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Users' Perceptions Regarding Networking and Resource Sharing in Selected Academic Libraries of Bangladesh

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Introduction

Across the disciplines, technology is spawning brand new carries in even as it changes in the way we performed old ones. Standing at the edge of 21st century probably there is no dispute over the recognition of technologies in information activities. Unprecedented changes in the use of information are reshaping our personal activities, our community and organizational practices. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) bring the global information to our finger end. With the emergence of Internet, information kept in different locations has become asset of the world community bringing –almost every day in equal platform. To control over the world information resources different specialized information systems and networks are playing vital role in accumulating and generating indigenous literature on the information super-highway (Alam, 1998).

In the present day, libraries and information centers have become multimedia due to adoption of new technological advances and innovations, and changing nature of their information storage, retrieval and services. In fact, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is an indispensable part of modern information systems development, management and services (Munshi, 1998).

In the present information age, it is simply impossible to keep track with development activities in the absence of a dependable information system in the country. A workable information system is an essential pre-requisite for research and development in every field of study. Scientists and researchers need to know about the information tools and resources available for better utilization of information. Failure to provide accurate and adequate information to the scientists, researchers, planners and administrators may lead to faulty results which will, in turn, hinder national development. The solution lies in identifying the available information resources and ensuring quick dissemination of information to the concerned users through various channels of communication. In this regard libraries and information centers can be considered crucial media, which can play a dynamic role in the universal diffusion and advancement of knowledge and can

provide right information to the right user at the right time (Mannan, 1997).

Presently Bangladesh lacks a well organized and planned library and information system. However, both the government and private bodies in recent times have shown an awareness of the importance and need of information system. The existing libraries and information centers in Bangladesh are not properly organized and suffer from different problems such as, acute shortage of funds, inadequate information resources, lack of qualified staff, modern technological facilities and a lack of willingness of the authorities. In such circumstances it is simply impossible for any single library in Bangladesh to meet the information needs of its users. To overcome this stagnant condition of research and development activities, library networking and resource sharing is a must. The major reason of this networking is to share available library resources effectively. The resources can include information, equipment, facilities, qualified staff, time and money. The sharing of resources usually means the sharing of library materials and other information resources irrespective of geographical barriers. The library and information system of Bangladesh is in need of catching up with modern development. Already, many libraries of the country from different fields have started to realize that networking and resource sharing is one of the most effective ways to solve the problem of providing information in time to the users. But many of them are undecided about what models they should adopt, because of a lack of experience, technological facilities or necessary financial allocation, etc. Library and information centers of Bangladesh are now seeking models adaptable to Bangladeshi circumstances (Mannan, 1997). Research motivation and objectives of the study

Library networks have grown mostly during the last thirty years in different geographical environment in order to cater to the specific needs of the users. In the United States there has been a proliferation of them. Library networks in other countries are also growing. The development countries like Bangladesh are lagging behind in library cooperation. The reasons for the same are poor funding and the non-existence of the spirit of give and take or exchange is delaying the prospects of resource sharing programs.

Since the inception of computer revolution, the impact of electronic networking on education in general and library services in particular has been profound. High-speed transmissions of information through electronic networks are reducing the physical boundaries to information and are changing the role of the publisher and the library intermediaries in the chain of scholarly communication. The development of Z39.50 standard, World Wide Web (WWW) browsers and client/server technology has revolutionized the way information is being transferred. With the rise of the internet and the National Information Infrastructure (NII), geographic barriers are finally broken and equal access to electronic information is increasingly affordable. For library users the information super highway is becoming a primary way of accessing information. The ultimate aim of networking and resource sharing is to provide the right information expeditiously to the user as and when required. Keeping all these in mind, the present study has been proposed mainly to develop a model university library networking plan for resource sharing in Bangladesh. Therefore, the study has been designed to ascertain:

- The present scenario of library services to the users in some selected academic libraries of Bangladesh;
- The users' perceptions about the present status of resource sharing, networking and telecommunication in those libraries of Bangladesh;
- Information seeking behavior of academic community, scientists, researchers, and administrators; their information needs, degree of dependence of their institutional libraries and those outside;
- Finally, we have explored some suggestions from the users for improving the information services in the selected academic libraries in Bangladesh.

