

BOOK REVIEW

Users' Approach to Information in Libraries, by G Devarajan, New Delhi: Ess Ess Publications, 1989 xi, 89p. Rs. 100/- (Reviewed by Dr. Sewa Singh).

Information is considered to be a powerful resource and has become an important component in national development. Scholars, scientists, technologists, politicians, executives, managers, teachers, students, and public men all rub their shoulders with each other to gain current and adequate information so that they could excel in their respective areas of interest. But on the other hand, the amount of information has become enormous as a result of what is called 'information explosion'. In view of the increase in the number of users and consequently their diverse information needs, the problem of information analysis, processing, acquisition and dissemination are quite complex for the librarians and information scientists. Unless the user's information requirements are studied, it is difficult not only to assess the precise information needs but also to acquire, consolidate and market the information.

In the book under review are included four user studies aimed at four different user strata, viz., school students, scientists, humanities scholars, and development scientists. An attempt has been made to study the information needs, use pattern of information and behaviour of these four user groups.

The author has collected data through structured questionnaires, prepared separately for all the four categories of users. The first questionnaire consisting of 20 specific questions (in addition to 13 general) was circulated in senior secondary schools in Trivandrum, Kerala to study the reading interests of students. The 150 questionnaires (for this group of users) were analysed on the basis of different variables correlated with the socio-economic background of the respondents.

For the scientists, both the questionnaire and the interview methods were followed. The questionnaire regarding the user needs and use pattern was distributed to 75 scientists in the disciplines of physics, chemistry, biochemistry, botany, and zoology in the University of Kerala, Trivandrum. Out of these, 57 questionnaires were received back and analysed.

For the information needs and use pattern of literature by the scholars in humanities, the data was collected on similar basis. In all, 46 scholars in the field of literature, linguistics, and philosophy in the University of Kerala, Trivandrum responded to the survey on the basis of which the analysis is reported.

The fourth use study is confined to the reading interests and use habits of the development scientists working in the Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum. The data were collected through a questionnaire distributed among 57 scientists, while only 31 responded. Some of them were interviewed also. The collected data were analysed on the basis of such variables as subjects, types of documents, popular journals, newspapers, etc.

The author gives the findings and possible suggestions in each chapter separately for each group. It is clear from these findings that the library resources are found to be inadequate by the scientists, development scientists, humanities scholars and the school students. The libraries should, therefore, make need-based acquisitions of the documentary sources and provision of information services including the user education programme.

Although all the four user studies are restricted geographically to Trivandrum only, the findings reported in this book are eye opener to the library profession at large. Further, the suggestions offered are quite valuable both for the librarians and the users. If some more similar studies are undertaken in other parts of the country, the findings are not expected to differ much.

The book under review, in addition to five chapters, also contains four appendices displaying the questionnaires prepared for conducting the studies and a helpful bibliography.

Though small in size, the book is well brought out by means of the DTP. There are some typographical errors. The quality of paper and binding is also good for which the publisher deserves appreciation. However, one-page Index is quite brief and inadequate.

Rural Development - An Annotated Bibliography of ILO Publications and Documents, (1983-90). Geneva, International Labour Office, 1990 (Reviewed by Mrs. J. K. Ahluwalia)

About 70% of population in the developing countries live and work in rural areas. The rural sector remains the backbone of economy in terms of its contribution to employment and people's livelihood in these countries, although the global macro development implies a progressive decline in the importance of the rural sector and its contribution towards the employment and livelihood for a majority of the population in many developing countries.

The incidence of rural poverty has remained virtually unchanged over the past two decades. Between 30 and 40% of the rural population live on incomes which are below the bare minimum required that to ensure a minimum calorie intake. Poverty results from underemployment and low returns to labour. Demand for the low export prices in the developing countries, the "debt crisis", and the realignment of exchange rates and prices lead to lowering of the returns to labour. The rural population also lack access to education, health facilities and other social services.

These complex problems arising out of the present situation, require appropriate solutions. Innovative approaches are required to propose and implement necessary programmes, policies and methods that will not only generate economic growth but also make a fair distribution of its benefits. It is essential that the rural sector is given an increased prominence in macro development policies.

Considering all these factors, the bibliography running into 338 pages and giving the biblio-

graphic references with abstracts to 757 documents issued on rural development trends, policies, strategies and allied fields by the ILO during 1983-90 is compiled by ILO in the series "International Labour Bibliography."

The bibliography consists of seven sections and three indexes, i.e. author, corporate author and subject. The first section covers the books that are published by the ILO itself. The second includes books of the ILO that are published by commercial publishers. The third section focuses on research and working papers prepared for the various technical programmes of the ILO. The conference papers and reports are included in section four. The articles published in ILO and other journals are covered in the fifth section, while reports of the technical co-operation projects are included in section six. Section seven groups other miscellaneous publications of the ILO.

The bibliography is a very convenient and useful tool for disseminating information on a wide range of topics concerning rural under employment, poverty, income distribution, labour markets, agrarian reforms, employment of rural women, etc.

It gives bibliographic description of the ILO publications reporting the programmes, policies and strategies to promote rural development and employment opportunities and alleviate rural poverty. Each entry in the bibliography comprises the name of the authority, title, publisher/citation of the periodical/name of the conference, programme, the language/s in which the document is available, the descriptors identifying the contents of the document and the references, tables, etc. appended with the document.

