

DRTC Seminar (11)(1974). Paper H.

PLAN FOR A LOCAL DOCUMENTATION SERVICE : SOME SUGGESTIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PLANS FOR NATIONAL DOCUMENTATION SYSTEMS.

P JAYARAJAN, Documentation Officer Food Marketing Centre, Xavier Institute, Jamshedpur.

Some attempts are on their way to establish national documentation centres for different subject fields. When these centres come into effective operation, they are likely to effect the structure of the services rendered by a local documentation centre. This paper attempts to suggest the kinds of documentation services that a local documentation centre can attempt to do. It also points out the areas for cooperation and coordination among the national documentation and local documentation centres in building up an effective infra-structure for documentation service in India.

0 INTRODUCTION

01 National Information Systems

National information systems are being developed all over the world as an essential supporting service for the socio-economic development of a nation. In recent years, due to enormous proliferation of ideas, it has been found helpful to organise the national information system in the form of decentralised units, each unit devoted to a particular subject, such as a National Information System for Leather Technology or a National Information System for Aeronautics.

02 Developments in India

The establishment of the INSDOC (Indian National Scientific Documentation Centre) in 1952 can be considered as the first effective step in the field of documentation in India. INSDOC generated an awareness among the scientists about the utility of having local documentation centres. However, it took some time for research institutions and industries to establish local documentation centres in their respective organisations. As the scientific and technological infra-structure of the nation developed, the need for developing information systems for communication of ideas is being felt acutely. The various committees under the national Committee for Science and Technology, have recommended the establishment of subject oriented and mission oriented information systems. They have formed committees to draft plans for national information systems. Several such plans are under consideration and one can envisage that a chain of national information systems will be established in the near future.

03 Scope of Paper

This paper aims to discuss the role of local (institutional) documentation centres in the context of the emerging infra-structure of national information systems. In particular, the variety of documentation services that a local documentation centre attached to a research institution, can render, are discussed.

1 LOCAL DOCUMENTATION CENTRE

A local documentation centre forms a unit of a

research institute or an industrial firm. Its primary objective is to provide current awareness service to its clientele — that is, the members of the staff of its parent organisation. It acts as a clearing house for information requirements normally falling within the purview of the subject fields of the organisation.

2 STRUCTURE OF A LOCAL-DOCUMENTATION CENTRE

A local documentation centre generally consists of a technical library and a documentation unit. Some documentation centres may also have a small reprography unit and a translation unit attached to it. It usually consists of one senior documentation officer and one or two senior documentation assistants accompanied by the necessary secretarial and ministerial assistance. In respect of document resources, a local documentation centre should collect sources of information which are essential to meet the day-to-day information requirements of the parent organisation.

3 FUNCTIONS OF A LOCAL DOCUMENTATION CENTRE

The main items of work of a documentation unit attached to an institution may be stated as follows:

- 1 Reference Service;
- 2 Documentation Work;
- 3 Documentation Service;
- 4 Promotion of Use of Information; and
- 5 Arrangement for Reprography and Translation work.

The ideal would be for each documentation centre being equipped well to do all these items of work.

But it is neither economical nor absolutely necessary. There should be a division of functions between the different national documentation centres and the individual documentation centres. This is being examined in the succeeding sections.

4 REFERENCE SERVICE

41 Ready Reference Service

Each documentation centre should be well equipped to answer the queries of a ready reference service nature. Generally speaking, the documentation centre should be in a position to answer all queries of this type. A good collection of reference books, complemented by other items such as newspaper cuttings and other statistical information sources, is a must for any documentation centre. Still, help from other centres will have to be taken occasionally- Keeping a record of all the queries will very much help in building up a good reference collection and strengthening the service.

42 Long Range Reference Service

For an individual documentation centre, it may not be possible most of the time to meet the demands of long range reference service. Long range reference service consists of finding answers to specific queries and usually involves prolonged search in a large number and variety of documents. It is not economical to equip each documentation centre for meeting such queries. This work should always be done with the help of the appropriate national documentation centre.

5 DOCUMENTATION

Documentation is a generic term comprising

- (a) Documentation service;
- (b) Documentation work; and
- (c) Dissemination of information.

51 Documentation Service

Documentation service consists in finding out the exact requirement of each reader and serving him with the appropriate information and/or document. This is the most important function of an individual documentation centre. This can be done effectively only if the documentation centre is a well organised one. Books and other documents — including articles in periodicals — should be classified and catalogued properly. A dialogue between the user and the docuentalist in the presence of such a catalogue can elicit the exact requirement of the user, and again, with the help of the same catalogue, the required information or documents can be given. To carry out documentation service effectively, the Centre should have a very good collection of books, periodicals and other documents. Further, secondary periodicals such as indexing periodicals, abstracting periodicals and documentation lists would help very much in rendering documentation service.

But, it is not possible for each documentation centre to acquire all such documents. The documentation centre should have a representative collection of books and journals and similar documents, and it should try to avoid acquiring costly and less useful documents — especially primary periodicals. Further, indexing and abstracting periodicals, which are

generally costly, but at the same time, very useful, need not be acquired by each centre.. It is not economically feasible.

So, when a query comes, with the aid of the different documentation lists, catalogue, etc, the documentalist should be in a position to give maximum service within the limited collection at his disposal. For the rest, the appropriate national documentation centre can be contacted immediately and the latter should give the information within the least possible time. Only when there are a network of such national documentation centres with facilities for reprography and translation, can this plan be effectively and expeditiously implemented.

