

A PROGRAMMES APPROACH TO EXPLOITING THE RESOURCES OF AN ACADEMIC LIBRARY

ABSTRACT: The objective of librarianship is getting books and other library resources and thereafter making them available to satisfy peoples or users' needs. As costs of books rise, their effective use by clients becomes increasingly important. This write-up is a reference text to all academic library staff. The aim is to enable them have a fuller understanding of the organisation behind the effective exploitation, while making feasible effort to ensure that at the end of the day, their clientele go home satisfied with the services they got.

INTRODUCTION

The prime function of a university library is to contribute towards undergraduate and postgraduate study programmes as well as the research programmes of the institution. This, however, is not its exclusive function. A university is generally supported by public funds and its libraries represent a substantial part of the total library resources of a nation.

It is therefore incumbent on the university library that these resources should be made available to everyone. The resources of any university library are such that can take adequate care of the undergraduate, post-graduate and faculty members involved in that level of study as well as resident or visiting research specialist.¹ (1968).

In a write-up titled 'Standards for University Libraries', edited by Beverly Lynch, a university library must readily make available its collection to authorized clientele for adequate use. 'Most items in the library's collection should be readily available for consultation in the library and should be available to authorized clientele within the context of the library's purpose, goals and objectives'² (1987).

The thrust of this paper, therefore, is based on physical accessibility of the library's resources, which actually refers to the location of the collections. It is an incontrovertible fact that the more accessible materials are made within a particular library, the more likely that they will be used. Harris³ (1966) has shown how the physical location of portions of a collection can influence the use of materials in an academic library.

It is also clear that where library use instructions are properly organised, users find it easy and interesting to use such a library. Under such a condition, the library could claim to be making a worthwhile effort towards achieving the objective for which it was established.

DEFINITIONS:

For the purpose of this paper, it is necessary to explain the meanings of the two operative words of the topic which are 'exploiting' and 'resources':

Library resources⁴ (1984) for the purpose of this paper include the reading rooms, study carrels, book stock (books, pamphlets, periodicals, reports and other documents in print form or microfilm, audio-visual materials (gramophone records, tape

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recordings, films, filmstrips and slides) the services (inter-loan, photocopying, translation, printing etc).

The term also includes the facilities which result from the training and experience of the library staff. Indeed, the co-operation and goodwill of the teaching staff is crucial to the success of the entire exploitation plan.

Exploitation⁵ (1983) in this context could be described as 'the performance of library activities that direct the flow of books and information from the library shelves to the reader'. A system of exploitation involves changes in established library way of doing things: first, that the principles behind the organisation of a library are simple and that these principles can be easily understood by readers if suitable guiding and instruction are provided. Much of such guiding and instruction can be given by automatic or self-service means.

Secondly, that almost every library activity includes an exploitation element, e.g. librarians agree on the indispensability of a *catalogue*⁶ (1967) in a library; but to exploit information in the catalogue effectively, it is necessary to provide clearly printed *dewey labels* a sufficient number of guide cards; *contents* information indicating what type of information will be found in each part of the catalogue; an instruction panel, explaining the principles of the classification scheme in use and how to find a specific title, or information on a required subject.

Finally, such outline instruction may be amplified by tape recorded information accompanied with charts or slides.

WHAT IS THE PROGRAMME ABOUT?

What elements are involved in the programme? Library users seek answers to three basic questions:

- (i) what has a library which is useful to me now?
- (ii) where can I obtain this document, information or service?
- (iii) how effectively can I use this

document, information or service when found?

The exploitation programme is therefore designed, first, to answer these questions. It is important to recall that information in a library falls into two categories. The first kind is important for its own sake, that which is contained in books, periodicals reports, etc., which form the bulk of the library bookstock.

The second is concerned with the exploitation of the information in the first category, i.e. the catalogue, bibliographies indexes, abstracts, reviews of progress, published subject guides and the library guides. In an academic library the second group of publication is of particular importance⁷ (1980).

PROGRAMME APPROACH TO GUIDING

To answer the reader three questions above, permanent visual information is most effective. Colour codes may be used to enhance easy recognition in the guiding plan. The entire library is regarded as an area with series of geographical divisions, with each division of being associated with a particular colour.

TYPE OF PERMANENT VISUAL INFORMATION

- (i) Contents information is aimed at making the readers aware of what the library has or what sections are in the library. This has a profound attraction for any user. Thus, "Departments/sections in the library", 'sections or sub-sections in Department/section', Abstracts or periodicals filed in particular section for shelving.
- (ii) Instruction Panels, meaning brief instructions, easy to read at a distance, for using the catalogue and classification, microfilm readers, photocopies, etc.,
- (iii) Publicity and public relations information, e.g. "Change-over from Dewey to Library of Congress", or 'Opening hours extension'. This type of information could be amplified in a leaflet. A bold sign board could be used and kept in a lobby, visible and clear.
- (iv) Labelling on shelves and drawers which is clear and easily read at a distance. The essence of labelling is that a great deal of time is saved for library staff as well as for readers. This kind of information which is always available to all users of the library should at all cost be updated as and when due.

