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NEGLECT OF STRUCTURAL COMFORTS IN LIBRARIES

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ABSTRACT:

Examines the planning of space for different functions in three UGC-financed university libraries, located in Karnataka State, India. Planning aspects have been analysed on the basis of recommendations made by University Grants Commission (India), and standards provided by Indian Standards Institution. The findings indicate that the planners have not given due thought to the application of ISI standards and UGC recommendations made for different types of buildings resulting in a lot of wastage of space.

Keywords: Library buildings, Library standard, India.

INTRODUCTION

Man has created different structural/ artificial environment for the purpose of comfortable living, working and recreation. Among them library structure is one, which at times is neglected. In ancient and medieval periods the efficiency of library was very much restricted to housing and preserving of vast treasure of reading materials. Slowly as society developed in terms of science and technology the concept of library also changed along with functional efficiency. At present, every small factor in library accounts for its efficiency. The most important and striking factor is the building planning. It is generally said that "Dress makes half a man, what makes a good library?" No doubt good collections and proper administration of services in a conducive environment makes a good library. The conducive environment is nothing but a well-planned building with well-designed and comfortable library furniture, fittings and other physical facilities.

Higher Education and University Libraries in India

Education has been an important force in bringing about social changes in the world. Leaders of various social movements at different points of time recognised the importance of education. As far as India is concerned three stages can be marked regarding the educational development :

(a) Educational system prior to 1857.
(b) Post 1857 educational system and
(c) Post 1947 educational system.

The first stage was marked by traditional system wherein religion played a very important role. The second stage is marked by the establishment of western-oriented higher education system. The year 1857 witnessed the birth of three universities at Calcutta, Madras (Chennai) and

Bombay (Mumbai). Slowly religion gave way to the secular themes in the courses taught and their contents. Liberalism of Europe which advocated liberty of an individual and social equality, increasingly held its sway over the educational system of this period.

Unfortunately, these universities were merely functioning as teaching and examination centres. University libraries did not receive much attention during this period except as a support to the examination system. Later, the number of universities in the country increased and particularly after 1920's these universities widened their academic base and assumed research functions along with teaching. This necessitated the establishment of libraries which could play an active role in the university education. After independence, the central and state governments democratised and socialised the higher education system. With the establishment of the University Grants Commission (UGC) in 1956, a new era in the library development began. UGC allocated huge funds for the establishment of libraries, particularly the university library buildings. Thus, a good library system became an integral part of the Indian universities after 1956.

In the beginning the university libraries had to manage with buildings erected long before thought was turned on distinctive requirements of university library functions. But today, with such understanding widely prevailing and with the liberal financial assistance by the UGC new independent library buildings have been erected to realise the functions of the university by providing a wide variety of services. Obviously, the university library architecture is comparatively of very recent origin in India. After independence, a number of university library buildings were constructed. These buildings were not only planned on functional basis but also provided suitable space for users, staff and information packages.

In fact, the basic philosophy of librarianship has changed tremendously after 1960's. The twin phenomena of knowledge explosion and document explosion have baffled not only Indian libraries and management people but also the planners of highly advanced countries. In order to meet the challenges of growth in knowledge in various disciplines and the resultant explosion in document growth posing constant threat to the available space of university libraries, a number of new ideas were mooted by libraries and architects in planning and designing of new library buildings. The concept of modular planning emerged as an important factor in the field of library architecture.

BASIC REQUIREMENTS

The library building should be construed as a place of scholarly pursuits. Certain basic/general features any library building must have are as follows :

- The entire building should have unilevel flooring without thresholds, and should be at an easily accessible location.
- The staircases should be straight.
- Every room should have a separate entrance and no room should be made a thoroughfare leading passage to any other public room.

