CHAPTER XI

CONCLUSION
CHAPTER XI

CONCLUSION

After having made the study of current awareness services in science libraries in Karnataka, in the proceeding chapters it is desirable to summarise the same with a few suggestions in this chapter. It is anticipated that the conclusions drawn and suggestions made will contribute towards the development of better facilities of dissemination of information through current awareness services.

The current awareness service is commonly known as CAS. CAS means the service which is rendered by the libraries to inform their patrons about the latest developments in their subjects. This involves the reviewing of newly available information/documents relevant to the needs of an individual or group and inform the individuals or groups in the form of written notification if necessary. There are different methods of rendering CAS. The following are the widely used methods:

1. Preparing a current awareness publication (bulletin),
2. Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) service,
3. Routing of journals,
4. Subscribing to centralised and commercial services,
5. Circulating contents pages;
6. Telephoning the individuals,
7. Displaying of new arrivals.

Preparation of Current Awareness
(Information) Bulletins:

The current awareness bulletins (CA bulletins) are publications of the libraries or information centres/agencies. These bulletins contain lists of articles published in periodicals and/or other special kind of materials. These may contain abstracts in some cases. In others they may just list recent acquisitions. These are known as local documentation lists.

There are many comprehensive abstracting and indexing services. These include the articles etc. from periodicals. The current awareness publications also include the same things. But then should it be taken as duplication of something? This question has to be tackled carefully. For that matter any current awareness service is not meant to replace any abstracting and indexing service. Hence duplication to a limited extent is bound to be there. The
items which are covered in the current awareness publications would be necessarily included in the comprehensive abstracting and indexing services. Hence, inspite of a certain amount of limited duplication the publication of any current awareness bulletin is justified.

In science libraries more attention is given to the local current awareness bulletins than to those commercially published. The reason for this is that the contents of the local in-house CA bulletins are selected with the need of their clients of the organisation in mind. Hence the clients feel inclined to read the items included in them. This automatically places an additional burden on the library staff while selecting the items for inclusion for the CA bulletins.

The presentation of the entries or internal arrangement of CA bulletins is an important matter. There are a number of options/methods available to the compilers of the bulletins, as is evident in the divergent practices in the Indian current awareness bulletins including the samples collected from the libraries in Karnātaka.

The multiple publication of the local CA bulletins by different organisations is not in the interests of the
overall economy of a developing country where the material and human resources are scarce and hence to be conserved. Subjects like micro-biology would be of interest to bio-scientists, botanists, agriculturists, zoologists and medical scientists. Hence, multiple production of CA bulletins, atleast, in such fields can be avoided and done on co-operation.

Some CA bulletins give information similar if not identical. The preparation of CA bulletins involves money, time and human and non-human resources. If centralised preparation is undertaken, it can minimise the expenditure. Hence, the possibilities of centralisation of publication need to be explored.

As the standardisation is lacing in current awareness services, specially in the current awareness bulletins (publications) standardisation in all respects i.e. physical aspects and internal aspects of CA bulletins needs to be aimed at.

The total amount required for the preparation of local CA publications throughout India will be certainly more than the actual cost of national current awareness publications.
Without these local CA publications it is difficult to prepare a comprehensive national CA publication. Apart from this the local CA bulletins have their own importance and utility in the organisations concerned.

The staff of the libraries and the users have become aware of the value of CA bulletins as guides to latest information. Their utility as a means of saving the time of scientists and technologists is accepted. An additional function now being performed by the CA bulletins especially those published by the universities, is that they besides creating awareness are drawing attention of the college staff towards the new acquisitions and the existence of new information.

A few libraries and information centres have in the past issued current awareness publications to give better CA services to the scientific community of their respective organisations. But unfortunately somehow these publications lacked the support from both the users and the management. Now that the users are fully aware of the utility of such CA publications, research organisations need to be encouraged to sponsor such services. An atmosphere of such type is needed to be created for this purpose. Then only the scientific research will yield better fruits.
Though only 50 (fifty) bulletins were available for inspection by the investigator as a majority of the other institutions did not bring out any CA bulletin, this small sample of 50 (fifty) will hold a mirror to the type of CAS being offered in the research and industrial organisations in other parts of the country.

Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) Service:

Selective Dissemination of Information is known in short as SDI. SDI service is a practice of notifying the items/documents/information likely to be of interest to the individuals. This was done on the basis of manual methods for the last so many years. In this, for each client/user of the service the description of his interests called 'profile' is prepared. In the manual SDI method the key words of the subjects are written in profile proformas. These proformas are preserved. As and when the library receives new information, the SDI notifications are sent to the users.

SDI Service provides each subscriber with a periodic, tailored listing of new documents that have been entered in the library files and which are of interest to him. In such a system, each subscriber gets a different set of references. The references are based on interest profiles.
Of late, some information centres do not think of publishing information bulletins. They prefer to rely upon the SDI. If compared with the current awareness bulletin, SDI is a sound method. This brings titles/abstracts to the notice of the readers, which are of direct interest to them. The selection of abstracts is made on the basis of the user's profile and matched with the document profiles and then notified.

SDI service can be rendered very efficiently with the help of computers. In India, the Indian National Scientific Documentation Centre (INSDOC) renders computerised SDI service. The UGC Centre for Science Information at Bangalore renders such computerised SDI service. The National Information System for Science and Technology (NISSAT) has seven national information centres. These centres also render computerised SDI service.

Routing of Journals

Routing of periodicals to scientists co-exists along with methods of current awareness services. It has its own role and is a very significant practice. The current awareness service in the form of CA bulletin will help the
users in saving time. The bulletins cannot act as a substitute for the user's scanning of a few 'core' journals. If this point is considered routing a few 'Core' periodicals to the persons concerned, constitutes significant service. Of course there are problems in doing so, the main problem being the method of delivery, use by other persons and the safe return of journals to the library.

This is the only method of dissemination for certain categories of library clients whose visit to the library is practically impossible. Managers working in shift etc., would be very much benefited by the routing of journals.

The journals have not only articles but some other items of interest to the scientific community. They contain news items and informative advertisements, which many times are very important. The current awareness bulletin generally would not include such items. In journals Routing Method the client is able to go through all such information. Hence, it is more advantageous.

There are differences of opinion regarding CAS by this method. Compromises are made in some libraries.
Some circulate only technical journals; others only research journals; the remainders are just displayed. Others again display current periodicals for a few days so that everyone has an opportunity to see them prior to circulation.

The staff of some libraries think that documents should, if possible, go out to the user, rather than lie idle on shelves or display-racks.

Most of the research staff are always busy but regularly visit the library. A few are occupied with laboratory work. These 'few' may feel happy to use the periodicals in the free hour. For these 'few' periodicals can be routed.

The method of routing journals is not encouraged because of practical difficulties. If a library circulates the periodicals, it becomes a kind of remote controller. The habit of going through the periodicals in the library should be encouraged. The effort involved in the routing work is quite considerable. Moreover, a few sections of periodicals may be cut-out, pages/passage/paragraphs marked, covers may be torn, if the users neglect to put the issues sent in covers/envelopes.
The issues of periodicals in circulation are not available for consultation in the library. This defeats the very purpose of dissemination of the information through the library. Since the procedure is slow the last recipient gets the journal very late. In such cases the very purpose of routing journals for current awareness fails because it will not be that current for the last few readers. To overcome the non-availability of journals the library may subscribe to more than one copy, but this would impose additional financial burden.

Apart from the above defect there is the risk of damage or loss which is another disadvantage. Lastly, the practice calls for additional staff, which again is a burden on the management.

Subscribing to Centralised and Commercial CAS

Centralisation of CAS can be achieved in publication of CA bulletins and SDI services. As the centralisation of current awareness publication have to be very comprehensive, it is necessary to maintain a register of research in progress. This has to be updated regularly by getting the required information using the latest available communication techniques.
For centralised current awareness services in India the organisations like Indian National Scientific Documentation Centre (INSDOC), New Delhi and Defence Scientific Information and Documentation Centre (DESIDOC), New Delhi and Patent Information System (PIS), Nagpur can play a major role. The 'Insdoc List of Scientific Literature' ('Insdoc List') which has been discontinued was a very useful centralised CA publication. The publication of 'Insdoc List' should be revived.

There are a few commercial current awareness services available now in the world. The best example is of the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI), Philadelphia (U.S.A). The ISI publishes 'Current Contents' covering various subjects which are all well received by librarians and users.

