

Circulation Work

The first step in organising circulation work in a library is to define its members. The members in the case of a public library is the general public residing in a defined geographical area. In the case of an academic library, the members are the students and faculty members, including the authorities of the institution, who constitute the clientele. Registration is the initial contact point with the potential users of the library. It helps the library to understand the type and level of service that the potential members are going to expect from the library. It also offers library opportunity to explain its members their rights and privileges as well as their responsibility towards preservation of the resources.

Charging and Discharging

Circulation of documents or circulation service is one of the main functions of a library. Circulation service refers to facility provided by a library to its members to have one or more documents for study outside the library premises for a specific period. The basic aim of the circulation section is to maximize the utilization of the library resources and the major concern of circulation service is to perform this task with economy and efficiency.

Charging/Discharging function is the main component of the circulation work in a library. It refers to the issue and return of books for reading outside the library for a specified period. In the case of small libraries register system is followed for the charging and discharging system. There are various improvised systems for charging and discharging of documents, the two most widely practiced systems based on combination of book card and membership card are the Browne circulation system and the Newark circulation system.

Browne Charging System

The system is named after Nina E. Browne librarian of the Library Bureau, Boston who developed the system towards the close of the Nineteenth Century. Under the system each member is given as many pocket type membership cards as the number of documents s/he is entitled to borrow from a library. The card bears name, address and membership number of borrower. The borrower presents book for borrowing along with library card. Counter staff takes out book card from the book and puts it into the pocket of the library card, stamps the due /issue date on the date slip in the book and gives to the borrower. The book card along with borrower's card is filed behind the date guide in the charging tray. When the book is presented for

discharging, the staff with the help of due date in the book, takes out from the charging tray the relevant book card along with borrower's library card. The book is put on the trolley for shelving and the borrower gets back library card.

Advantages of the System

- ✓ The procedure is simple and less time consuming.
- ✓ Issue of reminders and calculation of overdue charges on the book is simplified as the staff does not need to check up members detail from membership record.
- ✓ Statistical record of issue also can be easily prepared.
- ✓ Reservation and/or recall can be carried out promptly.
- ✓ Borrower is not required to sign at the time of borrowing.

Disadvantages of the System

- ✓ No permanent record of issue is available after the return of the book
- ✓ It is difficult to ascertain the number of books issued to a person.
- ✓ In case of loss of library card misuse of the card is possible as borrower's signature is not required.
- ✓ Possibility of mismatch of book card and borrower's card if care is not taken in inserting the book card in right borrower's card.
- ✓ The system is popular in India because of its simplicity.

To overcome some of its limitations many modifications are incorporated by libraries.

Newark Charging System

Newark system is issuing system of books, generated at the Newark (New Jersey) Public Library. Its positive attributes include accurate files, conveniently located at the circulation desk by the patron's name due date and call number. It can also generate accurate statistical reports and accommodate different loan periods. The charging routines under this system are the same as are in the Browne system with the modification that in Newark system, book card has a column for recording user's membership number opposite the due date and borrower's card is given back along with the book to the borrower. In the case of discharging a document the date of return are put on the borrower's card while returning the card. In case any fine for late return is due the card is returned only after the fine is paid.

Advantages of the System

- ✓ A permanent record of type of books circulated and the kind of books borrowed by a member is available.
- ✓ The record of number of times the book has been circulated is available at all time from the issue record even when the book is not available in the library.
- ✓ It is also claimed that several assistant can carry out work simultaneously, or that borrower can be allowed to borrow books from any branch of the library. But such facilities are also available under the Browne system. The limitation is the number of books a member is entitled to borrow/ already borrowed cannot be checked at the time of issuing a book.

Disadvantages of the System

- ✓ The routines are slow and cumbersome as the issue work requires writing membership number on book card and stamping of due date on member's card also.
- ✓ There are chances of mistake in transcribing member's number on book card.
- ✓ Membership files both serial number wise and alphabetically by name have to be consulted repeatedly.
- ✓ Though claim is made that the system is fool proof, it is also said that this advantage may not be always available.

Other functions in Circulation Section

In addition to the charging routines the other functions falling under this section are Reminders, Reservation, Recall, Renewal and Collection of over dues for late return of books.

Reservation

When new collection of books is released for circulation, often more than one reader are interested in borrowing some books. In such situation the first person who expressed desire for a particular book is issued the book and the book is reserved for others to get the book in turn. Each one of the subsequent member is intimated about the availability of the book as and when his turn comes. Sometimes a reader wants a book which is already out on loan. In that case the

book is reserved by putting a slip bearing reader's detail in the issue record of the book and the member is intimated about its availability when it is returned by the earlier reader.

Recall

When for one reason or other, the library is in need of a book already out on loan, and still not due for return, the circulation section may ask the borrower to return the book to the library. Such practice is called recall of book by library.

Renewal

Members who want to keep book beyond due date may get the due date extended either by presenting the book to the counter or by telephone. Renewal is allowed only if the book is not reserved by some other member.

Reminder

Sometimes members forget to return books due for return, or deliberately hold the book as they are afraid that they may not get it again. This happens when books are in heavy demand and in short supply. In such cases the circulation counter sends reminders to the concerned members for early return of the books.

Overdue charges

In order to deter members from holding the books beyond the due date libraries follow a system of levying fine for the period the book has been held up beyond the due date. Such payments must be received against receipt. There have been cases when audit party has asked the library to produce record of such income. The overdue charges are deposited with the central office of the library.

Inter-library Loan

Inter-library loan is the oldest form of library network or cooperation among libraries. When a book is needed by a library member which is not available in the library, the library makes a request to a sister library, where it is available, for loan of the book. Such transaction is done on mutual understanding and under agreed terms and conditions. Normally books procured under inter-library loan are to be used within the premises of the borrowing library. Such a condition is laid to ensure prompt return if the lending library is in need of the same book.