USE OF CAB INTERNATIONAL ABSTRACTING PERIODICALS IN MAHATMA PIlULE AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, RAHURI - A SURVEY

The study aims at reviewing the use of CAB International (CABI) abstracting periodicals that are subscribed by the library of Mahatma Phule Agricultural University (MPAU), Rahuri (Maharashtra State). The study is conducted with the help of a written questionnaire supplemented by personal interviews wherever possible. 140 teaching, research and extension staff members and 75 M.Sc. and Ph.D. students selected randomly were the respondents to the study.

INTRODUCTION

Tremendous growth of literature and the escalating prices of the periodicals have made it imperative on the part of the library management to monitor their use so that only those periodicals are subscribed which are found to be essential. Such studies help in proper utilization of funds. They also enable the management to know the exact requirements of the users and to take necessary steps to meet them.

The university library, MPAU, Rahuri subscribes to 47 abstracting periodicals published by the Commonwealth Agricultural Bureau International, UK, which cover almost all the subjects taught in the university. It was decided to conduct a study to ascertain the extent of their use, adequacy in meeting the needs of users, convenient display arrangement and other related problems. Readers were also invited to give their suggestions to effect improvement in the present situation of periodical section, wherever required.

METHODOLOGY


a) Information about incidents and developments, i.e. data about events in a given period,

b) Information about the distributions and frequencies, i.e. the data concerning the possessions or characteristics of each member of a subject group,

c) Information about the generally known rules and status, i.e. data about institutional norms and conditions.

Since the study comes under the class “Information about distributions and frequencies”, the survey method was chosen. To collect the relevant data through the survey, a written questionnaire technique supplemented by personal interviews was used. As pointed out by Werner Kunz and others [2], the advantages of questionnaires derive mainly from the fact that a relatively large group of persons can be surveyed in relatively shorter period of time. Moreover, if the desired sample of the total population to be surveyed is large, this procedure offers a considerable economic advantage as compared to the other data collection techniques.

Questionnaire designed for this study was distributed to all teachers, research and extension...
staff members selected up to the level of junior research assistants, post graduate students and Ph.D. scholars in all disciplines at the Central Campus, Rahuri. In all 250 questionnaires were distributed, out of which 215 were responded by 140 staff members and 75 students. Since the number of readers of these categories was large it was decided to select the respondents randomly.

The data so collected was analysed from different angles to derive the required information. The findings made after the data analysis are presented below. The suggestions given by the users to improve the present situation of the periodical section of the university library have also been enumerated.

USE OF PERIODICALS

The users are found to visit the periodical section for different purposes. A majority of teachers (59.29%) visit the periodical section for collecting references for their lectures, whereas majority of students (81.33%) visit for conducting literature search on specific topics. About 49% teacher-respondents visit the periodical section for searching specific piece of information whereas only 24% students visit the periodical section for this purpose. It was found that 40.71% teacher-respondents and 37.33% students visit the periodical section for browsing through current periodicals.

Only 47.14% teachers visit the Periodical Section for the purpose of writing an article/book and 28.75% of them visit it for verifying the works of Ph.D. and postgraduate students.

ARRANGEMENT IN PERIODICAL SECTION

A majority of teacher and student respondents (84.28% and 73.34%) are found to be in favour of the present arrangement of current periodicals i.e. alphabetical arrangement within each subject. Only 9.29% teachers and 13.33% students wanted alphabetical arrangement of all Periodicals irrespective of subject whereas 5.72% teachers and 13.33% students desired the arrangement according to class numbers.

A large number of teacher and student respondents (92.14% and 76%) were in favour of present arrangement of back volumes (alphabetical within subjects). About 6% teachers and 15% students suggested the arrangement according to class number whereas 2.14% teachers and 9.33% students felt that back volumes of journals should be arranged alphabetically irrespective of subjects.

66.43% of teacher-respondents and 81.33% of student-respondents expressed the desire that current periodicals and bound volumes should be arranged at one place in periodical section. Only 29.29% teachers and 18.67% students were in favour of arranging loose issues of all the periodicals at a place different from that of back volumes.

USE OF CATALOGUE OF PERIODICALS

About 50% of teacher-respondents and 49.33% of student-respondents are observed to go directly to the shelves without consulting library catalogue. It is consulted by only 38.57% of teachers and 36% of students.

USE OF CAB INTERNATIONAL ABSTRACTING PERIODICALS

About 63% of teacher-respondents and 61.33% student-respondents are observed to be referring to CAB International abstracting journals, because they can get various references at one place. A large number of respondents reported that they are referring to them because the CAB International Database covers over 10,000 important international journals in their field and approximately 1,30,000 bibliographic records are added to the database every year.

