

# **CHALLENGES FACED IN FORMULATING ANEW FACULTY LIBRARY: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ALLIED HEALTH SCIENCES LIBRARY, GENERAL SIR JOHN KOTELAWALA DEFENCE UNIVERSITY**

**Hiruni KanchanaUkwattage**

Allied Health Sciences library, General Sir John KotelawalaDefence University,  
Sri Lanka

*udhkanchana@kdu.ac.lk*

**ABSTRACT:** The aim of this paper is to discuss and bring out challenges faced in formulating a faculty library with special reference to Allied Health Sciences Library, KotelawalaDefence University. Issues occurred in collection development, library utilization, marketing library services, managing human resources, building relationship with faculty and identification of user needs and seeking behaviors were described by this article. Some suggestions were included in this for the different challenges faced by the allied health sciences library. Developing the collection development policy, providing more e-resources, initiating more user friendly services are some of them. This is an institutional experience that will help to aware on same subject for others when they starting new library.

**Keywords:** New Faculty Library, Formulating a New Library, Allied Health Sciences, Collection Development, Library Utilization

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Libraries are considered as essential part of any academic environment which are directly affect with academic performance. Especiallyuniversity libraries are playing significant role by supporting teaching, learning and research process of mother institutions. It becomes important information unit in the university structure and active centre of course programmes and learning activities. Library is a growing institution that should be enhance its services and resources according to the new trends as well as user requirements. It is responsible to provide information facilities for each faculties of the university even though libraries are in different geographical locations.General Sir John KotelawalaDefence University (KDU) also expanded its information services by establishing faculty libraries in order to provide more access and services in information since its some faculties are located in different geographical areas.

Librarians are facing different challenges in the contemporary environment with complication of information sources, overwhelming of information, variety of user needs, new trends and issues in library and information science sector when they providing information services.Effort of present libraries are fulfill the patron's information needs and supporting them out of a problematic situation by approaching user centered situation (Wawire and Messah, 2010). With this situation establishing and functioning a new library is also not an easy task because there are many aspects to consider in the initial stage.It takes many times to solve the problems occurred with services and resources of the library when it functioning.

Main objective of this study is to be identified different challenges faced by the Allied Health Sciences library of General Sir John KotelawalaDefenceUniversity when it is formulate. Institutional experience earned by facing different challenges in formulating new library were described by this paper. Identification of these challenges will be beneficial for library professionals for prior planning when they establish new libraries.

General Sir John KotelawalaDefence University was formed by the Parliament Act No 68 in 1981 as KotelawalaDefence Academy and was upgraded later to the university status by the Parliament Act No. 29 in 1988. KDU is governed by the Ministry of Defense and later on, in 2007, it was renamed as General Sir John Kotelawala Defense University. At present, KDU

has become the authorized university to offer a number of bachelor's and postgraduate degrees in various subject areas. It is the only university that offers graduate courses in defense studies in the South Asian region. The university consist with nine faculties and southern campus is located at the Sooriyavewa.

Faculty of Allied Health Sciences was established in 2012 at the Ratmalana Premises and shifted to Veraherapremises in 2014 with six departments named Basic Sciences, Nursing & Midwifery, Physiotherapy, Pharmacy, Medical Laboratory Science and Radiography. Faculty library located at the fourth floor of the faculty building. Initially it was required to provide information services to around six hundred users in both faculty members and undergraduates.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

This study describes institutional experience that can be generalize in same situation faced by other librarians too. Mainly statistical records of Allied Health Sciences library, interviews conducted with selected users, observation done at the library and experiences were used as data collection methods of this study. Interviews done with randomly selected users those who usually utilize the library. Sample size is twenty.

## **3. DISCUSSION**

As a new library it is not an easy task to function a faculty library in new environment. Allied Health Sciences library started to function with limited resources and facilities in order to cater the faculty. This study reveals the many challenges occurred in various aspects when it is function.

