

PERSPECTIVES IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIANSHIP-2

# ACADEMIC LIBRARY EFFECTIVENESS

An abstract geometric design consisting of a jagged, stepped line that runs diagonally from the bottom left towards the top right. The line is composed of several segments of varying lengths, creating a staircase-like effect. The line is a light gray color, contrasting with the dark blue background.

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# **QUALITATIVE DEVELOPMENT OF COLLEGE LIBRARY COLLECTIONS**

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## **1. Introduction**

Teaching is a co-operative enterprise. Teachers must have the necessary tools for teaching purposes in the shape of libraries and laboratories. The library is the heart of all the work done in a college. Study of science subjects needs library as well as laboratory while for study of humanistic subjects, library is both the library and laboratory in one.<sup>1</sup> Hence good library is essential in the college for high quality teaching-learning process in humanities as well as science subjects. The objectives of a college library can be set out as follows:

Providing the information resources necessary for the teaching learning process in the fields of interest to the college.

Aiding the teachers in keeping abreast of the developments in their fields.

Opening the door to the wide world of already created and recorded information.

Encouraging reading for pleasure, self discovery, personal growth and the sharpening of intellectual curiosity.

These roles the college library has to play vindicates that the quality of teaching learning process in a college depends on quality of library and information services given there. Quality of these services depends on the quality of collection that is there in the college library. The collection in a college library should satisfy all curricular needs of the students and enable the teachers to keep abreast of new developments in their field.<sup>2</sup> So among the functions of college library; qualitative development of collection plays a vital role.

## **2. Definition of the concept.**

Quality is one of the prime concerns of management in all fields. But

usually the term quality is applied to goods and services that are produced and it refers to their productivity, desirability and affordability. All these elements are measurable. In management of library collections productivity element is the use into which the collection is put. Desirability is the capacity of the collection to meet the user's requirements. Affordability determines how fund can be utilized for collection to get maximum returns. So, like a producer planning consciously the quality of goods and services under the overall supervision of shrewd and experienced experts eyes, the principal in the college has to plan consciously the quality of the library collection and services under a well qualified and trained library professional.

A college library which is known for quality of collection will command respect of its user community that is teachers and students; and will be made fullest use of. To put simply, quality pays. It pays among user community because credibility of the collection will be established. It pays maintaining the collection because productivity is increased. Our college library collections need quality improvement as a continuous process. We are not making any conscious effort in this regard. No element contributing to quality control is present in our collection development practices.

Most important input for the production here is collection. Collection is relevant recorded knowledge in the form of books, journals, reports microfiche, cassettes, floppy disc etc. collected for use in the library. Any slackening or deficiency; that is lack of quality in this input may result in lack of quality of goods and services that may come out.

The term 'collection development' is used synonymously with the terms 'selection' and 'acquisition'. But collection development is a more encompassing term since it involves more than just selection and acquisition.<sup>3</sup> Building a collection may occasionally involve selection and acquisition of recorded knowledge. But exact meaning of the term collection development is; planned systematic development of an existing collection.<sup>4</sup> Collection development therefore is somewhat more than the mere act of selection and acquisition and is however synonymous with 'collection building' which presupposes a nucleus collection to develop over. The building up and developing of quality collection is the most important and most difficult of the professional librarian's responsibilities.

## 2.1 Collection Development

Learning is like sailing against a tide, if you don't advance you retreat, says a chinese proverb. This is very much true about development of library collections also. Any collection both in quantity and quality if not properly and constantly revised and updated will cease to be a live collection. A collection grows in a myriad of ways. It may grow in scope of its coverage, and it may grow in depth of its specialization; or it may just grow amoeba-like by means of pseudopodia - in this case a mixture of available funds and articulate personel preferences whether from the librarian or others.<sup>5</sup> Size is not synonymous with usefulness. Quantity does not always assure quality.

