

**BUILDING LIBRARY COLLECTIONS
AND
NATIONAL POLICY FOR LIBRARY
AND INFORMATION SERVICES**

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BOOK PROCUREMENT DELAY : A DEMOTIVATOR TO USER PARTICIPATION IN COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

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1 INTRODUCTION

In a recent case study¹ it was revealed that 35 percent of total acquisition of books were against specific suggestions of users and only about 21 percent of total users have ever suggested books to ISRO Satellite Centre (ISAC) Library. It was also observed that one of the reasons for such a low participation of users in collection development is book procurement delays. Quick and timely procurement of suggested/on demand books act as achievement motivator for further suggestions from users. On the other hand procurement delays could be dangerous disincentive to the meagre 21 percent of users who are presently participating in collection development activity.

Delays in providing on demand books to users have two major components. Firstly, order processing, classifying, cataloging and other processing delays at library, which mainly depend on the work environment of the library including quantum of work, available trained manpower and efficiency of the staff. Yet at this stage 'Line clear treatment' concept of Dr S R Ranganathan would help to minimise delays in case of suggested/on demand books. The second type of delays are at the book trade/suppliers end and this delay is substantially beyond the control of the library.

An attempt is made here to present actual data from ISAC Library to analyse the extent of delays on the part of book suppliers, which is distressfully heading towards discouraging users from participating in collection development. Incidentally the study also hopes to serve as guideline for future book procurement policy.

2 BACKGROUND OF THE DATA

Before analysing the data we should take note of the background of the data in terms of procurement policy of the library and limitations of the data. Supply position of books ordered by ISAC Library during 1983 are analysed as of mid September 1984. Orders for theses and reports, standing orders, orders based on approval books and ready stock announcements are excluded from the study for obvious reasons. Most of the orders were placed on more than a dozen carefully selected fairly known vendors, both Indian and foreign, including exclusive/specialised dealers and direct suppliers. Few orders placed on miscellaneous suppliers are clubbed with direct suppliers in the analysis. Most of the orders made directly on publishers required advance payments unlike credit supply terms of other vendors. Further, some of the outstation suppliers within the country compulsorily supplied through VPP or Railway parcel or road parcel involving a marginal delay. Though originally data was tabulated month-wise it was not found much useful as we were not trying to analyse the data for 'how soon' books are supplied. Taking for granted that there will be some delay, 'how many' books are supplied within a period of 8 to 20 months is examined. Hence data is grouped for four quarters of 1983 in Table 1. In addition the following limitations of the table may be noted.

Firstly, all the books for which there are specialised/exclusive representatives have been ordered on such Indian suppliers, i e, IS1, IS2 and IS3 in Table 1. Out of the remaining, books of popular publishers such as Academic, Pergamon and McGraw Hill are ordered in batches almost together on Indian suppliers (i e, IS4 to IS10) with the hope of getting many such books quickly from ready stock. Thirdly, as far as possible, each Indian supplier has been provided with orders representing books of all popular publishers. Yet due to lack of time supply position is not analysed here by publisher of the book. Fourthly, most of the books of professional bodies (so called short discounted titles) have been directly ordered with publishers including Indian publishers i e, IS11 and FS3. Fifthly, rest of the books including books of less known/obscure publishers, old books and books which are not likely to be available in local market have been ordered with two foreign suppliers (FS1 and FS2 in the table), one in UK and the other in USA, based on the nationality and pricing policy of the publishers. Sixthly, all orders except orders made during first quarter are for recently published books. Substantial number of books ordered during first quarter are published during 1970s. Lastly, data is found slightly inadequate in case of suppliers IS3 and IS5. So is in case of third and fourth quarter orders on Indian retailers.

Table 1 : Supply Status of on Demand Books Ordered during 1983 (as of September 1983)

SUP. LINE MONTH OF ORDER	SPECIALIST/SPECIALIST												RETAILERS												WAREHOUSE						TOTAL													
	SPECIALIST				SPECIALIST				SPECIALIST				SPECIALIST				SPECIALIST				SPECIALIST				TOTAL		TOTAL		TOTAL		TOTAL													
	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62				
JAN - MAR	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
APR - JUN	9	14	1	24	1	7	1	5	1	5	1	0	1	10	1	19	44	19	44	27	31	21	52	84	153	153	153	153	153	153	153	153	153	153	153	153	153	153	153	153				
JUL - SEP	6	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
OCT - DEC	29	6	8	43	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
TOTAL	44	35	9	86	21	7	22	75	25	24	49	53	226	28	55	28	74	57	40	53	197	197	197	197	197	197	197	197	197	197	197	197	197	197	197	197								

