CHAPTER VII
ROUTING OF JOURNALS
7.1 Introduction

The libraries/information centres have to disseminate the newly published information in various forms of documents including journals. Routing of journals is one of the methods of dissemination of newly published information.\(^1\) This is the most elementary form of current awareness service. Walford says, "The majority of libraries circulate at least some of the periodicals they currently receive."\(^3\)

This type of current awareness service relates normally to journals. Of course, there is no hard and fast rule that the other types of documents should not be included in the routing. The practice in this method is usually to send issues of journals automatically to individual clients for perusal and return to the library. The British usage of the term for such current awareness service is 'circulation' whereas the Americans use the term 'periodicals routing'.\(^4\)

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In India, the phrase 'periodical routing', 'routing of journals' and 'circulation' are commonly used in library operations. The word 'circulation' and the phrase 'routing of journals' are used here synonymously.

7.2 Importance of Routing

Thornton queries the necessity of routing of journals. Many libraries think it as a time consuming and problematic method of current awareness services. This works well only in organisations with small physical sites and good internal mail system.

Routing of periodicals co-exists along with the other methods of current awareness services. It has its own role and is very significant even if the other types of current awareness services exist. As Pratap Lingam says, "Since this provides the facility for 'browsing', which no other service provides, the routing of periodicals is unique service." The current awareness service in the form of a bulletin will help the users in saving their time. The CA bulletin cannot act as substitutes for the users' scanning


of a few current issues of 'core' journals. In that case, routing of 'core' periodicals to the persons concerned is quite significant. Of course, there are problems in doing so, the main problems being, (a) the method of delivery, (b) use by other persons, and (c) prompt return of journals to the library.

7.3 Methods

There are different methods of routing of journals, which may vary from library to library. (1) The first method is: the journals to be routed are sent after a display for a specific period in the library. (2) The second method is: routing the journals immediately upon receipt and recording in the register or cardex about their receipt in the library. In this case it is possible to display the journals only after these are seen by all those to whom they are routed. (3) The third method is to route some and display some identified and selected journals and then reverse the procedure after a certain period. This is basically a matter of convenience of individual libraries. A library may follow one of the three methods mentioned above. These are alternative methods which may be employed for the purpose.

In all the three methods mentioned above, each periodical issue passes directly from one client to another.
Once it completes the circuit, it returns to the library after the last recipient has seen it.

Whitehall uses the phrase 'pass the parcel' method and 'ball game' technique to describe the methods of routing periodicals. In 'pass the parcel' method a slip is attached to the periodical issue and this is sent to the first client. Generally the user is requested through an instruction to pass on the periodical to the next person on the list attached.

In the 'ball game' method, after use each client returns the issue to the library. From the library, it is sent to the next person. This method consumes time because every time the issue has to return to the library and then sent to the next person.

Instead, a via-media would be to get the issue to the library after every few (five or six) clients have seen it. In such case the scientists have to be grouped. The grouping of persons has to be done on the basis of their physical location. The library has to know where the first group works and the next group and subsequent groups work. In the methods in which the issue returns to the library after each user or group has used it, transit time is involved. In the transit time the issue is unused. Apart from the non-use, the issue might get damaged.

A journal issue in circulation might be needed urgently by a person whose name is not on the list of persons who are to get it through circulation. When it is needed it may become difficult to trace it. Hence, a way out could be to display the journal issue for a definite period. This period could be seven to ten days. During the period when it is displayed, the clients would have seen it. If they find the particular issue essential they could be requested to write their names.

7.4 Items to be Circulated

There are some journals which need not be circulated. To cite an example, the popular science journal 'Nature', a weekly, which is a high frequency journal, and by the time it is circulated to all, the currency of the journal, itself is lost. There are certain items which are subscribed to by the clients. The clients may also be members of professional organisations and get the publications of such organisations. Sometimes the clients purchase certain items. In all such cases, it is unnecessary to circulate these journals.

7.4.1 Subjects of the Journals

The subjects covered by the journals constitute another consideration in the routing. For instance, a
person in a managerial position might not be interested in the technicalities of a thing, whereas an engineer, designer or the technical section head or scientist working within will be interested in the technicalities. The interest groups and their subject needs are studied by the individual libraries and then only the routing is started.

7.5 Persons to Whom the Journals are to be Circulated

While routing of journals the question arises, should they be routed to everyone or a selected few? This matter varies from library to library. Everyone agrees about routing to the top few people. In case of factories, the managers, managing directors, chief executives etc. get the journals. Generally, they are routed first to the persons having higher designations and then to their subordinates. This is a matter which varies from institution to institution.

As a librarian has to be selective in the circulation of items he also has to be selective in the persons to whom the journals are to be circulated. If the journal is circulated to the head of a section/division he carries the issue of the journal to his juniors out of interest and would disseminate the information. This might be a better and speedier method of dissemination. It would affect
adversely if the head/chief of a section/division does not part with it to others.

7.6 **Procedures for the grouping of users**

The users of library resources can be grouped into two or three well defined groups. The grouping has to be done on well defined norms as to why a particular individual is placed in a particular group. If the norms are followed there may not be any problems. Otherwise, the staff of a library would become a target for criticisms and might harm the image of the library.