So qualitative collection development is the effective and timely selection of library materials forming carefully constructed area or subject collection, shaped over time by bibliographic experts. Collection development is the process of linking thousands of decisions into sensitive provision of needed recorded knowledge; the capacity to make the parts fit into the needed whole.<sup>6</sup>

## 3. Objectives and Methodology

This paper attempts a qualitative assessment of the document collections in post graduate colleges. It evaluates the methods followed in building up, revising and updating library collections in colleges. Measures that can improve the building up and development of college library collections are also suggested.

The Post Graduate colleges in Kerala managed by government only are taken for this study. Under Kerala Government there are seventeen Post Graduate colleges. These colleges come under three Universities; Calicut, Mahatma Gandhi and Kerala Universities. The study covered three colleges from each university area with due representation to colleges of rural area nearness. Required data for the study was collected by the author through the personal meeting of the librarians of these colleges. A preset questionnaire was used to extract information. Clarifications and additional information that became essential at a later-stage of study was collected through personal informal letters. The findings and conclusions of this study can be considered objective.

#### 4. Findings of the study

The average student strength of the nine colleges surveyed comes to 2154 which includes post graduate, graduate and pre university students. The average post graduate student strength is 70. The average teacher strength is 105. The average book collection number is 40287. Average annual fund allotted for books is Rs.52,000/- from various schemes. In all colleges there are Grade I Librarians as the Chief professional staff. Average professional staff strength of the libraries is 3. All libraries are in the charge of a Professor who is also the Head of some other Academic Department. In the councils and committees of the college it is this Professor and not the Librarian who represents the library. Except in one college under the study there is no Library Advisory Committee.

The average collection strength in colleges under study is 40287 books. Except in one college there is no provision for binding and preserving journals of lasting reference value. The average cost of the basic collection built up upto March 1989 per college is Rs.19.05 lakhs. But the quality of these basic collections existing in the colleges is unimaginably poor. Even one percent of this collection is not relevant or useful to satisfy the day to day information requirements of the students and teachers. The collections lack popular encyclopaedias, dictionaries and other reference books with which even the most basic information services and ready reference services are to be done.

##### 4.1 State of Collections

Of the nine colleges under study only five have a set of Encyclopaedia Britannica. But all these five colleges have purchased these sets before 1965. They have never updated the sets by adding the Britannica year books or acquiring a new edition. The editions of this reference set that came after 1975 were totally different in arrangement of information and now a fully up to date 1991 edition has become available. But no college has noticed these developments. None of the colleges under study owned an Encyclopaedia of Science and Technology even though very popular and useful sets are available in the market. None of the colleges owned a standard biographical dictionary that can answer such enquiries that may come in the college. Only one of the nine colleges; owned the complete set of published volumes of a Malayalam Encyclopaedia Sarvavijnanakosham brought out by State Institute of Encyclopaedic

Publications. Only five of the nine colleges owned copies of any of the three popular and authentic English-Malayalam Dictionaries available in the State; i.e. those compiled by T.Ramalingam Pillai, C.Madhavan Pillai or Lexicon Department of Kerala University. Seven colleges have never acquired a volume of any standard year book or directory which are usually required for reference on current affairs; by students and teachers, even though 'India' Annual published by Government of India, 'Times of India Directory and Year Book' and 'Manorama Year Book' published inside the State are available with every local bookseller. The total number of books that can be classified as reference books in the colleges under study came only upto 107 and their total cost came to an average of Rs.23,050. Of these 84 percent are acquired before 1965 at the initial stages of collection building and have become obsolete. The books on different subjects kept for reference and lending at the central collections maintained in the colleges were on verification found to be non-relevant and obsolete. For a sample evaluation the author checked the collection on a subject familiar to him, i.e. history. Even though the topic is of general interest to all students none of the college library has tried to maintain a quality collection on this subject. None of the central collections contained a copy of 'Advanced History of India' by R.C.Majumdar and others or a set of the 'History and Culture of the Indian People' brought out by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan which is considered to be an authentic work on the topic. Seven of the nine colleges owned no history book or Gazetteers brought out by Government of India and Kerala.

