
UNIT 5 REFERENCE SERVICE

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5.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, you will learn about the wide range of reference services offered in libraries. After reading this Unit, you will be able to:

- explain the meaning of reference service;
- reason out why such service is necessary and important;
- describe the different types of reference enquiries and questions;
- distinguish between responsive and anticipatory reference services and explain the kind of service offered under each; and
- familiarise yourself with the organisation and management of reference departments.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

A reference service is the ultimate goal of all library services. It is this service that connects the users with the documents and information, they need and promotes use of the collections built in a library.

In this Unit, we shall study the different aspects of reference service. Beginning with a few definitions of reference service, we shall try to obtain a fuller description of reference service that encompasses a number of functions.

The different categories of users, their information needs, the world of documents and their intricacies, the types of enquiries and requests made in libraries, are some of the factors that necessitate reference service.

Reference functions are of two kinds: *Responsive* and *Anticipatory*. The former includes services that deal with those who visit libraries in person, and others who choose to obtain services through telephone or seek assistance through letters or send telex/fax messages or even E-mail,



now-a-days. The questions or enquiries may range from simple fact-finding ones to more complex ones involving searches through a wide range of reference materials and other documents for obtaining the required information.

Anticipatory reference service would include systematic preparation and production of several types of bibliographical tools: Many aspects of their design are discussed below in some detail.

The final section of this Unit deals with the organisational and managerial aspects of reference service.

This Unit should be read in conjunction with Unit 6 of Course BLIS 06 (Current Awareness Services).

5.2 WHAT IS A REFERENCE SERVICE?

'Reference Service' represents an area of study in library science which has evolved over the past 100 years. A precise definition of 'Reference Service' is rather elusive, as it comprehends a whole range of activities that promote the use of books/documents and the information contained in them. We shall, however, endeavour to understand and assimilate the overall meaning of 'Reference Service' and also discuss some of the definitions provided for it. We shall also consider the nature of such services offered in different types of libraries and their scope.

5.2.1 Meaning and Definition

You have learnt that the primary objective of a library, irrespective of its type or kind, is to promote the use of its resources. You also know that the collection built up should not be allowed to be idle and every document acquired for the library should have at least one reader. Techniques like classification of documents and their subject-wise arrangement on the shelves in a helpful order, providing open access to the shelves, preparation of the library catalogue and similar tools, are all indirect forms of assistance to users to find their required documents in the library. However, the more direct method that would promote the use of books or other documents is to bring together the documents and their readers by personal efforts of the library staff. This method of providing personal attention to readers in terms of meeting their specific needs for documents or for any information contained in them has been developed into a specialised activity and given the name 'Reference Service'.

Let us now discuss some of the formal definitions of 'Reference Service'. According to the American Library Association Glossary of Library Terms, "Reference Service is that phase of library work which is directly concerned with assistance to readers in securing information and in using the resources of the library in study and research". Ranganathan defines Reference Service as 'Personal service to each reader in helping him to find the documents answering the interest at the moment pin-pointedly, exhaustively and expeditiously.' It is also, he says, attempts "to provide the right book for the right reader, in the right way and at the right time, in the right personal way." Margaret Hutchins defines 'Reference Services' as those that include "the direct personal aid, within a library, to persons in search of information for whatever purpose and also various library activities specially aimed at making information as easily available as possible."

Donald Davinson says that it is "not just answering questions posed by readers. It is also about the maintenance of the resources banks from which answers to questions are provided for selection, and the associated development of close awareness of sources of supply of needed materials is another aspect of the reference librarian's work which needs to be given attention."

William Katz views 'Reference Service' as "the behind-the-scene activities of the reference library in the selection, acquisition and maintenance of library stock and its careful recording and administration."

All the above definition of 'Reference service' imply the following function:

- Personal assistance to readers in the use of the library and its collection;
- Answer questions that readers ask or give the right sources that provide answer to such question;



- Build up a good reference stock knowing users' needs., build up reference tools, maintain Reference Service and administer them properly;
- Provide all these services with speed and efficiency without any bias, meeting the exact needs of users.

Almost every modern library provides these services. However, their nature and scope may vary according to the classes of users. For instance, most of the users of academic and special libraries may have definite purpose seeking information/library support as against what may be in a public library. We shall see how the reference services vary in different types of libraries.

Self Check Exercise

1) Give four functions of reference service implied in the definitions discussed so far.

Note: i) Write your answer in the space given below

ii) Check your answer with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

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5.2.2 Nature and Scope

By nature of reference service, we mean the wide spectrum of services offered to different classes of users, in response to requests or in anticipation of them. These services may include meeting simple requests for documents; finding answers to straight forward fact-finding queries or to complex questions demanding prolonged search through a wide range of reference sources.

By scope, we refer to the depth and coverage of the subject about which the question is asked and the precision that is required in answering such a question.

