

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TECHNICAL AND PUBLIC SERVICES IN LIBRARY

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The library process is divided into two main divisions, technical and public services. Although these functions are very basic in all libraries, the two divisions are not always prevailed in all kind of libraries. For large libraries, both technical and public services may function as they should. However, for many small libraries, functioning both will involve many problems, one of which is financial problem. Even worse, many small libraries throughout the world may not know about public services and, of course, they do not apply any public services concept into their daily services.

In addition to the division, in 1954 Tauber used to use the word 'reader's service' instead of the word 'public service.' Further, he mentioned that 'there is no standard pattern in the grouping of the various departments into functional units'.¹ Thus, the use of 'public services' is relatively recent in librarianship. Nevertheless, it is clear to us that the concept of providing good direct services to the users concerning their problems and questions has long existed.

As library is not only a place to read or borrow books, but also a place to get information - including library use, locating information to get rapid access, and so on, education process is also applied in the library, especially regarding the use of library. This function, which gets the librarians communicate with the users directly, is very important in helping the library users as well as knowing who is using what. Thus, the existence of public services in library is very significant.

This paper is an attempt to discuss the library process which involves the functions mentioned above.

1. Technical Services

As the word implied and some defined, the library technical services are technical functions in library process, that is the functions which involve more physical works than practical knowledge. This definition is, certainly, very general and does not bring us to clear-cut understanding what technical services are all about. However, there is more general definition cited by Sheila S. Intner and Josephine Riss Fang that "technical services usually are thought of as that set of activities performed behind the scenes, without direct contact with the library's public, by which library materials are acquired and organized for use."²

Tauber defined technical services as "services involving the operations and the techniques for acquiring, recording, and preserving materials."³ This definition seems too narrow compared to current technical services carried out in the library works. What Tauber defined is only part of all technical functions of library.

Sheila and Tauber tried to get clear understanding of technical services although what they defined were not quite similar to what is recently applied. Sheila's definition, for example, is not only too broad but also can lead to misunderstanding. Circulation, which deals with book loan and return, is still considered as both technical and public services by Tauber and most librarians. If we put circulation function into Sheila's definition, it would only be considered as part of public service because this function gets librarian contacted directly with the users. Vice versa, considering circulation a part of public services only is not necessarily true since it involves technical work in its practice. It is true, however, that most of technical service works are done behind people scenes.

Different to Sheila and Tauber, Michael Gorman gives a Crystal-clear description about technical services as well as its parts. He maintains that "the broad definition of technical services that informs this book is as follows: all the tasks carried on in a library that are concerned with the processing of library materials in order to make them accessible to the users of the library. Such process includes:

- ordering, claiming, and receipt of library materials
- cataloguing and classification
- serials control
- database and catalogue maintenance
- marking of processed materials
- shelving and retrieval
- circulation (charging and discharging)
- binding and preservation
- collection management
- budgeting and planning for these activities.⁴

The first function of technical services is called acquisition which is defined as 'the work that involves recording and maintaining files of information about materials ordered for the library'.⁵ The primary duty of acquisition department is to handle business matters of ordering and receiving the materials selected for inclusion in the collection. However, not all items added to the collection are the result of purchases; some are gifts or exchanges. Library acquisitions work covers the procedures used in buying or otherwise acquiring materials for the collection: books, serials, audiovisual materials, and other items. Acquiring office supplies and library equipment (typewriters, desks, book trucks, for example) is seldom part of the acquisition department's duties. Dealing with materials to be collected, it is also the acquisition department responsibility for selection process.

Aimed at organizing library materials so that someone can identify a desired item quickly and easily from thousands of titles in the collection,⁶ cataloguing and classification play a very important role in providing good service to the users. Not only for the user's sake are they carried out in the library but it also provides easy control for the librarians towards the holdings of their collections. This dual role of cataloguing and classification is well realized by librarians, especially who are dealing with this job directly. On the other hand, as they are done behind the users scene, they are barely realized by the users whatever their rapid access to the materials are because of the favor of these works. For some people, it may be ambiguous to say that both cataloguing and classification contribute rapid access to the users, but Gorman described very briefly about what are contained in a catalogue card so that it helps people to locate information they need. "A catalogue entry, irrespective of the form of the catalogue, comprises three parts:

- the name and/or title access point (heading) which allows the catalogue user to find the entry.
- the bibliographic description which describes a piece of library materials (book, serial, map, etc.).
- the location which enables the catalogue user to move from the catalogue to the desired object."⁷

