MEASURING UP TO STANDARDS: A CASE STUDY OF ADOPTION OF A SCHOOL LIBRARY

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1 INTRODUCTION

Library has the motherhood status in the society. Everybody wants it. Nobody questions its importance. However, in reality, in many academic institutes – schools and colleges in particular- they exist more like an ornament. It receives the attention when committees visit the institutes for accreditation or some other similar purpose. Teachers, students, and the public rarely complain about the non-availability of library services. A school library, unfortunately, is no exception.

In a school library, the books are procured and kept under lock and key neat and tidy. The size of the library, with respect to the number of books, is increased at the pace that is just enough to satisfy the appetite of the accreditation committees. The books in the library are hardly organized in a professional way. The books are issued to the students on specific days of the week. The books are not introduced to the students. It is not teacher's job. There is no trained librarian, and hence, the staff-in-charge of the library does not do the job either. Many times, the children are given the books chosen by the teachers. As the arrangements of the books are on the weak principle of their organization, a book taken out from a stack is unlikely to be shelved at the same place. Searching for a book is more pain than pleasure. Nobody knows how to trace a book containing a particular story and finding a specific piece of information is considered a nightmare. The reference books, usually expensive than other books, are scarce in number, and they are usually reserved forthe teachers to protect the books from being damaged. The soaring cost of books has reduced the purchase capabilities of libraries and thus hampering its growth. And so on. This is the situation in many school libraries in general – government and private alike.

On the other hand, the information and communication technology has stirred up the mud water further against the libraries. 'Have a mobile and master the world,' 'Google is God', 'Information on the fingertips' and so on are the key phrases of the today's world. There are discussions about whether the Internet has made libraries redundant? The discussion, as a matter of fact, had started four decades ago when Lancaster proposed 'paperless society. 'The Library of Congress, the biggest library in the world, is 70,000 terabytes big (if all its collection are digitized), and still smaller in size to the Internetby 20 lakhs times !

All the above factors may apparently look more a deterrent factors for the existence of the libraries.

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However, we should understand libraries are an integral part of our culture. Book reading is the mantra for success. One needs to realize that the technology impact is in every field of human activity. All professions face the challenge from technology. Studies, fortunately, have shown that the libraries do not vanish and continue to grow, and there is aneed to press the panic button as of now. At the same time, the libraries also have to venture into new vistas of technology-based library services. The school libraries play a vital role in shaping the tender minds of children into a form beneficial to the society. Technology onslaught notwithstanding, the school libraries have to be developed with all seriousness.

2. PRINT VERSUS DIGITAL READING

An argument goes like this. Reading is a process of absorbing information into the mind for further use and processing. What is important in reading is the information transfer into the mind. The medium from which information is read or gathered is immaterial. Hence, there is no difference between reading from a book and a tablet except for sentimental feeling about the book. The digital reading is equally good or bad as that of print reading. The problem is that people tend to relate printed book to their culture, but it is a matter of time that it changes. Similar issue, they argue, was faced when the printed book was invited in the15th century. The modern electronic gadget provide more flexibility to the readers and hence likely to replace the old form of reading!

Studies on paper and screen reading have shown results contrary to the above arguments. A recent study by Jabr claims that “e-readers and tablets are becoming more popular as such technologies improve, but research suggests that reading on paper still boasts unique advantages.” In another study reported last year by Myrberg and Wiberg , somedisadvantages forscreen reading have been reported. They include: screens make reading slower, learn less deeply, less retention, and exposure to technology-related diseases like 'railway spine,' 'iPad neck,' 'computer vision syndrome' and so on. Many other studies go in tune with these findings. Hence, the school libraries should give emphasis on book reading and cultivate it more rigorously than ever before.

3. SETTING THE CONTEXT

The above sections may appear a bit extraneous to the framework of the topic. But the above questions came up during the discussion in the earlier stages of the project. In fact, the Arivu School and the Mysore Librarians and Information Science Association (MyLISA) entered into an informal contract of upgrading the Arivu School library to a service-oriented and user-centric library. The School has around three thousand books. These books were kept in a locally designed arrangement scheme. The school, being a different-from-other model emphasizing the local culture, gave relatively a better opportunity for the children to learn from the book collection that they have. It was heartening to note that the teachers read out the books to the children of lower grades, and encouraging the students to do-it-yourself kind of learning with the help of the books.

