CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Information is the life blood for medical professionals. Medical professionals are directly responsible for the health of a nation and the subjects are indirectly responsible for the economic growth and development of the country. Medical professionals depend heavily on nuggets of relevant, precise and timely information for their day to day professional success. They need to have access to information for everything they do, such as to refer the case studies, advise the patients and to give clinical prescriptions. So, library acts as a catalyst and indispensable part in their day to day lives.

The accessibility to Library depends upon various factors. Kulthau (2004) stated this as “expertly organized collections, even the most advanced digital collections may remain untouched without proper linkage to user’s problem and processes”. The aspects of individual user process of getting and using information is a vital aspect and that cannot be over looked in any library. So, proper linkage to sources with user is another important aspect.

Wilson (1977) aptly pointed out this in his insightful work “Public Knowledge Private Ignorance”. It is not the difficult of access but, the time, effort and difficulty of using documents that are the major deterrents to library use. Today the difficulty of using information is of increasing concern due to various factors. The factors which may include quality service apart from quality informational resources. From this view though libraries are non-profitable service organizations, they should be more concerned on how to bring
satisfactory services, when offering informational services to its users. Hence ‘User satisfaction’ is what librarian always devotes efforts to pursue.

1.2 USE AND USER STUDIES

Use and User studies are quite familiar to everyone in library and information science field. User studies use studies, information-need studies, information dissemination and utilization studies; communication behavior studies are also closely related and discussed across the globe. The ultimate aim of these studies is to help designing, redesigning evaluating and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of library and information systems/services in meeting predetermined goals of its patrons. User studies and user research have been much systematized in UK, USA and other developed countries over the past four decades. India is catching up with the west in this regard many user surveys undertaken for understanding users and their usage. The process of understanding users is neither simple nor one time activity (Sridhar, 1995). Even after establishing a library with a defined objectivity there is a constant and greater need to understand its users and their interactions while their use and behavior.

In library the customer is called by the term ‘User’ because the term ‘Customer’ is narrow in meaning and it is used widely in business settings. ‘User ‘is a broader in term and who is getting variety of informational services in library, where the user gets information, develops information and generates information through his learning process. It is a chain of activity in which a user can use the information at the beginning of the chain and at the end who is the generator of information through his research (Kumar, 1999). So the term ‘User’ is used in library field instead of the term ‘Customer’ As this study concerns libraries the customer will be referred to as ‘User’ as several authors have

Users are the most important stakeholders in the library. Without users, the library is just storehouses of information. The ultimate aim of the library is to provide “right information on right time to a right user”, who is in need and to ensure that the delivered informational resources would match his/her requirement of expectation. For effective delivery and utility of information, it needs library with high quality service. ‘Quality’ in service is the feelings of customer’s satisfaction shown at the point of availing services. Parasuraman et al. (1985) pointed out that, “The only criterion that counts in evaluating service quality is defined by customers”. So, customer is the only person, who can judge the quality of service.

1.3 USER SATISFACTION AND DISSATISFACTION

The early studies in library and information science field, on serviceability used satisfaction and dissatisfaction (CS/D) dichotomy. It is suggested that this is too simplistic for assessment. The diverse perceptions, motivations and expectations may be based on many factors. Being a service provider library provides service to its users and it should be satisfied for his desires and wants. To measure up user satisfaction with various aspects of service quality in library is a new horizon in the quality learning and teaching environment. According to Swanson (1979) “The Totality of features and characteristics of its resources and services must be able to satisfy all users’ stated or implied needs”.

User satisfaction stems from service quality which is based on satisfaction or dissatisfaction of users. Therefore, to improve service quality, provide services at par with, users’ expectations and satisfy their needs. When users are not satisfied it is inferred that there is something wrong in the implementation in the libraries policy with the library.
1.4 USER EXPECTATION

According to Parasuraman, et. al (1988) “Expectations are desires or wants of users”, i.e. what they feel a service provider should offer rather than would offer. It is also confirmed by the researchers, Heath & Cook, (2003). Customer’s evaluation on performance is the reference points of customer expectation and expectations are considered in terms of what a service would offer by the service providers.

