

APPRAISAL OF CIRCULATION ROUTINE DUTIES IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

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Abstract

This paper examines the circulation services in the circulation department of academic libraries. It defines circulation services and identifies types of circulation routine duties. Specific mention was made of shelving of consulted books, shelving arrangement, shelf reading, registration of library users, charging system, brown system, discharging system, advantages and disadvantages of brown charging system, book reservation, keeping of reserved collection, circulation of reserved books, treatment of overdue, lost of books on loan and library statistics among other as duties perform in circulation department of libraries.

Keywords: Library Service, Circulation Duties, Challenges, Academic Libraries

Introduction

Library is an indispensable organization in every tertiary institution. It is the heart of a University Polytechnics or College that provides access to the various resources: print, non-print and digital. All the services rendered impose certain challenges on the library. The services rendered by the academic libraries include, readers' services, circulation services, reference services, reprographic services, current awareness services (CAS), selective dissemination of information (SDI), bindery and reprographic services etc.

The task of the circulation department is to make resources available to library users. Nwalo (2003) put it that if an institution owns one book and allows people to use it, it is a library, and another library may have millions of books and if it does not allow anyone to use them, this is simply means it is a museum. The books that were dully processed in the cataloging and classification department are immediately sent to the circulation department so as to enable library users get access to it. As the name, suggest books kept in the circulation department are meant to be circulated among the interested library users. It is in the circulation department that library resources change hand, that is one person make use of a book and returned it and another borrow it for use.

Type of routine duties in the circulation department

The following types of routine duties are been discharge by a circulation department of libraries:
Shelving of consulted books: The library users are usually advised to leave the consulted books on the reading desks or tables. The library staffs are expected to gather these consulted books which litter

the reading room and properly sort them according to their subject groups. Before the proper shelving then

the books are arranged on the book trolleys in a classified order and wheeled to shelves for shelving. The shelves are labeled both at the outer and the edges of the inner bays. The label on the horizontal edge of the shelf bear class symbols of the materials (books) located on the shelf, for instance, in a library that is using the library of congress classification scheme (LCCS) and contain books on building, electric engineering and mechanical engineering, the shelf guide will read:

TA- Engineering (General)
TB- Building, and
TK- Electrical Engineering

Shelf labeling is an aspect of guiding library shelves and the method of guiding library shelves are many these are:

- ❖ Hanging of frame pointed or hand lettered signs on the stacks;
- ❖ Lettering directly on the wood or metal stacks itself, and
- ❖ Use of removable colored plastic letter which look attractive and can be seen from a distance.

Another important aspect of shelving is the shelf arrangement: The books in the library are usually systematically and accurately shelved in a classified order. The locations of needed books by the library users are easy only when they have been properly shelved by their call numbers. If books are not systematically shelved in classified order the effort and resources spent on building up a library catalogue to direct reader to the shelf for location of desired materials would have been in vain. The library of congress call numbers is derived from the class number in the schedule and the cutter numbers.

The cutter number is assigned to the author or title of the books where applicable, in cutter table. Cutter number also assigned book published in a particular geographical area or country. A book on transportation in Nigeria written by Abimbola Oyemikende is given the number as:

HE89 Transportation
.N685 Nigeria
.098 Oyemakinde

All the units of the class numbers are considered in shelving. If two books by different authors are on the same subject and geographical location, the last part of the Cutter numbers will decide the relative position of each of them on the shelf. The systematic and accurate shelving of books classified by the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) requires knowledge of the principles and use of decimals.

As the DDC classification number is a Pure notation, the basic arrangement is numerical with the addition of the decimal point. An example of filing order of the DDC is as follow:

120.25501
125.082558
125.125593

The call number is derived by the addition of the author notation to the classification number. The use of an author notation ensures that within a group of books bearing the same class, there is a sub arrangement which is alphabetical by author. For example:

234.5 Ach , 234.5 Bak, 234.5 Cla,234.5 Dew etc.

A good shelf guides the library users and advertised the collection and ensures that the library patrons locate the books they want in the quickest possible time. It is a primary responsibility of the library to ensure that the time of the user is not wasted and the user get the right books at the right time.

Shelf Reading: Shelf reading is a process of going through the shelves and checking the arrangement to ensure that every book is in its proper position. The library staff preferably the library officers do the shelf reading after shelving every morning before the library is opened to users.

Shelf reading is also a continuous exercise all through the service period in the library. During shelf reading, books wrongly shelves are removed and put in their proper position and also damage books are identified and removed or withdrawn for repair in the

bindery unit. It is also worthy to note that books are not tightly shelved to ensure a free removal of books and gaps are always left on each shelf to accommodate new books. Dada (1979) asserts that it is a good practice to assigned library assistant to specific shelves for the purpose of shelve reading and also a professional librarian should inspect the shelves every morning before the library is opened to users.