### **3.1 Collection Development**

Library collection should be strong to cater all user categories to fulfill their information needs. It should be maintain as balanced collection by providing reading materials relevant to each subject disciplines covered by the mother institution. According to the current user requirements collection must be consist with both printed and non-printed materials. Mainly Nursing and Midwifery, Physiotherapy, Radiography, Medical laboratory Science, Pharmacy and basic science subjects are covered by the collection of Allied Health Sciences library which are directly related to the degree programs offered by the faculty. At the beginning library collection more biased to the nursing subject and very less materials were available for remain subjects of the faculty. Due to the financial constraints and high cost of the books it is difficult task to build strong collection by covering all subject disciplines. Late submission of book list to library by the faculty members for purchasing process, delay of the procurement process, late supplying of books by suppliers, acquisition of unrelated books to the library as donations, inadequacy of infrastructure facilities to use electronic resources, high cost for subscription of databases and other e-resources were identified as some obstacles in developing balanced and strong library collection. Apart from subject books general reading materials, reference materials and fictions were included to the collection.

### **3.2 Library usage**

One of the major challenge faced by the library in initial stage was improving library usage of the students. At the beginning the library provided only lending facilities due to the latesupplying of furniture and other equipment at the reading area. This situation built a barrier in developing good image on new library among the students. It directly affected to

less usage of reading area by students at the beginning. Library had to encourage them to utilize the reading facility by emphasizing its benefits.

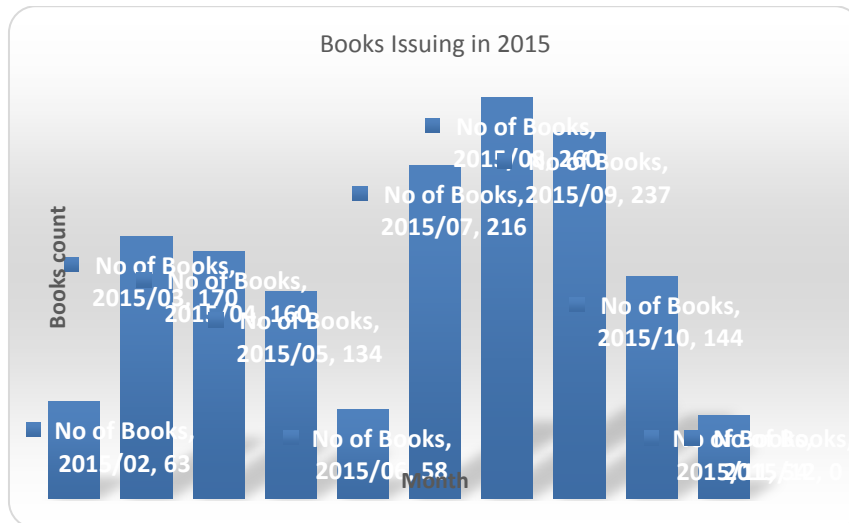


Figure 1. Book issuing statistics of Allied Health Sciences Library in year 2015

According to the statistics shown by the figure1, very less number of books were lend in months of February, June and November by Allied Health Sciences library. The FAHS library started to function in February and it may be the reason for less circulation in same month. At the initial stage it took some period to improve the library usage among the students since they were lack of awareness on faculty library and its services. According to the above figure overall circulation is not in highest level and library had to pay attention on improving the usage.