As per Cooper et.al (1998) “Expectations are the standards against which a service provider’s performance should be judged”. “Expectations are assumptions about the likelihood of something occurring” alternatively they reflected anticipated performance, customer’s desire a quality service or product provided in a friendly courteous manner.

1.5 LIBRARY AND SERVICE QUALITY

The concept of quality and its various facets were constantly referred to the library science literature in various forms. For the assessment of the quality the activities of any library could broadly be divided into two categories. The first is technical aspect like the acquisition, cataloguing, indexing and process of documents, so as to prepare them for service and the other is functional part i.e. the delivery of these documents to the intended users. In the research literature these aspects were referred as ‘Technical’ and ‘Functional’ aspects and evaluated with different criteria for assessing the quality.

The quality of library activities and functions is a technical quality which evaluates library from the perspective of management and effectiveness of various library activities. But library is a service facility. It provides services to the users and therefore quality of service is the most important factor in the entire library operations. However, the nature of any service is such that they are not tangible, difficult for measurement and cannot be
stored. Therefore, it is difficult to assess the quality of any service. In the library field several attempts are made to evaluate quality of library service.

Hernon (2002) concludes that “service quality focuses on the interaction between customers and service providers, and the gap or difference between expectations about service provision and perception about how the service is actually provided. Satisfaction, on the other hand, does not involve gap analysis”

1.6 LIBRARY ASSESSMENT

The concepts of quality policy and processes were well documented in business and management disciplines. This is referred in the library science literature in various forms for the assessment of the library service quality and it is used widely.

Heath (2000) has pointed out that, “Libraries today are service agents sharing much in common with other service providers throughout the profit and non-profit sector of society”. It is difficult to judge the library quality, because the libraries are organizations whose prime assets are tangible resources. However the utility of informational resources needs intangible services. Apart from well facilitated reading hall, furniture and sufficient human resources, personalized services are invaluable in the library premise. The intangible assets that comprised services rendered by the professional library personnel.

Hernon and Altman (1996) focused their studies on service quality and proposed four perspectives of service quality as excellence, value, conformance to specifications and meeting or exceeding expectations. The research is much emphasized ‘meeting and or exceeding expectations’ and led them to develop framework for service quality in academic libraries.
According to Filiz (2007) satisfaction is an important measure of service quality in libraries. Students’ perceptions about libraries seem to have been largely ignored by library management in developing countries. The assessment of service quality provides an important feedback for libraries to assess and improve their service to users. He also states that “the survival of a library very much depends on the benefits it brings to the user”. So, it is important for the library to be aware of changing expectations and to continually strive to provide quality service to its users.

Various service quality models proposed by Gronroos, Gravin (1978), Lethinen (1991), Sasser.et.al (1995) and Rust & Keininggham in the field of business marketing for assessing quality. Similarly SERVQUAL and LIBQUAL were developed. Initially Parasuraman.et.al developed SERVQUAL - quality assessment model for business settings, later these models put forth for the assessment of library service quality.

1.7 SIDDHA MEDICAL USERS AND TYPES

Siddha medical education is a professional education prevalent in the South India particularly, Tamil speaking areas of Tamil Nadu and the original works of Siddha medicine is available in Tamil language. The users of Siddha medical colleges are students, faculty members, medical professionals, and researchers and their needs and expectations vary with respect to the nature of their work and activities. Being Siddha medicine is an information rich with antique in nature and exploring required information from less permanent palm manuscripts and transcribed palm manuscripts is a typical activity in Siddha college libraries. Reading palm manuscripts and assisting the user is predominant activity in Siddha libraries.

As users are the prime component in the library segment of academic learning and teaching system of higher education. In view to understand the user segments,
characteristic features, needs, preferences of expectations, and evaluation of user segment, with respect to the quality library and information services that are offered are covered in this research.

