Measuring user satisfaction: a case study at the PGIM Branch Library at Peradeniya

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Abstract

The paper discusses the results of a user satisfaction survey as a guide to improve the collection and services of a library. The purpose of the library survey conducted in 2005 was to evaluate satisfaction of users over currently available resources; service quality and assess future information needs of the users of PGIM Branch Library at Peradeniya. The questionnaire was distributed among a random sample of 120 users and 74 responded. Most respondents were somewhat or very satisfied with overall library services and staff performance; moderately satisfied with the print collection; and least satisfied with space and ventilation; lack of study areas and the noisy environment. The helpfulness of the staff was rated the best.

Based on the findings, several steps were taken to modify or change collection development, services and customer care. The more grieving problems that are still to be answered by the authorities were forwarded for their attention. Survey led to more intimate analyzing of the strengths and weaknesses of the library and it was illustrated that such studies are needed in regular intervals for improvement.

Introduction

The user community is the most important component of a library. Every information service exists for the sole aim of satisfying its users. How well this purpose is served is a measure of the effectiveness of that information service. To provide an efficient service, any library should identify the specific community which needs its services as different users need not only different services, but also services at different levels. This identification is essential for the systematic development of the collection and the planning of suitable services for the effective utilization of the collection.

Being both a discipline and a profession, medical science differs from many other fields of study. Further the clientele of a medical library varies with the type of

library and the organization supporting it. Each type of medical library user has vastly different information needs. A clear understanding of the needs of the user is necessary to assist him in meeting the specific information need.

A branch library for the Postgraduate Institute of Medicine of University of Colombo was established at the Teaching Hospital, Peradeniya in 1985. The intention was to develop a center of learning in order to cater for the information needs of the postgraduate trainees, lecturers and doctors in central region. The library which has a slow growth is still trying to excel facing the challenges.

User satisfaction

Although many different kinds of studies have paid passing attention to how satisfied users are with the information they receive, there have been a few studies that have dealt specifically with satisfaction. A survey carried out by Davis (1975) outlined an outreaching approach to the problem of adopting library services to patrons' changing needs. Lancaster (1977) defined "effectiveness must be measured in term of how well a service satisfies the demand placed upon it by the users.' Mundt (2003) says 'satisfaction surveys are an established means to collect and gather subjective judgments of single customers and convert them into a complex, objectified "snapshot".'

It is interesting to note that Sri Lankan librarians' enthusiasm over improving services to meet the user satisfaction. Rifaudeen (2004) has proposed a model structure for the improvement of the Inter Library Loan services.

Prior to the present study a survey was carried out (Seneviratne, 2001) at PGIM Branch library at Peradeniya to understand the information seeking behaviour of medical scientists who use medical libraries and to ascertain the type of information they need; the reasons prompting them to seek information; to identify the sources from which they obtain information; to determine the factors that influence their information needs and the use of resources.

The present study of measuring of satisfaction is a follow up of the previous study as well as an effort to find solutions to the complaints and suggestions placed at the library. This study paved the way to do a SWOT (Strengths/ Weaknesses/ Opportunities/ Threats) analysis of the work carried out at this library in order to modify, correct or completely change activities to suit the user needs.

Objectives and methodology

The objectives of the survey were to learn (1) the user categories and their pattern of library use (2) whether they are satisfied with these resources, services and staff (3) what other services they would like to see the library provide.

The survey asked questions regarding the use of the library; their satisfaction with material selection procedure, specific library collections, services, and

facilities; and their comments and suggestions for improving the services of the library or initiating new services.

For the sample Senior Registrars and Registrars (PGIM trainees) of all the different disciplines were chosen as they form the main user group. Rests were selected randomly from other categories. A total of 74 completed questionnaires were received out of 120 giving an overall response rate of 61 percent. The survey invited respondents to make comments after each section of questions. They were also encouraged to include comments on any area of library operation of concern to them. Nearly 60% of all survey forms included some comments. Those comments are grouped and have been subject to analysis.

Results and discussion

User Categories

39% of respondents were PGIM trainees while 36% were those preparing for selection examinations. Opinion of these groups on the library is vital as one of the primary objectives of the library is to fulfill their needs. Views of Consultants too are important since they are involved in teaching programs and are members of respective Boards of Study of the PGIM. The 18% respondents consisted of 'other users' being doctors who visit the library to become aware of current developments and update the knowledge needed for patient care.