The Tables 1 and 2 below show the degree of use of CAB International abstracting periodicals staff members and the students respectively.
Table 1
Use of Periodicals by Staff Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Category of back volumes</th>
<th>Percentage of staff members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Used frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Journals published during 1971-75</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Journals published during 1976-80</td>
<td>23.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Journals published during 1981-85</td>
<td>60.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Journals published during and after 1986</td>
<td>70.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2
Use of Periodicals by students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Category of back volumes</th>
<th>Percentage of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Used frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Journals published before 1970</td>
<td>6.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Journals published during 1971-75</td>
<td>8.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Journals published during 1976-80</td>
<td>46.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Journals published during 1981-85</td>
<td>89.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Journals published during and after 1986</td>
<td>66.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ADEQUACY OF CAB INTERNATIONAL ABSTRACTING PERIODICALS

The number of CAB International abstracting periodicals subscribed at present is found adequate to meet the needs of the users. Hence there is no immediate need to add other abstracting periodicals. The data reveals that the immediate needs of 96.43% of teacher-respondents and 98% of student-respondents are satisfied with the present collection.

A significant number of teacher-respondents (80.71%) and 69.33% of student-respondents felt that the present collection is adequate enough to meet their requirements. However, 19.29% teachers and 28% students suggested some new CAB International abstracting journals which may be added to the collection of the library.

All respondents are found in favour of continuing the presently subscribed CAB International abstracting journals.
SELECTION OF PERIODICALS

A significantly large number of teacher-respondents i.e. 80.71% and 36% of students are found in favour of the present system of routing suggestions for addition of periodicals through the heads of the departments.

It is also suggested by the respondents that in order to fulfill the needs of all categories of readers, the teachers and the research staff should also be consulted for selection of journals.

The students may also give suggestions to their teachers or the heads of the departments for selecting/deleting a periodical.

STORAGE OF PERIODICALS

Use of compact storage devices and microforming of the documents are suggested to overcome the space problem which the university library is likely to face in near future.

It is suggested that the periodicals published before 1970 may be preserved in a compact storage device as only 15.71% of teacher-respondents and 6.67% of student-respondents need them frequently. About 19% teachers and 8% students use them occasionally and 57.14% of teacher-respondents and 85.33% of student-respondents need them scarcely.

The problem of space may be solved to some extent by arranging back volumes of journals on only one floor of the library building.

PROBLEMS OF USERS

Major problems faced by the users while using the current periodicals are:

a) Late receipt of periodicals in the library,
b) Misplacement of loose issues of periodicals,
c) Non-availability of periodicals in the library,
d) Non-availability of journals on inter-library loan, and
e) Incomplete volumes.

Following measures are suggested to make the journals available to readers:

a) Airlifting of periodicals should be encouraged to reduce procurement time,
b) Subscription should be renewed in time (October/November each year) for which finances should be made available to the library in time,
c) The period of claim for non-receipt of periodicals be extended by the foreign publishers to six months in case of Indian libraries, 
d) Users cooperation is solicited for avoiding misplacement of the issues and

e) Exchange programme of duplicate issues among university library and other research libraries is desirable for filling the gaps in holdings of the libraries, etc.

Problems faced by the users while using the back volumes are observed as follows:

a) Not bound in time,
b) Sent for binding,
c) Wrong shelving, and
d) Not replaced in time.

To overcome these problems, it is suggested that the Mahatma Phule Agricultural University Library should have its own bindery unit, adequate finances be provided for binding of back volumes and necessary staff be provided to ensure that the back volumes are replaced back in their places expeditiously.

CURRENT AWARENESS SERVICE

It is observed that about 58% respondents want information about current articles of interest to them and about 35% respondents have suggested for Tropical Bibliographical Service. It is also observed that about 5% of respondents have shown their disinterestedness in the Selective Dissemina
USE OF CAB INTERNATIONAL ABSTRACTING PERIODICALS

of Information Service and only 1% have not given their views on this point.

USER INSTRUCTION PROGRAMME

At present a user instruction programme is being implemented in the university library, MPAU, Rahuri under which the users are made aware of the CAB International abstracting journals and the techniques of using them. The data collected in this regard reveals that about 78% of respondents are of the opinion that the user instruction programme is very useful in promoting the use of CAB International abstracting journals. It is also observed that 22% respondents do not feel any need of such programme. They might have formed this opinion because the CAB International abstracting journals are self-explanatory. One respondent has not given his views in this regard.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that a majority of the users feel that the CAB International abstracting periodicals presently subscribed by the university library are adequate to meet their information requirements and they do not have to depend on other information services. The CAB International abstracting periodicals are playing a vital role in dissemination of scientific and technical information for strengthening research, teaching and extension activities of the university. This study has shown that the CAB International abstracting journals are meeting almost all the requirements of the students and the staff of the University and the library management may choose not to invest more money in subscribing other costly abstracting journals like Biological Abstracts and Chemical Abstracts with the present limitations in budget.

The study has also drawn attention to some of the difficulties experienced by the users. The suggestions given by them can be of good help in removing the short-comings and thus strengthening the library facilities and services.

REFERENCES