

Lib sc. 2: 1965; PAPER Q.

**Evolution of Reference and Documentation Service.**

(Teaching in library science. 3).

S R RANGANATHAN

Reported by

M A GOPINATH, *Documentation Research and Training Centre, Bangalore 3.*

This is a report of five lessons in DRTC, extending over 7 hours, given by Dr Ranganathan, during June 1964. Demonstrates the importance of making teaching library-centred and enthusing the students to discover for themselves instead of telling the final result. Examines the confusion in the idea plane arising out of the two-worded term of art 'Reference Service'. With reference to a century long time-grid traces the evolution of reference service from 1850 to the current period showing its intensification into 'Documentation Service' as it is now called.

ABBREVIATIONS USED

P .. .. = All the Participants.

P1, P2 .. .. P8 = Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 8.

T .. .. = Teacher.

**0 Introduction**

**01 HARMONIOUS INTEGRATION**

T.—What is meant by Reference Service?

P2.—Helping the reader to have his reference.

P3.—Serving the reader at the time of his information needs.

P4.—Giving information to readers as and when they ask for it.

P5.—Guiding the reader in getting his information.

P6.—Personal service to reader in the library.

T.—The definition of P6 seems to be near the point. Here I want to tell you an incident. I have many Marathi old students. They are all very enthusiastic. They have translated some of my books. They have formulated a standard terminology for library science in Marathi. In doing so, they happened to translate the two-worded term-of-art 'Reference Service'. They took the literal meaning of the two component words 'Reference' and 'Service'. They translated them into '*Sandarbha*' and '*Seva*'. Thus, the term-of-art 'Reference Service' was translated into '*Sandarbha Seva*' (= Exigency service).

You all know what a misleading term it is. When I came across this term, I was rudely shocked. I told my Marathi friends that their translation was wrong. They did not translate the idea denoted by the term-of-art 'Reference Service'. They asked me to suggest an appropriate term. After much thought I suggested the term '*Anulaya Seva*'. Do any of you know what '*Anulaya Seva*' signifies?

P's.—(Silence for a few minutes).

T.—Take the term '*Laya*'. What does it mean?

P5.—'*Laya*' means 'destruction' in Sanskrit.

P3.—'*Laya*' also means 'Rhythm' in 'Sanskrit'.

T.—We come near our meaning if we take '*Laya*' to mean 'Rhythm'. Now, What is Rhythm?

P5.—(From the *Concise oxford dictionary*, Ed 4 (1959)) Rhythm means metrical movement determined by various relations of syllables.

P3.—(From the Dictionary). In musical composition 'Rhythm' concerns periodical accent and duration of notes.

P6.—(From the Dictionary). In Physics, rhythm means movement with regular succession of strong and weak elements.

P4.—(From the Dictionary). Rhythm also means 'Harmonious correlation of parts'.

T.—'Rhythm' has so many meanings in different contexts. Here we have to pick out what is appropriate to our context.

It requires experience to do so. The meaning of Rhythm, given by P4, suits our context. We shall take Rhythm as the harmonious correlation of parts. Each part integrates with all the others. And this produces Rhythm. Here '*Laya*' means 'Integration' — 'Becoming-at-one'. It means 'Getting merged'.

## 01A ANNOTATION 1

In the verbal plane there are many homonyms. To choose the meaning appropriate to the context requires a considerable experience. If the teacher himself chooses the appropriate meaning and dictates it to the student it does not educate the student in the art of choosing the appropriate meaning. On the other hand the student will benefit, if and only if, he is exposed to all the possible meanings and is helped to eliminate the wrong ones and to arrive at the right one. How often such an experience should be given to a student is a matter of judgement. It is less harmful to err in excess rather than in deficit.

## 011 TERM-OF-ART

T.—Next comes '*Anulaya*'. What does the epithet '*Anu*' mean?

P4.—We say '*Anusarana*' which means to follow up.

P5.—'*Anulayi*' means the follower.

T.—'*Anulaya*' actually means 'Harmonious integration'. '*Seva*' means 'service'. Thus '*Anulaya seva*' means 'Service leading to harmonious integration'. This is a happy word. Is it not? The two-worded term-of-art 'Reference Service' really connotes 'Service leading to a harmonious integration of the reader and the book'. It is wrong to get its meaning by mechanically combining together the meanings of the component terms 'Reference' and 'Service'.

