بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

NEWSLETTER
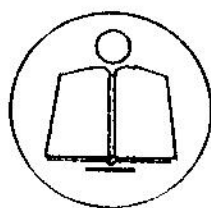
National Library, Male', Republic of Maldives

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EDITORIAL

We greet you with our first issue of the current year (1997) Newsletter of the Library Association, presenting you the activities of our members and a few articles which may interest you.

This newsletter has been established to bring forward the ideas of the library's loving members, readers and library staff. You, who are interested in running of a library, the upgrading of a Library and reading, are welcome to send us your thoughts in forms of articles, poems, photographs and surveys.

We assure you that your thoughts are most welcome and as our aim is to progress library science, we await your generous contribution.

We pray to Allah Almighty to give us inspiration for further progress in achieving our goal.

INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE

HABEEBA HUSSAIN HABEEB

Information and Knowledge have become the most important economic resource of our country. These two important assets are key factors of the progress of our society as it is of any society. These factors will be instrumental in ensuring that nations compete successfully in the next century. To enable Maldivians to keep up with the fast progressing era, we, Maldivians must be empowered with knowledge. We agree that the future belongs to countries whose people make the most productive use of **information, knowledge**, and **technology**.

National Library of Maldives, is certain to play a major role in creating and supporting knowledge acquisition and knowledge dissemination to encourage learning.

National Library of Maldives, though it is still a National Library cum public library can, and should continue to serve as an integral part of our nations' learning system in the emerging knowledge economy.

Learning has been proven very effective when it takes place within a social process. We at National Library should therefore help our library to be positioned to play a great role in stimulating learning; instead of merely providing access to information available in formal sources. We, the National Library should also provide opportunities for users to gather knowledge through informal channels and social interactions. Therefore we organised a Library Association for this purpose. Through the activities of our Association, we hope to gather new ideas from members as well as outside sources. We hope to activate talks, lectures, forums, and exhibitions by the National Library as well as with the help and co-ordination of the Maldivian Library Association.

National Library hopes to help readers and members to provide a knowledge investing centre by the year 2000.

A LETTER FROM THE NEW VSO TEACHER LIBRARIAN

My name is Melanie Weeks and I am the new VSO Teacher Librarian based at The National Library. I arrived in Male' on July 15th 1997 and will be working in Maldives until July 1999. I already feel "at home" here, thanks to the warm welcome I received from all the staff at the National Library.

So why am I here? Many of you will remember Geoff James, VSO Teacher Librarian (1991-1992) and Dharma Diyasena, Library Advisor (1994-1996). My job is to build on the tremendous work they both did at the National Library and to extend this work to other libraries in Male' and the atolls. My main job is to provide training courses for library staff throughout Male' and the atolls. In addition, I am here to provide professional support to all library staff and help with the publication of a National Bibliography.

I have already met some of you at the Library Association meeting on 29th September. Over the next few weeks I hope to visit all of you in your libraries, to see where you work and discuss what training you want.

If you want to talk to me you can phone me at the National Library on 323944. My working hours are 8am –12 and 2pm –5pm.

I look forward to working with you all over the next two years.

Melanie Weeks

HOW TO KEEP YOUR USERS HAPPY

Melanie Weeks
VSO Teacher Librarian

Who or what is the most important part of a library?

The books?
The users?
The staff?

It is of course the *users*. If people did not use the library, there would be no library. The books and the staff are also very important, but without the users, they wouldn't be there. The focus of every librarian therefore, must be the users.

Every librarian must ask herself three basic questions:

i)   Who are the users?
ii)   What information do they need?
iii) How can I get the information to the user?

A librarian must also ask herself about the people who do not use the library, even if they are eligible to be a member of it. These are known as 'potential users'.

i) <u>Who are the users</u>? The users of a library service vary according to the type of library, e.g. public library, school library and company library. To take some local examples: the National Library of Maldives is a public library as well as a national library. This means that every Maldivian can use the library. It also means that every person living, working or studying in Maldives can use the library.

Atoll libraries- these are public libraries and so can be used by every one living, working or studying in a particular atoll or island.

School libraries-e.g. Aminiya School library. Every one working or studying at the school can use the school library.

