

# Do Business School Libraries Outsource? A Study of Gujarat State

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## Abstract

The study focuses on how business school libraries use “outsourcing” as a management tool to deliver good quality at low cost. It also examines the reasons, advantages and disadvantages behind outsourcing. To get the data about outsourcing of functions, services from business school libraries, a questionnaire was sent to 87 business school libraries in Gujarat (India). The findings indicate that many libraries use “Outsourcing” as an effective management tool and most libraries outsource their technical and computer related operations.

**Keywords:** Contracting-out, Business Schools; Library Management, Library Outsourcing

## 1. Introduction

Outsourcing has become a common practice in various sectors (Deakin, 2010)<sup>1</sup>. Library and Information Service (LIS) sector has also accepted “Outsourcing” as a tool to reduce costs and increase the quality of services. Many processes, functions and services in libraries are not done by the library staff members due to lack of staff and lack of expertise in a specific process or work. Further, they want to concentrate on core areas and thus not focus on multiple functions simultaneously. However, the services provided to the users should not be affected. Hence outsourcing is seen as using the expertise, skills, investment, and infrastructure of third party sources to provide better services to users and at a low cost. The study shows the impact of outsourcing on the services, functions and management in business school (B-school) libraries in Gujarat (India).

Twenty four library operations (services and functions) were identified and classified into three groups: Technical Operations, User Oriented Services and, Computer Related Operations. The Technical Operations include Book Acquisition or Collection Development, Book Processing, Book Arrangement and Maintenance, Preservation and Conservation, Classification/re-classification, Cataloguing/re-cataloguing, Periodical Acquisition, Entire Library/

Library Management, Binding, Stock Verification etc. The User Oriented Services include Circulation, Reference, Indexing, Translation, Reprography, Inter-Library Loan, and Janitorial service etc whereas Computer Related Operations include Automation, Digitization, OPAC/Bar-coding/RFID, Retrospective Conversion of Records, Library Webpage Design/Library Portal, Digital Archival Management/Institutional Repository, Data Storage/Data Server etc.

## 2. Literature Review

According to Robert S. Martin (2000)<sup>2</sup>, “outsourcing is the contracting out to external companies or organisations, functions that would otherwise be performed by library employees”. Outsourcing is the transfer of an internal service or function to an outside vendor<sup>3</sup>. Public, Private and Academic sectors have been using “Outsourcing” in their daily operations for many years. Outsourcing has been applied to libraries since many years to perform core and auxiliary library and non-library tasks and functions through external companies or agencies.

Libraries have been outsourcing their technical operations and services for a long time now<sup>4</sup>. According to Benaud and Bordeianu (1998)<sup>3</sup>, in the beginning of the 20th century (1901), the Library of Congress (LC)

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started printing catalogue cards for other libraries and hence LC could be seen as the first vendor of cataloguing services. The OCLC, established as a bibliographic utility in 1967, began to send MARC records to its member's libraries. In the 1970s, the concept of outsourcing was related to providing responsibility to a supplier to manage and operate the functions in-house. In 1980, the concept of outsourcing changed. It evolved and became a close collaboration between two companies. It further evolved in the 1990s to fuller partnerships<sup>3</sup>. In 1990s, "Outsourcing" become a buzzword in all sectors to the extent that many librarians started contracting- out from a single service or function to complete privatization or outsourcing of publicly funded libraries<sup>2,5</sup>. Many libraries, accepted "Outsourcing" in their agendas<sup>3</sup>.

The University of California, Santa Barbara outsourced their retrospective authority control (migration of bibliographic records from card catalog to NOTIS Online Catalog) for NOTIS online catalog database to Blackwell Inc. during 1980-90<sup>4</sup>. J. Hugh Jackson Library at Stanford University's Graduate School of Business also outsourced various services such as acquiring copy cataloguing and the physical processing of monographs to Blackwell North America, Inc. and B.H. Blackwell, Ltd agencies in 1992<sup>4</sup>.

The Wright State University of United States outsourced their entire cataloguing service to Online Computer Library Centre (OCLC) in 1993. During the same period, all the books purchased from YBP on approval by Michigan State University Libraries were catalogued and tested through OCLC PromptCat service. In 1993 the University of California, Santa Barbara outsourced a service to enrich catalog records for monographs with the tables of contents (Johns, 1997)<sup>4</sup>. The outsourcing of copy cataloguing of 900 music scores and 6000 monographs and other materials including rare materials was assigned by Florida Atlantic University Libraries to OCLC's TECHPRO in 1993<sup>6</sup>.

