

An Attitudinal User Survey on Library Services and Facilities: A Case Study of Wayamba University Library

P.C.D.S. Gunasekara
Senior Assistant Librarian
Wayamba University of Sri Lanka
Kuliyapitiya, Sri Lanka
E-mail: chamanig@yahoo.com

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Refereed Paper

Abstract

University libraries are strongly committed to enhance its current level of collections, services and facilities. This survey was conducted to seek user feedback from the Wayamba University academic community on library's existing collection, services, and facilities and to solicit the university community's advice for future directions and priorities. Survey Method was used for this study and main research instrument was self-administered questionnaire.

The results of the survey showed that the faculty members were somewhat satisfied with the library's collection, particularly the book collection, and that they used the library mainly for academic purposes. Generally the faculty was not satisfied with the availability of materials in their subject areas and they were not aware of most of the services provided by the library. The results of this survey suggest that the levels of user satisfaction towards most of the library services are very low. They were highly satisfied with the level of helpfulness of the library staff particularly for finding information in the library. It was suggested that the top priority should be given to the collection development and acquisition procedures while increasing online access for journals, databases, etc. It is also suggested to introduce advanced technology for library operations while providing continuous user awareness programs to the users.

1. Introduction

In the education system, an academic library is the center of academic life. A library attached to a school, college, university or an institution of higher education exists to support the goals of its parent organization. Since university libraries are an integral part of the higher education system, they should provide support services not only for the formal education program but also for those geared to research and for generation of new knowledge in the university to which they belong. The aims and structure of a university library are influenced by the vision of the university; just as the quality of the library service within an institution is related to the quality of the education

provided by that institution.

If the library is to fulfill its proper role within the education system, there must be continual interaction between the library and the users it serve. Interaction can be influenced both by factors directly related to the library, such as how efficiently and effectively it is run, the relevance of the information it provides and the communication channels it employs, and by others directly related to the user, including his personality, motivation, pursuits and specialized interest.

The University Library is committed to providing excellent collections and services. To develop and maintain a library that meets the needs of the university community, the University Library seeks an on-going dialog with its users (Herrera, 1993).

In order to provide better library services for the users it is necessary to have a precise knowledge of the needs of user's information requirements. The best way of getting to know about users and their information needs is to carry out user studies, which enable libraries to determine exactly how and what direction they should develop in order to meet those requirements (Vaughan, 1987).

Assessing user needs is the primary concern of better library service and it helps to identify actual needs of the users. One tool used to evaluate and assess current services is the library user study (SPEC User survey, 1994). It is impossible to assess the changing needs of the clientele unless user studies are conducted to determine user needs and their reading interests.

Library user surveys have become widespread in academic libraries during the past twenty years. Rapid changes in library services and operations, demands for internal institutional accountability, and assessment expectations by external accrediting agencies have contributed to further development and application of user surveys within academic libraries during the past decade (Hiller, 2001).

User studies cover a wide range of topics and foci, for example:

- Focus on the user will investigate user's wants, needs, contexts, motivations, expectations and tasks.
- Focus on user will investigate what a particular information source is actually used for, with the barriers and enablers to its use investigated.
- Focus on the information system or service will investigate aspect of technology, design and evaluation.
- Focus on the organization will concentrate on contextual aspects of the organizational setting, covering both internal and external factors such as resources, internal management procedures, internal and external strategies,

which are all parts of building up a holistic case study (Banwell, 2004).

The purpose of employing the user studies are described by Cullen (2000) in the following terms:

- Provide detailed information about user's opinion of the service
- Help to clarify the librarians concept of the service as well as their assumptions about the user needs
- Indicate problems
- Suggest solutions

This paper is about a user study carried out at the library of Wayamba University of Sri Lanka and the main purpose of the study was to make recommendations to improve the services of the library.

Objectives of the study were to;

- To ascertain the opinion of the faculty regarding the adequacy of information resources and services available at the library and
- To determine the future directions of growth for the library.

2. Methodology

Survey method was used and the main research instrument was self administered questionnaire. A questionnaire consisting of twenty one (21) questions was designed to elicit specific information on faculty preferences on various library services and facilities. The questionnaire asked for information on the frequency of library use and levels of user satisfaction in library collection, services, facilities, physical environment and the library staff.

