

Block

5

ADVANCED WRITING SKILLS

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BLOCK 5 ADVANCED WRITING SKILLS

Introduction

In this final Block we have discussed the most difficult but also the most important areas of writing at the workplace i.e. writing proposals and reports and preparing survey questionnaires.

In order to get anything of importance at the workplace, i. e. more computers, more staff or more shelves, we need to write a proposal. The proposal can be accepted or rejected depending on a number of factors. But an important factor in the acceptability of any proposal is how we write the proposals itself. Therefore, in **Unit 15** (Basic Features of Proposals) we give you the mechanics of proposal writing with an emphasis on project proposals.

After a particular activity is concluded, you need to write a report on it. This report reflects very transparently the process of the activity you conducted, the findings or facts that you uncovered, the problems you faced and the recommendations that you have to offer. In **Unit 16** (Writing Reports), we give you examples of actual reports in the format that is required for a report. You could model your own report along these lines.

For a librarian, conducting surveys is an important part of the job. In **Unit 17** (Questionnaire Method) we give you tools of preparing questionnaires and conducting meaningful surveys.

Please read these units carefully and use the format and style suggested when you need to write proposals, reports or conduct surveys at your workplace.

Hope you enjoyed the course and found it useful!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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UNIT 15 BASIC FEATURES OF PROPOSALS

Structure

- 15.0 Objectives
- 15.1 Warm Up
- 15.2 A Proposal
- 15.3 Need for Proposals
- 15.4 Features of a Proposal
- 15.5 Framework for Proposals
- 15.6 Grammar: The Passive Form
- 15.7 Summary
- 15.8 Answers to Activities
- 15.9 Answers to Self Check Exercises
- 15.10 References and Further Reading

15.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will be able to:

- explain why proposals are written;
- describe the features of a proposal; and
- identify the parts of common kinds of proposals.

15.1 WARM UP

A proposal is always addressed to someone: an individual or a group of individuals. The writer of the proposal expects that person or the group to read the proposal and act on it. A proposal could be aimed at internal audience or external audience, and it might be written proactively or against a request. You must have read in newspapers statements such as:

- ...the State Government has submitted a proposal to the Central Government on ...
- ...the Central Government has asked the State Government to submit a proposal on...
- ...the Government has sent a proposal to the World Bank on.....
- ...the World Bank has asked the Government to submit a proposal on

Proposals are often written aimed at internal audience;

- ...the Librarian has sent a proposal for automating the library to the Director...
- ...the Director has asked the Librarian to submit a proposal for automating the library...

A proposal could also be between institutions, e.g:

- University X has submitted a proposal to University Z for sharing of scientific resources between the two....

Activity

- 1) Suppose that you are the librarian of a research institute. Discuss with your friend(s) two subjects which are appropriate ones for submitting proposals, and list the subjects of these two proposals below:

.....

.....

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15.2 A PROPOSAL

A proposal indicates the direction of a future action. Any action begins with an idea. The idea develops into a plan of action. The plan needs to be elaborated upon. The prospects and consequences of the plan need to be visualised. If the plan shows promise of being executed, then it needs to be written down with the costs worked out. This document is called **a proposal**. The proposal is scrutinised by colleagues, superiors or authorities within an organisation or by clients outside and approved or rejected based on its viability and financial implications.

Written proposals form the basis for projects undertaken by an institution, organisation, or a business firm. They serve as blueprints for projects and sources of reference during and after the execution of projects. Oral presentations of proposals are also made before a select audience, especially if the project is undertaken for an outside client.

A proposal can be in the form of a short letter or a long document with supporting graphics and visuals.

As proposals are projections into the future, ‘modal verbs’, that is, “will”, “shall”, “may”, “can” are generally used along with the main verbs.

15.3 NEED FOR PROPOSALS

Let us begin with a short mental activity.

Activity

- 2) Imagine that you have a certain amount of money and you plan to build a small public library in your neighbourhood. List the steps in planning that you would take:

.....

.....

.....

Discussion

I have put down the following points. Match them with yours.

- 1) Why do I want to build a library in the neighbourhood?
 [Saves time from traveling to public libraries in the city.]
 [Busy parents can take time out and bring their children to a library that is in the vicinity.]
 [Retired people can meaningfully spend their mornings and evening there.]
- 2) What kind of a library do I intend to build? (For adults/ for children)
- 3) Which locality do I want to build the library in?
 [Why have I chosen that particular locality? Give reasons]
- 4) How will I look for good spaces?
 [Look at advertisements? Advertise what I am looking for? Ask for advice]
- 5) What is my budget?
 [How much money do I have in hand? How much money can I get as loan from other sources?]

This is a mental blueprint. This will give you a direction in identifying the kind of library you want to set up.

Let us extend this to various activities and projects that have to be undertaken by large institutions and firms. All the things that you do mentally for your personal purchase will have to be formally stated and documented. Your purchase is a private decision.

You might consult family and friends. An official proposal will have to be examined and approved by the executive authorities in the organisation.

If certain problems are encountered in the proposal stage, ways to overcome them may be considered, or the proposal may be dropped because it is not viable.

This is why proposals are written down.

If a project is undertaken without a well-thought out proposal, it may get stuck mid-way and might entail loss of money.

Proposals, therefore, are the basis of undertakings.

Activity

- 3) List five activities for which proposals will be needed in any organisation of your choice. (You can choose a school, a library, a retail outlet, a sports club, etc.)

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15.4 FEATURES OF A PROPOSAL

A proposal is made for something that does not exist or to add on to something that already exists. Creating, acquiring, or presenting something new, involves investment of effort and money. This investment has to be justified.

A proposal usually begins with a description of what exists. It then moves on to what is required. This has to be supported with reasons for investing. The benefit or profit of the venture is then stated with a view to obtaining approval of the proposal.

The functions that are required in writing a proposal thus are:

- Describing
- Stating the problem
- Proposing solution
- Providing reasons or justifying
- Highlighting benefits
- Persuading or urging action

Here is a short one-paragraph draft proposal for a public facility:

The traffic on the M.G. Road is very heavy from 7am to 10pm. Two schools and three colleges line the 5 km stretch of the road from Police quarters to the General Street Metro station. There is no pedestrian crossing anywhere in between. It is impossible to cross the road during the daytime. School children and college-goers are forced to go by vehicles or public transport even if the distance is within 1 km. Three foot-over bridges at 1.5 km distance from each other **should be built** to ease the problems faced by pedestrians.

Self Check Exercise

Note: i) Write your answers in the space given below.

ii) Check your answers with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

1) What is the function performed in sentences 1- 3?

.....
.....
.....
.....

2) What do sentences 4 and 5 convey?

.....
.....

3) What is the solution proposed in sentence 6?

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.....

4) Notice the verb forms in sentences 1-5

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.....

5) Underline the verb phrase in sentence 6.

.....
.....

6) What is the notion indicated by the modal verb “should”?

.....
.....

7) Why has the passive voice been used in sentence 6?

.....
.....

The answers to these questions will give you an idea of how a proposal is presented. Refer back to the functions performed through proposals mentioned earlier in this section and match your answers with them.

Activity

4) You are the librarian of your institution or organisation. Make notes for the proposal for the provision of a café in the library premises.

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Discussion

Did you include the following?

- Background** : Description of the institution and the nature of work done
- Rationale** : Need for a café near the library for its members as well as the staff. People will not waste time travelling to the canteen located nearly a km away.
- Proposal** : Identification of space on premises
 Number of people required to work in the cafeteria.
 Items on the menu
 Number of tables required
 Kitchen equipment required.
- Costs** :
- Justification** : Desire of staff and library members.
 Other organisations have the facility
- Request for Action** : Provision of a space for a cafeteria as soon as possible.

Proposals are put up for various kinds of purposes: for starting institutions, building bridges, buying furniture, machinery, etc.

To start a film club in a university, interested students may approach teachers or the Vice Chancellor and express their wish. A teacher may be asked to help the students in framing a proposal. The proposal is drafted.

- It states the objective.
- It talks of the number of students who are interested.
- It lists the activities that the club will perform.
- It states the requirements for setting up the club. It projects the funds that will be required.
- It urges action.

On a larger scale, proposals are submitted for the Five Year Plans of the Government. The budget allocations are made on the basis of the proposals. They are called Plan Proposals.

Language focus

Notice the contexts in which the word 'proposal' is used. You will then have an idea of what a proposal involves, in what contexts proposals are generally written and the kind of importance they have.

The proposal must be approved by the Commerce Department.

The Board approved a library proposal *to increase* the number of authorized book sellers.

The proposal *to rebuild* the archive wing of the library came in the year 20xx.

Under the proposal, the Company’s shareholders would receive 10% dividend.

The company had access to inside information when it made its proposal to the Railway Board.

The company rejected the proposal and recalled its agent.

The librarian was asked to send his proposal at the earliest possible time.

The Board of Management approved Library Committee’s *proposal to finance* the long-awaited multimedia library.

Notice the phrase ‘proposal to ...’. *to + verb* is used to show intention or purpose. A proposal expresses an intention or purpose or plan.

A proposal is ‘**presented**’ or ‘**put up**’ for approval. A proposal can be ‘**sent**. A proposal is ‘**approved**’ or ‘**rejected**’.

15.5 FRAMEWORK FOR PROPOSALS

In the previous sections we looked at the basic features of proposals. In this section, we will examine certain common kinds of proposals for facilities within an organisation/institution.

A proposal has a framework which can be expanded. It may run into several pages. If it is a detailed proposal, it begins with an executive summary. This summary must be carefully written in order to impress the reader at the first instance. The executive summary condenses the content of the proposal and states the objective clearly.

In the following section, each part of a proposal will be examined. The questions that follow each proposal are learning questions that will enable you to understand the process of writing proposals better.

Sample Executive Summary

This proposal is submitted for the setting up of a departmental library of ELT (English Language Training) books in the Commerce Department of the M.G.L University. Most undergraduate students are in need of acquiring proper reading skills and have expressed a desire for focused training in English language skills as they have had their schooling through non-English medium. Departmental libraries can provide access to books related to the particular discipline. They will help the students acquire the register related to Commerce and improve their comprehension and communication skills in English.

