

Library: Rethinking Roles, Rethinking Space

By

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Abstract: Library has been considered as important place in an academic institution. Space is one of the components in a system where it required adequate attentions like other components such as materials, staff and users. This paper focuses the importance of space in an academic institutions and space management. And also discuss the solution for the space problems in academic libraries. While considering the library as a social space, how virtual library would be solution to space problems in libraries. It also discusses the pro and cons of virtual library and role of social networking sites in space problems.

Keywords: Library Space; Space management; Virtual library; Space optimization; Web 2.0; Social networking sites

1. Introduction

Library has always held a central position as the heart of institution / place – both symbolically and its physical placement. The library has served as a visual anchor for the surrounding buildings on campus. As a knowledge centre, the library as place assumed an important place reflected both in its architecture and in its sitting (Freeman, 2005). As per the Fifth Law of Library Science, materials, staff, users and space are considered as the components / elements in a library as an organism. It is evidence from the many cases; all the elements are continuously growing except the physical space. The libraries are being established in various academic institutions like schools, colleges, universities and research institutions to help the parent institution to achieve their goals such as study, teaching, learning and research. To achieve this, the library provides a variety of informational materials and services for students and staff (both academic and non-academic) to support the academic programmes and research. It also provides serene environment for learning and research as a place of knowledge (Ugwuanyi, 2011).

2. Aim

The aim of this paper is try to answer certain questions: What is space management in libraries?; Why is it important even if library space considered as social space?; Is virtual library solution to the space problems in libraries?; and how social networking sites / media can be utilized to solve the space problems in libraries.

3. Library Space

When we think about library space, it is necessary to think it into two ways: one is optimum utilization of physical space, and to find out the alternative to the physical space. The major concern of today's library managers is how to manage the library space as one of the important aspects of library management.

Libraries have generally been designed a place to collect, access, and preserve print collections primarily. In general, we are inclined to think that space in libraries is used primarily for storing books. But, most university libraries use considerably more space for readers than for books. Also, in addition to space for books and readers, there must be space for the staff, the catalogue, entrance lobbies, corridors, stairways, exhibitions, and many other uses. The space is consumed because the building is a monumental as well as of poor planning.

The library buildings built, many instances, with multiple expectations, apart from space for library purpose, including sharing space for some classroom functions and continuing to provide the campus computer commons. Cohen and Cohen (1979) emphasised that the proper organisation of space and things for people to easily find what they want in the library. But, Li and Klippel (2012) outlined that the library space is inclined with problems of visibility, connectivity, layout complexity and familiarity. The interior design aspect such as furniture and equipment layouts, people and material traffic patterns, workflow, lighting, acoustics, and even colour affect how users and staff work in the library. The Interior design and management of library building determine, to a large extent, the rate of accessibility of materials and concentration of the library users. The three elements that depict a good space/place include:

- A space for variety of library materials and expansion or addition of collections.
- It has to be comfortable or behaviourally usable for both users and staff. The users should find the library, inviting and staff having enough and inviting space too, rather than be relegated to subterranean spaces and treated as second-class citizens.
- The library should also be attractive to the users in terms of the aesthetic (beauty) through art work decoration and other beautifying features. A library housed in a structure that is ugly and ill kept says something of the management and staff such as disorganisation and poor morale.

When there is a continuous growth of collection, staff and users, there is no possibility of expansion of library building / space. Library space is one of the main problems to librarian / managers / authorities. The space problems in the libraries include modular structure, space for monumental purposes, workroom space and space for catalogues (Metcalf).

4. Optimization of Space

From the above said premises, the optimization of space became need for librarians. The optimization of space in libraries refers to proper utilization of space for various library activity purposes. The available facilities and techniques made it possible in the present days. Technology also plays important roles in this aspect. The idea of 'reduce the collection or de-selection' and weeding out does seem to be on the agenda for any library space management. Even with the increase of digital collections, the print collection continues to grow. When the shelves are full, what do we do? Where should we allow the most growth room? Here are some suggestions (Turnquist and Loucks):

- *Move lower-use books to the Library Annex:* The unutilized and underutilized books may be moved from regular stack and can be stocked in an annex building.
- *Arrangement of books:* Books are arranged by size, not by call number, for space efficiency.
- *Forecast popular and high-growth areas:* Use a formula that gives usage points for each call number. Checked-out books are rated the highest, then browsed books, then shelves with the most books out of order.