But, teachers were always thinking that much more could be done to exploit their book collection. They were in search of suitable professional guidance for this. They happen to come in contact with one of the dynamic members of the MyLISA.

On the other hand, the MyLISA – a local association of professionals in LIS - was thinking of taking up a project related to school libraries. The association has the habit of coming out with new initiatives cajoling with its objectives. The success stories of the association in its previous engagements in the immediate past were pushing its functionaries to think of a project which yields long time benefits to the library users. The association quickly grabbed the idea mooted by one of its executive members to adopt a school library preferably in a village for a year and extend the academic cum professional support to the library to organize its collection. It was formally decided to take the Arivu School as aguinea pig for the adoption of the project. The school satisfied all the requirements expected by the MyLISA. The MyLISA constituted a three-member committee to implement and look into all the matters related to the project. The project started formally on August 12, 2015.

The next work was to tie the loose ends by both stakeholders to launch the project. The broad objectives of the project were laid out as follows:

- To technically process all the documents in the library. The processing includes:
  - Classification
  - Cataloguing
  - Book preparation for shelving and circulation
- To come out with scheme of arrangement suitable to the local needs
- To prepare or suggest a school library development manual for future use
- To adopt the international standards and also open standards where possible
- To automate the library using open source, international and scalable software
- To develop a year-long curriculum for library activities
- To lay foundation to the school library to eventually become a community library
- To raise the funds required for the project in addition to the financial support given by the School
- To train the staff of the Arivu school in maintaining the library further

As said earlier the adoption was for only one year. The members of the committee regularly visited the School, which was on the outskirts of Mysuru. The assistance of three students of library science was taken to complete the project. The other terms and conditions for the project were agreed upon more informally.

4. MYLISA

It is a household name for the LIS professionals in the city of Mysore. Established in 2001, MyLISA has carved the niche in the profession in the region. Its activities are varied and have impacted the professionals in a positive way. The objectives of MyLISA are as follows :

- To promote and develop high standards of librarianship and of library and information services in the Mysore region, and to secure greater cooperation between libraries.
- To represent the profession of librarianship in Mysore region, and to promote the professional interests of members.
- To establish and maintain an Association for persons and organizations concerned with and interested in library and information work.
- To unite all persons interested and engaged in library documentation and information Profession by such means as conferences, seminars, meetings, and symposia, and to promote research.
- To create awareness and update the knowledge and skills among the professionals.
- To provide opportunities for enrichment of Social and Cultural interests of the members.
- To interface with other professional associations for mutual benefits.

5. ARIVU : AN INNOVATIVE SCHOOLING

Arivu is an innovative school based in Mysore. At Arivu learning is activity based, collaborative and relevant to everyday life. Education is not limited to classroom and knowledge is not limited to books.

While the school provides joyful learning experience for the children, it engages in activities like nature walks, star watching, workshops that provides a platform for learning for elders. Arivu looks at human development holistically and works towards facilitating it through cultural awareness programs, nature resource center, community living initiatives and Arivu publication.

Tabla, classical and light music, acting/theatre, desi sports are few of many activities that facilitate learning for kids. Field visits for elders and kids are an important part of "learning through experience". Visiting places like Kuppalli, Hosa Jeevana Dari in Melukote or the water treatment plant, a bank, the fire brigade, heritage buildings of Mysore have helped our kids to imbibe qualities of observing, feeling the differences and growing up with a mindset of probing to learn more.

Some of the highlights of learning at Arivu School are:

- Activity based learning
- Thematic study (Interdisciplinary approach)

- Community culture
- Focus on learning from and learning about nature
- No school uniform, no written rule book
- No inclination towards any particular ideology/philosophy yet staying abreast with latest development in learning sciences and educational reforms
- Healthy living (fruity Fridays, organic food awareness, physical activities like trekking)
- More than 30 resource persons (and visiting faculties) involved in teaching various things.
- Every day first half day is for curricular and second half for co and extra curricular, although quite often there is a lot of overlap.

Environment is a key part of all our activities at Arivuhence, all activities has its focal point revolves around 'save our environment'.

Arivudo not have any rigid philosophy. While different members in team bring different influences ranging from NaiTaleem of Mahatma Gandhi to paradigm shift proposed by Ken Robinson, but as a school have not committed to one particular ideology.

If at all there is some guiding principle that holds true at Arivu – it is "Learning with pleasure". Learning is a joyful activities. The concept 'We all love to learn, we all live to learn' is the approach in school and elsewhere is aligned with this simple idea.