Registration of library users:

Every library serves a specific group of readers, as academic library serve the interest of the academic community (students, teachers, non-teaching staff and researchers), National and Public libraries are open to every member of the community where these types of library exist, while special library serve the interest of special group, usually specialist in a specific subject area. Never the less, all libraries have rules and regulations guiding the use of the library as who are eligible to register to use the library. Registration in most libraries is free of charge (this applied to only academic libraries). Every library designs its registration form and cards based on its peculiar situation to suit the particular need of its users. Jean (1978) stated that information on the registration form should include the identity of the potential library user that is the name, residential address, department, occupation if it is public or national library, marital status, sex, state and local government of origin, spouse's name and address, signature and date, and also the expiration date of the membership of the library user. The provision of space for guarantor is also very important (guarantor must those who held responsible for public post). In academic libraries, for instance head of department, dean of faculties etc are the guarantors accepted for registration of every potential library user. Also most libraries require a passport photograph of potential library user for registration. This is to ensure that the library is dealing with the right users at all the time, especially in lending transactions. The number of forms or cards completed at the time of registrations differs from library to library but according to Gay (1978) this usually corresponds with the individual situation and needs. After registration, a potential library user is given a library ticket. This is called a borrowers ticket which entitle a user to borrow a given number of books for a stipulated period of time which depends on the rules and regulations governing a particular library. Users are eligible to borrow a specific number of books depending on the library and the user book ratio. In a situation, when a library user loses his/her lending ticket, a fee is usually charge for a replacement of another ticket to be issued to him/her. As a result, this prevents user from

been careless with the lending ticket issued to them. All the registration cards are arranged alphabetically by the users surname and are filed in special trays in the circulation desk.

Charging System: charging system referred to a system adopted by a library to lend books to users and received them after due date. Lending books to library users is one of the major functions of libraries. Circulation desk is the point at which loan transaction take place in the library. The record of users and loan transaction (charges) are kept in the circulation counter and might be tempered with if non library staff are allow to get access to the department. The charging and discharging transactions involved routines which must be systematically followed. If any of the steps is skipped the library may be at disadvantage. Charging system may include Brown System, Network System, Multiple Slip system, and the computer system. Brown System is the commonest charging system used in Nigerian libraries. In the Brown system, when borrowers are registered they are given a number of borrowers ticket in the form of pockets bearing his/her name, address and registration numbers. The numbers of ticket given to users correspond with the number of books he/she entitle to borrow at a time. Each time the library user borrows a book he/she will surrender a borrower ticket into which the book card is inserted and the book is then charged in to the account of the user. The charge is kept at charging trays according to the due date and the charging trays have date due tags with stick out above charges. When the book is returned the card is replaced in the book pocket and borrowers ticket returned to the patron/library user. Charging found against a date that has passed is called overdue and all over dues are assemble at the end of each day and overdue notice send to the defaulting borrowers.

Essential Features of Brown Charging System

- ❖ Record of borrower
- ❖ Title of book borrowed
- ❖ Author of book borrowed
- ❖ Accession number of book borrowed
- ❖ The date borrowed book is due for returned; and
- ❖ Class mark of the book if any.

Steps of Borrowing a Book under Brown System

1. Take book from user
2. Open the book to examine the physical condition and ascertain whether it is for lending;
3. If a book is for loans, take the user's ticket and find out whether or not it is valid. If the ticket is invalid explain to the library user

and advise him/her to renew his/her registration;

4. If the user's ticket is valid, pull out the book card from the book pocket;
5. Insert the book card in the borrower's ticket;
6. Stamp date due on the date due slip; and
7. Keep the charge for immediate filling.

Discharging System: To discharge a book under the Brown system, the following steps are taken:

1. Take the book from the user;
2. Check the physical condition of the book;
3. Remove the card from the charging tray against the date due if the book is overdue calculate overdue to user to pay;
4. Remove the book card from the borrower's ticket;
5. Insert the card in to the book pocket
6. Cancel date due on the slip; and
7. Return the discharged book to its appropriate position on the shelf.

Advantages of Brown System

- ❖ Only one operation is necessary to make the book available for reissue. The simple operation in discharging is to pull out book card from borrower's ticket and return the ticket to the owner;
- ❖ The process of charging a book is simple, pull book card from the book pocket and insert into the borrower's ticket and stamp date due;
- ❖ Overdue books are easily identified and handled.

Book Reservation: Book on loan could be reserved for other users who have indicate their interest in using or borrowing them when it is returned. Libraries usually make slip for this purpose. A reserve slip always bears the name and address of the prospective book user, the author and title of the book and the date which will no more be needed. The complete slip is then attached to the book card in the charging tray. The library assistant who is working in the circulation desk will check the date the borrowed book is due for return, then inform the prospective borrower to come for the book a day after the date due. If the library user returns a book for which a reserve request has been made, he is not allowed to renew the book. However if the library user who has requested the book reserved for him failed to come after a reasonable length of time, the reserved book is return to the open shelf.

