

Community Outreach Library Services in Rajarata University Library System in Sri Lanka: A System Approach

Harshani, K.R. and Siriwardena, A.S.

ssasoka@yahoo.com

The principal purpose of this paper is to explore the role of community service in academic librarianship conducted by the Rajarata University Library System. In this study it is expected to establish the concept of community service as a system approach for enhancing continuous lifetime library use by the communities from their early childhood up to mature age. The other objectives are to evaluate the development and the implementation activities in community service and to peruse the best practices leading to community success and growth. The principal notion of the community service is the exertion done by a person or group of people which benefits one or the others. Librarians can involve with the community for identifying their aspirations in advance with view to offer a very quality service to the same community. Based on this view, Rajarata university library conducts numerous services for their community. In addition to the provision of pertinent information relating to the general functions of the library such as services, sections and resources, it is yet another opportunity to build relationship with students as they begin their school career. Library conducts numerous training programme for the public such as Primary level Student (Grade 1-5) O/L and A/L students, preschool teachers, pregnant mothers in North Central Province. Through these all programmes, it gives students and library officers of the particular library a chance to interact with librarians who are not always visible to the public. Library offers a range of service for children including various type of themes including storytelling, good reading habit, mind mapping concept, getting ready for exam, and the way of organizing home library. Therefore libraries can achieve great effects when they are with the community from their early childhood. Library staff can facilitate and support library efforts because they are linked into communities that libraries may not reach. Libraries have to attempt to show their strengths not only as a reading institution, but as a community services center. It is hoped that this study will be used as a model by other librarians who wish to develop service option in their own suburban communities.

Keywords: *Academic libraries, Community service, Library service, Rajarata university library, Extension services*