

# THE CHALLENGES FACED BY LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS IN THEIR DAY TO DAY CONVERSATION

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**Abstract** *Indian library professionals are faced with a plethora of challenges in the documentation and communication of indigenous knowledge and apart from this they are also facing problems in their day to day conversation with students and staff. These include the technology shortages, physical barriers, linguistic barriers, time management, stress management and the lack of legal frameworks at national and international level to support the library efforts to document and communicate indigenous knowledge. The paper discusses these challenges, looking at some of the lessons learnt and the ways to overcome them.*

**Keywords:** *Challenges, Communication, Linguistic Barrier, By-passing, Organizational Barriers, Meditation, Rigidity, Frame of Reference*

## INTRODUCTION

Communication is a social activity. It is carried out in various ways in everyday life knowingly and unknowingly. Communication is carried out through verbal and non-verbal channels. All organisations and institutions have particular goals. Communication is of vital importance, and failure to communicate will give rise to inefficiency and lack of direction, as pointed out by Beeby (1966). Communication is the establishment of meaning and understanding between people (Kpangban, 1995). Library administration is responsible for the control and supervision of a library, and cannot function without good communication (Reitz, 2004). Communication is a complex communicative process, involving shared assumptions and unspoken agreement between individuals. It is just like a nervous system of an enterprise. It serves as the lubricant, fostering for the smooth operation of management process. Thus, it is very essential to maintain an effective and efficient flow of communication in all directions. There may occur frequent errors and misunderstanding in communication, due to them message got is not complete or we can say it becomes distorted or truncated.

The library as an organization is geared toward serving the users. The library needs a way to make meaning and understanding between the clientele and the staff of the library, in order to achieve desired results. Library administration is the control and supervision of a library or library system, including planning, budgeting, policymaking, personnel

management, public relations and programme assessment with responsibility for results (Reitz, 2004).

## LIBRARY COMMUNICATION

Library communication is carried out within the library and in some cases between libraries. In communicating, meaning and understanding between the people involved has to be established. Communication in the library has two distinct levels: Staff communication and Clientele/staff communication.

*Staff Communication:* Communication among the staff of the library has an effect on the way the library is managed. Communication must flow upward and horizontally across the organization just as much as it flows downward. Regular meetings are held to discuss library policies and implementation. Because the entire library staff cannot be at those meetings, heads of the various departments, sections or units and other designated representatives will have to meet formally or informally and resolutions or decisions of such meetings made available to other members of staff for them to understand and comply with. Some meetings are solely for the members of the top of the administrative hierarchy, and decisions that affect other staff are made known to them.

*Clientele/Staff Communication:* The clientele of the library need communication to achieve desired information-seeking goals. Communication is an exchange of information; it takes two or more to exchange information. So when a user visits the library in search of information resources, and is

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helped by a reference librarian, communication takes place. Information is exchanged and acquired. The reference librarian is an assistant to information seekers, a translator of different information sources, who queries users on what they need, and feeds the information seeker with the desired materials to work with. The circulation desk is another place where significant communication takes place between library staff and users. Users interact with the staff concerning enquiries, and borrowing and returning material.

Another crucial kind of communication between staff and users is the publicizing changes in policies and services. Lectures and exhibitions sponsored by the library are announced in the university gazette and the official newsletters. Suggestion boxes placed at strategic points around the library may yield useful information that can be supplemented by occasional user surveys. The library can also hold meetings with designated university officials when considering a collection building in line with university programmes. The library can also make connections with other university libraries for services like interlibrary loan.

## IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION

No organizational function can be successfully carried out without successful communication. Without effective flowing from the top of the administrative hierarchy to the bottom, i.e., from the university librarian or director to the other managers and to other staff, things will not work properly. But where communication flows properly, horizontally and vertically, the library will be well-managed. Communication facilitates the achievement of organizational goals. In the library, where the division of labour and departmentalization is well-established, effective communication is of vital importance since acquired materials go through nearly all departments before appearing on the shelves, and breakdown in communication can delay this. Good communication gives a sense of direction and serves as a guide. That includes things like library signage, placed at entrances to sections of the library and on shelves, which directs or guides library users. Communication between clientele and librarians can help users a great deal, especially those who are new to the library, by informing and educating them about collections, rules and policies, and procedures for borrowing books, and so on.

## PROBLEMS OF COMMUNICATION IN THE LIBRARY

Communication is reciprocal. Ideas that are not communicated have no effect. A nonchalant attitude to service and responsibility on the part of some library staff results in failure to communicate effectively with the clientele and leads to inefficiency and poor service. A library

that is staffed with unqualified librarians, who do not actually know their duties and responsibilities and who cannot communicate effectively, leads users to lack interest in using the library. Many library users are not even aware of the various sections of the library and how and where to locate information and materials. Some of them do not understand the need to interact with the librarians when they need information. Some, out of pride or shame, do not want to ask for help and will leave the library without the information that they need. Some users may not be able to frame their query in a way that is comprehensible. If staff or librarians are not able to analyze the query as it is expressed, issues of semantics arise and the librarian might not be able to satisfy user needs. Barriers are the obstacles which prevent us from transmitting our ideas meaningfully. Barriers or obstacles or hurdles distort the message and make communication ineffective. The barriers to communication are obstacles in the process of communication. In fact we cannot remove them from communication, but try to minimize them. Some of the important barriers to communication are; Physical, personal, psychological, emotional, status linguistic, semantic, pre-mature evaluation, inattentive listening, conflicting information, loss in transmission, poor retention, disinterest, previous experiences, physical discomfort, referent confusion etc.