7.6.1 **Priority groups**

It is reasonable to divide the users into priority groups, viz. first priority group, second priority group and third priority group. Amongst the total library users the groupings have to be based on the designations, place of work, the job done by the persons and the subject interest which is of prime importance. Once all these are studied they can be assigned numbers. The sectional/divisional head has to be assigned number 'one'. The individual who is number one naturally gets the journal first and the individual with the last number gets it last. From number two onwards, it would be difficult to assign numbers. The alphabetical
order could be one of the criteria for assigning numbers for individuals for journal routing. In such cases the later promotions, transfers from one section/division to another or transfer from one unit to another unit will create some problems.

### 7.6.2 Service Seniority

The second alternative would be to assign number to individuals within a group as per their service chronology. This method is applicable to all the three groups. Many users agree with the procedure of grouping on the basis of service seniority.

### 7.7 Number of persons to whom journals are to be circulated

It is equally essential to understand whether periodicals should be routed to everyone or a selected few. As discussed earlier in this chapter, it is always essential to be selective about the persons to whom the periodicals are to be circulated. Once we agree that we have to select the persons, the question arises regarding the number of persons. There are no definite standards for this. However, some persons have suggested the maximum number of persons for this purpose. To quote Whitehall, "Six people on a circulation list is perhaps a useful maximus." It is difficult to come to any

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8. Ibid. p 4.
definite conclusion or agree with this number. The number varies from one organisation to another. It depends on different factors. In the organisation where ten people are of managerial status they all have to get the journals through the routing method.

7.8 Routing in Research Organisations

Routing is difficult in research organisations. In research organisations and academic institutions every subject or discipline is equally important. The persons working there also have equal importance in almost all respects. Whom to route in such is problematic, hence routing is not possible.

7.9 Routing in Industries

Routing is possible and is being done in industrial organisations. Since the clientele here is very small, routing is not only possible but practical. Hence it is put into practice there.

7.10 Advantages of Routing of Journals

This is the only method of dissemination of information or certain category of library clients whose visit to the library is practically impossible. Many
shift managers etc. would be working in the plant and they would be very much benefited by routing of journals.

The journals have not only articles but some other items of interest to a scientific community. They contain news items and advertisements which many times are very important. In CAS rendered by the method of routing of journals the client is able to go through all such information. Hence it is more advantageous.

7.11 Karnataka Scene

Information from 105 organisations (90 research organisations and 15 industries) was obtained to know as to whether they route the journals. The table given below shows the results at a glance.

Table 2.2: Routing of journals in libraries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisations</th>
<th>Routes No.</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Does not Route No.</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research organisations</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>91.11</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industries</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>60.00</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>85</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>105</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above table shows that the research organisations as well as industries route the journals. The percentage of routing is found to be high in industries. The 12 out of 15 i.e. 80% of industries are rendering this type of current awareness service. Whereas, among the research organisations only 8(eight) out of 90 (ninety) i.e. only 8.89% are rendering the current awareness service by the method of routing the journals. The reasons for such a low percentage in research organisations is that, in this survey a large number of professional college libraries have been included. With their limited man power etc. they find routing impossible.

While describing the current awareness services in special libraries in Karnataka, Rajashekar says, "the practice of routing of periodicals with articles marked for the interested users is followed by nine libraries." As per the data collected for this study as many as 20 (twenty) organisations are routing the journals. This shows that there is an increase in the number of libraries who are rendering CAS by this method.

In research organisations, there are large number of potential users of information and their status/importance is equal as the use of the library is concerned. The number of journals received is also high in the universities and large research organisations like National Aeronautical Laboratory (NAL) etc. Hence, routing is not found popular among the research organisations in Karnataka.

The reason for the routing in 80% of the industries is the total number of potential users. The potential users in industries are designers, managers and heads of the divisions/sections. Their number is very small. The rest of the employees may be users of the library but they are not the potential users. Hence it is not necessary to route the journals to them. This is the reason why routing to other employees who are non-potential users is not done. Even in large industrial establishments like Indian Telephone Industries Ltd. (ITI) the number of managerial type of clients is quite handy and manageable. Hence the industries have this type of CA service in Karnataka.

In only one industry, i.e. Kirloskar Electricals Ltd., the library staff is assigned the duty of collecting the periodicals and carrying them to the next users. After
everyone has seen the journals the person in-charge brings them back to the library. In this type of practice the safety of the journal is guaranteed. If the journals are to pass from one client to another it is likely that the periodicals would get damaged in transit. Hence the organisation has spared the services of one person for this work.

7.11.1 Routing to partial Clients in Research Organisations

There are instances in research organisations where the periodicals are routed only to some clients. The library is justified in doing so. The journals are circulated to the clients working in the important sections of the organisation only. Of course, for that matter all the sections of an organisation are important for the overall working and success.

