and benefit aspects, identify service weaknesses and promotional opportunities. Survey questionnaires are administered on library users and ‘enquirers’ and the latter are informed of the findings and of action taken as a result. Similarly period market analysis is done to explore, for instance, the impact of a new service or the needs of non-user priority groups. Before re-introducing the children’s section in the British Council Libraries, market analysis was done to test the ground. The information centre at Chandigarh was opened only after getting a very positive feed back and assurance about the need and necessity of such a centre in Chandigarh.

From the earlier days, the British Council has realised the importance of cultivating good customer care and for this, continuous contact with user groups is encouraged, particularly through meetings with segments of the clientele or through newsletter. In order to achieve this, open houses and focus group meetings are organised in the library on a regular basis on the basis of its outcome, changes are made in their services. If there is to be a policy change, the matter is discussed at SLIM (South Indian Librarians Meeting) and the Regional/British Librarians’ conference (now known as Library Manager’s Meet) and a decision taken.
Both the information and recreational needs of priority groups are regularly identified/established and then the managers determine how many of these can be met through Library and Information Services activity and if so, what resources are needed and can be made available. These decisions are later made explicit in internal policy documents and in promotional materials. As for marketing of the Library and Information Services of the priority user groups target audiences is concerned, promotional materials like Library brochures with stress on the benefit of services to the user are produced. These are distinct from the library rules and regulations.

The resources allocated to individual library and information centres are also related to Country Plan policies and to performance and are regularly reviewed on these bases. ‘Use’ is a crucial performance measure for all stock and the aim is to acquire materials which contribute to Country Policies and are well used. There is a written collection department policy for each region. The acquisition of materials is planned and budgeted in advance, with allocations relating to the regional priorities.

Services provided by the Council Library and Information Services are normally drawn from a list of possible library and information services, which consists of video CDs and home videos, lending of books and periodicals, enquiry answering services (educational and general), promotion of UK educational opportunities, current awareness bulletins, CD Rom searches of databases, online searches of databases, IT corners, and reservation facility and photocopying. The service mixture depends upon several factors like relevance to CP policies, the findings of market analysis, performance and the availability and effectiveness of local Library and Information Services. For example, in the four regional libraries in Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai and Mumbai home videos are popular where as this service is not available in the British Council Libraries. In the initial stages, video
cassettes were lent out only to institutional members. Now, with the advent of CD, the service is offered to individual members as well.

As part of customer relations, the full range of Council's Library and Information Services available locally is made known to all members through 'Know Your Library' sessions. Formerly the British Council Libraries used to have a video presentation, 'What is your library?' before KYL but now the library is introduced to the newcomers through power point presentations. This helps the user to shed his/her inhibitions in knowing more about the library services on offer and this leads to more utilization of library materials and also to customer satisfaction.

There is also a procedure for users to suggest improvements to services and even a complaints procedure. All the British Council Libraries in India have a Complaints and Suggestions box displayed at a very prominent place in the library and all are looked into. This is a very effective feedback mechanism and by attending to this, the user/consumer is also made to feel that he is important to the library/British Council and also that it is his library. This identification with the library goes a long way in promoting the British Council Libraries in India.

Library opening hours also reflect user needs as identified in market analysis. The British Council Libraries used to have a lengthy lunch break in the 1970s but this was found to be very inconvenient for the users especially students. As a result, the library came to be kept open continuously from 11am to 7pm on five days a week, from Tuesday to Saturday. The five-day-norm has again been changed now due to the persistent demand from library members and now the libraries in India are open from Monday to Saturday. But in Bangalore, Delhi and Mumbai the timings are different because of the weather conditions and the distance factor. This has forced them to open and close early.
As for Council stock, till very recently, it was essentially restricted to British materials. All the materials were expected to have a substantial British contribution in them. But now, again, owing to the demand from users, the British Council Libraries in India have strong ‘India collection’ sections stacked with books in subjects relevant to India, by Indian authors and published in India. This is also a part of the British Council strategy to attract more young people to the Council and to increase the membership which again is an objective in the CP for 2004 - 2005. BookFind is recommended for book selection and publishers’ catalogues are not normally recommended as basic selection tools.

