

## Reaching to Patrons: A Case Study of DESIDOC Outreach Programmes

*Alka Bansal*

*Sumati Sharma*

*Suresh Kumar Jindal*

### Abstract

*The purpose of this study is to investigate the organization and understand the initiatives taken by Defence Scientific Information & Documentation Centre (DESIDOC) which is providing S&T information required by the S&T community in Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) across the country for R&D purposes as a special library and information centre in the area of library outreach programmes. The paper also suggests areas where further efforts are required. A qualitative study was done. It included a survey regarding the work being carried out and methods adopted by DESIDOC regarding its activities and the initiatives taken for their outreach programmes. The results of this study identified the different sets of measures taken for different outreach programmes as per different audience/clients. It also identified certain programmes carried out for the benefit of society. This study was necessary for the practical purpose of organizing outreach programmes in context of special libraries. What measures can be taken to reach to specific users. What initiatives can be taken for society in addition to serving the specific users.*

**Keywords:** Library Outreach, Case Study, DESIDOC

### 1. Introduction

With the advent of the internet the way of information presentation as well as access and delivery has changed a lot. Now a library may not completely rely on past reputation and oral appreciation from users to ensure survival. It is now important to remain involved to existing patrons and also attract new audience for its sustenance. As Dr Ranganathan has rightly said that 'Books are for use' and 'Save the time of the reader'. If the audience is not in a position to come to the library then the library has to outreach to its patrons. Outreach programmes are conducted to increase access for users (enhance a person's ability to use, acquire or employ service, product, or practice); expand peoples' willingness to use service or product; and

increase awareness of service among potential users or those who will refer them.

"Outreach involves the dissemination of ideas and educating people, which includes two way communication. Outreach does not involve increase in the market share, it is typically carried out by for non-profit organisations, civic groups, etc."<sup>1</sup>. The organization decides upon its outreach strategies as per their vision and mission, and set its goals.

People use the word "outreach" to describe a wide range of activities, from actual delivery of services to dissemination of information. As a tool to help expand access to services, practices or products, outreach is most often designed to accomplish one of the following (or some combination)<sup>2</sup>:

- ❖ Deliver services or products directly such as mobile library van that visits areas to deliver



and collect books/magazines. There is one-on-one interaction.

- ❖ Increase the knowledge and/or skills by educating or informing the target population
- ❖ Educate or inform people who interact with the target population
- ❖ Establish beneficial connections between people and/or organizations to create opportunities and prevent problems. Cultivate reading habits, skills, and interests in target population.
- ❖ Common reasons<sup>3</sup> for outreach are to:
- ❖ Increase access for users (enhance a person's ability to use, acquire or employ service, product, or practice)
- ❖ Expand peoples' willingness to use service or product
- ❖ Increase awareness of service among potential users or those who will refer them
- ❖ A combination of outreach efforts to deliver services, enhance skills and knowledge, and raise awareness

## 2. Method of Outreach for Libraries

A library has to apply certain methods to be deployed to reach out its users. Different type of libraries will apply different methods keeping in view their policies, type, clientele, budget, infrastructure, resources, competencies, time availability, etc.

To disseminate information and create awareness about a service, product, or practice, outreach can take several forms:

- ❖ Street outreach—It can be a type of mobile van service which can provide instant service such as photocopies of documents, digital prints, free educational CDs, etc. Under

street outreach programme, a library may cover: issue and return of books, magazines, journals, newspapers, etc.

- ❖ Door-step promotion—It is a sales technique<sup>4</sup> in which a salesperson walks from the door of one house to the door of another trying to sell a product or service to the general public. In the context of library services, it can be a very exciting feature for libraries to reach out to individual houses and educate them regarding its services and resources.
- ❖ Group Presentations—In this type of presentation, the library can identify certain groups and give presentation regarding their services and products. The group can be based on gender, age, interest group wise, profession-wise, etc.
- ❖ Community Fair—Under this method, a library can invite publishers, book vendors, service providers, etc., to showcase their services, unique products, etc. They can give tutorials regarding how to use them. For example, if the library provides e-books for different readers from the library, the e-book publisher/providers can show them how to use the reader, how to download the software programs, features of e-books, etc. whereas the library can inform them about their collection and their formats and services. The visitors may find the information valuable and may like to use the libraries more effectively.
- ❖ Community/Business Drop-Offs—Events can be organized where the users can deposit their books/journals, etc., of archival value, which can be preserved for the future.
- ❖ Drop-in Centers—These centres can counsel, support and develop liaison with other

library systems to provide services. Here the people can also visit and ask for information and they can be referred to concerned organizations dealing in those areas.