- Flooring material should be in relation to its being noise-proof, non-slippery and conveniently cleaned.
- Switch rooms should be outside the building and separate switchboards be provided for each room.
- Climate and atmospheric conditions are to be taken care of while providing heating, cooling, ventilation for users, staff and reading materials.
- Interior decoration and choice of colour in relation to light and colour harmony for reducing strain on eyes for improving the feeling of pleasantness is important.
- Air-conditioning, though costly is considered desirable for better conservation of library materials as well as for comfortable and congenial interior for users and staff.
- Fire fighting equipment and fire alarm with proper instructions written, at appropriate places are essential.
- Efficiency of reading areas may be enhanced by the nature of layout, acoustical properties, level of illumination, quality of serenity provided.
- Seclusion between one reader and another is important in reading areas.
- Noise is another nuisance in the reading areas. It should be put off by design and selection of flooring, ceiling and wall materials.
- Both natural and artificial lighting and ventilation are to be provided uniformly throughout the day.
- Drinking water facility particularly in tropical climates has greater significance.
- Sanitary facilities are also of vital importance.
- A small refreshment room where beverages like tea, coffee and light snacks could refresh after long hours of work/study is a necessity rather than a luxury, provided there is no full-fledged canteen facility nearby.

OBJECTIVES

Several library building projects have been undertaken in India since independence, particularly for university, college and research libraries. But not many surveys/ studies have been made so far to evaluate the functional efficiency of the buildings. During early 1980's Rajwant Singh (1984) has made an attempt to study systematically the university library buildings in India. As the author himself has admitted in the preface of his work that "In the absence of the blue prints and layout plans, the evaluation of the library buildings was not possible". Hence, an attempt has been made in this direction of evaluating the library buildings in the universities of Karnataka state. This study in particular attempts:

- to know the difference between the original plans and the constructed buildings and the reasons thereof;
- to measure the functional efficiency of the space allocated for different functions in different university library buildings and;
- to measure the available space used to discharge different functions in the university library buildings.

STANDARDS / NORMS

IS : 1553-1975 2 : Indian standards recommendations relating to primary ele-

ments in the design of library buildings (first revision) provides detailed information regarding planning of different library buildings. In addition UGC (1988) has also recommended certain guidelines for planning university library buildings.

Incidentally, Dr. S.R. Ranganathan was the Chairman of the expert committees for both the agencies. Except for minor differences the guidelines of these institutions go together. Further, it is pertinent to mention that there is another effective method of studying the functional efficiency of library buildings, called Library Space Utilisation Methodology (LSUM) developed by Richard B. Hall (1978) which will help in better understanding of the functional relationships of the units of a library.

SURVEY OF EXISTING LIBRARY BUILDINGS

A sample of three university library buildings in Karnataka has been chosen for study and evaluated for their functional efficiency of planning and use of space. The buildings are (Table 1):

1. Bangalore University library building, (1976) (BUL).
2. Karnatak University library building, (1981) (KUL).
3. Mysore University library building (1965, 1977, 1990) (MUL).

DISCUSSION

a) Allocation

One of the primary purposes of the study was to identify the differences, if any, between the original plan and the construction, whether allocation and utilisation of space is in accordance with ISI specification.

There is a difference between the original plan and the construction. The first floor of the stack wing has been converted into mezzanine floor in BUL building, and a major portion of the space has been allocated for stacking and reading purposes. (Table 2).

Interestingly none of these libraries fulfill the standards of ISI(1976) (Clause 5.1 and 10.2 in page 6 and 10 respectively) in respect of storage and reading space. And there is a difference in the amount of space allocated and used, except the reading space in KUL, the other two libraries have under utilised both reading and stacking space. Reading area has been enhanced by consuming movement area in KUL. Further, the seating arrangements are not according to ISI specification of one side of the table only [clause 10.3 and page 10].

Further, except for librarians and deputy librarians, none of the university building plans indicate allocation of space for other library staff members (i.e. violation of ISI).

The research cubicle facility, one of the important facilities has not been taken care of in BUL and KUL building and the number of cubicles provided in MUL is not sufficient for the purpose. Audio/ visual materials warrant different environment for their placement and use within a library. ISI has prescribed such a place as essential requirement, but none of the libraries has made any provision for A/V materials except MUL building plan.

