CHAPTER EIGHT

FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

8.0 Introduction

The analysis and interpretation of data collected through the survey could reveal the various roles played by the British Council Libraries in promoting higher education in India. Some of the findings evolved out of this study provide sufficient scope for a striking comparison between three types of libraries namely, Public Library, University Library and the academic–public British Council Library. The findings are summarized and presented along with a corresponding reading of the British Council library policy. Suggestions for improving information use and provision of more student-friendly services are given and topics for further research in this area are also suggested.

8.1.0 Roles Played by the British Council Library: Findings

One of the objectives of this study has been to ascertain information needs in the sector of Higher Education in India and find out how far the British Council meets these needs. Their needs were ascertained through the questionnaire survey carried out in a British Council Library that was taken as a sample of the eleven libraries in British Council Library network. The analysis of the responses could bring out the various roles played by the British Council Libraries to meet these needs. In addition to this, the perceptions and responses of Indian users regarding the organization, collection and services of British Council Libraries could also be studied.

The questionnaire had five sections under membership and personal details, library use, collection, services and assessment. But from the data collected through the survey, it was possible to classify the various roles played by the British Council Library into 6 – as an academic library, as an intermediary and educator, as information provider and information manager, as a facilitator and also its supporting and educational roles. The findings are given under these heads.
8.1.1. As an Academic Library

Membership

The British Council Library has a very good representation of the higher education sector among its members. The students are mostly from the postgraduate and research courses. The newly introduced IT and Learning Resource Centres (ITLRC) have attracted more engineering students, especially those with IT as their branch of study, to the library. There are more from English literature discipline also. Teachers, irrespective of where they work – whether higher secondary, college or university – take membership in the British Council Library. They continue to renew their membership.

The membership composition of the British Council Library corresponds to the guidelines laid down by the British Council. The policy prefers T3 among its target groups. This includes students, especially postgraduates and professionals, in the age group of 18-35. The membership base of the British Council Library also has this as its dominant group.

Thus, though a public library, in the composition of its membership, the British Council Library resembles an academic library.

Extent of Library use

British Council Library is extensively used by students and teachers alike. The next most used is institutional / college library. More number of students than teachers use the British Council Library to a great extent (91.77% as against 77.98%), whereas in the case of the University Library, teachers use it more (64.22% vs. 57.14%).

University Library is not consulted / used as it should be on the other hand. British Council Library though a public library, is a very useful source of information to both students and teachers, with institutional / college library coming second. In this respect British Council Library plays the role of an academic library better than the university library.

Borrowing Pattern: Number of Materials borrowed

Serious users still prefer “bookness” of books and for this very reason libraries remain the most important source of information used for teaching, learning and research. British Council Libraries are no exception. In spite of online databases and
the internet, their members still prefer print materials. The average number of books, journals and CDs borrowed prove this. The average number of books borrowed per month is 5.52, that of journals is 3.16 and the average number of CDs borrowed is 1.35. This is more than what a member is entitled to. Printed materials like books and periodicals continue to be the most sought after materials in spite of all the competition and hype created by e-sources and online sources.

The books in the British Council Library are used heavily by its members. The library gets the latest books from Britain and they cover various subject areas meant for professional and post graduate students. These books are put into great use by the members.

*Borrowing Pattern: Type of Books Borrowed*

British Council Library is still basically a public library, built on the line of a UK Public Library. Naturally it has its collection and services aimed at the general reader. With the re-defining of target groups, the thrust has now shifted to students and professionals and the collection and services have also changed accordingly. The library thus has a combination of subject, fiction and non-fiction to suit the needs of its target groups.

The most preferred type was subject books. Students, teachers and unemployed were unanimous in their choice. They visited the British Council Library to borrow books and they borrowed subject books first and foremost. The general pattern showed the preference as subject books, fiction and non-fiction, in that order.

There are individual differences shown by students and teachers. Students still prefer fiction over non-fiction but subject books are their first priority. Teachers show a deviation from the general trend in that they prefer non-fiction. They use the British Council Library mainly for subject and non-fiction books.

The British Council Library provides access to materials for learning as well as for ‘play’ befitting their motto of ‘give the user / reader what he/she wants’. The proportions vary according to the priorities with clearly defined objectives and target groups, the British Council Library has more books on subjects like IT, management and medicine since the members are mostly professionals, professional students, postgraduate students and senior and middle level managers. But it does not ignore the general and recreational needs either. The library takes care of the educational
need by providing subject books and that of recreation, by providing latest and award-winning novels from UK. By providing good reading materials it promotes the critical thinking skills of the students in the higher education sector.

