

CHAPTER XI

Summary, Conclusions and Areas of Further Research

Library effectiveness has long been an elusive target for the library theorists. Difficulties in determining library effectiveness arise because of the fact that library service cannot be stated in terms of units and its value cannot be measured in terms of money. Often the criteria used for measuring library effectiveness are of a qualitative nature.

It has been shown in this study that while some aspects of library effectiveness defy measurement in quantitative terms, the total issue is however not immeasurable. It is possible to measure library effectiveness if the concept is neatly clarified. It has been shown in this study that in the literature published so far there has been ambiguity about the effectiveness concept itself. There appears to be general confusion about efficiency and effectiveness. The dividing line between the two is thin and they are often used interchangeably. This gives rise to ambiguity and, as a result, the criteria available in the literature are not always suitable. The clear distinction made in the present work between the two has helped to derive a set of criteria for measuring library effectiveness. Some of the criteria lend themselves to quantitative measurement, e.g. issue of books, use of reference service, etc. whereas others such as reading habit, change in behaviour, acceptance of library as a natural source of information do not, although, the latter are crucial in the effectiveness discussion. Those that can be measured have been

measured according to the method suggested in the model. Those that cannot be measured have been included in the instrument that is developed for measuring effectiveness and the evaluator has been advised to make his own judgement about the influence of these qualitative issues on others and give the score accordingly.

Library is a complex social system. The open system analysis offers the best possible explanation of social systems. The effectiveness model used in the present work has been thus based on the open system concept.

The necessity of the opinion survey and the testing of the model resorted to in this work has already been explained in Chapters IX and X. The survey and the test helped to validate three of the conclusions as stated below and made it clear that the model called for a few modifications for it to be truly workable.

They also brought to the fore some issues listed at the end of this chapter on which further research is needed.

This chapter deals with three issues, viz. conclusions, modifications in the model and areas of further research.

I. Conclusions

Main conclusions of the thesis can be summarised as follows :

a. The effectiveness level of a library depends upon its (library's) efficiency level. These two levels run parallel to each other. The higher the level of efficiency the higher will

be the level of effectiveness. Efficiency is thus the prerequisite of effectiveness. A library cannot be effective unless it is first efficient in the manner as defined in this study.

b. Throughput is a very crucial factor in the effectiveness phenomenon. It makes up for the deficiency in the input and increases the efficiency and the effectiveness of a library. On the other hand, if the throughputs are poor, even strong inputs cannot make a library effective.

c. Four facets, one in each component, emerge as most crucial. They are i) organisational set-up (inputs), ii) innovation (throughputs); iii) services (efficiency), and iv) participation of the library in the parent organisations' goals (effectiveness). The library survey validates these conclusions.

II. Modifications

As already stated, the effectiveness model as developed initially was subjected to the scrutiny of experts in the field. Additionally, it was also tested in 12 different libraries. The purpose of the former step was to arrive at a consensus in the matter of certain problems that defied solutions. The purpose of the test was to assess the viability of the model. The survey and the test demonstrated that the initial model which formed the basis of the whole investigation did contain certain snags. On the basis of the consensus arrived at in the survey and in consonance with the result of the

test the following modifications are required in order that the model may be viable.

i) The concept of core, peripheral and alien subjects that has been evolved in the context of balanced collection in the efficiency component of the model is applicable only in the case of special libraries. In the case of academic libraries like university, college and school, all subjects are equally important. However, for purpose of book selection (as also other library activities) Ashworth's concept of 'active band' of knowledge is more appropriate. At a time only certain areas in a given subject are active and the acquisition should concentrate on these active areas. Accordingly, in such cases, the questionnaire for the efficiency component has to be amended, rendering questions 12 to 20 redundant. To keep the value of the facet unchanged questions 4 to 11 are categorised as 'A'.

ii) The second modification relates to the quantitative dimension of updated collection. In place of suggested ratio of current acquisition to retrospective acquisition the ratio of 60:40 may be accepted.

iii) Third modification refers to the percentage of users. The suggested percentage of active users as equal to 50% of the registered users needs to be modified. No consensus on this issue evolved in the opinion survey. The results of the test does suggest a modification. The modification is that the percentage of daily users to registered users will decrease as the number of registered users rises. The decrease can be upto 10% mentioned

in the response received from the experts.

iv) The fourth modification relates to the frequency of visits of the individual users to the library. Although a majority of experts accepted the suggested criterion of 'once a week' there is a possibility of it going down to 'once a month' due to several factors such as the distance, conditions under which the researcher is working, and, more importantly, the level of technology in use in the library, for example, reprographic facility, communication system and computer terminals.

v) The fifth modification relates to the number of books issued every day. The suggested number of 20% of the potential users was agreed to, but as the number of users goes up it will come down proportionately to the lowest level of 10% suggested in the response.

vi) This modification relates to the number of books consulted in the library. It should be 10% of the registered users.

vii) This modification relates to reference queries. The number could proportionately go down to 5% as suggested in response as the number of users goes up.

viii) The ratio of references demanded from the library to those listed in a bibliography given to the users should be 1:4.

ix) The criterion that the number of books borrowed from the library and the number of books issued out on inter-library loan should be equal should be dropped (for reasons explained in Chapter IX).

x) Peculiarities of each library must be taken into consideration while applying the suggested standards. These peculiarities have been listed in the second chapter.

Apart from these modifications, it also must be reiterated here that the desire for the evaluation of the library must come from within the parent organisation and the library. This is emphasised because the participation of authorities in parent organisation, librarian, his staff and users must be whole-hearted. It is also necessary to note that the results would come out only if the full model is applied as it is an integrated model.

III. Areas of Further Research

While dealing with the problem of library effectiveness in all its ramifications, two areas for further research have been identified. It is necessary to explore them in order to provide a strong base to the concept of library effectiveness and its measurement.

The first is the role identification for the library. In spite of the vast amount of literature on libraries and librarianship this subject has still been far from clear. The subject is basically theoretical and research on this has to be interdisciplinary in nature. The participation of theoreticians as

well as practitioners at different levels in the fields of education, research and training as well as librarianship is needed. The research output should bring forth the role that should be assigned to the libraries in education at all levels.

The second area of research emerges from the first : the translation of the role into practical terms, viz. the standards. It is necessary to develop the standards for all types of libraries especially in developing societies. Attempts towards developing them have not been fruitful so far. Standards are necessary for assessing library effectiveness in quantitative terms. The available standards are not helpful in this regard. More research is thus needed for establishing the desirable quantitative norms of library service.