ANALYSING USER PROBLEMS IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

BY

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ABSTRACT

Librarians often assume that their services sufficiently meet student information needs. This dissertation is aimed to develop a method for discovering some of the main defects of existing arrangements, their causes and possible solutions. The techniques used to examine problems were the author's observations, and the problem focussed interviews with students, academics and librarians. Due to time limitations, attention was mainly concentrated on students and library staff.

The results suggested that user problems, when analysed from different perspectives, prove to be more complex than when taken at face value - leading to a diversion of the user problem into elements which should be shared among students, librarians, and lecturers. Library management, staff and the lecturers all have a role in solving students' problems. Wherever possible, they should co-operate in performing this role. The library manager's role was seen as crucial in facilitating the changes needed.

The major problems identified revolved around the use of stock, catalogues and library staff. Solutions suggested included better organisation of existing systems and greater involvement of academic staff in providing
information skills.

The library was largely viewed by students as a working place and librarians were consulted reluctantly. The study offers a strategy for changing this image of librarians and libraries by making the services much more user oriented.