Self Check Exercise

Note: i) Write your answers in the space given below.

ii) Check your answers with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

8) What is stated in the first sentence?

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.....

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9) What does the second sentence convey?

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.....

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10) What function do the last two sentences perform?

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Let us look at a sample proposal presented within an organisation:

Title Page

<p align="center">Proposal for Acquiring Space for HERITAGE LIBRARY, Trivandrum</p> <p align="center"><i>Submitted to the Mayor</i> Corporation of Trivandrum</p> <p align="center"><i>By the Director, Heritage Library Committee, Trivandrum</i> <i>12 September xxxx</i></p>

Self Check Exercise

Note: i) Write your answers in the space given below.

ii) Check your answers with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

11) What information does this page give you?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

12) What is being proposed?

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.....
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.....

13) To whom is it addressed?

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.....
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14) By whom is it proposed?

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Executive Summary
It is proposed that a space be allocated for the HERITAGE LIBRARY in the city of Trivandrum. The city has witnessed an increase in the number of people flocking to the public libraries in recent times. A need for a new library in the city has been perceived. The vacant building next to the Trivandrum Museum has been identified as suitable for the purpose. The cost of investment can be compensated by the charges levied for the using the library facilities.

Self Check Exercise

- Note: i) Write your answers in the space given below.
- ii) Check your answers with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

15) What does the summary indicate?

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16) What are the essential points it highlights?

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17) Will the reader view the proposal favourably on reading the summary?

.....

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.....

Background

The two Literary festivals held in the city this year have been instrumental in developing an interest in reading books. The residents of the city, especially the youngsters, have discovered the joy of reading books. A suitable space for a new library has been identified next to the Trivandrum Museum. This was used as the venue for various handicraft exhibitions. However a bigger space has been allotted for these exhibitions and the building is now lying vacant. Since this building is located in the heart of the city, residents from various parts of Trivandrum can easily access it. There is also a plan to include a section which has a collection of DVDs of films based on the literary classics.

Self Check Exercise

Note: i) Write your answers in the space given below.

ii) Check your answers with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

18) What does this section tell you about?

.....

.....

.....

.....

19) What is being described in sentences 3-5?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Rationale

In order to meet the demand of the increasing interest in reading, the need for a new library was imminent. A need was perceived for a library that can be easily accessed by the city folks. A committee was formed to determine the feasibility of setting up a Heritage Library. The library would be an avenue where the members would be exposed to a wide range of literature from across the world. In addition to that, both children and senior citizens could be fruitfully occupied. They would also be exposed to films based on literary classics.

Self Check Exercise

Note: i) Write your answer in the space given below.

ii) Check your answer with the answer given at the end of this Unit.

20) What is the purpose of this section?

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.....
.....
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.....

Proposal

In view of the above-mentioned factors, it is obvious that a new library is required.

The 4000 sq. ft space on the premises will be ideal for the library. This space has been recently vacated and advertised for letting out on lease. There will be ample space for the library members to move around and spend time in the library.

Shelves need to be built for placing the books and DVDs. There is also a requirement for tables and chairs for people to sit and read. There is a need for a separate cubicle to accommodate a cyber zone on the first floor.

Self Check Exercise

Note: i) Write your answers in the space given below.

ii) Check your answers with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

21) What is the connecting link between the rationale section and the proposal section?

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.....

22) Is the link needed? Why?

.....

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.....

23) What new information is presented in the Proposal section?

.....

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.....

Estimated Budget	
Lease amount for a two-year period:	Rs. 24, 00,000
Cost of renovation and setting up display shelves, boards:	Rs. 1,00,000
Capital investment on books:	Rs. 30,00,000
Cyber zone:	Rs. 10,00,000
Salaries for 8 library staff:	Rs. 10,00,000
Salaries for 2 cleaning staff:	Rs. 1,00,000
Maintenance costs:	Rs. 1,00,000
Transport:	Rs. 50,000
Miscellaneous:	Rs. 1,00,000
Total	Rs. 83,00,000
Estimated Returns	Rs. 10,00,000

Self Check Exercise

- Note:** i) Write your answers in the space given below.
 ii) Check your answers with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

24) Why is this section needed?

.....

.....

25) What does it tell you at a glance?

.....

.....

.....

Benefits

- ❖ Customers needs fulfillment
- ❖ Inculcating reading habits in the younger generation.
- ❖ Giving senior citizens a meaningful occupation.
- ❖ Access to a wide variety of books from various streams.

Self Check Exercise

Note: i) Write your answers in the space given below.

ii) Check your answers with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

26) What does this section highlight?

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.....

.....

.....

.....

27) Is the proposal convincing?

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.....

.....

Conclusion

It may be seen from the facts and figures presented above that this is a viable proposal that will yield good returns. An early decision on this proposal will prove worthwhile.

The proposal is submitted for approval.

Self Check Exercise

Note: i) Write your answers in the space given below.

ii) Check your answers with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

28) What is the function of the above section?

.....

.....

29) Why is it needed?

.....

.....

Self Check Exercise

Note: i) Write your answer in the space given below.

ii) Check your answer with the answer given at the end of this Unit.

30) Reproduced below is a proposal presented as one chunk. Section it and write suitable headings for each section using the table of contents given below.

Proposal for setting up a 24 x 7 café on the library premises submitted to the Vice Chancellor, XYZ University, by Pankaj Mongia, President XYZ Participants' Association

Table of Contents**Executive Summary****Statement of Problem****Objectives****Plan Proposal****Work Plan****Total Budget Estimates****Conclusion**

Economic, technological, informational, demographic and political forces have changed the way people live and work. These changes and the rate of change will continue to accelerate. Educational institutions like businesses, communities and families, must adapt to changing conditions to thrive. These institutions are struggling hard to keep pace with the astonishing rate of change in students' lives outside these institutions. Students will spend their adult lives in a multitasking, multifaceted, technology driven, diverse, vibrant world and they must come equipped to do so.

Our institute strives to provide every student a rich experience as far as academics is concerned. Entertainment and recreation of the students, however, have not been duly taken care of. There is a need to provide the students with a truly global experience so that they don't become misfits but work for its betterment and development. The proposal for a **24 x 7 café** on the library premises is an endeavour of XYZ Participant Association to bridge the gap between academics and entertainment.

XYZ attracts students from all over the country and across the globe. Some of these students come from metros while others are from small towns. They have different backgrounds and different identities. However they never get to meet each other, know each other better, and share ideas, thoughts and opinions simply because there is no place where they can meet and interact. The students make small groups and spend most of their time in these groups without bothering to introduce themselves to the members of the other groups. They go out, eat out and enjoy only in their own groups. Recently some students had a bitter experience when they had to go out at night in search of food at an unearthly hour.

Following are the objectives of this proposal:

- To ensure that the students get a global experience on the campus round the clock
- To provide the students with a place where they can refresh themselves for the next day's work
- To provide round the clock facilities to the students
- To blend academics with entertainment

The 21st century student is not bound by the limits of time. He/she is a 24 x 7 student. The XYZ Participants' Association has come up with the proposal to set up a 24 x 7 café which takes care of all the needs of the 21st century students and provides them with a truly global experience on the campus round the clock.

The 24 x 7 café will have:

- A **cyber zone** with at least 30 computers with internet access to provide the students with high speed Internet access to explore the world wide web.
- A **snacks counter** which will provide the students with fresh snacks, mini-meals, fresh fruit juices, etc.
- A **news corner** where the students can access magazines and newspapers.
- A **reading room** which will allow the students to sit and read books.
- A **tête-à-tête hall** where the students can sit and discuss the issues that concern them.
- A **TV room** where the students can watch TV.
- A **music room** with headphones and juke box where the students can listen to music.
- A **sports corner** where the students can play games like carom, table tennis, badminton, etc. and work out in the gym.

The entire plan will be carried out by two sub-committees – one responsible for procuring equipment for the café and appointing personnel; and the other one responsible for selecting the site for construction, inviting tenders and supervising the construction of the café.

The plan will be carried out in two phases: In the first phase, three best sites for the construction of the site will be selected, the feasibility report will be prepared and tenders will be invited.

In the second phase, when the construction would have begun, the equipment will be procured for the café and personnel will be appointed.

1) **Budget for Salaries/Wages****Personnel required**

Place	Manager/Instructor	Attendant
Cyber Zone	1	1
Snacks counter	1	2
Gym	1	-
Reading room		
News corner	-	1
General	-	2

Monthly Emoluments (per person-per month in Rs.)

Place	Manager/Instructor	Attendant
Cyber Café	5000	2500
Cafeteria	4500	2500
Gym	5500	-
Library	5000	2000
General	-	2000

Budget for Equipment (in Rs.)

Air Conditioners	Furniture (for reading room, discussion hall, TV and Music room)	Equipment for Gym	Sports Accessories (for Health Club)	Electronic Equipment (for TV and Music Room)	Cafeteria (kitchen appliances including automatic soft drink vending machines)	Cyber Cafe
20,000	30,000	15,000	10,000	25,000	20,000	100000

2) **Budget for Construction Related Expenditure (in Rs.)**

Soft Material including electronic equipment etc.	10,00,00
Hard Material including cement, bricks, etc.	70,00,00

The aim of education in the modern world is not just limited to academics but goes beyond it. It aims at overall personality development of the students. The educational institutions should provide the students with every possible opportunity to grow as a professional as well as a person. The 24 x 7 café is essentially global in nature and strives at the fusion of academics and entertainment. It also aims at providing the students a truly rich and global experience. There is a great need to have such multi-utility cafes on the campus to ensure that the students have all the facilities within easy reach and get them round the clock.

That was a proposal written by a student representative of an educational institution. It gives you an idea of what elements need to be included in a proposal and an overall structure of a proposal that is sent to authorities within an organisation.

15.6 GRAMMAR: THE PASSIVE FORM

Read the following sentences from the reading passage:

- 1) The proposal **is scrutinized** by authorities within the organisation.
- 2) Oral presentations of proposals **are** also **made** before a select audience.

