BACHELOR OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE
SECOND SEMESTER

INFORMATION SOURCES, PRODUCTS, AND SERVIES

Information Services

Introduction:-We are living in the information age. Information is crucial for all our day-today activities. It is generated from all kinds of human activities and achievements. Both individuals and organizations are involved in the creation of information. R&D organizations, for instance, carry out research and generate new information. Government organizations through their diverse activities, such as governance, administration, census and surveys, generate new information. Individuals, like researchers, inventors, innovators, discoverers, thinkers, authors, planners and policy makers, judges, etc. are all involved in the task of generating information. The information, thus generated, is processed and recorded in a variety of sources and formats, and is made available for public use. Large amount of information is created every year in the form of print, films, and electronic and optical storage media and is disseminated through various channels like print, telephone, radio, television and Internet. Printed information is available in a variety of **primary sources** (like periodicals, theses, research reports, patents, standards, etc.), **secondary sources** (like indexing and abstracting periodicals, books, dictionaries, encyclopedias, handbooks, etc.) and **tertiary sources** (like directories, bibliography of bibliographies, guide books, etc.). Electronic information is available for all the print versions in the form of **e-resources**, such as e-books, e-journals, etc. Libraries systematically collect, process, store and disseminate this recorded knowledge and information to their users.

Types of Information needs: - A large number of user surveys have been conducted to find out information requirements of different categories of library users. Such studies show, information needs vary from person to person, and a particular person may have different needs at different points in time, depending upon her/his nature of work, place of work, etc. These surveys, in general, have identified four types of information needs of users which are: current information needs, exhaustive information needs, everyday information needs, and catching-up information needs.

1. Current Information Needs

When users need information to keep themselves up-to-date with the latest developments in their area of interest on a regular basis, the need is known as current information need. Here, users do not need specific information, but need to regularly keep themselves abreast of information not only in their own area of interest but also of developments that may affect their work. For instance, people in the corporate sector need to know on regular basis, about the market and their competitors, latest innovations in the product development and how to do business.

2. Exhaustive Information Needs

When user wants to have information on a particular subject as exhaustive as possible, the need is known as exhaustive information need. This need is an occasional one and is expected mainly from the researchers. A researcher, before starting research on a particular topic, surveys the literature published in that area as comprehensively as possible, with a view to select new area for her/his research as well as to avoid duplication of research effort. The exhaustive information need also arises when the researcher is reporting her/his research findings, in order to compare her/his research results with the results of earlier studies.

3. Everyday Information Needs

This need is for a specific piece of information which users require, generally in their day-to-day work related activities. For instance, a scientist working on an experiment wants to know melting or boiling point of a particular compound. This need is basically for factual information which may range from how to spell a word or find a telephone number of an industry or to know the name and address of a managing director of a corporate house.

8.4.4 Catching-up Information Needs

This need arises when a user, who is not conversant with a particular subject field, requires an account of overall development of that subject in short and most comprehensible form. This type of need is grouped as catching-up information need. It arises when a scientist or technologist conducts research on a multidisciplinary project. S/he may be an expert in one of the disciplines, but to catch-up with other disciplines, which fall within the purview of the current project, s/he requires a brief overview of those disciplines in simple and understandable form.

Apart from the four types of information needs mentioned above, there are two more types of information needs of users which a good library system can fulfill.

These needs are **General Reading Needs** and a **Need for Informal Information** which help users to improve the work they do. Both these needs, when fulfilled, help in personal development of the user.

Libraries form a vital part of world's system of information storage and retrieval. Libraries of all types, like academic, public or special libraries, acquire, organize, store, retrieve and disseminate information according to the needs of users. They make available through books, journals, films, recordings and other media, the knowledge that has been accumulated through ages. People from all walk of life including students, teachers, researchers, professionals, business executives, government officials use library resources to meet their information requirements.

