

Current Awareness Service and Selective Dissemination of Information from Periodical Literature

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The library profession has been passing through identity crisis which even today could not establish itself as fully recognised profession. The main reason for this state of affairs could be poor perception of users about Library and its services. In fact, the Library profession has been trying in vain to mould the users to fit in its own system, taking little account of real information needs of user. Bellardo and Waldhart (i) have stated that 'patron receptivity to, and demand for, and information product is much more likely to be positive if the design and introduction of that product or services is preceded by a careful analysis of needs and wants of users. This lack of coordination between users and the Library, resulted in poor image of Library services. Moreover; service orientation was also not given due consideration. Unless library relates to service philosophy with in the community, its importance often remains latent. More valuable is the communication instant information.

Information Overload

The philosophy of Library profession is derivable from the Five Laws of Library

Science given by S. R. Ranganathan. In the information age, society demands the priority to be given to the Fourth Law of Library Science—"Save the time of the Reader". The modern man is fully overloaded with rapid flow of information. Alvin Toffler (2) in his book 'Future Shock' written during 1970's estimated the information overload on a average man in United States. He states that today the median time spent by adults reading newspapers is 52 minutes per day. The same person who commits nearly an hour to newspaper also spends time reading magazines, books . etc. Surrounded by prints he 'ingests' between 10,000 and 20,000 edited words per day. In addition to this, he also listens news and hears about 11,000 pre-processed words. He also spends several hours watching TV programme and advertisements etc. This way, adds another 10,000 words per day. From the above survey, information overload of modern man engaged in academic work can be well estimated. He obviously is always hard pressed with time. Our main concern is to save his time and conserve his potentiality. We should strive to ensure that our patron receives instant information without wasting his precious time in loca-

ting information. This would enable him to use his saved time for more vital purpose.

Concept of CAS And SDI

The quality of Library service lies more in timely and speedy dissemination of required information, overcoming all the barriers and obstructions. Making available the current information is one of the important services of the Library. "In addition to access to the content of all recorded information, it should also be possible to obtain current short time periodic reports of information newly received" (3). The valuable attribute of information is currency or updateness,

"CAS may be defined as knowledge of recent development, knowledge of contents of recent publication" (4). This is derived from the need to keep up-to-date with the progress within the field. Luhn in his historic paper states that "an essential function of management to make the members of its organisation aware promptly if such new information which will most likely contribute to performing their individual tasks with the highest possible of competence" (5). He regarded SDI as that service within an organisation which concerns itself with the "machine assisted" channeling of new items of information for whatever sources to those point within the organisation where the probability of usefulness in connection with current work or interests is high (6).

The concept of SDI and CAS are not new ones. These have been recognised much early, but their organised form came quite late in the library profession. The library of College of Physicians and surgeons of Co-

lumbia University was using SDI service as early as in 1939 which was referred to as continuous bibliographic service. This was quite similar to SDI service of today. In 1947, its need was realised which has more relevance today.

"University libraries are increasingly conscious of the great mass of scholarly literature which pours in their libraries and is carefully catalogued, classified, and subject headed, only to sit on the shelves untouched. It is generally recognised that they are of the greatest impediments to the advancements of learning at the present time is the lack of effective means by which the finding of scholars-especially those of diverse nations and languages can be brought to light, mobilised and put to work. The conclusion is inescapable that libraries of the world must in future play a far more decisive role that at present is increasing productivity of research. (7)

One of the major ways in which university libraries can contribute is through establishment of a continuous bibliographic service for scholars requiring their active support. (8)

Making available and servicable of the requisite information are both equally important. If available information is not accessible, it remains of no value. CAS and SDI are capable of overcoming the problems associated with access—a lack of information, lack of knowledge of existing services and problems associated with physical isolation for centralised information resources(9).

Both types of services have the same goal of keeping the users currently well in-

formed of new publications. The difference is only in approaches. One concentrates on general users (CAS) and the other (SDI) on individual or group of individuals which has additional responsibility of matching the explicit information needs with the supply product. The purpose of SDI system is not to find a useful document for a scientist when sudden pressing need emerges rather "it attacks the information problems by keeping him continuously informed of new documents published in his area of specialization so that he can keep abreast of the latest development (9).

