

## **PATTERN OF USAGE OF LIBRARY FACILITIES AT THE MEDICAL LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY PERADENIYA**

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The Medical Library services mainly the undergraduate, postgraduate and academic staff of the faculties of Medicine and Dental Sciences of the University of Peradeniya. Updating the collection of material is essential for any library. This could be best achieved by evaluating the usage of the collection. This study therefore, aims to investigate the appropriateness of the collection in the medical library, Peradeniya, by investigating the information needs of the user and the extent of usage of the collection.

A survey was conducted over a period of six months, from January to June 2004. During this period the library statistics on lending, reference issues and records of requests of photocopies were analyzed. Furthermore, the number of visits to the library, the purpose of the visit and the time were recorded during a specified period of two weeks. Additional information was obtained by administering a questionnaire. Percentages were obtained using Microsoft Excel.

Library material on Pharmacology, Clinical medicine, Microbiology, Pathology, Anatomy, Physiology, Surgery, Dentistry and Gynecology/Obstetrics were in constant use during the period of the study. Average number of visits to the library per day was 179. Of the total 2511 visits to the library during a specified period of two weeks, 97% were undergraduates. Purpose of these visits were: 15% to return books, 17% to read their notes, 45% to do reference work, 16 % to borrow books, 1% to carry out CD-ROM searches, 1% to use journals and 5 % to photocopy library materials. Books in Clinical Medicine had high demand for photocopies followed by Surgery and Dentistry books. The questionnaire survey revealed that 72% of Medical and 90% of Dental undergraduates considered student textbooks as the most important library material. However, 66.7% of academic staff and 40% of postgraduates thought current journals were important. Majority of undergraduates (75% Medical and 66% of Dental) used textbooks in the reference section as opposed to the majority of academic staff (71%) who read current journals. A question rating the comprehensiveness of reference collection, 48% Medical, 45% Dental undergraduates, and 21% academic staff selected the rating "Good". Similarly for the collection in the lending section, 13% Medical, 17% Dental undergraduates, and 21% academic staff rated 'Good'. Sixty nine percent Medical and 78% Dental undergraduates and 50% academic staff suggested improvements to the lending collection while 79% of academic staff suggested improvements to the journal collection.

The library should be able to provide the readers with sufficient number of books on subjects in which books are in constant circulation. Undergraduates used the library extensively for reference work. Photocopying was done extensively of books on Clinical Medicine, Surgery and Dentistry. This may be due to either a lack of books in those subject areas in the library with respect to the number of users or students found it difficult to purchase those books. Textbooks were the most important library material for undergraduates. For academic staff it was the current journal. In order to fulfill the needs of the users, it is evident that the lending, reference and the journal collections should be improved.