52 Documentation Work

Documentation work consists of the preparation of documentation lists and various other varieties of presentation of information to suit the different requirements of the different categories of users. These are explained in the succeeding sections.

53 Current Awareness Service

Current Awareness Service aims to keep the research, development and management personnel of an organisation abreast of the latest developments in their respective fields of interest. A list of the different current articles in periodicals, technical reports, patents, standards and specifications and such other documents should be brought to the notice of the specialists at suitable intervals. The preparation of such a list requires more manpower, money and material. So, this is one very effective field

where centralisation can be adopted. Each of the national documentation centres should prepare such documentation lists and send copies to all the documentation centres dealing with the core and related subjects.

54 Selective Dissemination of Information

Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) keeps the specialists informed of the current developments in their respective fields of interest. This can be best done by an individual documentation centre. SDI can be effectively done only if the documentalist keeps himself aware of the individual interests of the specialists working in an organisation. Where this is not feasible, they usually keep tract with individual projects. Subject profile and reader profile or project-file are necessary prerequisites for a good SDI system.

55 Abstracts on Bequest

The documentation list, sent out by the national documentation centre, might show some articles that are of interest to a particular specialist and he may like to have abstracts of these at first. If the original document is available with the documentalist, the documentation centre may prepare an informative abstract and pass it on to the reader. If the document is not available, he may look through abstracting periodicals. As a last resort, he may contact the appropriate national documentation centre for an informative abstract, or if it is found feasible, ask for a reproof copy of the original.

56 Patent Abstracts

It is not desirable and economical for each documentation centre to acquire all patents related to its subject field. At the same time, patents are very useful sources of information. It is essential that the specialists are kept abreast of the new patents. This can be best done by the national documentation centres. A periodical "Patents Abstracts" will be the best medium for the dissemination of patent information. The individual centre can then get photocopies of those patents required by the specialists.

57 Technical Digest

This publication is meant to solve technical problems and to promote technical advances and modernisation. This should be done by individual documentation centres to suit its clientele. This can be a quarterly publication and should include information culled out from all kinds of current documents.

56 management Digest

Management Digest is designed to disseminate current scientific, technical, commercial and technoeconomic information, from the management point of view, in order to promote managerial competence and decision-making. The Digest should be brief and present the information in a lucid language and wherever necessary, graphs, diagrams and statistics may be used. This is an essential function of a local documentation.

591 Data Compilation

Data compilation aims to present reliable data. It may pertain to any subject field — scientific, technical, commercial, techno-economic, etc. Sources for such data would be all kinds of documents, including newspapers. The presentation of the data also should be pleasing and easily understandable. Data compilation has to be done for specific purpose. It is a highly specialised form of service. This type of service can be provided only by a local documentation centre.

592 Newsbrief

Newsbrief disseminates general information that are pertinent to the functions and work of the organisation. It can be a fortnightly publication. It should contain only current, general, non technical information. The main sources for such information would be newspapers and sections of technical periodicals. A journalistic style of writing would be more appealing in this case. This can be best done by individual documentation centres.

593 Retrospective Bibliography

Preparation of an exhaustive bibliography in response to a query is generally beyond the limits of an individual documentation centre. But, with the available resources, the centre can prepare a bibliography, and later on, this can be made exhaustive with the help of the appropriate national documentation centre.

594 State-of-Art and Trend Report

This is to review the developments in a

specific field. Generally, such a report covers a period of five to ten years and the report should be exhaustive. Here again, the individual centre can only make a draft report with the help of its collection. To have a comprehensive report, the help of the concerned national documentation centre will have to be taken.

6 TRANSLATION

Procuring documents in any language other than English (except regional language), by individual documentation centres should not be encouraged. At the same time, the national documentation centres should procure all such documents, and the periodically produced documentation list should include such documents. If the translation of any document is necessary, it can be got done through the appropriate national documentation centre, since it is not possible to keep a panel of translators in each centre. This is one area where each documentation centre can get maximum help from the national documentation centres.

7 REPROGRAPHY

Since there is going to be intensive cooperation and coordination between different individual documentation centres and different national documentation centres, there is a need for each documentation centre to own some kind of machinery for copying documents. However, the initial investment on these documents may be heavy. But, it has been found that such investments usually yielded good returns.

8 PROMOTING THE USE OF INFORMATION

Promoting the use of information is an important function of each of the national documentation centres and the individual documentation centres; at a national level by the former and at an institutional level by the latter. This implies liaison work at various levels.

91 CONCLUSION

If each of the national documentation centres and individual centres can effectively carry out their functions, there will be an effective infra-structure for the documentation activities in India. "Time lag" in secondary periodical publications is one of the serious problems in India. We are having secondary periodicals months and even years behind: This is a very serious obstacle. It is quite true, bringing out such secondary periodicals and other publications is not an easy task; it requires a well-organised machinery. Probably we are yet to organise our system effectively. When the new network of documentation centres comes up, this should not be the case. It is very important that the publications are brought out in time. Further, any query from any centre should be answered in as little time as possible. Any publication published by a national documentation centre or a local documentation centre should be sent to all other centres interested in the subject. There should be periodic meeting of the documentalists of all the centres to discuss organisational and other problems. A coordination of this type can bring in a thorough but effective change in the documentation scene of India.