'Current Contents' is published in the following subject groups by the ISI.

1. Agriculture, Biology and Environmental Sciences (A B & E S)
2. Arts and Humanities (A & H)
3. Clinical Medicine (C M)
4. Engineering, Technology & Applied Sciences (E T & A S)
5. Life Sciences (L S)
6. Physical, Chemical & Earth Sciences (P C & E S)
7. Social & Behavioural Sciences (S & B S)

The 'Current Contents' consists of facsimile copies of the contents pages of selected journals and a list of the journals covered along with an author index and address directory.

Circulating the Contents Pages

The contents pages of journals are circulated as a part of CAS to the scientific community. In this the scientists are invited to visit and read the journal if necessary. This gives the scientist a chance to scan himself for his needs. This procedure saves the library or information centre staff the burden of scanning for somebody. In preparing the CA bulletin the library staff scans for others. The scanning by library staff might restrict the subject coverage, whereas in contents page circulation the clients are provided with a wider coverage. The method of Circulating the contents pages is also speed. This is one of the services which can be rendered with minimum delay and maximum speed.
The disadvantage in contents page circulation is the scientists have to depend on the titles provided by the authors of articles, which sometimes may mislead them. This disadvantage is not there in CAS by CA bulletins wherein the articles are already read by the library staff and then the subject headings etc. are provided.

Other Methods of Current Awareness Service

Communicating to the scientists the receipt of recent information through a telephone call is a simple method of CAS. Telephoning creates problems because sometimes scientists may not be available on their seats. Displaying the new arrivals is also a method of rendering the current awareness service.

All the available methods of CAS are not to be thought of as alternatives. They are complementary and useful in different environments and different situations. Different situations might call for different methods of providing the service.

The choice of any suitable method for CAS depends on the varied factors like subject, population served, resources available, etc. This has to be studied in various environments. One method which suits a particular
environment might not suit another environment. It varies from library to library.

The effectiveness of the CAS depends not only on the methods chosen but also on the personality and enthusiasm of the staff of the library doing the work and their relations with the clients. This in turn depends on the overall organisation and administration of the library or the information centre.

The local or in-house current awareness services needs a constant evaluation at regular intervals of five years. There could a change in the five years in various aspects of current awareness services. The services now rendered through a bulletin are a matter of prestige, but care should be taken to see that it is really useful to the clients.

The CA services in vogue have been effective, but there is a need to see that the other organizations local and nearby are also benefited by these. The co-operation in all respects like compilation of CA bulletin at a central place by an agreed agency etc. would prove to be economically viable.
Subscribing to Computerised Services

Many people feel that the traditional methods of providing current awareness services are the effective if not cheaper. There is no doubt that the present trend is towards the use of external computerised services. Libraries would continue to benefit from the acquisition, display, circulation of current awareness publications prepared elsewhere in different organisations, commercial and non-commercial. This is true of many libraries, but particularly of small scientific and technical libraries.

The computerisation of various library services especially current awareness services both from libraries and commercial and non-commercial organisations has made a beginning and is now in the stage of rapid development. This cannot be ignored. The SDL services from commercial organisations are likely to become more popular. In such cases, the existing services are to be carefully evaluated and continued only if necessary.

The recent threat to the current awareness publications is the improved communication technology and acquisition of computer terminals/links by scientists and technologists.
at the places where they work. By this the in-house scanning of literature as the basis for current awareness service would be a duplication of what scientists and technologists can easily do for themselves, i.e. a literature search from the on-line data bases.

Computerisation would make it easy to build up an in-house data base of material stored for current awareness. This will be in addition to files of internal information. This would result in improving the access to information stored which is useful to an organisation in future. This could be indexed and searched in an appropriate manner.

As per our observation, the present status is quite a contrast to the past, that is there is an encouragement for the establishment of computers in libraries and information centres for CA services. The size of the information centre/library is not a major consideration. This is the concern of managements of the organisations.

It can be concluded that computerisation of current awareness services is going to be more beneficial and advantageous. In the survey undertaken, a majority of the
libraries which scan various forms of primary literature and produce an information or OA bulletin are planning to computerise the current awareness services.

**Local Networks**

The computerisation of current awareness services might be helpful in evolving a local network. In this local network the current information can be used by various libraries as soon as it is available in any library. It would mean immediate access to new information. This would simultaneously lead to wider dissemination of information. The future scientists will be able to find out and go through the current awareness file by accessing a computer as a part of their daily routine.

