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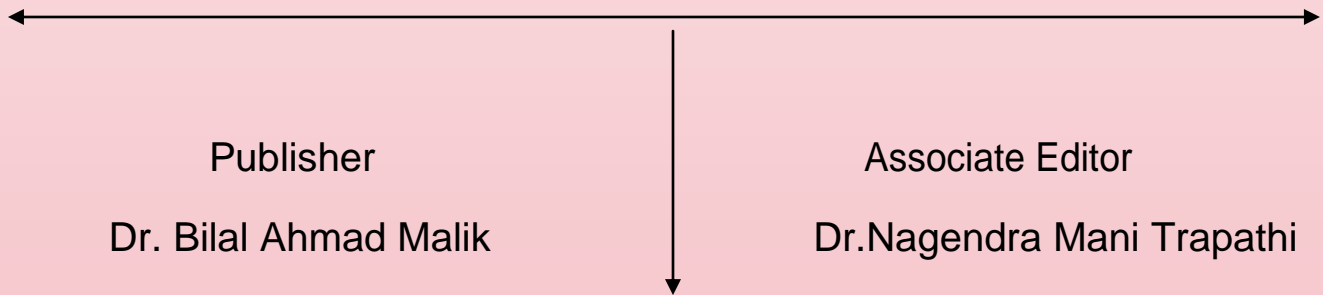
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SPECIAL LIBRARY PROFESSIONAL'S SATISFACTION ON WORKING CONDITIONS: AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

I. HANUMANTHA REDDY*

*Research Scholar, Department of Information and Library Science, Sri Krishnadevaraya University, Ananthapuramu, Andhra Pradesh.

ABSTRACT

The three pillars of library include books, readers and staff. Among them the staff stood at the base. They are the foundation stones of the library. The quality of services and reputation of the library depends upon the efficiency and morale of the staff. The efficiency and morale of the staff in turn depends on the working conditions in a particular library. It is truer in case of special libraries, where more and more emphasis is given to specific field/s of knowledge. The present article makes an assessment of the sample special library staff satisfaction levels on working conditions in the state of Andhra Pradesh. The study was carried out with the twin objectives; examining the origin and nature of special libraries and analyzing the satisfactory levels of sample librarians on the working conditions in sample special libraries.

Key Words: Material, Equipment, Working hours, infrastructure

INTRODUCTION

Special libraries serve a specialist clientele, located within a single establishment or group, and all engaged in working towards one common purpose. They are not normally directly available to the general public. The staffs of these special libraries are also members of the groups or bodies which they serve.

The term 'special' embraces commercial, government, industrial, medical, scientific and technical libraries. It includes libraries and information services of research establishments, industrial firms, national libraries with specialist functions (eg the National Lending Library) and libraries of learned and professional societies and institutions.

Useful background articles to the history and development of special libraries and information services are to be found in the 1957 edition of *Encyclopedia Britannica*, the fourteenth edition of which also contains more detailed material relating to co-operation and special libraries. A shorter account is given in the 1950

edition of Chambers's encyclopedia. This mainly covers history in relation to national and public systems. A section on library history is included in *Encyclopedia of librarianship* edited by T Landau (Bowes & Bowes, second edition 1961).

Libraries have existed from earliest times. In ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome they consisted primarily of privately-established or semi-public collections. Many were obtained or built up from the spoils of war and most were attached to temples or legal houses. They could be described as special libraries insofar as they served a specialist or restricted clientele.

In more modern times, medieval libraries, mainly the property of religious orders and housed in the monasteries, flourished during the middle ages. Many of them were later absorbed into the universities.

Special libraries in the form they are known today, began to develop at the beginning of the twentieth century in response to the increased pace of scientific and technical achievement.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the origin and nature of special libraries.
2. To analyze the satisfactory levels of sample librarians on the working conditions in sample special libraries.

SAMPLING

A sample of 276 librarians from sample special libraries in Andhra Pradesh was selected by random sampling method for in-depth analysis.