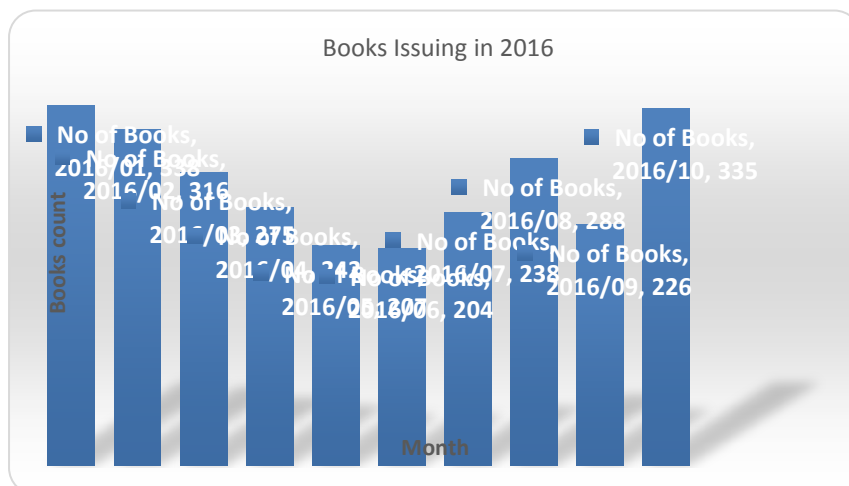


Figure 2. Book issuing statistics of Allied Health Sciences Library in year 2016

Figure 2 shows that there is a rapid improvement of circulation in 2016 compared with previous year. Maximum number (335) found in January it may be the reason of enlistment of new intake and increased the user community too. Library has rendered its services by using many methods in order to improve the circulation as well as library usage.

According to the faculty requirement library has extended its opening hours until 06.00 pm in weekends and opened on Saturdays. Library had to face many issues occurred with

extension of opening hours such as lack of library staff members, transport issues for the staff, poor usage, etc. Allied health Sciences library has faced the challenge by motivating staff to offer their service in extra hours and by assigning them according to the duty roster in order to provide more opportunities to get maximum benefit of the library services and resources.

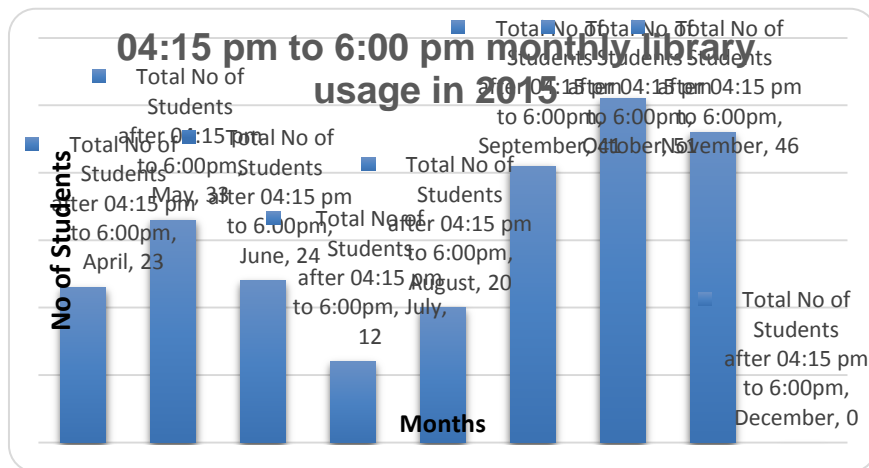


Figure 3. Library usage statistics after 04.15 pm in weekdays

According to the figure 3, library usage in extra hours is very low and highest number found in October because of the end semester examinations. Some reasons for poor library usage after 4.15 pm in weekdays and weekends were identified by the interview conducted with selected students in second and third years. Unavailability of hostel facilities within the faculty premises, lectures are conducting until 2.30 pm and students can be refer library until 4.15 pm, lack of information sources at the library for their subjects, each student have their own laptop which are providing by the university, students are preferred to search information through internet rather than printed materials, unavailability of network connection at the library were mentioned as factors which effected to them in less utilization of library after 4.15pm in weekdays. As per the study, students are feel tired to study until 06.00 pm in weekdays since they are continuously attending to the lectures from 08.00pm to 2.30pm.

User orientation programmes were conducted by the Allied Health Sciences Library in order to improve the library usage and to get maximum usage. It was helped to them to aware on library resources and services as well as ways of access information. Two lecture hours allocated by the timetable are insufficient to conduct proper orientation, unavailability of network connection and IT laboratory facilities at the faculty to conduct practical sessions on searching techniques for databases were identified as some factors making obstacles in user orientation programme.