## 4.2 Distribution of Book Fund

The fund received from various sources utilized for books in the college per year comes to an average of Rs.52,000 per college during 1987-1990. The allocation of this fund among various subject Departments and collections is done by Purchase Committees constituted in the colleges with all Heads of Departments as members as per a Government Order.<sup>7</sup> Librarians are not considered by the colleges as equal to the Heads of other Departments in the college and are not represented in the purchase committee which allocates book fund in all these colleges. So Heads of other subject Departments represent interests of their departments arbitrarily at the cost of Library and Information Services in the purchase committee while allotting book funds. The strong and influential persons including the professor in-charge of the Library gets more share

for their departments usurping the justified General Reference collections and actual library needs. None of the colleges came under study is having a written policy with regard to book selection or collection development. The process of book selection entirely depends on the whims and fancies of the teachers who are entrusted with the work.

An abstract of the details of allocation of fund for books in one of the colleges under the study will be relevant in this context.

Year	Total Fund for books	Allocation to Departments	Allocation to central library	Set aside for Refe- rence Books
1987-88	27400	27400	00	00
1988-89	25000	25000	00	00
1989-90	139000	139000	00	00
1990-91	44077	44077	00	00

### 4.3 Lack of professional involvement

At present in the colleges, no control is being exercised by the librarians over collection, development policies and what is included in their collections. For general collections and reference books only 3 of the 9 colleges have any special allotment. Even from this allotment librarian is allowed to exercise authority to purchase the books in only one college. So in 90 percent of the colleges Librarians are acting purely as forwarding agents or clearing men between the vendors and faculties. As a result several corrupt practices have developed. The whole process of book selection and acquisition has become a mockery.

### 4.4 Acquisition practices

According to the details collected from colleges under study Head of Subject Divisions or Lecturers working under them entrusted by him with this work select and order books. The selection is done based on the list of books supplied to them by the interested bookseller or by their personal visits at the bookshops, immediately after the allotment of funds. Even duplicate checking is not done before this ordering. Teachers who predominate book selection process in college libraries never try to know and discover the needs and opinions of readers about the library. The scientific methods of book selection to be done in association with professional help

is followed in none of the colleges. As a result many required materials for maintaining library and information services and current books on relevant topics are left out. But multiple copies of substandard textbooks and non textbooks are purchased in merely to spend the amount in time. All these leads to ineffective library service to the user. Thus huge waste of precious library fund has become common in colleges.

## **5. Evaluation of the situation**

The qualitative development of collection actually means the planned systematic development of an existing basic collection of high quality. But the findings of our study show that in none of the colleges covered; a basic collection of required quality and relevance existed even though the colleges have spent about 20 lakhs for what is there in their collections. So we are forced to use the term 'collection development' synonymously with the term 'collection building'

### **5.1 Quality of collection**

If any collection of minimum quality is to come into existence in colleges the annual funds that becomes available to them for development of collections should be used judiciously for building up the basic collection for years to come.

Actually the amount government has spent for books in each of the college under study and the annual allotment for development of collections is more than sufficient for the building up of a basic collection and its developing to meet the day to day reference and reading needs of the students and teachers of the colleges satisfactorily. But due to the system defects, wrong policy on allocation of funds and unscientific selection of books a relevant collection of required quality has not come up in any college and due to same reasons development of collections also becomes mere quantitative development and not development of any relevance.

### **5.2 Role of Librarian**

A balanced book collection of high quality can be built up and developed only through a well planned distribution of funds meant for books among various departments, subjects and kinds of documents. To do this according to established principles, the full involvement of senior



library professionals is essential. Even though it has been suggested by University Grants Commission none of the colleges has formed Library Advisory Committees with Principal as Chairman, Librarian as Secretary and all other Heads of Departments as members. In the colleges under study the distribution of book fund and effecting of all purchases which includes the major item books also is done by a purchase committee in which Librarian is not represented. But it goes without saying that book fund is mainly intended for the library. Allocation of book fund by a committee without representation to the Head of the Library Division is improper. To make this look proper the colleges place the Head of some subject Department to be in charge of Library also, and considers him to be representing library in purchase committee. As we have seen in this study, this works against the interest for which government and UGC sanctions the fund.