THE FUNCTIONS OF A SPECIAL LIBRARY

The acceptance of such a charter, and the requirement that a special library must make a significant contribution to its funding organization commensurate with its cost, (that is to say it must be 'profitable') leads logically to a series of necessary functions for a special library and lays duties upon the special librarian which contribute to the effectiveness and efficiency of his unit. Firstly, he must build up a balanced collection of material comprehensive in the main interest of the organization he serves and tapering to a careful selection of reference works and textbooks to cover marginal, but important, interests. A significant proportion, perhaps as

much as a fifth, will be in languages other than English which will create a demand for a translation service. Wider coverage in the main subjects will be achieved through secondary publications. Secondly, he must collect the relevant report material from his own and other organisations with related interests. The cost of production of these reports (in terms of expensive research effort) is extremely high and justifies their being indexed in the special library so that the information they contain may be fully exploited. The depth to which they are indexed will depend on the intrinsic importance of the information they carry and also on the rapidity of access required.

So far, apart from the more extensive coverage of a narrow subject, such a library might still be fairly conventional. The parent organisation would provide for the cost of buildings and other overheads staff, books and periodicals; reports, equipment, stationery and communications. Depreciation, administration, and travelling expenses are other items to be taken into consideration. But because this is a special library, there is an Important omission in the list. The high cost of the time users of the library spend in it must always be remembered in a special library situation. Though clearly no conscientious librarian would be happy to think that users might be wasting their time in the library, it is only of direct concern under special library conditions where the users of the library are on the payroll of the organisation served. Their time has been paid for and belongs to that organisation, so it must be accounted for and shown not to be wasted. Ranganathan's canon of librarianship which says 'save the time of the user' is a good one for all libraries, but is absolutely vital in special libraries.

This factor is one of the most important differences between a special and a general library and goes much further than the simple concept, used in some earlier definitions of 'special library', that the clientele is limited and known to the library staff. There must be a realisation that users and library staff work together in their search for information. In the interests of saving total time and achieving an overall minimum cost to the organisation, the special librarian will take over from the user a number of tasks which would be his in a more conventional library. Users will, for example, be kept informed of new developments in their own fields of interest. All material coming into the library, including secondary publications, will be scanned for information of potential value to the individual users whose 'profiles' of interests will be known to the library staff. As a result of this activity they will receive a current awareness, or alerting, service in the form of a bulletin of news, abstracts and additions to the library; or the information may be made known, if of sufficient importance, by an immediate note. This dissemination is a characteristic feature of special libraries and enables its users, by scanning only selected items, to have freedom to browse or carry out more serious study or research in the time they save.

Special library staff capitalizes on necessary routines by addition of helpful devices which offer a bonus to users. For example, in the preparation for the issue of a bulletin, material is retained as separate items but is filed in publication order. In this way, each item as it is selected becomes available for use as if it were in a published, indexed bulletin. Therefore the most up-to-date items, too new to be included in the indexes of publications, become readily accessible at little extra cost in staff time.

Further, the library staff will take over a proportion of the literature-searching for retrospectively-published information on behalf of their users. It is more efficient for the library staff to do this because they are trained to know sources of information, and to handle them effectively. They develop skill in the process by doing it constantly and not, as research workers would, merely as a side-line to their main duties. One result is that library users are freed to spend more time on their own work. This saves a great deal of money, especially when laboratory experiments and utilization of expensive equipment are involved.

The proportion of literature-searching taken over by the library staff will have to be worked out as a compromise between two conflicting factors. One is the value of the time saved; the other is the value to the research worker of maintaining that close contact which is achieved by searching through it. Experience has shown it most profitable to the parent organization if from two-thirds to three-quarters of the information-searching is taken over by a library or information unit. By doing so it is possible to save from half to two-thirds of the total cost to the organization of its literature searching. As a further guideline, derived from experience in a number of widely different types of unit, it can be taken that there would probably be something wrong with a research worker, or his library service, if he were to spend less than one tenth or more than one quarter of his time either in the library or in reading material borrowed from it. This rule would not apply to those periods of more concentrated library work which would be needed at the inception of a new project, or while results" are being finally written up; at which times, many facts and statements have to be checked, and results compared with the published work of others.