The author determined that the survey should focus the academic staff those who use the library for teaching, learning and research purposes. Since the population was very small no sampling technique was used. Therefore the sample represented all the permanent faculty members including Professors, Associate Professors, Senior Lectures and Lecturers. Librarians, Instructors and temporary academic staff members were excluded. According to the official sources, the total number of permanent academic staff members was 62 and the questionnaires were distributed among all of them.

Tables 1 & 2 highlight several variables of the faculty members who responded to the questionnaire.

Faculty	No. of questionnaires distributed	No of Responses	% of Responses
Agriculture & Plantation Management	16	4	25
Livestock, Fisheries & Nutrition	17	14	82
Business Studies & Finance	11	10	91
Applied Sciences	18	16	89
Total	62	44	71

Table 1
Faculty - wise
distribution of the
questionnaire

Rank	No of Distribution	No of Responses	% of Responses
Professor	5	3	60
Associate Professor	1	1	100
Senior Lecturer	14	11	78
Lecturer	42	29	69
Total	62	44	71

Table 2
Distribution of the
questionnaire (according
to the post)

Table 1 shows that the response rate of faculty members at Faculty of Agriculture and Plantation Management was very low (25%) and Table 2 shows most of the senior staff members were responded to the survey than junior members.

Faculty members who responded to the survey, have a wide range of teaching experience in the university. Figure 1 show the teaching experience of the faculty.

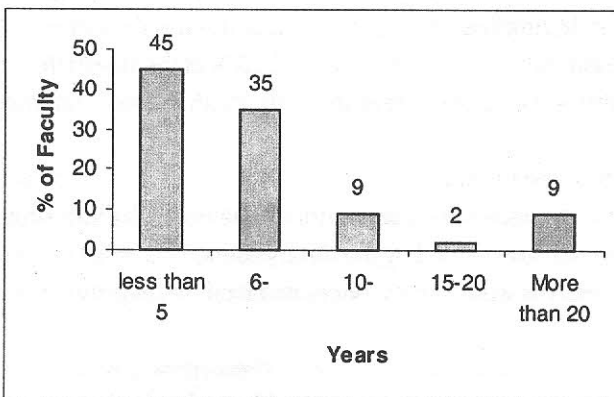


Figure 1
Teaching experience of
the faculty

Figure 1 indicates that 45% of the respondents have less than 5 years of teaching experience in the university and only 9% of lecturers have more than 20 years experience of university level teaching.

3. Library Usage

Visits to the library

Significant variance is evident, in terms of how frequently faculty members visited the library.

Figure 2 indicated the frequency of library visits by the faculty.

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Figure 2
Frequency of library
visits by the faculty

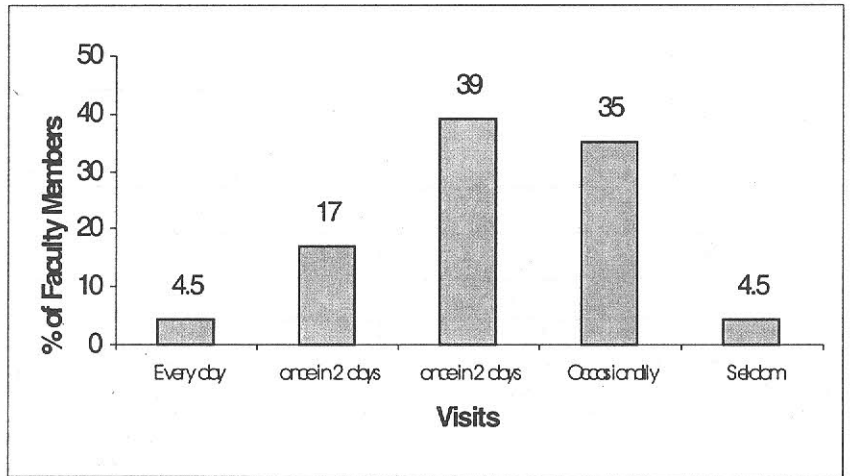


Figure 2 shows the 39% of the faculty members visited the library once in 3 days. It is evident from the figure about 4.5% of the faculty members visit the library every day to meet their needs. More than 40% of them visit the library occasionally.

When analyzing the results further it shows 88% of the daily users are the senior staff members including the professors. 40% of the junior staff members visit the library very occasionally and at the same time 15% of them visit the library once in two days. In contrast 50% of the seldom users are the senior staff members.