The nature and scope of reference service offered in a library are generally determined on the basis of the following factors

- Categories of users: Children, students, teachers, researchers, professionals and such others;
- Types of libraries: Public, academic and special;
- Quality and level of service sought: Location of specific documents in the library, help in the use of the library catalogue and such other tools, or help in consulting reference books, assistance advice in selecting documents for the study undertaken;
- Types of questions: Fact findings, literature searches, questions relating to a specific area of research, industrial or business activity, and similar others;
- Reference and bibliographical tools maintained for effective use,
- Persons visiting the library personally, or enquiring via telephone or seeking assistance through post or other means.

Reference service in most public libraries would be in the nature of assistance to readers in seeking books for study or recreation, answering simple fact-finding questions or enquiries relating to public utilities and so on. Most users of public libraries may not be engaged in any serious pursuit of study or research or investigation and their collections are also not geared up to this type of requirements. Of course, there are exceptions for example, large public libraries of the West.

In university and special libraries, the_ reference service usually would be of an intensive type. In fact, most modern documentation and information services have evolved and grown in the context of serving specialised users, such as researchers, academicians, writers, industrial and business experts, planners, executives and management specialists.

From what has been discussed so far about reference service, it should be clear that reference service incorporates a number of different functions and a precise definition does not seem to be



so essential. It should, however, be noted that all these services can be offered only by trained, experienced and competent staff. A number of different techniques and tools have been developed to provide these services. But, before we discuss these aspects, let us examine the need and purpose of reference service in libraries.

5.3 NEED AND PURPOSE OF REFERENCE SERVICE

As you know, historically, libraries have been a part of social milieu. Most of the human activities- education and training, research and development, socio-economic growth, industry and business, trade and commerce, politics and international relational , arts and culture, government administration, need active support of libraries. In fact, modern innovative information services which are considered as an extension of reference service place emphasis on intensive user –oriented , need-based reference services? In other words, we shall study the need and purpose of reference service .We shall do so from the following angles:

- Users’ information needs and demand for intensive services;
- Growth of libraries in all dimensions and their complexities;
- Modern tools and techniques developed for library and information services;
- Volume and variety of documents , both print and non –print; and
- Impact of information technology

5.3.1 User’s Information Needs

The process of socio- economic and industrial development has been a major thrust in almost every country in the later half of 20th century. It has been very much pronounced after the Second World War when many countries of Asia and Africa become independent . The result of this process has been the creation and establishment of new institution in almost every field .Specialised groups of people have been working in these institutions with different functions and responsibilities .this , in turn , has given rise to the need for information and knowledge on various aspects of the work in which each group has been involved . These developments naturally have brought pressure on the libraries to innovate new types of intensive reference services to meet the growing demand for information .each group has a distinct purpose for information support .The table below gives a board summary of the different groups of persons , their needs for and purpose of information and the type of services offered by libraries in meeting them.

Table

Group	Information Need	Reference and information Services Provided
Students	Study, examination, extra curricular activities	Reading lists, check lists, general information
Teachers	Teaching, guiding students; writing	Bibliographies, A & I service and inter-library loans.
Researcher	Research	Bibliographic support including CAS and SDI
Engineers	Construction, production and other technical activities	Standards, and patents , indexes, abstracts and handbooks.
Medical Practitioners	Bio-medical activities	Bio-medical journals' abstracts and indexes.
Lawyers and Judges	Legal activities	Codes, case laws digests and citations.
Businessmen and industrialists	Market potential, product demand, product development, economy	Techno-economic and market surveys; regulations, trade literature.



The above table which is merely illustrative and suggestive, indicates the different types of groups of users and their information needs. All these requirements clearly establish the need for and purpose of reference and information services to be provided by libraries to different user groups.

Self Check Exercise

2) State the five factors that necessitate the provision of reference service in libraries.

Note: i) Write your answer in the space given below

ii) Check your answer with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

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5.3.2 Growth of Libraries

The need for information has necessitated the establishment of different types of libraries. The newer activities of libraries have resulted in the growth of collections and their proper organisation, display and control; creation of different types of tools for accessing them; and providing specialised services. All users are not usually aware of the methods, rules and procedures used in libraries and organising their activities. Efforts have to be made by libraries to explain the library's holdings, their organisation and display in different sequences, privileges for borrowing, the use of the catalogue and other bibliographic tools and a number of other aspects of the library pertaining to reader services.

Libraries have responded to these needs of users by

- conducting guided tours of the library for the users and explaining every aspect of the library's collections, their display on stacks, tools such as the catalogue, reading room facilities and availability of personal assistance, etc.
- producing and showing video cassettes explaining the activities of the library,
- producing printed handouts/brochures/guides, etc., on the library and distributing them to the users; and
- developing various housekeeping and information services by use of IT.

Self Check Exercise

3) List the dimensions in which libraries have grown.