Reserve Collections: According to Reitz (2004) stated that an information material which is on high

demand and are limited in number of copies in the library are sometimes placed on reserve. The lists of such materials are made available to users in the section. Materials on reserve are borrowed to library users for a short period of time and return back to reserve room.

Reasons for keeping Reserve Collections in the Library

Book could be kept in the reserve collection for the following reasons:

- ❖ Rare, costly books or single copy books;
- ❖ A book is put on reserve when it is discovered that there is high demand of it within the same period;
- ❖ In academic and school library, some books are placed on reserve at the request of teaching staff that may have referred students to the book within a given period of time;
- ❖ A library may decide to keep a copy of an expensive book but with multitude copies on so that it will at all-time have a copy in the library.

Circulation of Reserve Books:

Books are kept in the reserve could be borrowed for a very short period of time and used only within the library. Many libraries allow loans of reserve book only within the libraries for about two hours. However, a loan could be renewed if its expiration no one else has requested the material. Other libraries also allows reserved book to be loan out on overnight or weekend loan. All books issued out on overnight or weekend loan should be returned, early in the morning of the next service day. Like loan defaulters in the regular book lending, penalties are imposed on short term loan defaulter because of the value attached to the material on reserve. The fine on the defaulters may be some times higher than that of books charge out on regular basis.

Loss of Books on loan: sometimes it is quite common that borrowers lose library issued out to them. When the lost of book on loan is reported to the staff at the circulation desk, the report is noted and attached to the book card. At this point the borrower is advised to go back and look the book for a certain period of time depending on the policy of the library. Some libraries recommend two weeks after which the borrower should report if the book is still not recovered. If the library confirms that the borrower has lost a book loaned to him, he is required to pay the replacement cost of the book. The cost of a library book is not the same as the market price of the book at the time of purchased. The computation of replacement cost of a library book is done by the librarian as follows:

- Present market price of the book
- Cost of a acquisition
- Cost of processing

A special file is kept at the circulation desk for cases of loss of library books on loan. The affected borrower is requested to pay the replacement cost of the book within a stipulated time but when a library user default in the payment after a reasonable length of time, his guarantor is surcharged.

Library Statistic: Statistical record is the keeping of accurate record of transactions in the library. It is one of the most important responsibilities of staff in the circulation section. Statistics of library users are taken daily to know the number of users who come to the library. There are also hourly counts of users seated in the library. The purpose of keeping statistics according to Ode and Omokaro (2007) is to know:

- ❖ The kind of books used for a day/week/month and year;
- ❖ The amount of books used for particular day/week/month and year;
- ❖ The library keeps statistical record of daily circulation of books because of the information is helpful in preparing an annual library report;
- ❖ Library statistical record also helps in proving information for research and other information.

Challenges faced in the course of discharging circulation routine duties

There are many challenges faced when providing circulation services among which are:

Inadequate current text books

Many libraries are facing this challenge Assefa (2009) stated that library users prefer e-resources than the hard copies because most of the hard copies are retrospectives. Collection development of many libraries hardly acquires books that have been published in the year of acquisition. The selection used to be done in time but the release of fund used to be delayed as a result of this current text books are not been found.

Inadequate qualified staff Most of the circulation staff are not professionals to provide the required services needed by their users. Carver (1992) stated that library users used to be attracted by the kind of services given to them by their libraries. For any library that wants their users to utilize the library stocks, effective services have to be given to their patrons. The effective services will only be provided through a qualified staff. Many libraries manage their circulation using library assistants and library attendants.

Lack of constant evaluation In any organization whether public or private there is need for constant evaluation of their services. This will enable the organization to know its strengths and weaknesses. Library is an organization that its activities has to be evaluated especially circulation department. The activities of circulation department has to be evaluated this will enable the department to serve and solve the problem of their users.

Insecurity

Today insecurity is a top of discussion in almost every organization. The library is a public area where to identify bad person will be very difficult and in most cases it has a single entrance. Moreover the entrance is directly in to the circulation unit of almost all libraries.

Epileptic Power Supply

Electricity is the bedrock of almost every activity in almost every human society. No business, communication and education that can be carried out effectively without power to support the services. Library is also inclusive among those that are in need of power to discharge their responsibility effectively. Lack of constant power supply in the library affects circulation services to the extent that library users are not enjoying the library facilities the way they want.

Conclusion

Circulation services are the backbone of any library, failure to provide effective service will discourage users from the use of library because circulation is the first area of contact of both new and returning users.

Recommendations

1. Fund should be allocated before selection this will enable libraries to select current text books to the patrons that are published in the current year.
2. Professional librarians should be among the para-professionals (Library officers, Assistant Library Officer) so that effective

services will be given to the patrons in the circulation department of a library.

3. Constant evaluation should be embarked this will let the library to know its strength and weakness and proffer solutions on how to improve.
4. Proper checking should be made from a far distance of the entrance of the library.
5. Alternative source of power should be provided to support the main source of power in the library.

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