The underlined sentences are in the passive voice.

The passive voice is formed by using the verb *be* and the past participle. (e.g. bought, used, etc.)

Examples:

Advanced degrees (Ph.D.) **are listed** on business cards...

Status **is determined** by age, university degrees and profession.

We use the passive in the following situations:

- We often use the passive to focus on something that happens to someone, when we do not want to focus on the person who does the action.

Example: Over 30% of Indians **are employed** in the agricultural sector.

- The passive is often used to talk about systems and processes. Example:

The US **is characterised** by a 'scientific' approach to business. Every aspect of commercial life **is studied** and **analysed**.

- The passive is often used in business correspondence because it is less personal than the active voice. Example:

Thank you for your letter which **was received** at this branch today.

- The present perfect passive is often used when we are describing changes that have taken place. Example:

Globalization **has brought** the world closer together and helped to reduce cultural diversity.

- To downplay the action or when you don't want to fix blame when something goes wrong. Example:

The sales targets **were not met**.

How to form the passive with other tenses:

- **Present Continuous Passive**

Example: I **am being asked** to work every weekend.

- **Past Continuous Passive**

Example: We only noticed the mistakes when the book **was being published**.

- **Present Perfect Passive**

Example: Various models **have been used** to explain this concept.

• **Past Perfect Passive:**

Example: They emailed us to say that the shipment **had been delayed**.

The passive forms of the verb in different tenses would look as follows:

Tense	Simple	Continuous	Perfect
Present	Is / am / are + past participle	Is / am / are + being + past participle	Has/have+ been +part participle
Past	Was / were + past participle	Was/were + being + past participle	Had + been + past participle
Future	Will/ shall + be + past participle	-	-

Activity

5) Change the following sentences into the passive voice. Omit the doer where it is necessary.

i) China produces these types of telephones

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.....

ii) We make water from a mixture of hydrogen and oxygen.

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.....

iii) Someone hit my car from the back.

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.....

iv) Employers pay many manual workers weekly.

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v) Madam Curie discovered Radium.

.....
.....

vi) They announced the winners of the Nobel Prizes in Physics and Chemistry yesterday.

.....
.....

vii) Countries store most nuclear waste underground.

.....
.....

viii) If there is a vacancy, we first ask suitable in-house candidates to apply.

.....
.....

ix) They have cleared all the roads in this area due to VIP movement.

.....
.....

x) They elected a new mayor yesterday.

.....
.....

6) Rampur as a small city has changed a lot in the last 10 years. Rewrite the sentences below about Rampur using the passive form. The first one is done for you.

i) They built a new stadium. A new stadium was built.

ii) They are building a new hospital.

.....
.....

iii) They will finish it by next December.

.....
.....

iv) They have knocked down the old shopping complex.

.....
.....

v) They are going to build a new modern one soon.

.....
.....

vi) They are constructing a new multiplex movie hall.

.....
.....

15.7 SUMMARY

In this Unit, we have examined the need for writing a proposal, the features of proposals and the framework of proposals. The language functions used are: describing, justifying and persuading. In the grammar section, we concentrated on the passive form.

15.8 ANSWERS TO ACTIVITIES

- 1)
 - i) Library automation,
 - ii) Setting up of digital library
- 2) Do it yourself.
- 3) We have given some sample proposals. You could have your own list.
 - i) Providing computer labs with internet facilities.
 - ii) Starting clubs.
 - iii) Starting new courses.
 - iv) Opening a new branch of a bank.
 - v) Providing crèches for children of employees.
- 4) Refer to section 15.5
 - i) These types of telephones are produced by China.
 - ii) Water is made from a mixture of hydrogen and oxygen.
 - iii) My car was hit from the back.
 - iv) Many manual workers are paid weekly by employers.
 - v) Radium was discovered by Madam Curie.
 - vi) The winner of the Nobel Prize in Physics and Chemistry were announced yesterday.
 - vii) Most nuclear waste is stored underground.
 - viii) If there is a vacancy, suitable in-house candidates are asked first to apply.
 - ix) All the roads in the area have been cleared due to the movement of VIP.
 - x) A new mayor was elected yesterday.
- 6)
 - i) A new hospital is being built.
 - ii) It will be finished by next December.
 - iii) The old shopping complex has been knocked down.
 - iv) A new modern one is going to be built soon.
 - v) A new multiplex movie hall is being constructed.

15.9 ANSWERS TO SELF CHECK EXERCISES

- 1) Sentences 1-3 perform the function of describing the situation on M.G. Road.
- 2) Sentences 4 and 5 state the problem. Traffic on M.G. Road makes it impossible to cross the road during the day time and school children and college-goers are forced to make use of transportation even for a short distance.
- 3) The solution proposed is that of building three foot-over bridges at 1.5 km distance from each other.

- 4) The verb forms in sentences from 1-5 are stative verbs.
- 5) To ease
- 6) The modal verb 'should' is indicative of obligation.
- 7) The passive voice used in the sentence to put the onus on the authorities concerned.
- 8) The first sentence gives the information that a proposal has been submitted for setting up a departmental library in the Commerce Department of the M.G.L University.
- 9) The second sentence conveys the need for the departmental library. There are undergraduate students who have had their schooling through non-English medium. They want to acquire proper reading skills and have expressed a desire for focused training in English language skills.
- 10) They last two sentences justify the need for a departmental library. There is persuasion for the proposal to be implemented.
- 11) The information conveyed here consists of- the proposal made, to whom it is addressed and by whom the proposal is made.
- 12) The proposal is for acquiring space for a new library in the city of Trivandrum.
- 13) It is addressed to the Mayor of the city of Trivandrum.
- 14) It is proposed by the Director of the Heritage Library Committee.
- 15) This summary indicates the need for a new library in the city of Trivandrum in Kerala.
- 16) The summary advocates the need for a new library in Trivandrum. The growing population of avid readers is stated as the main reason. It also includes the suggestion for a suitable space for this library. It indicates how the cost of investment can be compensated for.
- 17) Yes, the reader will view the proposal favorably since the reason for setting up a library is valid.
- 18) This section acquaints the reader with the background which justifies the need for the new library.
- 19) The sentences describe how a space has been identified for the Heritage library and why it is a suitable space.
- 20) This section gives the rationale for setting up a new library in Trivandrum.
- 21) The connecting link between the rationale section and the proposal section is the need for a new library.
- 22) The link is needed because it gives a logical flow and cohesion to the proposal.
- 23) The proposal also mentions the need for shelves to be built for placing the books and DVDs as well as a need for tables and chairs for people to sit and read. It also indicates the plan to build a separate cubicle to accommodate a cyber zone on the first floor.

- 24) This section gives the reader an idea of the expenditure to be incurred.
- 25) This section is a concrete way of looking at the estimated budget involved in implementing the proposal. It shows the proposal to be economically viable.
- 26) This section highlights the benefits of the proposal.
- 27) The proposal is convincing as it deals in detail all the pros and cons involved in implementing the proposal.
- 28) The section concludes the proposal in a logical and convincing manner.
- 29) The section is needed because it persuades the reader to make a favourable decision at the earliest.
- 30) Executive Summary: paras 1, 2
 Statement of Problem: para 3
 Objectives: 5,6
 Plan Proposal: 7
 Work Plan: 8,9,10
 Total Budget Estimates: 11
 Conclusion: 12

15.10 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Brock, S. L. *Writing Business Proposals And Reports 01 Edition*, Viva Books Pvt Ltd. New Delhi, 2004, Print.

Forsyth, P. *How to Be Better at Writing Reports and Proposals*, Kogan Page Ltd., 2009, print.

Hamper. R. J. Baugh, L. *Handbook For Writing Proposals, Second Edition*, Print, Paperback, McGraw Hills, print, 2011.

UNIT 16 WRITING REPORTS

Structure

- 16.0 Objectives
- 16.1 Introduction
- 16.2 Warm Up
- 16.3 Types of Reports
- 16.4 Style, Structure and Order
 - 16.4.1 Style of a Report
 - 16.4.2 Structure of a Report
 - 16.4.3 Order of a Report
- 16.5 Example of a Report: Internal Inquiry Reports
- 16.6 Listening Comprehension: Some Tips on Presenting A Report
- 16.7 Grammar: Reduced Relative Clauses
- 16.8 Summary
- 16.9 Answers to Self Check Exercises
- 16.10 References and Further Reading

16.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we will discuss writing of reports. After reading the Unit, you will be able to:

- describe the types of reports with special reference to those that are useful to the library staff;
- explain the style, structure and order of reports;
- be conscious of some broad tips on report writing;
- use reduced relative clause in your writing and speech; and
- prepare an internal inquiry report.

16.1 INTRODUCTION

Reports are a necessary part of on-the-job communication. As a librarian we have to write reports of different kinds. These may be short reports in the form of a memo or a letter or longer reports which may be in manuscript form. Sometimes these reports are submitted within the organisation—in fact there are times you may be asked to write a report by a senior in your organisation.

You may ask ‘what is a report?’ Although the term is used to refer to hundreds of different types of written communication, a report can be simply defined as an organised presentation of information which serves an immediate and practical need by furnishing requested or needed ideas. For example, you have to write an appraisal report of a junior or a progress report of an ongoing project that you may have taken up. Your chief librarian may ask you to recommend some equipment that is required for the library—then you have to write a ‘recommendation report’, and so on.

In this Unit we will make you aware of the different types of reports that you may have to write in the course of your working life as a librarian.

16.2 WARM UP

Reports may be of various types: meant for internal audience or external audience; narrative or statistical; periodic or one off; short or detailed; formal or informal; confidential or open; and so on.