**Borrowing Pattern: Correlation between borrowals and information needs**

British Council Library is able to provide the latest materials to postgraduate / professional students according to their information and educational needs.

**Borrowing Pattern: Correlation between borrowals and courses**

The level and nature of course affects the type of books borrowed. All the students give the utmost priority to subject books but the second and third preferences show individual differences. For under graduates, postgraduates (professional) and research students it is fiction and non-fiction whereas postgraduates and professional students favour only non-fiction books. The British Council Libraries buy a good number of non-fiction books also every year to satisfy these needs. It thus has a judicious mix to satisfy all types of needs and very effectively combines traditional and modern librarianship. **The British Council Library effectively combines the surrogate public library role and the surrogate academic library role by providing subject, fiction and non-fiction books to students in a judicious manner.**

**General**

The libraries have a clear policy regarding the types of materials to be stocked and the services to be rendered. All these are decided on the basis of who the target customer is. The library provides a much varied kind of stock and information materials to suit the different kinds of needs – academic, professional, recreational and general interests of students.

There is a wide range of reading materials – books on almost all subjects, reference books, subject and general periodicals, videos, newspapers and even non-book materials like CD ROMs and online databases. The British Council Library serves the educational and information needs of students by providing a quality collection of these materials, especially standard textbooks, classic books and books containing knowledge essential for a professional. The collection of award-winning novels in the library is par excellence. 79.63% of students and teachers consider it to be excellent.
On the whole, students and teachers have a high opinion about the collection. The British Council Library takes care to bring the latest editions for the benefit of students and this is appreciated by the user group from the higher education sector. The book stock is now essentially built upon professional subjects such as IT, management, engineering and medicine. It has materials both for the beginner and the professional. Students use the British Council Library for all these reasons.

The collection of the British Council Library comprising of general books, subject books, reference books, periodicals (both general and subject), newspapers, CD ROMS, audio and video cassettes and even the online databases are used well by the T3 group. Online databases are gradually gaining acceptance. 68.22% found them to be most adequate or adequate and students are the main consumers of online databases.

There is a very close matching between adequacy and frequency of their use in the case of materials like subject books, reference books and general books. They are not only perceived to be adequate but also actually used by many. At the same time, audio and video cassettes are perceived to be adequate but not used by many.

The quality of the collection corresponded well with its benefit. The most beneficial are books containing knowledge essential for a professional. All the materials that help to develop the language skills and subject knowledge are being provided by the British Council Library. But even those materials which are not of high quality are accepted as beneficial by users. There is an eagerness to accept anything that is provided by the library due to the non-availability of quality library service from academic libraries in general.

The British Council Library’s collection is its strength and because of this, it is almost treated like an academic library by the students and teachers.

8.1.2. As Intermediary and Educator

Subject Interests

The primary subject interests of British Council Library members are English literature, engineering, IT, management and medicine. Most of the students are from these subject areas which are the same as the British Council’s developmental and priority areas. But this does not prevent them from using other sections of the library. They are found to have diverse interests, and the library offers materials on a wide
range of subjects to meet this demand. The British Council Library thus encourages the students to gain more knowledge by satisfying their intellectual curiosity. In this, it acts both as an intermediary and educator – connecting students to the universe of knowledge and educating them to develop themselves.

**User Education**

British Council Library is offering many things to students by way of print, non-print and online sources. But many of them do not have holistic picture about what the British Council Library offers. Though there are ‘Know your Library’ sessions, they are not being exploited properly. 68.09% seemed to be aware of this user education programme but only 32.22% have attended the session. Those who attended the programme have expressed high level of satisfaction also.

More than the level of satisfaction, it is the lack of awareness that definitely undermines the extra-human efforts put by the Council to serve the T3 user group to the maximum extent possible.

The British Council Library tries to train its users in techniques of information retrieval by providing user education in a systematic and efficient searching of scientific information. If this educator’s role were to be more effective, the British Council Library has to concentrate more on user education programmes with more frequency.

8.1.3. As Information Provider and Information Manager

**Type of information sought**

Students and teachers who use the British Council Library are in need of current information. The coverage they require is only selective. All of them have a professional purpose in seeking the information. In the changed context of higher education curriculum and syllabus and also with the introduction of credit and semester system, the relevance of current, selective and professional information is more. Even teachers and researchers look for current information in libraries.

