PROBLEMS IN SUBSCRIPTION OF PERIODICALS IN NCERT LIBRARY: AN EVALUATION

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An attempt has been made to describe the importance of periodicals in the libraries and highlight the problems relating to subscription of foreign periodicals through agents. Offers some evaluative comments on different measures adopted to avoid difficulties. Discusses practical difficulties experienced in NCERT library in acquisition of periodicals through agents.

INTRODUCTION

Information is regarded as the sixth basic need of human beings available both from formal and informal sources. Among formal sources, library and information centres (LICs) occupy a prominent and significant place in the dissemination of information. The growth and prosperity of any country depends on the importance accorded to research and developmental activities as information is a crucial input [1]. The journals being the carriers of the latest information are much sought after documents in a library. Every person engaged in research and higher studies wants his finding published and made known at the earliest. The quickest and the easiest way thus is through the periodicals [2].

Periodical literature is an important source of information for latest developments in the area of research. About 70% to 80% of the total budget is spent on periodicals alone in most of the research libraries [3]. Research libraries in India are almost fully dependent upon costly foreign periodicals for resource building. But non-receipt of these costly items is the main obstacle for smooth functioning of the library services. An attempt has been made in this paper to study the problems faced by the library of NCERT while subscribing periodicals [4].

NCERT LIBRARY

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), New Delhi was set up by the Government of India on September 01, 1961 as an autonomous organisation, registered under the Societies Registration Act-XXI (1860), for qualitative improvement in school education in the country. The NCERT functions as an academic adviser to the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India in implementing policies and major programmes in the field of education, particularly school education. In the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes in the field of education and teacher education, the Ministry draws upon the expertise of the NCERT to a considerable extent. The Council is fully financed by the Government of India [5].

NCERT Library known as Division of Library, Documentation and Information (DLDI) functions as Information and Resource Centre of the Council. Its main functions are to collect, organise and disseminate reading materials with the following objectives in view:

- To cater to the needs of faculty members of the National Institute of Education, the Central Institute of Educational Technology (Constituents of NCERT) and scholars in the field of education from all over the country.

- To act as a clearing house for educational information.
- To promote research and study in the field of education.
- To improve the quality of education through improved quality of library services in school and teacher training college libraries by providing in-service orientation programmes to the professional staff of these institutions [6].

SUBSCRIPTION OF PERIODICALS

Procurement of periodicals for the library of research institute is a task which requires intellectual skills. The method of procurement of periodicals is quite different from that of a monograph. The selection of journals for subscription depends upon the instruction and research programmes of the Institute. Generally the periodicals to be subscribed are selected by the faculty in consultation with the librarian keeping in view the financial allocation [7].

Some of the general problems which are usually faced by libraries in periodical section are:

a) Advance payment of subscription is insisted upon. Sometime this becomes a security risk leading to litigation [8].

b) Even though journals are subscribed through agents, the agents do not agree to take risk of recovery of proportionate amount from the publishers for the non-receipt of journals. This not only puts the professionals in difficulty while facing readers enquiries, but also in answering the higher authorities and auditors [9].

c) Inability on the part of the library to select a reliable agent. While selecting a reliable agency for subscribing foreign journals, ascertaining the credentials of the agents through their last transactions and searching in the files is like searching a pin in a haystack [10].

d) Instances are not uncommon when agents delay payments of subscription to the publishers, leading to delay in receiving periodicals and in many cases resulting in incomplete volumes where subscription remains unpaid or payment delayed thus causing gaps in collection.

e) In cases where fake parties are accepted as agents, the recovery both in case of full or partial non-payment becomes a problem and often results in civil suits causing ultimate embarrassment to the government officials. A possible remedy to counteract this problem is to obtain a security deposit from the agents in favour of Institution/Organisation for which hardly any agent agrees. Moreover execution of bond is no remedy unless supported by the security bonds [11].

f) While dealing through the agent, it is observed that the publishers stop the supply with the last issue unless the payment is received, even if it is on standing order; where as while dealing directly with the publisher, some issues are usually supplied in anticipation of the renewal order or money being received late. In case of hotly sought after journals extra copies are not printed in large number and the declared payment leads to non-supply of the issues which are declared out of print. It is found that the incidence of such discision is lower when the library deals with the publishers directly.

g) There are many libraries in India which have long runs of incomplete volumes for the want of one or two issues missed in transit. In fact, libraries earn a lot of bad name on account of missed issues or delayed receipt of issues, which are due to the vagaries of the postal system. Many of us have had the experiences of a cryptic response to our reminders for missing issues from abroad like "The record shows that the issues were duly mailed to the addressee on the dates mentioned against each. Please check with your postal authorities". The postal authorities in India cannot take cognizance of such complaints unless it is through registered mail [12].

h) Current problems in binding of periodicals is the non availability of volumes for readers in an emergency if they are held up by outside agencies. It is not advisable to part with the back volumes for long periods as the users require them for reference. If the binding of
problems in subscription of periodicals in NCERT library

volumes is given to outside binders, the users are deprived of referring them during the period [13].

i) Storage of loose issues till the completion of a volume in the place provided in the display rack leads to mixing and missing of issues due to lack of sufficient manpower and vigilance [14].