Figure : 1 – User categories

Legend:
- Consultant
- Senoir Registar
- Registar
- Preparing for Exam
- Others
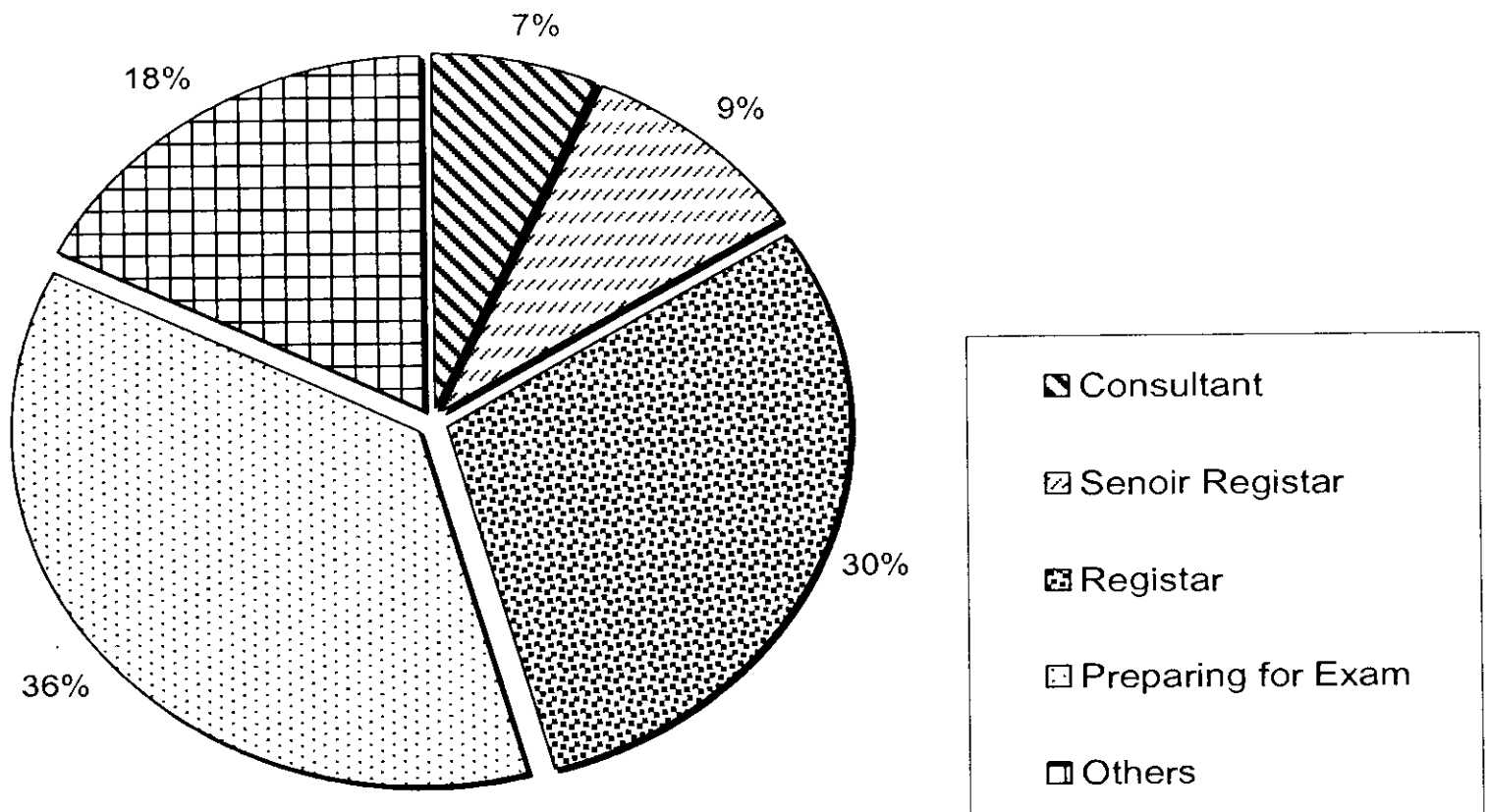
Use of the Library

97% surveyed responded that they visit the Library in person at least once a fortnight. Of those, more than three-quarters indicated that they visit daily or many days a week

Table 1: Frequency of use of the library

Daily	17	23.0%
Many days a week	47	63.5%
Weekly	5	6.8%
Fortnightly	3	4.1%
Monthly	2	2.7%
Never	0	0.0%

Non-use of the Library

It is difficult to make generalizations about the users who report they rarely use the library, as the numbers are low (7% or less overall). However, the most frequent comment given was: "The lack of time due to busy work schedule." Another reason given was that "the atmosphere in the library is not conducive to reading". One comment was "he would love to visit more frequently, if there was more space less congestion and better ventilation".