Note: i) Write your answer in the space given below

ii) Check your answer with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

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5.3.3 Library Tools and Techniques

Keeping the objective of service in view, libraries have designed a number of tools and services, using their special techniques for providing help and assistance to users. Some of the more important ones are:

- Standard classification schemes for subject-wise organisation of collection on the shelves;
- Cataloguing of documents with analytical entries, providing access to the whole or parts of documents containing the desired information;
- Compilation of specialised bibliographies and project information files for meeting specific requirements of users;
- Building up a good bibliographic service facility for providing specialised subject bibliographies, indexing and abstracting services, current awareness bulletins, reviews and state-of-the art reports and others, to help users in collecting literature on specific topics;
- Offering reprographic services;
- Organising computerised information services.

These types of services offered in libraries have to be explained to users, as their intricacies are not obvious to those who are not familiar with them. In order to help users utilise these service fully and also to help themselves, libraries have been conducting regular short courses for the users at different levels. These are known as User Education Programmes which are aimed at developing skills in users in literature search, consulting different types of tools, and preparing their own personal information files.

5.3.4 Volume and Variety of Documents

You are familiar with the oft-repeated expression 'information explosion' which is in fact publication explosion. Not only has there been millions of micro and macro level documents in different disciplines, there has also been a large number of secondary and tertiary publications; these are ever increasing. The growth is, thus, not merely in their number but in their forms and languages also. All these types of documents find their way to libraries. Specialised guides are also published giving an overall picture of the literature in any discipline. Most users are not aware of the organised structure of literature in their respective disciplines. The aspects of growth of literature and its organised structure need to be explained to users. In recent years, this type of personal assistance to users in making maximum possible use of the subject literature has become a part of reference service.

5.3.5 Information Technology for Reference Service

One of the most striking features in the last quarter of the previous century is the impact of computer and communication technologies in every activity of man and society. Libraries are not exception to this. Libraries have been applying these technologies to all their activities and services such as acquisition, cataloguing, serials control, circulation, information storage, retrieval and dissemination. These technologies bring a total change in the nature and use of a library. Library networks connecting the databases of holdings of different libraries, with facilities for accessing them and obtaining hard copies of documents in a short period of time have now become a reality. Accessing national and international databases through online telecommunication networks and satellite communication has become a normal feature. These developments naturally would introduce new tools and techniques. The reference staff in libraries would act as intermediaries in making information available to users, in addition to helping them to help themselves in using the network terminals installed at strategic points in the library. With the help of E-mail and Bulletin Boards answers to reference queries are now regularly sought and provided from libraries within the country and beyond.

In the foregoing section, we have seen how reference and information services have become indispensable in a library. In fact, the efficiency in providing these services would be crucial to the reputation of a library. The future of some libraries would largely rest on the expert reference service provided by them to users.



5.4 REFERENCE FUNCTIONS

Reference functions may be discussed under two broad groups : *Responsive* and *Anticipatory*. Responsive services are those that are provided in response to requests for assistance in finding answers to specific questions. Anticipatory services are those that are offered in anticipation of demand. Most documentation and information services would fall under the latter group. Let us discuss these two functions.

5.4.1 Responsive Services

There are various ways in which requests for documents or information may reach the reference division of a library. The principal ways are through the following:

- i) **Personal visit by user.** A user may personally visit the library to seek some information. In such instances, it is possible for the reference staff member to have a dialogue with the user so that he can understand the exact requirement and commence the search for the desired information with the help of the library catalogue, or appropriate bibliographical tools or reference books, depending upon the type of information requirement.
- ii) **Visit to the library by a person who represents the actual user.** Usually, the representative of the actual user would be his personal secretary or a research assistant or occasionally a colleague or a friend. The person who visits the library on behalf of the actual user, may state the need as instructed by the user and sometimes may usefully assist in the process of determining the nature of the request or question.
- iii) **Telephone call.** A user may be too busy to visit the library to seek help, or the library may be too far from the place of work to make a personal visit; hence he or his representative may make a telephone call for information. Although it may be difficult to get into a lengthy dialogue to get a clear idea of the need, it is possible to get clarification of the request, in the subsequent calls if not in the first.
- iv) **Written communication.** A user may send a letter, a telegram or a telex/fax message, depending on the urgency of his need for information. The request may also be sent through a messenger in the form of a note. These cases do not allow any kind of immediate dialogue between the user and the library staff. It might be possible to make telephone call to seek clarification, but in cases 'where there is no telephone number available or telephone call may seem to be inadequate for details of information sought, the only means of seeking further clarification would be through further correspondence. It is, however, of requests by written communication that they are often much more clearly and coherently stated than oral ones.

In all these ways of enquiry or request, there are some common characteristics that may enable a dialogue to take place between the reference staff and the user or his representative. Some kind of personal communication between the user and the reference staff is crucial to the quick and efficient supply of right information. Very often when a representative of a user undertakes the responsibility to get a service from the library, there are chances of improper understanding of the actual need that may give rise to inadequate or unsatisfactory information service.