INFORMATION STATIONS

Information stations can be effectively utilised

by readers at any time without the aid of library staff. See the following examples:

HUMANITIES
SOCIAL SCIENCES
APPLIED SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENTS

Using Indexing/abstracting publications, using relevant services as examples. (Chemical abstracts, Psychological abstracts, Science Citation index, etc.).

LOCATION INFORMATION

The library classification and the catalogue. This is perhaps the most useful substitute for a missed lecture in class instruction or as an aid for the reader's adviser. This type of aid should be very close to relevant books or facilities.

LIBRARY GUIDES

Library literature has perhaps five main functions:

- (i) To establish the library's image and develop good public relations. Thus a good library should have brief and well presented information.
- (ii) To make readers aware of the facilities of the library.
- (iii) To act as supplement to instructions in use in the library - books and services.
- (iv) To bring to readers new developments, additions to library resources, etc.
- (v) To make the readers know of the library's administrative details, loan arrangements and library rules.

LIBRARY LITERATURE USED IN A TYPICAL AFRICAN UNIVERSITY.

SINGLE SHEET GUIDE:

- (i) This is aimed at explaining to users the principles behind the organisation of the library and to make readers aware of the more important library facilities and the rules for using them. This guide is freely distributed to all library users, especially during library tours.

(ii) GUIDE TO USING PERIODICALS

The serials section must have a manual which should bear all that a user wants to know about the use of the periodicals. In advanced countries of the world, these are recorded in computer prepared union lists, copies of which are strategically placed for use of library users.

In this country, Kardex or Kalamazoo is used for recording purposes. The aim is to find out what issue has been received and what issue has not been received. This will surely help in stock taking and getting claim for what is not sent.

(iii) HOW TO FIND OUT

A guide to the use of library classification, the library catalogue, general bibliographies, indexing/abstraction publications, reviews of progress series. The aim is to list major bibliographic aids available in the library and to make the readers know how to find and use each.

(iv) SUBJECT BIBLIOGRAPHIES

A large number of these aids need to be prepared in specific subject areas. These tools could be used in relevant class instruction, as an aid for reader's advice and as library liaison with teaching staff.

(v) INFORMATION LEAFLETS

This is a short term information to readers explaining development and changes in a library's resources and the details of routine and services. These leaflets are supposed to be left on the main, counter or enquiry desk and must be discarded when they become outdated.

CLASS INSTRUCTION

In addition to introduction tours, library instructions as pointed out by Lubans⁸ (1974) is undertaken as an integral part of the teaching programme. This instruction is given early in a student's career. The students get the experience in finding and using information which will lead to a habit of library use as part of his education programme.

Ideally, this should be at appropriate intervals during the students' course and should sometimes be based on the subjects which they are studying. Library instruction as part of the preparation for teaching practice in case of students majoring in Education should be based on or around a suitable subject and should follow the teaching approach adopted at the university or college.

LIBRARY AND TEACHING STAFF

As earlier enunciated, the chief purpose of the library is to aid the teaching and learning programme⁹ (1978). The more closely the library is integrated

into the teaching arrangements, the more effective is its role. It must be made clear here that the co-operation and the good will of the academic staff is essential to the success of the exploitation programme. The teaching staff in a university use the library to pursue information of personal interest to them, and to prepare their course lectures for the students.

READING LISTS

Lists prepared by academic departments often have incomplete bibliographical details. Thus such information are often checked by library staff before printing and location marks can be added. This arrangement facilitates easy identification of books, needed by the library, enables lecturers to know that such books would be in the library and also leads students to go to the shelves or the reserved book collection section for any text they may require.

RESERVED BOOK COLLECTION

One important function of liaison is to find out the titles for which there will be special demand because of teaching need. Sometimes, the demand will last for a short period. It may be necessary to obtain extra copies of a book. Photo-copies of reports, articles may be needed.

It is advantageous to have a restricted loan collection because students and lecturers are sure that at least one copy of a recommended text will be in the library and that the library will be less likely to receive requests for books which are out or not readily available.

PROJECTS

It is important to know before hand any proposed project by students which would involve library use. Library class instruction arrangement therefore becomes very important and the library staff must have clear understanding of it to succeed. The following are the aims:

To make the teaching staff know the facilities available in the library and to make the teacher develop confidence in the library, to bring the users and library closer and so involve both in teaching programme and to save the teachers, student, and library staff time.

On the whole, academic library, like other libraries, should be regarded as a major teaching medium¹¹ (1969). Library liaison represents the most effective way of showing teachers how libraries can fit into the teaching programme and it is also an effective channel for the dissemination of library literature to other clients.

Today, it is very common to find Universities or Colleges of Education in Nigeria organising vacation courses, specially arranged for workers who are engaged in full time job. This is also an avenue for

the library to work with the academic to make the library known to all those concerned, an essential aim of the exploitation plan.

CONCLUSION

The exploitation programme is geared towards co-ordinating all elements associated with all aspects of library activity, with a view to ensuring maximum use of library materials. It is quite necessary to restate the fact that the success of such a programme depends on the personal contact between readers and the library staff.

The essence of the printed guide will be more obvious if its purpose and content is briefly explained to the reader. The information stations can only be used mostly at the suggestion of library staff. It is hoped that if the plan for better use of an academic library as contained in this paper is properly executed, better services to the clientele which is the utmost objective will be easily achievable.

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