Material selection

Table 2: Aware of selection process

Yes	52	70.3%
No	22	29.7%

70% of the users were aware of the resource selection process of the library but their participation in material selection was at a low level.

Table 3: Participate in material selection

Yes	26	35.1%
No	48	64.9%

Majority of the users were satisfied or very satisfied with books and journal selection process but dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the non-print and other material selection procedure.

Table: 4 Resource selection process

	Books	Journals	Non-Print	Other
Excellent	27.0%	21.6%	4.1%	1.4%
Satisfactory	63.5%	60.8%	33.8%	5.4%
Poor	0.0%	1.4%	13.5%	0.0%
Unanswered	9.5%	16.2%	48.7%	93.2%

A user suggestion was that books and journals must be selected by the examiners or members of Boards of Study and those who have got through exams in the recent past (e.g. Senior Registrars). Some Indian prints decay quickly (e.g. Robbins) when ever possible, books having good quality paper and print should be selected as library books are often used by many readers.

Satisfaction with printed material collection by discipline:

As might be expected, the satisfaction level varies widely by discipline. Hence this section is evaluated both as a single group as well as in each discipline. In the present analysis, 8 different disciplines of study (listed in the following tables) were chosen. Taken overall, 69% were either satisfied or very satisfied with the quantity of the textbook collection, and the satisfaction of discipline wise also was high on textbooks. Satisfaction over MCQs was 66% on Anaesthesia while it was 41% on Surgery. The overall lowest satisfaction levels were for the quantity of encyclopedias (26%) and dictionaries (32%).

The responses tabulated by the eight general disciplines are as follows:

Table 5 : Quantity of printed material (%)

	textbooks	MCQ	Atlas	Encyclopedia	Dictionary	Core journals	Subject journals
Anaesthesia	72.2	66.7	55.6	33.3	44.4	61.1	27.8
Gyn & Obs.	72.2	55.6	55.6	25.0	38.9	55.6	69.4
Medicine	61.1	41.7	47.2	16.7	22.2	50.0	36.1
Paediatrics	66.7	58.3	50.0	37.5	37.5	33.3	58.3
Pathology	66.7	46.7	50.0	10.0	10.0	23.3	40.0
Psychiatry	75.0	58.3	25.0	33.3	33.3	25.0	33.3
Radiology	77.8	55.6	48.2	40.7	40.7	51.9	25.9
Surgery	64.1	41.0	38.5	15.4	28.2	28.2	35.9
All	69.5	53.0	46.2	26.5	31.9	41.1	40.9

The associated comments demanded increases of exam related materials such as picture books, case history books and multiple copies of core textbooks.

Table 6: Quality of printed material

	Textbooks	MCQ	Atlas	Encyclopedia	Dictionary	Core journals	Subject journals
Anaesthesia	77.8	55.6	38.9	38.9	38.9	38.9	66.7
Gyn & Obs	86.1	61.1	55.6	22.2	19.4	50.0	58.3
Medicine	66.7	55.6	44.4	27.8	38.9	52.8	30.6
Paediatrics	70.8	70.8	54.2	41.7	33.3	50.0	33.3
Pathology	70.0	50.0	36.7	0.0	13.3	30.0	30.0
Psychiatry	75.0	50.0	25.0	33.3	33.3	33.3	41.7
Radiology	70.4	59.3	51.9	22.2	37.0	44.4	33.3
Surgery	66.7	38.5	38.5	12.8	18.0	41.0	35.9
All	72.9	55.1	43.1	24.9	29.0	42.6	41.2

Satisfaction on non-print material

Table 7: Assessment on Quality and Quantity non-print material (%)

	Slides	Videos	CDs	Web Access
Anaesthesia	0.0	0.0	38.9	66.7
Gyn & Obs	33.3	33.3	41.7	52.4
Medicine	51.1	51.1	50.0	66.7
Paediatrics	36.7	33.3	41.7	54.4
Pathology	33.3	41.7	55.6	55.6
Psychiatry	33.3	33.3	33.3	66.7
Radiology	44.1	44.4	46.4	55.6
Surgery	55.6	54.2	56.7	56.7
All	35.9	36.4	45.5	59.3

Out of electronic format material, web access was rated high (59%) and CDs were rated next. Quantity of other material on many subjects was insignificant and was rated low. The major reasons given for low use were "Not enough exam-related CDs", "Inadequate/expensive access to web", "Not enough computers and staff to assist" and "Even through the service provided in user based information is good, there should be more assistants & equipment (computer) to meet the demand".

Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with supplementary facilities

Table 8: Quantity of equipment (%)

	Reading Tables - Wooden	Reading Tables – Steel	Computer Workstation	Chairs-leather	Chairs - revolving	Chairs - Wooden
Good	62.2	35.1	33.8	44.6	28.4	37.8
Average	32.4	36.5	37.8	33.8	28.4	33.8
Poor	2.7	5.4	5.4	6.8	8.1	2.7
Unanswered	2.7	23.0	23.0	14.9	33.8	25.7

The overall satisfaction on the quantity of equipment seems high but there were some comments . such as "Wooden chairs and tables are extremely uncomfortable"

Table 9: Infrastructure facilities (%)

	Space	Lighting	Ventilation	Sound prevention	Cleanliness	Arrangement	Organization of material	Catalogue
Excellent	4.1	17.6	9.5	5.4	31.1	21.6	23.0	6.8
Satisfactory	48.7	77.0	47.3	41.9	63.5	74.3	68.9	52.7
Poor	40.5	4.1	40.5	48.7	2.7	1.4	1.4	4.1
Unanswered	6.8	1.4	2.7	4.1	2.7	2.7	6.8	36.5

Lighting (95%), cleanliness (95%), arrangement (96%) and organization of material (92%) were rated high but users were most dissatisfied with sound prevention (48%), space (40%) and temperature/humidity levels (40%) in the library. In the comments, users consistently voiced their dissatisfaction with the space and ventilation of the library. There were many suggestions and requests

for increasing the space including the increase of less-noisy reading area, adding temperature reduction methods/air conditioning etc.

Table 10: Quality of photocopying & availability of computer software (%)

	Quality of photocopies	Availability of computer software
Excellent	24.3	8.1
Satisfactory	66.2	51.4
Poor	2.7	10.8
Unanswered	6.8	28.4

General satisfaction over quality of photocopying was high (90.5%) but some comments were "Need to be well trained in photocopying" and "The inadequate staff is a major problem. There should be a separate photocopy section with 2 machines".

Table 11: Quality of Services (%)

	Lending	Book reservation	ILL	Photocopy	Internet searching	Email	content page service	document delivery	current awareness service	referral service
Excellent	40.5	23.0	5.4	21.6	13.5	9.5	5.4	6.8	12.2	8.1
Satisfactory	50.0	55.4	25.7	50.0	43.2	21.6	20.3	18.9	33.8	23.0
Poor	2.7	1.4	4.1	14.9	4.1	1.4	1.4	0.0	8.1	2.7
Unanswered	6.8	20.3	64.9	13.5	39.2	66.2	73.0	74.3	46.0	66.2

It will be important to discover the precise reasons for users' high rate of no comment on services such as ILL, e-mail, content page service, referral service. Some have commented that they haven't used these services yet, and thus are unable to comment on them and some were not aware of them. Many users acknowledged the role of Interlibrary Loan (ILL) in providing access to material not owned by the library. Comments indicated that ILL service takes too long.

Table 12: Opening hours (%)

	Weekdays	Saturdays	Public holidays
More than Adequate	13.5	9.5	16.2
Satisfactory	70.3	59.5	71.6
Inadequate	13.5	27.0	5.4
Unanswered	1.4	2.7	5.4

Hours seem to satisfy the majority of the users on week days but 27 requested for longer hours on Saturdays and some have suggested keeping the library open on Sundays. They have stated that use of library is restricted on working hours and prefer to use the library on non working hours. There were requests to recruit more staff & organize to function on Sundays as it is more convenient for many of the doctors

Table 13: Library staff (%)

|	Amount	Courteousness	Efficiency	Helpfulness
Excellent	10.8	63.5	59.5	74.3
Satisfactory	50.0	32.4	37.8	25.7
Poor	29.7	1.4	1.4	0.0
Unanswered	9.5	2.7	1.4	0.0

Staff fared very well in the satisfaction rating and this was further illustrated by the comments. While all users were satisfied with helpfulness of the staff, courteousness and the efficiency also ranked high. Nearly 30% were dissatisfied with the amount of staff to carry out the services and have suggested increasing the number without delay

"Computers & photocopy services need more staff – urgently"
"Library staff is more excellent than we can expect."
"It's a pleasure and a privilege to have the service of the present staff."