## 011A ANNOTATION 2

The concept of 'term-of-art' is an important one. The students should be given many opportunities to become familiar with this concept.

## 02 ORIGIN OF THE TERM

Can any one of you tell me how this term-of-art 'Reference Service' came into vogue?

P3.—Probably from the term-of-art 'Reference book'.

T.—What is a 'Reference Book'?

P4.—A book which is used for reference.

P5.—A book giving specific information.

P3.—A fact-book.

P4.—A book not meant for continuous reading—such as a Dictionary, Encyclopaedia, and Directory.

T.—That is right. A reference book is one which is referred to or looked up for a specific piece of information—only for a short while. It is a book not normally read continuously. This term-of-art 'Reference Work' first appeared on the title of a book written by Wyers in 1930 (Wyer (James I). Reference work. 1930). From this, the term-of-art 'Reference Service' came into vogue.

#### Q3 ALTERNATIVE TERMS

T.—Can any one of you tell me what are the other terms in English used to denote the idea 'Reference Service'?

P4.—Information service.

P5.—Reader's Advisory Service.

T.—Information service, perhaps, connotes — at least meant for a long time — Ready Reference Service — that is reference service done in a few minutes. Reader's Advisory Service is a high-sounding term. It is offensive. It is offensive because it carries with it an air of superiority on the part of the librarian. Can you check up who actually coined this term?

P5.—(From Landau's *Encyclopaedia of Librarianship* Ed 2, (1961). The term "Reader's Advisory Service" and "Reader's Advise" probably originated in USA by the work of Miss Jennie M Flexner of New York Public Library in early 1930's. (Flexner (J M) and Edge (S A). Reader's Advisory Service. 1934).

T.—Today the term is almost vanishing. The term offends the dignity of the reader and it cannot last long. On the other

hand term-of-art 'Reference Service' is free from such offence and it should be brought into vogue.

#### 03A ANNOTATION

If the only object of formal education was to fill the memory of the students, the teacher himself could have stated or dictated the name of the source. But in reality the purpose of formal education is to develop in the students capacity for self-education with the aid of sources. This alone will fit him for the journey of life. It is to secure this primary purpose of education that education has to be library-centred — not merely for students of library science but also for students in any subject whatever.

#### 04 TIME-GRID

We shall now go into the genesis of the service connoted by the term of art 'Reference Service'. In tracing out the important stages in the evolution of Reference Service, it will be convenient to restrict ourselves to the evolution in a particular country. What country shall we choose?

P2.—India.

P3.—UK.

T.—Why do you prefer UK to India?

P3.—Because, in India, reference service is beginning only recently. In UK it began earlier. Further we have more of recorded library history about UK than about India.

T.—I agree. UK is used only as a 'Guniea pig'. The general trend of evolution is likely to be the same in most of the countries. Now that we have settled about the country, what year shall we take as the first epoch for our purpose?

P8.—1850 AD.

T.—Why?

P7.—The First Library Act was passed in that year.

T.—This is good. Can you continue to look at the time factor from the library angle? What is the next important year?

P's.—(Silence for a few minutes).

T.—A convenient year is the year when the Library Association was formed and an eventful step was taken by Melvil Dewey by designing a scheme of library classification.

P2.—1876.

T.—I agree. What is the next eventful year — a year which shocked the whole world, though not particularly significant from the library point of view?

P6.—The beginning of World War I — 1914.

T.—We have thus got two intervals of time 1850—1875 and 1876—1914. You know that 25 years is taken as a period for one generation. The interval 1876—1900 would have fitted with the idea of a generation. But we changed 1900 to 1914 as the end year of the second period on account of the world crisis of 1914. Let us recapture the generation idea and use the end of the third generation after 1850, in fixing the next interval. What then will be the next interval?

P4.—1915-1925.

T.—On the basis of the analogy of what we have already done what will determine the end year of the Fourth interval of time?

P1.—World War II. The interval of time will be 1926-1939.

T.—The generation unit has been disturbed due to the reality of the world. Let us recapture the generation idea, as before, in fixing the end period of the Fifth interval.

