

Impact of Public Libraries in Fulfilling Information Needs of User Communities: a Study based on Galle, Matara, Hambantota, Colombo and Batticaloa districts

Rangani, B.G. G. and Kumara, A.G.R.P.

geethika94612@gmail.com, Kumaraagrpk123@gmail.com

Abstract

Due to various activities such as educational, research, economic, political and cultural activities, information flowing to human knowledge has become a major stream. With the fast of beginning this information, readers' information needs are rapidly growing, and information is so closely linked to human life. The responsibility of transmitting the information thus generated to the reader and inheriting it for future needs rests with the Library and Information Centers. Though there is internet, its access for general public particularly the marginalized communities has been a severe problem and made a severe information gap too. In this context public libraries extend information services for all communities. Public libraries can be introduced as an institution for all people with equal access to all members for knowledge, information and imaginative purposes through a wide range of resources and services. The main objective of this research is to study the usefulness of public libraries in the achievement of reader information needs. Identifying the information needs of the readers, identifying the nature of the information required for the readers, identifying the types and sources of information, how important are the public libraries to the information needs, what are the existing problems, and the personal development of the readers, information literacy. How important are public libraries to developing reading skills. The Population of the study comprised of public libraries established in Sri Lanka and the research sample was five public libraries in five districts in the three provinces. The research method was the survey design and used questionnaire and the interview technique. The data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, such as tables, charts and percentages. As a result of the research, it was found that public libraries are not in a proper status of satisfying the user's information needs. It was also revealed that users face several problems when they find information. This is mainly due to lack of up-to-date information sources in the library, lack of good information management, lack of reader advocacy programs, lack of familiarity with the staff and lack of support and guidance from staff in fulfilling information needs and services. This ensures that public libraries need to implement an effective, efficient and informative mechanism for accurately identifying user's information needs.

Keywords: *Information sources, Communication media, Information society, Public libraries*

Introduction

Food, clothing, as well as information, has become a major need of man. Information relates to human life to the extent that it cannot sustain human life without information. With this