Visit a nearby library and study different types of reports and write down the titles of at least five reports below:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

Study the structure of these reports in details, and write down five main headings that are common in these reports:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

16.3 TYPES OF REPORTS

Reports can be classified in many ways: by their contents (e.g., feasibility reports, survey reports, etc.), by their function (e.g., informational, analytical, recommendatory), by their **format** (e.g. memo reports, letter reports, formal reports, informal reports), by **time** (periodic reports, progress reports, final reports), and so on. While all these parameters (content, function, format, time, etc.) are relevant and useful for classifying reports, they lead to several subcategories of reports which are not very relevant and useful when your aim is to learn how to write reports. For the purpose of learning report writing, the most useful parameter is a very simple one: **length**. On the basis of length, we can divide reports into two types: short reports and long reports. By a short report we mean a report that is up to 10-12 pages long, while a long report is anything above this and may run into several volumes. A good number of features of reports can be described in terms of length: for example, long reports are always written and presented in a formal style. Short reports are much more informal. Similarly, long reports are always presented in a manuscript format, whereas short reports are mostly sent in the memo or letter format.

Next to length, the parameter of *function* is the most important. The purpose of most official reports, as we stated above, is to convey **information** about some aspect of any organisation, so most organisational reports are informational. Periodic reports, progress reports, lab reports, survey reports, etc. are all information reports. Sometimes you may be asked to provide not only information but also your analysis of the information, i.e. your interpretation of the facts, to help the management take decisions. Such reports are called **analytical reports** (or **interpretive reports**). Analytical reports contain information and analysis: they do not contain recommendations for action. If you are asked to include recommendations for action too in your report, it becomes a **recommendation** (or **recommendatory**)report.

The third important parameter is that of *style*. By style we mean essentially the degree of formality in the presentation of the report. There are a number of factors which influence the choice of style in a report, and a number of features in the report in which this choice is expressed. On the basis of this parameter we divide reports into **formal** and **informal**.

The question of style is closely linked to that of format. Like simple messages, reports too can be sent in the memo format or the letter format. The letter format is used when the report is to be sent outside the organisation: such reports are always written in the formal style. Internal reports are sent in the memo format unless they happen to be long, in which case they are sent in the manuscript format. Manuscript reports, as we stated above, are always in the formal style; memo reports may be written in the formal or the semi-formal style. What style the writer chooses depends on a number of factors.

Let us discuss the characteristics of reports.

Conciseness

Most official reports are short, as they should be. That is, they never exceed a few pages. As we had occasion to mention several times before, **conciseness** is one of the basic qualities of official writing.

Accuracy

The second aspect is **accuracy**. **Accuracy** means “**telling it as it is**”, “**telling it concretely**” and “**telling it all**”. The first, in the context of project reports, means not making the project appear closer to, or farther away from completion than it really is. The second, “telling it concretely”, means using quantitative instead of vague and imprecise descriptions. Say: “the project will be ready for final assessment in three weeks”, rather than “The project will take some more time to complete”. The third “telling it all” means what it says: don’t hide anything. There may be problems and complications, including some created by your own mistakes, and you may be tempted to conceal them lest they reflect on your capability. Concealed mistakes tend to have a multiplier effect and may well come back to haunt you later. Moreover, the management appreciates a candid estimate of all problems so that they can be addressed in good time.

Format

The third virtue of a good report is the **right format**. Reports, as we saw above, can be sent in three formats: the memo format, the letter format and the manuscript format.

Objective

It is important to be objective. Don't let your personal feelings about things influence your analysis. For example, if you have been asked to submit a report on whether or not the Heritage Library should open a new branch at Patna, don't give a favourable report just because it happens to be your hometown.

Evidence

Lastly, provide solid evidence. Don't base your analysis on flimsy evidence. Do not make a recommendation based on a single piece of evidence, collect solid and irrefutable support for your analysis. If such support is not available and you still want to offer an analysis or a recommendation, say why. Normally, mere hunches are not acceptable reasons for recommendations.

Self Check Exercise

Note: i) Write your answers at the space given below.

ii) Check your answers with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

Answer these questions briefly.

- 1) Reports are said to be a management tool. What is this tool used for? Give examples.

.....

.....

.....

- 2) How are informational reports different from analytic reports?

.....

.....

.....

- 3) Name three types of informational reports.

.....

.....

.....

- 4) Define 'Accuracy'.

.....

.....

.....

16.4 STYLE, STRUCTURE AND ORDER

In this section, we shall discuss the style, structure and order of a report.

16.4.1 Style of a Report

We have discussed so far some qualities of a good report. For example, we said that reports in general should be brief and should be written in the right format. Further the informational content of the reports should be accurate (i.e. should be factual, should not leave out any facts and should be conveyed concretely), the analytical content should be objective, argued and well-supported with evidence. These virtues are, by and large, welcome in all reports. However, all the virtues of a good report cannot be laid down in absolute terms: i.e. in terms which would be applicable to each and every report irrespective of any other factors. In fact, a major virtue in a report is that it should be sensitive to factors like who initiates it (the writer on his own or on the authorisation of another person), who is going to read it and what his/her attributes are, what the subject matter of the report is, etc. For example, a report that is to be read by the top person in your organisation, whom you don't even know personally, cannot be written in the same style as a report which will be read by your immediate supervisor with whom you are quite friendly. Similarly, a report requiring detailed statistical information, would have to be presented in a different style from an X report and so on. It is the influence of factors like these on the style and structure of the reports that we will discuss in this section.

To keep the discussion simple and intelligible, we will confine ourselves to the six main affecting variables (i.e. factors which affect the choice of styles, structures, etc.) and the three main affected variables, as follows:

Affecting variables:

- 1) Who originates the report?
- 2) Who receives the report?
- 3) What is the subject matter of the report?
- 4) Where is the report to be sent: within or outside the organisation?
- 5) Why is the report being prepared?
- 6) How will the report be received?

Affected variables:

- 1) Degree of formality
- 2) Structure (or organisation)
- 3) Order (direct or indirect) or presentation

We will focus our discussion around the affected variables and trace the relationship of each one of them to the affecting variables.

16.4.2 Structure of a Report

A formal report has a basic structure. It has several parts of which the following six are the main ones. The structure of a report depends on a number of factors, such as the purpose of the report, the audience (do they belong to the same organisation or external are they especially internal or external), the convention followed by the organisation, the format prescribed by the organisation. However, any format chosen will usually have some or all of the following elements. This is especially true in the case of longer reports.

- 1) Title page
- 2) Abstract
- 3) Content page
- 4) Executive summary
- 5) Introduction
- 6) The body of the report
- 7) Conclusions / Recommendations
- 8) Bibliographical references
- 9) Appendices

A formal report will show all these parts and some others. Informal reports do away with many of these parts: most are without Synopsis and Appendices and some may also do away with Introduction and Conclusions. A Recommendatory Report retains the recommendation section. Certain kinds of informal reports retain Introduction and Conclusion. These reports can then be described as being more formal than the ones that do without them.

Given below are **details of the structure of a report:**

1) **Title Page**

The information that should appear on the title page includes:

- The title proper, including sub-title if any.
- Name of the organisation / department who has prepared the report, along with name and designation of the lead person.
- The Year (and month) in which the report is prepared.
- Name of the recipient organisation /department and designation of the person concerned.

2) **Abstract**

The abstract should present a very brief informative summary of the entire report. For that reason it should be written only after the report is written. The abstract should be brief having only one paragraph and not exceeding 250 words.

3) **Content Page**

As the name suggests, the content page will list all the numbered headings of chapters/sections, following the same sequence as in the report, with corresponding page numbers. The purpose of the content page is to help the reader to locate the section or part of the document which they want to read.

4) **Executive Summary**

The purpose of executive summary is very different from that of an abstract. While abstracts are brief, executive summaries are more detailed and aimed at a non-technical audience. Its focus is more the findings, conclusions and recommendations. Though an executive summary should stand on its own, it should not exceed more than two pages. Often recipients do not read the

whole report, they just read the summary, and if needed read certain sections of the report. So it is very important to make sure that the executive summary captures all the important findings in the report.

5) **Introduction**

The purpose, aim and scope of the report should be stated in the introduction. This section may also briefly describe the background to put the report in context. The background can also be a section on its own, instead of being part of an introduction. It should be a brief, not more than two pages and presented in a few paragraphs.

6) **Main Body**

This will be the main part of the report, and its structure will depend on the kind of report it is and the intended audience. It should give details of the methodology used, the samples taken, details of the analysis of data, and a section presenting the findings and comments on those findings.

7) **Conclusions / Recommendations**

It is in this section the interpretation of the results and conclusions arrived at are given. If the results were discussed with anyone else before arriving at the conclusions, mention it here. The conclusions should be listed in order of priority, the most important one first and the least important one last. The conclusion should answer questions such as the following:

What has the investigation shown?

How important are the conclusions for the organisation?

Where there any surprises, if so, what are they?

The recommendation / conclusions should be very specific, not vague statements, and should be closely related to the aims stated in the earlier section. If you are not happy with the conclusions, it should be mentioned. This section can also list the specific action points and where to go from here.

8) **Bibliographical References**

If any reference sources were used, it is necessary to list the details of those sources here, following international standards for citing references.

9) **Appendices**

It is better to include certain type of materials as an Appendix (e.g. tables, copy of questionnaires, etc.) instead of putting in the main body of the report.

In addition to these nine sections mentioned, some reports also may contain sections such as:

- Glossary
- Abbreviations
- Acknowledgments

Report Layout

Unlike in an essay or a piece of prose, it is important to use a proper layout, with sections numbered properly, in a report. The numbering system used to identify different parts of a report has great significance. The normal practice is to use one of the following two layout systems: decimal numbering or number-letter. Once a system is chosen, it is essential to use the same system throughout and consistently.

Decimal Numbering

Using decimal system for numbering content is very popular. The convention is to use the decimal system in the following way:

The main sections (level 1 headings)	1.0	2.0	3.0	4.0 (zero can be omitted)
Main divisions of sections (level 2 headings)	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4
Sub-divisions of main divisions	1.1.1	1.1.2	1.1.3	1.1.4

Alpha-numeric System

Here a combination of letters and numerals are used to number sections, where the main sections are denoted by a single letter and the sections under it are denoted by numerals, as shown below:

The main sections (level 1 headings)	A	B	C	D
Main divisions of sections (level 2 headings)	A.1	A.2	A.3	A.4

Other Systems

Though the two systems mentioned above are the popular ones, writers often use other systems also, such as I, II, III, IV, V and a, b, c, d, e or any combinations of letters and numerals, e.g. 1.a, 1.b; I.A, IIA, and so on.