*Personal Barriers:* Personal factors like difference in judgment, social status, social value, inferiority complex, attitude, pressure of time, inability to communicate etc. widen the psychological distance between the communicator and communicatee. Credibility gap i.e. inconsistency between what one say and what one does and also act as a barrier to communication. The sender and receiver of the ...s, day dreaming,

*Psychological Barriers:* These barriers depend on the mentality and personality of the human being. They may be because of depression, emotions, wrong timings of message, complexes, defective communication network, language differences, wrong pronunciation, and improper vocabulary, receiver's attention, sender's or receiver's background etc. develops a negative thinking or misunderstanding. Barriers may also arise due to emotional attitude because when emotions are strong, it is difficult to know the frame of mind of first person or group. Emotional attitude of both the communicator and communicatee after transmission and understanding of message.

*Linguistic Barrier:* This include improper encoding / decoding, by-passing, denotations and connotations. If the audience is not able to follow the language / dialogue/ jargon, a communicative failure will definitely occur.

*Bypassing:* The term bypassing refers to misunderstanding resulting from missed meanings because of the use of abstract words and phrases on which both sender and receiver do not

agree. In order to avoid bypassing you should use familiar words with concrete meaning so that there is no scope for confusion.

*Frame of Reference:* Your frame of reference is individual to you as it is based on your experiences, exposure, education, personality and several other arguments. If you analyze everything with your frame of reference then it may again lead to confusion and misunderstanding of the message.

*Status:* Status or positioning the hierarchy of an organization is one of the fundamental barriers that obstruct free flow of information. A superior may only give selected information to his subordinate. Subordinate tend to convey only those things which the superiors will appreciate. This creates distortion in upward communication.

*Rigidity:* Rigidity in a communication means the meaning attached to various words and expressions varies from person to person. Some people held stray views on various matters that they hardly listen to other person in view of their rigid stand on matters. This leads to ineffective communication.

*Partial or Marginal Listening:* It can distort the intent of the message. The receiver could be paying heed partially to spoken material and partially to his thought process. In such instances he is sure to misunderstand, the intent of the spoken material.

*Extreme Opinion:* People with extreme opinions behave in such a way that if a person is good in one area they consider him good in every aspect of life. This happens in the other way too. This leads to ineffective communication.

*Poor Retention:* Poor retention either on the part of the sender or on the part of the receiver can create problem or may lead to misunderstanding.

*Language Barriers:* Language plays a significant role in any communication. If the sender and the receiver are ignorant of each other's language it creates a major barrier. In India, language is a big barrier.

*Semantic Gap/ Semantic Barriers:* the incorrect or careless use of language is called semantic barrier. If a person uses a word with multiple meanings, the receiver gets incorrect message. It is because of the improper pronunciation, incorrect spellings and poor grammar. In language, incorrect pronunciation marks also create a barrier to communication process.

*Socio-Economical Barriers:* It arises because of status and position in society. A person of higher position and status always maintains some distance with socio-economically lower person.

*Cultural Barriers:* Different people in a country have different cultural backgrounds. They want to be confined

to their won cultural values and neglect the others. So they cannot get mixed freely with each other.

*Technical Barriers/ Technical Jargons:* It arises because of the use of difficult technical terminologies. The person with high knowledge if uses technical jargons in his communication, it creates obstacles in understanding of common people.

## SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

There is always a solution to a problem, whether permanent or temporary. Problems of communication in the library are inherent, but they can be solved to a degree. To avoid disruption in the smooth running of the library, the university librarian, chief librarian, or director should maintain regular contact formally and informally with the staff to keep abreast with activities of his subordinates and maintain a constant check through deputies on the other staff to guide them away from irresponsibility and a nonchalant attitude to work. The librarian can institute regular meetings with the top hierarchy, beginning with a weekly briefing on all library matters, to facilitate understanding of problems and to formulate the best possible strategy for resolving them. This demands two-way communication and can lead to consensus and action. This broader basis for decision-making can result in better planning and more cooperation from staff (Coing, 1999). The librarian should give incentives to staff to motivate them. The library can also assign staff to the open shelves, catalog area, and other strategic locations to offer to help patrons. Such inquiries can help the patrons who do not know what to do and where to turn. In this way, proud and shy patrons can make good use of the library. The librarian must recruit and employ qualified and knowledgeable staff, librarians who can match students' or patrons' intelligence, knowledge, and means of expression. The library must send its staff on short courses or further studies to update their knowledge, to keep abreast with current trends, and communicate properly with patrons. The barriers to communication which are observed to exist with library professionals cannot be totally removed; we can try to minimize them up to a great extent because they are inseparable part of communication. If communication takes place, some or other barriers can also be noticed there. By following some measures these barriers can be controlled or minimized. Following are some of the measures to overcome the barriers to the communication process; the proper medium of communication should be used, external barriers of faulty channels should be removed and checked frequently, message should be in simple and clear language, for effective communication, personal interaction, proper training should be provided to the authorities, semantic barriers can be overcome by clear and concise words and

use of proper language. Workshops, seminars which create healthy mental atmosphere must be created.

## CONCLUSION

Effective communication is a keystone of any good administration. The goal of proper communication in the library is to ensure that users make good use of the library's resources bought with scarce funds, that library staff know what their responsibilities are and perform them properly, and that the libraries' parent bodies can know and appreciate the problems of the libraries and offer necessary assistance regularly. The failure to establish a meaningful and understandable exchange of information between the staff and the clientele will give rise to inefficiency on the part of the library, and lack of direction on the part of the clientele.

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