

User Expectations in Private-Public Libraries in India

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Introduction

Private-public libraries are those public institutions that are run by private management. Except in finance and governance, all activities, functions, and aims are the same for both private-public libraries and government public libraries. Private-public libraries get their operating expenses from donations, subscription or membership fees, and user community grants from the Department of Culture of the Government of India. Public library funds are provided by government funds that are created by means of taxes, donations, subscriptions, government grants and user fees.

Private agencies or registered societies maintain private-public libraries. They have the right to allocate the funds for both recurring and nonrecurring expenses. The administrators of these libraries create policies for management and administration. Government public libraries, by contrast, must adhere to government rules and regulations for the allocation of funds and other administrative matters.

Some private-public Libraries (Tamil Nadu-India)

- Maraimalai Adikal Library - Chennai
- U.V Swaminatha Iyer Library - Chennai
- Roja Muthiah Library - Chennai
- Saraswath Mahal Library - Tanjore
- Owen Trust Library - Nagercoil
- Raja Ram Mohan Roy Library - Calcutta
- Pennington Public Library - Srivilliputthur

Users and Their Expectations

Private-public library users include students, teachers, scholars, businesspeople, housewives, professionals, retired persons, the newly literate, and so on. Their educational attainments, interests, and cultural backgrounds will vary a great deal. Mostly

users use a private-public library for either general reading or for obtaining documents or information on a subject. Each user group has different needs and expectations. The private-public library's role is to provide accurate information quickly to any individual or group.

When determining the needs of users it is essential to know: Who are they? What are their backgrounds? What are their qualifications, knowledge of languages, areas of research and specialization? For what purpose do they seek information? How would they assess the quality of library service? Information service exists for the sake of users. Therefore, it is essential to know what they need.

User Expectations and Information Technology

By employing modern technology a private-public library should be able to supply information to the right users in the right form at the right time. Private-public libraries should be equipped with computers to automate all library activities. Information technology should also be used in every private-public library for effective management and administration. Computer networks can help end users share resources, ideas, and knowledge electronically and communicate with the users worldwide. Paper documents should gradually be replaced with electronic formats wherever possible. Every private-public library should acquire these technologies to meet the complex demands of the user and also to deal with space problems in the library.

User Education and User Expectations

There is an enormous waste of resources due to nonuse and misuse in all types of libraries. This presents a great challenge. Educating the user is the proper solution. With shrinking budgets, libraries must encourage users to make greater and better use of available resources. In addition, educating the library user improves the quality of use. User education aims to provide knowledge and skills necessary for a user to find his way.

A new library user would not be familiar with the ways of the library. He would not know about rules, regulations, and services of the library. The tools of the library are not easy for a beginner to understand. There are many particulars about the arrangements of documents, the layout of various sections, and the kind of services being provided. All this requires some sort of orientation, otherwise new users might feel inhibited in using the library. Private-public libraries require experienced, knowledgeable reference librarians who possess practical knowledge about the psychology of users, and are able to hold their interest. Instruction should aim to increase user awareness of the library as a primary source of information and as a place to turn to for assistance. This is achieved through publicizing the library, with special reference to the resources and services available to the community.

Users expect the staff to be informed about modern technology. The staff should understand recent developments in the field. Librarians must be patient with users, since to implement and to understand new technology is a tedious process for both sides.

Member fees should be nominal so that everyone in the area can become a member. User suggestions should be considered in selecting material for the library. All

private-public libraries should provide a separate section for children and young people as a part of their service to the younger community, with staff who enjoy working with children.

Conclusion

The private-public library runs with the the financial assistance of the library organization and support from the local people. It is important to know the community that the library serves, to make the library efficient through the use of modern technology, to publicize the library and its services, and to provide user education to maximize use of the library.

References

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