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Communication in the Library for Effective Administration

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Introduction

Communication is a social activity. It is carried out in various ways in everyday life knowingly and unknowingly. Communication is carried out through verbal and non-verbal channels. All organisations and institutions have particular goals. Communication is of vital importance, and failure to communicate will give rise to inefficiency and lack of direction, as pointed out by Beeby (1966). Communication is the establishment of meaning and understanding between people (Kpangban, 1995.) Library administration is responsible for the control and supervision of a library, and cannot function without good communication (Reitz, 2004). The library as an organisation is geared toward serving the users. The library needs a way to make meaning and understanding between the clientele and the staff of the library, in order to achieve desired results. Library administration is the control and supervision of a library or library system, including planning, budgeting, policymaking, personnel management, public relations and programme assessment with responsibility for results (Reitz, 2004).

Library Communication

Library communication is carried out within the library and in some cases between libraries. In communicating, meaning and understanding between the people involved has to be established. Communication in the library has two distinct levels:

- Staff communication
- Clientele/staff communication

Staff Communication

Communication among the staff of the library has an effect on the way the library is managed. Communication must flow upward and horizontally across the organization just as much as it flows downward. Regular meetings are held to discuss library policies and implementation. Because the entire library staff cannot be at those meetings, heads of the various departments, sections or units and other designated representatives will have to meet formally or informally and resolutions or decisions of such meetings made available to other members of staff for them to understand and comply with. Some meetings are solely for the members of the top of the administrative hierarchy, and decisions that affect other staff are made known to them.

Clientele/Staff Communication

The clientele of the library need communication to achieve desired information-seeking goals. Communication is an exchange of information; it takes two or more to exchange information. So when a

user visits the library in search of information resources, and is helped by a reference librarian, communication takes place. Information is exchanged and acquired. The reference librarian is an assistant to information seekers, a translator of different information sources, who queries users on what they need, and feeds the information seeker with the desired materials to work with. The circulation desk is another place where significant communication takes place between library staff and users. Users interact with the staff concerning enquiries, and borrowing and returning material.

Another crucial kind of communication between staff and users is the publicizing changes in policies and services. Lectures and exhibitions sponsored by the library are announced in the university gazette and the official newsletters. Suggestion boxes placed at strategic points around the library may yield useful information that can be supplemented by occasional user surveys. The library can also hold meetings with designated university officials when considering a collection building in line with university programmes. The library can also make connections with other university libraries for services like interlibrary loan.

Importance of Communication

No organizational function can be successfully carried out without successful communication. Without effective flowing from the top of the administrative hierarchy to the bottom, i.e., from the university librarian or director to the other managers and to other staff, things will not work properly. But where communication flows properly, horizontally and vertically, the library will be well-managed.

Communication facilitates the achievement of organizational goals. In the library, where the division of labour and departmentalization is well-established, effective communication is of vital importance since acquired materials go through nearly all departments before appearing on the shelves, and breakdown in communication can delay this. Good communication gives a sense of direction and serves as a guide. That includes things like library signage, placed at entrances to sections of the library and on shelves, which directs or guides library users. Communication between clientele and librarians can help users a great deal, especially those who are new to the library, by informing and educating them about collections, rules and policies, and procedures for borrowing books, and so on.

Problems of Communication in the Library

Communication is reciprocal. Ideas that are not communicated have no effect. A nonchalant attitude to service and responsibility on the part of some library staff results in failure to communicate effectively with the clientele and leads to inefficiency and poor service. A library that is staffed with unqualified librarians, who do not actually know their duties and responsibilities and who cannot communicate effectively, leads users to lack interest in using the library.

Many library users are not even aware of the various sections of the library and how and where to locate information and materials. Some of them do not understand the need to interact with the librarians when they need information. Some, out of pride or shame, do not want to ask for help and will leave the library without the information that they need. Some users may not be able to frame their query in a way that is comprehensible. If staff or librarians are not able to analyse the query as it is expressed, issues of semantics arise and the librarian might not be able to satisfy user needs.

Solutions and Recommendation

There is always a solution to a problem, whether permanent or temporary. Problems of communication in the library are inherent, but they can be solved to a degree. To avoid disruption in the smooth running of the library, the university librarian, chief librarian, or director should maintain regular contact formally and informally with the staff to keep abreast with activities of his subordinates and maintain a constant check through deputies on the other staff to guide them away from irresponsibility

and a nonchalant attitude to work. The librarian can institute regular meetings with the top hierarchy, beginning with a weekly briefing on all library matters, to facilitate understanding of problems and to formulate the best possible strategy for resolving them. This demands two-way communication and can lead to consensus and action. This broader basis for decision-making can result in better planning and more cooperation from staff (Coing, 1999). The librarian should give incentives to staff to motivate them.

The library can also assign staff to the open shelves, catalog area, and other strategic locations to offer to help patrons. Such inquiries can help the patrons who do not know what to do and where to turn. In this way, proud and shy patrons can make good use of the library.

The librarian must recruit and employ qualified and knowledgeable staff, librarians who can match students' or patrons' intelligence, knowledge, and means of expression. The library must send its staff on short courses or further studies to update their knowledge, to keep abreast with current trends, and communicate properly with patrons.

Conclusion

Effective communication is a keystone of any good administration. The goal of proper communication in the library is to ensure that users make good use of the library's resources bought with scarce funds, that library staff know what their responsibilities are and perform them properly, and that the libraries' parent bodies can know and appreciate the problems of the libraries and offer necessary assistance regularly.

The failure to establish a meaningful and understandable exchange of information between the staff and the clientele will give rise to inefficiency on the part of the library, and lack of direction on the part of the clientele.

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