Institute library-e.g. MITE library, IHS library. Every one working or studying at the institute can use the library.

Specialist libraries-e.g. MCMA library, Ministry of Finance library. These libraries can be used by everyone who works for the organization they are based in.

It is important that the rules about who can use a library are not too rigid. All types of library contain information that people find useful. This is particularly true where resources are scarce and where some information is only found in one place. So, a student doing a project on coral might find it useful to use the Ministry of Fisheries library and a reporter from TVM, researching a programme on the impact of smoking on health, might find it useful to use the IHS library.

ii) <u>What information do users need?</u>
N.B. by 'information' I mean everything that is found in a library - story books, information books, newspapers, magazines etc.

The answer to the question 'what information do users need?' depends largely on where the library is and who the users are. For example, if a library is based in an educational institute then the information the staff and students need is related to the courses they are teaching /studying, which is turn relates to the

examinations taken at the school or institute.

One of the main jobs of a librarian is to find out what information the users and potential users of a library need. This can be done in several ways:

- Talking to the users.
- Making a note of which books and subjects are popular.
- In the case of a school or institute library, find out what exams are taken and the full range of subjects taught.
- As part of a questionnaire to find out what the users think of the library.
- Asking users to recommend books or subjects that they would like to see in the library.

This kind of research must not just be done once. The information needs of users change all the time and the Librarian must respond to these changes as and when they happen.

iii) How can I get the information to the users? The other main job of a librarian is to see that the users get the information they need. This means that the users can find the information they need as quickly and as easily as possible. One of the ways this is done is by classifying the bookstock. As well as separating books into fiction and non-fiction, children's and adults, libraries arrange books according to subject. Most libraries in Maldives use the DDC classification system. I will not go into details of DDC in this article, as I want to concentrate on other ways of getting information to the users.
A library should be an attractive, friendly place. The users should feel that they are welcome there. Here are a few ways to make a library more friendly:
- Have a sign close to the entrance saying 'Welcome to the Library'.
- Every library has to have rules, but try and have as few as possible. Think about what the users can do, not what they can't do. The rules should be displayed clearly where everyone can see them.
- If a reader needs help, stop what you are doing and help them straight away. Even if you are having an interesting discussion with another member of staff, you must always help the reader immediately. Remember they are the most important people in the library.
- If you cannot find the answer to a question, try to find out who might have the answer and send the user to them.
- Always be polite and friendly to the users. Sometimes this is difficult if the user is rude or unfriendly, or if you are feeling tired or upset. However it is well worth the effort, as if you are friendly, the users will be too!
- All administrative procedures should be as simple and quick as possible. It is very frustrating for the users if they have to wait a long time, particularly when they are returning or taking out books.
- When choosing books for the library, try and think what the user need not what you like! It's very tempting to buy books on subjects that you are interested in, but you must think of the users first.
- Do not keep new books, newspapers and magazines to read for yourself. All new material in the library should be put out for the users straight away.

As mentioned earlier, the library should be arranged in a logical order, following DDC. Although you must always be there to show the users where things are in the library, some users like

to find the books they need themselves. To help them do this there should be signs for the different sections of the library, e.g. reference, Dhivehi books and for the main subjects, e.g. mathematics, obstetrics. If a library has lots of different sections it is also a good idea to draw a plan of the library, showing where everything is.

You can also give guided tours of the library. This is particularly useful to new members of a school or institute, or to new employees.

You could produce a free newsletter for the library users. In it you could list new books and write about recent events in the library.

These are just some of the things you can do to help your users. I'm sure you can all think of many more that I have not mentioned here. Remember that everything you do as a librarian is for the users. Keep this in mind and they will be happier with the library service and ultimately your job will be easier and more rewarding.

PRACTICAL LIBRARIANSHIP

ZULFA MOHAMED

CLASSIFICATION

Many people stand in awe of classification, believing it is a skill completely beyond their capabilities. The truth is that every one of us is involved in the process of classification as part of our day-to-day lives, often it is a subconscious activity.

The process begins when we are toddlers acquiring a vocabulary. Try to imagine yourself as a 2.5 years old, walking in the garden with your mum and seeing a little creature. You note that it has four legs and a tail. Your mother informs you, "it's a rat". Some days later you were again out with your mum in the garden. Seeing a little creature, you proudly say "rat", but mother says "No, dear! That's a mouse". At that point your brain has to wrestle with a problem, "what is it that distinguishes a mouse from the rat?"