Cataloguing and physical processing operations were outsourced by the University of Alberta Library and University of Manitoba Libraries<sup>7</sup>. Libraries of The Claremont Colleges in California outsourced copy cataloguing to OCLC's TECHPRO<sup>8</sup>. In mid-February 1994, Emory University Library negotiated a contract of complete processing of authority control to Library Technologies Inc.<sup>9</sup> The original cataloguing of books and audio-visual materials was outsourced by Central Oregon Community College Library and Media Department in Bend to a freelance cataloguing professional in Spring 1994<sup>10</sup>. The University of Manitoba Libraries in Canada outsourced to Information Systems Management/Library Technical Services (ISM/LTS) the cataloguing and

physical processing of their monographs<sup>11</sup>. University of Nebraska- Lincoln Libraries applied an alternative to outsourcing the cataloguing of 3200 items and they agreed to experiment by awarding the project in 1994 to the Cataloguing Department staff members (cataloguers) of University of Nebraska- Lincoln Libraries to work overtime to complete the project<sup>12</sup>. The City University of New York Board of Trustees Resolution No. 29 passed in June 1995. It made it compulsory to outsource acquisition and cataloging of CUNY's 19 colleges into a single unit<sup>13</sup>. In May 1994, Information Express (IE) was selected as an outsourcing agency by Stanford University's Graduate School of Business Library to provide Document Delivery and Table of Contents<sup>14</sup>. Johns Hopkins University's Milton S. Eisenhower Library and John Hopkins University Press jointly worked on the project called ProjectMuse to provide enhanced access to Table of Contents (ToC) for 1101 articles and reviews from 13 titles of journals of the John Hopkins University Press. The entire project was outsourced to TeleSec Library Services Inc. in 1995, for providing authoritative form of names, assigning Library of Congress subject headings for articles and book reviews and performing HTML Mark-up of TOC citations of all 13 titles<sup>15</sup>.

The University of Arizona Library outsourced their copy cataloguing, item record creation, and physical processing to Blackwell North America, Inc., and Innovative Interfaces, Inc. in 1996<sup>16</sup>. Universities in UK have generally resisted outsourcing operations of their ICT systems, but there was an exception; the Durham University outsourced its Management Information System<sup>17</sup>. The Arts and Sciences Library at Tufts University outsourced its retrospective conversion to two vendors<sup>18</sup>.

## 2.1 Library Outsourcing in India

Many academic libraries in India also used outsourcing as a viable way to complete various tasks. The Sarabhai Foundation Library at Ahmedabad assigned the responsibility of cataloguing and subject heading listing to an individual. National Institute of Design (NID) at Ahmedabad outsourced its various operations such as classification, data entry for cataloguing (backlog) etc to Ahmedabad Library Network (ADINET). Mohinaba Kanya Vidyalaya at Ahmedabad outsourced its various functions such as classification, cataloguing, and preparing list of book titles and subject registers to an individual<sup>19</sup>.

The Institute of Plasma Research (IPR) Library at Gandhinagar assigned its students in 1984 to prepare computer programs that enable printing of catalogue

cards, retrieving documents, maintaining records for current and renewal of periodicals, and preparing bibliographies. It outsourced other operations such as catalogue data entry, retrospective conversion of records from dbaseIII to LibSys, Conversion of Microform to CD ROM and photocopying<sup>20</sup>.

MICA's Knowledge Exchange and Information Centre (KEIC) at Ahmedabad outsourced its digitization of newspaper clippings and conversion of television commercials from video cassette to CD format<sup>21</sup>.

IIT Bombay central library outsourced the binding of 5700 volumes and photocopying service<sup>22</sup>. Kurukshetra University Library (2006) reported that the digitization project of the manuscript collection of Palm leaf, Sharda, Persian, Bangla, Gurumukhi, and Oriya scripts was outsourced to The Nanak Shahi Trust<sup>22</sup>. The Jayakar Library, University of Pune, outsourced the database creation of around 450000 books and RFID implementation related work<sup>23</sup>.

Some surveys on outsourcing in academic libraries have been conducted in India. A survey was conducted in 2007 to know the impact of outsourcing in academic libraries in Ahmedabad; it was found that every library outsourced one or more services or functions<sup>24</sup>.

A survey of 40 Science and Technology libraries in Delhi indicates that one or more operations such as Classification, Library automation, Software development, Website creation and designing, Network creation/established, Database creation, Barcode preparation and pasting, Members identity cards preparation, digitization, RFID tagging and maintenance, Hardware maintenance, Photocopying, Binding, Labelling and pasting, Dusting and cleaning, Building cleaning, Building maintenance, and Security have been fully or partially outsourced<sup>22</sup>.

The review suggests that outsourcing by libraries was used in technical services and gradually expanded to other operations.