So far we have discussed the ways in which users seek help. Now, we shall study the types of requests made or the kinds of questions asked.

Self Check Exercise

- 4) State four ways in which users communicate requests to a library for information.

Note: i) Write your answer in the space given below

ii) Check your answer with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

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Reference Enquiries and Questions

Enquiries for help/assistance or reference questions may be of the following types :

- i) Directional guidance in the use of the library, its collections or services, including initiation in the use of the library for fresh persons.
 - ii) Ready reference service or short range reference service.
 - iii) Research level or long range reference service.
 - iv) General help.
- i) **Directional guidance** is generally sought by persons who visit the library occasionally but may be generally familiar with library practices. Such persons may seek help or assistance, for example, in locating the current issue of a periodical, or where books on computer programming are displayed or in general to know what services are available in the library. Although these services cannot be considered strictly as reference, according to some writers, this kind of help or assistance is quite often sought and has to be provided by reference staff.

Another form of directional guidance, particularly for new entrants to higher secondary schools, colleges, and universities, is an organised and regular programme in the use of the library or an introduction to the library and its services. Such initiation programme for fresh persons is to be suitably designed in relation to the level at which it is required in school, college, university or public libraries. This service is usually given to groups rather than individuals. The programme may last an hour's duration, explained through slides, followed by a tour in the library. Usually, the contents of such programmes include the following aspects:

Objectives of the library; its organisational structure and senior officers of the library; the collection, its form, variety and languages and its organisation and display in the stack room and at other places; the library catalogue and how to use it; reference collections and their location; reading rooms; lending services and borrowing privileges; reference and information services; reprographic services; library rules and procedures; a map of the library including locations of washroom, smoking rooms, rest room, etc.

- ii) **Ready reference service** usually comprises handling reference questions of fact-finding nature or identifying a few documents relevant to a particular study. These kinds of needs are clearly understood without much discussion and the sources required are usually fairly easy to identify. Such services do not take much time and hence are known as *short range reference service*. This service is distinguished from the purely directional guidance in that the reference staff need to consult some sort of reference source rather than simply answer from personal knowledge. The professional requirement for the reference staff here is the knowledge of reference source, their contents, organisation and presentation, besides the skill to match the query with the appropriate reference source which contains the answer. The following table presents a few illustrative examples of typical questions and the possible sources to find the answers:

Questions Relating to:	Possible Reference Source
Words/phrases, their meaning and usages; synonyms , antonyms etc.	Language dictionaries , Thesauri
Technical terms in different subjects	Technical dictionaries , Special glossaries.
Literature references	Bibliographies , indexes, Abstracts and the like.
Persons	Who's who , Biographical dictionaries.
Places	Geographical dictionaries, Gazetteers;
Facts about a country , background information on a subject	Statesman's Yearbook, Encyclopaedias.



Self Check Exercise

- 5) List the four types of reference services offered in a library, with particular reference to users' questions or enquiries.

Note: i) Write your answer in the space given below

ii) Check your answer with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

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- iii) Long range reference service research level questions are those that require extended searches, perhaps over several hours, or days, and sometimes, even longer periods, on continuing basis. Answering such questions takes a long time because a number of reference are to be searched regularly and information supplied during the course of the research work. Therefore, such service is also known as *long range reference service*. The marshalling of facts and figures from a wide range of secondary and primary sources, together with the need to write background notes and explanations, would call for the highest expertise in reference service. In such instances, the user may be an active re-searcher, a celebrated author, a report writer, or an industrialist urgently requiring data on complex legal and regulatory matters. It is also possible that the person may be well-versed in his subject of enquiry and the reference sources pertaining to the field. The help, the person might seek from the library, would be like research assistance which would provide all the reference notes and materials that may be needed for his project. No doubt such reference and information support has to be of a high quality.

In handling such long range and often intricate reference questions, it would be useful to learn the procedures and practices that are usually employed for the purpose. These may be conceived as a series of steps, as given below:

- Reference interview;
- Determination of the subject of enquiry with a precise enunciation of the topic;
- Identification of the primary sources that may provide the answer, through searches from secondary and tertiary sources;
- Spotting the places of possible answers to the topic;
- Organising and presenting the collected information in the form of a report acceptable to the user; and
- After getting the feedback, fill up the gaps to complete the process of reference and information support.

The most important step here is the 'Reference Interview' which would determine the entire course of action for operating successfully. The process of dialogue between the user and a member of the reference staff is termed as 'Reference Interview'. This technique would demand high communication and articulation skills to elicit the exact nature of the enquirer's need for assistance and research support. The useful details that would eventually emerge from this dialogue would be highly useful in conducting the search for finding the necessary answers. These details are:

- Objective of the question and its modification in the course of the interview;
- Personal characteristics, particularly with reference to the persons' co-operative tendencies;
- Depth of search required on the subject of enquiry and his knowledge of the sources; and
- Expertise available in the library.



