2018

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Dr. K. Vijayakumar has 18 years of teaching and 16 years of research experience. He is presently working as an Assistant Professor (SG) in the Department of Library and Information Science, Annamalai University. He has successfully guided 7 Ph.D. Degrees and 43 M.Phil. Degrees. He has published 55 research articles in International Journals and 15 articles in National Journals. He has to his credit more than 80 articles in conference Proceedings. He is a member of ILA, IASLIC and SALIS. He is a UGC- NET/ SLET trainer in various colleges and Universities and has delivered special lectures in various colleges and universities. He is a Editorial Board member in IJASSH, IJASSR, IJCRD, IJIKC, IJMSRF, IJRR, IJLSIM, IJRLS. He is a member in Board of Studies in various Colleges and Universities. He is a coordinator in Training and Placement Cell of Annamalai University. His areas of interest include Bibliometrics, Information and Communication Technology and User Studies.

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REJUVENATING OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES

PUBLIC LIBRARY EXTENSION SERVICES

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Abstract

Colombo Public Library, which is considered the largest library in Sri Lanka, performs a great service for the whole community of users. Number of library extension services are implemented in order to generate the habit of reading among children and to generate enthusiasm to use libraries. Not only that, but also it is obvious that extension services are implemented to fulfil the necessities of the users who are unable to approach the library.

Keywords: Library Extension Services, Public Library, Library Services, Colombo Public Library

Introduction

The public library is unique as an institute which provides public services for those who need library services. The public library provides number of library services in an extended range such as information services, education, fun and entertainment. The UNESCO manifesto on public library (1972) has defined "Public Library'' as follows. The public library is a public institute which is alive and significant in developing peace & harmony, mutual understanding among nations. The public library is the main mechanism which provides information sources needed for education and research freely and independently & for common utilization. The public library provides services by supplying books for fun & entertainment, helping for lifelong learning, supplying necessary knowledge for those who are studying and making approaches for novel knowledge in public technological, scientific & social knowledge.

The public library should be definitely maintained as an institute, which is beyond the discrimination of nation, religion, cast, language, sex, education, living status and also professional and social discrimination in performing the said functions. Service necessities

of all citizens; children, youngsters and adults should be taken in to consideration. The public library is unique as an institute which provides services to the public in fulfilling a diverse set of information services without any discrimination.

Providing services for those who are able to approach the library and not able to is the main function which should be performed by a public library. If the user is not approaching the library, the library should approach the user. Library services should be brought for those who are unable to approach the library, but enthusiastic to read books. Thus, there are so many library extension services to be implemented for the above said endeavour. This study is to investigate the library extension services which are implemented by Colombo public library; the largest public library in Sri Lanka.

Colombo Public Library

The Colombo public library was established in 1952 by integrating two sponsor libraries namely Colombo library and the library in Pettah. After that, in 1980 it was established in a building close to Viharamahadevi park, Sri Marks Fernando road, Colombo 07. At the initial stage, the staff consisted seven (7) members with the guidance of the Librarian Mr. S.C.Block. The Colombo public library was led by 7 Librarians up to now. At the initial stage, the library which was commenced with approximately 20000 books was composed with three(3) sections namely Lending section, Reference section and Reading hall.

When considering the current situation, the number of permanent users of the library is more than 65000 and approximately 2500 people are daily using the library. Today, the total number of the library collection is approximately five million. The staff also consists more than 100 members to serve the users. There are several service providing sections implemented in order to provide effective information necessities of the users. Lending Section, Reference Section, Children Section, Newspapers and Magazines Section, Special & Rare Section, Audio Visual Section, Computer Section, Reading halls and Study halls are some of them. This library provides many services namely Internet service, Photocopy & Scanning service, Inter Library loan service and Auditorium facilities for the community of users. The distinguished feature of Colombo public library beyond the other public libraries of Sri Lanka is the implementation of number of extension services of the users.

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Extension Services of Colombo Public Library

An extension service of public library is to increase the services rendered by public libraries in every possible way and it's utilization. In other words, it's to organize public libraries making it more beneficial for majority of people.

Colombo Public Library implements number of library extension services with the target of providing information services equally to all the users. Number of services are implemented aiming children and also youngsters, adults and those who are unable to approach the library. Several extension services implemented by it can be identified through this study.