The next function of technical services is serial control. It is worth mentioning that, there has been a definition derived from ALA Glossary stating that "serial is any publication issued in successive parts, appearing at intervals, usually regular ones, and, as a rule, intended to be continued indefinitely. The term includes periodicals, newspapers, annuals, numbered monographic series and the proceedings, transactions and memoirs of societies."⁸ The forces that influence the acquisition and control of serials include the nature of intellectual inquiry and knowledge dissemination; the vagaries of inflation, currency valuation, market place competition, and library budgets; and a host of technological factors facing all parties to the chain of knowledge/information

dissemination. Decisions to purchase serials lock libraries into large annual commitments of funds. This always becomes a dilemma in serial control.

The growth of technology has long affected library process, especially with the implementation of online catalogue. The brief description of a piece of material is no longer written manually on a card, but it is written on tape electronically. There has been an advantage by implementing this new method. Instead of having to write eight or seven cards in a set for the description of an item, librarians now have only to type the description on a single screen which, then, can be used by many users at the same time. Again, human errors which, more often than not, happen in typing as well as filing the card catalogue now can be reduced since some system are designed not to accept error and file automatically in order. This means that online catalogue can guarantee the accuracy and currency of the information described more than the manual one.

In order to control circulated library materials, there has been a need for marking and identifying the materials. Here comes the role of stamping, labeling, putting date-due slip, barcoding, and putting a spine label before they are ready for shelving.⁹ Some identifications have long been known and applied in the library, but some others are very recent. Barcoding, for example, is applied only after the implementation of computer in the library.

Shelving involves the work of organizing materials in order according to the call number and classification number regardless the size of the material. This part of library work is usually done by clerk or part-time students who work at the library. The workers, however, should have been informed of how to do shelving before bearing them with the responsibility. Although it is not a heavy duty to do shelving and needs no special skill, this work determines the accessibility and retrievability of material. If one is noticed by computer, for example, that material is in the library, he would not be able to retrieve the material if it were shelved in the wrong place (not in the appropriate order).

One of library works which can be considered as part of technical or public services or both, is circulation department. The circulation operation has four fundamental tasks: 1) charging out materials to patrons, 2) checking in returned materials, 3) returning materials to their proper places in the library, and 4) carrying out the housekeeping tasks necessary to keep the collection in good order.¹⁰ In spite of doing technical works, the librarians - sometimes part-time students - working in this department have direct contact with the users, or in other words their services are kind of public services.

With regard to the preservation of material, binding is one of the key components and vital to the upkeep of circulating and reference collections. According to the category of collection, binding method is vary (e.g., monograph, serials, and pamphlet). As there is no standard organization for binding operations in libraries¹¹, each library has its own procedure pertaining this function. For small libraries (e.g., academic and special libraries), binding department is organized by a single staff member to prepare and send materials to a local bindery. For large libraries, in the other hand, a more complex organization is necessary. Since this work requires a great amount of

money, it is a library budget plan that determines whether a damaged material needs to be bound with a leather cover for long-lasting use, or not at all.

Generally speaking, collection management, as used today, relates to the library environment (in the traditional sense); where the emphasis is on collecting materials produced by other organizations.¹² This term is always accompanied by another term, i.e. Information resource management which, as used today, relates to any organizational context, often without any centralized collection of materials, in which the information manager is responsible for identifying and making available both internal and external source of information.¹³ Although these two terms seem to be different, they have the same goal, that is to provide accurate information in timely and cost-effective manner to all members of the service community. The collaboration of the two terms is known as collection development, i.e., a library work concerning the process of selection, acquisition, deselection and evaluation of materials. It is due to the limitation of library budget that selection must be conducted in the library. This process can also imply weeding materials that do not meet collection development policy established in the library. The last mentioned process is called deselection.

Some activities of technical services mentioned above need a great amount of money, such as acquisition and binding process. Others, although still need fund to support their operations, the amount is not as much as those of acquisition and binding. Library as a nonprofit organization receives its funding from a parent organization such as a government agency or municipality, or a private educational institution. Most libraries, like their parent institutions, are faced by dual dilemmas of constraints, namely funding and increasing demands for service. There has appeared to be the need to accomplish the goal of providing high-priority services to the clientele of library with the available short budget. Allocating budget as efficiently as possible while still giving high-priority services is the responsibility of budget management administrators and their staff. As the budget of the library represents a financial plan designed to carry out an operational plan, the operational budget should support the performance expectations of the operating plan.¹⁴

2. Public Services

As it is mentioned before that public services are any library work which deals directly with library clientele. Some activities and services usually considered public services include circulation, reference, interlibrary loan, collection maintenance, public relations, and reserve collections.