Once this preliminary step is handled well and the relevant details of the question collected, the rest of the steps may not be very difficult, provided the reference staff know the procedure of search and the relevant bibliographical and reference tools.

- iv) General help involves providing what Foskett calls sympathetic personal assistance to visitors. He also calls it 'humanism in practice'. Visitors to the library are people of diverse character: some shy, some other arrogant. However, the reference staff should be sympathetic to their problems and must go a long way to help them find answers that may meet their needs.

Self Check Exercises

- 6) List the steps in handling research level reference questions.
- 7) State what types of information may be obtained in a typical reference interview

Note: i) Write your answer in the space given below

ii) Check your answer with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

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5.4.2 Anticipatory Services

As stated at the beginning of Section 5.4, anticipatory reference and information services are offered in libraries in anticipation of a demand for such services. Keeping author and subject bibliographies ready, to give them on demand is one form of anticipatory reference service. Anticipation of demands presupposes assessment of requirements of user needs in advance. These services may include :

- Bibliographic compilations on specific topics
- Current awareness service
- Newspaper clipping service
- Indexing service
- Abstracting service
- Project information files
- User education programmes

All or some of these services User education programmes only if they have a sizeable collection and a regular inflow of materials in the form of monographs, journals, reports, conference papers and other currently published materials. It must be, however, noted that there are regular national and international information services available on many subjects. Local services should be supplementary and complementary to these services and should not overlap.

One common feature of all these services is that they are not just a one-time service. All of them are to be offered on a continuing basis except, perhaps, bibliographic compilations on specific topics that may be occasional but with a regular updating mechanism. User education programmes fall in a different category which are meant to develop readers skills in the use of the library's resources.

Often current awareness services including indexing and abstracting services have to be followed up by what is called document back-up service.

Now, let us discuss each one of these services with reference the different aspects that should be given attention to.



Self Check Exercise

8) List seven anticipatory information services.

Note: i) Write your answer in the space given below

ii) Check your answer with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

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Bibliographic Compilations

This is a conventional service offered in many libraries for a long time. University and special libraries have to offer this service quite frequently, as the clientele as well as their information needs are fairly well defined. Some of the important aspects that call for attention in such compilations are :

- Objectives and purpose;
- Selection of topics;
- Scope of the topic in terms of its full ramifications;
- Coverage with reference to types of documents;
- Coverage with reference to the age of reference;
- Mode of presentation of entries;
- Supporting indexes;
- Updating procedures, if necessary; and
- Mode of production.

Short bibliographies topical subject areas may also be compiled on occasions to highlight some recent literature. These types of services may be on the eve of seminars, workshops and such other occasions.

Current Awareness Service

This service is meant to keep researchers, advance level teachers and such others abreast of current developments taking place in their respective fields of study and research. Obviously, the emphasis will be only on current materials that report research and development on the wavefront of knowledge all over the world. Users of current literature keenly look forward to accessing tools such as current awareness bulletins. 'Current Contents' is a typical example of current awareness tool at the international level. At the local library level, the service has to be carefully planned, taking the help of users in selecting the titles of journals to be included for the service as well as other types of literature like research reports, monographs and treatises, conference papers, etc. The service can be offered in the form of weekly bulletins, depending upon the quantity of materials received in the library. Monthly accession lists and display of new arrivals, both monographs and serials, are two basic forms of

Some of the aspects that should get full attention in the preparation and production of current awareness service at the local level.

- Subject scope and coverage
- Selection of types of documents
- Frequency
- Mode of presentation of information -- contents by journal, classified lists, etc.
- Means for physical production
- Supporting indexes and their cumulations.



You will learn more about current awareness service in Unit 6 of this Course.

Newspaper Clipping Service

This service is a kind of current awareness service covering current socio-political and technoeconomic events and activities. This service would be required by R&D managers, researchers at all levels and the general category of users wishing to be kept informed about current affairs. Depending upon the needs of a particular group of clients, subjects covered may vary. But the essence of this service is to bring to the notice of users reports about current events, activities, personalities. The following would need attention in organising this service:

- Subject or area to be covered.
- Selection of events to be noticed such as reports on government actions and its policies on current issues pertaining to educational, research, economic, social and political matters; editorials; views and comments; feature articles and others.
- Newspapers to be scanned.
- Clippings file and its organisation.
- Index file and arrangement of entries.
- Frequency.

Self Check Exercise

9) Explain in five sentences as to how newspaper clipping service is a kind of current awareness service.

Note: i) Write your answer in the space given below

ii) Check your answer with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

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Abstracting Service

This service is for providing current and retrospective literature on chosen fields with abstracts as well as citations of articles and papers appearing in current journals, and also reports, conference papers and proceedings. The aspects which need attention in the production of abstract bulletins are :

- Subject identification
- Selection of items to be included
- Sources
- Citation practice
- Preparation of abstracts or using author abstracts
- Presentation of entries
- Supporting indexes
- Frequency
- Physical production.