Students and teachers who come to the British Council Library also seek current information for their professional purpose. The British Council Library thus is expected to play the role of information provider to the academic and student communities in the Higher Education sector.
The British Council Library's collection is used well. An adequate knowledge about the needs of the users and about the available resources enables the British Council Library to provide the right material/book/information to the right reader/user. It does this by building a collection that (i) helps to keep abreast with the latest developments in the field and (ii) has a wide coverage of a particular area. Most of the books in the collection are unique to this library alone and cover not only the currently important/key areas but also offer good coverage of emerging areas. The users appreciate the collection very well and only when it comes to a comparison between what is available here and what is available in developed countries do they show confusion. They agree that the library collection's size is appropriate.

On the whole, the users show a positive attitude towards the collection and hold it at high esteem. Their information needs/requirements match well with the collection and the British Council Library's book selection policy deserves full praise for this. The collection is up-to-date, selective and offers good coverage of emerging areas. As a full partner in the educational enterprise, the library collection has everything that the students and teachers want – judicious selection from current monographs, selections of important works in their subject area and a wide range of current and retrospective materials, suited to all levels of education.

But the collection – building exercise does not have any active participation from the target groups. Many of them are not even aware that they can suggest the titles of important books in their subject areas or that the British Council Library takes suggestions from the users and if found suitable, can buy them also. This would have given the users a sense of participation/involvement and it would have benefited the library also.

The users have some suggestions to improve the quality of the book collection. They perceive the British Council Library as a centre wherein quality books and periodicals are made available but they do not wish to see them taken off the shelves. They do not like weeding out or downsizing the collection, the two things strongly recommended and religiously executed by the British Council in all its libraries. The British Council Library's try to keep their collection intact by doing this but this does not go down well with the users. The expectations the users have of the
British Council Library are so high that it is very difficult to satisfy all. There is an insatiable demand for more and more books and printed materials like books continue to be the most sought-after materials.

The British Council Library tries to perform many roles when it comes to collection and matching it with the users' needs. The scope and content of the collection is highly suited to those in higher education sector and British Council Library manages information well this way.

8.1.4. As a Facilitator

**Duration of Membership**

Students join the British Council Library as soon as they join for a degree course. As a result, most of the new members i.e. in the up-to-2-year category are students. But they renew the membership subsequently and there is a long association between the students and the British Council Library. There are more students in the 2-5 year category, especially from postgraduate and professional courses like MA and B.Tech. They renew the membership based on the satisfying experience they had while using the library. **British Council Library facilitates the educational needs of the students in a satisfying manner and thus plays a facilitator's role in promoting higher education.**

**Visit to the Library**

The members visit the library as and when needed. i.e. British Council Library is used / visited whenever a user feels the need for some information. In other words, the characteristics of British Council Library as a system correspond to the situation of the client. The actual and potential users of the system are willing and able to make use of the services provided. In the case of students and teachers, there are many factors like their daily classes, writing / correcting of assignments etc. that restrict their library use. They can have no regular and compulsory library visit at regular intervals. There is no particular time also when they are likely to feel a need for information. **British Council Library is able to satisfy their needs any time.**

By virtue of a membership, the user can use the British Council Library to the maximum extent possible. But the students visit the library more often than teachers and the unemployed. Among the students, undergraduates visit the library more than
the other categories like postgraduates, professional students and researchers. They need the library more for their educational purpose.

**Correlation with Studies**

Postgraduate and professional students and researchers visit the library more than the others. Teachers do not go to the library quite often since they have other sources like their personal collection and colleagues to meet their information requirements. This is not the case with the students. They are totally dependent upon the libraries for getting knowledge and British Council Library with its sources and services is ready to help them as and when they need it.

**Time Spent at the Library**

The British Council Library members spend up to 2 hours at the library per visit. This is not necessarily spent in reading alone. Various services provided by the British Council Library like IT corner and Internet browsing provide enough opportunities for the users to get the information they require. This is irrespective of the periodicity or frequency of their library visit.

Students spend more time at the library than the teachers. Postgraduates and professional students, have a need for more information by virtue of their courses. This makes them spend more time on literature search and gaining state-of-the art knowledge and these activities take up more library time. They came to the British Council Library to satisfy their information needs that are in different stages and different levels. British Council Library is a hybrid library and because of this nature, the students can visit the library to borrow a book or a CD and during the same visit also use the internet. The novelty of experience and the support they get from the library make the students, especially the new members, stay for a longer time inside the lib.

British Council Library provides a comfortable environment conducive to studies and browsing. The members also feel free to use the library as and when needed. Here, need is an important criteria behind the use. The fact that they visit the library quite often means that the library has something to offer them and that the library satisfies their needs.
In this, the British Council Library has an educational and facilitator's role – facilitating the various needs of students and teachers by providing unlimited access to its resources whenever they need it.

