

# **Library buildings planning and its service: with special reference to university library systems**

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## **Abstract**

*A library is a social organization and its main function is preserving and disseminating the 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. The aim of this study was to introduce main services of the university library building. This paper gives brief idea about the basic need of university library buildings in Sri Lanka. It is very important in the library building structure and efficient and effective library services. The method used for this study was to descriptive research.*

**Keywords:** *University library, library buildings*

## **Introduction**

Each library has various functions and services. But the main objective of a library is to store and provide information. “Library” is a general term used for the system which supplies a reader with information on request, dissemination of information and direct handling of books and other materials. In the distribution of books, periodicals, audio – visual material ect. (*Education in Ceylon: A Centenary Volume, 1969*)

All the libraries are funded either directly or indirectly by the government. Among these libraries a university library is a main part of the university setup. Also it is regarded as the heart of the university system. A university library plays a leading role in teaching as well as learning process providing information and knowledge required by the academics and the students.

On the other hand a library is regarded as a hallowed place where quietness is a key factor. All the users want to get their necessary information with no disturbances. Therefore the library or the library building should be structured taking into consideration the needs of the users and the staff.

Singha (2004) states that ‘the library is the backbone of any organization whether it is a Public library, School library, College library, University library or Research library. However rich the collection of these libraries might be, they would not fulfill their propose if their library buildings are not attractive with beautiful elevation and equipped with comfortable furniture. Only then it would attract readers and invite them to enter into these temples of knowledge and get enriched with mental food without any tension.’

Francis Bacon says 'Reading maketh a full man and writing maketh a perfect man.' Therefore library can create full men and perfect men. 'A library' gives a wider sense of understanding as it is not merely a collection of books, reading materials and information. When both these building and information sources are put together, it is considered as a library. A mere collection of information sources or a building alone cannot be called a library.

### **University Library**

Mainly, a university library is expected to cater to the varied needs and requirements of undergraduates, post-graduate students, research scholars and other academic and non-academic library members. The collection of a university library consists of books connected with their subject's related information as well as research and teaching needs. In addition a university library occupies recreational information and literary sources too.

Ranganathan (1928) formulated the fundamental laws of library science and he enunciated the five laws of library science as:

1. Books are for use
2. Every reader his book
3. Every book its reader
4. Save time of the reader
5. Library is a growing organism

As such any kind of library is supposed to play a huge role in the learning, teaching and research process. Nowadays readers are considered as 'customers' from a management point of view because the libraries today are more service oriented. Unlike in the past, libraries are committed to provide their best services to the customers to the best of their satisfaction. As libraries were mere store houses of books in the past, they paid little or no attention to their members in terms of service and relationship. In other words users were provided with poor services and resources creating hardly any relationship between the members and the 'store houses.'

But with the development and advancement of science and technology, like in many other fields, the situation that existed in the library system began to change drastically for the best. The former "store house" began to grow continuously and various kinds of libraries were introduced to cater to the varied needs of users who had a great thirst for knowledge in the globalized world.

Besides books, readers and staff, the trinity of librarianship, the most important part of the organization of a library system is the building -a functional library building where the allocation of space for books and other reading material, staff and readers could conveniently be made (**Srivastava, 1980**).

## **Library Building**

Therefore the library building is an important part and a concern of the library as it provides services from generation to generation. The construction of a library should be done professionally in consultation with professionally qualified architects having a wide knowledge and experience, because it completely differs from building a house to satisfy the needs of a family. As such there are main features to be considered seriously in setting up a library building.

\* **The type of the library**

e.g.: (National, Special, University, Public and School Library)

\* **The services of the library**

e.g.:- Reference, lending, photocopying, Inter library loan services, documentation service, Information service

\* **The sections of the library**

A library consists of many sections with each performing different functions. When all those sections are work together then one unit can provide a unique service. It is called library service. Some of the sections are as follows:

e.g. :- Acquisition section, classification section, cataloguing section, display section, maintenance section, periodical section, binding section, circulation section, book reservation section, reference section, reprography section, archival section, reference service section, Inter- library loan section, bibliography and documentation section, computer section, library services section, audio - visual section, administration section, and department section.

Krishan Kumar (1978) states that 'functional arrangement usually provides for following sections or departments:

Acquisition, classification and cataloguing, reference service, circulation and maintenance sections. In addition to above, there may be periodical section, administration section, special rooms and collections.

In case, these sections based on functional approach work autonomously, it is not desirable. It is essential to combine these into larger units on the basis of related activities. For this purpose having a technical services division and public services division, cataloguing section (classification and cataloguing), etc. is desirable. Public services division would cover reference service, circulation etc.