Purpose of visits to the library

Purpose of visit gives necessary information to the library administrators about the reading materials that are needed by the library users. This helps them in developing the library collection as well as the services and facilities to provide better service to its users.

Figure 3 indicates the purpose of visits to the library by the faculty.

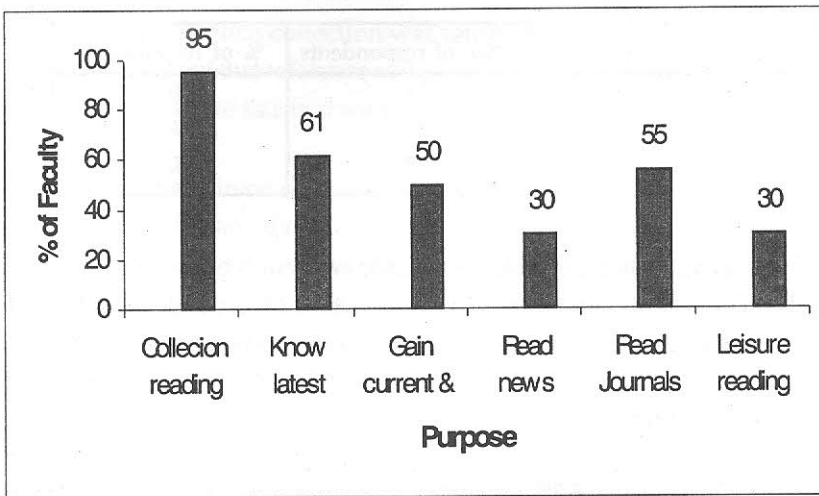


Figure 3
Purpose of visits to the
library

95% of the faculty members visited the library to collect reading materials in their subject fields. 61% of respondents visit the library to know the latest arrivals in their disciplines and 50% of them visit the library to read journals. Approximately 30% of the faculty members visited the library to read news magazines and for leisure reading. Although half of the faculty visited the library to gain current and general information, 95% of the junior staff members (lecturers and senior lecturers) come to collect reading materials in their subjects. In general, results show that the faculty visited the library mainly for collecting materials relevant for their academic purposes.

Survey results further shows that 98% (4) of the senior staff members (Professors & Associate professors) visit the library to collect reading materials, to know the latest arrivals in their subject areas and to read journals. 50% (2) of them visit the library to gain current & general information. 25% (1) of the senior staff members visit the library for leisure reading.

95% of the junior staff members (Senior lecturers and lecturers) come to the library to collect reading materials and 50% of them come to the library to read journals. 30% of them come for leisure reading and for reading news magazines. 50% of the junior staff members come to the library to gain current and general information.

4. Library collection

Faculty members were asked to indicate frequently used library material from each of the following collections for their teaching and/or research activities: book collection, serial collection (including journals magazine) and reference collection.

Table 3 highlights the frequently used collection by the faculty.

Table 3
Frequently used library
collection

Collection	No. of respondents	% of respondents
Book collection	37	84%
Reference collection	23	52%
Serial collection	17	39%

As one would expect the most frequently used collection by faculty members was the book collection. As can be seen in Table 3, 84% of respondents indicated that their most frequently used collection was book collection especially the text books. 52% of faculty members indicated that serial collection is their frequently used collection in the library.

Survey further reveals that 52% (14) of the frequent users (daily, once in 2days and once in 3 days) indicated that their frequently used collection was a serial collection. 77% (21) of them indicated that their frequently used collection was the book collection and at the same time 45% (12) of them expressed that their most frequently used collection was the reference collection.

94% (16) of the rare users of the library (occasionally and seldom) indicated that the book collection was the most frequently used collection by them. 61% (10) of them indicated that their frequently used collection was the reference collection. 22% (4) of them indicated that the serial collection was the most frequently used collection.

The survey examined to what extent the present collections were meeting the needs of faculty members.

Table 4 shows the respondents' opinion in terms of present library collection.

Table 4
Opinion on present
library collections

Collection	Excellent	Satisfactory	Fair	Very poor	No response
Serial collection	0%	18%	32%	16%	34%
Reference collection	5%	52%	32%	6%	5%
Book collection	15%	70%	10%	3%	2%

Table 4 reveals that of the faculty members who rely on these collections for their teaching and research activities, 85% indicated that the present book collection either excellent or satisfactory. Most of the senior staff members (78%) are among them. It is noteworthy that 34% of faculty members did not give any opinion in terms of serial collection and the same time 16% expressed that serial collection was very poor. Most of the senior members (67%) are indicted that serial collection was very poor. The survey further reveals, that half of faculty members (52%) expressed

that the existing reference collection was satisfactory and at the same time 6% of respondents expressed that reference collection was very poor. But most of the senior staff members (68%) are satisfied with regarding the existing reference collection.