Library and Information Services

Libraries build their collections tailored to the needs and goals of the organisation they serve. Viewed historically, the library's role of making materials available ranks among the most important contributions ever made to human culture and technology. Libraries have long stored materials that enable ideas, knowledge and experiences to be passed on from generation to generation. Without this line of communication, cultural and technological developments would not be as advanced as they are today. In day-to-day life, the library materials serve as important resources in education, work and recreation of millions of people. To the students, the library is a place where they can find information that help them to carry out their school or college work. It is also a place where they can pursue knowledge outside their classrooms and beyond their textbooks. Professional people rely on materials in special library for information they need for their work. Before going to a court for a legal case, a lawyer may spend hours in a law library finding and studying cases to prepare for arguments. Doctors use medical libraries to obtain information they need in order to treat unusual and complicated cases. Many business executives also find materials in the library to be of great value for their work.

Present day libraries have extended library services far beyond making materials available. They offer many forms of assistance to library users, which can broadly be grouped as Reference and Information Services. These services promote the use of library material, connect the users with the library resources and meet the Information requirements of the users. These services can be broadly divided into two groups:

a) **Responsive Information Service:** The service that is provided in response to a specific request.

b) **Anticipatory Information Service:** The service that is provided in anticipation of some need.

1. Responsive Information Services

Responsive information services (also known as *passive information services*) are provided in response to a request from the users. The request may come from the user in person, over the telephone, through correspondence, or via e-mail. Requests may be for finding general information about the library, its layout, how to become a member, how to use catalogue, or for finding answer to a particular question or getting a particular document from the library. These services can be broadly categorized as follows:

1. Provision of General Information

General information is sought by a user, who visits the library for the first time. Such readers need directional guidance in the use of library such as general layout of the library, where current issues of periodicals are displayed or the location of reference and textbooks section of the library or where is the computer terminal for searching information on OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue) of the library if there is one, etc. Such type of directional guidance is frequently provided by the libraries. Schools, college and university libraries normally offer 'user orientation' or 'user education' programmes for the new entrants. These programmes are organised for new students every year in the beginning of the academic session. The contents of these programmes cover: objectives of the library and its organisation, collections of the library and its location, catalogue of the library and how to use it, general rules and procedures of the library, lending and borrowing facilities, reference and information services, etc. User initiation programme may be in the form of a lecture by the librarian followed by a tour of the library. Some libraries prepare audio/visual kits for this purpose, other libraries distribute library brochures containing all the information. Whatever may be the format of these programmes, basic objective is the same i.e. to introduce the library and its services to the new user.

2. Reference Service

According to Ranganathan "Reference service is the process of establishing contact between a reader and his documents in a personal way". Reference service is also considered as a personal service which is provided in response to the

request from the users. Requests may be for locating answers to fact finding questions, literature search for solving a research problem or for compiling a bibliography, or for general help. To provide the service the librarian may utilize the resources available in the library as well as available outside the library. Basic aim is to make the information available to the user as early as possible. Depending upon the requirement, librarian may give information or the document containing the information. Basic services under this category are ready reference service and long range reference service.

i) **Ready Reference Service or Short Range Reference Service**

This service is concerned with providing answers to fact finding questions, such as what, where, who, when, and how type. What is the population of India? Where is Nile River located? Who discovered telephone? When will next total solar eclipse occur? How many bonesare there in a human being? Where can I find a biography of Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen? The required information can be easily located in standard reference books like dictionaries, encyclopaedias, yearbooks, almanacs, gazetteers, biographical sources, etc. The time required to answer these queries is very short ranging from a few minutes to half an hour. Ninety per cent of such queries are simple to handle. That is why this service is known as ready reference service or short range reference service. Only 5 to 10 per cent of the queries may take hours of research to find the answer. Percentage of ready reference questions, handled by libraries differ from library to library. In one study it was found that 60 per cent of the questions asked in a public library were of ready reference type. Request for background information made up other 40 per cent of the queries. In academic and special libraries, such questions may range from 30 to 60 per cent of the total. Ready reference service is not limited to users, who visit the library to ask question. Many libraries offer remote assistance via telephone, e-mail. Librarians are also creating websites, answer archives and links to answers to "Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)." These all are designed to anticipate user's questions and help users to find information independently. Ready reference service satisfies everyday information needs of the users.