Figure 2: Overall assessment of the Library
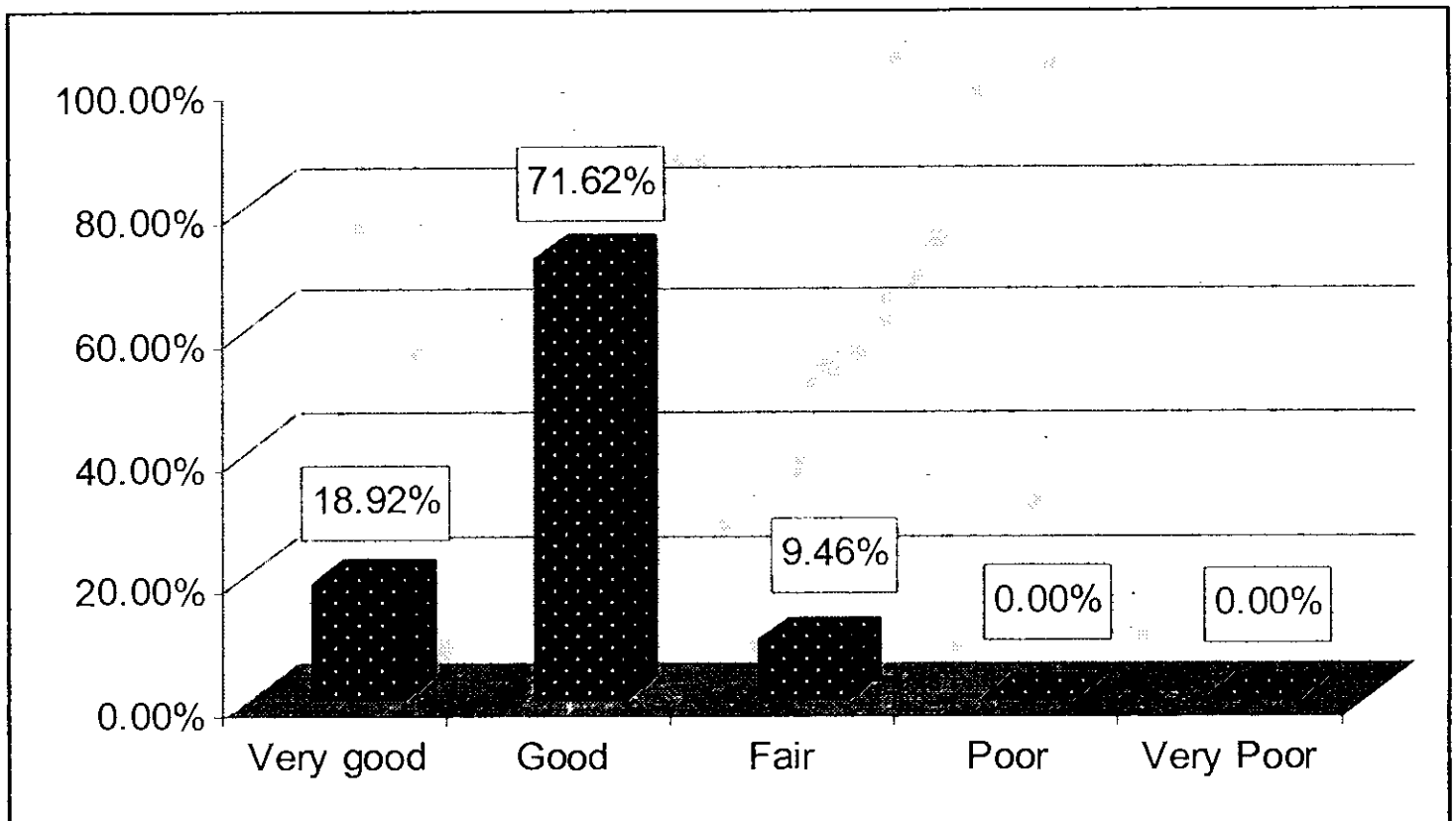
Overall, satisfaction with the library operation as a whole is high. Most users (90%) said they were satisfied with the library overall, while none were dissatisfied.

"On the whole, a good library."

"Currently this library provides good service in spite of having limited recourses (man power)"

The massage given was "Keep up the good work"

Suggestions for improvement

The sample as a whole gave library staff and facilities a tightly grouped and high level of satisfaction.