P3.—1940-1950.

T.—We have next to take 1950 — 1975 as the probable sixth interval of time.

Please write on the Black-board the time-grid arrived at for our purpose. While doing so indicate by an arrow that our consideration of the first interval will also cover the entire past before 1850.

P7.—(Goes up to black-board and writes).

S N of the period	Interval in inclusive years	Name of the period
1	(1850-1875)	Aristocracy of learning
2	(1876-1914)	Universal education
3	(1915-1925)	Adult education
4	(1926-1939)	Spread of democracy
5	(1940-1950)	United Nations
6	(1950-1975)	Current

### 05 CONTROLLING FACTORS

T.—Our object is to trace the evolution of reference and documentation service. This is certainly a service to humanity. What do we serve to humanity?

P1.—Books.

P2.—Information.

P3.—Knowledge.

P4.—Information and knowledge packed in a book.

T.—Is it necessarily the whole book?

P3.—It may even be an article or a part of a book.

T.—What is the generic term we have agreed to use to denote either?

P2.—Document.

T.—By what terms do we distinguish between the two kinds of documents?

P2.—Macro document and micro document.

T.—The two factors determining the stages of evolution of reference and documentation service are then:

1 Reading public — that is the extent of literacy and of scholarship; and

2 Documents — that is the number of books or macro documents and the number of articles or micro documents produced in a year.

## 06 PARAMETERS

T.—The two main parameters in the study of evolution of reference and documentation service can then be taken as Literacy and Document. Each of the above parameters in reality is a bundle of more than one. Let us break it into the ultimate parameters. We shall then have the following:

- 1 Reader served:
  - 11 Number of ordinary literates or generalist readers;
  - 12 Number of scholars or specialist readers;
- 2 Document served;
  - 21 Number of scholarly books suited to specialist readers;
  - 22 Number of ordinary books suited to the average or generalist reader; and
  - 23 Number of micro documents.

## 07 METHODOLOGY

T.—Our method of tracing the evolution of reference service will be to examine the value of these parameters in the successive periods and to determine whether the combination of the incidence of these values would call for reference service or not, and if it does its scope.

(*Note.*—The table given in Sec 04 is the final one reached at the end of the discussion. In the class itself each item in the table was written in the black-board as and when it was decided upon.)

## 1 Period 1 — (1850–1875): Aristocracy of Scholarship

## 11 PARAMETER 1: READER

T.—Can you mention an important legislation in UK during this period, which is relevant to the use of libraries by the public?

P's.—(Silence for a few minutes).

T.—What is the essential qualification which a person should have to be able to use a library and read the books in it?

P5.—Literacy.



T.—What is the means of acquiring literacy?

P6.—Education.

T.—Is it education at all levels? Does it include, for example, education at the university level or at the DRTC level?

P7.—Elementary education.

P8.—Now, I know. The important relevant legislation of the period is the First Elementary Education Act.

T.—Find out from the reference books the year of that Act.

P3.—(From the *Encyclopaedia britannica*) 1870.

T.—Let us examine the value of the various parameters during that period. To give accurate figures a knowledge of the statistics of that period is necessary. I hope you will pursue it sometime later. For the time being, we can work on a fairly reliable conjecture. Start with your conjecture about each of the parameters.

#### 111 GENERALIST READER

P5.—Literacy might have been about 10 per cent.

T.—What do you expect about the number of generalist readers during that period?

P6.—Not many.

#### 112 SPECIALIST READER OR SCHOLAR

T.—What about the number of scholars — that is specialist readers?

P4.—Extremely few.

T.—There is another factor to be reckoned with select scholars of that period using the libraries would have been mostly self-helpers.

#### 12 DOCUMENT

T.—Let us pass on to the next parameter—the documents.

Let us first make a conjecture about the average number of books published annually during that period. It is difficult for

you to conjecture. I take it to be about 5,000 a year. You can get at the actual figure by looking up the volumes of the *English catalogue* of that period.

P5.—Would there have been so many books published during that period?

T.—So many will figure in the statistics. But books of good standard and lasting value might have been only less than 1,000. Further, there would not have been many books on the diverse arts and crafts needed by the common man. The worthwhile books would have been largely scholarly books in the fundamental disciplines.