### 3. Objective of the Study

This study was carried out to identify the impact of outsourcing on functions, services and management of business school libraries in Gujarat (India). The study was conducted to identify:

- which operations and services are performed in house and which are outsourced,
- the reasons for outsourcing,
- the impact (advantages and disadvantage) of outsourcing on library operations and services and management, and

- the criteria in selecting an outsourcing agency (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Criteria in selecting library outsourcing agency

Particulars	Respondents and percentage	
	Yes	No
Much experience in specific work	50 (79.4%)	13 (20.6%)
Good review given by other library/librarian	52 (82.5%)	11 (17.5%)
Low bid	10 (15.9%)	53 (84.1%)

## 4. Methodology

A pilot survey was conducted with a sample of 11 business school libraries. A questionnaire with 4 questions was sent through email. The data revealed that technical operations such as Book Processing (9%), Journal Subscription (55%), non-library operations/Services such as Cleaning/Janitorial (36%), Manual Security (45%), Book/Periodical Binding (100%), and ICT related operation such as Automation (9%), Digitization (27%) etc were outsourced. The results led to a more detailed study.

A questionnaire was sent to 87 AICTE Business School libraries in Gujarat State. During the survey, it was found that 9 institutes had closed their management education program and 15 libraries did not respond. The data from 63 business school libraries was analysed.

## 5. Data Analysis

### 5.1 Outsourcing of Functions and Services

As shown in Table 2, of the 24 operations (services and functions), 14 operations have been outsourced. There was no library which outsourced Book Acquisition or Collection Development, Book Arrangement and Maintenance, Cataloguing or Re-cataloguing, Entire Library, Managing Digital Library or Creating Institutional Repository, Book Circulation Service, Reference Service or E-Reference Service, Indexing, and Translation Service. Book Processing Related functions were performed in 63 libraries, but only 4 libraries outsourced this job. Book Preservation and Conservation which includes photocopying, binding or mending, scanning, digital photography, and de-acidification. Book Preservation and Conservation was performed by 52 libraries, but only 3 libraries outsourced some of the aforesaid jobs.

**Table 2.** In-housed and outsourced library operations and services

Library operation or service	In-housed		Outsourced		Responded libraries
	n	%	n	%	n
Book acquisition/ Collection Development	63	100	0	0	63
Books Processing Related Function	59	93.7	4	6.3	63
Book arrangement and maintenance	63	100	0	0	63
Book preservation and conservation	49	94.2	3	5.8	52
Classification	57	96.6	2	3.4	59
Cataloguing	5	100	0	0	5
Periodical subscription	12	19	51	81	63
Entire Library/Library Management	63	100	0	0	63
Book/periodical binding	5	7.9	58	92.1	63
Cleaning related (Janitorial services) functions	28	44.4	35	55.6	63
Stock verification	63	0	0	0	63
Computer Desktop Related Functions	35	56.5	27	43.5	62
Automation	19	40.43	28	59.57	47
Digitization	14	63.6	8	36.4	22
Retrospective Conversion of Records	11	73.3	4	26.7	15
OPAC/Bar Coding/RFID	19	40.43	28	59.57	47
Webpage Designing/ Library Portal Creation	19	63.2	8	34.8	23
Data Server/ Data Storage	60	95.2	3	4.8	63
Digital Archival Management/Institu-tional Repository	13	100	0	0	13
Book circulation (Issue/Return)	63	100	0	0	63
Reference Service/ E-Reference Service	63	100	0	0	63
Indexing Service	16	100	0	0	16
Translation Service	4	100	0	0	4
Photocopying	7	11.11	56	88.89	63

Periodical acquisition/subscription through outsourcing agency or consortia was well known in B-school libraries, 51 libraries outsourced periodical acquisition or subscription task.

Books or periodicals binding job is considered as technical non-library activity. 58 out of 63 libraries outsourced this job.

Janitorial services such as housekeeping and regular cleaning of stack room and book racks are considered non-library operations. This job was outsourced by 35 libraries.

27 libraries outsourced computer desktop service including onsite desktop service, Annual Maintenance Contract (AMC) and facility management.

Automation related activities include data entry, software maintenance, hardware maintenance and troubleshooting tasks etc. 47 libraries out 63 computerised their libraries. 28 out of 47 libraries outsourced automation related operations.

Some libraries digitized their print resources and converted them into digital format. 22 libraries out of 63, managed to convert their resources into digital format but only 8 libraries outsourced the digitization operation.

Retrospective conversion of records includes various functions such as converting existing catalogue records into machine readable format, migrating data from one system to another, copy cataloguing, and conversion of video cassette to CD/DVD etc. 15 libraries out of 63, managed retrospective conversion of record related activities, but only 4 libraries outsourced this job.