When analyzing the opinion on present library collection further, most of the frequent users (88%) of the library (daily, once in 2 days and once in 3 days) indicated that the book collection either excellent or satisfactory. 69% of them indicated that the serial collection was satisfactory. 77% of the frequent users of the library indicated that the reference collection was satisfactory and at the same time 8% of them indicated that the collection was very poor.

When comparing the rare users of the library (occasional and seldom users), 67% of them indicated that the book collection was satisfactory. And at the same time 94% of them indicated that the reference collection was very satisfactory. A considerable percentage of the occasional users (29%) expressed that the existing serial collection was very poor and at the same time 62% of them did not give any opinion on that.

When considering the low satisfaction level on serial collection, most of the staff members (84%) especially the junior members in the Faculty of Business Studies and Finance indicated that the serial collection was very poor. Most of the junior staff members (72%) in the faculty of Applied Sciences did not give any comment regarding that. And at the same time 65% of the senior staff of the faculty of Applied Sciences indicated that the serial collection was satisfactory.

Accessibility of reading materials

An important function of the university library is to provide essential information to the faculty for their teaching and research purposes. Sometimes due to some hindrances the reading materials are not accessible. The survey explored the opinion on the accessibility of library material in the library and it found most of the faculty members (78%) expressed either very easy or fairly easy to access reading materials. Only 20% of faculty members expressed that it was not easy to access the materials.

The survey also explored what hindered the accessibility of reading materials and the respondents were given a list of factors to mark. Table 5 below shows the factors which affect the accessibility of reading materials. Above table shows that 52% of the respondents indicated the narrow space between racks affect to the free movement. 43% of faculty members indicated that lack of light and ventilation in reading areas affect to the accessibility of reading materials. 32% of respondents expressed that the books relating to the subjects are scattered and the some books are misplaced in the library. It is evident from table 5 that the lack of space and poor ventilation and

lighting in reading areas were main obstacles for the access to library materials. Most of the members (74%) in the Faculty of Livestock, Fisheries and Nutrition indicated that scattered and misplacement of books were main barriers for the accessibility of materials.

Table 5
Factors affecting the
accessibility

Opinion	No. of Respondents	Rank
1. Poor shelf arrangement	8	4
2. Height of racks	2	6
3. Scattered of books	14	3
4. Books are misplaced	14	3
5. Poor ventilation and lighting in reading areas	20	2
6. Narrow space between racks	23	1
7. Books are under lock	7	5
8. Lack of staff assistance to find out book	2	6

Library catalog

The survey asked respondents to provide opinion about the adequacy of information in the library catalog and mark their preference on card and on line catalog.

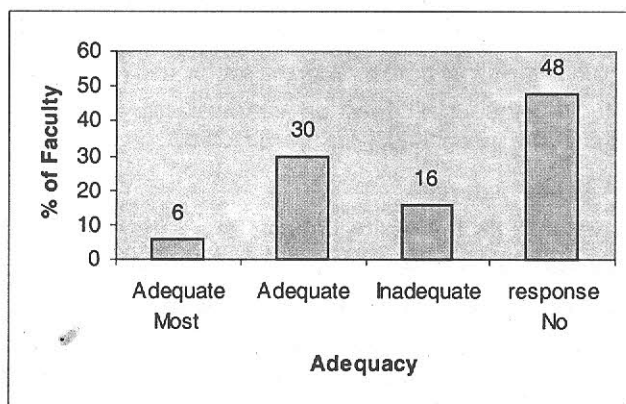


Figure 4
Adequacy of
information in the
catalog

As can be seen in Figure 4, 36% of faculty members expressed that the information given in the catalog was adequate. (6% mostly adequate and 30% adequate). Only 16% of respondents expressed that the information given in the catalog was inadequate. Nearly half of the respondents (48%) did not express any opinion in this regard. Most of the faculty members (72%) in the Faculty of Agriculture and Plantation Management and the faculty of Livestock, Fisheries and Nutrition did not give any idea about that. When analyzing the results of the survey most of the junior staff members (68%) in other faculties were also reluctant to give any comment on this regard. The results revealed that the most of the senior staff members (78%) in the

faculty especially professors and associate professors indicated that the information given in the catalog was adequate. The reason may be that the most of young academics prefer to use the on line catalog than the card catalog.

