RELEGATION IN LIBRARIES: A PRACTICAL APPROACH

IMPORTANCE OF STOCK RELEGATION IN LIBRARIES

Importance of stock relegation in libraries is justified. An attempt is made to decide a formula for relegating the stock by examining various probable and measurable qualitative criteria of the documents. Pre- as well as post-relegation steps are summed up. The outcome of two sectoral computer aided sample surveys is presented on experimental basis as supporting data for the relegation project.

INTRODUCTION

It has now become clear to all the people concerned that expenditure towards the development and maintenance of library stock is escalating day by day. The situation is pressing to tackle the problem in a different way as well as from different view points. Instead of allowing the stock be increased, it should be organised in a balanced way using both the instrumentations of acquisition and discarding. The result calls for the relegation operation.

Atkinson Report of the University Grants Committee, UK is a significant contribution in the area of relegation. It suggested in broad terms that the number of books purchased should equal the number of books relegated. With the passage of time, a section of the relevant books in a library becomes redundant to an unquestionable precision. As a result of which, dead books will clutter up the library stock. Both economic circumstances and space problems have brought about restraints on the number of books that can be stored in one place. Special libraries, academic libraries and even the public libraries are also seriously facing the problem of expanding the library's carpet area continuously.

PRE-RELEGATION STEPS

Regulation programme should be so designed as to achieve the highest level in satisfying the users' demand using the stock left over. The programme should also demand a comparatively less preparatory work; and less cost. Administrative infrastructure should initiate such a programme on a regular basis after every 5/6 years. As the relegation programme requires either a sample or an exhaustive survey on different subject areas, so before removing the volumes thus screened out, they should be brought to the notice of readers for testing their minimum reading potentiality.

The titles that should not be relegated at all are of following categories.

1. Books having future use potentiality,
2. Standard documents in various fields,
3. Rare and reference collections, and
4. Books published earlier than a certain year (e.g. shelf-life of 15 years).

RELEGATION - LINKED SURVEY

This project-linked survey has got two objectives (1) to trace what to relegate by examining various criteria and (2) to determine the efficiency of the formula selected. In this connexion, survey has been carried out on two representative facets (e.g. Econometrics, and Diseases) of ISI library stock, Calcutta. During 1983, about 858 titles were surveyed - 381 on Diseases and 477 on Econometrics. The data covers the period upto 1982. The set of raw data in respect of each title belonging to the subject areas under review were collected manually by examining the issue records and
recorded serially on paper sheets in the following sequence - year of publication, year of accession, year of issue and circulation frequency within the year. Later, these data were processed on IBM-029 Data Processing Machine according to a preformulated card design using IBM 80 column unit record cards. To get the final results analysed from different viewpoints (Table 1-4), two separate programmes were written in FORTRAN-IV high level language and each of them were run twice (for two subject areas) in two parts using G-Level compiler with the already processed data on ISI's main-frame in-house installation EC-1033 computer system which is a replica of IBM-360 system. The entire computation consumed the C.P.U. time of 89 second in total.

During the survey several possible methods were tested in order to decide a formula for relegation. Many criteria for predicting future use are investigated to observe its feasibility in the Institute library.

CRITERIA FOR RELEGATION

1) Additional copies : Additional copies are procured only for those books which are in high demand. Obviously they cannot be considered for relegation, hampering the users' satisfaction level.

2) Editions : A good number of titles regularly succeed their earlier editions in different subject areas. But it is difficult to identify in which areas, users are willing to consult both the current and earlier editions; and in some areas only the current ones.

3) Succeeding works : Mostly in scientific fields earlier works are succeeded by not merely the new editions but by up-to-date thoughts. Only the specialists in the field concerned can judge whether the earlier works have lost their use potentiality. In this method the cost-benefit is too low.

4) Year of publication : The year of publication reveals the up-to-dateness of the thought content of documents. Thus the age of the documents may be an important criterion to relegate them though it may vary in different subject fields. Hence, the method of relegation based on the year of publication may easily be adopted. It demands very little documentation and shelf work. The respective cards on the catalogue may simply be rubber-stamped indicating their new location. The flaw of this method lies in the fact that the year of publication, not the year of acquisition, is considered for calculating the age of the book. In some cases many older books may continue to be highly used (Table 1).

