

Review

User studies and user education

V. Senthurvel Murugan

Librarian, n- cradmath library, Kalasalingam University, krishnankoil - 626 190, Tamil-nadu, India.
E- mail: senthur85@gmail.com.

Accepted 18 March, 2011

The users are prime aspect of any type of library. They may be called as clientele, reader and so on. The term user is complex since the user is in the end of information chain. The information generator is in the first stage but some of the users are also the producers of information. The collection developments, planning, decision making, organizing, delivering of information in the library should centered around the needs of the users. Thus, users an essential features of any library/information systems.

Key words: User, user education, clientele, reader.

INTRODUCTION

In a library or an information center the users are the last links or the recipient of the information in the communication cycle. There are number of terms used as synonyms or near synonyms to users as patron client, member customer. Of these, user is the preferred term. (Mews, 1972)

DEFINITIONS

According to a "Whittaker" a user may be defined as, "a person who uses one or more library's services at least once in a year". Users are individuals who can be divided in to different categories on the basis of tasks assigned to them in a library organization (Devarajan, 1989; Devarajan, 1995).

Types of users

The library / information system are of many types. Based on few criteria, they can be classified as:

1. By their library experience, they can classified into experienced and inexperienced users.
2. By the nature of their activities, they can be classified as student researcher, faculty, and so on.
3. By nature of their works, they can be classified into Businessman, managers, workers, etc.

4. Some other characters are also used to classify library the users: they are sex and psychological characters.

Identification of their needs

The users are come to the library with information needs, but with minimum possible time, the library has to satisfy their needs, but it is not so easy for the library since users may not express their need exactly due to various complex psychological characters. It is the duty of librarians to ascertain information needs by putting series of questions. But it is also to remember that the user needs are ever changing and complex one. To identity users needs, several methods are designed. MS Pauline Athorton listed twenty methods to elicit information from users. The methods are ranging from conducting survey to guiding the users. (Mews, 1972)

Services to the users

Services to the users can be provided as follows:

1. Search assistance
2. Dissemination
3. Notification
4. Reference
5. Referral

6. Document reproduction and
7. Translation

User's characteristics

Lehman mentioned 7 user's characteristics that, if evaluate, would help the librarian in his efforts to satisfy user need. They are:

- (i) Personality level.
- (ii) Variability level and
- (iii) Vocational-a vocational level.
- (iv) Capacity level.
- (v) Satisfaction level. Functional reading level.
- (vi) Visual level.

Systematic study of user community will reveal the various characteristics of users seeking information. This will give necessary base guidelines to librarians to serve various types of users groups (Pandy, 1992).

User attitudes and behaviours

The users' behaviours or information seeking behaviours are complex in nature. The information seeking behaviours are centred around how the users locating information in the library. This behaviour is influenced by number of factor such as information organizational pattern, information products, educational level and social – economic profiles of users (Ravi, 2006).

User studies

Number of ways the users' studies can be conducted to identify what exactly users want from the library. The user studies are varying on the following factors.

1. Objectives, types of users to be studied.
2. The available resources to conduct the study.

Steps involved in conducting user studies:

Step 1: The studies begin with the selection of a problems and formulating objectives of the study should cover one or more of the followings.

1. To identify user information behaviour.
2. To assess the information use pattern in the library.
3. To assess reasons for using one or more information sources regularly.

Step 2: Appointing the staff member who is experienced to conduct different user studies.

Step 3: Preparing time table for the study.

Step 4: Executing the sample design.

Step 5: Design data collection instruments.

Step 6: Developing suitable procedures for editing, coding and analysing of the collected data. For this purpose, experts consultation may be obtained.

Step 7: Report writing.

Step 8: Publication of results.

User education

Education is a long life process, there is no end. As far as library activities are concerns, the users are illiterates. They need some sought of user education on how to use library resources and services. Because the collection libraries are very complicated. To know how to use and what the service available is etc., they must need assistance and guidance (Instructions, Initiation and education). It has its own objectives. Broadly it means to bring the awareness about or to guide the users, about library facilities, collection, services, etc, for new users this type of guidance is necessary (Misra and Phadka 1988).

DEFINITIONS

According to Shahi "It is a process of activities involved in making the users of the library conscious about tremendous value of information in day to day life to develop interest among the users to seek information as and when they requires" (Ravi, 2006).

Need for user education

Tremendous increase in the volume of publication as well as the resulting complexity of libraries and the methods by which literature is organized and disseminated necessitate the user education. Rapid changes in teaching methods and the resulting trend towards a wider use of multi-media learning resources ranging from the press cutting to slide tapes package and multiple kit. Such format has added new dimensions to the learning process in all types of institutions.

METHODS OF USER EDUCATION

User education can be conducted in the following:

1. Lecture method
2. Using audio visual methods
3. Using computer assisted learning
4. on site visit to the library

LEVELS OF USER EDUCATION

The user education program can be divided into three levels as following:

1. Library orientations
2. Library instruction and
3. Bibliographic instruction

LIBRARY ORIENTATION

It is an introduction to library building, card catalogue and some basic reference materials. The orientation aimed to the follows:

1. Motivation for searching and using the information
2. Creating awareness about available information resources
3. Exposing them to various organizational tools of the library

LIBRARY INSTRUCTION

It teaches the users, how to use the indexes bibliographic tools, abstracts and other reference materials. This method often gives instructions to the researchers in their field to get specific information resources.

The aims are as follows:

Provide specific instructions to how to use and understand specific information system, information sources and tools.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC INSTRUCTION

Normally, it is difficult to use the bibliographic tools because of their organizational pattern. Thus these instructions aim at:

Exposing to the users to bibliographical tools.

Providing guidance's to understand the features of these tools and their nature of subject coverage. (Pandy, 1992).

PRESENT STATUS OF USER EDUCATION

The user education is neglected phenomena in many libraries. This will result into the following consequences: it results into the user utilization or resources available in the libraries. This under utilization has the direct adverse effect on the intellectual creativity of the individuals. This will leads to under development of the country with minimum intellectual works coming from the researcher. The competitive advantages are possible only on the capacity of country to gather analyse and disseminate the information on proper manner. These functions are mostly carried out by libraries. But these functions are only completed if the libraries are come forward to expose their resources to its users. It is not so, the

development of country is questionable (Devarajan, 1995).

IT AND USER EDUCATION

The modern libraries are at the behest of IT. The IT slowly and steadily transferring the libraries from traditional to modern. This results in the development of OPAC system, electronic document delivery system, multimedia applications, internet and so on. As the user of the library bewildering tractional arrangements of classification and cataloguing, their implicational of IT complicated or aggravated this further. This results in preventing and minimizing the use of library resources as well as services of the library. To avoid these phenomena, it is necessary for libraries to redesign the user education programs, and in the changing environment user needs a specific training in the use of library services (Devarajan, 1995).

CONCLUSION

Proper user education helps the library users to save the time: the saved time can be used for other intellectual works. Thus, it is an essential phenomena for every type of library from school library to special library to have user education.

REFERNCES

- Devarajan G (1989). Users approach in information in libraries Ess New Delhi.
- Devarajan G (1995) Library and information, user and user studies becin book, New Delhi.
- Mewe H (1972). Reader Instruction in college and university: introductory handbook, bingley, London.
- Misra VN, Phadka DN (1988). User education program at different levels in academic libraries. In: Saryanarayana NR Ed. User education in academic libraries, Ess Ess Publications, New Delhi., p. 9.
- Pandy SKS (1992). Library and society, Ess New Delhi.
- Ravi KB (2006). User Education in libraries, Dr. kaliayperumal, library and information science.