Before books are circulated, they have to be processed as library books. First of all, purchases have to be made after the selection and the acquisition should follow. There after the processing deals with labeling, pasting, classification and cataloguing either manually or through a computerized system. All the new arrivals are then displayed in relevant racks or bookshelves. Periodical section is also a very important section where not only the latest periodicals and journals but also the previous issues are available.

In addition there are also some other sections. Mainly the reference section consists of reference books and a reading area. Some reference books are only for inside use and some for scheduled reference only. Readers can borrow these volumes only for a very short period and have to return them on the following day (over night books). The permanent reference books are only for in-house use. Lending section consists of lending books and reading areas and the volumes that the user can borrow in compliance with the library rules and regulations.

In the circumstances it is very important for both the librarian and the relevant professionals to pay their attention to the following factors before planning a library building complex.

\* **The users of the library**

Users of the library depend on the type of the library. If it is a school library, university or college library the users are either students or undergraduates. In case of a public library the users are the general public, the children and the students. A National library caters to the public, the researchers and the students. It becomes a special library when the users are mostly researchers, the students, the children, the public and the students with special needs such as the disabled.

\* **Convenience of the users**

The building structure should provide access to all the users including the disabled with no discrimination against them. The Faculties, the study rooms and various departments of a university are located at different places in the university premises. They all should have easy access to the library.

\* **Protection of materials**

The construction, the materials used for ventilation system and the store system should ensure the protection of the resources and there should be security measures at the entrance of the library. This system needs to be on alert after the books are issued at the main counter and technologically advanced security machinery should be in place to check any unauthorized removal of books. (E.g. electronic gate)

Furthermore there should be an advanced computerized system that indicates any damage on the materials at the main counter when they are returned. Though it sounds rather complex, the mechanism should be improved up to this level of protection to ensure that the materials removed are returned intact.

\* Even access facilities for disabled people

e.g.:- Users in wheel chairs, the visually impaired

\* **Security**

Security measures including equipment like fire extinguishers and a well - trained staff to maintain and use them are of great importance. Furthermore, other security measures like security alarm system and exit doors should be given utmost consideration in the construction process.

\* **Appearance**

Appearance of the building should be able to create a positive impression and a welcome feeling in the minds of those, who would access to it. It should be outstanding among the other buildings in the university.

\* **Interior arrangements**

Library interior décor can enhance its attraction. The following conditions and material could be used and applied to give the interior a touch of pleasantness.

e.g. : Cleanliness, furniture and equipment, floor charts, direction system arrangement, pictures, library wall colors, lighting system, space and shape of the building are of primary value to give the interior a user-friendly environment.

The staff and the users would prefer a nice and comfortable interior. Systematic arrangement is very helpful for the smooth function of a library building. A library is always service - oriented. Fundamentally, users come to a library for their information needs. The pleasant look of the building and its interior would definitely help the marketing of its purposes and in attracting more users.

Interior is a reflection of the beauty and smooth functioning and service of a library. The success of a library depends on the above mentioned facts and features. Unless these requirements are completed, a library would not be worth calling a library. The Architect is the person who puts librarian's imagination into shape.

Krishan Kumar (1987) highlights the following basic principles of library building design.

**Functional**

A library building should have a functional design rather than a monumental one. The functional requirements should get preference.

**Open access**

A library building designed for 'open access system' is also considered useful for a 'close access system'. However, it is not true vice versa. Provision of 'open access system, has certain proper control on incoming and outgoing users. Doors and windows should be protected by means of wire fabric to avoid any loss of books. The height of the unit book rack should be such that a person of normal height should be able to pick up books from top-most shelf.

**Future growth**

A library building should be planned possibly for 20 years, keeping in view rate of stock development, number of readers, future use of microforms etc. The building should be extendable to allow for future growth with minimum of disruption.

## **Flexible**

In case a change in library functions takes place, then it should be possible to adjust the layout without carrying out major structural operations. This means interchangeability of all major stack areas, service areas, reading areas and staff areas.

## **Provision of areas**

There should be provision for documents, users, staff service areas, library tools ( public catalogue)

## **Accessible**

Building should be accessible from outside and from the entrance to different parts of the building by means of a simple and easy to understand plan requiring only a few directions or guidelines.

## **Modular**

The basic dimensions of library building, furniture and fittings should be in multiples or sub-multiples of 10-cm modules. This would be the case for tables, chairs, book racks, book trolleys, doors, windows etc.

## **Economic**

Design should be economical to carry out and result in a building which can be maintained of staff and finance.