In addition, respondents were asked to indicate their preferences on card or /and on line catalog. Table 6 shows the faculty preferences on catalog.

Type of catalog	No. of respondents	% of respondents
Card catalog	4	9
On line catalog	29	66
Both	11	25
Total	44	100

66% of faculty members expressed that they prefer on line catalog than card catalog. Only 9% of respondents preferred card catalog and 25% of them indicated that they need both catalogs in the library. Results also indicated that a few senior staff members specially, some professors were reluctant to use online catalog and they needed the card catalog only. In contrast, most of the junior staff members (92%) in the faculty prefer the on line catalog than the card catalog.

Material availability

The respondents were asked to rate their opinion on the availability of library materials specially books in multiple copies. Figure 5 highlights the responses received from the faculty.

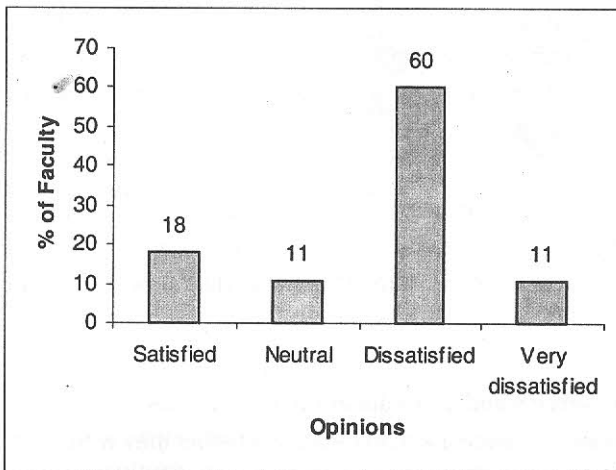


Figure 5 reveals that the results were somewhat similar to those in respect of the

Table 6
Faculty preferences on catalog

Figure 5
Material availability in multiple copies

stock coverage. Only 18% of faculty members expressed satisfaction with material availability in multiple copies. Majority of respondents (71%) were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with material availability in multiple copies. Most of the faculty members (76%) in the Faculty of Livestock, Fisheries and Nutrition indicated that they were very dissatisfied with the non availability of materials in multiple copies. Since the courses taught in this faculty are related to other faculties, the usage of some books are very high. Hence it was very much needed to purchase more copies on Nutrition, Biotechnology, Food Science, Food Technology and Aquaculture which were in high demand in use.

5. Evaluation of services and facilities

Questions of this section of the survey were designed to gain information on the library's current services and facilities which are important to meet the needs of the teaching and/or research activities of the faculty members.

Lending Facilities

The survey examined the opinion on the lending procedures in the library. Table 7 presents a clear picture of the opinion of the faculty members in terms of lending procedures existed in the library.

Table 7
Opinion on lending procedures

Opinion	Excellent	Systematic	Not satisfied	Not certain	Total
No.of respondent	6	29	7	2	44
%of respondent	14	66	15	5	100

Table 7 highlights that most of the faculty members (66%) expressed that the lending procedure of the library was systemic while 14% of respondents expressed that an excellent lending procedure existed in the library. However 15% of faculty members were not satisfied with the lending procedures and most of them were junior staff.

When comparing the frequent users of the library (daily, once in 2days and once in 3days) 77% (21) of them expressed that the lending procedure was systematic and at the same time 8% (2) of them indicated that the lending procedure of the library was not satisfied.

Inter library loan service and user education programmes

In this study respondents were asked to indicate whether they were aware of the inter library- loan services and the user education programmes. Table 8 shows the responses to that question.

Table 8
Awareness of ILL and
User education
programs

Awareness	Inter library loan		User education Programs	
	No. of respondents	% of respondents	No. of respondents	% of respondents
Yes	15	34%	6	14%
No	29	66%	38	86%
Total	44	100%	44	100%

Only 34% of faculty members indicated that they were aware of Inter- Library Loan service and the rest (66%) was not aware of such service. 86% of faculty members reported that they were not aware of user education programmes conducted by the library. Only 14% of respondents knew that the services provided by the library and they stressed that the library guide book is the most important tool in user education programs.

