

Advocacy Programs and Activities Conducted by Public Libraries Attached to Municipal Councils of Sri Lanka: Some Public Libraries Selected from the Western Province

Jayasekara, D.W.

dinu.w.jayasekara@gmail.com

Abstract

Library is the most important place that everyone goes to get information for his or her various needs. Today the technology has vastly changed the way most of the people in accessing the information. Technology has greatly enhanced library and information services, but it has also raised some unsettling questions, issues. Libraries have been challenged for their firm existence and maintenance. In this background, “Advocacy” is the most useful element and the concept for libraries. Simply, library advocacy means “Appearing for the libraries” or talking on behalf of the libraries and their very existence. The persons who appearing for the libraries are called as “Library Advocates”. The Librarians and library staff, library trustees, friends of libraries, library users, institutional and community leaders, library and information science students, potential advocates can identify as library advocates. The democracy needs libraries. Moreover, libraries need advocates.

The main objects of library advocacy are certifying libraries protection and the provision a good library service. Therefore, the main activities under the library advocacy are public relations and library marketing. Library advocates support libraries, organize various library advocacy activities and programs as seminars, lectures, exhibitions, cultural programs, book fair etc. and this task is vested with the librarians and library staff. This study explores about the library advocacy activities and programs conducted by public libraries in Sri Lanka. The research studied through five main public libraries operating under municipal councils in Western province. Method of study is the survey research. Questionnaires, interviews and observation methods were used for the survey. Information was gathered mainly from librarians and users through two different questionnaires. This research information were presented about, what is the library advocacy, why is it needed, who are library advocates, what are the advocacy programs conducted by public libraries in Sri Lanka, who participate and support for them, what is the service to the society by this programs and new tendencies, problems, challenges of these programs. Accordingly, presented conclusions and suggestions for the development of library advocacy activities and programs. It was found that lot of library users are not aware what is library advocacy. Moreover, public libraries were conducting various advocacy programs, but most of them introduced those programs as extension services. “Library Advocacy” was an uncommon word for most of libraries and library users in Sri Lanka. It must be changed. This research was done for directing to that change.

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