3 ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

It may be seen from Table 1 that out of 818 on demand books ordered during 1983, only 426 (i.e., 52 percent) are supplied by September 1984. This is against the usual tall claim of the industry that any book published anywhere in the world can be supplied in about six months time. In other words 48 percent of demands of users are not met even after 8/20 months of placing orders. By and large, exclusive/specialised agents have fared fairly better with an overall 82 percent efficiency. Though the ordering policy has a favourable edge to Indian retail vendors, the performance of foreign vendors with an average of 59 percent efficiency is much better than 28 percent efficiency of Indian vendors. It may be noted here that though foreign vendors have unilaterally cancelled some titles after lapse of six months/one year, the same are not excluded from the data. Among Indian vendors, highest percentage (i.e., 43 percent) of books have been bought by direct orders including orders on miscellaneous suppliers. The next highest performance among Indian vendors are by IS6 (41 percent) which has slightly inadequate data to generalise and IS1 (36 percent).

Among foreign vendors FS1 has been quite better with 74 percent of efficiency than FS2 which supplied 59 percent of books. However, direct and miscellaneous suppliers (FS3) could supply only 48 percent understandably due to infrequent contact of the library and lengthy advance payment procedure involved. Looking at the table for row totals we see the supply position of orders made during different quarters of 1983. For convenience Table 2 presents by extracting from Table 1⁶ percentages of on demand books supplied by Indian and foreign suppliers for orders of four quarters of 1983. An interesting observation is that the percentage of books supplied is not at all directly proportional to time as far as Indian retail vendors are concerned. However, supply of exclusive/specialised Indian dealers and foreign suppliers show a trend that more books are supplied against older orders. In fact, a reverse trend of more supplies against recent orders than old orders is seen in case of Indian retail vendors. This goes to confirm the general observation that many Indian book vendors make random supply in an accidental way, depending on match of pending orders with stock based on memory of operating staff. There were instances where books pending for supply for long time came as approval books either from the same vendors or others in the city. As such old orders may not materialise fully and reach 90 to 95 percent supply even after 2-3 years. Even the feedback about delay or non-availability or cancellation comes rarely from Indian vendors.

4 RESULTS AND OBSERVATIONS

To recapitulate from the analysis, out of 818 on demand books ordered

during 1983 only 426 (52 percent) are supplied so far, and average supplying efficiency of exclusive/specialised Indian dealers, foreign vendors and Indian vendors are 82 percent, 59 percent and 28 percent respectively. The direct orders on publishers and miscellaneous suppliers have brought reasonably good supplies. The percentage of books supplied is not directly proportional to time in case of Indian vendors. The study indicated that among the Indian vendors IS6, IS8 and IS11 are more efficient than others.

**Table 2 : Percentages of On Demand Books Supplied
(as of September 1984)**

<i>Month of Order</i>	<i>Supplier</i>			<i>Total</i>
	<i>Exclusive Specialised</i>	<i>Indian Retailers</i>	<i>Foreign</i>	
Jan—Mar 1983	100	23	65	39
Apr—Jun 1983	100	27	62	58
Jul—Sep 1983	88	39	69	64
Oct—Dec 1983	65	60	48	51
TOTAL	82	28	59	52

With the mushrooming of retail book vendors and certain problems of the trade no sign of improvement in on demand books supply position is seen in the near future. They try to concentrate on fairly costly books, standing orders on serials, books of popular publishers and prefer dealer library (approval) plan to promote what is available (or what is left?) in their stock than meeting on demand requirements of books. Very few of them have systematic methods of informing libraries about status of supply and nonsupply to enable libraries to take alternate action. In this respect, foreign vendors are quite prompt. With their computerised system, they inform libraries about status of supply as well as cancellation after lapse of stipulated period.

Few years ago, a similar experiment was done by ISAC Library with Indian wholesale dealers and the result was not much different from that of Indian retail vendors.

If user participation in collection development is discouraging, the supplying efficiency is much more gloomy as discussed above, thereby creating a vicious circle in special libraries where users are conscious of their rights and sensitive about their demands. Several users have expressed that they are losing faith in indenting/suggesting books to ISAC

Library as many of their earlier indents have not yet been fulfilled. Even after discounting an element of subjectivity in their feelings, there is truth in their views as evidenced in this study. If the library wishes to have constant patronage and participation of users in collection development, newer methods such as obtaining by bulk airfreight and/or selective airmail from foreign vendors may have to be explored at least in case of on-demand books once convinced about nonavailability in local market.

Finally, this study has enabled ISAC Library to know where it stands in terms of procurement of on demand books and how this data should be made use of in future procurement policies. Since users are not much concerned with the book trade/suppliers all the delays have to be apparently absorbed as delays at library and the librarian has to smilingly say user is always right. The problem persists to a great extent.

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