Policy recommends that each year a number of stock revisions be planned in subjects related to interests of priority user groups. Multiple copies are ordered only in those cases where there is a constant and continuous demand for standard work; Reference books are also included in subject stock revisions. Similarly, materials in poor condition or that are obsolete or have not been loaned in the previous two years, are withdrawn from the stock and this weeding and trimming of stock is also a continuous process. Another policy is that annual withdrawals should roughly equal annual additions. In a library which contains absolute stock or where use rates are very low, annual withdrawals can be double annual additions. This means that while the British Council Libraries will always have a fixed number of books in the collection at the same time, due to stringent stock editing, the library will always be stacked with up-to-date information, a factor which is very much appreciated by the library users. This also saves physical space.

The weeded out materials were formerly presented to nearby library or educational institutions. Now, they are being sold at a much subsidised rate to the members. This has been the result of a reassessment of the former policy in view of funding shortages. It was decided that the practice of making large-scale presentations of books and periodicals using British Council operational money was not a good one especially when there were financial crunch every year and it
was finally decided to sell them to interested members, bringing in revenue for the Council that could be utilised for buying more materials for the library itself.

Performance measurement is another key aspect of the British Council policy and it is applied to the library as well. A large amount of library statistics is compiled locally, including local records of membership and use, broken down in a way which relates to priority user groups / targets audiences.

**Library and Information Services performance indicators are divided into effectiveness and efficiency.** The indicators for the former are the number of library members from priority groups; % of CP priority groups who are library members; average number of loans per item per annum; % of total enquires received from priority groups renewal rate of priority group members, number of key contact library members, by name and status, average number of current awareness uses per periodical per week; column inches of publicity about British Council LIS in newspapers/professional journals; its amount of time of publicity received TV/radio and average number of users in the library. Efficiency is gauged on the basis of net cost of library service per library member, number of enquiries handled per staff hour on enquiry points, % of library and information service costs recovered from revenue, % of enquiries answered in two working days of receipt and book stock withdrawals as a % of book stock additions. Such regular and systematic assessment forces the libraries to maintain certain standards all the time.

Fee levels and charges for all Library and Information Services are also periodically reviewed to ensure that they maximise revenue while not damaging the delivery of services. In fixing fees, charges are compared other local indicators and fees are normally increased annually in tune with increases in local inflation rates. Similarly charges for photocopies are also fixed at the top of local commercial rates. A sliding scale of fines is also imposed for late return of library books and other materials is fixed at a rate high enough to later non-return.
In the past, the Council had tried to provide a surrogate lending service for the general reader educated in English. The core collection over the years has been adapted to serve the needs of the student. It has also tried to reflect the various strands of Britain's department aid to India. In his report, Cavaliero gives an accurate self-analysis: "It [The British Council] has tried to do too many things and has ended by doing none of them very well. We have to admit that membership is random. There has been scant liaison with other major British Council programmes, the department of reference collections has been differently pursued in the regions, book exhibitions have pre-empted too much time in relation to results, there has been very little interaction with the public sector library scene in India and we do not know very clearly what its resources are. We have by our very oasis-like qualities allowed the libraries to settle into not very impressive simulation of public libraries in Britain."  

6.11 Conclusion

By its very nature, the Council has offered library development with both cultural and material 'strings' attached. Its aim, after all, is to project the values of the former imperial power and it has a quite undisguised interest in promoting relevant British goods and services. Still it is remarkable that the Council should have played the part that it has in post-colonial library development. It is a tribute to the decentralized 'flexibility' of the Council that such practical assistance to library development can continue to be given not as part of a formal aid programme but within the context of its own library work. The overall picture of this work is neither small nor simple, involving as it currently does the running of around 220 overseas libraries and information centres. This is system which is the biggest of its kind in the world today. To combine the running of a worldwide operation of such a size with the ability to respond to widely differing local needs and opportunities presents a considerable challenge but it is one to which the Council has risen with conspicuous success in the past.
As the present day Corporate and Country Plans show, things have changed now when compared to the British Council of earlier days. There is a clearer vision about what the Council stands for, how the various units have to function without encroaching into one another and though the word ‘libraries’ is missing from the plans, information work has taken pre-dominance and whether it is openly admitted or not, libraries still have a special place in the academic and administrative psyche in India. This shows that the libraries are much more than what meets the ordinary eye. By providing quality service and by being selective and specific about its target audiences, the libraries have naturally become the vibrant, local points for the Council to interact with people who matter and to promote Britain unobtrusively.

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