Research Questions

Resource sharing or networking between the different LIS seems to be the only solution to the lack of resources and lack of access to resources (Jalloh, 2000). Resource sharing among libraries is long-standing and takes a number of forms including interlending, co-operative acquisitions, shared storage facilities, staff education, sharing of human and computer facilities, and information networks (Edwards, 1994). Resource sharing holds a strong potential for LIS in developing countries. With no library able to acquire all the publications deemed essential, a division of tasks or specialties is a worthwhile investment for increasing a country's coverage. However, resource sharing requires efficient communication structures (Jalloh, 2000).

In pursuing the above research objectives, the following research questions (RQ) have been posed:

RQ1. What is the present scenario of library services to the users in major public and private university libraries of Bangladesh?

RQ2. What are the users' perceptions about the present status of resource sharing, networking and telecommunication in public and private university libraries in Bangladesh?

RQ3. What are the information seeking behavior of academic community, scientists, researchers, and administrators; their information needs, degree of dependence of their institutional libraries and those outside?

RQ4. What are the suggestions for improving the information services of the selected public and private university libraries in Bangladesh?

Methodology

Population and sample of the study

Based on random sampling, one hundred twenty structured questionnaires were distributed among the different category of library users. This group includes students, teachers, researchers, scientists, administrators and others from the selected academic libraries of the country. One hundred questionnaires were received filled up the users which have been tabulated and analyzed (the questionnaire is given in Appendix -1). The sample consists of the following:

Table 1: Number of users selected from the sample academic libraries

Category of the users	Number of the users
Undergraduate	40
Postgraduate	25
M. Phil	7
PhD	3
Faculty members	10
Researchers	5
Administrators	10

Total	100

All the questionnaires were duly coded after editing for computer input. The steps followed in the process of data input are:

- Entering data on the computer;
- Conducting validation checks to ensure that data have been correctly entered on the computer;
- Preparation of output tables.

According to University Grants Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh (2009), Bangladesh has 31 public universities and 51 private universities. For ensuring representativeness from public and private university libraries and considering the services and usefulness to the users, six public and private (3+3) university libraries of the country were purposefully selected and brought under investigation at the first stage (sample size).

Table-2: Sample Libraries of the study

SL. No.	Name of the library	Type	Year of establishment	Location
01	Dhaka University Library	Public	1921	Dhaka
02	Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) Library	Public	1961	Dhaka
03	Bangababdhu Sheik Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) Library	Public	1998, But IPGMR was established in 1965.	Dhaka
04	Independent Unviersity of Bangladesh (IUB) Library	Private	1993	Dhaka
05	East West University Library	Private	1996	Dhaka
06	BRAC University Library	Private	2001	Dhaka

Findings and Discussions

All the users were asked how frequently they visited the library, availability of services they received, whether they get help from the library personnel in order to collect materials and availability of national and international databases in respect of the degree of usefulness. For further improvement library services, suggestions were also sought from the users.

5.1 Selection categories of the users

Information on users characteristics were collected by gender and category they belong to and their area of profession.

Table 3 shows that the survey was made among 100 users, of which 60 users were male and 40 were female.

Table 3: Ratio of gender of the sample users

Gender	Number of the users	Percentage of the users
Male	60	60.0%
Female	40	40.0%

The below Table 4 indicates the number of respondents. Among the respondents interviewed; 40 % were undergraduate students, 25 % were postgraduate students, 7 % were M. Phil students, 3 % were PhD. Students, 10 % faculty members, 5 % were researchers, and 10 % were administrators.

