

The 'State-of-Library Services' in the Bangladesh Open University and an action plan for future development.

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<http://www-icdl.open.ac.uk/icdl/database/asia/banglade/openuniv/inst/index.htm>

Introduction:

Education cannot be imparted without books nor research without journals. Both are essential, in case of Open Learning/ Distance Education. It is in this perspective that the Bangladesh Open University (BOU) has been growing up. Library without services is the cart without wheel. Library services can be compared with the blood circulation in a human body. If the books are the heart of a library then services can be called active machines. So the services offered by the libraries are to be treated most important. These are:

- a. Assistance given by the staff to its users and clientele;
- b. Lending of books to read either at home or in the library;
- c. Reservation of books on request from the reader;
- d. Inter-library loan;
- e. Reference services;
- f. Information and bibliographic services;
- g. Photocopying services;
- h. Translation services (where required);
- i. Social education activities, if needed;
- j. Mobile services to local centres in Open Learning/Distance Education system.

Besides them, parking facilities for cars and cycles, facilities for canteen, separate toilet facilities for both male and female, arrangement of boxes and protected places to keep umbrellas and bags etc. can be treated as services rendered from the library.

In addition, the Bangladesh Open University Library also offers the following services:

- a. Audio-Video services;
- b. Exclusive study area for users (i.e. Teacher, Scholar, Potential reader);
- c. E-mail services;

- d. Use of CD and other disks;
- e. Liberal reference services to readers;
- f. Clippings, etc.;
- g. Current awareness services;
- h. Selective dissemination of information.

"The role of the BOU Library services is to improve the quality of learning among BOU students. The Library Services Division does this through its work with the Academic Schools and by supporting student study through the Regional Resource Centre and Tutorial Centre network. An important aspect of the library support service is to help writers and materials developers prepare up-to-date and relevant courses" (BOU-CS 29, p. 46).

The objectives of Library and Documentation is to project its materials to its users. To achieve this goal, Library is always busy with programs and functional activities. "The Library holds a CD entitled 'Distance Education Database' from the International Centre for Distance Learning [ICDL], OU UK. It contains data on courses, literature and institutions world-wide, including BOU. The Library would like to up-grade its system to a Windows-based network available for local area and remote reference..." (BOU-CS 1, p. 2.5).

So far as the services are concerned BOU Library is in a moderate position. But one thing should be kept in mind that, this University is yet new and is crossing a transition period from Development Project to Revenue Budget of the government, and the library staffs are also acquainted themselves with the system of OL/DE system. So we cannot over emphasis our library services. Keeping all these in mind, BOU Library services are outlined.

Background:

Bangladesh Open University (BOU) came into existence with a view to transform the country's vast human resources into an educated and trained workforce by extending to them a wide range of academic programs, both formal and non-formal in the field of Science and Technology, Education, Social Sciences, Agriculture, Business, General education, etc. vide an Act of the Parliament in 1992.

The BOU Central Library has its own building and is situated in the independent three storied building (1568 sqm or 16,870 sft). The RRC libraries provide facilities for

listening and viewing of audio-video cassettes and reading and reference books for the tutors & students of BOU.

The Central Library at Gazipur main campus is equipped with a reasonable collection of books and CD-Roms on a wide variety of subjects including those on Distance Education. It renders various services on resources available including various reference and reading materials for teachers, research students and members of staff.

Learning of Resources and Services:

The Library is at its initial stage (established in 1992). By this time it has built up a collection of 18000 volumes of books, and has started subscribing to 330 titles of journals. It is meant to serve a wide range of users. In addition it has:

- i. Government publications, gazetteers, pamphlets, posters, etc.
- ii. Reports, proceedings, seminar and workshop-papers, graphic designs, survey, reports, etc.;
- iii. CD-ROMs;
- iv. Audio-Video materials;
- v. Globes, maps, charts, etc.;
- vi. vi. Museum specimens, photographs, portraits, etc.

Storage of information in a computer is a continuous process, and BOU library is in progress now, computer is used in searching required information.

Maintaining the resources within the library:

Open Access: Librarians, Information Scientists, and Documentalists have their own goals for the dissemination of information. So they design their programs according to need. "The contents, kinds, and services of libraries have all been improved through the years. But improvements extend even further. ...Within the library buildings themselves, librarians try to provide easy access to library materials. Many do so through the open-stack or open-shelf system. This system allows borrowers to go through library materials themselves." (World Book Encyclopedia, vol.12, p.213..