Such systems of numbering help the reader to gain a strong indication of the relatedness, and relative importance of the parts of the text.

16.4.3 Order of a Report

One can adopt a direct or an indirect approach to the presentation of the message in a report. How will a report be received? Anyone who submits a report has some idea of how the report is likely to be received by the audience: favourably or unfavourably? Is the audience going to be receptive or not? If s/he feels that the audience will be receptive, i.e. her/his report will be received favourably, s/he can adopt the direct approach; if s/he feels that the audience will not be receptive and the report may be received with skepticism, or if s/he has no idea whatsoever about the attitude of the audience, s/he will be safe using the indirect approach. Let us explain why.

By the **direct approach** we mean presentation of the main idea of the report (the main recommendation, finding, conclusion, etc.) at the very outset. The details, supporting arguments, justification or whatever else there is, follows the presentation of the main idea. The advantage of the approach is that the audience does not have to wait till the end to find out what your main conclusion or recommendation is. Once the main idea is clear to the audience, they find it easy to assimilate it and either agree or disagree with it. No one is left in any doubt. A report which follows the direct approach also creates a positive impression of the writer. The writer is shown to be sure of her/himself and not trying to hide her/himself in a maze of arguments or details.

However, this kind of report produces a positive effect only if the audience already has some confidence in the writer, e.g., in an authorised report. If you have just joined an organisation and this is your first report, and if the organisation also happens to be a status conscious one, you would be better off eschewing the direct approach and using the indirect one. In **the indirect approach**, you win the confidence of the audience gradually by presenting your arguments for the audience's evaluation one by one, and by building up, through a process of slow accumulation, an impressive array of argument and evidence before drawing your own conclusions and making your recommendations. The impression that you thus produce is that you have not pre-judged the issue, that you have not only been quite objective in collecting your evidence, you have also offered it for the reader's own inspection, along with all the facts. Even a hostile audience can be won over by an approach of this type.

Self Check Exercise

Note: i) Write your answers at the space given below.

ii) Check your answers with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

5) What are the affecting variables and the affected variables? What is the relationship between the two?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

6) What style of writing, formal and informal, would you use if the person who was going to receive your report was:

- a) Your friendly supervisor
- b) Chief Librarian
- c) A very status conscious Senior with whom you had only an official relationship.

.....
.....
.....

7) Arrange these sentences in order of formality from the most to the least formal:

- a) I say, let’s advertise the post right away.
- b) I recommend that the post be advertised immediately.
- c) I think we should advertise the post as soon as possible.
- d) The Chief Librarian is of the opinion that the post should be advertised without any further delay.

.....

.....

.....

16.5 EXAMPLE OF A REPORT: INTERNAL INQUIRY REPORTS

A library can be beset with various problems which need to be attended to immediately as they will affect its smooth running. It needs to look into problems related to book procurement and placement, customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction, salary structures, competition or problems related to all of these. When such problems arise, committees are appointed to study the problems and suggest solutions. The scope of each issue is defined as well as the time specified for the report to be submitted. In this section we will study a sample of this kind of report. It is an in-house report. The boxes on the left indicate the tense and grammatical forms used. The boxes on the left indicate the content. As you read, understand why a particular tense is used for a particular section.

	LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL	
	28 February 2...	
Address	Mr. Saurabh Kumar Senior Librarian Biblio Library Mumbai	
Present Continuous	Dear Sir, I am submitting the report compiled by the Special Committee appointed by you to examine the causes of growing customer dissatisfaction with the services of Biblio Library.	Topic
Present for future indication	I hope that the recommendations of the Committee will help us set right the problems raised by members of the library as we as the employees. These will help our library be back on the right track.	
	Yours truly, Beni Kumar Assistant Librarian	

REPORT ON
GROWING CUSTOMER AND EMPLOYEE DISSATISFACTION

Submitted to
 Mr. Saurabh Kumar
 Senior Librarian
 BIBLIO Library,

by
 Beni Kumar
 Assistant Librarian, Delhi
 28 February

Title

Senior official

Person responsible for the study

Language focus: A report is written **on** something.
 A report is submitted **to** someone **by** someone.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Special Committee consisting of five members appointed by the Chief Librarian inquired into the causes for growing customer and employee dissatisfaction that have plagued BIBLIO Library for a year now.

Surveys and interviews indicated that customer complaints were related to poor maintenance of books, lack of information on the library website, delay in getting the latest editions of journals and magazines, and poor in-library service.

The staff response to the above complaints was that it was a result of understaffing, long working hours, low wages and weak communication channels between the employees and the management. Poor service was also the result of insufficient procurements and stocking and lack of communication between the employees and the management.

Recommendations include increase in compensation, rationalising working hours, open channels of communication between staff and customers, management and operations.

Past

Present Perfect

Past

Past

Present

Purpose

Data collected

Feedback from staff

Recommendations

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The following were the members of the Special Committee, set up by the Chief Librarian, to investigate the reasons for increasing customer and employee dissatisfaction at BIBLIO Library:

- Mr. Saurabh Kumar, Senior Librarian.
- Mr. Pranav Sudhir, Assistant Librarian (Collection & Maintenance)
- Ms Christine Thur, Assistant Librarian (e-library)
- Mr. Akhil Singh, Assistant Librarian (Periodicals and Journals)
- Mr. Beni Kumar, Assistant Librarian

The committee was asked to study the reasons for the customer and employee dissatisfaction during the year 20xx – 20xx. They had to examine the customer complaints and employee responses and submit its report to the Chief Librarian by March 5, 2....

Sign-posting listing

Past
Passive

BACKGROUND

Biblio Library was established in 2001. Being a centrally located public library it soon became a regular haunt of the city’s bookworms. However, lapses in the services have resulted in several complaints from the library members.

Growing discontent among the employees has been noticed which in turn has adversely affected their performance. The Committee was appointed to look into the causes for this through direct interaction with the library members and employees with a view to getting the library back on rail.

Discussing issues and giving reasons for the study

Past

Present Perfect

Present Perfect

Past

OBJECTIVES

- To study
- a. customer discontent
 - b. employee behaviour and
 - c. and recommend remedial measures

To+verb

PLANNING

A preliminary meeting of the committee was held on August 7, 20... to decide upon the modalities of the inquiry.

It was decided that five representatives including the Senior Librarian, Assistant Librarian (Collection & Maintenance), Assistant Librarian (e-library) and Assistant Librarian (Periodicals and Journals) will be part of the Committee. Ten representatives of the Employees’ Union would also be invited to attend a meeting to understand the employees’ perspective of the problems on Aug 15, 2...,

Survey questionnaires would be distributed to 100 members of the library to obtain information regarding the library services. Long-standing members would be identified and contacted personally or via telephone.

Step 1

Decision a

b

c

Past passive

Modal verb in passive to indicate future

The responsibilities were divided among the Committee members as follows:

Senior Librarian: Overall Coordinator

d Assistant Librarian ((Collection & Maintenance): Reasons for poor maintenance of the books.

Assistant Librarian (e-library): Reasons for the problems in the library database.

Assistant Librarian (Periodicals and Journals): Reasons for delay in getting the latest editions of journals and magazines

Assistant Librarian: Reasons for discourteous behaviour by employees, lack of motivation

The entire process would be completed by February 1, 2.... and the report submitted by February 28, 2...

PROCEDURE

Past passive	A series of 5 meetings was held with the staff to gather first-hand information on the various aspects of operational difficulties once a month.	Step 2
Past passive	The meetings were held in a democratic manner to allow for free and frank expression of views.	
Past passive	Survey forms were distributed to 50 library members and detailed information regarding various service aspects was gathered.	Step 3
Past passive	The findings are reported in the next section.	Step 4

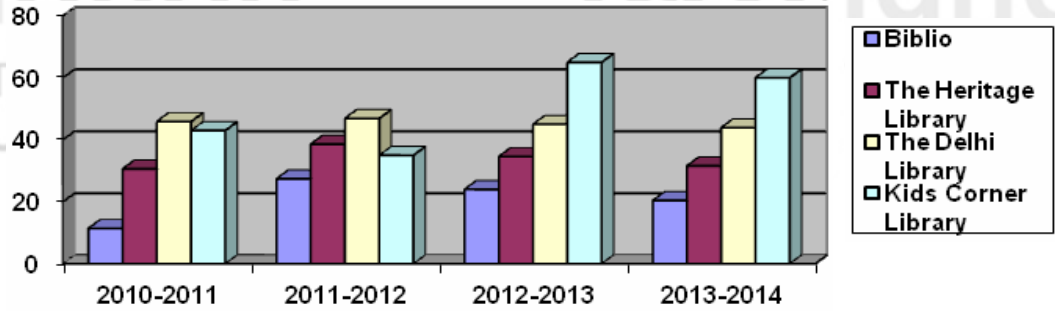
FINDINGS related to employees

Sources: meetings, interactive sessions, personal investigation.