- ❖ **Media**— These are the storage and transmission channels or tools used to store and deliver information or data. It is often referred to as synonymous with mass media or news media, but may refer to any means of information communication<sup>5</sup>. In LIS context the media to be used can be e-media or physical media or a combination of both. Information regarding the events being organized can be disseminated through air, TV, flyers, local newspapers, etc.
- ❖ **Others**—Include advertising, public relations, publications of newsletters, social groups, web pages, contests, media coverage, etc. Displays, signage, and knowledgeable staff are also great outreach tools<sup>4</sup>.

### 3. Actions For Communication

For an outreach programme, planning is done to establish strategic relationship to promote the usefulness of the library. There are certain steps to conduct an outreach programme:

- ❖ **Select the Target Audience**—It is important to know who is the target audience and which means is best suited to the service, product, or concept being promoted. Outreach should tie into the needs, preferences, and decision-making practices of users. Who comes into the library and sees displays? Who only works online from home?
- ❖ **Develop Strategy** —Develop consistent promotion and distribution strategy to meet the

goals and objectives based on the analysis of target audiences

- ❖ **Select the Services**—Which service is suitable for whom? How to communicate the value of the service to those users who will benefit and for whom the service was developed? Find out (or already know) about users? i.e., who needs a particular service and how will you reach those who will benefit? For example, who reads news stories and newsletters? Who doesn't<sup>5</sup>?
- ❖ **Create Tools** —Create graphics standards, styles guide and consistent print and e-communication standards and develop tools accordingly
- ❖ **Marketing Training**—Provide marketing training (how to promote services, how to talk to the media, how to use the tools, etc)
- ❖ **Implementation of programme**—Conduct the outreach programme, maintain the records and clear communication/feedback with the management, staff and stakeholders
- ❖ **Evaluation of Programme**—The corrective action, preventive action and new actions required are determined and implemented. Evaluation of effectiveness of the strategies and revisions is highly important for continual improvement.

### 4. Guidelines for Effective Outreach

- ❖ Understand the relationship of the library to other people and meet them where they are
- ❖ Create policies and practice for clear communication of the library's message to staff, community, etc.

- ❖ Listen to their requirements
- ❖ Build trust and relationships
- ❖ Provide information regarding products and services in multiple media through print and electronic according to established plan
- ❖ Offer service and information in a variety of locations and at non-traditional times, especially after work hours
- ❖ Make written information friendly, easy to understand, welcoming and appropriate for all audience
- ❖ Enhance the library's message by speaking publicly and throughout the community
- ❖ Provide information in the primary language of those who will use the service
- ❖ Develop relationship with media representatives, and all stakeholders
- ❖ Foster an inclusive, affirming and respectful climate for communication
- ❖ Develop relationships with other library leaders, community leaders, educational organizations, community groups and agencies. These collaborative relationships will lead to support and ideas for new and existing programmes.

### 5. DESIDOC: Case Study of Special Library

Defence Scientific Information and Documentation Centre (DESIDOC) provide Science and Technology information required by the S&T community in Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) Head Quarters / labs / establishments across the country for Rand D purposes. DESIDOC is a central resource for providing scientific infor-

mation, documentation, library, reprographic, translation and printing services and coordinates DRDO scientific information programmes. It also publishes scientific and technical publications (including journals, bulletins and monographs) on behalf of DRDO to highlight the achievements of DRDO and to give impetus to research being carried out. It provides training and user education programmes for DRDO and all defence users and carries out R&D work in the field of scientific information/documentation. Under its mandate it is a special documentation centre that caters to the specific users. However efforts are made to involve others in various fields such as collaboration with academia and other departments; organising conferences in the field of S&T in official language, bringing out publications meant for general public etc.

#### 5.1. Defence Science Library

Defence Science Library (DSL) of DESIDOC is the nerve centre for providing current information on cutting edge technologies to the project leaders, top management, and researchers in the field of defence S&T. The DSL mainly caters to the needs of scientists working on different projects in the DRDO head quarters/ labs/ establishments scattered all over the country. To provide current information to users, DSL subscribes to S&T journals (print form), e-journals, and databases in addition to books on current topics.

DSL is a unique specialised library catering to the information needs of researchers in defence science and technology. The DSL has a rich collection on defence science and technology which includes micro- and macro- subjects. The DSL provides a unique environment of traditional as well as modern library setup. When one thinks of a library, an image

of traditional materials is evoked: shelves and cabinets brimming with books, journals and their bound volumes, technical reports, microfilms, microfiches, charts, atlases, slides, films, video tapes, sound recordings etc.

### 5.1.1 DSL Outreach Programmes

In the ever-expanding scenario of ICT, internet/intranet, online, CD-ROM/DVD appliances occupy the centre stage of a modern library. As the collection of DSL is of specialised nature and meant for specific user community, the DSL has taken many initiatives, as listed below, for outreach programmes to make effective use of its resources.

