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July 2005

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Saravanan, T.K., "The Economics of an Indian Engineering College Library" (2005). *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. 50.

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The Economics of an Indian Engineering College Library

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Introduction

The library is one of society's forms of cultural self-expression. In India, the development of higher education is closely associated with the steady growth and development of the library in the institution of higher learning. An academic library is affiliated with an academic institution, be it a school, college, or university. A college library, of which an engineering college library is one example, is a service component of its parent body, and since it is a non-profit organization, it must manage its finances in a judicious manner. At the same time, library services are increasingly expensive.

The Clientele of an Engineering College Library

The clientele of an engineering college library, like that of other college libraries, includes students, faculty, and other support staff. Needless to say, students' information needs change and broaden as they move from school to college. More than simply listening in a classroom, students take initiative to educate themselves. The college library ought to be an instrument of this self-education. The primary function of the college library is to make students feel that the library is an integral part of their careers. In this context, one of the roles of the college librarian is as an information manager.

The Engineering College Library Collection

The majority of the engineering college library collection is in the form of books and periodicals, while nonbook materials may not so well-represented, with the possible exception of maps. In Indian college libraries, book selection is based on the curriculum and on the syllabi of the courses conducted at the college. A textbook collection and a separate "book bank" are important sources for these college libraries.

Service Orientation

The services of a college library should promote

- Conservation of knowledge
- Preservation of culture
- Information dissemination on a wide scale

- Resource sharing
- Information services
- Self-education

Therefore, the engineering college library should promote self-education through the traditional services that all libraries provide.

Impact of Information Technology (IT) on College Libraries

While the traditional mission of libraries presents challenges of its own, the introduction of new media and new information technology compound these challenges. This may include a new concept of the library itself as a virtual or digital library, as well as the provision of CD-ROMs and other electronic sources, including Internet sources, to library users. These new media have financial implications for college librarians.

Financial Support of College Libraries

College libraries have several sources of funds, from governmental allocations, to grants and endowments, as well as library fees and charges for certain services. The size of the library, which can be determined through a number of measures, along with the services provided and the funds from various sources, create the economics of the college library.

The table given below gives data about a college library. The library serves 1000 students and 50 faculty. On an average 200 books are issued and returned per day

Use of the Lending Service in an Engineering College Library for the Period of October to December 2000

Input-cost	Kind of service	Object of programme	Output totals	Cost per output
Rs.25,000	Lending service	Lending documents for home use	24,000 documents	Salaries Rs.1.04, plus supplies and equipment
Rs.15,000	Cataloging	Bibliographic control and access	1,200 documents	Salaries Rs.12.5, plus supplies and equipment

Cost for materials and labor divided by the number of transactions or items processed results in the cost per unit. Depending on the type of activity, costs can be determined by calculating staff time and price of materials, as well as other operational costs.

College Library Budgeting

“The Economics of an Indian Engineering College Library,” T. K. Saravanan, *Library Philosophy and Practice*, Vol. 4 No. 2 (Spring 2002)

Determining the costs for processes such as selection and ordering involves materials, labor, and overhead.

In this context if one assumes that it costs Rs.500,000 for processing 10,000 documents (each document may be priced in the range of Rs.10 to Rs.2000), then the question is how to add the value-added cost.

If the price of 10,000 documents = Rs.5,00,000

Process Cost =45,000+

Total cost =545,000

Value added is $45,000 \times 100 / 500,000 = 9\%$

Budgeting for Operation

Operational costing is similar. Lending is considered an operation. The costs include material, labor, overhead, and general costs. In order to arrive at unit cost per user, divide the total cost by the number of users.

If the total cost of books is Rs.300,000 and the total number of user is 1000:

Cost per User = $3,00,000 / 1,000 = \text{Rs.}300$

Conclusion

The educational role that the college library plays must be supported by sound financial management. Librarians need not be accountants or economists, but they must be acquainted with the basics of budgeting.