Table 4: Characteristics of the users by status

Category of the users	Number of the users	Percentage of the uses
Undergraduate	40	40.0%
Postgraduate	25	25.0%
M. Phil	7	7.0%
PhD	3	3.0%
Faculty members	10	10.0%
Researchers	5	5.0%
Administrators	10	10.0%
Total	100	100.0%

5.2 Status of user's visit to library

The frequency of visit by the users to their institutional libraries is presented in the Figure1. It denotes that 35% of the users visit their libraries every day, 15 % frequently, 40 % if need and 10 % of the users visit their libraries most of the days.

Figure 2 explains that out of all the users surveyed 60 % of the users use only their institutional library, 30 % visit two libraries to search for their desired materials while only 10% of the users visit more than two libraries to meet their need.

5.3 User satisfaction

Figure 3 reveals that users have mixed reaction towards the level of satisfaction. Although there is no scientific method to measure the level of users' satisfaction, most of the libraries still manage to satisfy their users' needs. 15 % users which are mostly library officers and researchers believe that their libraries satisfy them fully. However 38 % of the users, most of them are students, think that their institutional libraries satisfy them and 47 % of the users think that their institutional libraries need to improve.

Figure 4 explains that users have different taste regarding the information needs. Although it is quite impossible to calculate the percentage of the types of users'

needs. But 40 % of the users require reference and textbooks materials, 5 % require current information, 10 % requires periodicals information, and two percent users need audio-visual information.

The users' responses indicated that they took six alternatives when they did not get the information that they were looking for in their institutional libraries. Most of the times the users search substitute information. 24 % of the users request the librarian to get their desired information. 17 % of the users go to other libraries, while 16 % users take assistance from their senior colleagues. 12 % of the users contact other international information centers, 21 % of users search substitute information, and 10 % of the users leave their search (See Figure 5).

5.4 Usage of database

Among the users of the library database, most of the users are unaware of their library database. Only 29 % of the users are fully aware of these databases and use these databases frequently. However, the rest 71 % of the users are unaware of these facilities of the libraries. The users who are familiar with these databases are quite happy with the databases and think that they are very helpful for their research work (See Figure 6).

5.5 Need of information services

The frequency of availing library services from the institutional and outside libraries was determined by four qualities, such as, frequently, sometimes, rarely, and never used by a scale ranging in between nine services. The mean result of scale by individual service availed by the respondents is presented in Table 5. According to the mean value in the Table 5, the users frequently borrowed books from the library followed by photocopying of book materials, inter-library loan and searching in-house database.

Table 5: Response of the frequency of availing services from institutional library

Nature of services	Institutional library				
	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
Borrowing of books	45	20	20	15	100
Inter-library loan	10	20	10	60	100
Photocopying book materials	40	25	25	10	100
Photocopying articles from the journal	25	35	25	15	100
Computerized data search	55	30	15	10	100
Any other services	30	20	40	10	100

On the other hand, the mean result of scale by individual service availed by the respondents is presented in Table 6. According to the mean value, the users frequently borrowed books from the outside libraries by inter-library loan and photocopying of articles from journals, and photocopy from books.

Table 6: Response of the frequency of availing services from outside library

Nature of services	Outside library

	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
Borrowing of books	10	20	30	40	100
Inter-library loan	5	10	35	50	100
Photocopying book materials	25	45	15	15	100
Photocopying articles from the journal	15	20	45	20	100
Computerized data search	20	30	35	15	100
Any other services	25	35	25	15	100

Table 7 reveals that CAS and SDI services are very need to 40 % users, bibliographic services are very need to 35 % users, reprographic services are very need to 60 % users, reverence services are very need to 40 % users, indexing and abstracting services are very need to 50 % users, using periodicals are very need to 35 % users, audio-visual services are very need to 55 % users, translation services are very need to 40 % users, and finally internet services are very need to 70 % users of the public and private university libraries in Bangladesh.