Unlike technical services, public services are emphasized more on knowledge application than library technical works. Public services librarians are provided with the knowledge of professional duties. The most important way of freeing librarians to perform professional duties is to give clerical and preprofessional tasks to trained library clerks and trained paraprofessionals.¹⁵

However, there are levels of professional in the public services in the library. Senior librarian is one whose nonlibrary related qualification is senior specialist. This librarian should have, at least, experience and education beyond the M.A. (i.e., a master's degree in any of its variant designations: M.A., M.L.S., M.S.L.S., M.Ed., etc.) as: postmaster's degree; Ph.D.; relevant continuing education in many forms. The librarian in this level has top-level responsibilities, including but not limited to administration; superior knowledge of some aspect of librarianship, or of other subject fields of value to the library.

A librarian, on the other hand, must be a specialist in his/her nonlibrary related qualification with basic requirement a Master degree. With a master degree, such as an M.L.S., he/she is borne with professional responsibilities, including those of management, which require independent judgment, interpretation of rules and procedures, analysis of library problems, and formulation of original and creative solutions for them (normally utilizing knowledge of the subject field represented by the academic degree).

There is another category of library personnel with academic basic requirements as well as nature of responsibilities lower than the professional category mentioned. This supportive category includes Library Associate, Library Technical Assistant, and clerk as the lowest level. All library personnel, regardless of their level of profession, must be aware of the library's unique place in the society. Again, as members of an organization, they should also realize whom they are working for, how the policies established go on, and what the mission, goals and objectives of the library they are working in.

With regard to the operation of public services, there are two principal operations: circulation and reference.¹⁶ As you might have already noticed that these two operations have direct contact with library patrons and both are responsible for satisfying patron needs. Circulation department has its own ways of satisfying patron's needs as they are mentioned above. Meanwhile, reference department deals with answering questions of library's patrons and using some reference tools. Therefore, there has been a particular discussion of reference works should one wants to know deeply.

Katz maintained that the simple equation of reference may be quickly analyzed, and the basic factors are:

- *Information.* This comes in many formats which sometimes can be difficult to locate and even more challenging to interpret. Some others are very simple such as "where is the card catalogue?"
- *The user.* This is the person who puts the questions to the librarians. The basic problem in reference work is trying to determine precisely what type of answer is required.
- *The reference librarian.* This key person who interprets the question identifies the precise source of answer, and, with the user, decides whether or not the response is adequate.¹⁷

Compared to the technical services, public service is a rather exciting department to work because the work is dynamic and varied. This is resulted from dealing with the people coming to the library with various needs of information inquiry. In addition, as the information changes very rapidly from time to time, this job can be very challenging to the librarians. Therefore, there is a need to develop skills and knowledge in the field as a counter-balance of the changes. Such an interesting image may influence many library and information science graduates to find employment in many types and sizes of library requiring a variety of responsibilities.

3.The Relationship between Technical and Public Services

Although the two services of library process seem to be different and separated from one another, they can not actually be independent. As library moves to the idea of educating library users, three basic functions of reference services come to play, namely provision of information, instruction in the use of libraries and information sources and guidance in the choice of library materials.¹⁸ These roles become more and more important along with the development of library use and library tools implemented. Again, as the amount of information continues to expand, and as radical changes are made in the way in which information is stored, organized, accessed, and used, it has become increasingly apparent that individuals need instruction not only in the use of libraries but also in the general handling and use of information.¹⁹

This reality leads to the thought that there should be an integration of technical and public services in library process. Such an integration usually means that catalogers, while still reporting to the cataloging department, may also engage in reference desk work, collection development, or bibliographic instruction.²⁰ In addition to the integration, there has been a recognition of the importance of technical services personnel for on-line searching of reference databases. However, the recognition is still rarely realized by librarian. Cataloguers' subject, classification and technological skills make them ideal candidates for the role of providing bibliographic information to the users in public services department.

