Chapter - IV

OVERVIEW OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES AS SERVICE SECTOR
4.1 Introduction:

In modern societies, every human activity is organized through institutions. Every major social task, whether economic performance or health care, education or research, business or industry is institutionalized. The protection of the environment or defense is today invariably entrusted to institutions and organizations. As members of the society, every human being is having some kinds of needs. Education is perhaps the most important among them, for it helps to mould a well informed, knowledgeable and responsible citizen who alone will be able to contribute to progress and advancement.

Then there is the goal of the economic well being of society. Activities towards this end have to be sustained by technological developments brought about by research and the enormous amount of information it makes available to us. It is for the purpose of discharging this important responsibility that society has, over a long period of its existence, founded various institutions. Educational institutions like schools, colleges and universities, research institutions, cultural institutions, institutions of fine arts and recreation, business and industrial
establishments and a host of others are some examples of such social institutions. The library is also one such institution. But, unlike the other institutions each of which concentrates on one or a few of the needs of society, the library is able to serve almost all its needs.

Earliest recorded documents reveal that, the library has been considered as the most ancient, social and cultural institution in existence. For example, the clay tablets and waxed wood of Mari, the Royal Library of Assurbanipal, the papyrus rolls of Egypt and the codices of Pergamo, palm leaves of India were organized and preserved because these societies needed to allocate and register information for the maintenance of the state, the conversation and communication of religious belief, the practice of commerce, education and the transmission of culture to new generations, among other functions.

Libraries have body of information recorded on some type of medium and that information could be retrieved when needed. A society stagnates if it is not prepared for the reception and generation of new knowledge. "A society is a duality of action and thought, tied by a system of communications which is, in turn, a duality of mechanisms and messages"(1). When considering that libraries have as part of their principle objectives, the purpose of organizing and disseminating printed
knowledge in any kind of medium, with the intension of affecting the
generation of new knowledge, their role will have repercussions in the economic and social context of any country.

Library and information services are fundamental to the goals of creating, disseminating, optimum utilizing and preserving knowledge. They are instrumental in transforming an unequal society into a democratic, progressive knowledge society. Developments in Information Communication Technology (ICT) have enabled libraries to provide wide public access to all.

Among various services which are provided by the educational institutions, the high and customized library facility plays vital services in the institution. Library is primarily a basic information supplying source, place, physical evidence, people (2) and in the process play a vital role in satisfying the customer's demand. The library functions integrate with the primary tasks of university i.e. education and research by transferring the knowledge through teachers to students and provision of information to users.

The academic library has been described as the "heart" of the learning community, providing a place for students and faculty to do their research and advance their knowledge. The
librarians and library staff provide numerous services to these users, addressing their diverse needs, characteristics, and interests. The roles of library professionals is changing and are facing greater competition from many sources like bookstores and information from publishers and vendors who try to provide some of the same services faster and more efficiently.

The conventional functions of libraries i.e. to collect, process, disseminate, store and retrieve information are very much challenged in the era of knowledge and information explosion. The role of library is changing to provide competitive advantage to its users. The success of library and information centre depends upon their ability to utilize information/knowledge of its staff to serve the user community. The new role of librarian in the knowledge society needs to be as a learning and knowledge centre for their users. As a learning organization, libraries should provide a strong platform in sharing the knowledge. The exponential growth in human knowledge in a variety of formats, libraries need to develop their resources, access and sharing strategies from printed to electronic and digital resources. Restricted by limited funding, technology, staff and space, libraries must carefully analyze the needs of their users and develop strategies to meet the needs to the potential users.
4.2 Library: An Integral Part of Education:

The library and information sector is a very important part of the education industry. The sector's focus is to enable people to connect with the world of information, to interact with information, and to utilize information in all aspects of their lives. The library and information sector enables information access, communication and preservation by the development and implementation of policies, standards, networks, products and services. The sector aims to be both dependable and responsive to a wide diversity of information needs. The role of librarians is not only to identify and acquire highly relevant information, but to add value to that information by making it more useable and to assist users to develop the capabilities to become learners for all time.

Library and information services deal with the integrated applications of professionally processing print and non-print, formal and informal, bibliographic and full text, core and related to information services. They have to judged from the parameters of like;

- **Time:** Timely provision of right information in right user, which can be used for its maximum utility.
- **Cost:** Information, professional manpower and infrastructure are costly and hence cost effective approaches should be practiced.
- **Availability:** Library collection can make or mar the library. Strong and weakness of the collection can be
evaluated by the user demand and it should be incorporated in future acquisition policy, and

- **Extensibility**: how the library is influenced by the current changes in information generation to its usage? How the library is using new technological advances in extending its services? Based on the classification of service based various variables by the marketing researchers library service is facilitating service to the core service of University. On the basis of tangibility, library services are considered as services linked to tangible goods where knowledge resources are used to provide the services. Primary, secondary and tertiary resources are used to deliver the services. Considering the people based classification of services, library services are people-based services with high contact services where services are given to the members in their presence in its conventional role played in an organization. But technological advances have blurred the aspect of presence of member to have services like online database, OPAC, etc which can be remotely used by the user.

