Abstract

The paper focuses on the importance of librarian-faculty relationship in an academic library. It discusses how it helps in the development of library and improvement of its services, like collection development and maximum usage of resources available in the library by the users, which leads to the fulfillment of the ultimate goal of academic library, i.e. research and teaching. Various measures which can be implemented to improve the quality of this relationship have been discussed in detail.

Introduction

In today’s electronic age, the tech-savvy librarians not only bridge the gap between the users and the vast ocean of knowledge and information but also match the information and its users, present it in a usable manner with the help of latest technology, saving the time of the users. In fact they educate the users in an informal fashion. They provide quality learning spaces, creating metadata, virtual reference services and information literacy, selecting and managing resource licenses, collecting and digitizing archival materials and maintaining digital repositories (Campbell, 2006).

The role of academic librarians is changing fast. They are attempting to redefine their core activities to maintain their relevance with the core activities of the organization they serve, i.e. research and teaching. In the world of Internet, the information is readily available to the end users; therefore the librarians are seeking to embed their activities within academic programs, rather than just supporting or aligning with them. This can be achieved if the faculty and the librarians have cordial relationship with each other.

Gaps in the Librarian-Faculty Relations

Generally libraries encourage a culture of sharing, cooperation and collaboration, for the ultimate purpose of assisting students in their educational pursuits. But on the other hand the faculty work in isolation and proprietary. They value solitary work highly and see their classes as their own domain, untouchable even by other faculty. They think that the librarians are not fit to be part of faculty teaching or research. Like wise librarians do not find faculty to be aware of latest information technology or search techniques.

In the organizational structure the faculty members have more powers than the librarians in terms of decision making. The status difference between the two also leads to a gap in relationship. It relates to differences in work-time expectations, pay and benefits, power in academic policies and issues, and in terms of social relations between faculty and librarians. It is more like super ordinate-subordinate relationship. It is perceived that the librarians' work is more service oriented and their main duty is to provide smooth access to the information and its resources. On the other hand the main duty of the faculty is perceived to be producing and disseminating knowledge. The faculty are unaware of what librarians' actually do for their work, they do not see the non-service production in which librarians are engaged, i.e. research projects and publishing, creating new systems and techniques for searches, the development of collections, the development of courses and so on.

The other factor is that the librarians are labeled as “staff” and the faulty as “faculty” who have the doctorate degree as the terminal degree, whereas librarians generally have Masters’ degree as terminal degree.

Another reason may be the social context of the problem. Generally the librarianship is viewed as a female dominated profession; therefore it is undervalued in many ways.
Benefits of Improving Librarian-Faculty Relations

Since both faculty and the librarians have common goal so it is always advantageous to have a good relationship between them. The improved relation will yield in the better and optimal use of the library and its services by the faculty. The more they feel good about the library, the more they will encourage their students to use the library and its resources.\(^2\)

Improved librarian-faculty relations enhance the involvement of the faculty in the library collection development activities and involvement of the librarians in the non-library related teaching, research, instructional design and curriculum development.

It is also argued sometimes that the better librarian-faculty relations help in increasing the librarians’ ability to promote and support research among faculty members. It also makes them proactive rather than reactive in their approach to support the research activities of the organization.

Evaluating Librarian-Faculty Relations

Most of the academic librarians complain about the unfriendly relations with the faculty. The lack of interaction and communication between the librarians and the faculty leads to the poor relationships between the two. In an academic set up the librarians and the faculty work in separate domains. This gap widens mostly because of the ignorance of the faculty about the work and knowledge of the librarians.

The Faculty:

- May not know that librarians are willing to help;
- May feel that librarians do not have time to help;
- May feel ashamed to ask a librarian for help because it might be viewed by their colleagues and by the librarians as unscholarly;
- May be reluctant to admit that librarians have any contribution to make; and
- May be reluctant to admit that librarians actually made a contribution to their work.

The librarians may evaluate the system of their respective organizations and their individual relations with the faculty and try to make out the improvement they wish to have. The interpersonal contact has a significant positive correlation with faculty attitude towards library services.

Improving Librarian-Faculty Relations

Once it has been established that the improved librarian-faculty relations improve the library usage and services, the librarians should strive to improve theses relations by incorporating few value added services in the library, like increasing the awareness among faculty about the library services, involving faculty in library programs and librarians in faculty programs, providing direct support to faculty in their research.

**Improved Library Services for the Faculty**

With slight improvement in the existing services like Current Awareness service, Selective Dissemination of Information Service, Document Delivery Service, Database Searching, Inter Library Loan Service, the librarians can make the faculty more connected to the library.

**Current Awareness Service**: The purpose of the Current Awareness Service is to make the faculty aware of the new arrivals in the library. The Current Additions Bulletin and Current Contents Bulletin are two such widely used services.

**Current Additions**: The new additions in the library collections may be published in the form of “Current Additions”. It is a monthly publication and contains all the documents received in the library, be it a book, case material, CD, database, etc. These documents are indexed subject wise and sent to all faculty members in the organization in hard/soft copy. It can be published on the web portal of the library also.

**Current Contents**: The counterpart of the Current Additions is the Current Contents. It is a weekly publication and contains the index page of the journals received during the week. This publication can be arranged subject wise and sent to the faculty via e-mail. By keeping the archives of this publication, the faculty can have the research papers/articles published on a particular subject at one place.