The number of worthwhile books published in the earlier years would have been even smaller. Remember that 50% of the books get outmoded in 5 years; another 30% in 15 years; and the remaining 20% in 25 years. Taking all this information into consideration, calculate the maximum number of worthwhile books that would not have gone out of date in 1875. P3, begin with the books published between 1870—1875.

P3.—5,000 worthwhile books would have been published in that period. Of these 2,500 would have gone out of date.

P5.—10,000 worthwhile books would have been published between 1860—1870.

P7.—No. I would make it 8,000, because the annual output would have been slightly less in that period. Of these, 80% would have gone out of date by 1875. That is, only 1,600 books would not have gone out of date.

P6.—Similarly during the period 1850—1860 about 6,000 worthwhile books might have been published. Only about 500 of these books might not have gone out of date.

T.—What would have been the cumulative total of the live worthwhile books in 1875?

P5.—About 4,600 books. In round figures 5,000.

T.—At the end of the first period—the period of Aristocracy of Scholarship—there would have been only about 5,000

live worthwhile books. The readers would have been largely self-helping scholars. What is the inference about the need for Reference Service?

P.—No need for Reference Service.

## 2 Period 2 — (1876–1914): Universal Education

T.—As you did in the case of Period 1, you should work out the values of the parameters and infer the chance for the emergence of Reference Service during the Period 2.

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Finding of the class—The number of scholars would have increased. But most of them would have been self-helpers. The generalist reader would have increased considerably. The number of live worthwhile books in a library collection might have gone up to 20,000. More books of a recreative nature would have been available. Books on arts and crafts would have been few. Therefore, the generalist readers would have been seeking more of recreative books than of informative books. Need for Reference Service would not have arisen.

T.—You are nearly right. But ready reference books had begun to appear in these periods. I would ask you to scan through the ready reference books listed in my *Bibliography of bibliographies and reference books* (1941) and estimate the number of reference books originated during this period. Make also a subject analysis of them. This work was once done by your predecessors and presented in a symposium to the Indian Library Conference (1942) (Bombay). There would have been some need for the librarians to promote their use by readers. But this need would not have been sufficient to set apart a section of the library staff solely for Reference Service.

P4.—Will there not have been need to do Reference Service at least in the choice of recreative books?

T.—No doubt the chief new function of the public library in period 2 was to harness the leisure of the common man. It

would have been helpful if Reference Service had developed in the selection of recreative materials. But as a matter of fact, it did not emerge. Reason might have been partly the fact that only the upper quartiles in the intellectual scale used the public library system. They could help themselves in the choice of their creative books suited to themselves. There was no drive on the part of the library profession to make all — particularly, the lower quartiles — accept library service.

### 3 Period 3 — (1915–1925): Adult Education

T.—All matters including library service were greatly affected by a political event of that period. What was it?

P2.—World War I of 1914 — 1918.

T.—The post of a new Secretary of State was created during this period. Can you find out the jurisdiction of that Secretary of State. Find out also the year in which the post was created and the chief legislation that followed it.

P2.—(From the *Encyclopaedia britannica*) Secretary of State for Education. The *Encyclopaedia* reads “In 1916, H A L Fisher became Minister of education”.

P1.—In 1918, an Education Act was passed providing for Continuation Schools for the education of young persons from the ages of 14 to 18 years.

T.—The World War I was essentially a trench war. An army was scattered along trenches many miles long. Communication had to be through documents. But it was found that many soldiers could not read them though they had gone through compulsory education costing millions of pounds through years. This disclosed a colossal wastage of National Funds. “How could this relapse to illiteracy can be prevented? That was the question. The relapse to illiteracy can be prevented only by the exercise of literacy. Do you now see the new function to be taken up by the Public Library System?

P8.—Librarians should persuade people to come to the library and read.

T.—By reading library books, no doubt a literate will keep up his literacy. There is also an important educational by-product. What is it?

P4.—Further education.

T.—It is in this function of adult education — self education and adults — that the Public Library System took on itself during Period 3. Do you expect Reference Service to have emerged in this context?

P7.—Yes. The librarian should select suitable books for each adult and persuade him through satisfying personal service to come to the library frequently.

T.—This was the beginning of Reference Service. It was largely to the generalist reader. But the specialist reader still continued to be a self-helper.