The BOU library has introduced open access system to facilitate easy access to the books. Readers are at liberty to select the right book of their choice. Books are issued to the users both for home reading and library reading as per library rules.

The BOU Library has following services:

Rare & Reference: The reference section is quite rich. It has a good number of reference collection. These are not lent out but the readers can use these as ready reference tools within the four walls of the library. Some rare books and other informative materials have been kept as confined reading materials. These are allowed for reading on prior permission of the Librarian and these too are to be read inside the library.

Journal/Periodicals: This library has got a good number of journals, periodicals, magazine (local & foreign). These are procured according to the demand of BOU's schools and proper approval of the authority. Some journals also have been received as gift. These are also treated as reference materials and cannot be issued. If some one needs any page(s), requirement is met through photocopy.

Bound Newspapers: The BOU library subscribes to 10 dailies and 2 weeklies locally published. Daily papers are preserved here for a year. After then, keeping necessary clippings, papers are disposed off from the library. It may be mentioned here that Bangladesh National Library (Sher-e-Banglanagar, Dhaka), Bangladesh Central Public Library (Shahbagh, Dhaka), Dhaka University Library (Ramna, Dhaka) and Bangla Academy Library (Ramna, Dhaka) preserve all the papers published in Bangladesh. So the preservation of papers in the BOU Library will be a duplication of efforts and an wastage of money. For obvious reasons BOU Library has avoided the preservation of papers.

Binding: The BOU Library has a Binding section. Periodicals, special reports, abstracts, torned and partially damaged books etc. are repaired and bound here. In special cases spiral and laminating binding are also done if required.

Photo Copying Service: To facilitate photocopying services, a photocopier has been installed in the library. Required pages can be photocopied on request as per rule. Special pages of book(s), papers, reports, contents, essays or any part of a journal or periodical, or from clippings file can be photocopied on request, as per rule. There is also provision for copying large charts, maps, drawings, layout, etc. In special cases colour photocopy can be done through Map-copier as required.

Computer Service: At present the library has computerized catalogue, CDS/ISIS system is followed. Through this catalogue, a reader can easily find his/her required

information.

Current Awareness Service: Through computerized catalogue, a periodical bulletin is prepared on current arrival of books, journals etc. giving all details of bibliographical information and is distributed to the Schools and Divisions of BOU for ready reference and guidance. Moreover, paper clippings are maintained. In addition, leaflets, pamphlets, brochures are preserved and arranged in document boxes alphabetically under their title.

Special Corners:

a) **War of Liberation Corner:** Museum (memorials of the great liberation war of Bangladesh), a good number of photographs, posters, portrait of Father of the nation martyrs, freedom fighters, and other dedicated personalities. Specimens and Audio-Video Cassettes on Liberation War of Bangladesh have also been collected and displayed.

b) **Corner of Personalities:** There are some corners in the name of distinguished personalities, political leaders, litterateur, poets, scientists etc. with collections of their writings, essays, books, reports, features published in the newspapers etc. These corners portray the illustrious sons of our soil and their achievements.

c) **BOU's Publications:** Every year a large number of course materials, instructional materials are published in modular book forms, on various subjects for six schools (Faculty) of the Bangladesh Open University. Three copies of each are preserved for reference, future guidance, course design and research purposes.

Clientele/Readers: Generally Teachers (faculty members) Academicians, Researchers, Officers, Tutors, Editors and Writers on BOU subjects can use the library. Students may use the Central library in special cases. But in case of the use of Regional Resource Centre (RRC) library, students are always welcomed.

Electronic Library Services:

Audio-Video: BOU Library has a large number of Audio & Video programmes produced by BOU's Media Division and all are telecast by BTV and broadcast by Radio Bangladesh for our students and tutors of various formal courses. Besides, a large number of non-formal programmes are also telecast and broadcast for the

masses. These programme tapes can be re-used by readers from Audio-Video section. Besides, other important related programmes of foreign organizations are procured. These are used for research and quality programme production.

Other Audio-Video materials such as Multimedia projector, Film Strips, Slides, Overhead projector, Epidiascope etc. have been procured for training purposes and reference use.