Services

The library makes continuous effort to deliver services at a level better than what the customer expects. This has resulted in a higher satisfaction level of the customers. The library staff treats the library users with respect and the customers are generally satisfied with staff attitude. Staff efficiency also impresses them.

Students still prefer traditional services like lending and reference and new services like online services are just catching up.

Services: Assessment by Users

Customer satisfaction level is very high in the British Council Library, especially in the case of core services like lending and reference. Integration of IT has made significant difference in the quality of service. But new services like Internet access are utilised more by students than teachers. The British Council Library facilitates teaching and learning by providing online search facilities, quality photocopying and education counselling on study in Britain.

In spite of being networked, resource sharing is not very effective. This study shows a very low utilisation of interlibrary loan facility (8.5% and 8%). Similar is the case of Education Counselling Service. In spite of the wide publicity given for this service through the media students do not show much enthusiasm. Students are interested in knowing about scholarships, because more than quality, funding is a deciding factor while pursuing studies abroad.

8.1.5. Supporting Role

Library Use: General

Students and teachers do not depend on one library alone for satisfying their information requirements. They have membership in all the important libraries in the locality like University Library, Public Library, Institutional / College / Department Library and even the lending library.
Among the student members of the British Council Library, the number of students who have membership in the University Library is not high (52.38%). At the same time, among the British Council Library members who use the University Library, there are a good number of students (61.42%). On the other hand, more teachers are members of or utilize their institutional / department / college libraries. Public Library and lending library also have more student members from the British Council Library as their members. **British Council Library is here seen as a supporting library along with the other libraries.**

*Why the British Council Library is used*

The British Council Library is used mostly for academic and study purpose i.e. for the purpose of consulting reference books, completing assignments and for preparing for the class. But students use it very frequently more for professional updating (81.74%), i.e. for updating knowledge in the field of primary interest by reading subject books, consulting research materials and carrying out internet search. More number of students uses the British Council Library for recreational / general purpose also (61.76%).

The British Council Library is used by students for professional updating, for supporting their studies and for general reading also. **The British Council Library plays a supporting role in promoting higher education by providing subject books, reference books, research materials and internet facility to the students, especially postgraduate and professional students, in the higher education sector.**

*Purpose and Frequency of use*

British Council Library is very frequently used more for academic and study purpose (45.30%), followed by professional updating (32.76%). Recreational and general purpose is what it is frequently used for. But British Council Library is rarely used for getting current awareness about Britain. **Though British Council has been established for promoting Britain, the library is seen more as a place which supports the professional, academic and study and recreational purpose of students and employed alike.**

*Needs Satisfaction*

Level of satisfaction is very high. **The professional, recreational / general, and academic / study needs of the students and teachers in Higher Education**
sector are satisfied mostly by the British Council Library. Even in this, the library satisfies the academic and study needs more than the others and that too, to a great extent. The library does this by providing quality subject books, state-of-the-art books and the latest books from Britain to the students and teachers. Within the academic group, students are the most satisfied lot; British Council Library satisfies their needs mostly. But teachers are not that easily satisfied.

**British Council Library, University Library and Public Library: Comparison**

The University Library and the Public Library score over the British Council Library only in the collection. The physical environment, services, staff, support facility and IT support provided by the British Council Library is superior to that by the other two. Compared to University Library and Public Library, British Council Library is ‘younger’ and has a small number of memberships. But except for collection, in all other departments, the British Council Library is considered better by students and teachers.

British Council Library, like the Public Library, provides books and other materials for recreational and general reading. But it differs from the Public Library in that its members are not general public. It is a special library in the sense of having a special group – students – as its target groups. Thus it resembles a university library. But collection-wise, it is less than a university library. There are subject books, and other materials that the academic and students communities need. At the same time, materials supporting research students like theses, reports are not available at the British Council Library. All these make the British Council Library more than a Public Library but less than a University library. It plays a supportive role and supports and augments what the university library has. The British Council Library has an excellent physical environment conducive to learning and reading, offer excellent quality services that have the latest technological support, excellent staff who have the right attitude and efficiency and excellent support facilities and IT support.

8.1.6. British Council Library’s Educational Role

**Sources required and Libraries consulted**

Students and teachers depend on personal collection. Collection of colleagues, libraries attached to the Department/ institution/college, University Library, British
Council Library and internet for various sources connected to their teaching and learning. Irrespective of the libraries they consult, they require standard text books most (82.62%). Personal collections and institutional/college libraries are most consulted for this. University Library is consulted most for theses and dissertations. But in general, British Council Library is consulted most, though it does not specialize in any particular source. It thus plays an educational role by offering all important sources relevant to study and teaching.