For building up and developing a relevant and useful library collection in the college and for maintaining its quality; all decisions in colleges, related to library policy should be taken according to the advice of the Librarian. For this, representation of the professional Head of the Library Division in all councils and committees of the college with equal status to that of the Heads of other Subject Divisions of the College is essential.

### 5.3 Selection and Acquisition

In these days of information explosion, acquisition of information materials like books and other documents have become a highly specialized profession like teaching and is equal to any academic profession.<sup>8</sup> One of the basic assumption in the colleges is based upon the belief that the faculty members have a better knowledge of the needs of their students than the librarians have, since they are the ones who teach the courses. Proceeding on this assumption the function of book selection in the college libraries has been assigned to the heads of the departments or their nominees in the respective library committees in the colleges. But actually the faculty members, who are primarily engaged in the teaching and research often pursue only one or two areas of interest and as a result are comparatively limited in their ability to assess the overall needs of the library's clientele. On the other hand library professionals come into daily contact with the demands of teachers and students for books and other information and therefore they are in a better position to understand the needs of the users. The library professionals by virtue of their training and

experience, are more current about books than the teachers. The responsibility in book selection on a subject assigned to the Heads of the subject Departments in colleges, by University Grants Commission's Committee on College Libraries is to evaluate the book selection list on his subject forwarded to him by the Librarian and advice the Librarian on the relevance or non relevance of the titles included in the list.<sup>9</sup> The organizational system for collection development which can ensure quality is the system in which Librarians can finalize the plans for acquisitions based on the suggestions obtained from Heads of subject departments, information obtained from book selection tools, requirement assessed from library-user interaction and a policy of selection; to acquire materials of maximum utility with limited resources. Such proposals of Librarian should be evaluated only by a Library Advisory Committee. Therefore it is the professional Head of the Department in college which gives Library and Information services who is to be given the final word on distribution of book fund among subjects or on matters related to the selection and acquisition of books.

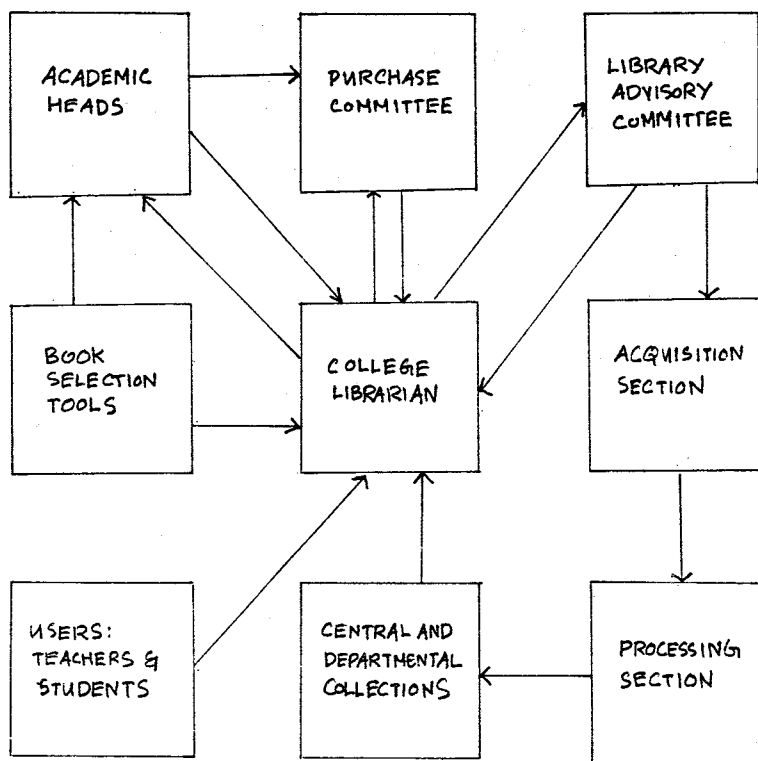
#### 5.4 Allocation of Funds

Finance plays an important role in building up and developing library collections. But finance alone can not help as we saw in the colleges we have surveyed. A balanced or need based collection depends on a well planned distribution of financial resources.

