

Abstract

Periodical literature is of prime importance in the field of health science as it is the method by which new knowledge is imparted as quickly as possible in a brief and a usable form. They constitute the single more important vehicle for global scholarly communication. Health information is updated continually and with such rapidity that the acquired information becomes obsolete very quickly. The medical periodicals become the principal conduits through which this newly acquired knowledge is effectively disseminated to every corner of the medical world. Proliferation of periodical literature and rapidly escalating cost of periodicals with the devaluation of the Sri Lanka rupee create challenges to health science librarians. There is an urgent need to find ways to improve the collection of medical periodical literature in Sri Lanka. The main objective of the study is to analyze the available medical periodical collections and the library services to access periodical literature and to recommend better ways to improve the availability and usage of periodicals in health science libraries in Sri Lanka.

Major research instruments employed were questionnaires and documentary sources. Health Literature Library and Information ~~Science~~^{Service} (HELLIS) network member libraries were considered for the study. Data were collected from selected health science library user community, librarians and documentary sources. Periodical price changes, currency exchange rate, subject area coverage, geographic distribution, fund allocation, user satisfaction, availability of services and indexing abstracting tools and usage of electronic databases were analyzed.

The study reveals that Sri Lanka health science libraries do not have adequate periodical titles in order to satisfy user demand.. They are unable to provide even a minimum level of services mainly due to inadequate funds, lack of trained staff and infrastructure facilities. Users are not fully satisfied with the periodical collection and library services. Resource sharing, co-operative acquisition, developing a national center for little used journals, provision of user education programs, implementing the advantages of new information technology and providing staff training programs are some of the suggestions recommended for improving the accessibility and usage of medical periodical literature in Sri Lanka.