- ❖ Provides services under a single window on DRDO intranet on 24x7 basis.
- ❖ The DSL regularly updates its services on DRDO intranet for providing a single window access to its services, activities, databases, and other information.
- ❖ Provides access to research articles from the subscribed scientific and technical journals over internet.
- ❖ Participates in book fairs
- ❖ Creates pamphlets and brochures regarding services and products and distributes them
- ❖ Conducts awareness programme at different zones regarding its e-journals consortium. Coordinates with publishers and arrange user-awareness across the country.
- ❖ Offers training in software use which was developed in house.

## 5.2. Knowledge Management Activities

Keeping the aim to be more productive and innovative the knowledge management activity has been started in DESIDOC to create, process, store, and disseminates knowledge to achieve organizational objectives.

### 5.2.2 Knowledge Repository

DESIDOC is keeping and maintaining copies of different types of technical reports (unclassified/restricted) prepared and published by DRDO labs/establishments. It has evolved a mechanism to ensure proper indexing process with a definite format of presentation to develop and maintain a DRDO Technical Report identity. All unclassified/restricted reports of various DRDO labs are being digitised to make it a tangible and available knowledge asset for use by the DRDO scientist and professionals at the time of their need. The repository is restricted in nature. Up to abstract level it is open to all DRDO intranet users; however access to full text is only for authorised users. The reports are made available with varying details to the users. For all this purpose, DESIDOC is coordinating with all the DRDO labs/establishments to activate and monitor the process to progress the work. As of now 25000+ technical reports are made accessible through KR which is hosted on DRDO intranet.

#### ◆ Institutional Repository—Gyansrota

The institutional repository, named, Gyansrota is a digital archive of the knowledge capital which is accessible to the R&D community of the organisation. The repository aims to centralize, capture, store, preserve and access mechanism of the research output, i.e., intellectual content of DRDO. This include all published material like research papers, articles, adhoc publications, learning materials, book chapters, bibliographical sketches,

etc. More than 6000 papers are available in the repository which is hosted on DRDO intranet.

◆ **Knowledge Management-specific Outreach Programmes**

- Collects and compiles various information assets of DRDO and make it accessible to entire DRDO community through a central platform
- Coordinates and conducts training programme for nodal officers through a central platform regarding how to submit to these repositories across the country.
- Conducts end-user education programme at lab-level/ region-level on how to register and use these repositories.

(c) **Publishing Activities**

DESIDOC, the central publishing agency of DRDO, brings out a number of regular and ad-hoc/ special publications on behalf of DRDO, to disseminate current information on research and development activities being carried out by various DRDO labs/ establishments to the outside world. DESIDOC brings out regular publications, viz., Defence Science Journal (DSJ), DESIDOC Journal of Library & Information Technology (DJLIT), DRDO Monographs, Technology Focus, Prodyogiki Vishesh, DRDO Newsletter, DRDO Samachar, DRDO Science Spectrum, and DRDO Technology Spectrum, Gyandeeep. Many ad-hoc publications/books/proceedings of the DRDO Head Quarters and DRDO labs/ establishments are also brought out by DESIDOC.

Different publications have their own scope and serve varied population; hence the outreach programmes are designed differently keeping in view the specific group's requirements. Defence Science Journal (DSJ), DESIDOC Journal of Library & Information Technology (DJLIT) are priced publications

in print form but the full text is available free online. DRDO Science Spectrum, and DRDO Technology Spectrum cover the technical content which is available under restricted domain.

◆ **Publications-specific Outreach Programmes**

- ❖ Publications such as Technology Focus, Prodyogiki Vishesh, DRDO Newsletter, DRDO Samachar are freely distributed in print format. Free soft copy is made available on internet for wide audience across the globe.
- ❖ These publications are freely distributed during conferences (international and national), seminars, exhibitions, and book fairs.
- ❖ Publications such as Prodyogiki Vishesh and DRDO Samachar are published in Hindi and are also meant for Indian soldiers
- ❖ Books which are of interest to society are also published.
- ❖ General brochures covering the general details which cover the publications for the society are designed and distributed.
- ❖ Brochures and pamphlets for specific audience (such as different publications) are created.
- ❖ Catalogues of publications are distributed in conferences.
- ❖ Journals are covered in many indexing and abstracting sources such as Scopus, EBSCO Abstracts/Full-text, Library Literature and Information Science Index/Full-text, The Informed Librarian Online, DOAJ, OpenJ-Gate, Indian Science Abstracts, Indian Citation Index, Full text Sources Online, WorldCat, ProQuest, and OCLC to increase the awareness about the journals.