The allocation of book funds meant for building up and developing of collections should be done on the basis of well laid formula and policy.<sup>10</sup> In the college libraries we evaluated there is no theoretical framework to assist the Principal or Librarian to develop a systematic approach. The concept of scientific budgeting is necessary for libraries also to utilize the book fund effectively. A policy has to be evolved after obtaining the information on the exact needs of the library user - actual and projected; up-to-date and carefully analysed data on the existing collection; its strength and weakness in different subject areas; and the financial constraints and priority items.<sup>11</sup> The allocation is to be done not equally but equitably.<sup>12</sup>

College libraries after analysing such data may be able to finalize a written policy statement.

Possible interactions contributing to qualitative development of collections.



### 5.5 Need for Written Policy

A written collection development policy becomes an indispensable tool because it enables the librarians to work with greater consistency towards defined goals. It can also enable them to use limited funds more wisely resulting in quality collections. Due to ever increasing inflation and decreasing purchasing power of college libraries it has become necessary for the librarians to develop techniques to ensure that their limited book collections are developed to meet the pressing demands of their users.

It is better to have a written policy statements on allocation of funds, collection development aspects etc. A written policy can publicly express the relationship of allocation of funds, collection development method etc. to the objectives of the college and the needs of the teachers and students. A written policy justifies the selections made for the library. It will help to minimise personal bias on the part of the individual selectors. It can assure continuity in collection development because the staff who select books, often keep on changing. The written policy serves as a reference tool for new library staff members and the members of the purchase committee by informing them about the nature and content of existing collection. It can also help to determine the items to be weeded out.

## 6. Summary

The data collected for this study reveals that for building up the basic collection that is required for giving library and information services to teachers and students, Government has already utilized an average of 19.05 lakhs in each college. An average of 0.52 lakh per year is also allotted to every college for updating the collection. But a purpose oriented collection has not come up in any college. Collection development in college libraries at present is mere quantitative development; for there is no existing quality base to develop on. Lakhs and lakhs of rupees had been wasted due to the system defect and the unscientific methods of allocation and book selection. It is utilization of public money ineffectively and is a grave situation. More than that it very badly affects the teaching learning process that is going on in our colleges and so reform is urgent.

The following points are put forward to avoid the continuance of this situation and for reform.

### **6.1 Improving Basic Collection**

The Directorates of Collegiate, Medical and Technical Education which runs these colleges should immediately constitute an Expert Committee on College Libraries to conduct a scientific evaluation of the existing college library collections and services. The colleges should be directed to fill in immediately the lack of basic tools for library and information services and the gaps in collections identified by the committee. As the requirement of general reference sources in the colleges are almost identical the Directorate, with the advice of the Expert committee can insist on the colleges to acquire some selected information sources and journals in all colleges without fail. The finance required for the quality improvement of the basic collection according to the assessment of the Expert committee may be sanctioned to the college immediately.

### **6.2 General Guidelines.**

Government, Directorates of Collegiate, Medical and Technical Education and Universities should issue to the colleges clear guidelines on representation of Librarian in committees and councils of the colleges including purchase committee which allocates book fund. The related Acts, rules and government orders should be amended and revised accordingly. These guidelines should also cover aspects of allocation of book fund, methods of book selection etc. The expert committee on college libraries should verify periodically; if the colleges are adhering to these instructions or not.