Along with the idea of integrating public and technical services in the library, Sheila Intner has expressed 10 reasons of the integration viewed from the public services perspective. *First*, she believed that a reference librarian can be a good cataloguer as he/she can contribute his direct knowledge of people's information-seeking behavior to the cataloguing work. *Second*, reference librarians often have valuable language or subject expertise which will be very beneficial for cataloguing work. *Third*, more often than not, many graduates of Library and Information science are looking for dual assignments in cataloguing and reference for more interesting and satisfying job. *Fourth*, cataloguing has much to gain from librarians who have more exposure to and training in the use of reference tools and familiarity with publishing and distribution of informational materials. *Fifth*, decision-making about the catalog is no longer a back-affair but requires integration of knowledge about all the

bibliographic services in the library. This is mainly because of the implementation of MARC-formatted catalog entry which becomes the basis for a host of systems and bibliographic tools ranging from acquisitions and interlibrary loan to circulation control. Sixth, as it was mentioned before that teaching clients to use the library (i.e., bibliographic information) requires deep knowledge of the catalog: its organization and structure as well as its operation and use. Seventh, there has been an image that reference librarians should be bibliographers and furnished bibliographic services, just like catalogers. Therefore, the integration of reference knowledge and cataloguing skill is very much supporting the image. Eighth, as professionals having expertise of discovering as well as solving problem, the reference librarians can contribute not only their expertise but also their different perspective to the cataloguing librarians which might be a fresh viewpoint to both the solution of cataloguing problem and the identification of new goals. Ninth, if there were new cataloguers hired in the library, it would be reference librarian's responsibility to train them. Therefore, getting involved in, or at least knowing, cataloguing work is very helpful for reference librarians should they are asked to train new cataloguers. The last, there has been a belief that creative new bibliographic services need input from people who see the catalog from the 'other side.' Clearly, the contribution of reference librarians is desirable in designing new systems only if they recognize and acknowledge the infrastructure into which the system must fit.²¹

It is obvious, then, that there is not only a relation between technical and public services, but there has also been an idea to integrate them. The idea of integration is, certainly, not a new phenomenon since some libraries have a history of decentralized processing, particularly for special/professional branches.²²

Endnotes:

- ¹ F. Maurice Tauber, *Technical Services in Libraries* (New York: Columbia University, 1954), 9.
- ² Sheila S. Intner and Josephine Riss Fang, *Technical Services in the Medium-Sized Library* (Connecticut: Library Professional Publications, 1991), xi.
- ³ P. Irene Godden, *Library Technical Services: Operations and Management*, 2nd ed. (San Diego: Academic Press, Inc., 1991), 1.
- ⁴ Michael Gorman, *Technical Services Today and Tomorrow*, (Englewood, Colorado: Libraries Unlimited, Inc., 1990), 3.
- ⁵ G. Edward Evans and Sandra M. Heft, *Introduction to Technical Services*, 6th ed. (Englewood, Colorado: Libraries Unlimited, Inc., 1994), 22.
- ⁶ Sheila S. Intner and Josephine Riss Fang, 73.
- ⁷ Gorman, 63.
- ⁸ Leonard Montague Harrord, *The Librarian's Glossary* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1958), 746.
- ⁹ Godden, 235.
- ¹⁰ Marty Bloomberg, *Introduction to Public Services for Library Technicians*, 4th ed., (Littleton, Colorado: Libraries Unlimited, Inc., 1985), 10.

- ¹¹ Godden, 220.
- ¹² G. Edward Evans, *Developing Library and Information Center Collections*, 3rd ed. (Englewood, Colorado: Libraries Unlimited, Inc., 1995), 20.
- ¹³ Evans, 1995, 20.
- ¹⁴ Gorman, 185.
- ¹⁵ Bloomberg, 1.
- ¹⁶ Bloomberg, 9.
- ¹⁷ William A. Katz, *Introduction to Reference Work*, vol. 1, 6th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1992), 3.
- ¹⁸ Richard E. Bopp and Linda C. Smith, *Reference and Information Services*, 2nd ed. (Englewood, Colorado: Libraries Unlimited, Inc., 1995), 5.
- ¹⁹ Bopp, 153.
- ²⁰ B.J. Busch, *Integration of Public and Technical Services Functions* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Management Studies Association of Research Libraries, 1986), 2.
- ²¹ Sheila S. Intner, *Interfaces: Relationships between Library Technical and Public Services*, 1995, p. 97-100.
- ²² Busch, 2.