## **Functionality of library buildings**

Mainly a university is a place which shares universal knowledge and is a source of information for the students and the academic staff for their education and research purposes. This study examines basically the functionality of university library buildings in Sri Lanka. When it comes to a university library, functionality is of paramount importance.

A library consists of different sections with multifaceted services. It should provide a quality service for which it needs functionality. A pleasant arrangement of the setting is very useful, for the users need to stay in a comfortable environment to meet their needs. Such a nice and very systematic arrangement, results in a user friendly library building. It also has a positive impact on the library building. Not only the interior arrangement but also the exterior arrangement of the library building directly affects its functionality. Exterior appearance is very useful for attracting the users. It begins from the entrance of the library building.

It means a library should essentially cater to the needs and requirements of its members to the best of their satisfaction providing the best service for the information needs of its users. In other words, the systematic arrangements of books, materials and official documents play a vital role for the purpose of effective functioning for which the building planning too becomes one of the most important elements.

Library building planning is as such very important for preserving the quality of the library services and functions, lighting, ventilation and the location of the library. The site should be taken into consideration, when building a library as it directly affects the smooth functionality of the library buildings. The absence of

an excellent ventilation system is likely to have an unfavorable effect on the day to day duties services and functions of the library.

In the library field, functionality means organizing the library building in a proper way to provide quality services to the users with efficiency, planning and maintenance of the quality services as well as the continuous activity or the process of extending maximum user satisfaction in the access, and utilization information through the provision of effective and efficient library and information service based on the most appropriate library and information infrastructure environment, particularly the library building with best internal and external atmosphere values, conditions, as well as other user services and facilities.

University Grants Commission (UGC) of India suggests the following guidelines for the relative position or spatial contiguity of different rooms of the library. **(Srivastava, 1980).**

### **Stack room**

The stack room should be placed centrally so that it is easily accessible from every part of the library.

### **Cataloguing room**

The catalogue room should be like an ante -room to the stack room, on the way from the general reading room to the stack room.

### **General reading room**

This room is very important part of the library. The entrance to the library should open into the general reading room.

### **Periodical reading room**

Periodical reading room may be further removed from the general reading room. But it should have an independent access for the users to use it when the other rooms in the library are closed.

### **Special reading room**

Special reading room may be still further removed from the general reading room.

### **Librarian's room**

The Librarian and the Deputy Librarian should have their rooms in close proximity to the general reading room.

### **Work rooms for the staff**

The work rooms for the technical and administrative staff should be placed in close proximity to the rooms of the Librarian and the Deputy Librarian.

### **Independent access to stack room**

The technical staff should have independent access to the stack room.

### **Cubicles and other rooms**

The cubicles, the rooms for group studies, the committee room and such other rooms may be in a separate wing or on a separate floor.

### **Exhibition room**

The exhibition room may be combined with the entrance lobby or placed as close to it as possible.

### **Rooms for the Department of Library Science**

The rooms for the Department of Library Science may be provided in a separate floor or wing. For example every section should be ideally arranged always with the service and convenience in mind. The counter with the help desk for information should be in a place very close to the entrance, so that even a new member can be guided properly and easily.

A first impression that is important is immediately when entering the library the right kind of atmosphere has to be created for the readers (**Orr, 1972**).

The reference library section should provide facilities such as photocopying in its own section and extreme silence needs to be maintained creating the right atmosphere for the other readers. The time management is also a very important feature of functionality. Further, user friendly computer system or databases to search books, guidelines, instructions, handbooks, user education programs and helpers at hand are also important.

Library users are the information seekers and they cannot waste their time going through stocks or loads of materials looking for what they need among thousands of materials as they are pressed for time. Therefore it is the responsibilities of the library to categorize re-categories and sub categorize the materials in an appealing way to the users. People live in the information age and they get information on various subjects, faster than ever before in the history. People live in a satellite communication age and a press button age. Therefore today library users expect this new knowledge efficiently from a library too. Therefore functionality essentially includes the ability to provide the above facilities as well.

The library should be isolated from the other noisy buildings such as gymnasias, cafeteria or student centers. Although a reader is a knowledge seeker, he / she have little knowledge of the materials produced in huge numbers. Libraries apply various systems and acquire them and arrange them systematically. Therefore the university libraries have several departments or sections to provide such services.

The idea that a library should be completely a silent place is no more totally accepted and acceptable. It should have a place for members to discuss academic matters with the use of library materials. Therefore when a library is constructed there should be a separate section for this purpose too in the library itself and attention should be paid to separate it from other sections which are full of busy readers. The university library buildings should be pleasant and attractive as they provide guidance to other libraries as well.

## **Conclusion**

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.

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