Early childhood is a precious time and it is very important that the child enjoys the process of learning new things, which actually come to them naturally unless destroyed by parents and schools. Arivu attempts to impart learning in a light yet meaningful and effective way.

Some of the common beliefs on which Arivu schooling is abased are:

- Learning should be a happy experience
- Environment should be key focus area of education
- Learning happens best through activities
- A school must question prevalent systems and processes
- Learning is not limited to classroom
- Children learn in different ways and thus school must expose children to different experiences of learning
- Good education can well be affordable
- Collaboration is an important skill
- A child must walk out of school with confidence and self dependency

5. TECHNICAL PROCESSING

The three primary processing work took up under these activities are classification, cataloguing, and preparation of books for shelving and circulation. To achieve the consistency and uniformity, certain decisions regarding the standards to be used were taken. The standards used are given below:

- Classification – Dewey Decimal Classification 23rd edition
- Cataloguing – AACR2
- Software – Koha
- Exchange format for data import – Z39.50
- Subject headings – Library of Congress, SLSH and FAST subject headings
- Preparation of books – Locally decided format and methods

6. CLASSIFICATION

Classification of books has two essential functions. The classification numbers applied to books and other materials are used to arrange items on shelves and to support browsing, filtering, and retrieval of bibliographic information in online systems. It also helps in the subject categorization of books. It was decided to go for the 'Dewey Decimal Classification' for the reasons that it is widely used, international and expertise was available locally. A decision was taken not to shorten the classification numbers, though a school library needed only a broad classification. Thus, there are books which were assigned 8 to 9 digit class numbers. A number of such books although is very less. Similarly, it was decided to classify all biographies at one place instead of segregating them subject wise. For Kannada literature books, in the interest of parsimony, the letter K was used inside the class number. This kind of class number is legal and allowed in DDC as an optional method that could be used. For example, while the expanded form of the DDC number for a book on poetry in Kannada language is 894.8141, the shortened from for the class number is 8k1 which is derived using the Option B facility provided in the DDC schedule. The book number is derived from the first three letters of the primary author's name.

Classification helped the Arivu school authorities to know the strength of their collection in each discipline. There are about 1600 are books in local language, i.e., Kannada and the most of the remaining are in English. There are around 200 books in Hindi. The following is figure shows the collection distribution of the ten main classes.

7. CATALOGUING

Arivu did not have a catalogue at all. The books were retrieved based on the memory and experience of teachers. Sometimes it was a frustrating experience for them to lay a hand on a required book. Shelving back the books at the same place was not even thought off.

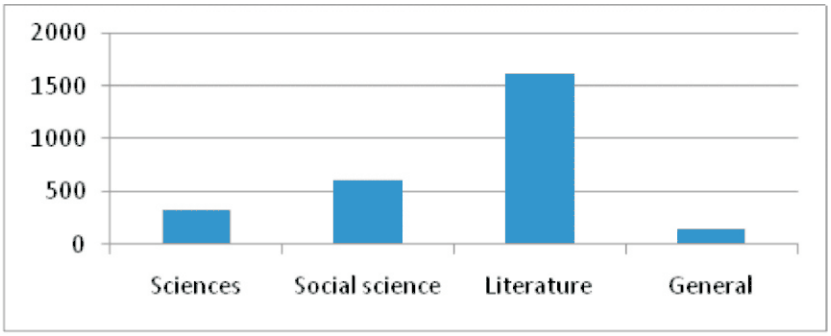


Figure: Subject-wise distribution of books in Arivu School

The project gave them a sigh of relief. The new detailed and standardized catalogue in Koha software makes the teachers, parents and students happy. Now a book can be located within a minute, or two is what teachers say.

The catalogue has been developed in adherence to the international standard called 'AACR2.'The MARC21 is also employed to the best of the abilities of the working staff. The fields like 006 and 008, normally ignored by the libraries, are also populated. This gives the software additional ability to filter the data and provide additional advantages in searching. The data was downloaded from Library of Congress where possible through z39.50 protocol. The data entry of the other document was done by the volunteers of the school and also the students of LIS, who extended their service on an honorary basis. The subject catalogue has been developed meticulously. The unique feature of the cataloguing effort in this project is that the analytical entries for the literature book have been created diligently. This provides extra power to the library staff. Now any story or poem or essay or similar information found deep inside the book can be traced.