In the Indian Veterinary Research Institute (Southern Regional Centre), Bangalore the journals are circulated to the main laboratory where research on 'foot and mouth diseases' to animals is conducted. The remaining clients never objected to this type of circulation to some clients only. Of course, the 'foot and mouth diseases' is the main subject field in which the institution is very much interested.
7.11.2 Routing to Partial Clients in Industries

In industrial organisations the managers make policies and take decisions. The managerial clients of the library generally are a busy group. Hence this routing of journals is only to them.

Kirloskar Electricals Ltd., an industrial library routes the periodicals upto the managerial level. WIDIA India Ltd., a factory library routes to about 20 people who are managerial level persons. The NGEF, Factory library routes upto directors, general managers and deputy managers i.e., about ten persons in all. The Switching Division of Indian Telephone Industries Ltd., Bangalore routes only to one person i.e., to the general manager of Switching R & D.

The Hindustan Machine Tools Ltd. (HMT) Watch Factory, Bangalore route to the managers and regular users.

HMT Watch Factory library classifies its users into two categories: Regular and Occasional. In HMT Watch Factory library the occasional users are not covered by this service. This shows that those who need the information and those who are in search of information only are getting the journals. This is a sort of arbitrary decision to
Categorise some clients as regular users and some as occasional users, but the decision is based on an enquiry into the clients needs. The library justifies the circulation to a few users only.

7.11.3 Occasional Routing

There are institutions where the routing is not a regular procedure. There are reasons for this. Lack of adequate staff is one of the reason. The other reason is lack of a definite policy guidelines from the management. In the absence of such guidelines the library has to have its own guidelines. If the library also does not frame any guidelines for the service, the service will not have any regularity.

The National Tuberculosis Institute, Bangalore has been routing the periodicals occasionally. The occasional routing will give rise to a number of doubts like:

(a) whether the library receives only the material which is of the occasional importance; (b) whether the library thinks the other material which is not circulated is not that essential; and/or (c) whether the library can spare time for rendering this service only occasionally.
The shortage of library staff is one of the reasons for this. If the shortage of staff is the reason why is it that occasional routing service is rendered? It is out of interest and through extra effort put in by the library staff that the routing of journals is done occasionally. There are disadvantages of occasional routing. The client thinks that only that much of important information was received and that the other information received, was probably of less importance to the work of the institution.

The clients once habituated to this practice would feel uneasy if they did not get the periodicals at their tables.

Service of any type needs continuity. Irregular service might hurt the image of the library staff.

7.11.4 Discontinuations

There are discontinuations in routing of journals because of different reasons. The important reasons are discussed below.

7.11.4.1 Discontinuation of Routing Because of the
Non-return of Periodicals

The Central Power Research Institute (CPRI) used to route periodicals to the various officers of the institute.
The practice was in vogue up to 1985. The journals were not returned to the library properly. The non-return and/or late return of the journals to the library created some other problems. The library staff had to find out and trace the unreturned issues. Reminders used to be sent in some cases; whereas in some cases the library staff personally used to collect the issues. The library found the practice of routing a difficult one. In 1985, the practice of routing of periodicals was finally stopped.

7.11.4.3 Discontinuation of Routing Because of Introduction of Other Service

The librarians of some organisations feel that routing may not be necessary if the CA bulletin is being published. In the Indian Plywood Research Institute (IPRI) the practice of routing periodicals was in existence. It has been stopped since 1985. It is stopped when the title and contents service was introduced.

7.12 Reasons for Not Routing of the Journals

The librarians have given the following reasons/constraints for not rendering the current awareness service by the method of routing of journals.
Constrains/Reasons:

a) shortage of staff;
b) paucity of funds;
c) mere orientation towards teaching and less importance to research;
d) lack of infrastructure; and
e) lack of interest from management.

7.15 Disadvantages of Routing of Journals

The following are the disadvantages of routing of journals:

a) The issues of periodicals in circulation are not available for consultation in the library. This defeats the very purpose of the dissemination of the information through periodicals in the library.

b) Since the procedure is slow, the last recipient gets the journal very late, in which case the very purpose of routing journals for current awareness fails. The information will not be that current for the last one or two persons.

c) To overcome the non-availability of journals the library may subscribe to more than one copy. This would be an additional burden on the budget of the library and generally is not admissible.
d) Apart from the above, there is a risk of damage or loss.
e) Lastly, this involves extra staff which is a burden on the management.

7.14 Conclusion

The routing of journals depend largely on the co-operation of the users. If the users do not co-operate in returning the journals the CAS by this method has to be discontinued. Strauss et al. says, "Many librarians find that one of their most appreciated services is the routing of current issues of periodicals. This is not a simple procedure and for ultimate effectiveness it depends upon the conscientious co-operation of everyone on the routing lists."10

If the user think that the other user is equally in need of the document then the routing of journals works smooth; otherwise it becomes difficult.

To quote Pratap Lingam, "Routing of periodicals will depend on the structure of the organisation, the status of the user, perception of user about himself and other user's values, and above all the culture of the organisations."11

Routing of journals is a good way of reaching their contents to the persons who need to go through and choose for themselves whatever is required. In spite of the drawbacks explained, if staff is available, routing the journals is one of the best methods of disseminating current information. Routing of journals is not an alternative to other types of current awareness services. This is complementary to other methods of current awareness services.