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ROLE OF LIBRARIAN IN INFORMATION SERVICES

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ABSTRACT

The levels of information service, however, are very definitely conditioned by the nature of the information they deal with, and so may vary enormously. It is this fact that has led some of those engaged on the highest levels, and particularly in science, to insist that they do not belong to the same profession as librarian, I believe that it is this last factor that distinguishes the modern Information service from any library, no matter how good that provides information only when it is asked to do so.

I. INTRODUCTION

Libraries have always been Information Services, because the word 'Information' has such a broad connotation that any person who systematically imparts knowledge to others may be called an Librarian. That this article should begin with such an utterly commonplace observation is a measure of the futility of the discussion. Often acrimonious, that have taken place among those who in one way or another, build up collection of books, papers, film, gramophone records and other documents so that the information they contain shall be useful in circumstance other than those in which it was discovered and records. The social function of an information service is to find out what is known of a particular subject, and provide so much of it as is wanted by enquirer in order to fill a gap in his knowledge.

The levels of information service, however, are very definitely conditioned by the nature of the information they deal with, and so may vary enormously. It is this fact that has led some of those engaged on the highest levels, and particularly in science, to insist that they do not belong to the same profession as librarian, who in some libraries, may be engaged on the lowest, as well as on higher, levels. It is mainly in scientific and industrial research that the Information service or information library.

When first set up, most of these libraries fulfilled the traditional role of a collecting and storing agency, but the benefit that a research team can gain from skilful use of the literature soon became obvious, as did the advantage of centralizing such operation as the scanning of new literature and searching for information on specific problem.

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Selection and Acquisition of Stock

In a careful analysis of the use of staff in the small information library. B. C. Vickery linked the selection of stock to the administrative control of the whole library. Whoever has the responsibility of selecting items for purchase should be ultimately responsible for the rest of the library work.

The main problem however is actually to find out the existence of new publication. Although we no doubt have better bibliographical control than has ever existed before, it is still surprising now often a useful paper is picked up only some years after its first appearance.

Arrangement and Indexing

While the systematic arrangement of a library's stock has long been admitted to be one of the most important foundation of its work, there is a most significant and revealing difference in the attitude towards classification shown by librarian on the one hand and librarian of other types of library on the other. Librarian have at least shown their awareness of modern thought and several have adopted either the library of congress Classification or Bliss's Bibliographic Classification they have not shirked the task of re classifying even hundreds of thousand of volumes in order to make their arrangement more up to date.

Even special librarians have to some extent held up progress by their widespread adoption of the Universal Decimal Classification.

Dissemination of Information

If most of the research and original thinking in the information library field has centered on arrangement and indexing by far the greatest emphasis in practice lies on the dissemination of information. In fact it may truly be said that this is the characteristic activity of the special library. Distinguishing it more than any other feature from University and public libraries.

Most libraries nowadays adopt some method of keeping their readers informed about the material coming into their stock. The days of merely inserting cards in the catalogue and posting up some of the brighter dust jackets are passing. But just as there are various levels in enquiry work so there are various levels of dissemination and the better the library the higher the level it will reach. In the old days cards were inserted in the catalogue it was said to answer certain enquiries that readers might make on author, subject and so forth.

So much for the distribution of individual documents to individuals knowledge of interests combined with a sense of urgency are the prime factors.

The great standard form of publication for the special library of course is the bulletin of abstract of which there must be many hundreds produced for the private circulation.

II. REFERENCE SERVICE

Dissemination information that will keep its readers well informed and up to date in their own and related subjects forms one aspect of information service the second of equal importance is the provision of answers to specific enquiries question and this may take several forms according to the nature of the question actually asked.

In reference service the basic qualification is probably experience through which a librarian acquires the flair that directs him along the paths most likely to the information he wants. There is no substitute for this and even the most enthusiastic beginner should if possible learn the business under the direct guidance of an experienced colleague. Nor in fact does it suffice for good reference service. It may be that libraries exist where the level of service is so low that all the enquiries received in are satisfied at once from the stock.

The final question about records must be whether the record of an enquiry justifies itself by making a contribution to the reference service and although this seems to call for powers of prophecy the answer probably reflects the quality of the librarian's flair.

III. OTHER SERVICES

Accepting the theory of the librarian and information officer's responsibility for the bibliographical preparedness of his organization creates at once an interest in several other techniques which have become quite a familiar part of the information library science. Perhaps the most important of these is the translating of papers in foreign languages indeed, a knowledge of several foreign languages is one of the qualifications suggested by Farradane for his information scientist. On the other hand there seems to be for the present at any rate, fairly general agreement that translator requires qualification that are not necessarily part of the equipment of the information officer, who must however, have some knowledge of the terminology of his subjects in as many foreign languages as possible.

Without it he can scarcely carry out his obligation in the scrutiny of foreign journals. All these services offered by the information library involve to a greater or lesser extent the question of copyright. Clearly the rights of an author or publisher may be severely infringed if unauthorized copies of his work are scattered broadcast. In research authors at least are usually only too anxious for their works to reach the widest possible audience but some publishers now place a strict embargo on reproducing part from any of their publication without written permission.

However, as we know, copying in libraries is of sufficient importance to warrant the attention of legislators and the 1956 Copyright Act has a word to say about it. Under the terms of the Act, non profit making libraries are permitted to make single copies for research purpose and not for sale except at cost price.

The important exception is that part of an information service that is concerned with the presentation and dissemination of information,

Further Development in Information Service

The temptation to prophesy what might happen for the best in the future is well-nigh irresistible, and it so happens that this is a particularly auspicious moment for prophecy in our profession. Several promising development are already under way and with the Roberts committee reporting on public libraries to the minister of Education and the International Conference on Scientific Information.

If we believe that the special libraries are now the vanguard of the profession it seems logical to consider how much their characteristic contribution can be adapted to suit other types of libraries.

Role of the Librarian

When the need for an active service of information made itself felt, it at once become necessary to find someone to organize the service and although the libraries had begun their existence already they had more often than not been put in the charge of a junior member of the staff sometimes of a typist or the secretary of the director of research. As long as the function was merely one of keeping records, it did not appear to demand qualified staff how great a mistake this was is readily perceived by those who have to work with catalogues and indexes begun in this style. What was now required however was far removed from such matters as the circulation of periodicals to those who asked for them and since a good service to each individual research man depended on a good understanding of his needs it is scarcely surprising that the position was usually assumed by a scientist already working for the organization.

There is no doubt that this was justly considered to be a function of a superior order to that of the management of a small library high qualification were demanded of a person whom the research workers could trust not to overlook new work that might be important to them. There is obviously far more involved here than in simply building up a collection which is bound to be small in most industrial libraries because of the limited range of subject covered. It must be appreciated that it is no light matter for a research man to pass over to someone else the duty of keeping watch over new publication for him not in far do they do so completely since every scientist must read at least those that deal specifically with his own subject in his own language . S. Weinberg has pointed out that in a small firm the fuction might well be assumed ny the director of research himself. He might not ne aware of everything that his staff would like to read, but he would certainly know what they ought to read.

Evaluation for a n Librarian means knowing whether or not the new information he receives in his library is related to the work that his colleagues are doing. He may be able to suggest the nature of the relationship, but I do not see how he can expect to specify it exactly. He must be able to recognize for example that an article entitled “Radiation cross linking mechanisms” may deal with the properties of polythene and if this interests his firm he will read the article to find out.

IV. CONCLUSION

I have no doubt that many readers will recognize their own views and practices. Nevertheless, I have deliberately set out to give a personal view of the subject because there are already several works mention the Aslib Handbooks of Special librarianship and information.

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