Let us look at the second parameter — documents. Here you should examine the annual volume of the *English catalogue* for the period and verify the increasing number of books on diverse arts and crafts. The adult literate with no more than elementary education had to be helped in the selection of the right reading material to suit his vocational needs. Reference Service to the generalist reader began this way. As an aid to Reference Service, select bibliographies on diverse arts and crafts were necessary. Their preparation was a part of Reference Service. Very soon it was found economical to have such bibliographies prepared and published by a national organisation. The National Book Council came into being for this purpose. Find out when it was established and any other information on it from a suitable Reference Book.

P7.—(From the *Encyclopaedia of librarianship*). The National Book Council was established in 1924. Its name was changed to National Book League in 1944.

T.—The emergence of Reference Service to the generalist reader during Period 3 led the same period to the establishment of a national centre to prepare bibliographies as tools for Reference Service. This fact is worth noting. You will find a paralleled for it in Period 6 (*see* Sec 63).

#### 4 Period 4 — (1926-1939): Spread of Democracy

T.—The period 1926 — 1939 was characterised by the spread of democracies in several countries of the West. In a democracy, Sovereignty is distributed over each citizen, though he delegates it periodically to a Government formed of elected representatives. Each citizen has a twofold responsibility in a democracy. He has to vote for a party with an acceptable policy in respect of every sphere of state of action and social need. Collectively the citizens have to be watchdogs between two elections to ensure that the government is proceeding along right lines. This requires knowledge on the part of every citizen — knowledge of current facts and knowledge of current ideas. Therefore, every citizen should be helped to get these. The agency to serve these should be an impartial one. It cannot be one of the political parties. The Public Library System is recognised to be the agency pre-eminently fitted for this purpose. In the discharge of this work the library should do aggressive Reference Service to every citizen, bringing to his notice all expressed and embodied facts and ideas of all political and economic, and sociological shades, in equal measure. For, ignorance and democracy would be a dangerous mixture. As a result, Reference Service to the generalist reader got itself established during Period 4 — the period of the Spread of Democracy. But it had not become efficient enough in all the countries. World War II broke out in 1939. It was partly due to the insufficiency of Reference Service. Later, in 1955-56, when the Suez Canal trouble began, the averting of a war was at least partly due to the impartial and fuller Reference Service rendered by the Public Library System. I saw this is being done. It was almost guessed by some librarians that the fact of the citizens knowing the correct data from the library resources would go a long way in averting the war, though no librarian suggested this to readers by himself. This is out of respect due to the Canon of Reticence to be observed by the library profession.

(Note.—In the succeeding sections verbatim report is avoided in order to save space. The information directed to be gathered by the student is not explicitly indicated. Only the general conclusions are given. But it will not be difficult to expand it and to throw it in the form of verbatim report.)

**5 Period 5 — (1940–1950): United Nations**

T.—This period was characterised by an international crisis in the political world—World War II. The war awakened the masses in several countries. People became aware of their responsibilities. New forms of governments were formed in many countries. The war also brought in a dangerous weapon — atom bomb — released by the invention of nuclear energy. The two bombs exploded in Japan in Hiroshima and Nagasaki clearly showed the harmful effects of this weapon. So a new kind of social force came into being by the co-operation of many top leaders of the world. To avert the dangers of a nuclear war a new organization was found. It is called United Nations. The main function of this organisation is to maintain the peace and security of the world and avert war. A charter was drawn by the principal members of the United Nations. Many countries like India became independent and formed their own governments with a democratic set-up. Later they too became members of the United Nations and signed the charter. The war also reduced the natural resources in many countries. There was also an imbalance in wealth among countries of the world. Sportively, the industrially advanced countries came forward to help the other less fortunate countries. Thus amity among nations and promotion of peace was the main aim of this period. Many documents were exchanged between one country with another. Contact Libraries — the libraries maintained by a country in a foreign country in order to promote and cultivate cultural contacts and sympathetic correct cultural understanding among the people of all the countries of the world — came into vogue and formed a lively media of communication in a foreign country. This period was thus full of exchange of scholars, exchange of ideas, and exchange of industrial know-how and progress. Reference service in this period became more and more intensive and tended towards specialist users. Many new species of documents such as articles in periodicals, pamphlets, monographs etc came to prominence. The applied research instead of fundamental research came into prominence. The number of periodicals began to grow. Consequently the number of articles in a periodical

—micro documents—also began to increase. By the end of the United Nations period it had grown to such an extent that intensive Reference Service to specialist readers became a necessity in many of the countries of the world.