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Nowadays, the assessment in libraries has strong international culture after the quality management practices developed in business and other service sectors in developed countries. Under an International collaborative study Kyrillidou and Hipps, (2001) studied on assessing library service quality among scholars in Japan, United Kingdom, Finland and Thailand. The results of this study may be confirmed that there are Global commonalities about library service quality. They also suggested that service quality may enhance the readers’ usability. So, it is the chance to implementing the study related library service quality in Siddha medical college library by using the adaptation of modified SERVQUAL study. This study may urge the new culture of assessment in library service quality among the Siddha medical libraries.

No evidence had been found prior to undertaking this study that service quality expectations of users of Siddha medical college libraries have been studied. Since, no such wide study is reported till date this study is ‘Unique of its kind’

1.9 CHOICE OF THE TOPIC

The study is confined to “A study on Assessment of Service Quality with special reference to Government Siddha Medical College Library in Tirunelveli District” which is a survey research. It aims to analyse the Gap from service expectations and service perceptions of users’ by applying SPSS software to ascertain service quality.
1.10 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The present study aims at applying statistical methods with the help of SPSS software version 20.0 on the data collected from the Siddha medical college library heads through questionnaire survey, observation and interviews. “A study on Assessment of Service Quality with special reference to Government Siddha Medical College Library in Tirunelveli District” is selected for the study. The survey method is used to know the present situation of the topic of the study.

The Siddha medical college library which is included in the present study comprises the users of Government Siddha Medical College, Palayamkottai, Tamil Nadu.

Hence the survey has been undertaken with the help of questionnaire designed for the purpose. In addition to questionnaires, interviews with the heads of libraries were conducted to collect the data. In this study, the data from published sources and the raw data collected from the respondents through questionnaire have been assessed and analyzed with the application of SPSS software version 20.0

1.11 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Some terms are used throughout this study are:

Annotation:

The palm manuscripts are written or inscribed in the form of Tamil poetry and so annotating the poems to users’ readability. The annotation work is carried out with the help of Tamil scholars and Siddha experts.

Expectation:

Internal standards that customers use to judge the quality of service experience.
Medical academics:

Members of the teaching staff at Siddha medical college.

Medical library:

Refer to libraries attached to colleges of Siddha medical college.

Medical Professionals:

Members of the medical council registrants, who have obtained basic BSMS qualification.

Norms:

Minimum standards & infrastructure for Siddha medical college approval lay out by CCIM.

Perception (n)

The ability to see, hear or become aware of something through the senses or a way of understanding or regarding something or the ability to understand the true nature of something insight

Perpetual map: A

visual illustration of how customers perceive competing service.

Quality:

The degree to which a service satisfies customers by meeting their needs, wants and expectations..

Service quality:

Customers’ long term cognitive evaluation of organizations service quality.
Service quality Assessment:

User assessment based on their expectation versus perception or vice versa

Service Model:

An integrative statement that specifies the nature of the service concept.

Translation:

Important Palm manuscript is transcribed or copied.

Translation and publication:

Siddha medical scripts are translated from Tamil to English and outdated very old books reprinted along with annotation.

1.12 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The present thesis is organized into 7 chapters as detailed below:

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the subject of study and the general features of Siddha medical college libraries, resources, user study and significance of the study, and statement of the problem.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the medical systems in India, medical councils, medical colleges and affiliations.

Chapter 3 includes a review of literature relevant to this study relating to user expectations, user perceptions, service quality models, user satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

Chapter 4 deals with the methodology of the study including the research design, the statistical methods adopted for the analysis and inferences.
Chapter 5 provides the profile of the study area and its salient features.

Chapter 6 presents the analysis and interpretation of the data collected.

Chapter 7 provides summary and conclusion of the study and future directions.

The Bibliography contains a record of the literature used in this study, including both cited and un-cited literature.
REFERENCE