- *Buffer Room*: Move the most heavily-used books to Stack 1, which is on the first floor and convenient to all. This is similar to the bookstore model, which places the most popular titles on the most prominent location in the store. This also makes it easier and quicker for those shelving books. Stack 1 could potentially hold 14,940 books. However, this method would make it more difficult to find books overall since the entire stacks would not be in strict call number order.
- *Carrel Clustering*: Carrels suffer from poor lighting, not enough space, and are inconvenient to find. By clustering them on Stack 1 or in the Basement (if we removed the microfiche), carrels could provide more space for laptops and small group study.

5. Library as Social Space

In recent years, library space has gained popularity with the idea of being as social space. This idea of a 'social' library reflects trends such as a change in learning and teaching methods in academic institutions. The library space is being used for other social activities such as meeting, discussions, etc., apart from its own purposes. In western countries, university libraries have been built in a way that responds to current ideas around the ideas of the library as a social space. There were efforts of the redesign, rebuilding, and refurbishment involved in to shift to this idea.

Common spaces are designed to welcome everyone in the community. "On college campuses, these include chapels; pedestrian quadrangles; pathways; gardens, arboretums, or natural areas; gymnasiums or recreation centers; cafeterias or other eating places; student centres; museums; and libraries. Library is among the busiest, most welcoming space on a college campus. As egalitarian common spaces associated with learning and culture they hold a strong appeal Well-run and well-designed libraries serve, in effect, as a form of academic community centre. While socializing is not necessarily their primary purpose, these spaces are prized for the opportunities they create for socializing. People who do not travel in the same disciplinary, social, political, or economic circles frequently meet and greet each other in these common spaces, helping build and maintain a larger sense of community" (Demas). Well-run and well-designed libraries serve, in effect, as a form of academic community centre. They are creating welcoming spaces, explicitly associated with tolerance and culture, for social interaction and intellectual discourse.

6. Rethinking Roles

In the present ICT environment, the academic libraries no longer needs to define itself as a place where users go to access the materials physically. Instead, the library has become a service point for providing information resources and services to their users that they seek even if they never set foot in the library physically. Users expect to get everything on the desk and in gadgets without spending much time, cost and effort.

Libraries have dealt with the impact of technology on space for decades. Over the period of time, applications of technology have been seen in areas such as automation of library house-keeping operations and user-oriented services. Arrival of the Internet, the changing patterns of collection building have had the most effect upon library space needs. As more digital resources have become available, academic libraries are collecting fewer physical materials and are often discarding parts of their physical collections. Digital resources are popular with

users for many reasons. They are available 24/7, unlike the unavailability of physical resources when the library is closed (Holly).

There is a shift in approaching the users as a group. No more considered the users as a homogeneous group in terms of their information needs, information sources and services. Each and every individual user of a library is considered as unit and his/her information needs and required a unique set of information and services. Therefore, it is necessary that library re-orient the approach to consider their stakeholders. Personalised library services are tailored with a specific clientele in mind and will provide the enhanced service demanded by today's users. The personalised or 'boutique' approach should adopt focusing on your users individually, rather than generically, and offering them unique and highly-tailored services in order to promote the relevance, and increase usage and engagement, of libraries (Hallam, 2013). These services need not cost more money due to available means of technology; but they do require inventive and customer oriented services.