5) Use statistics : Little or no use since a certain year (i.e. cut off year) may be regarded as one of the criteria to relegate the documents. It is a very simple exercise which demands the examination of issue records only.

Table 2 reveals that the titles showing no use in fifteen years and in five years may help to compute the percentage of relegation in the respective fields. Figures between 1968 and 1978 show a steady fall into disuse in both the facets.

Table 1

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of books on &quot;Diseases&quot;**</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of books on &quot;Econometrics&quot;**</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>100</td>
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*Total books surveyed 381 books
**Total books surveyed 477 books
Table 2  
Circulation Statistics

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<th>No use since</th>
<th>1968</th>
<th>1978</th>
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<tr>
<td>% of books on “Diseases”</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of books on “Econometrics”</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29</td>
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The negative points forwarded by the professionals are a) future use cannot be predicted accurately only by use statistics; b) browsing and in-house uses are ignored; c) use in library terms is not equivalent to the use in scholarly terms. But the relegation by use statistics is easy to implement.

6) Physical condition: The books in soiled or otherwise in poor physical condition may be taken as one of the criteria of relegation. Usability of books, however, is not at all considered.

7) Year of publication tied to use statistics:  
The preceding discussion reveals that only one criterion cannot justify the relegation. Considering all the factors, the method which combines the year of publication with use statistics may be adopted in practice to reach the optimum. This can be achieved in different ways. One such method may be to relegate all the books having year of publication before a predetermined year (N) and featuring non-use since a certain year (M). In between these two years (N and M) there should exist a reasonable time-gap (eg. for 5 or 10 years). This time-gap (M ~ N) enables the book to show its use potentiality. Thus recently used books will automatically be exempted from the relegation and at the same time old and unused books will be relegated. This formula will ensure relegation of erstwhile useful books. This method also relegates documents which had been used once but now have fallen into disuse (eg. superseded scientific works and editions). It also ensures the stay of the document on the shelf for a significant period after purchase. It is likely that a book should be used within 5/10 years after it is procured and it should show some evidence of circulation. Only in-house use for 5 to 10 years cannot be expected.

When this formula is applied to the collection on (A) Diseases and (B) Econometrics at ISI Library it is observed that if all books published before 1965 and featuring no use since 1978 are relegated, this will come out as percentage relegation of 54% in Diseases and 16% in Econometrics (Table 4). If the books published before 1960 and featuring no use since 1968 are considered, this gives a relegation percentage of 20% in (A) and 5% in (B) (Table 3).

TECHNICALITIES OF RELEGATION

Each title on a pre-determined subject area is to be picked up from the shelves one by one. Then it is to be examined in respect of the relegation formula adopted. The titles selected for relegation are to be separated and necessary indications are to be marked in the title itself, the catalogue and shelf list. Finally they should be shifted to the predecided Store house (Ware house) where compact storage method is to be adopted in an organised way to facilitate further retrieval, if needed at all.

COSTS

If the process of relegation is to be continued every five or six years, cost is also an important factor to be thought of. These costs appear to be of two kinds – pre-relegation non-recurring cost and post-relegation recurring cost. The former covers — screening the stock; technical work and shifting of stock, while the later takes into consideration mainly Store house maintenance.

CONCLUDING NOTES

a) After the titles are relegated from the main stock by adopting any relegation formula, a very small number of requests may come for relegated titles. There should be provision to call any of the relegated materials back to the main stock, if the data from use statistics justifies it.

b) The objective of relegation is to keep the unused materials in the ware house and to provide enough space on the main stock to the useful documents to be arranged in

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Table 3
No use since 1968 with Year of Publication

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of books on “Diseases”</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>55</td>
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<tr>
<td>% of books on “Econometrics”</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
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Table 4
No use since 1978 with Year of Publication

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of books on “Diseases”</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of books on “Econometrics”</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>27</td>
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attractive way. Ultimately the document delivery service can be made more effective. So the relegation should be a continuous process.

c) The relegation formula should vary according to the nature of the subject specialization of the libraries.

d) Though relegation is an expensive activity, but in view of current space problems the librarians should not neglect it.