**OPAC**

Members find Online Public Access Catalogue very useful and user-friendly. By offering this facility, British Council Library is again effectively using technology to improve the quality of service provided. According to the country plan, the BC will use IT to service the T3 group in its efforts to satisfy their information needs. OPAC is one method by which information retrieval has been made easier for the users. The British Council Library thus introduces its users to the latest technological development in the Library and information field. By introducing OPAC, British Council Library helps the young professionals and students to search for their information in a very simple manner. Information retrieval is made easier and less time-consuming for the young professionals and students. The British Council Library plays an educational role this way by helping students develop their information and information-seeking skills. While many of the students have appreciated OPAC’s usefulness, a sizeable number of members are ignorant about such a facility. Yet another category is there which do not know how to use it. This is an area the British Council Library has to concentrate on and user education has to be provided to such users.

**Networking**

This is one of the under-used facilities offered by the British Council Library. Only a very few make use of the online facilities membership services at the British Council Library. Such services have been introduced with the expressed desire to help students to gain the necessary skills to negotiate an increasingly complex, digital maze. But this does not seem to be happening. Though British Council Library tries its level best to provide access to a well-managed IT environment by offering such services, not many are aware of it. Students have to be educated properly in this.
The British Council Library prepares the students for the Knowledge Age by providing ICT support. It facilitates the educational needs of the academic and student community in the Higher education sector by developing innovative facilities like access to international and national databases. This role can be realised fully only if the number of students using the new services go up.

8.2 Policy and Performance: Findings

As for how policy formulation was shaped by changing needs in Higher Education sector in India, it was necessary to critically analyse the policy of the British Council in general and that with regards to its libraries in particular. On the basis of this, the roles played by the British Council Libraries in promoting higher education in India could be studied. In addition to this, the Code of Practice for libraries as formulated by the British Council was also studied and the findings are given below. It shows what the Code of Practice / Country Plan want to achieve with respect to various facets of library and information services and what the survey says. Policy stipulated in Code of Practice / Country Plan with regards to each aspect is given in bold letters and the corresponding finding of the survey’s finding is given in italics.

- All council LIS to support CP policies and thereby the interests of the council’s client. The users, T3 and T4 of the Country Plan, get what they want.
- Number of library members from priority groups should be more and LIS activity is to be aimed at some or the entire CP priority groups. There are more from the priority groups and their percentage is more. They are satisfied with the LIS but want more services.
- LIS should meet the needs of priority groups. Satisfied but need to be educated on how to utilize them to the maximum.
- There should be continuous contact with user groups through user education and focus group meetings. But respondents do not seem to be very familiar with these programmes.
- Resources allocated should be related CP policies and performance. They are used very extensively by students and to a lesser extent by teachers in higher education.
LIS should be continuously and systematically promoted to priority user groups. There are more new members among the priority user groups. Renewal rate of Priority Group members is also high and there are many members with long duration of membership.

Materials that contribute to country policies should be acquired. Library materials are well used.

There should be a written collection development policy. Collection well-used and this is proof of its effectiveness.

Comfortable environment should be provided. Satisfied; Rating high.

A checklist of possible library and information services is given. Satisfied; but they want more services to be introduced.

In non-educational counselling service centres, libraries should handle the queries. But this does not seem to be very effective; not much demand.

Libraries to have a consistent policy for the use of back numbers of periodicals. Use of journals is satisfactory; students use them more.

Use of CD-Rom and/or online services should be considered in subject areas when existing use or market research has revealed a demand for information in this form. CD use high especially among students; online services yet to pick up; meaningful internet use is yet to take place.

Reservation service is an essential feature of a good Council Library. Facility much used and appreciated by the users.

There should normally be a library photocopier for providing copies but without violating copyright laws. Users are satisfied; use percentage is high.

The full range of LIS services available locally should be made known to all new members. Not enough awareness about the programme. More user education needed for better use of resources and services.

Library opening hours should as far as possible reflect user needs. Users are still not satisfied.

Council stock (books, periodicals, videos etc.) should essentially be restricted to British materials. Demand for publications from other countries.
Stock should reflect the customer’s needs. Satisfied with the collection as evidenced by their borrowal pattern and rating; still want more non-British and Indian books

Weeding of stock should be a continuous process. Users not happy; shows British Council Libraries have to be more careful – not seem to know the demand.