Project information Files

Project information files are information support provided to projects undertaken by research institutions, university departments, government bodies and others in which different groups of specialists may be involved. Retrospective and current information in the form of literature



references, statistical facts and figures and other types of information are continuously compiled and maintained in a cumulated form in card files or computer-based files. This is constantly updated. If necessary, specific areas may be taken up for the preparation and production of specialised information bulletins at periodical intervals. This service would usually terminate at the termination of the project. The contents of the file are determined on the basis of the different subject areas relevant to the project. The entries may be citations with or without abstracts.

Self Check Exercise

10) what do you understand by project Information File ?Give your answer in five sentences.

Note: i) Write your answer in the space given below

ii) Check your answer with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

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User Education Programmes

This service has already been briefly discussed under Section 5.4 of this Unit, under the heading 'Directional Guidance'. This service is a sort of orientation programme for users at different levels helping them to use the library and its collection effectively. Such programmes are offered to students at school, college and university levels, particularly to junior entrants in re-search organisations and new entrants in any institution in order to expose them to library collections and library services. These user education programmes have been dealt with in detail in Unit 12 of Course BLIS 01: Library and Society. Here, we just mention a few important points.

In designing such courses, the main points that require attention are :

- The target groups for whom the orientation course to be offered;
- Duration;
- Course contents;
- Course materials, supporting oral instructions;
- Demonstrations of the use of reference tools through audio-visual kits;
- Knowledgeable and trained faculty;
- Practicals and self-learning exercises; and
- Evaluation.

This Section, viz., 5.4.2, has to be read along with Units 2 and 6 of Course BLIS 06 which deals with Information Services, to get a fuller view of this aspect of Reference and Information Services.

5.5 ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT OF REFERENCE SERVICE

As reference and information services are a measure of the strength of a library in meeting the information needs of users, which to a large extent determines the success or failure of the library, no effort should be spared in organising and managing these services with efficiency and speed. Almost all large and middle size libraries entrust these services to a separate division. Keeping in view the general policy guidelines of the library relating to the various reader services, let us examine the management of a reference division in the light of the elements of



management, viz., planning, organising, staffing, directing co-ordinating, reporting and budgeting. We shall also correlate these elements with the operational guidelines expounded by Ranganathan for operational management. You can refer to Unit I of Course BLIS 02 to recapitulate the main points of scientific management.

Planning

Planning is a process that deals with the resource mobilisation in terms of short and long range requirements and drawing up a working programme for its implementation over a period of time. As most of the reference and information services are of a continuing nature, there must be ample provisions in the plan document for an uninterrupted flow of resources that include updated reference materials, personnel and physical facilities. The planning of reference services would involve the following aspects:

- Assessment of users' information needs;
- Range of services to be offered, both responsive and anticipatory;
- Reference collections, their organisation and maintenance;
- Personnel;
- Physical facilities; and
- Finance and Budget.

As the reference division is one of the most important service divisions of a library which is constantly in touch with users, it is the primary responsibility of this division to study and assess the actual and potential information needs of the users. In fact, the whole planning of the library collections and services would considerably rest on the results of such studies. For this division, in particular, the results of the user study would very much determine the range of services to be offered. The various inputs to this study would be : a) analysis of records maintained on the nature of help and assistance given to users everyday; b) analysis of feedback records of short and long range reference services; c) inferences and conclusions drawn from dialogues with users in reference interviews including users' suggestions; and d) a general survey of the use of information products of the reference division such as current awareness bulletins, SDI services, indexing and abstracting publications and others. User studies could usefully be done at frequent intervals to serve as a sort of barometer for assessing users' reactions.

One of the most important resources of the reference division is reference materials built up by the library. It is the duty and responsibility of the reference division to advise the collection development division in acquiring right reference materials which would include not only the conventional sources but also others of reference value. Updated editions of reference books, replacement of outdated versions, their proper location for easy access are some of the factors that should receive full attention.

Alongside the reference materials, trained and experienced staff is indispensable to set up high quality reference service. The size and the quality of staff required is to be on the basis of the range of services offered, the volume of work involved and the techniques and methods of their handling and other related aspects. Adequate budgetary provisions and physical facilities in terms of space, equipment and machinery to bring out the various types of bibliographical products should be in place.

The day –to – day routine operations of the reference division would usually cover the following aspects:

- Reference desk
- Reference collection , their organisation and providing ready and long rang reference service;
- Preparation and production of the different types of reference publication;
- User education programmes; and
- Co-ordination and supervision.



Self Check Exercise

11) State the different aspects of work to be considered for planning the operations of the reference division.