Because part of the information-searching has to be carried out on a do-it-yourself basis, by users untrained in this work, the librarian or information worker has a clear duty to teach the user about appropriate sources of information and to show how they can be manipulated to best advantage. The enquiry services of a special library are usually more highly developed and more freely available than in a general library. Answering telephone enquiries forms a large part of the library's activities, because it saves the enquirer having always to visit the library for information, and minimizes the interruptions to his work.

Another activity of a special library should be the collecting and indexing of material relating to the history of its parent organization, because the library can deal with this category of information far more effectively and comprehensively than could any external agency. Far too often, organizations overlook this important function and fail to give anyone responsibility for it; so material is quickly and irretrievably lost. Even a simple chronological log of important dates—for example, when policy changes were introduced or new buildings opened; new products marketed or important personnel changes made; would prove invaluable in years to come. For anyone commissioned to write a history of the organization, it would be a helpful framework and check-list. A collection of photographs and ephemeral documents should also be made; as well as having a value for posterity, the former would have current use for illustration of a house journal and other publicity material.

WORKING CONDITIONS

Working conditions can vary greatly between libraries, depending on the size, location and type. Librarians in larger libraries may be required to work evenings and on weekends. Librarians in smaller libraries, where there will be fewer staff, will be responsible for managing many/all aspects of the library's operation.

Working hours

The librarians working in special libraries have to work even in weekends. They have to stay longer hours in library if there is an inadequate staff or if any one of the staff goes on leave. They have to work in morning and evening shift duties weekly. The rigidity of the working hours, w makes it difficult for them to take leisure. Table 1 gives the clear picture of satisfactory levels sample librarians on working hours.

Table 1
Respondent Special Library Personnel Satisfaction Levels on Working Hours

S. No	Responses	No of Respondents	Per Cent
1	Very Satisfactory	64	23.19
2	Satisfactory	141	51.09
3	Dissatisfactory	48	17.39
4	Highly Dissatisfactory	14	5.07
5	Undecided	9	3.26
Total		276	100.00

Source: Field Data

CIF IMPACT FACTOR: 4.465

It is evident from table 1 that nearly three-fourth of the sample librarians expressed satisfaction on their working hours. They declared that even though they work in shifts the working hours are justifiably distributed and they are accustomed for such timings. Around 17.39 per cent of sample respondent librarians stated that they are not satisfied with the present state of working hours. High dissatisfaction is registered by 5.07 per cent of sample librarians. They argue that the working hours shall be general as to other employees of the organization in which they are functioning. The remaining 3.26 per cent of respondents were unable to respond.

Inter-personnel Relations

The success of librarian depends upon his ability to establish working relations with fellow workers. Defining, sharing and delegating responsibilities within a group and encouraging people to work effectively with others, ability to cooperate with others and make a variety of contributions (eg ideas, organization) in team spirit. Table 2 furnishes the satisfactory levels of sample librarians on inter-personnel relations in their respective institutions.

Table 2
Respondent Special Library Personnel Satisfaction Levels on Inter-personnel Relations

S. No	Responses	No of Respondents	Per Cent
1	Very Satisfactory	51	18.48
2	Satisfactory	129	46.74
3	Dissatisfactory	66	23.91
4	Highly Dissatisfactory	19	6.88
5	Undecided	11	3.99
Total		276	100.00

Source: Field Data

It can be inferred from table 2 that inter-personnel relations in the special libraries are highly satisfactory as per the reports of 18.48 per cent of sample respondents. Besides, about 46.74 per cent of sample librarians expressed satisfaction on inter-personnel relations in respective libraries. Undesirable inter-personnel were reported by 30.80 per cent of sample librarians. Among them 6.88 per cent expressed extreme dissatisfaction on inter-personnel relations in their organization. They stated that some of their superiors showing discrimination in allotting work, discrimination in sanctioning of leaves, discrimination on the basis of gender, caste etc. some of the higher personnel also reported that the subordinates were indifferent to their orders, negligence in completion of tasks within the stipulated time etc. Around 3.99 per cent of sample was unable to give their responses.

Infrastructure Facilities

The job satisfaction of the librarians was also influenced by the available infrastructure facilities. The condition and location of building, separate rooms for various sections, binding facility, lighting, racks for arranging books etc. Table 3 gives the clear picture of satisfactory levels of sample librarians on available infrastructure facilities in sample special libraries.