Table 7: Results of information services need assessment

Name of information services	Need level			
	Very need	Need	Not need	Total
CAS & SDI	40%	40%	20%	100%
Bibliographic services	35%	35%	30%	100%
Reprographic services	60%	30%	10%	100%
Reference & referral services	40%	30%	30%	100%
Indexing & abstracting	50%	35%	15%	100%
Using periodicals	35%	35%	30%	100%
Audio-visual services	55%	40%	5%	100%
Translation services	40%	35%	25%	100%
Internet services	70%	25%	5%	100%

5.6 Library collection and staff: users' perspective

The users were asked about the collection of the libraries. Many were happy about the collection while others were questioning about the sufficiency of the collections

to meet the information needs. Figure 7 show that 45 % users believed that the collections of their libraries had sufficient and 55 % believed that the collections of their libraries were not sufficient.

5.7 User's suggestions to improve library services

All the respondents, as users of library and information center, were requested to provide their suggestions for the future development of the library services and operations. All the respondents have provided comments although this question was open-ended. It was a unique experience that most of the respondents were unaware about library networking and resource sharing. Whenever they were explained about the merits of networking and resource sharing they were totally amazed and expected the library to take necessary initiatives regarding networking and resource sharing.

Table 8: Suggestions of the users for improving library services

Suggestion of the users	User percentage
Library collections should be increased	30
All modern IT facilities should be installed in the library	25
Professional and qualified library staff should be appointed	15
Library networking and resource sharing should be established	20
Readers friendly environment should be maintained in the library	10
Total	100

Among the users, 20 % have given emphasis on establishing library networking and resource sharing system (Table 8). 25 % users responded to install all the modern technological equipments in the library. 30 % of the users also demanded to enrich the library collections and 15 percent demanded to appoint skilled and professionals in the library along with a better reading environment.

6. Conclusion

The findings of the study suggest that the present scenarios of library and information services of the public and private university libraries are at the marginal level regarding users' satisfaction in spite of quite a good number of affluent academic libraries in the country. It is very hard to maintain the users' satisfaction level yet, it is the duty of the library to fulfill all its users' demands. To refine the existing situation, efforts should be undertaken promptly to facilitate efficient resource sharing systems among the libraries through better management and installing the state of the art of technologies and advancement.

It was found that users have mixed reaction towards the level of satisfaction. Although there is no scientific method to measure the level of users' satisfaction, most of the libraries still manage to satisfy their users' needs. 15 % users which are mostly library officers and researchers believe that their libraries satisfy them fully. However 38 % of the users, most of them are students, think that their institutional libraries satisfy them and 47 % of the users think that their institutional libraries need to improve. On the other hand, the users frequently borrowed books from the outside libraries by inter-library loan and photocopying of articles from journals, and photocopy from books.

It was viewed that the information services that the users frequently borrowed books from the library followed by photocopying of book materials, inter-library loan and searching in-house database.

It was also found that among the users of the library database; most of the users are unaware of their library database. Only 29 % of the users are fully aware of these databases and use these databases frequently. However, the rest 71 % of the users are unaware of these facilities of the libraries. The users who are familiar with these databases are quite happy with the databases and think that they are very helpful for their research work.

It was expressed that CAS and SDI services were very need to 40 % users, bibliographic services were very need to 35 % users, reprographic services were very need to 60 % users, reverence services were very need to 40 % users, indexing and abstracting services were very need to 50 % users, using periodicals were very need to 35 % users, audio-visual services were very need to 55 % users, translation services are very need to 40 % users, and finally internet services are very need to 70 % users of the public and private university libraries in Bangladesh.

All the respondents, as users of library and information center, were asked to deliver their suggestions for the future development of the library services and operations. All the respondents have provided comments although this question was open-ended. It was a unique experience that most of the respondents were unaware about library networking and resource sharing. Whenever they were explained about the merits of networking and resource sharing they were totally amazed and expected the library to take necessary initiatives regarding networking and resource sharing. Among the users, 20 percent have given emphasis on establishing library networking and resource sharing system, 25 percent users responded to install all the modern technological equipments in the library. 30 percent of the users also demanded to enrich the library collections and 15 percent demanded to appoint skilled and professionals in the library along with a better reading environment.

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