Expertise is also used to classify the services like professional and non-professional. Professional services understood by certain common factors; such as;

- Professional services providers are highly trained and knowledgeable in complex specialist are of expertise.
- They will hold qualifications and accreditation within their field of expertise, entry in for the field is not possible without the appropriated credentials.
- Typically, membership of professional society or governing body is also required.
- Professional services are sold to individual clients – either business or private – on confidential basis
- The service is tailored to meet client’s needs.

Based on the above factors definitely library services are professional services where the library professionals have to deal with the very dynamic, ever growing and tacit and explicit knowledge to provide the services.

Being heart of the universities or any education institutions the library services are not getting the due respect actually they have to have. A user might need information in the course of their work, has a staffed library available to them but do not use it, there may be chances of under-use or sub-optimal use, infrequent, superficial or inefficient use of the library services. Users are not accustomed to asking for information. There are many reasons for non-use of library

- Users are not aware of what is available
- Underestimation of the service provided
- inefficiency of the parent organization in providing the proper infrastructure
• Personal behavior problems such as ego, status which hinders the use of information.

The other side of the problem may be due to the Informational professionals
• Survival fears; if they don't use us they many decide they don't need us
• Inability to handle the queries the users
• No proper guidance to use the information resources to the users
• Behavioral problems

Andaleeb and Simmonds (3) identified several factors that influenced user satisfaction; these factors included responsiveness, competence and assurance (which translated to demeanor), tangibles, and resources. However, they did not investigate whether quality services leads to increased usage of the library itself. This study examines whether, and the extent to which, service quality factors along with resources and user characteristics affect library usage.

4.3 Library: A Service Point:

Library, primarily basics information supplying source, place, physical evidence, people and process plays a vital role in satisfying the customer's demand. In early years the strength of the library was based on the number of collections, volumes and number of library users. These traditional and conventional
parameters are not useful measures to understand the quality of better services. Transition from library as a storehouse of books to the information centre as the information processor-cum provider, there has emerged a new breed of information specialists, aiming at fulfilling the information needs of users in a multi-disciplinary information environment. Their mission is to produce a constant flow of value-added, customized information services. The role of the librarian has evolved to meet the demands of both the technology revolution and the information revolution with the motto "just in time" and "just for you". Hence new methods and models have been evolved to determine the success of libraries and satisfy the customer's needs.

Bruce Thompson and Colleen Cook (4) report their findings of an overarching construct of library service quality as well as the four dimensions that define the construct: affect of service, reliability, access to information, and library as place. Staff demeanor, knowledge, and responsiveness seem to be as important in the library sector as they are in business, as are the various aspects of the reliable performance of library service. Comprehensive collection remain important, and faculty and students often fault their libraries for the absent of in-place collections. Increasingly, there emerges an expectation of ubiquitous access to information, regardless of format or mode of delivery. As a place, the physical library still serves many clients in a myriad of practical fashions while it diminished in centrality for others (5). With the above background, Parasuraman,
Zeithmal and Bery (6) made the study to find out the implications of the SERQUAL application in the educational institution library with the following factors

- **Empathy with communication and assurance**: indicates guidance to how to access, evaluate and use information, employees who understand the needs of their users.

- **Access of information sources from library** is associated with library orientation / instruction sessions, the electronic information resources needed by the users, dependability in handling user's service problems, making electronic resources accessible.

- **Reliability**: on library services and personnel dealt with Print and electronic resources that users require for their work, providing direction to self-navigate the library, library personnel who deal with users in a caring fashion, a gateway to study for, modern equipment to facilitate the easy access.

- **Understanding and / knowing the customer**: readiness to respond to user's questions, a comfortable and inviting location, community space for group learning and discussion, making information easily accessible for independent use, making aware of library resources and services.

- **Tangibles dimension** of library quality services reveals physical evidence and service hours of the library. It includes library space that inspires study and learning. Quiet space for individual activities and convenient service hours.
'Beauty' lies in the eye of the beholder is the adage, squeal to this it can be said that 'Quality' lies in the mind of the customer. This emphasizes that the quality of service is not same for all the users and service organizations cannot generalize the services packages to all the users. In such circumstances dissatisfaction or discrepancy between expectation and performance tend to arise. Overall satisfaction is determined by combining the satisfaction and dissatisfaction outcomes of various attributes of services, such as intangibility, heterogeneity, perishability etc. Since the users satisfaction is based on the physical (tangible) and interaction with service provider, there should be always a service recovery strategies.