Children very quickly learn to differentiate and categorise so that they can correctly name what they see. The noting of similarities and differences become almost automatic so that there is instantaneous recognition, and it is not long before the child identifies which is a rat and which is a mouse. This is what classification is all about. It is the identification of similarities and differences, enabling one to group together things, which are similar, and separate them from things, which are dissimilar.

As has been said, all of us are involved in categorization or classification as part of our daily lives and it is automatic. However, some people are involved in classification as part of their daily work and it is for them a conscious and precise activity.

Consider for example the work of the shoe manager. Take a few minutes to think about the way he or she arranges the stock of shoes. The first thing the shoe shop manager will do is to separate the stock into men's shoes, women's shoes and children's shoes. Indeed a large shop will have a separate department or area for each category. He or she will then arrange the shoes by style, size and colour.

Why does the shoe shop manager go to the trouble of classifying the stock in this way? Because customers ask for shoes in that manner. "I'd like a pair of men's slip-on shoes, black leather, size 10, please." On hearing that request the assistant's aim will be get the shoes to the customer in the quickest possible time.

Imagine what would happen if the stock were not classified. The shop assistant would take ages to find the right shoes. The customer would become irate and would eventually walk out in disgust. For the shop manager that would be very bad business.

Classification in libraries

The principle is much the same in libraries. The object of classifying the stock is to get the book to the reader, or the reader to the book, in the quickest possible time. The librarian has to consider the needs of the library users. And the way they frame their requests. The latter usually depends on whether the reader wants fiction or non-fiction. When a library member asks for a work of fiction, the request is usually framed in this way: "I have just read a book by Dennis Robbins. Have you another by the same author, please?" Therefore the best way to arrange the fiction books are by the author. Some readers ask their question. Differently and may say, "I would like to read detective novels. Can you show me where to find them, please?" In libraries where many readers frame their fiction requests in this way, the librarian may categorise their fiction and group novels of a certain type together, e.g. all the love stories, all the detective stories, all historical novels but there is always a residue of fiction which cannot be categorise in this way. Other librarians solve the problem by arranging all the fiction alphabetically by author but put easily identifiable symbols on the spine to indicate the type of novel.

Classification of non-fiction stock

When readers request non-fiction books, they usually frame their question in this way: "Have you any books on photography?" In other words, they ask for non-fiction books by subject. So the most convenient way to arrange the non-fiction stock is by subject.

When a factual book is added to the library's stock, the librarian has to look through it in order to discover what its subject is. Sometimes this is an easy task but sometimes it is quite difficult. The librarian will look at the book's title, subtitle, preface, contents list and so on in order to determine the subject matter. Sometimes a dictionary, encyclopaedia or other reference work has to be consulted in order to shed light on unfamiliar terminology. When books are classified and shelved, books or the same subject are together, and books on related subjects are alongside.

Imagine, however, that the book is a straightforward one about physics. The librarian could put label, which says 'PHSICS' on the spine, and the book could be shelved alongside other books on physics. However, some subjects have very lengthy names – for e.g. electromagnetism and sometimes subject cannot be expressed by a word but need a phrase. Also, how would one manage to keep books on related sciences such as chemistry and mathematics nearby?

What is needed is a logical arrangement of subjects accompanied by a system of symbols, which represent the subjects. Librarians call these symbols a notation. Many people have devised such classification systems-Bliss, and Ranganathan. The one who is most widely knows is Melvil Dewey (1851-1931) whose system we use in Maldives.

THE CALL OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY

ZULFA MOHAMED

Welcome all those who can read
Our library has the treasure you need
Fiction, science, detective or romance
Spare sometime to have a glance
Spend your leisure in this quiet place
All those who have at home no space
Read and read whatever you can
For "reading make a full man"

People look for treasure in the sea
But never in a wonderful library as we
Gems and gold will easily part
But the knowledge you gain will never depart
Science found computers for bulky store
Human brain's store more and more
So, store your knowledge in your brain
And enjoy the wisdom without strain

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