### 3.3 Marketing library services and resources

Internet and World Wide Web (WWW) can be identified as most obvious challenge faced by librarians in current world. Most of the present users even faculty members are preferred to access internet rather than search from library when they search information. There are plenty of places to access internet easily in any environment. This competitive situation build a gap between user and library. Same challenge faced by the Allied Health Sciences library also when it established. In this situation the library identified its role in marketing and advertising its services and resources to against challenges. Strengths, weaknesses. Opportunities and threats were identified by SWOT analysis and it was helped to build proper market strategy. Library services can be identified as its product and its providing

based on the information available. Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) service, newsletter, content page, news bulleting, Table of Content service (TOC), Document Delivery Service (DDS) are can be identified as marketing tools practicing by the Allied Health Sciences library. Public relation skill of library staff members were developed by guiding them and participating different workshops relevant to same subject. According to the observation done by the library rapid development in library usage were identified with marketing strategy.

### **3.4 Managing Human Resources**

Human resource management at the libraries is not an easy task since people are come from different backgrounds as well as different attitudes. It was required to provide training opportunities for newly recruited staff members since those are not in library and information science background. Not only that motivation and changing attitude of the staff members also identified as one of the challenge faced by the library. The staff members must be developed their soft skills to provide quality services. Library has arranged some workshops for them to give subject knowledge since the staff members should be ready to provide their information services to face actual demand of the users.

### **3.5 Building relationship with the faculty**

Role of academic librarians have been changed very fast in complicated information society. Libraries are ready to sharing information, assisting users in their educational matters and leading them to solve their information quires. But in many cases there is an isolation of libraries from the faculty it may be the reason the faculty members are unaware of what librarian actually do for teaching, learning and research process. (Chaddha, 2009) With this situation librarians are responsible to build good relationship by making good image on library and its services. Support of the faculty is essential for its library to function properly and enhance information services. Allied Health Sciences library was able to build relationship with the faculty by helping them on their research activities and checking plagiarism level of research works, by providing document delivery services and electronic inter library loan service.

### **3.6 Identification of information needs and seeking behaviors**

Academic librarians must have clear understand in actual user needs and their seeking behavior when providing information services. Library as a centre of education, it should identify its role in dissemination of knowledge for all. Especially patron expectation in information services has been rapidly changed with the impact of the new improvements in information and communication technology sector. Different user categories those who are come with different subject backgrounds are showing variety of information needs and seeking behaviors. Issues in developing library collection, organizing knowledge, making acquisition policies, providing facilities, organizing knowledge management tools were identified as many challenges occurred with different user needs and seeking behaviors. Always library collection, services and other facilities should be capable to fulfill user requirement. Being a new faculty library, it is required identify the user requirement by using different methods such as conduct surveys, interviews, observations, etc. Without this identification it is very difficult to fulfill patron requirements.

Apart from above discussed challenges lack of relevant reading materials, not enough space at the library to provide separate reading space to bring their own materials, unavailability of network connection, etc. Were identified as other issues faced by the Allied Health Sciences Library by this study..

#### 4. RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

Being an academic library as well as a new library, Allied Health Sciences Library has faced many challenges when it functioning. This study attempted to identify those challenges such as issues in collection development, marketing the library services and resources, improving library usage, financial constraints, etc. Library has paid attention on donations to develop its collection. Recommended to follow donation procedure since it will helps to acquire donations in good condition as well as relevant to the subject coverage by the library. If library can developed its collection based on the collection development policy it will avoid the acquisition of unrelated materials. Collection should be consist with materials in all subject disciplines of the faculty in multiple formats. Recommended to provide access for more e-resources by the library that will improve the interest on library among the users. Library usage has been improved in year 2016 compared with previous year it may be the impact of user orientation programmes and marketing strategy practiced by the library. Library committee and faculty board is good place to solve the issues in technical and other infrastructure facilities. Being a new library it will be beneficial to follow and observe well established academic library to gain some ideas on library services. Identification of user needs and seeking behaviors can be done by conducting surveys among the different user categories. It will help to provide more effective information services by the faculty library.

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