4.4 User of Library and Information Services:

Client, reader, patron, visitor, customer are synonymously referred to indicate the person who is using LIS in one or the other way. Particular words may be used in certain instance to convey a specific approach or environment. Like 'user-oriented' and 'user-accountable' provider to emphasize that the LIS provides more services than only providing books for reference. Users are diverse in nature depending on the institutional set up. These different users and user groups use different services and their needs and expectation change over time.

Line (7) reflected the traditional view that public libraries have most diverse range of users, with academic and special libraries having more closely determined user groups. Public
libraries include children and young people, students, the elderly, local businesses, local government officers, etc. - potentially, anyone in community. The population served by public libraries is heterogeneous. These different users and user groups use different services, and their needs and expectation change over time. Both academic and special libraries have a growing range of user groups, and libraries exist to serve their users. Based on the libraries and their users, the perspective and view of the library varies.

Users' perspective is directly influenced by their expectations of LIS, the demands they make and how well LIS supply the required service or product. Thebridge, Nankivell and Matthews (8) identified six key reason as crucial to the users choice of library to visit;

- Where the library is - location, transport routes to it, parking facilities, proximity to home, work or place of study.
- The resources within the library - books, journals, IT facilities, and study space - and their quality, range and appropriateness.
- When the library is open - library hours
- Who staffs the library - their knowledge, helpfulness and approachability
- How the resources within the library are organized - catalogues, classification systems, signposting, etc.
• The library environment - how comfortable people find it, the lighting and heating, and provision of such facilities as toilets, phones and a cafe.

With the changing time perception of LIS also keeps on changing. Those must be seen in the context of the world around us and other sources of information or leisure providers, and what can be expected from them, i.e. alternatives or competitors. This situation should also be considered in the light of the often expressed, negative stereotypical image of the librarian.

4.5 Use of Academic Library Services:

The use of academic libraries is influenced most by a user's perceived familiarity with the library and its resources; those who are more familiar with the library are more likely to use academic libraries. If library usage is to be increased, it is important that libraries find ways to familiarize users with the library. There is also the need for librarians to make sure that users know how to use library resources not only in the confines of the library building, but even when they access the resources remotely. Even with the basic library instruction, many users find it difficult to comprehend and manipulate the many complexities of information research. Many instruction librarians are aware of how easily users forget what is shown to them after the basic library instruction class. Whatever is taught to users in orientation or course-related instruction sessions has to be reinforced with other effective search techniques to make it easier.
for them to utilize those techniques when they are working independently away from the library environment.

Emphasis on instruction and knowledge on how to use these resources can help to increase library usage and also to enable them to evaluate more effectively the resources they find when they do research. The very nature of the users that everything is found on Web can be changed by librarians by teaching users how to learn to distinguish between materials found on the Internet using typical search engines and materials which libraries have purchased from vendors. Instructions on how to critically evaluate both print and electronic resources would also help users appreciate the multitude of sources.

Perceived quality of the library’s resources is a key variable explaining library usage. Because academic library users frequent their visit to libraries to find solutions to their academic problems and needs, it is imperative that libraries have the right kinds of resources available; otherwise, users will go somewhere else. Resources are more important than the size of the library’s collection.

4.6 Monitoring the Services:

Librarians must monitor the needs of the academic environment by remaining networked into their academic institution’s curriculum, resource needs of teachers, student
preference for how needed information is packaged and related administrative use of information. By focusing on needed resources and delivering what user want, librarians can play a proactive role by developing a variety of resource access options for the users that meet cost and efficacy criteria.

Library usage is influenced by tangibles – a clean and visually appealing library. Clearly, the physical appearance of the library must be made appealing to bring users to the facilities. Visual appeal can be achieved by designers and refurbishes about architectural layout, color tones, amenities.

**LIS Service Values:**

The production of formal statements of the beliefs or principles that underpin organizational or professional philosophies has become more common recently and this is reflected in the prominence now given to values in many library plans. Values statements can be seen as part of the framework that guides discretionary decision-making along with policy, vision and direction statements. Statements of service values can be particularly useful at times of rapid change in reassuring people that underlying values remain constant even though the service around them is changing radically. Such statements can also be used to support cultural change by asserting new values seen as critical to success in the future, such as customer service or user focus.
Libraries have traditionally concentrated in a longer phrase or professional mission, such as the preservation of our cultural heritage, service to the community, promotion of information literacy and support for intellectual freedom, but they have often also incorporated into their statements references to more general humanistic values, such as democracy, diversity, equity, integrity, literacy and privacy. Contemporary examples still reflect these important concerns but tend to give more prominence to modes of working and styles of delivery felt necessary for success in the changing environment around us, notably collaboration and partnership, flexibility and responsiveness, initiative and innovation. The mission statement of library is 'The Library is driven by community needs' – and reinforces its commitment to customer service in two more of the ten points. The values cover collaboration with community groups and sensitivity to community values as well as an explicit commitment to customer service. 'Quality customer service is the hallmark of LIS'.

