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Extended abstract

Loss of books due to non-returns : a case study in an academic library

Loss of books in a library takes place due to various reasons . Theft, vandalism or destruction or mutilation and non-returns are more prominent reasons for loss of books. It is a major problem faced by librarians especially when rare and valuable books are lost from the collection. In an academic library valuable textbooks contributes a lot. This study investigates only the books lost due to non-returns since non returns contribute a significant amount for lost books. In an academic library setting this is very important as when textbooks are missing or lost it affects a lot to its reader community especially to undergraduates and academic staff members. The main objective of this study was to make an in depth analysis of lost books due to non –returns. To achieve this, study focused on several aspects that is identifying non returned books faculty/subject wise; recognizing user categories responsible for losing books; reasons for non-returns, find out the publication year of non-returns, evaluate the cost of lost books and finally to make suggestions to minimize the number of non-returns and way to fill the gap arisen in the collection due to those lost books. Books lost due to non-returns for the year 2013 and 2014 were taken in to this study. Forms filled by users to report loss of books and Reported Books Lost (RBL) Register were used as data collection instruments. Also a very short questionnaire was attached to the lost book forms. There were 106 lost books forms in 2013 and 192 forms in 2014 totaled to 298 books. Data were tabulated in two ways ; User data and Book data. User category(undergraduates, post graduates, academic staff members and non-academic staff members). Gender, Subject category ,Year of publication, country of publication were used as variables.

According to the analysis it was found that a total of 198 users have reported that they have lost books ; 85 in 2013 and 113 in 2014. Among them there were 14% Academics, 66% undergraduates, 18% postgraduates and 6% non – academics who have forwarded loss book forms. Among them 61% were males and 39% were females. Total number of lost books due to non-returns was 298 in which 106 in 2013 and 192 in 2014. Among those lost books 68% were local publications while 32% were foreign publications.29 books were translations that are 9.8% of the total books lost. 29.5% were fictions. Most of the reported lost books belong to Arts subjects (70.5%), followed by Science subjects (12.8%) , Management Sciences (10,7%) and Medicine (6.0%). Subjects were classified using Dewey Decimal Classification. When consider the publication year most books (42%) were published during 1996-2005 and before 1965 there were only 6%. There were 14% of books published after 2006. Some users have provided a replacement copy for the lost book . There were 33 replacements but other 265 have paid the required cost. The total income due to paid books was around Rs. 150,000.00 in 2013 and Rs. 568,000.00 in 2014. Most users (68%) have indicated that they have misplaced the books (boarding place, reading halls, lecture halls etc.) and 27% have stated they have given it a friend/student while others indicated that they don't know what has happened.According to the results , it seems that most of the undergraduates are responsible for non –returns and male users are prominent in not returning books. Non academics do not include in to non-returns significantly. Also it was found that majority of the books among non-returns are subject based as there were only 29.5% of fictions. According to subject wise analysis it seems that most were belong into Social Sciences and Humanities and then Science, Management and Medicine. But it is difficult to say users in such faculties do lost books as users in Faculty of Medicine also had lost some social sciences books. Most of the publications lost were published after 1996 which gives a slight indication that readers tend to read recent publications not very old publications.

It seems that a considerable amount of books were reported as lost and mainly it is due to irresponsibility of users in protecting the books they borrowed. More attention has to be paid for undergraduates on returning of books. Most of the academic staff members have reported borrowed books as lost before releasing provident funds and postgraduates for obtaining no claim certificate to acquire degree certificate or before convocation. This study recommends that to minimize book loss due to non –returns timely reminders should be sent to all categories of users because sometimes users forgotten to return the book they borrow. If the library sends

reminders repeatedly they will tend to return the book. Also it was observed that most of the users are willing to pay the cost though the library adds extra charges apart from the cost of the book. That means there is a gap in the collection as the same book will not be purchased again. So it will badly affects the collection and finally to user community. Therefore some precautions should be taken and policies should be implemented with faculty level discussions and collaborations to avoid non-returns and to fill the gap in the collection.

Key words : Academic Libraries; University Libraries; Book losses, Non returned books ; Users' misbehavior

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