Note: i) Write your answer in the space given below

ii) Check your answer with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

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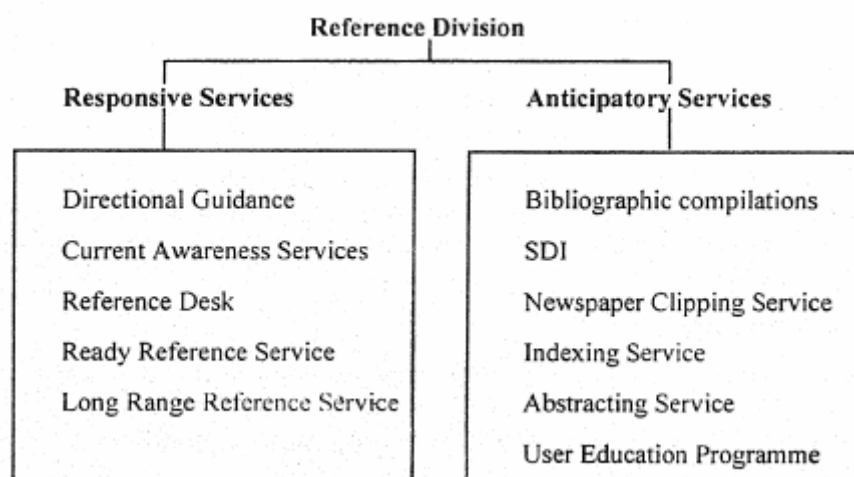
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Organising

Organising refers to the creation of an operational structure of the reference division. The structure is determined on the basis of analysis of work and jobs of all the different activities of the division. An illustrative organisational structure is given below:



Staffing

Staffing refers to the type, quality and the number of persons required to perform the various functions of the division. Apart from the head of the division who should have the competence and ability to lead the division, having good academic background and professional experience in handling users and reference work, the others must have experience and proficiency in the different types of reference and information work and in handling people. As this division has to deal with different types of persons, the staff must have an insight into human psychology and maintenance of good public relations. Therefore, the selection and recruitment of personnel to this division has to be done with great care.

The staff strength is to be determined on the basis of the volume of work in each of the different operations and also with reference to the number of users seeking help and assistance, nature of enquiries, time required to respond to each type of enquiry, the number of sources consulted in doing the work and similar other parameters.

Directing

The head of the division should give directions to the staff in every aspect of work of the division and get the best out of them. He should also bring to the attention of the head of the library the best performers and get them recognition and appreciation. Supervision and control should not provoke animosities of any kind. Proper motivation of the staff in work would result in high productivity.



Establishing proper methods for operational routines is a means to achieve qualitative and quantitative results. While the lower staff operate the routines, the head of the division should design work methods, taking his juniors into confidence and constantly evaluate the work for obtaining best results. Suggestions and initiative of the staff should be encouraged.

Co-ordinating

The reference division is at a junction point connected to many other divisions of the library, such as technical services division, circulation, reading rooms, stack and maintenance, and periodicals. Co-ordination of all the activities from this perspective is absolutely necessary for the effective functioning of the reference division and to face users with confidence and alertness.

Reporting

Reports on the performance of the division, its achievements and shortfalls during a year or at shorter intervals are essential to build the image and reputation of the division. These reports carry vital details on the various activities of the division in analysed forms. The information to be collected and maintained includes the following:

- Number and type of visitors seeking help and assistance in a day;
- Each reference question recorded in a well designed proforma which should give particulars of users such as name, occupation, place of work; level and purpose of enquiry; persons who attended to the enquiry/question; sources checked and answers found; time taken; other sources consulted like experts and organisations, etc. These records are to be filed in an orderly sequence to retrieve any data required for further enquiries; and other relevant data and information;
- Records on bibliographies compiled; and
- Similar records on information products like CAS, SDI, Indexing and Abstracting publications, for feedback analysis.

Appropriate and proper designing of these records and their maintenance and filing are vital to the efficient functioning of the reference division. Not only do these records give vital information for the annual report, they would provide invaluable data for tuning the work of the division to a high level of efficiency.

Finance and Budget

As already stated, most of the services offered by the reference division are of a continuing nature. There should not be any paucity of finance in operating any of the services, particularly those which need financial support. CAS, SDI and the preparation of I&A services would need a budget every year. Equipment and machinery for production of the information bulletins have also to be given the needed financial support.

Budgetary allocations should be made for each of the activities, on the basis of the cost of production and distribution for a given period, usually annually. For this the division has to maintain a number of records, as listed above under Reporting. A rhythm and tempo must be maintained for all the information services provided by the division. As pointed out earlier, timeliness is the essence of service. Every activity of the division must fit into a rhythm to bring reputation and credibility to the division.

Self Check Exercise

12) Name the type of records of details to be maintained by the reference division.