It is obvious from the data presented in table 8 that there was a communication gap between the library staff and the faculty regarding the library services. User awareness programs should be marketed and conducted continuously in order to make them aware of the library services.

Photocopy service

Respondents were asked to rate how efficient the available photocopy service. Figure 6 shows the opinions expressed by the faculty members.

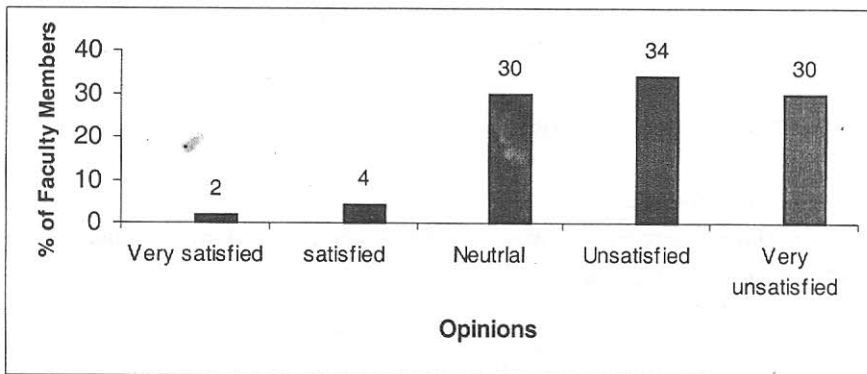


Figure 6
Opinion on photocopy
services

Only 6% of respondents were very satisfied or satisfied with the photocopy service. Most of the faculty members (64%) were unhappy (34% were unsatisfied and 30% were very unsatisfied) with the service.

Shelving arrangement and reading room facilities

The survey sought opinion of the faculty members in terms of shelving arrangement and reading room facilities in the library. Figure 7 shows the results in this regard.

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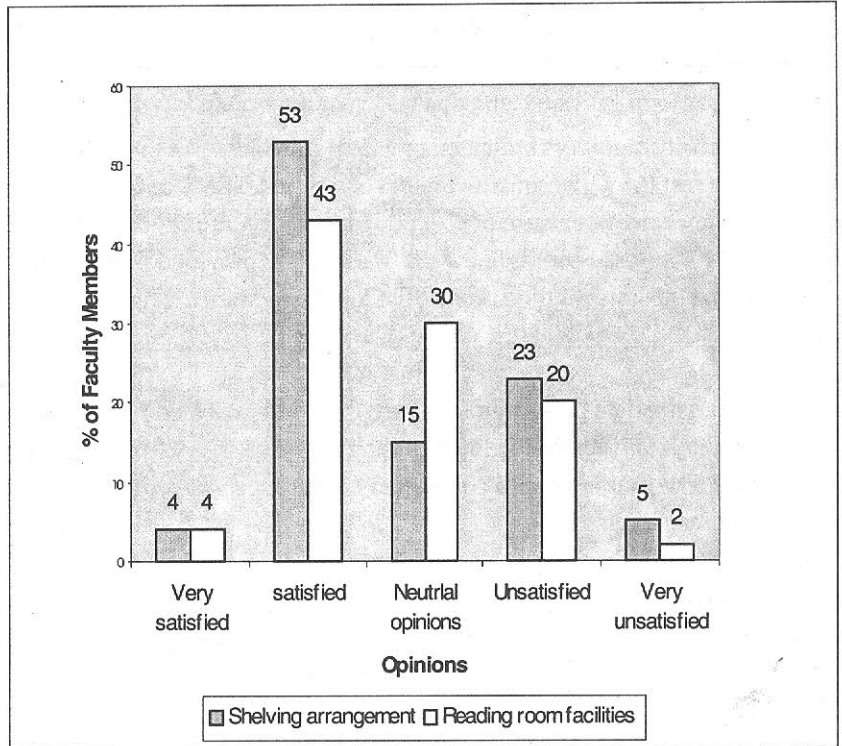


Figure 7
Opinions on shelving arrangement and reading room facilities

More than half of the faculty members (57%) were satisfied (4% very satisfied and 53% satisfied) with shelving arrangement in the library. 23% of the respondents expressed dissatisfaction with shelving arrangement in the library.

As can be seen in the figure 7, 47% of faculty members were either satisfied or very satisfied with reading room facilities available in the library. Similar to the results in respect shelving arrangement, 23% of respondents reported their dissatisfaction with reading room facilities.

