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Inter-library Lending System

—Prof Md. Osman Ghani

THE economic backbone of any country mainly depends upon the proper utilization of its natural resources and this can be done by the systematic research of scientists and technologists. Taking the results of the latest investigation in his field as base a researcher will proceed in this way. For this the researcher should have some knowledge of the latest investigation. Bangladesh is a developing country and so the researcher should play a vital role for the overall development of the country by utilizing the country's natural resources. To compare and analyse results the researcher should consult periodicals, research reports, patents, monographs etc. Researchers are prepared to identify their particular needs and hence they should necessarily be reflected in the quality of library service. Poor service will never encourage the use of libraries by researchers. So, scientific and technological information is an essential factor for the success of any project of scientific research.

WHAT IS BANSDOC?

In recognition of the importance of information science and then Pakistan Government established in 1957 a national documentation centre PANSDOC (Pakistan National Scientific and Technical Documentation Centre) at Karachi. On finding the popularity and demand of PANSDOC in the scientific field, the government was compelled to open two branch offices—one at Lahore and the other at Dhaka. The PANSDOC branch office after liberation became BANSDOC (Bangladesh National Scientific and Technical Documentation Centre). It is one of the six sectors of BCSIR (Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research). It is

In Bangladesh there are more than 30 research libraries. Also there are about 60 special libraries. But unfortunately no inter-library lending system exists. This is the bone of contention of the author and a move in this direction is immediately called for.

main function is supply of documents. Besides this, compilation of bibliographies, translation, procurement of microfilm slides and photocopies of any published scientific and technical paper are also within the scope of BANSDOC services. In the best interests of the users, materials are supplied at a very subsidised rate. Charges are only made to prevent abuse of the services. BANSDOC also establishes contact between researchers in the same field. Everyone whether in government services or in research institutions has the opportunity of using BANSDOC services. BANSDOC has so far compiled and published about 300 bibliographies in the different fields of science and technology.

THE PROBLEM

BANSDOC can supply only 8-10% of the total requests from the resources available within the country and for the rest, it depends upon other documentation centres in the world. From the insignificant stock of BANSDOC Library only a few requests can be satisfied. For agricultural materials BANSDOC has to depend upon BARC (Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council, BRRI (Bangladesh Rice Research Institute) etc., for medical articles on IPGMR (Institute of Post Graduate Medicine and Research) and NMIDC (National Medical Information Documentation Centre) etc., and for other scientific

materials on BCSIR Library and BAEC (Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission) Library etc.

With a few exceptions, as there is no coordination policy between the libraries, it is very difficult to collect articles from the libraries. Sometime personal influence or friendship with the librarians helps to obtain journals and books from other libraries, in the interests of users. This lack of coordination between the libraries and lack of national acquisition policy cause unnecessary wastage of both time and the resources of the country.

BANSDOC, as a wing of BCSIR, is under the control of the Ministry of Industries whereas the National Library whose main two functions are (i) to collect Bangladeshi publications and (ii) to compile and publish national bibliography (at present part of the Directorate of Archives and Libraries) is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture. And newly established National Science Library is under the Ministry of Science and Technology. Similarly the Universities are controlled by the Ministry of Education and special libraries by their own agencies. As different libraries are under different Ministries and as there is no coordination agency, BANSDOC has to face many difficulties in procuring materials.

POSSIBLE SOLUTION

The newly established National Science Library is now

in the same building as BANSDOC. If BANSDOC and National Science Library are merged together to make a separate organisation under one Ministry, scientists will get better benefit both in reading facilities and document procurement service. It is needless to point out here that BANSDOC Building has got sufficient floor-area to accommodate this joint venture. It is now in its infant stage and it will deal only with science subjects which BANSDOC has been doing.

As BANSDOC is the national focal point for document supply it may also serve as the National Centre for Inter-Library Lending system with the full cooperation of National Science Library. In the early stages of starting lending system, adequate support will be needed from other libraries of the country, for which a strong coordinating agency needs to be set up. BANSDOC and National Science Library should play a vital role in this, rather than directing a large part of their efforts to a document supply service.

The NMIDC (National Medical Information and Documentation Centre), ICDDR,B (International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease and Research, Bangladesh), IPGMR etc., may obviously serve as the back-up libraries in the field of medicine. The NMIDC which was opened in 1975 with support from the Government and Asia Foundation, is under the control of the Ministry of Health and Population Control. Its objectives are to render inter library loan, reference and other information services in medical fields and it is acting as the medical back-up library at the national level. Though NMIDC is assumed to be the national centre for supplying medical materials, it is

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interesting to point out that many requests are received by BANSDOC for medical references. It may be that researchers are not well-acquainted with which organisation will give them the documents they need.

To overcome this difficulty more librarians and documentalists should be trained in foreign developed countries and on returning home they may offer more dynamic service concerned with the use and availability of information rather than simply maintain collections and supply photocopies.

Researchers are not in the habit of analysing their documentation works and are not equipped to identify their particular needs. Trained librarians and documentalists can make much more of an effect in this area in

increasing the use of libraries by the researchers. The communication system, postal services and telephone services are not reliable. This may be one of the barriers for implementing an inter-library loan system. There is a danger that these problems and shortages of financial resources may prevent any staff, trained abroad, from implementing some of the things they have learned, once they get back to Bangladesh. Such visits may then be counter-productive and just lead to frustration.

In Bangladesh there are more than 30 research libraries and about 60 special libraries. They are located chiefly in Dhaka and its surroundings. One or two have access to foreign computerized data-bases. Out of these libraries only three or four main libraries in Dhaka can be channelled in the first stage of the implementation of an inter-library lending system with BANSDOC taking the lead. Using only libraries in Dhaka City, problems of bad communication and irregular postal services can be overcome. Requests can be delivered personally using local transport (rickshaw, bus, taxi etc.) Outside Dhaka City, Rajshahi University Library has recently decided to accord priority to the purchase of abstracting and indexing publications and to rely on back-up from BANSDOC, but will have to be content with the postal service.

CONCLUSION

To satisfy researchers with a quick supply of the documents they need it is undoubtedly essential to expand the scientific and technical information services of Bangladesh and this demand can only be fulfilled by the development of BANSDOC with modern machinery, essential journals, periodicals, monographs, trained staff etc. Such development could be done with the assistance of Aid Agencies like UNESCO, FAO, IDRC etc.