❖ *Mobile Library Services*

This mobile library service is implemented aiming to provide library services approaching the users, without waiting for the users to approach the library with the concept that the knowledge should be common to all the people. This service which was commenced in 1975, provides services for the users in 40 places in Colombo in order to read books. This mobile service arrives at these particular places ones a fortnight. These places are irregularly composed with State institutions, Flat complex, Areas where low income families are settled, Prisons, Universities, Children and Elder homes.

❖ *Book Box Service*

This Book Box Service is implemented in order to improve the desire of reading and the skills of information research of children of low income families in Colombo. This service which was commenced with the sponsorship of United Nations children's fund is implemented for the children up to 15 years of age. This service is provided for 42 places in Colombo and its surrounding areas. The special feature of this is that no fines are taken to be paid.

❖ *Branch Libraries*

Eleven (11) branch libraries are being implemented by Colombo public library in order to provide opportunities for those who need to use libraries and to expand library services.The branch libraries are scattered throughout Colombo and the library now provides facilities to all residents within the city has aided in promoting the reading habit

and the dissemination of information.The following shows the particular places where this service is provided.

- ✓ Kirulapona Branch Library
- ✓ Mihindu Mawatha Branch Library
- ✓ Elliot Branch Library
- ✓ Kettarama Branch Library
- ✓ Mattakkuliya Branch Library
- ✓ Kotahena Branch Library
- ✓ Sri Sucharitha Branch Library
- ✓ Peterson Lane Branch Library
- ✓ Belmont Street Branch Library
- ✓ Henry Pediris Childrens Library
- ✓ Gunasinghe Park Reading Room

❖ *Special Services for Children*

The Colombo public library implements number of special services for children. Based on a diverse set of themes, several programmes are implemented. For example,

- Story hour : enhancing reading skills among children by allocating one hours on Saturdays to read stories.

- Performing the ritual of visiting relatives with the participation of pupils by giving a significant place to the rituals and customs of the new year in the month of April. Introducing our ancient rituals to children and developing peace and harmony is expected through this theme.

- Preparing Vesak decorations and selecting the best vesak lantern in May.

- Preparing Kites and implementing programmes to fly kites in August.

- Conducting Books exhibitions in September based on Literature Month and providing opportunities to purchase books under minimum prices. Giving prizes for the best creations by conducting literary competitions.

- Conducting lectures and workshops with Authors taking the National Reading month in October in to consideration.

- Prize giving for all the child users (children about 1000 users) for the World Children's Day.
- Creating greeting cards with child users for special days such as Teacher's Day and Christmas.
- Taking children to visit bookshops and libraries by organizing library trips.
- Prize giving by selecting the users who are more engaged in Reading.
- Organizing seminars, workshops and lectures for those students who face Grade 5 Scholarship, ordinary level and Advanced level examinations.

The Colombo public library implements number of such extension services in order to develop the desire for reading among children in this manner and to generate willingness to use the library for those who do not approach it.

❖ ***Special Services for Youngers and Adults***

Colombo public library implements several programmes not only for children, but also youngers and adults in order to use the library. For example,

- Maintaining reading societies.
- Organizing refreshment stall for vesak.
- Providing spectacles by organizing health camps, local and foreign treatments for different illnesses, implementing blood donation and nutritional programme.
- Conducting classes for adults to increase the awareness of usage of technological equipment such as computer and Tab.
- Maintain a book fair for a period of one week during the Literature Month.
- Conducting discussions on books with famous authors during the Reading Month.
- Conducting different lectures and workshops in relation to contemporary topics.

❖ ***Language Corner***

This opportunity is provided for those users who have a special desire to study different languages. There is the opportunity to learn the particular languages in relation to Japanese corner, Vietnam corner and Korean corner. The user can also study the history, economy, social and cultural aspects of particular countries. Internet facilities and facilities to watch videos are provided for all children, youngers and adults. This attractive language corner is

used by a large number of users. Sometimes, scholarships are also provided for foreign tours.

Conclusion

It is obvious that number of extension services are conducted by Colombo public library. Diverse set of programmes are implemented in order to generate willingness among children and make them to use libraries. It is also obvious that particular library services are rendered for different social groups such as those who are unable to approach libraries, those who are prisoned, disabled and elders. There are several issues and challenges faced by the Colombo public library when providing the above said services for every community of users. Having inadequate numbers of trained staff members, limited space in providing the said services, storage of equipment and mobile vehicles, inadequate welfare facilities for user are some of the challenges faced by Colombo public library. If adequate financial support is provided, library services will be extended by minimizing the above issues.

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