OPAC/Bar-coding and RFID allied facilities were available in 47 libraries, but 28 libraries outsourced various tasks such as maintaining the Integrated Library System (ILS), bar-coding related tasks, RFID system maintenance and stock verification through bar-coding.

Libraries use their own webpage and portal to make resources available to users. 23 libraries have their own webpage or library portal, but only 8 libraries outsourced webpage designing and creating library portal related tasks.

Data Storage and photocopy services were outsourced by 3 and 56 libraries respectively. No library outsourced Circulation, Reference service, Indexing, and Translation services.

Apart from above 24 operations (services/functions), 1 library outsourced the task of creating a Periodical

Finder for more than 10000 electronic periodicals to an individual in. This involved a series of operations such as extracting the periodical title, subject, periodical's hyperlink, embargo, access period etc were done in line with creating one-stop-search to facilitate the users to find the periodical of his/her interest from all subscribed online resources. Manual security service was outsourced by 2 libraries.

## 5.2 Reasons for Outsourcing

There are various reasons for outsourcing:

- Reduction of book processing time (2 libraries); Lack of time for library employees to perform this task (2 libraries), and providing the required book/s to users on time (1 library);
- Lack of knowledge in performing certain operations (1 library) such as taking special care of rare reading materials (2 libraries), lack of technical skills in photocopying, digitization and binding etc (2 libraries);
- Periodical Acquisition/Subscription service was outsourced by 51 libraries. These libraries mentioned different reasons for outsourcing this service such as the staff having lack of time to perform this task (22 libraries), reduction of the burden in subscription related job and follow-up (37 libraries), concentration on core services/functions of library (16 libraries);
- Photocopying service was outsourced by 36 libraries. These libraries mentioned various reasons behind outsourcing such as increased price of photocopier machine (5 libraries), reduction of the burden in maintaining the photocopier machine (20 libraries), reduction in the risk of a technology becoming obsolete (10 libraries), reduction of operational and capital expenditure (23 libraries);
- Book/Periodical Binding was outsourced by 58 libraries. The reasons included lack of resources, technology and equipment to perform this task as also the fact that it was seen as a non-library activity;
- Automation related activities were outsourced by 28 libraries. These libraries mentioned different reasons such as lack of expertise in automation (15 libraries), lack of time (9 libraries), lack of staff in library (7 libraries), lack of resources, equipment, and technology (8 libraries);
- Digitization was also outsourced by 8 libraries; due to lack of expertise, need to complete digitization in stipulated time (3 libraries), lack of software, hardware and other equipment in the library (3 libraries);
- Retrospective Conversion of Records was outsourced by 4 libraries. The reasons mentioned for outsourcing

were conversion of records from one system to another e.g. LIBSYS to KOHA (2 libraries), lack of manpower (1 library) and lack of specific knowledge with regards to software/system (1 library).

- OPAC/Bar-coding/RFID related tasks were outsourced by 28 libraries. These libraries mentioned various reasons for outsourcing such as resolution of trouble shooting (22 libraries), prevent library staff from the laborious work (6 libraries), lack of knowledge to maintain RFID;
- Webpage Designing/Library Portal Creating job was outsourced by 8 libraries. The primary reason being the need to provide a professional touch to library; and
- Data server/data storage related services were outsourced by 3 libraries for reducing the risk of software and hardware becoming obsolete (3 libraries), lack of skilled persons.

## 6. Conclusion

Table 3 indicates that out of 63 libraries, 50 (79.4%) libraries have accepted outsourcing as an effective tool for managing the libraries. Many libraries feel that operations have become more effective and faster due to outsourcing. Prior experiences with a vendor and reviews have been the major factors in selecting the agency for outsourcing; however, the rate quoted by an agency for completing a task has also been a factor. Outsourcing has come to be seen not as a threat, but as an effective tool to manage the library's various services and operations. Outsourcing has ensured cost effectiveness and also enabled library professionals to concentrate on core areas.

**Table 3.** Impact of outsourcing on management of library

Particulars	Respondents and percentage	
	Yes	No
Outsourcing become an effective management tool	50 (79.4%)	13 (20.6%)
Negative impact happened on employees and job security issues emerged	16 (25.4%)	47 (74.6%)
Outsourcing resulted in enhanced library services and improved management	45 (71.4%)	18 (28.6%)
Legal issues between outsourcing agency and library emerged	14 (22.2%)	49 (77.8%)
Library could gain benefit of cost effective services/ functions	52 (82.5%)	11 (17.5%)
Management has been satisfied with the services provided by agency	38 (60.3%)	25 (39.7%)

## 7. Acknowledgement

This paper is based on a PhD thesis submitted by author to Gujarat Vidyapith, Ahmedabad (India). The author expresses sincere thanks to Prof. Urmilaben Thaker for her constant guidance in this research work.

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