Libraries must not only give consumers what they want, but surprise them by giving them some added value that they did not expect. The concept of adding value to and through services is not easy. There is not direct and automatic cause and effect between work performed and value added. Value addition occurs at the end of a process when the total steps, activities, tasks and resources produce an output which the user judges as value added service. It means providing real benefits from the consumer's and their point of view. Value addition also means
that the service is valuable in relation to direct user costs. The value of a specific service must be judged in relationship to the user's personal time and effort spent.

4.7 Satisfaction of User Needs:

Libraries are in the business of satisfying the user's information and documents needs, and this means taking a proactive role in identifying and effectively using proven new technologies that can deliver value added services. Value can be added with or without the use of technology, as it is rightly said that the use technology is a means to provide the service but not an end. Library service many be expanded by adding more convenient hours.

Saving user's time is the fastest growing added value in importance, since every person has a limited fixed amount of time and attention. Value can be added in the form of precision, reliability, accuracy and consistency - i.e. quality. This is the heart of quality. Users expect precise accurate targeted services. Quality is perhaps the most important aspect of adding value in a service. Generally libraries design & provide one service for all. But future library service will have concentrate on more customized and sometimes personalized services. Value can also be added by making services easier to use, requiring both less effort and knowledge. Apart from the above factors, the distance to the library, ample of parking, use of good signage also help to attract the users to the library. The library should weed out
irrelevant material and library should have alternative document formats to suit a particular user's need. For instance, providing audio books rather than printed book enables users to capture time already chosen for one activity and use it simultaneously for other activities.

4.8 Innovativeness in Library Service:

Innovative implies action, not just conceiving new ideas. Creativity is pre-requisite to innovation. Innovation is the transformation of creative ideas into useful applications. Innovation process involves five stages

- Diagnostic Planning – to rationally decide about the product design, market strategy, financial need, etc.
- Mobilizing Resources – to mobilize adequate resources like land, labour, machine, material, capital, etc.
- Execution – to implement plan of action
- Commercial Application – to provide value to customers, reward of employees, revenues for investors, satisfaction for founder
- Feedback – a regular monitoring of the progress

The implementation of Innovative services in the libraries pave the way for following benefits:

- Better work culture
- Better pay and perks for the individual working
- Accumulation of assets
• Employment generation
• Independence in decision making
• Fulfillment (psychological satisfaction)
• Welfare of the society

In the changing scenario Library Service sector is no more exception and is bound to face competition at the global level. Professionals are needed to initiate creative ideas to establish innovativeness to provide quality library and information services. With this library service can definitely establish themselves as one of profitable service sectors.

4.9 Conclusion:

A successful user customer-service culture is not something that can be designed and built in the way that one can plan and construct a new building or a computer system, but the tools and techniques of strategic management can be used to facilitate cultural change or to strengthen an established culture. Library and information managers need to ensure that their policies and strategies reflect a culture of real customer service. The key to achieving this is to build user perspectives into your planning processes, through a combination of direct personal engagement and indirect ‘proxy’ involvement via frontline staff, and to make your service responsive to changing needs by making strategic planning a continuous process that is also integrated with the wider internal and external policy context.
Serving the community involves both responsiveness and leadership: The library must not only respond to patron demand but also anticipate patron needs for new materials, resources and services. It regularly monitors patron satisfaction and analyses community needs through data provided by the computer system, surveys, and conversations with focus groups. Library of the future means a building that is comfortable with amenities that welcome patrons of all ages. This could include seating that invites relaxation, a café, quiet areas, group work areas, a teen lounge, and more it requires materials, services, programmes, policies, and dedicated dynamic staff members. It means more personalized customer services that consider individual needs. Making accessible the world's intellectual, scientific and cultural heritage makes library and its great collections on everyone's virtual book shelf at work, at school, at home.
4.10 References:


(5) Ganesan, P. ‘Services quality dimensions: application of SERQUAL in educational institution library’ in International Conference on Services Management, March 11-12, 2005 New Delhi, organized by Institute for International Management and Technology, Gurgaon, 2005.