Table 1: Comparative Assessment of University Library Buildings

		BUL	KUL	MUL
1	Total Area [sq. ft.]	80,000	41,512	73,000
2	Date of construction [completion]	1976	1981	1965
3	Location	Central	Central	Not central
4	Space Allocation	-----	-----	-----
	For stacking	25%	47%	42%
	For reading [General]	20%	12%	32%
	For staff [Except for the librarian/Dy. librarian]	-----	-----	-----
	For special reading [cubicles]	-----	-----	1082 sq. ft. [12 cubicles]
	For non-print materials [sq. ft.]	1230 A/V room [Present store room]	-----	352
	For extension work/activities [sq. ft.]	1410 [Conference hall] [Present DLiSc staff room]	-----	692 [Seminar hall]
	Spatial relationship of different sections	Not related	Not related	Related
	Separation of administration/reading areas	Separated	Separated	Separated
	Lounge facility[sq. ft.]	1060 [present library office]	-----	2113
	Provision of inner open yard [sq. ft.]	-----	-----	14768
	Staircase space [sq. ft.]	2745	1194	1962
	Cloak room facility [sq. ft.]	1311	603	1176
	Drinking water facility	Provided	Provided	Provided
	Space allocated for librarian [sq. ft.]	200	100	120
	Seating arrangement	Not ISI	Not ISI	Partially ISI

Table 2: Allocation of Space for Reading and Stacking

Purpose	BUL	KUL	MUL
Reading	20% [12%]	12% [16%]	32% [21%]
Stacking	25% [17%]	47% [43%]	42% [41%]

(Figures in parenthesis show utilised space)

Relaxation facility is a necessity not a luxury, excepting in MUL no other library plan makes a provision for lounge facility. Except in MUL plan, no provision has been made in other library plans for extension activities like seminar, exhibition, though ISI prescribes such activities as a requirement of any university library.

In addition, considerable space wastage is seen in the form of courtyards, staircases and corridors in case of BUL plan and in the form of lobbies and 'light wells' in case of KUL plan. Certain unnecessary provisions have been made, though they have not been listed in ISI specification as "required" like canteen wing in BUL, Department of Library and Information Science in MUL plan.

(b)Utilisation aspects

There is a difference between the purpose of allocation and its utilisation in BUL, KUL and MUL buildings and the changes made are arbitrary.

Table 3: Allocation of space and its utilisation

Libraries		Purpose of allocation	Presently used as
BUL	1.	Browsing room	Periodicals section
	2.	Exhibition lounge	Browsing room
	3.	Stenographers room	Computer lab
	4.	Library office	Store room
	5.	Staff lounge	Library office
	6.	A/V room	Newspaper store room
	7.	Conference hall	Dept. of Library and Information Science
KUL	1.	Browsing area	Undepository centre
	2.	Waiting hall	Stenographers room
	3.	Property counter	Xerox room
	4.	Deputy librarian's room	Binding section
MUL	1.	Non-book materials room	Deputy librarian's room
	2.	Lounge on first floor	Exhibition hall

While allotting space for staff members (librarians and deputy librarians) they have not followed ISI standard of space requirement. On average they have 200 sq. ft. in BUL, 100 sq. ft. in KUL and 120 sq. ft. in MUL.

Lot of space has been wasted in the form of fairly large entrance hall (4500 sq. ft.) and canteen wing (both floors 5553 sq. ft.) of BUL and the first floor lounge (1383 st. ft.) of MUL building.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above information it may be said that there is strong need to plan our university library buildings as per accepted norms duly consulting the experts in this regard. While allocating space for different functional units accepted norms or standards need to be followed to avoid wastage of space.

Wastage of valuable space is a perennial burden on the library authorities in two ways. First, a lot of money and materials, are spent for the construction of such usable space is a capital wastage; and secondly the constructed space need to be maintained continuously without tangible results is but a recurring wastage.

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