### **6.3 Stress on Quality.**

The plans and policies related to college education have always emphasised quantitative targets and achievements like student strength, number of courses offered, number of books added to the collection etc. But no mention was ever made of the quality of materials acquired, their relevance to requirements the quality of education imparted and the like. In future plans and policies; more stress should be given to quality.

The inspections conducted in the colleges by teams from University, Government and Directorates check only the college's adherence to some existing procedures and practices on affairs related to collection building and development; and have never evaluated; if the procedures could help to fulfil the purposes or not.

## 6.4 Policies and Formulaes

The expert committee should develop a general formulae to be used by colleges for allocation of book funds among departments, subjects and kinds of reading materials. A general formulae on kinds of materials to be acquired; most Librarians of colleges covered by this study supported was that the allocation of book funds should be some what equal to 40 percent for reference sources, 20 percent for standard books on all subjects to be maintained in central collections, 20 percent for journals, and 20 percent for textbooks. It seems to be a reasonable allocation.

No committees, which have also to discuss on matter shaping library policy, collection building and development, quality checking of collections and services should be constituted in future by Universities, Government or colleges without due representation of library professionals.

Based on the guidelines given by Government or the Directorate and in consultation with and advice of the Heads of Library and other academic departments the colleges should prepare an official statement of the policy in some detail as to the institution's present and future programmes of teaching and other academic activities including library development. This written policy should clearly explain the college's policy for allocation of book fund and development of collection.

## 6.5 Need based Collection.

The collections at Central Library and Departments of the colleges should be built up or developed in future only in strict accordance with the possible and probable information requirements of the college. Many other studies on college libraries have opined that by improving selection and selection procedures and by adopting suitable book acquisition techniques the improvement of the quality of the library collection and its need based development is possible with the same financial resources now available to the colleges.

In colleges the responsibility for book selection and collection development should mainly rest with the library staff because they are fully conversant with all important aspects of the existing collection. The high rate of non-relevant and non use materials in college libraries demands greater interaction between library and other teaching departments in book selection. Library only can continuously watch current publishing and have information about all relevant documents on all subject areas.

So the academicians consulting the librarian before selecting any document is essential.

## 6.6 Other Aspects

Building up and developing the collection requires the associating of Librarian and experts on all subjects taught in the college. So besides purchase committee the college should form Library Advisory Committees with Principal as President, Librarian as Secretary and all Heads of the Departments as members. All recommendations for purchase of books from library and other subject, departments after their processing by the Librarian should be reviewed by this committee before ordering.

Librarian should periodically identify the gaps in the existing collections with the help of his staff and should report the same at the purchase committee meetings for allocation of funds. While allocating funds priority should be given to the filling of these subject gaps.

Journals are one of the most important sources for information about current development in all subject fields. So the quality and uptodateness of a college library collection depends also on the back and current volumes of relevant journals available in it. Special attention should be paid to the acquisition and retention of required journals. Volume of journals on completion should be send immediately for binding.

College libraries should adopt a systematic and regular weeding out programme to remove obsolete materials from the collection and to give space for current materials of relevance and importance. To maintain the quality and serviceability, the regular weeding out of unwanted materials is very essential.

## 7. Conclusion

Even if the colleges maintain maximum quality in regard to basic collection and its development, they cannot satisfy all the requirements of teachers and students. For no collection can independently provide all information asked for by all users at all times. That will require the collecting of rarely used as well as very costly materials by the colleges; which is not an economically viable policy. But to overcome this problem college libraries can form resource sharing networks. Such networks can avoid unnecessary duplication of expensive books and other documents and thus prevent the call for additional finance for this purpose.<sup>13</sup>

Responsible and effective library and information service at less cost will become possible. Teachers and students of the Colleges will have access to a wider range of materials, collections and services. Such regional level networks can be connected to the National level network INFLIBNET<sup>14</sup> planned by UGC which can rise the quality and usefulness of college libraries to unlimited extents,

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