problems of subscription of periodicals in DLDI

In order to bring the nascent information to the notice of the researchers, faculty and other users of the library, it is essential to subscribe to the journals for the library. Subscription of the Indian periodicals seems to be easier when compared to foreign periodicals. But ever rising costs, inelastic library budget, rapid advancement in research activities, absoluteness of information within a short span of time, poses certain problems in the subscription of periodicals and providing them to those who are in need of them. Trade barrier, the geographical distance and the currency system of different nations of the world puts the library professionals into a great deal problem while procuring the information published anywhere in the world not only in time but also directly from the publishers. Thus the need to select agents. Hence in the DLDI the foreign periodicals are being subscribed through agents [15]. There are some problems in NCERT's DLDI in subscription of journals through agents. These are:

a) In case of non-receipt of issues, library has to write to the agent who in turn will write to the publishers and communicate to the publishers to reply back to the library on receipt. By this process the process is delayed and if library writes directly to the publishers for non-receipt of issues, the clerical work of the library will increase and to some extent the expenses also.

b) Many times, delayed payment of subscription to the publishers by agents leads to delay in receiving periodicals and in many cases results in incomplete volume thus causing gaps in collection [16].

c) Recovery of subscription amount for the non-supply of subscribed journals is a major problem in periodical subscription [17].

d) Since reminders for missing issues are sent to the agent, the journals go out of stock by the time reminders reach the publishers through agents [18].

e) To safeguard the library from the unscrupulous motives, if any, and for assured supply, the DLDI made an agreement with the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount Spent (In Rs.)</th>
<th>No. of Journals Subscribed</th>
<th>Magazines</th>
<th>Newspapers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990-91</td>
<td>7,72,350.20</td>
<td>451</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991-92</td>
<td>8,09,015.62</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992-93</td>
<td>11,80,230.17</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993-94</td>
<td>9,64,822.05</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-95</td>
<td>10,40,962.42</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-96</td>
<td>13,89,216.90</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-97</td>
<td>15,44,118.16</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-98</td>
<td>16,85,340.93</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-99</td>
<td>16,14,978.25</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1

Year wise Amount spent and Journals subscribed in DLDI during the year 1990-99
agencies supplying journals. Though the agencies sign the agreement form to have the order but it is seen from past experience that on many occasions the agencies do not strictly comply with the terms stipulated in the agreement form. They profess to take utmost care in regular supply of journals but they do not guarantee the assured supply and that is the primary concern of the library.

f) While the agencies are only interested in the matter of early payment they do not assume any financial responsibility for missing issues. They only endorse the complaints from the libraries to the publishers. While many publishers do replace the missing issues subject to availability of stock, there are others who do not comply with such requests as a matter of policy [19].

g) The payments to publishers abroad are not remitted in time, which leads to disruption in supply. Many a times, it is discovered from a feedback from the publishers in response to reminders for non-receipt of journals that the payment has not been transmitted by the agent. It is discovered that occasionally the agent remits money or part of money for part of a volume at a time, whereas he collects the full amount in advance from the library. May be the vendor finds that return on the investment of money elsewhere is more than the extra payment involved in making partial payment of the volume. If on account of one or the other reason, the payments are delayed by the vendor, the supply of the entire lot gets disrupted. At times it is found that soon after collecting the advance payment the firm goes into liquidation and the library takes nearly a year to discover the mishap.

h) Although the vendors always assure prompt handling of correspondence for claiming gaps with the publisher, it is found that these are often delayed. The delay in claiming the gaps leads to a cryptic reply “Not claimed within time or issues out of print” [20].

i) Without giving any notice, some publishers discontinue the publication of journals and nothing is informed about the remaining subscription amount.

**SUGGESTIONS FOR SMOOTH FUNCTIONING**

To ensure smooth functioning of periodicals section, some of the suggestions are:

- The publishers should not increase the subscription rate in the middle of the year, and send supplementary bills. From the users’ point of view it is suggested that the library budget should be elastic in certain respects.

- The aim of the publishers should not be earning profit at the cost of the libraries but to certain extent prompt reply, kind responses to the enquiries will yield very much.

- To avoid the delay in supply, loss in transit etc., it is suggested that the supply agency should have its branch in foreign countries and suggest the foreign publishers to send their publications to their respective branches by surface mail and that centre has to send the publication by air mail to Indian agency, then the distribution may be made by surface mail if desired.

- The publishers should enable the subscribers to have complete volumes by sending at least the photocopies of the missing and out of stock issues of journals.

- The maintenance of a separate binding section in the library will save not only the wastage of funds but also reduce the delay in binding work thus enabling the users to maintain continuity in reading.

- For the incomplete volumes due to missing issues or loss in transit etc., attempts should be made to collect at least the photocopies of the missing issues from the libraries where they are available.

**CONCLUSION**

The subscription of journals both Indian and foreign is a challenging job for the librarians. The selection of reliable agents for subscribing foreign journals is a problem, particularly for the DLDI, it has become very difficult to rely on the agents [21].
The main reason of non-receipt is due to postal deficiency. Direct acquisition of periodicals from publishers though means some extra cost and administrative work, this can still be considered a better method of acquisition of periodicals. It is however, a known fact that for direct acquisition, planning is a must and delay brings many problems, such as, interruptions in supplies. The system will work smoothly as long as both the parties, namely the publishers and the libraries perform their duties efficiently and the postal system works effectively[24]. The State Trading Corporation (STC) should be strengthened for prompt supply of the journals. By opening its divisions in foreign countries and taking the responsibility of prompt supply of journals will certainly eliminate the existing problems of procuring journal [21].

REFERENCES


[9] MALLAIAH (T Y) and KUMBAR (S S). Ibid. p.175.

[10] MALLAIAH (T Y) and KUMBAR (S S). Ibid. p. 177.


[14] MALLAIAH (T Y) and KUMBAR (S S). Ibid. p.175.


[17] MALLAIAH (T Y) and KUMBAR (S S). Ibid. p.177.


[22] MALLAIAH (T Y) and KUMBAR (S S). Ibid. p.185.