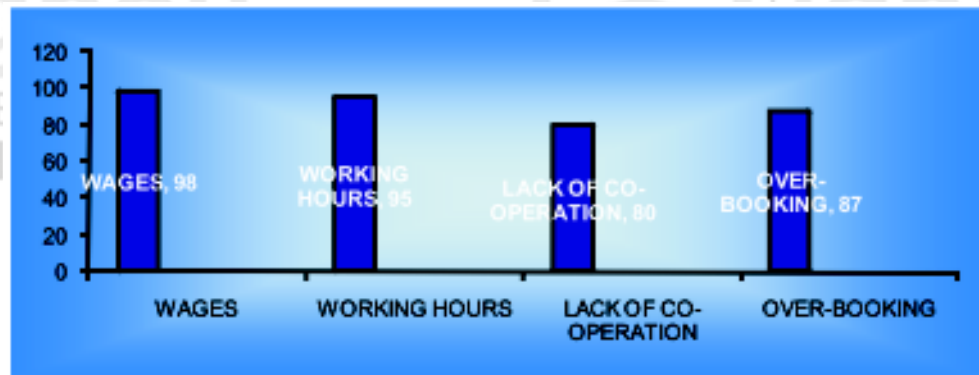
The major reasons of employee dissatisfaction:

Present perfect	The employee wage structure has remained the same for the past five years. The employees want an increment in their wages.	Finding 1
		Signposting
		Point a
Present perfect	The library does not compensate for overtime when employees stand in for absentees. Facilities for pick-up and drop of staff have become very irregular resulting in late reporting for duty and leaving later than duty hours.	b
Present	BIBLIO Library management adopts a very stiff and unsympathetic attitude towards employees' personal problems. There is no one to go to when there is a crisis.	c
Present	Lack of proper communication between the management and the employees results in poor coordination of the library activities.	d
		e
Present	All these problems affect the overall performance, motivation and skills of the employees resulting in angry outbursts and discourteous behaviour with the library members. This has been detrimental to Biblio Library's public image.	Summary

Graph showing the comparative average wage structure of four private libraries in the city:



Graph showing the percentage of dissatisfaction of employees about various issues:



FINDINGS related to library members.

Sources: questionnaires, personal investigation by Mr. Pranav Sudhir and Ms. Christine Thur

Present

The following are the major problems faced by the library members:

Findings II

Signposting

Past passive

Poor maintenance of books: Books were often found in a bad state. Missing pages and torn covers were common. In addition to that they were not arranged properly, making it difficult for members to find the books.

a

Present

Non-availability of latest editions of journals and periodicals: Often the latest editions of the various academic journals as well as periodicals are not available for issue. Sometimes certain issues would be available only after several months of publication.

b

Past

Lack of information on the library database: The library website is not updated regularly. Some of the links were also not functioning properly.

c

Lack of courtesy: Members reported several instances of indifference and curtness by library staff when they were approached for help with problems.

d

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the above findings, we recommend the following:

- 1 A 5% increase **in** wage structure and allowances.
- 2 Rationalization **of** working hours. Compensation **for** overtime.
- 3 Intensive training programmes for the employees in people relations management.
- 4 Open communication systems between management and employees.
- 5 Training the library staff in proper cataloging and maintenance of books.
6. Ensuring that there are weekly meetings to review if the library databases are up-to-date and that the latest issues of periodicals and journals are in place.

Nominalised Constructions

Notice prepositions following subjects

Link with previous section

List of recommendations a, b

c

d

e

CONCLUSION

Present

The committee suggests an immediate implementation of the recommendations.

Future indications

It suggests that BIBLIO Library should concentrate on arriving at earliest possible solutions of the problems at hand.

Summary statement

Self Check Exercise

- Note:** i) Write your answers at the space given below.
 ii) Check your answers with the answers given at the end of this Unit.
- 8) Summarise the above detailed report as a letter.

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9) What is the purpose of this report?

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10) What are the functions of each section?

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16.6 LISTENING COMPREHENSION: SOME TIPS ON PRESENTING A REPORT

Self Check Exercise

11) Listen to some tips in good report presentations. Tick the tips that are mentioned by the speaker. Put a cross against those that are not. You may play the CD provided and listen to the audio as many times as you require. Please note that the text of the audio has been provided in the answers section.

- 1) A report is not something totally set apart from other forms of writing.
- 2) It is important to use a distinctive style in writing a report.
- 3) The language of a report needs to be lucid, direct and economical.
- 4) The author of the report needs to put himself/herself in the background so that the subject gets the primary attention.
- 5) Don't put more than one important idea under the same heading and sub-heading.
- 6) Allow adequate space between the elements of your report.
- 7) It is better to use formal language only.
- 8) Do number each page.

- 9) A good report shares the background with the speakers.
- 10) Label the tables, graphs etc in a report.

16.7 GRAMMAR: REDUCED RELATIVE CLAUSES

Adjective clauses can also be **reduced** to **phrases**, which modify the noun, without changing the meaning of the sentence.

Let's look at the rules for reducing adjective clauses used as **subject of the clause**.

- 1) Omit the relative pronouns **who, which, that** and the **be** form of the verb (is, was, were, etc.)

Example:

- a) A report is a formal written document on a particular function or an operation which is carried out at the workplace.
- 2) In adjective clauses that do not contain the verb **be**, it is often possible to drop the relative pronoun, and change the verb to its **-ing** form.

Examples:

- a) IIC members **who have their library tickets** may borrow books.
- b) IIC members **having their library tickets** may borrow books.
- 3) Some adjective clauses can be reduced to **appositive phrases**. An **appositive phrase** is simply **placing one noun or noun phrase next to another, with a comma between them**.

Examples:

- a) Mrs. Gupta, **who is our MD**, is very fond of parties.
- b) Mrs. Gupta, our MD, is very fond of parties.

Self Check Exercises

Note: i) Write your answers at the space given below.

ii) Check your answers with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

- 12) Which of the following phrases can be considered 'reduced' versions of relative clauses?
 - i) The lady in the front row
 - ii) The worker in the street
 - iii) The voice of authority
 - iv) The destruction of the habitat
 - v) The point to consider
 - vi) The proposal discussed during the meeting
- 13) First pick out the adjective clauses. Then change the adjective clauses to adjective phrases or appositive phrases.
 - i) Mr. Anil Kumar is the new Chief Librarian who is in-charge of the Delhi Library.

- ii) The employees who are in Mr. Kanwar’s library are having a great time.
- iii) Mr. Kumar has written books which are used in colleges all over the country.
- iv) He’s just completed a new book which is *Working in a Library Can Be Fun*.
- v) Library Science, which is a difficult subject, is made interesting and entertaining by him.

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16.8 SUMMARY

In this Unit, we made you aware of various formal aspect of a report. While writing report, it is important to keep the audience in mind: the content, format, structure, etc. will depend a lot on that factor. Grant making organisations will normally have their own prescribed format for reports, and it is necessary to follow that format. If any does not have such formats, one should arrive at a format using elements described in this Unit. For internal reports too, one need to understand the type of format popularly used in the organisation, and follow that. Whatever format is used, it is most important to ensure that report is perfect in every respect.

16.9 ANSWER TO SELF CHECK EXERCISES

- 1) Reports are used for collecting information about what is going on at the lower levels in an organisation. For example whether organisation policies are being implemented, organisation targets are being met, etc.
- 2) Informational reports convey only information; analytical reports also include analyses of the information.
- 3) Progress reports; periodic reports, narrative reports
- 4) Accuracy means three things. 1) Tell it as it is. 2) Tell it concretely. 3) Tell it all.
- 5) Affected variables describe certain characteristics of reports; affecting variables describe the factors which determine in what form or degree these characteristics will be manifested in the reports. They, thus, have a cause-effect relationship.
- 6) (a) Informal (b) formal (c) formal

- 7) d-b-c-a
- 8) Do it yourself.
- 9) Do it yourself.
- 10) Do it yourself.

Text for listening:

- The language of a report needs to be direct, lucid and economical.
- Select good typeface and type size and use these consistently throughout the report.
- Use distinctive styles for headings and subheadings.
- Don't put more than one important idea under the same heading or subheading.
- Allow generous spacing between the elements of your report.
- Highlight enumerated parts of the report by the use of dot points or numberings.
- Number each page.
- Provide header and/or footer to make the report look professional.
- Use consistent and appropriate formatting.
- It is better to use formal language only.
- Label tables, figures, graphs, illustrations, maps etc for clarification and cite the source.

11) Do it yourself.

- | | | |
|--------|---|-----------|
| 12) i) | The lady in the front row | 'reduced' |
| v) | The point to consider | 'reduced' |
| vi) | The proposal discussed during the meeting | 'reduced' |

13) Adjective clauses:

- i) who is in-charge of the Delhi Library.
- ii) who are in Mr. Kanwar's Library
- iii) which are used in colleges
- vi) which is *Working in a Library Can Be Fun*.
- vii) which is a difficult subject,

Adjective phrases or appositive phrases.

- i) Mr. Anil Kumar is the new Chief Librarian of the Delhi Library.
- ii) The employees in Mr. Kanwar's library are having a good time.
- iii) Mr. Kanwar has written books used in colleges all over the country.
- iv) He's just completed a new book *Working in a Library Can Be Fun*.
- v) Library Science, a difficult subject, is made interesting and entertaining by him.

16.10 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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UNIT 17 QUESTIONNAIRE METHOD

Structure

- 17.0 Objectives
- 11.1 Introduction
- 17.2 Questionnaire Method: Definition
- 17.3 Questionnaire Construction
 - 11.7.1 Types of Questionnaires
 - 11.7.2 Types of Questions
 - 11.7.3 Use of Scales
 - 11.7.4 Precautions
- 17.4 Pretesting of Questionnaire
- 17.5 Distribution of Questionnaire
- 17.6 Response Rate
- 17.7 Advantages and Limitations of Questionnaire Method
- 17.8 Summary
- 17.9 Answers to Self Check Exercises
- 17.10 References and Further Reading

17.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will be able to:

- understand the meaning of questionnaire;
- state the methodology of its construction;
- learn the technique of preparing and pretesting the questionnaire and the precautions to be taken;
- elucidate the administration of questionnaire distribution and collection;
- identify advantages and limitations of questionnaire method; and
- comprehend the emerging trends in this field.

17.1 INTRODUCTION

In the field of Library and Information Science, survey research is heavily used in exploring the user information needs and use patterns. In order to strengthen the information resources and services in the libraries the researchers conduct surveys. These library surveys are attempted to gather data for investigations and to know the characteristics of users, their needs, etc.

In survey research, the data is gathered by using three types of methods: Observation, Interview and Questionnaire. In this Unit we will learn the technique of preparing questionnaire, its distribution, advantages, limitations and emerging trends in this area.