ii) **Long Range Reference Service** This service is generally provided to a specialist who is seeking information for research work or to solve a particular problem. Information sought may be too specialized in nature, it may be too recent, it may be related to earlier period, or it may be in another language. This type of service is more common in special libraries. The request may come from a

professor, a business executive, a professional, or R&D personnel. In long range reference service, information is searched in several sources like printed sources, electronic sources, organisations as well as informal sources. In case information is not available in local library the sources of other libraries are explored and material is borrowed on interlibrary loan. Since wide range of sources are consulted to provide this service, the time taken is much longer than the ready reference service. Moreover, in ready reference service data or facts are provided, while in long range reference service documents, periodicals or reports containing information are provided. Sometimes information selected from various sources is analysed, evaluated, synthesized and repackaged to suit the information requirement of the user.

3. **Literature Search and Compiling a Subject Bibliography**

Another very important responsive service offered by a library is to compile subject bibliographies on request. Sometimes such bibliographies are compiled on regular basis or in anticipation of user's needs. At times bibliographies are compiled on special occasions, such as during seminars and workshops, to provide the latest literature on the subject. University and special libraries offer this service more frequently than the public library.

4. **Assistance in the Use of Library Collection and Library Tools**

Assistance in the use of library collection and library tools (such as catalogue including OPAC, reference books, online databases, etc.) is provided to the user so that s/he may be able to use the library more profitably. To provide this service it is important that the reference librarian should have positive attitude towards the profession. S/he should be friendly in nature and willing to help the user. S/he should be professionally competent to establish rapport with the user. Positive attitudes not only enhance the image of the library but also encourage the library user to approach the library staff without any hesitation and with confidence. Such services form part of promotional activities and encourage the use of library material as well as library services.

5. **Document Delivery Service**

Document Delivery Service (DDS) is concerned with the supply of document(s) to the users on demand, either in original or its copy in print or non-print form. Most of the information services such as current awareness service, selective dissemination of information (SDI) service, indexing and abstracting service, literature search service, etc. are aimed at guiding the user to the document where

required information is available. On the other hand, DDS actually locates the required document and deliver it to the user. Earlier, DDS was mainly concerned with "lending" a document to the user for a specified period of time, if the publication is not available within the library, then borrowing it from other libraries on interlibrary loan and lending it to the user. With the introduction of xerography in mid 1950s and large scale use of photocopier in the libraries by 1970s, documents could be and given permanently to the users. The libraries started using photocopier for supply of copies of documents, particularly of journal articles and parts of books. The advent of ICTs (Information Communication Technologies) in 1980s, made it possible to store the documents in electronic form and send the same electronically over long distances via telecommunication networks almost instantly. Now, many libraries and information centres are using this technology for delivery of documents to their users. With the availability of full-text electronic journals and e-books on the Internet, many publishers and aggregators, have started offering online ordering and instantaneous delivery of the books and articles of journals. User can request an item directly from the publisher and receive the article at the location of her/his choice. At present, database producers, commercial online vendors, commercial publishers, and e-journal service providers are also offering DDS on payment basis. DDS is one of the backup services of the library.

6. **Referral Service**

When users are referred to the sources where the required information is available, the service is called referral service. Referral service does not provide users with the document or information needed by them, but directs them to the sources of information where required information will be available. The source may be either a document, an organization or an individual. In traditional library services, the service is offered mainly from sources available in-house. In referral service the sources may vary from recorded sources of information to informal sources like individuals, specialists and experts from other organizations.