**Local \( \Rightarrow \) National SDI**

The SDI service at local level is more useful and effective. The national level SDI is possible by the formation of information systems/grids. For example, the engineering laboratories and organisations can form an 'Engineering Information System/Grid'. In a similar manner, the 'Bio-Information Grid,' the 'Medical Information Grid' etc. can be formed and SDI programmes aimed at these
The National Information System for Science and Technology (NISSAT) has to help in the formation of subjectwise information grids/systems.

**Users of CAS**

Users of both, i.e. industrial and research organisations are interested in current awareness services. The industries give preference to digested information. This is probably because of their commercial attitude. The industries are not ready to waste the time of their research staff. They can do more profitable work if their time is saved. Hence, they rely more on the condensed and digested recent information.

The documentalists have to play a major role in catering to the current information need of their clientele in applied science organisations especially in industries.

The following are the steps suggested before starting CAS in any science and technology library:

The first and foremost step is the defining of what the system is intended to do, i.e., functions and objectives of the system;

The second step is the laying out of the plan and procedures;
The third step is determining the requirements of the system to meet the objectives;

The fourth step is the assessment of the overall benefits by CA services;

After this, the system starts functioning. Once the system starts, the library cannot keep quite. Further at regular intervals they have to follow the following steps:

Modifications in the CAS if necessary; and
Continuance or the maintenance of the CA services.

The needs of the scientists being the same and the help being given by the librarians also being the same, this sample study will surely give us the correct picture of the current awareness services in science libraries in India.

Based on the investigation of current awareness services, the following suggestions are made:

Suggestions

1. A survey of the provisions of current awareness services should be conducted by some agencies/bodies like the NISSAT or INSDOC at regular intervals. This
helps to determine the extent, nature and quality of CA services.

2. The CA services have to be thoroughly re-organised so as to avoid/eliminate duplications.

3. The inadequacies of the CA services should be identified and suitable remedial modifications instituted.

4. The centralisation of CA services for the entire country in one place is difficult because of the vast area. The feasibility of centralisation on a zonal basis should be worked out.

5. There is scope for improvement of CA publications/bulletins. The improvement should be done in the physical get up, the printing, internal arrangement of entries etc.

6. The CA publications be standardised in all their internal and physical aspects.

7. In CA publications with abstracts, sometimes the abstracts are locally prepared. This consumes time and is unavoidable. It is suggested to use the author abstracts wherever available. It will be compulsory to prepare abstracts locally in a few cases where the authors do not provides abstracts.
8. The circulation of local CA publications has to be widened. Every CA publication should invariably be sent to the libraries of the region. This would help a lot in knowing the developments in the related areas.

9. UGC has already established the Centre for Science Information for rendering SDI service in a limited range of subjects. It is suggested that all subjects of science be covered in the scheme immediately.

10. A separate UGC Centre for Applied Science Information be established because of the fact that a large number of applied science departments are being opened in the universities.

11. SDI services rendered by INSDOC should cover the remaining scientific subjects, like Geology, Mathematics, Bio-Sciences etc.

12. The periodicity of SDI notifications should be made fortnightly.

13. There should be a check up of the correctness of the scientists' profiles regularly.

14. Regularity in SDI service should be maintained.

15. Some more National Information Centres (Sectoral
Centres) of NISSAT should be established. Once the
National Information Centres are established in various
subjects, the CA services will improve.

16. The local in-house computerised data bases should be
    created/built for the purpose of CA services.

17. A national net-work/grid should be established for
    Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) service
    to the scientists and technologists working in various
    research establishments, universities and industries.

18. National Information Policy should have a separate
    section on Scientific and Technological Information
    Policy.

**Future of Current Awareness**

The journey through any intellectual process cannot
stop until time itself stops or intellect ceases to exist.
The library profession was developed after 1876 in many
respects. The pursuit of this during last 110 years has
brought the current awareness services from manual operations
to the stage of computerisation.

The indications are that the scientist may obtain
the latest information either sitting in a laboratory or
sitting at home through his own computer.
Areas for Further Research to be done

1) Possibilities of providing SDI services using data bases.

2) Possible improvements in back-up services.