- ❖ Many studies regarding the journals are done to promote these journals.
- ❖ To impart the knowledge, the full-text of the journals are available free online as open access.
- ❖ Information regarding the journals is made available through notifications, RSS feeds, professional forums, professional groups, etc.

#### (d) Specific Training Programmes

DESIDOC conducts user education programmes in the area of IT, communication, technical writing and LIS for personnel of DRDO labs/ establishments to update their knowledge and working skills. It also invites the scientists and managers of middle and senior levels from other departments/organisations like CSIR, ICMR, ICAR and PSUs to impart training. DESIDOC conducts short-term, long-term and special training programmes. These outreach programmes are organised not only in English language but many of them are conducted in official language also.

#### ◆ Training-related Outreach Programmes

##### Short-term Outreach Programmes

- ❖ Imparts knowledge about its resources (print and online) at various Continuing Education Programme (CEP) courses.
- ❖ Imparts knowledge about its sources and services at International Conferences.
- ❖ Organising lectures on different subjects from time to time
- ❖ Deputing DESIDOC officers/staff for courses/workshops/conferences, etc., for short-term courses.

#### Special Outreach Programmes

- ❖ DESIDOC conducts special training courses with collaboration of other institutions (of similar nature) to impart knowledge.
- ❖ Conducts training at different DRDO labs in the areas of IT, communication, technical presentation, technical writing, LIS activities, e-publishing, web designing, database development, digital libraries, and other relevant aspects of IT to the personnel working in DRDO to update their knowledge and working skills.

#### Long-term Outreach Programmes

- ❖ Junior Research Fellows are appointed under various R&D projects in the field of library and information science/computer science for two years which is extendable for one more year.
- ❖ Training is imparted to students from various colleges and universities under the summer training/industrial training programme in the field of computer applications in library activities, IT and other information processing and dissemination activities, software development, etc.
- ❖ Conducts one-year apprenticeship training in various disciplines such as library and information science, publishing, printing technology, computer science, etc., with hands-on practice.

#### (e) Projects with Academia and other S&T Organisations

Regular interaction is done with many institutes such as ISI, Kolkata; BE College, Kolkata; IISc, Bangalore; IIT, Chennai; CEERI, CSIR Lab, Delhi; IIT, Delhi; University of Roorkee, etc., sometimes on time-bound projects and sometimes otherwise.

### Areas Of Further Efforts

- (a) To conduct quantitative analysis of user requirements for effective delivery of services through questionnaire.
- (b) Planning for new or updated facilities to meet current and future requirements.
- (c) To measure the effectiveness of awareness programmes and service on various user groups and suggest continuous improvements outcome based evaluations are needed
- (d) Feedback mechanism is required from long-term programme trainees to improve upon further trainings.
- (e) Efforts are required to publish more information regarding the spinoff of the products created.
- (f) Interaction and collaboration is required with more academic and scientific organisations to create more deliverables which are beneficial for the society.

### 6. Conclusions

It is important to promote the library as a centre of lifelong learning for the community. The efforts are to be made to take the library to the users. As Dr Ranganathan has rightly said that 'Books are for use' and 'save the time of the reader'. The library in today's scenario has to outreach to its users for its survival. There is a need of coherent overall plan that aligns with the library's goals and community needs. Outcome based evaluation is important to measure the effect of programmes and services on various user groups, so that continual improvement can be done, and plans can be made for new or updated facilities to meet current and future requirements. DESIDOC has taken many initiatives to reach to its user community. Apart from services to DRDO

personnel it is providing community services by way of providing training opportunities to students of various colleges, and delivering products for the society.

The DESIDOC personnel are deputed to attend the various elementary and advanced training courses, conferences and workshops, within DRDO and outside institutions, to share and enhance their working knowledge in their areas of work as well as for their personality development and skill development to conduct outreach programmes.

### References

1. Community Outreach and the Community Health Worker. <http://www.bu.edu/phhprc/files/2012/07/Module-2-Community-Outreach-and-the-CHW.pptx>
2. Using Outreach to Increase Access. <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/implement/access-barriers-opportunities/outreach-to-increase-access/main>
3. Promoting the Library: Introduction to Marketing the Library Module 4. <http://www.olc.org/marketing/4intro.htm>
4. Door-to-door. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Door-to-door>.
5. Media (communication). [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Media\\_\(communication\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Media_(communication)).

### About Authors

**Ms. Alka Bansal**, DESIDOC, DRDO,  
Delhi-110054  
E-mail: [alkabansal777@gmail.com](mailto:alkabansal777@gmail.com)

**Ms. Sumati Sharma**, DESIDOC, DRDO,  
Delhi-110054  
E-mail: [sumatisharma18@gmail.com](mailto:sumatisharma18@gmail.com)

**Mr. Suresh Kumar Jindal**, DESIDOC, DRDO,  
Delhi-110054