17.2 QUESTIONNAIRE METHOD: DEFINITION

Questionnaire is an instrument of data collection. The researchers most commonly use this method for collecting data. In order to gather data on a particular research topic, the researcher lists the questions to which s/he requires answers. The list of questions arranged in some order is either given personally, or sent / mailed to the target population.

A questionnaire is a set of written questions for respondents to answer. These answers become primary data for investigation. According to Krishan Kumar (1992) “a questionnaire is a written document listing a series of questions pertaining to the problem under study, to which the investigator requires the answers”. Schvaneveldt (1985) defined questionnaire as “a data-gathering device that elicits from a respondent the answers or reactions to printed (pre-arranged) questions presented in a specific order.” Questionnaires are often used in surveys as the primary data collection instruments.

17.3 QUESTIONNAIRE CONSTRUCTION

While preparing a questionnaire, caution must be taken in selection of questions and variables so that the researcher could receive accurate answers to the issues that a researcher wants to explore. The purpose of this type of data gathering technique is to obtain valid and reliable information so that smooth investigation can be conducted and the hypothesis can be tested. It is essential for the researcher to have a clear understanding of the problem under study. Hence, s/he needs to review the related literature before finalising the contents of the questionnaire.

Often you may require a covering letter to validate the authenticity of your research. The covering letter explains the identity of the researcher, the objectives of the research. It also includes the need for questionnaire to be addressed to the respondent. It should tell the respondents what use will be made of the results and precisely what will happen to their answers. Hence, a covering letter, requesting the respondent for cooperation should explain the purpose of the questionnaire, while ensuring the confidentiality of their answers. This assurance will motivate the respondents to express their views freely.

Please find below a specimen copy of the covering letter is given:

For Private Circulation Only

Questionnaire

Impact of the Internet on Scholarly Communication of Social Scientists of Central Universities in Delhi

Dear Respondent,

I am conducting a research on the impact of Internet on scholarly communication of social scientists. In this connection I have designed a questionnaire to get the responses of social scientists. I request you to spare some of your valuable time in filling in this questionnaire. The answers will be kept confidential and will be used for the purpose of research only.

Please find enclosed the questionnaire and a self addressed stamped envelope. You are requested to fill the questionnaire and post it within a week. Your cooperation in this regard will be highly appreciated.

With thanks

Yours sincerely,

Name and address of the Researcher

Only those types of questions should be asked which the target population can understand and has the knowledge to answer them. Williams (1997) is of the opinion that researcher should conduct some fieldwork with the target group in the form of interview or observation work. This in turn assists the researcher in knowing the pulse of the sample and also their reaction to a particular section of the questionnaire.

In the mailed questionnaire stamped self-addressed envelope should be provided. Reminders should be sent two to four weeks after posting the initial questionnaire.

Let us look at some of the steps that should be followed in constructing a questionnaire and writing the final report.

Steps to be followed in questionnaire construction and writing the report:

- 1) Determining the scope of the questionnaire.
- 2) Deciding the type of questions (close ended or open ended) to be asked.
- 3) Preparing the draft questionnaire.
- 4) Pretesting the questionnaire with a sample population.
- 5) Revising the questionnaire according to the suggestions received.
- 6) Distributing of the questionnaire to the actual sample.
- 7) Sending reminders to the population under study.
- 8) Receiving the responses.
- 9) Analysing and interpreting of the data received.
- 10) Writing the report.

Length of the Questionnaire

There is no prescribed length for a standard questionnaire. However, there is a belief that if the questionnaire is too long its response rate drops. Length of the questionnaire depends on the topic of the research problem and size of the target population. The response rate may vary according to the type of clientele as well. The length of the questionnaire must definitely take into consideration the cost and the willingness of the target population to answer. Hence, a general statement about the length of questionnaire cannot be made.

Questionnaire is not simply listing of relevant questions on a subject. The researcher must know what is the objective of the research undertaken and what type of questions to ask. Questions should be such which will elicit the required information.

Guiding Principles to be followed in the questionnaire:

- 1) It should be self-explanatory.
- 2) Questions should be restricted to close ended as opened ended questions could receive vague and incomplete responses, which are difficult to interpret.
- 3) Less number of questions in the questionnaire helps in receiving high response rate.
- 4) Attractive layout of the questionnaire is necessary. It helps in completion of the questionnaires.
- 5) Proper instructions should be provided to the respondents in filling up the questionnaire.

Self Check Exercise

- Note:** i) Write your answer in the space given below.
ii) Check your answer with the answer given at the end of this Unit.

1) Explain why length of a questionnaire determines its response rate.

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2) Why covering letter is necessary in a mailed questionnaire?

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17.3.1 Types of Questionnaires

Mc Kornam (1996) categorized questionnaires into three types: i) Mailed questionnaire ii) Group administered questionnaire iii) Personal contact questionnaire.

First of these three types is a postal questionnaire. Williams(1997) calls this type self-completion questionnaire. This type has a pre determined set of questions. The respondents are provided with self-addressed stamped envelope to return within two to four weeks after posting the questionnaire. This type of questionnaire contains a covering letter, which explains the purpose, objectives of the research. It also requests the respondent for co-operation and assures them of confidentiality of their answers. This type of questionnaires costs less compare to other types. Respondents can take their own time in filling it. The advantage of this type is that it covers a wider geographical area. The biggest disadvantage of mailed questionnaire is low response rate. While most of the questionnaires return after two weeks, some may even return after two months adding to the time and cost of data collection. Mailed questionnaire may be filled by someone other than the respondent. The answer may also be incomplete; incomplete questionnaire sometimes pose a serious problem at the time of analysis of data.

The second type is group-administered questionnaire. In this method the respondents gather at one place and complete the questionnaire. This type of method is basically used by the teachers to gather data on any research query. In the third, category the researcher and the respondents come together and questionnaire is filled in the presence of the researcher or by the researcher.

17.3.2 Types of Questions

What type of Questions should be included in the questionnaire for survey research? There is no unanimity on this issue. Each type has its own advantages and disadvantages. Numen (1997) asserts: “The crucial issue is not which form is best. Rather it is under which conditions a form is most appropriate”. The choice of questions also depends upon the topic of research, the target population, etc. Survey questions can be grouped into two categories i.e. open ended and close-ended questions.

Open Ended Questions

Open-ended questions give liberty to the respondents to express their views. They give tremendous freedom to the respondents to answer according to their interpretation. Given below is an example of an open-ended question.

Example of Open Ended Questions:

Can you suggest some ways to further improve the use of Internet in your research?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Advantages of Open Ended Questions

- Unanticipated answers can be obtained from the respondents.
- Researcher can get the real views of the respondents.
- Respondents can give their views in their own language reflecting creativity, self expression and richness of detail.
- Such answers reveal the logic of the respondents.

Disadvantages of Open Ended Questions

- Responses can be vague, irrelevant or not to the point.
- Many interpretations of the same question may not lead to valuable analysis.
- Coding of the responses is not possible.
- Respondent needs more time to answer.
- More space is required for answers in the questionnaire.
- Respondents may use different terms for the same concept.

The responses to open ended questions are difficult to analyse but not impossible. The researcher has to carefully study the responses and put them in different categories. This process may be very time consuming.

Close Ended Questions

Close ended questions are best suited for large-scale surveys. They are easier and quicker for the respondents as well as for the researcher. The Close-ended

questions in the questionnaire may sometimes suggest strange results. This problem can be overcome by taking interviews, which can supplement the information on the close ended questions.

There is another problem faced by the researcher while formulating different choices for a particular question. If the choices are less the desired results cannot be achieved. If the choices are too many, it may confuse the participant and appropriate answers cannot be received.

Close-ended questions are provided with a list of accepted answers. A respondent has to pick and choose the right answers. The responses chosen by respondents may be best suited to them but they may not be the correct answers. There is a possibility that the list of alternative answers may not be sufficient for the respondent, hence, limiting his/her options. Given below is an example of a close-ended question.

Example of Close Ended Question:

Given here are some reasons with regard to dissatisfaction with the current state of Internet based resources. Rank your answers by 1,2,3..... etc. Rank no. 1 is for the highest.

- There is dearth of research resources on the net _____.
- Instability of e- resources_____.
- Difficulty in verifying the authenticity of information on the net _____.
- The state of Indexing and Search engines not helpful _____.
- Lack of standardization _____.

Paul Burton further classifies the close ended questions into single choice or multiple-choice questions.

Example:

Single choice question:

Gender: Male Female

Multiple-choice question:

Which of the following computing skills do you have?

Word processing Internet browsing E-mail etc.

Database searching Power point

Any other please specify

Advantages of Close Ended Questions

- Cost effective.
- Answers of the respondents can be compared.

- Easy for respondents to answer.
- Easy to code and tabulate.
- Performance of the respondents is more reliable.
- Researcher can also reliably interpret the answers.
- Sensitive questions can be properly answered.
- Less number of confused answers.
- Less knowledgeable persons can also answer.
- With limited number of answer options, the possibility of getting enough responses to the options or categories may be useful for analysis.

Disadvantages of Close Ended Questions

- Ideas of the researchers are imposed on the respondents.
- Less knowledgeable can also answer due to the availability of multiple choices.
- It is possible that respondents get frustrated by not getting the desirous options of their choice.
- Multiple choices from the researcher may be confusing for the respondents.

The disadvantages of both types of questions can be reduced if there is a judicious mix of both the categories in the questionnaire. Most of the questionnaires mix these two types. Open and close-ended types of questions are required to get facts or opinions of the respondents. Which type of the questions will be adopted will depend on various factors. For quantitative data, factual questions are required. In this case close-ended questions will suit the most. For qualitative data the open-ended questions are required though they are less easy to categories and less amenable to computer techniques.

Framing of Questions

Before framing the questionnaire the researcher has to review the literature on the area to determine the type of questions to be asked. Flower (1987) has suggested four queries to be addressed before finalising a question in the questionnaire.

- 1) Is this a question that can be asked exactly the way it is written?
- 2) Is this a question that will mean the same thing to everyone?
- 3) Is this a question that people can answer?
- 4) Is this a question that people will be willing to answer, given the data collection procedure?