There is no place for the librarians to sit and wait for the assistance and services being asked from the users, instead they are supposed to work as effective communicators of information. We have the obligation to inform our users with or without their initiatives. What would be appreciative today is dissemination of newly published information instantaneously. This must be the core function of librarianship. The possible methods for such communication are :

1. Telephoning to individuals
2. Noting references on slips and sending to individuals.
3. Routing of periodicals, possibly marking certain articles for attention.
4. Maintaining a card file of references the library
5. Preparing a bulletin for wide distribution at intervals.
6. Duplicating tables of contents of periodicals

7. Subscribing to centralized commercial services
8. Utilizing automation for selective dissemination

Each of the above methods have their own advantages and disadvantages. We shall discuss the methodology for providing periodical based CAS and SDI by duplicating tables of contents of periodicals,

PERIODICAL BASED CAS AND SDI

We are familiar with various problems associated with periodical selection, acquisition including recording. It consumes more input in the form of manpower and expenditure than book material, which places added responsibility on us for its effective utilization to keep balancing input and output,

Reference Database

Output Format

Item No : 30542
 Type : N
 Title : Ideology and economic policy
 Author : Raj Krishna
 Reference : Indian Economic Review V 23. No 1 (June 1988)
 Pages : 1-26
 Subject 1 : Economic Policy-India
 Subject 2 : Ideology
 Subject 3 : Developing Countries
 Item No : 30543
 Type : N
 Title : Policy choices for developing countries
 Author : Bela Balarsa
 Reference : Indian Economic Review V 23. No 1 (June 1988)

Pages	: 27-44
Subject 1	: Developing Countries
Subject 2	: Economic Policy
Subject 3	: Price Policy

Cross Index database

Item No	Keyword
30542	Economic Policy-India
30542	Ideology
30542	Developing countries
30543	Developing Countries
30543	Economic Policy
30543	Paice Policy

User database

Keyword	User
Price Policy	Mishra (RK)
Economic Policy	Mishra (RK)
Developing Countries	Mishra (RK)
Ideology	Sinha (AK)
Urban	
Employment	Sinha (AK)
Finance	
Comm'ssion	Sinha (AK)
Developing Countries	Sadhu (R)
Ideology	Sadhu (R)

Otherwise it is not possible to think in terms of cost effectiveness of our services from periodical literature. Our past experience about CAS and SDI is not very happy. There are a few libraries in the country which have taken initiatives for introducing such services. They too could not get the expected results. It is unfortunate that we have passive and reluctant users. The addition list which many of our libraries are preparing has a least utilization. On the other hand we are also aware that information is also being marketed with profit which gives us encouragement and incentive for introducing such services. Let us not provide

anything which is not needed and asked for by our community in the initial stage. Unwanted things however valuable they may be are not received well. Assessing and creating need must be our first priority so that the services provided are tailored according to the needs. When public is willing to pay 20-25 more on quick delivery postal services, there is no reason that our timely and current information services are not utilised.

Let us take the following steps to keep our patrons upto date with current information and development :

(i) First ascertain who want to avail of your such services. A brief survey of your users may identify such group (s), individual (s), If you are in a position to provide SDI service, Prepare interest profiles of users accordingly. If you have computer facilities, store the profiles giving keywords/subject headings of their interests.

(ii) The commonest and cheapest way of providing CAS and SDI services is to scan new issues of interesting and relevant journals. The best course of action for those who lack resources is to select only core journals for the purpose. The faculty members/active users of the library may help in such identification. Since the users may not find time to check the new arrival in the library every day so we preferably try to inform them at their own places.

(iii) Photocopy the content page of the select journals (may be typed if photocopy facilities do not exist) as soon as received in the library. Put it on the library bulletin board. This requires more bulletin boards for different subjects/discipline. Send

its copies to the department concerned. It should be done without any definite frequency. Provide such service as and when you receive new issues of periodicals. If library policy permits, routing of current periodicals after a week or so from the date of receipt in the library may be useful. This is not a simple procedure, its effectiveness depends upon the conscientiousness and cooperation from users. But this could be a appreciative service.

(iv) Prepare an index entry for each article under subject headings or keywords for consolidation of entries at a later stage for the purpose of CAS/SDI to be provided on fortnightly or monthly basis. In case of computer, feed such data accordingly at a regular time interval and match the profiles to give print-out to the users. This can also be done manually by systematic arrangement of entries and printing or typing them in a standard format. Computerised SDI services can be provided by creating three files—reference, cross index and user databases.

(v) Also extract other such informa-

tion from the periodicals which may interest your users. Follow the same procedure for display and circulation of such information as applied in case of content page. Book reviews, information about conference, seminar may be included in such services.

LOCAL COOPERATION

Local cooperation in providing the above services would definitely be a successful endeavour. We may have more output with minimum output. The following procedure may be adopted.

1. Divide the journals to be indexed among the participating libraries.
2. Index the articles from your assigned journals.
3. Submit your list of articles/current contents to the coordinating centre.
4. Compilation of composition list by the centre followed by its distribution to the concerned ones.