



As applications for modified information sources multiply and the need for incorporating these conclusions in future services is indeed evident.

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USER EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF PRACTITIONERS

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User Education beyond the formal educational institutions

The surveys of user education have shown that most of this activity is carried out in academic - school, university and college - libraries and that school, undergraduate and postgraduate students form a large percentage of the target audiences.

Special libraries have adopted some of the methods and techniques employed in academic libraries, and while some modifications have been made in the methods used, the basic assumptions and techniques have been retained. The programmes have, however, been usually carried out on a more personalized basis as permitted by smaller sizes of clientele and greater awareness of the users' needs.

User Education and Training of Practitioners

In previous sessions it has been proposed that practitioners are likely to hold a different view of 'information' from that held by users from educational institutions. User education for practitioners would therefore need to take into consideration, the wider definition of information which would include:

"Not only published or semi-published documents, but also information which can be derived from other sources such as financial, administrative or personnel records."

in fact we should include:

"any facts, figures or other data which can help a user solve a problem".

This definition of information would also require a re-examination of:

1. The context in which the user functions;
2. The users' information-seeking behaviour patterns;
3. The type of information service which the user would require;
4. The consequent implications for user education and training.

User education and training in this context would aim to inform the user, on a continuing basis, of the information services which can be provided by or through the library, enabling the user to have enough confidence in the information system to permit him/her to present these needs to the librarian.

One of our tasks here is therefore to consider the general user education techniques with which we are familiar, and which are used in school, university and college libraries, and to evaluate their effectiveness in special libraries and especially the national focal points and participating centres of the Caribbean Information System (CARISPLAN).

Those of you who were present at the workshop which was organized last year by the U.W.I. Department of Library Studies will no doubt have done further application of the theories and techniques, and could possibly therefore arrive at well-founded conclusions on the applicability of the general theories and techniques of user education to the Caribbean Information System.

The Scope and Range of User Education Programmes for Practitioners

Initially user education was considered to consist of orientation tours and bibliographic instruction. Some other dimensions have since been added with a view to reaching the user who is not able or willing to attend formal sessions, and to motivate users and potential users to request and use information.

The range of user education activities can be conveniently classified into:

User awareness activities - which aim to increase the user's awareness of the library as a primary source of information, and as an agency to which users may turn for solution of problems related to their information needs.

General public awareness programmes - these would provide news of the library and its services. Various media which seem relevant are organizational newsletters, library newsletters, radio programmes, presentations at meetings of professional associations, articles in newspapers, handouts and flyers.

Similar results can be achieved by special meetings of groups of users, and current awareness services to relevant planners and policy-makers on the library's activities, developments and plans.

Orientation tours - while these might be considered to be standard and well used, they can, if well organized, help members of the organization to visualize the role of the library, and the services which they can request from it. This is likely to be even more useful if the systems or services vary from those of the user's previous library. Jim Wellvang will go into more detail on the areas of orientation which could be applied to a special library, and in that practical session you will be able to identify those which you consider to be appropriate to your special users.

Bibliographic instruction - which is the principal component of user training is considered to be best carried out in the libraries of educational institutions. It is generally considered to be superfluous because:

1. They have already had such training in schools.
 - This we need to consider in terms of its relevance to the Caribbean.
2. Their schedules do not permit them to undertake relatively time-consuming bibliographic searching.
 - Is this relevant to CARISPLAN users? From the reports of user studies and user education activities, it would seem that the users' portfolios and some of their schedules would not permit them to do regular bibliographic searching to be able to satisfy their information needs. Carol Collins findings also seem to bear this out.
3. They consider this to be the job of the reference librarian rather than theirs.
 - The question sometimes arises of how aware are some of CARISPLAN's users of the job of the reference librarian?

Indeed it seems that the work situation of many practitioners prevents them from doing their own bibliographic searching, however, even in the cases where this is so, brief but ongoing explanations of:

- The types of sources available,
- The depth of processing, and
- The services which can be provided

would help research officers to use the library and help other practitioners to understand the type of information which is available, and help them identify their information needs and queries more effectively.

Guides to the library - these are sometimes considered to be passive forms of user education and training but they might reach users whose schedules do not permit them to enter the library for collective orientation programmes. These are likely to be most applicable in libraries which have to serve a geographically dispersed clientele. For guides to make maximum impact, special techniques of presentation need to be employed so that the important statements stand out and can be easily read.

