

## **DESIGNING A CREATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY SYSTEM IN SRI LANKA**

**K.R.N. Harshani**

Faculty of Applied Sciences Library,  
Rajarata University of Sri Lanka, Mihintale, Sri Lanka.  
*wimukasi@yahoo.com*

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### **Introduction**

A library is a social organization and its main function is preserving and disseminating knowledge and information for the enhancement of human culture and civilization. At one time a library was defined as a store house and books were only kept for the purpose of preservation. The present library system in Sri Lanka consists of different kinds of libraries which differ in terms of their administration, objectives, users, books and services. These libraries can be divided as National library, Special library, University library, School library and public library.

Each library has various functions and services. But the main objective of a library is to store and provide information. Staff and the student of the university come to libraries for many study related reasons, and for studying in the library. Some users prefer study carol seating and others prefer several seating facility. A variety of seating options and surroundings is recommended for a user oriented facility. The "library as a place" is still an important aspect of practical library management. When the users enter the

library his/her first impression counts very much. Impressions can give some idea about the library. As the library is service oriented it may be that the user has to stay in the library for a long period.

Ramana (2010) expresses that the academic libraries need to develop an elegant, comfortable and conducive learning environment in the library to attract more number of users. They must provide a clean, bright, warm and well-lit learning environment. Libraries renovate facilities to incorporate technology and provide more comfortable spaces to promote learning environment. Library staff needs to be professionally more proactive, user friendly, welcoming and helpful in order to encourage the users to visit the library. If users visit the library, they will be aware of the facilities, resources and services offered to them and thus increase the usage of the library. The purpose of this paper is to describe the way of design a creative learning environment in university library buildings in Sri Lanka.

Sharma (1990) points out the important principles which are popularly

considered in planning process, as mentioned below

- (a) The building should be utilized by all without any consideration for caste, creed and sex. Library is a social organism and everybody who comes is a member of the society and should be free to use it. Hence it should be planned accordingly.
- (b) There are contradictory natures in organism or the functional design may be good looking, costly and can be appreciated by a layman. But until the building is functional, it cannot be put to effective and sincere service to the community. Hence the building should be designed on the functional basis.
- (c) Building should be simple in construction, but effective for efficient service.
- (d) Reading area ; The reading rooms should be near the stack area. It helps an easy approach to reading materials.
- (e) The building should be designed to facilitate the administrative working and all other operations done in a library.
- (f) A foresight outlook should be applied and expansion programme should be given due consideration. The library grows continuously and thus future anticipation should be kept in mind while planning a library building.
- (g) A detailed study should be made above and over all activities of a library and a brief statement, concerning its future in the light of proportionate future growth.
- (h) Physical facilities should be provided in proportion to the

reading community and the library staff.

Therefore the library building design is one of the most important factors needed for the development of the libraries. The library is a growing organism.

### **Methodology**

The university libraries of Peradeniya, Colombo, Kelaniya, Sri Jayawardenepura and Moratuwa established in 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s respectively were selected for the study. Only the undergraduate (first year and final year) students were the selected as respondents. They were given the opportunity to comment freely on positive as well as negative features observed in their interaction with the library. Survey research methodology was used to conduct this study. Primary data was collected through observation, questionnaires, and interviews and field visits. The library plans, floor plans and annual reports were used to obtain secondary data.

### **Experimental results**

Among the university building complexes, the library building structure takes pride of place. It is of imperative significance that the library buildings is centrally located, easily accessible and identifiable with a solemn and dignified outlook that befits the place to have an appealing entrance on the clientele. A library building has to be simple in construction and easy to maintain with space for additions and renovations in future. Auditoriums and exhibition rooms not only fulfill efficient and effective services, but also can be

additional source of income, and an attraction to the prospective clients. Carrels should be set up preferably with a computer unit for individual use of readers. They are known as study Carrels and providing this facility can be decided based on the number of membership category members requirements and etc. This can be considered as a very effective way of serving readers. It is psychologically correct to say that readers need some rest during their studies in libraries. A relaxation area within the library is an important feature in a modern library. Members should be able to use a library in the most time effective way. Floor charts and section charts should be displayed on every floor and each and every section of the library. This helps the readers to reach the book and

look for without wasting their precious time.

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