**Database Searching**

Providing help to the faculty in their research work by doing literature search on their behalf, using databases available in the library, can make the librarian-faculty relations more bonding. This can be on demand or in anticipation of demand. When the librarians and faculty are having good communications, the librarians will be able to know the areas of research of the faculty members. They can do time to time literature search on their behalf and provide them the results in a usable manner.

The search can be done on demand also for a specific topic. From the vast ocean of literature available on internet, the librarians can find out the relevant information, saving their time and present it in a usable fashion to the faculty.

**Document Delivery**

The Document Delivery Service given to the faculty is to make the required document available to them. If the requested item is available in the library, it is issued to them, if not; it is made available to them by using Inter Library Loan (ILL) Service. The purpose is to provide them the required information in least time, using least energy, in a usable format. This effort on the librarians’ part can show the faculty that the library is serious in providing the information necessary for their research work.
**Library Network**

The library catalogue should be accessible through network connections within and outside the campus. This should be internet based, i.e. WEB OPAC. So that the faculty can see the collection of the library without being present in the library and select the documents relevant for the teaching and research.

Besides this the librarians should be easily accessible through phone and e-mail in case an urgent help is required. They can send instant requests for the new document for the library collection, ILL request for not available documents, topics for database searching and so on and so forth.

**Newsletter**

By publishing newsletters for the library activities on a regular basis, and circulating it amongst faculty members, the librarians can make them aware of the library services. To make it more widely accepted, the overall activities of the organization can be included in it. The papers presented/published in journals by the faculty, seminars/conference organized and attended, forthcoming seminars/conferences to be held by the organization, new arrivals in the library and other similar information can be published in the newsletter. The frequency of the newsletter can be monthly. The electronic version of the same can be sent to the faculty. It will save paper and can be sent instantly to multiple recipients.

**Involving Faculty in Library’s Core Activities**

The involvement of the faculty in the core activities of the library, i.e. selection and evaluation of collection, preservation and weeding, serials cancellation, Library Advisory Committees, helps in making the better librarian-faculty relations.

**Selecting/Evaluating Library Collection**

By involving faculty in the selection of documents for the library collection, the librarians can increase the interest of the faculty towards the library and its resources. A systematic and strategically developed collection will ultimately help the library users in their teaching and research activities. Not only selection, but regular evaluation of library collection also connects faculty to the library. These two activities of the library, with the involvement of the faculty, leads to a well documented collection development policy for the library. This ultimately strengthens the librarian-faculty relationship.

**Preservation And Weeding**

While involving faculty in the selection and evaluation of the library collection, the librarians must involve them in the preservation and weeding activities also. The decisions, whether the previous issues of journals are to be bound or weeded out, the obsolete books should be weeded out or not, the very old and rare documents should be preserved in some other form which takes less space and is easy to use, like CDs or DVDs or may be stored in servers, should be taken in consultation with the faculty. It helps in making the library well focused towards its goal.

**Serials Selection And Cancellation**

In most of the libraries, serials selection and cancellation is an annual exercise. Invoking faculty members in the selection and cancellation of serials for the library affects positively on the relationship between librarian and the faculty members. A list of prospective serials is circulated among the faculty members and their suggestions are invited in approving/disapproving the serial for the next year. On the basis of the suggestions received, the list of selected journals/serials is prepared for approval by the competent authority. This exercise not only makes the library collection a very balanced one, but also increases the interest of the faculty in the library.

**Library Advisory Committees**

For the overall development and growth of the library, Library Advisory Committee (LIC) is formed in the organization with the librarian and few faculty as members. They meet on a regular basis to discuss the problems of the library and suggestions are invited for further improvement. The librarian and the faculty come to know about the expectations and views of each other about the library - its collection and services. There may be some disagreements also, but gradually they may fade out, since the ultimate goal of the LIC is to improve the library collection and services. Healthy discussions may lead to better and positive relations between the librarian and the faculty members.

**Faculty Status for the Librarians**

The controversy over faculty status for librarians has been one of the leading issues among academic librarians, college and university faculties and the administration also. It is advocated by the librarians that in academic institutions, the importance of the librarian is equal to that of faculty members, so the librarians should also get the faculty status. On the other hand faculty feels that they are knowledge producers and librarians are disseminators of knowledge produced by the faculty. So it is more like super ordinate-subordinate relationship between the two. Many agree that the faculty status benefits the librarians and the profession of librarianship by providing recognition, respect and certain privileges, like financial benefits and possibility of job security through the tenure process.

On 27th of May, 2008, Dr. Dr. P.V. Konnur President Indian Academic Library Association (IALA) submitted a proposal to Prof. G.K. Chadha, Chairman, UGC Pay Review Committee advocating the provision of faculty status to the library professionals in universities and colleges.

The Ministry of HRD, Department of Higher Education, New Delhi released an Order to the UGC on 3rd December, 2008, regarding revision of pay of the teachers and equivalent cadres in universities and
colleges following the recommendations of the 6th CPC.\(^6\)

Based on these recommendations, IALA sent a representation regarding the anomalies in the report and gave some suggestions for removal of disparities in promotion and benefits to librarians in colleges and universities.\(^6\)

The recent developments in this connection are a welcome sign by recognizing the importance of librarians in an academic set up. On the other hand, it is the responsibility of the librarians also to prove themselves worthwhile by giving contribution in academic goals of their parent organization.

**Conclusion**

The relationship between librarian and faculty should be seen in terms of cooperation and not conflict. The better and harmonious relationship between the two would help the organization achieve its ultimate goal, i.e. better and improved teaching and research.

**References**