7. Virtual Library

Libraries are now taking a new direction, heading for dynamic virtual libraries which use efficient and flexible mechanisms to locate, organise, accede to and, above all, personalise the content and services they develop (Pérez). It is a library that exists, without any regard to a physical space or location. The virtual library suffers the same vulnerability and the same precarious existence. Virtual libraries are come up with some disadvantages. Some are (Riccio, 2001):

- Everything is NOT available in digital format
- The scope of coverage and available archives is often limited
- Every product has its own distinct user interface.
- Users need to remember different passwords for different products.
- Often there is no cost savings, especially when both the virtual and print products are maintained.
- There are restrictions, which vary from vendor to vendor, on how the product can be used
- The virtual library relies on power and computer networks in order to be available for use.
- Users can't spread everything out in front of them and use it all at once.
- Users are most comfortable using books.

A digital library is not a single entity. It requires technology link the resources of many collections. The digital library planning includes IT Infrastructure; digitization; access; staffing; furniture, equipment, and space; services; and funding (Trivedi, 2011).

8. Social Networking Sites / Media

Web 2.0 technology permits building a virtual applications, drawing data and functionality from a number of different sources as appropriate. These applications tend to be relatively rapid to deploy, and they bring power within the reach of suitably motivated individuals. The new technology is somewhat participative rather one-sided approach. This also focuses the particular user for sharing the ideas among the community. There are many social networks including Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter being the most popular platforms used by academic libraries (Johnson and Burclaff, 2013). The blogs are being used for outreach and to share information about events, services, or resources of the libraries. The librarians are using

social media channels as tools for instruction, particularly online collaboration, curation and sharing, and practicing inquiry (Stoeckel and Sinkinson, 2013).

9. Conclusion

The library space management is an important aspect of the library managers. The optimum utilization of existing space by using appropriate strategies is warranted. The collection development needs a very much attention. The library should formulate guidelines / policies for collection development. The guidelines should have the following important components (Dhawan):

- *Define the objectives of the library:* Clearly state the purpose of its existence.
- *Define the user community and their information needs:* This requires complete knowledge and understanding about library stakeholders. Their information needs can be assessed through library surveys, personal interviews, and informal discussions with all stakeholders.
- *Define library policy for building collections:* The policy states the guiding principles and procedures under which collection development activities, including the selection, maintenance, and weeding of print, electronic, and media library materials will occur. This would also mean specifying subject areas of interest to library stakeholders, their languages preferences, and formats (i.e. print, non-print, or electronic format). The policy may also specify the subject areas in which the library is going build its archival collection, if any. Such a policy statement on the part of the library ensures continuity and consistency in selection and revision of materials for the library collections.
- *Define what different collections are required to be developed and sustained keeping in view users' information needs:* The possible options include books collection, reports collection, pamphlet collection, multimedia collection, and reference collection, etc. The library may decide on developing some of these collections keeping in view the users' information needs.
- *Define the book selection policy:* State the distribution of library budget by subject and by collection. The policy may also state guidelines for acquiring multiple copies of books, guidelines for accepting books from donors, and guidelines for weeding out material.

The library also formulate guidelines / policy for library Space, Equipment and Tools for Library Operations and Services

- *Space required for each section / activity:* Bureau of Indian Standards provides guidelines that a library should have a stack room, a librarian's room, a reading room, and stack room.
- *Equipment and tools:* The library equipments and tools like furniture, fittings and accessories should of standard pattern and design, so that users feel comfortable in using them. The following is the list of essential furniture and fittings for conventional library: reading tables; chairs for pupils; librarian's table; circulation or charging desk and chair; librarian's shelf list trays; card catalogue trays; card catalogue cabinet; bulletin board and notice board; book supporters; new arrivals display case; dictionary stands; periodicals display stand; newspaper display stand; filing cabinets. Besides, the library may acquire radio and television set, tape recorder/player, VCR and VCP, slide and film projector, overhead projectors, computers with internet connection, photocopying machine, etc.

Space is a big issue for libraries. Even with the increase of digital collections, the print collection continues to grow. Digital technology cannot completely wash out the print collection, but it can make substantial impact on print collection. At the same time, if the library space as social space, we have to spend the cost over it. Keeping in view of rethinking roles of libraries the librarians should think of the virtual library concept and make use of social networking sites/media to meet the objectives of the libraries to be served in a more personalised way to their clientele.

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