Note: i) Write your answer in the space given below

ii) Check your answer with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

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5.6 SUMMARY

In this Unit, we have discussed the following aspects of reference service :

- i) Definitions and meaning of reference service, indicating that it comprehends a whole range of reference functions, particularly in view of its expanding dimensions;
- ii) Nature and scope of reference service with reference to the clientele of the different types of libraries.
- iii) Reference service has become indispensable in libraries because of several reasons, the most important being growing information needs of users, document explosion, complex growth of libraries and their services, new tools and techniques for library services and the impact of information technology.
- iv) Reference functions include responsive and anticipatory services. The former deal with help and assistance in use of the library; answering questions, fact finding and research types; these are discussed in the context of users visiting the library in person, seeking assistance through telephone and also through written postal communication or telex. Anticipatory services include the preparation and production of a variety of information services such as bibliographies on specific topics, current awareness bulletins, SDI services, indexing and abstracting publications.
- v) Organisation and management of reference service is examined in terms of the seven elements of scientific management and also in the light of Ranganathan's ground work of library administration.

5.7 ANSWERS TO SELF CHECK EXERCISES

- 1) Assistance by personnel to readers in the use of the library and its collections; answer questions that readers ask and/or give the appropriate sources that may provide the right answers; build up a good reference collection on the basis of users' needs and; maintain them; and help readers in using them with speed and efficiency.
- 2) The five factors that necessitate reference service in libraries are :
 - i) Users' information needs and demand for intensive services;
 - ii) Growth of libraries^o in all dimensions and their complexities;
 - iii) Modern tools and techniques developed for library and information services;
 - iv) Volume and variety of documents, both print and non-print;
 - v) Impact of information technology. .
- 3) The growth of libraries can be seen in
 - i) exponential growth of publications, resulting in corresponding growth in their collections;
 - ii) complexities in their organisation and maintenance;
 - iii) tools and techniques developed by libraries for the use of documents;
 - iv) variety of information and library services; use of information technology for library housekeeping and services.
- 4) The four principal ways in which users communicate reference enquiries are:
Personal visits by users; visits by a representative of a user; user seeking assistance through telephone; and written communication through post, telegram and telex/fax.
- 5) The four types of reference service with reference to use and users' questions are:
 - i) Directional guidance;
 - ii) Ready reference service;



- iii) Long range reference service;
 - iv) General help.
- 6) The seven steps in handling research level reference questions are :
- i) Reference interview;
 - ii) Determination of the subject of enquiry with a precise enunciation of the topic;
 - iii) Identification of the primary sources that may provide the answer through searches from secondary and tertiary sources;
 - iv) Spotting the places of possible answers to the topic;
 - v) Recording the references consulted with notes and explanations;
 - vi) Preparing the report covering the information collected;
 - vii) Filling the gaps after receiving the feedback from the enquirer.
- 7) A reference interview may throw light on the following aspects :
- i) Objective of the question and its modifications;
 - ii) Personality of the user;
 - iii) Depth of search required on the subject of enquiry and his knowledge of the possible sources;
 - iv) Expertise available in the library.
- 8) Anticipatory information services include the following :
- a) Bibliographic compilation on specific topics;
 - b) Current awareness service;
 - c) Newspaper clipping service;
 - d) Indexing services;
 - e) Abstracting service;
 - f) Project information files; and
 - g) User education programmes.
- 9) Newspapers report on current socio-political, techno-economic and other events and activities, Clippings of such reports as relevant to particular groups of users would be very useful to them and is generally welcome by them. Depending upon the needs of user groups the subjects covered may vary. Indexing all such clippings would also serve as a chronicle of current affairs. Thus, newspaper clipping service takes the form of a current awareness service.
- 10) Projects that are taken up for study and research by institutions need a lot of background information on the subject areas of the project. There may be several *subject* disciplines involved in projects where joint efforts of different experts may be required. A complete documentation of information available in journals, reports, conference papers, and similar publications in the subject areas of the project is regularly collected and maintained up-to-date and this is called the project information file. This file provides exhaustive, current and retrospective information.
- 11) The following factors have to be taken into account for planning the work of the reference division
- a) Reference desk;
 - b) Reference collection;
 - c) Ready reference service;
 - d) Long range reference service;
 - e) Preparation and production of various types of bibliographical publications;



- f) User education programmes; and
- g) Co-ordination and supervision.

12) The reference division may maintain the following records

- a) Visitors seeking information support;
- b) Reference questions, both short and long range questions and sources consulted for answering them;
- c) Subject lists of bibliographies compiled on specific subjects; and
- d) Feedback records on other information service.

5.8 KEY WORDS

Anticipatory Services	: Information service given in anticipation of demand after a general assessment of need.
Bibliographical Apparatus	: A complete range of access tools to primary literature such as bibliographies, indexes, abstracts.
Kaleidoscope :	: Changing patterns, as in a kaleidoscope, which is an optical instrument in which bits of glasses, beads, etc., held loose at the end of a rotating tube, are shown continuously changing symmetrical forms by reflection in two or more mirrors set at angles to each other.
Responsive Services	: Reference and information services given on request to individuals.

5.9 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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