Sixty percent of the responses to the question "What are your suggestions for the improvement of the library" called for improving the space, and ventilation. Recruitment of Staff to assist with computer related duties, photocopying work and to keep the library open for longer hours was the next major suggestion. Improvement of print and non print collections and adding computers, scanner, and fax machine were other suggestions.

Remedial Actions

The survey provided an opportunity to make an assessment of the resources and services, define present use and the areas to concentrate for improvement. The

analysis of comments was used as the basis for a critical assessment of library resources leading to changes that would benefit the users.

Insufficient library material, books and core texts:

It was revealed that the traditional format collections of books and journals are the major reasons most users come to the Library. 65% of users stated that they did not participate in the material selection process of the library. This factor was taken in to consideration as a point of dissatisfaction over the quality of the collection. A suggestion book was placed for the users enabling them to provide bibliographic data of the material to be purchased for their subject areas of interest and there by taking part in the collection development process of the library. The suggestions in this book were taken into account in preparing accession list to be approved by the members of the respective Boards of Study.

Extended opening hours:

The library faces difficulty of extending opening hours due to insufficient staff strength and the restriction of overtime payments. However, with special approval, the opening hours on Saturdays were increased by adding two more hours employing the single available library assistant.

Service enhancement:

The relationship between the level of general awareness of users about a particular resource and the satisfaction attributed to that resource is meaningful. According to the comments several services which appear to have low ratings are also those which users are most unaware: for example: the Library's compliance with SDCP service (66% unaware), announcements of new Library services (74% unaware),

The assessment of services and their effectiveness measured to a greater extent by user responses must not be overlooked. It was vital to know that users were unaware of several services provided by the library. The nonuse or rare-use considered as lack of knowledge of the facilities provided by the library.

The study revealed that many were unaware of the availability of CDs and useful websites on their respective areas of study.

User education is very valuable to produce a satisfied library user. This enables them to make more efficient, independent use of the stock and the services. Several steps were taken to make productive use of library resources and services to answer this need. It was revealed that users were unaware of the online public access catalogue of the library by analyzing the 36.5% of no comment responses on the catalogue.

Based on the comments the following services and improvements were implemented.

- A User guide with list of service offered was prepared to be distributed among the users in addition to the orientation sessions organized for new members.
- A presentation about the services was displayed on the computer screen (desktop).
- Launching library Webpage: A web page with access to web catalogue was crated and launched.
- Awareness programs: Presentation on resources and services of the library was carried out at a seminar at the Kandy Society of Medicine.
- Seminar on web based medical information was carried out with collaboration of HELLIS network. This was to address users' comments and ratings about the web based information resources.

- Promptly Updating signage and shelf labels and stack directories to reflect changes was needed. In addition to the call number, the subject heading was added to spine labels for easy identification.

Addition of equipment

To address the need of more computers and related accessories, two computers with CD reading and writing facilities were purchased with tables and chairs. Acquiring of a printer with fax, scanner, colour printer and a colour copier was welcomed by the users with all the new services accompanied with it.

Facility enhancement

The level of use of the web information searching was low and users were on the opinion that the dial up connection that was available was a slow connectivity and Rs.100/= per hour charge also too high. With the timely introduction of ADSL services in the Kandy area, the internet access service was upgraded. Obtaining connectivity to this service during the promotional period itself made a major change. The users are given two internet searching lines at a substantially low rate at Rs. 40/= per hour.

Sound prevention

The main reading area of the library was restricted to "No talk zone" and banned cell phones inside that room to maintain silence within a limited area though the library staff is not in a position to prevent out side disturbances.

Space & ventilation

Most of the elements mentioned as sources of dissatisfaction have yet to be attended to; the temperature/air quality, out side noise prevention, discussion room, separate computer room, additional studying area. All fundamental aspects of facilities were considered by many users to be of substandard. Comments about the physical environment of the library and list suggestions of possible changes were submitted to administration for approval.

Infrastructure facilities such as space, sound prevention and ventilation still cause for concern and this needs have been pointed out to the authorities

Manpower enrichment

Staff is the most valuable resource in any service organization. But the library is facing a severe shortage of manpower. This has been brought to the notice of appropriate authorities.

Conclusion

Medical libraries must be as dynamic like the discipline they serve. In a rapidly developing field such as medical science, changes in user behaviour and the impact of improvements need to be re-assessed in regular intervals on a continuous basis. The answer to the question "how can a library improve its collection and services to satisfy user requirements?" is perpetually changing since user needs never remain static. However, finding answers to this question will help any librarian to be more attentive to the objective of satisfying users and to execute changes depending on the user needs.

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