Some of the respondents (8%) had commented that they need separate reading room/ area for the faculty members.

6. Staff helpfulness

The library users judge the quality of all its organization by their interaction with user service staff (Jushin, 2002). Therefore in this study respondents were asked to

express how helpful they found the staff of the library was.

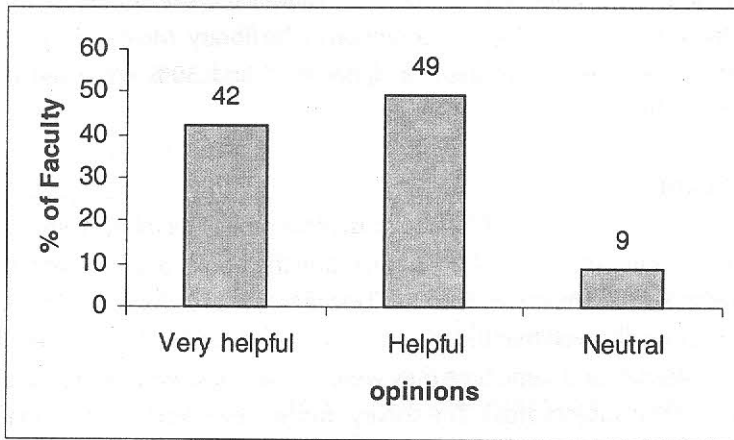


Figure 8 Staff helpfulness

The results were very much encouraging: not a single respondent found the staff to be unhelpful or very unhelpful. Moreover 91% of faculty members felt that the staff was either very helpful or helpful, regarding helpfulness and assistance given for finding information. Most of the senior as well as junior staff (75%) of all faculties expressed the staff was helpful and courteous. Very few members in Faculty of Agriculture and Plantation Management did not give any opinions in this regard.

7. Environmental factors

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the library’s physical environment including space of library building and ventilation and lighting in the library.

Table 9 provides faculty opinion on physical environment factors.

Opinion	Space of the library building		Ventilation & lighting	
	No. of respondents	% of respondents	No. of respondents	% of respondents
Very satisfied	0	0	0	0
Satisfied	9	20	13	30
Neutral	11	25	4	9
Dissatisfied	14	32	17	39
Very dissatisfied	10	23	10	22
Total	44	100	44	100

Table 9 Opinion on physical environment factors

Table 9 shows 55% of faculty members were either very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with available space of the library building. Only 20% of respondents expressed satisfaction with the available space. Further, Table 9 reveals opinion of the faculty regarding the ventilation and lighting condition in the library. Most of the respondents (61%) were either very dissatisfied or dissatisfied and 30% were satisfied with ventilation and lighting.

8. Conclusion

The results of the survey revealed that the most of the faculty members were somewhat satisfied with the library's collection, particularly the book collection and its ability to support teaching and research. They used the library mainly for academic purposes. The survey results showed that the faculty was not satisfied with the accessibility to the reading materials and same time they were not satisfied with the non availability of materials in their subject areas. The survey further revealed that more than half of the faculty members were not aware of most of the services provided by the library such as Inter- library Loan, User education programmes. The results of the survey showed that the levels of user satisfaction towards most of the library services were very low. These were photocopy service, Inter-library Loan service and lending facilities. Most of them were not satisfied with shelving arrangement in the library and same time they indicated their dissatisfaction with the physical environment factors in the library. The encouraging factor that found from the survey was staff helpfulness and they were highly satisfied with the levels of helpfulness of library staff and the assistance given to them for finding information from the library.

Policy Implications

Based on the conclusions of the survey, following suggestions were made:

- 1 The top priority should be given for the collection development and acquisition and it is understood that the books and print-journal collection, on- line journals and the access to on line databases and indexes should be increased.
- 2 The necessity to set up some procedures to record the faculty recommendations and use them for the library acquisitions.
- 3 The possibility should be explored to gather different resources under specific subject categories.
- 4 Library should provide continuous user education programmes and user awareness services geared to the faculty members and all other types of users.
- 5 Introduce advanced technology for library operations.

- 6 The library staff needed to be congratulated in their customer care skills and they should be provided more training programmes to develop the skills.
- 7 To have a separate library building with required standard specifications on space, ventilation and lightening, other physical environmental factors and infrastructure facilities.

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