The catalogue is locally available on the intranet of the school. It is planned to host the catalogue on the cloud so that even the parents and community in the vicinity of the school make use of the school libraries to their advantage.

8. MANAGING THE SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTUREFOR THE PROJECT

The adoption project of this nature requires the services, infrastructure, and money. These need to be managed well in a successful project. Let us talk about them one by one how they are handled in the present project.

The human resource is most important among all other resources. It is fortunate that MyLISA could bring the professional volunteers who dedicated to the task till the project reached the logical end purely on an honorary basis. The executive member of MyLISA extended their moral support. As said earlier, a three-member committee of MyLISA took charge of the whole process of

adoption and the tasks identified there in. The team had one academician who has had working experience, and two working and successful librarians. The team was supported by three students who have training in library and information science. The technical support for installing the software was given by the computer professionals from SDM/IMD and the Arivu school. At Arivu School, the project was supported wholeheartedly by all the members of the Trust. It was a very pleasing experience that the teachers and even parent volunteers joined hands. This helped them to get on-the-job training for future maintenance.

The Arivu School library required a lot of suitable infrastructures. It is again fortunate that the project could get the external help from philanthropists and institutions. The following infrastructure was donated to the Arivu School library:

- The books identified for library hour, reading activities, story hour, suggested from experts for school library, was provided by Rotary Mid-town Mysore, Mysuru.
- The Stationary materials and technical processing materials were donated by Shri Dharmasthala Manjunatheshwara Institute for Management Development (SDMIMD), Mysuru.
- The computer for hosting Open Source Integrated Library System – Koha with necessary peripherals was provided by Prof. N.R. Govinda Sharma, SDMIMD, Mysuru.
- The magazine rack and newspaper stand were contributed by Prof. Malathi Sriram, SDMIMD, Mysuru.
- The MyLISA Sub-Committee members contributed the honorarium paid to the young LIS professionals associated with this project.

Other Activities

One of the objectives of the project was to prepare/suggest a manual for the development of the library in future. The three-member committee of MyLISA suggested adopting the manual prepared by Ms. Usha Mukund on open library mode. The author herself was invited twice. She demonstrated how the library activities could be conducted at school libraries. Her session was well attended and appreciated by the students and teachers alike. The manual contains some library activities that instigate and inculcate reading and library culture in young mind.

In addition to the above, Smt. Rashmi Kumbar was invited to interact with the school authorities. The meeting was really helpful, and the teachers got a plenty of ideas.

Plan Chart of Library Activities

With the help of a dynamic librarian in the region, who is also a member of MyLISA, a planning chart of library activities for a year has been chalked out and submitted to Arivu. The aim of this exercise is to make the students to recognize the available information from a wide range of

sources, understand their various components, make distinctions among them, and retrieve them for use. The activities identified by the chart includes:

1. **Library Orientation** – Rules, Policy, Staff, Physical Layout and Resource Location, Care for library materials, introduction to internet.
2. **Resource Selection & access** – Parts of book; Types of print resources; Genre (Fiction, Poetry, Play, etc.); Classification systems in Library; Non-print resources (Websites, OPAC, Audio, CD/DVD, Video, etc.); Mass Media (TV, Newspaper, Social Media)
3. **Resource Utilization** – Identifying information need; Formulating search; selecting resources; gathering information (skimming, note-taking, summarizing, paraphrasing); gathering bibliographical information, ethical use of information.
4. **Communication of Information** - Students will create presentations in a variety of formats to communicate information.
5. **Literature appreciation and comprehension** - Students will be exposed to and participate in a variety of literary experiences to increase appreciation and understanding of literature. In this section they are trained in - Reading, writing, listening, and speaking for comprehension; and, Recognizes literary elements.

9. CONCLUSION

The project of the adoption of a school library by MyLISA is a success story and adds as a jewel in the association's crown. It appears that this kind of activity was first of its kind in India by a professional association. The project was started as a small idea, and has really went on well with the co-operation of all concerned. The library was inaugurated on April 2, 2016, admits the 500 people.

The real wok starts now. The adoption project has empowered the Arivu School to provide service-oriented and user-centric services to its children. Guidance and other required training have been given. The Arivu School will now take the advantage that it had with the collaboration of MyLISA and see that the children are motivated towards reading. Then only the real success of the efforts can be seen.

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