#### 6 Period 6—(1950–1975): Current Period

Since 1950 the population pressure of the world is increasing enormously. This has made the natural and near natural commodities inadequate to maintain the population—almost to the point of their exhaustion. Hunger and disease are threatening to become imminent. The society has to meet this challenge. So the scientists are made to engage themselves in intensive research to produce artificial commodities—such as food, clothing, shelter, and transport from out of the directly non-consumable raw materials. This stimulates scientific research. The concept of ‘Productivity’ and of ‘conservation of research potential’ have emerged.

(*Note.*—The students worked out the necessary statistical data about population and economic products.)

#### 61 PARAMETER 1: READER

A world-wide team-research-in-relay has become a necessity. This team has to draw specialists, heavily even from the second quartile of intellectual scale. A majority of them are not self-helpers. Thus, the change in the first parameter—reader—has made intensive reference service as an absolute social necessity.

(*Note.*—The students worked out the necessary statistical data showing increase in research workers in India, UK and USA since World War II.)

#### 62 PARAMETER 2: DOCUMENT

This was characterised by the downpour of many macro as well as micro documents of research value. The very world-wide team-research-in-relay itself contributed to this. It is estimated that about 100 micro documents appear in print each day. The rate of increase of documents is beyond the capacity of self-help on the part of a specialist. Even if the few capable self-helpers relay only on their self-help more than half their time



will have to be spent on literature search. To this extent productivity in research will go down. Thus for a specialist to say that he does not want any documentation service amounts to an anti-social attitude. Thus the change in second parameter—documents has made the aggressive, intensive reference service to specialist readers a distinctive feature of the current period.

(*Note.*—The students worked out the necessary statistical data on the annual increase and rate of increase in documents in diverse subject fields.)

### 63 NATIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHICAL AND DOCUMENTATION CENTRES

Many countries have begun to publish national bibliographies on weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual bases. So also they have begun to establish national documentation centres. These two institutions reduce to a considerable extent the load on the day-to-day work of reference and documentation service in local service libraries. This benefit will be at its best if the bibliography and the documentation list are of a classified variety based on a scheme such as the Colon Classification with adequate capacity for depth classification.

### 7 Sum-up

Thus there was no chance for reference service to emerge during the nineteenth century, as the live books in that period was small in number and other readers being mostly self-helping scholars. During first half of the twentieth century the Literacy tended to become universal. Both to prevent relapse to Illiteracy and to put to literacy to social use, generalist readers had to be helped in the choice of their books. The annual increase in book production and production of books in diverse subjects including arts and crafts also made reference service necessity. In the present half of the twentieth century a social necessity has begun to launch a world-wide-team-research-in-relay. This has created a vast mass of specialists who are not self-helpers. These have to be fed with nascent micro-thought. Micro documents are increasing by leaps and bounds. Therefore, reference service has to be intensified with emphasis on specialist readers and on

nascent micro documents. This new form of reference service is now called 'Documentation Service'. This is in addition to a widespread practice of reference service in the older form—service of macro document to generalist readers.

(*Note.*—In this evolution students were asked to trace out the part played by each of the Five Laws of Library Science.)

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### 1 DRTC Seminar (3) Bangalore, 19 to 23 December 1965

Subjects: 1 Design of depth schedules for classification of specific subjects.  
2 Standard for presentation of schedules of classification. 3 Standard for subject heading.

#### *Time Table*

1 August 1965 .. Complete papers to reach DRTC.  
1 November 1965 .. Despatch of the volume of papers to the participants.

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### 2 Sarada Ranganathan Endowment Lectures in Library Science

at DRTC from 18 to 23 December 1965

by B I PALMER

*Educational Officer*

*British Library Association*

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### 3 Indian Standards Convention (9)

Library Housing .. Forenoon 18 December 1965.  
Documentation .. Afternoon 18 December 1965.