The premises should meet the standards required by British or local health and safety legislation, whichever are the more stringent. Given excellent rating

Plans for LIS premises should ensure that there is easy user access to resources and equipment. Users do not agree. Congestion is cited as one of the problems hindering easy access; Libraries should separate busy areas from quiet areas (for study and reading)

In the Council libraries, there should be some tables and seating for study purposes and some casual seating, the proportion that of will depend upon their respective use by priority groups. Users do not feel it is adequate – suggest more seating and more ‘quiet’ and more space for internet browsing.

Catalogues for library books and other holdings should be obtained through OPAC. OPAC is there but use of OPAC is not much.

The usual Council loan for books should be 3 weeks and the average loan period for home videos should be not more than one week. But the users want more time (4 weeks.)

A sliding scale of fines should be imposed for late return of library books and other materials and be fixed at a rate high enough to deter and non-return. But users feel it is high and want it to be reduced.

It is clear that British Council Libraries contribute to India’s development in the field of education

- by providing students and teachers in the Higher Education with what they need; this is done through the maintenance of a visible and widespread library work in India. Appropriate resources are concentrated on libraries where they
are most needed and used by priority groups that include students from the Higher Education sector.

- by providing the students, especially postgraduate and professional students, with a stock designed to meet their education and information needs; the stock is replenished and updated regularly for this purpose.
- by providing quality information for study and for professional updating through books, journals, CDs, websites etc;
- by providing library members, which include students of higher education sector, with a professionally acceptable level of service; In addition to the traditional services like reference and lending, online services are also provided to them through the network which are beneficial to students, especially those doing postgraduates and research;
- by making services more user- oriented;
- by developing library resources as identified through various surveys and other feedback mechanisms; information and thought content (primarily of British origin) are made accessible to the right people (including postgraduate and professional students) at the appropriate time and are adequate and up-to-date enough to be effective; and
- by providing access to online and managed learning opportunities which are affordable and work – related.

The findings evolved out of the study have thus substantiated the objectives derived and tested logically the tenability of the hypotheses formulated at the beginning of the study.

8.3 Suggestions for Improvement

The study reveals some areas the British Council has to pay special attention to.

1. The British Council Libraries should have a clear vision about what they are supposed to do and what they can do. Going by the aims and goals presented in the Country Plans and Corporate Plans, the picture that emerges is that of a library which tries to do so many things at the same time. It is true that now it at least seems to have a clear definition about its target groups. The libraries
should be given enough time to consolidate their gains due to a particular change, evaluate and modify them before they are pushed on to another change.

2. Though almost all the members have a high opinion about the British Council Library, it is seen that many of them do not have a holistic picture of the library. Effective user education is the only solution to this problem. Upholding their image as information providers and keeping in tune with their educational role, the British Council Libraries can think of starting information skills programmes for their student members. Even research and postgraduate students have doubts about their skill levels in word processing, knowledge of application software packages and they are overwhelmed with the range of databases, e-prints, e-text and e-journals. This programme can be evolved to remove such misgivings and also meet the changing skills requirements. Strategies adopted in the sessions can include keeping up-to-date with new services and instruction in the use of bibliographic software packages. This can be an advanced version of the present ‘Know Your Library session’.

3. Even the ‘Know Your Library’ sessions can be made more frequent, say, once in two weeks and the attendance at these sessions has to be monitored. The session’s content can be improved and modified to include tips on internet searching, effective search strategies and how to use OPAC effectively. This will lead to maximum utilization of library facilities and resources, thus justifying the ‘tax payers’ money spent in procuring them.

4. The evolving information and technology environment is creating many changes and opportunities in higher education. Being a provider, shaper and generator of knowledge, the British Council Libraries in India can utilise their IT environment, to set up something along the line of the Global Enquiries Project. This will facilitate enquiry handling via bulletin boards, similar to the bulletin board currently run by British Council, China.

5. More publicity has to be given to the online databases the British Council Libraries offer to their members. The online services provided by the British Council Libraries seem to be underused or it may be that one never knows
what are being used by remote access. Such services were introduced due to the realisation that students of today do not have the mindset to browse among books for reference. But they are to be educated properly on how to use them. British Council Library has to help the students gain the skills necessary to negotiate an increasingly complex digital maze.

6. If the British Council Library really wants to support and facilitate the information and education needs of its T3 user group in Higher Education, it has to become more student-friendly. This can be done by (1) using the website to communicate news about collections and exhibitions, including recommended and new items; (2) by creating constantly changing small exhibitions (for eg. books of the week, website of the day etc.), particularly when these create opportunities for dialogue with users; (3) by video conferencing with some ‘high achievers’; and (4) by developing a proactive information service like e-news alert service being done in British Council, Pakistan.