The modified guide in the form of audio-visual presentations - tape/slide programmes, video presentations, which can be shown at professional meetings or symposia, can also serve to introduce users and potential users to larger libraries.

Education and Training of On-line Users and End Users

Although on-line services are not available in libraries in the Caribbean, it is possible for users to have access to the results of on-line searches through libraries. The majority of training in the use of on-line systems is done by database producers, or by database suppliers. This, as Ian Malley points out in his article on Educating the Special Library User, is usually marketing rather than user education, and the consequent responsibility of the librarian in user education and user training would seem to be aiding in the evaluation of databases, and database suppliers or hosts, and informing the users of the services which are or are not provided by the databases. Such training is an integral part of user education of practitioners who might be interested in obtaining information from databases or who might be involved in decision-making on the question of purchasing or establishing databases.

It would seem therefore that in the special library situation the techniques of manipulation of databases should rather be taught to the information intermediaries who at this time seem likely to be the ones using the services directly.

End users on the other hand would learn:

- that there are databases which record, index and abstract specialized information - bibliographic and non-bibliographic;

- the subject areas covered by the databases relevant to the user;
- the depth of coverage of each database;
- the type of materials and period of coverage of each database;
- evaluations and comparisons of databases and hosts relevant to the end user;
- the basis on which the terminology of indexing is employed;
- basic search strategy;
- the comparative advantages of manual, off-line and on-line searching.

In these programmes, the objectives would be:

- making users aware or more aware of services available;
- making users aware of holdings in their specialized areas;
- making users aware of external sources of information.

In special libraries this increased awareness could help users to be aware of the value of assisting in developing the library in ways such as:

- depositing material received at conferences, committees etc.

Evaluation and Planning of Information Systems and Services

User education can also be used to provide practitioners, who are responsible for planning and development of national or sectoral information systems, with information on which they can base their decisions. Such programmes - using the most appropriate media - could explain:

- why national, regional and international systems provide more effective information services;
- their methods of operation;
- new developments in information and information technology.

The Relationship of User Education and User Training to Users' Needs

In earlier sessions it has been proposed that the information needs of practitioners are likely to be different from those of students and even those of academic staff. The user groups of special libraries are usually very clearly defined. The groups of users in CARISPLAN organizations can usually be categorized into:

Policy-makers - Ministers, Permanent Secretaries,
Managers of Corporations, Directors of Agencies.

Administrators - Personnel Officers, Finance
Officers, etc.

Technical Personnel - Economists, Agriculturalists,
Medical Practitioners, Lawyers, Engineers.

Researchers - Research Officers, Research Assistants.

Secretarial Staff

Clerical Staff

Consequently, we need to determine:

- the information which they need
- the form in which they need to have this information provided

The interview with the user, on which the user profile is based, can be used as an aspect of user education.

User Studies and User Profiles

The preparation of profiles of information users has principally been a feature of special libraries.

In many national focal points and participating centres of CARISPLAN, the clientele is of a size that permits the study of the information needs of each member of the organization.

The libraries of CARISPLAN have principal responsibility for the work-related information needs of the members of their organizations - users and potential users.

Some of the characteristics and general information interests of the users will be already known to the librarian, but details of their more specific interests and information-seeking behaviour would also need to be recorded.

It is possible to prepare a profile form and to distribute this to all members of the organization. Individuals could then list topics etc. in which they are interested and services which they would require. The preparation of the user profile becomes a user education exercise, however, when the librarian discusses the information needs of the user and assists in the preparation of the profile based on the services which the user has been advised are available. The interview will therefore indicate to the user the sources, services and facilities which are available in his field, within or through the library, and will also help the librarian to serve the users' needs more effectively.

From these studies it would be possible to determine relevant sources within or outside the organization and information on these would be the principal components of the user education programmes.

The user studies which have been carried out in CARISPLAN countries, and our experiences in providing information services to CARISPLAN users, seem to indicate that the main sources of information for users of CARISPLAN would be:

- Libraries
- Databases (national/regional/international)
- Databanks (statistical/current facts and events)
- Administrative files (internal/external)
- Personnel records (internal/external)
- Membership of committees
- Attendance at conferences
- Informal contact with colleagues and professional associates

User education and training would therefore need to inform the user of the library's access to these sources, and the way in which information can be retrieved from them.

Again the implications for modified information sources are many and the need for incorporating these conclusions in future services is indeed evident.