Table 3
Respondent Special Library Personnel Satisfaction Levels on Infrastructure Facilities

S. No	Responses	No of Respondents	Per Cent
1	Very Satisfactory	45	16.30
2	Satisfactory	82	29.71
3	Dissatisfactory	103	37.32
4	Highly Dissatisfactory	39	14.13
5	Undecided	7	2.54
Total		276	100.00

Source: Field Data

According to table 3 more than half of the sample special library personnel expressed discontent on the available infrastructure facilities. These personnel reported that the spacing for the arrangement of books/ journal of different areas of knowledge is insufficient. Moreover, there is a poor lighting facility in some sections, which further aggravates during power cuts as there is no generator facility for library. On the other hand, nearly 46 per cent of sample library personnel expressed satisfaction on the infrastructure facilities in their respective libraries. Around 2.54 per cent were not framed any opinion on the available infrastructure facilities in special libraries in which they are functioning.

Library Collections

The readers visit the library for reading books/magazines of different areas of knowledge and entertainment. A real librarian gets satisfaction when he satisfies the reader's interests/choices. As such the sample librarians were asked to give their satisfaction levels about their library collection in meeting the information needs of readers. Hence the librarians were asked to rate their satisfaction levels on their library collection in terms of books, journals, (both online and print) and reading material, their responses are shown in the following table 4.

Table 4

Respondent Special Library Personnel Satisfaction Levels on Library Collection

S. No	Responses	No of Respondents	Per Cent
1	Very Satisfactory	87	31.52
2	Satisfactory	140	50.72
3	Dissatisfactory	29	10.51
4	Highly Dissatisfactory	13	4.71
5	Undecided	7	2.54
Total		276	100.00

Source: Field Data

Table 4 shows that a preponderant majority i.e. 82.25 per cent of sample librarians were pleasing with regard to library collections. Among them 50.72 per cent of library personnel expressed satisfaction and 31.52 per cent expressed high level satisfaction. An analysis of data in the previous table and the current table reveals that there are sufficient library collections in sample libraries but the infrastructure facilities for proper utilization of them is poor. Only 15.22 per cent of sample personnel expressed dissatisfaction on the availability of library material in sample libraries. Nearly 2.54 per cent of library personnel not responded for various reasons of their own.

Library Equipments

The physical stress or easiness of librarians depends on the available library equipment in a particular library. For example if there is no computer in a library the librarians have to physically enter the details of transactions. If the computer is available the librarian just enters the reader's number and book number all others will automatically register. So the availability of library equipments like computers, scanner, Xerox machine, and furniture's also play an important role in deciding the satisfaction levels of librarians. Hence to examine the librarian's opinion about this equipment it was asked to give their opinion about these and their opinions are shown in table 5.

Table 5

Respondent Special Library Personnel Satisfaction Levels on Library Equipments

S. No	Responses	No of Respondents	Per Cent
1	Very Satisfactory	68	24.64
2	Satisfactory	131	47.46
3	Dissatisfactory	44	15.94
4	Highly Dissatisfactory	21	7.61
5	Undecided	12	4.35
Total		276	100.00

Source: Field Data

CIF IMPACT FACTOR: 4.465

It is clear from table 5 that nearly 47.46 per cent of sample library personnel expressed satisfaction on the availability of library equipment in sample libraries. While, 24.64 per cent of library personnel articulated that they are highly satisfied with regard to availability of library equipment. On the other hand, 15.94 per cent of sample respondents expressed dissatisfaction and 7.61 per cent expressed high level dissatisfaction on the availability of library equipment in their respective special libraries. Around 4.35 per cent of sample was unable to decide.

CONCLUSION

The professionals should start doing real public service by putting their heart and soul in their jobs and avoid wasting their time in idle gossips and quarrelling among themselves on account of personal jealousies and rivalries created due to narrow mindedness. Necessary integrity of character and the capacity to rise above petty personal matters should be developed among the members of the profession. A professional code of ethics like the medical profession should be drafted by the ILA and all professionals must act accordingly.

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Email: nairjc5@gmail.com, info@nairjc.com

Website: www.nairjc.com