7. Creativity and personality of the students can be developed by the British Council Library by making the already-existing culture cafés, poetry clubs and readers clubs more active. This will help to promote the reading habit among students. Chat clubs can be floated under its leadership. A presentation by one of the library staff, a teacher or a guest speaker can be arranged. Students and even outsiders can attend and participate in the lively discussions based on current affairs, political and other topical issues. This will be very useful to students especially those preparing for competitive exams and will also help them sharpen their critical thinking skills.

8. In Knowledge and Learning Centres (KLCs), the Distance Learning Zones already exist through which the British Council Libraries offer learning support on behalf of selected UK Universities with distance education programmes. But this benefits only a small section of students in Higher Education sector due to the joining cost, insufficient databases and the limited number of ‘free’ resources. To overcome this problem, new services can be thought of like developing the general service for students (like Internet and electronic journals) into a more focused and modern research service for the growing number of postgraduate students. This can be done by delivering the
resources to the student's own home by databases, websites, e-mails, telephone and even by post. The libraries can this way act as virtual libraries, not bound to bricks and mortar and off-site database will be very popular with students. This service can be two-fold: an initial induction and training on research methodology and use of databases can be followed by personalized support to the students research needs. Information profiling of the members/users of the service can be updated by e-mail.

Assistance can be offered to individuals for keyword searching based on e-mail request forms. The British Council Library, Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) has already introduced a similar service and this can be tried out in India also for the benefit of the students in Higher Education here.

9. The membership of the British Council Libraries shows a smaller figure when compared to University Library and Public Library. But it has been seen that with limited resources and limited members, the British Council Library still has more number of issues to its credit. The low number may be attributed to the wilful measures adopted by the British Council to keep it that way. But the Country Plan as well as Strategy 2005 has come out with clear definitions about target groups. In order to reach more people from these groups, the British Council Library should take the initiative to publicize the library and its services among the academic and student communities. Visits to colleges should be arranged and personal interaction with students should be established to achieve this.

10. Study in Britain should also be given enough awareness and publicity among the students.

11. An oft-repeated complaint against the British Council Libraries is that they are urbanized and cater only to 'high society' people. It is true that the British Council Libraries are all located in important cities in India. Because of this, the libraries' out reach is limited and they may not be reaching as many people as they should, especially from the Higher Education sector. Academic libraries are there all over India whereas there are only 11 British Council Libraries that aim at the users of academic libraries. This can be solved by opening new centres along the lines of the British Council USA Education
Service which has 5 members of staff and no public access. 99% of their target audiences are online. These centres can offer services like the Virtual Study Abroad Adviser, the FAQ Knowledge Base Application and a targeted monthly e-zine which can combine advice, useful information and links to website. These centres can be linked to local academic libraries and the British Council Library can thus benefit many a student.

12. One group that has been left out owing to the importance placed on T3 is T4, to which teachers belong. Higher Education covers both the teacher and the taught. It has been found that the teachers still depend on other sources to satisfy their education and information needs. The British Council Libraries can make it more useful to the teaching community by strengthening and supplementing the collection accordingly.

13. British Council is an international organization that places much value on customer care and feedback. In its endeavour to improve the performance; the British Council / British Council Libraries always administer a minimum of three questionnaires on its members. They have been doing this for long and for the same reason, it has become a ritual now. To connect needs to resources and services, the questionnaires have to become more effective.

14. British Council should also keep in touch with the universities in the locality / area, study the curriculum and provide what is relevant. Libraries and librarians are key players in facilitating student learning in higher education. This makes it imperative that the libraries resources and services should be effective in aiding students learning and supporting the research activities of staff and students. Thus there should be a fruitful partnership between library and academic staff to foster students’ information literacy. If British Council Libraries were to serve T3 user groups well, British Council should have its pulse on the Higher Education curriculum. Since the librarians have the freedom to choose their materials, they can build their collections according to the local needs. This is possible only if the British Council Libraries have a fairly good idea about the Higher Education scenario of their part of India. They can also establish closer links with libraries Higher Education sector, thus becoming learner – centred rather than institution-centred.
8.4 Suggestions for Further Research

1. There remains a glaring lack of research on the effect the library environment has on students' educational gains or outcomes. Most studies on libraries are related to the effectiveness of the services provided and not designed to assess how the services affect students' cognitive and affective outcomes. Such a study can be taken up in the context of British Council Libraries to assess their actual contribution to education and students.