There are other non-book materials such as maps, charts, globes, models, learning sets, visual aids etc. and can be used on request and reproduction purpose.

BOU Library: a future plan of action

1. Library Network Services:

Soon BOU library will have internet connections with other reputed libraries at home and abroad. Both LAN and WAN connections will be available then. So far LAN connection has been completed with the Regional Resource Centres (RRCs). Through this network e-mail services both at home and abroad have been introduced. Readers, members, tutors and students who have computer and e-mail connections, have ample opportunity to avail themselves of such services. They have every scope to receive any information available in the library. Besides, another network BNSLINK is going to be established soon through Bangladesh National Scientific and Technical Documentation Centre (BANSDOC) through which readers, users, information seekers, will be able to get information of the Resources' world of and University Libraries in Bangladesh. Through WAN connections library would collect or search information on latest development from other libraries at home and abroad and various sources available in web site especially articles published in the journals, periodicals etc.

2. CD-ROM Services:

Library has CD-ROM drive and through this huge information can be searched from various CD. So far as the use of network, CDs, A-V materials and other electronic items are concerned, the following steps are going to be taken:

- i. A manual of the operation of network will be prepared for wider and proper services of the library network. This will help to operate library electronic equipment and to render services of the library.
- ii. To facilitate library network services, a memorandum of understanding would be prepared. This will pave the way for contractual understanding among the libraries

using the network facilities.

iii. Besides, Audio-Video conferencing services and telephone services will be introduced through multi-media system and that would make available of the modern electronic services of BOU library.

3. Inter Library Exchange Services:

BOU Library is now ready to exchange various publications, journals, current awareness services and other informative materials with other prominent libraries at home and abroad. Exchanges can be done either via postal service, e-mail or through modern internet system.

4. BOU in Web site:

The Bangladesh Open University has a plan to open a web page in the near future so that information on BOU and its services could be made available on web site.

5. Outreach Services:

Book-mobiles service is one of the most effective ways and a good example of library outreach service. Using a large book-equipped truck, the library can go to outlying areas, miles away from the library building instead of expecting students to come to the Central/ Regional library. Book-mobile library can be started in a small-single van car from Gazipur main campus and at times it will spread out throughout the country to supply books and library-items to its 80 local and 800-1000 tutorial centres. After establishing connections with local centres and making full-time liaison with tutorial centres book-mobiles can be introduced.

6. Computer Based Cataloguing:

In addition to other activities and services, computer-accessed cooperative catalog system via computer and telecommunication lines, can be developed among Regional Resource Centre libraries of Bangladesh Open University, where every RRC will be able to know and collect new information about the central library collection.

7. Computer Charging system:

Computerised charging system will be introduced. Pending that, the books are issued through membership card & issue register. A set of approved library rules is followed. Moreover bar code system will be introduced soon. When introduced it will help to find out which books are on loan and who borrowed it and when it is due to be returned etc.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, we would like to draw a picture of future library activities in Bangladesh Open University for its urban students. In general, we can say that academic libraries have taken a number of approaches in organizing information to meet the needs of their students, faculty (schools), and staffs. Administratively, academic libraries are generally centralized, but physically they are often decentralized. Because different schools are situated in different buildings. The size of some campuses, the location of academic programs in remote areas, and the need for convenience to users has led to the creation of specialized libraries in the concerned faculty/departments to serve specialized users in some large universities.

Bangladesh Open University is a special type of university. Though its academic buildings are situated in the main campus, its 1,80,000 students are scattered throughout the country. They have hardly any scope to come to the main campus. Their liaison-point is either tutorial centre, or local centre, and very often they come to regional centre. So they have little scope to use central library resources which is situated at the main campus.

In the preview of Bangladesh, especially in OL/DE system, if library facilities and services are to be provided to the scattered students, and outreach activities are to be ensured. So there is no alternative of broadcasting Radio/Television programs regularly. And BOU is doing it. Simultaneously it should provide Book-mobile services, issuing of video and audio cassettes, and establishing of teleconferencing system and BOU is almost in the advanced stage of introducing this program.

The Bangladesh Open University has every good will to do and to introduce the above programs. But it is fact that, due to financial indigence BOU cannot afford fund always. If fund could be made available, BOU will go for each and every program and it will be a unique university in the world especially in the field of OL/DE system.

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