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**A COLLECTION EVALUATION
IN THE
OPEN UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY**

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Abstract

The principal task of the research done was to evaluate the library of the Open University of Sri Lanka - a library of its sort in a 3rd world context - using adaptations of methods and concepts in library literature. The data used was gathered from responses to a questionnaire and from circulation records. A question that recurred during the course of this work was whether in a climate with resources nowhere near adequate for satisfying norms prevalent in the West, is it yet possible to have a directed collection that fulfils the goals of learning and research? Another question examined in our case is whether circulation data can, upon analysis, tell enough about the manner in which the collection is used, and its shortcomings, to inform a rational collection policy.

It was found that circulation data tells us most of what is needed to guide selection policy, and indeed to formulate one. Taking satisfaction levels coming from the User Survey to determine the extent to which the expectations of the users are satisfied, two factors (UF and P) derived from the circulation data were identified that adequately account for satisfaction levels. In turn a good indication is obtained of how spending priorities should be reoriented for acquisitions. Circulation data also tells us in which areas resources are being mis-spent in acquiring too many books which are unused.

Considering that this is an institution that is yet developing and is yet to reach a stable state, under utilisation of the Library is not unexpected. During this period a collection policy that is more value-based is advocated, anticipating a time when there would be more active use of the library for learning and research. Then, switch to a more demand based policy. Again a structure that gives the Librarian greater autonomy while demanding more accountability, and recognising the Library staff as playing a distinctive professional role, will be beneficial for the University as a whole. Accountability also implies regular evaluation. Evaluation of the performance of the University in fulfilling its tasks of excellence in teaching and research.