2. Electronic resource provision is clearly the most significant area for future research. This is seen to link to the key issue of supporting teaching and learning which is becoming increasingly important, due to the number of new developments such as personalised e-learning and managed learning environments. Since British Council Libraries have introduced these new concepts through the KLCs, this will be an apt area of research. One of the main issues surrounding electronic services and resources is their expense and librarians are keen to make sure that they are using their budgets effectively. There is a concern about the impact of electronic resources, particularly in comparison to traditional library resources. How many people are using these, what effect this will have on libraries, usage patterns, especially access from off-site, student preferences and digitisation of special collections are all important areas for research in this respect.

3. The needs of British Council Libraries users are another area that can be studied in depth. As such, not many studies have been done on British Council Libraries, let alone on this important aspect. This can be done either as a general study or on particular groups of users such as undergraduates, postgraduates, academic staff, researchers or general users. Specific issues related to particular groups of users will also go along way in helping the British Council Libraries decide on choice of materials and the types of services to be provided. Studies on the benefits of research materials to research students, behaviour of postgraduate students/research students and the role of British Council library is supporting research are to name a few.

4. There has been too much focus on the user in the life of the library but not enough on the library in the life of the user. The LIS community has been so
consumed with technology that it has not adequately recognized the values people associate with library as place and the reading materials it has been providing for centuries. A study on what roles the British Council Libraries play in the lives of readers, especially the sociological aspects, can be taken up. This can include analysis of the social bases for reading, especially the reading of popular fiction since the British Council Libraries have excellent collection of the former.

5. Values that readers place on reading for pleasure, empowerment, intellectual stimulation and social banding it brings out can be another subject for research in British Council Libraries. Since it is very easy to get statistics of everything from the database, the British Council Libraries can isolate the circulation statistics and analyse what kinds of reading generate most interest. It is understood that statistics are sent to the headquarters but this has to be put to use to be of any significance.

6. British Council Libraries have only British books and only English books in its collection. This is the physical manifestation of the BC’s ‘cultural diplomacy’. In this context, it will be worthwhile to study the sharing of cultural experiences as promoted through the physical manifestation of the British Council’s ‘cultural diplomacy’. In this context, it will be worthwhile to study the sharing of cultural experiences as promoted through the physical manifestation of the British Council’s cultural diplomacy'. Though a comparison of previous figures shows a decline in the number of users of British Council Libraries world wide, the number is on the increase in India.

The appreciation for the various roles the British Council Libraries play in promoting education in a developing country like India continues to grow, as the present study shows. There are many who think the British Council Libraries are doing an excellent work and this has resulted in more peoples utilising its services in spite of the high fees it charges. The advantage it provides to the young is limitless. The British Council Libraries tout a virtual library, a library without walls, by going online. At the same time, it has not ignored the traditional library services. This combination provides the best of the two world to its T3 audience who are essentially students with specific academic and information needs.
8.5 Conclusion

The latest Board Performance Report of the British Council cryptically poses some questions and proceeds to answer them graphically. In ‘Who are we reaching?’ the figures show that the British Council has been able to reach 328,740 target audiences, particularly young people who will be of influence in the future, through its Library and Information centres. The striking factor about this number is that 70% of this audience is under 35. Still more important than this, from the point of view of the present study, is the pleasant truth that Indian share of this comes to 104,197. No further explanation seems to be necessary to show the importance of the British Council Library Network in India.

The British Council Libraries in India too take their role seriously. They act as academic libraries while providing quality information services and resources to meet the research, teaching and learning needs of the higher education sector. They have been successful in developing and delivering client-focused information and technological services that enhance the educational, research and community programmes of the higher education institutions. The British Council Libraries seem to participate directly in the university’s teaching, research and the development of new knowledge by

(i) providing equitable access to information and recorded knowledge
(ii) acquiring, organizing and making available information resources appropriate to the users’ educational purpose.
(iii) teaching information skills to all library users as the basis for lifelong learning and
(iv) playing a central role in promoting learning by providing expert and innovative access to information and the world’s knowledge to a wide range of users within and even outside the higher education sector through high quality services and collections.

All these show a thrust on services and collections. But the evolving information and technology environment is creating many opportunities in higher education. The cumulative effects of changes in information technology demand that librarians be flexible in assessing how technology may enhance service delivery. The development of web-based technology has made it possible for British Council
Libraries to work outside the library. The uptake of publishers to use the web for product delivery has made it possible for students and researchers to access information at their time of need. The British Council Libraries’ websites are constantly evolving better to match user needs, if the recently concluded web survey is anything to go by.

While web-based technology is exciting and a liberating force, one must not lose sight of the academic community needs. It is important that librarians assess the information needs of their student cohort and determine if their library websites, online services and online delivery of programmes will add value to the students’ learning experiences. Because, all said and done, the library’s role is to support, enrich and provide support services – both in person and online.

References