

For Improved Service From Varsity Libraries

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TODAY'S specialisation of knowledge is in fact a challenge to the traditional services offered by the libraries and the users, specially the researchers, are in a helpless condition. Hence co-operation and co-ordination become a necessity. It is only library co-operation which can help to tackle the situation and will help us to get out from this helpless condition.

Today's university libraries face problems created by two major events and these are "the explosion of knowledge" and "the explosion of students". To meet the growing needs libraries look forward to continued progress in serving their users efficiently. Many methods and techniques have been devised for it. Amongst them library co-operation is the most effective means to face the problem.

The term Library Co-operation needs some explanation here. It is generally understood to be a simple process of inter-lending or reading materials among libraries. But in fact it is much more than that. It will include (a) co-operative acquisition of books, periodicals and other reading materials with the object of obtaining maximum coverage of the world's output of printed materials by the libraries of a country. (b) Rationalization of the existing book stocks of different libraries by means of exchange and similar methods, in order to ensure that the maximum number of readers have direct access to the maximum number of books. (c) Preservation of national resources on a co-operative basis. (d) Inter-library loans as a means of temporarily supplementing the coverage of individual libraries.

The matter of discussion will be confined here to only one aspect of library co-operation i.e. Inter-lending between university libraries and its possible implementation in Bangladesh with a view to create a healthy library cooperation for facilitating and encouraging higher study and research in our uni-

Since a university library cannot procure all the books and periodicals that the scholars and researchers may want to read, a well co-ordinated system of inter-lending books should be developed to supplement the efforts of the six universities in the country.

versities. It will help research by providing maximum services with minimum means. It supplements a library's resources by making available through direct loans, materials available in other libraries and not possessed by borrowing library. It may be mentioned here that there is an informal inter-lending system among some libraries in our country. But this informal, half-hearted and limited co-operation will not serve the purpose. However, it is really a good sign and also a matter of joy for us that at least we can say that some libraries realise the importance of such co-operation.

In all developed and developing countries of the world there is an increasing tendency of co-operation among libraries—specially in research ones in identifying areas of specialization by individual library in order to avoid competition for rare and expensive items. If we follow this principle we shall be able to acquire maximum resources with our minimum means. The total book resources of our university libraries cover only a small percentage of world publications. There is no scope of denying the fact that any bottleneck in library services and resources will definitely hamper research activities seriously. Research may be made from various stand-points by the researchers. He may want to know all the available published sources of information along the line of his research and the libraries can make two major contributions by supplying the primary and the secondary sources. These are latest published information, preparation, publication and circulation of indexes, catalogues,

bibliographies, abstracts etc. Any article useful for higher studies and research should be abstracted and circulated. Abstracts help the users to gauge the real value of the article. Union catalogue of books and periodicals will indicate the materials available in one's own country. It will help inter-library lending and avoid unnecessary duplication.

National union catalogue is a very big thing. It is a joint venture of libraries. However, the preparation and publication of such catalogue officially falls under the purview of the National Library. We have no union catalogue. But it should have been done long before. We knew that the National Library of Bangladesh had a project to compile a union catalogue of periodicals but unfortunately we do not know the ultimate fate of the project. The necessity of such a catalogue cannot be ignored. It is imperative for obvious reasons.

In the interest of research, our university libraries can do one thing which will surely be more economic and also a feasible proposition for us. It is compilation of union catalogue of the holdings of the university libraries we have six universities and five university institutes and each of them has a good library of its own. But unfortunately due to the non-existence of union catalogue we do not know what the Dhaka University or the Chittagong University Library have. This may be removed through union catalogue of university libraries. In the absence of such a catalogue inter-university lending service cannot work fruitfully which is very essential in a country like ours hav-

ing very limited book resources.

The University Grants Commission may take the responsibilities of preparing the union catalogue of university libraries and other organisations and centres which coordinate and encourage higher studies and researches. If we consider the necessity of such a catalogue, we may all sit together and plan out a programme. It will be more useful to place one set of catalogue at each university library. Inter-lending cannot work efficiently without union catalogue and cheap photocopying facilities.

To simplify and standardize the services an inter-lending code must be formulated. It must be kept in mind that the rules which will guide in the actual working of inter-lending should not be very rigid in its applications. Inter-lending involves other things such as cost of services on both the sides, transportation cost, loss of services to local readers, loss of materials during transit etc. These issues must be received careful and desirable consideration while preparing rules for Inter University Lending.

Lending of materials must be restricted. Certain materials should not be generally loaned out even if they are in demand. For example books which are available in local market, reference works which are in constant use, books needed for instructional works by Faculty members, rare books, current periodicals, fragile materials, manuscripts unpublished theses etc. (photocopy may be supplied). A considerable and desirable collection is taken for granted in a University library for day-to-day use. So the question of inter-lending will arise only in reasonable and genuine ground mainly for unique and less frequently used books. No library can afford mass lending. Inter-lending can only be successful if it is confined only to unusual books for unusual purposes. It also requires generous attitude and cooperative mentality.