Terminology and jargon play a very important role in obtaining relevant responses. The researcher who is immersed in the subject sometimes forgets the target population's limited knowledge to understand the terms. Paul Burton suggests that to overcome the problem of use and relevance of technical terms, pretesting the questionnaire is essential. Pretesting may also help in eliminating ambiguity in the questions. For example, questions on frequency of use, visit to the library, etc. should not use the terms like 'Frequently', 'Often', and 'Occasionally' as the users may interpret these terms differently.

While drafting close ended questions, the researcher has to decide the inclusion of negative answers, like *not sure, not at all, do not know*, etc. There is a possibility that the target population finds it easy to just strike these choices without trying out other options. If such a choice is not given, the respondent would definitely choose some other option. Hence, it is advisable not to include negative options in the close ended questions.

Sensitive questions should also be avoided. Precaution must be taken in choosing controversial, emotional words. The choice of words should be such which increases willingness on the part of the respondents to answer as well as increases the response rate for the questions. High technical jargon, confusing words, words with multiple meanings also cause hindrance.

Sequence of Questions

Questions in the questionnaire should be arranged or grouped in logical sequences. Questions should be arranged in such a way that they do not scare the respondent but make him/her comfortable in answering/responding. Questionnaire should start with general but relevant questions and then moves to the specific ones. It helps to set the logical flow in the questionnaire. Similar questions may be put together in a group or section. For example, Question nos.1 to 10 deal with the use of library sources and services. This type of instruction helps the respondents to understand the grouping of questions. If the need arises, relevance of questions should be explained to the respondents. One can divide the questionnaire into three parts namely, opening part, middle part and end part. In the opening part the questions are basically on the personal background of the respondents. These questions also come under the category of demographic information; for instance questions on age, gender, qualifications, institution, contribution in the field, specialisation, etc. This category also involves questions pertaining to elementary information (relating to the topic of the survey), which helps in preparing the respondents' profile. The middle category involves questions directly concerning the topic of survey. The questions here are also organised in smooth and logical flow, which helps the respondents. The first question is related to the next one and so on. The questions on the first topic create the context within which the respondent moves on to the next without much hindrance. For example, if the users in a particular survey are asked about their awareness of library services or sources, the next question should be about the usage of library and services or sources, and this should be followed by the question on improvement of services or sources. Finally, the last portion of the questionnaire is basically loaded with open-ended questions on suggestions for improvement and their opinion on the research problem undertaken. The logical and proper organisation of questions helps in getting a completed questionnaire

Format and Layout of the Questionnaire

The format of the questions and physical layout of the questionnaire should be made attractive, neat and easy to follow.

Questions should be properly numbered, enough space should be given to write answers and spacing between questions should also be adequate. This will increase accuracy and completion of questionnaire. Questions whether mailed or distributed personally, should have attractive layout to motivate the respondents to answer. A polite covering letter with a sentence like *thank you for your*

cooperation is a must. The questionnaire should leave the respondent with the feeling that he/she is very an important component in the research project; his/her participation in the research is very much appreciated.

Consistency of format should be maintained. Close-ended question commonly use boxes, brackets tick mark or cross to facilitate quick responses. However, the researcher needs to use one type to maintain uniformity and consistency.

Examples of Question Format

Horizontal type:

What is the level of satisfaction for Internet search results? (Tick mark (✓) the answer)

High ——— Moderate ——— Low ———

Vertical type:

What is the level of satisfaction for Internet search results?(Tick mark(✓) the answer)

High _____

Moderate _____

Low _____

Example of Matrix Question Format

How frequently do you find information accidentally on the web? Tick mark (✓) the answers.

Methods	Frequently	Often	Sometime	Rarely	Never
Browsing websites	()	()	()	()	()
Following hyperlinks	()	()	()	()	()
Through cited works in the websites	()	()	()	()	()
Any other method please specify_____	()	()	()	()	()

Given below are examples of some 'response category' choices. The choices are adapted from Neuman (1997).

Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor

Strongly Agree, Agree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

Regularly, Often, Seldom, Never

Always, Most of the Time, Rarely, Never

More Likely, Less Likely, No Difference

Very Interested, Interested, Not Interested

Self Check Exercise

- Note:** i) Write your answer in the space given below.
 ii) Check your answer with the answer given at the end of this Unit.
 3) Differentiate between open ended and close-ended questions.

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17.3.3 Use of Scales

The questions should be designed in such a manner that the answers could be easily and quickly analysed. Some of the questions involve simple calculation of number and percentage. To tackle other complex issues, scaling techniques such as rating scale and rank order scale should be used. Analysis of responses to such questions should be done on the basis of weighted averages.

Rating Scale

A rating scale is a measuring instrument that requires the observer to assign the rated object to categories or continua that have numerals assigned to them. This is perhaps the most used measuring instrument as they are easy and quick to use. Time required for administering and measuring response is shorter than many other instruments. As a consequence, it is less expensive. However, they “lack validity due to their proneness to constant or biased error. If used with knowledge, skill and caution, a rating scale can prove to be a valuable measuring instrument.”(Krishan Kumar,1992)

Rating scale can be of several types. The most usual is simply a form of precoded questions, e.g.,

Do you find the collection in your area of research in libraries you use adequate enough to meet your demands? Please tick mark (√) the appropriate columns.

Excellent?___ Very Adequate?___ Adequate?___ Inadequate?___ Poor?___

The number of categories affects the dispersion of answers. A variation on the verbal expression scale may be used to elicit the extent of agreements with various statements. It is a normal practice to have a range of five answers, from positive to negative, with a neutral mid-point. The above responses may be assigned weights 5,4,3,2,1 at the stage of analysis of data. Numerical rating scale is easy to construct and use. The numbers can be used directly for the purpose of statistical analysis.

The procedure of Likert scale essentially involves allocating scores to statements for which the respondents can select a range of responses from ‘very useful’ to ‘no use’. Example:

Do you consider conferences/seminars as useful sources of information? If yes, please indicate (tick mark (✓)) how useful they have been for your research work?

Very useful? _____ Useful? _____ Satisfactory? _____ Little use? _____ No use? _____

In this example, choices that are most favourable to the use of conferences are assigned the greatest weights, and the least favourable responses are assigned the lowest weights. In this method the weighted index has been created by multiplying the number of respondents with the numerical value assigned to all the scales (e.g., very useful = 4, useful = 3, satisfactory = 2, little use = 1, and no use = 0) and then dividing the product by the total number of respondents. Next the averages of all the variables in different scales are calculated according to weighted index and are rearranged according to the rank order.

The responses are assigned weights like 5,4,3,2 and 1 or 4,3,2,1 and 0 in a 5-point scale and 3,2, and 1 in a 3-point scale. A three-point scale is developed for the level of difficulty. The following Tables 17.1,17.2,17.3 clarify the point.

Table 17.1: Three-Point Scale

Scale	Weights		
	3	2	1
Level of Difficulty	High	Moderate	Low

Table 17. 2: Five-Point Scale

Scale	Weights				
	4	3	2	1	0
Frequency	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Dependence	Solely	Most of the time	Often	Some extent	Not at all
Degree	Very useful	Useful	Satisfactory	Little use	No use

Table 17.3: Five-Point Scale

Scale	Weights				
	5	4	3	2	1
Adequacy	Excellent	Very adequate	Adequate	Inadequate	Poor

Rank Order Scale

Another rating scale used in the questionnaires is rank order scale. It is a simple and most useful form of scale. Here the respondent ranks a list of items in order of preference. This method “is far more economical in time and effort, on the part of respondents as well as investigators, particularly when a large number of items is involved.”(Line, 1981). Example:

Which methods would you adopt to find out the sources of information the library possesses on your topic of research? Mark 1,2,3, etc., indicating your preferences (1 stands for first preferences and 2 for second, etc.)

Table 17.4: Rank Order Scale

Methods	Order of Preference
Consult the Librarian	
Consult the Library Staff	
Consult Subject Bibliography	
Consult Subject Catalogue	
Searching the Shelves	

Self Check Exercise

Note: i) Write your answer in the space given below.

ii) Check your answer with the answer given at the end of this Unit.

4) What is a rating scale?

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17.3.4 Precautions

Preparation of a questionnaire is an art. It is an instrument for collecting data in survey research. If it is constructed properly half of the survey research is done. The researcher while constructing a questionnaire must take some of the precautions. Neuman (1997) has suggested the following points to be avoided while writing survey questions.

- Use of jargons, slang and abbreviations must be avoided.
- Ambiguity, confusion and vagueness have no place in a well-constructed questionnaire.
- Use of emotional language is not recommended; natural language makes the respondents more comfortable.
- Double-barreled questions should be avoided and each question should be asked for one specific aspect.
- Leading or loading questions must be avoided.
- The capability of the respondents should always kept in mind while framing the questions otherwise it will lead to incomplete questions or questionnaires with poor responses.
- Questions about hypothetical situations need not be asked.
- Questions about future intentions are not desirable.
- No question should have double negatives.
- Overlapping or unbalanced response options need to be avoided.

Busha and Harter (1980) suggest the following precautions “The investigators have a professional responsibility:

- a) To analyse carefully and understand their research problems;
- b) To state their questions clearly;
- c) To request only information that can be easily provided by respondents;
- d) To place emphasis upon brevity and economy, consistent with an adequate treatment of the subject;
- e) The objectives of questionnaire and the nature of needed data must be made clear;
- f) Respondent’s background, ability and knowledge must also be considered. If the respondent does not have adequate knowledge, it would be difficult to obtain valid data;
- g) Willingness of the Respondent must be ensured, otherwise questionnaire will not be of any value;
- h) Care must be taken to do away with unneeded or irrelevant questions. This may discourage the participants to answer the questions;
- i) With the help of a pre test, biased questions can be identified;
- j) Ambiguous questions must be avoided; and
- k) Questions that convey double meaning or pose two questions at once need to be enter eliminated or restated/reworded. These types of questions are called double-barreled questions.”

17.4 PRETESTING OF QUESTIONNAIRE

Survey research questionnaire act as an instrument for gathering data. It should be pre tested before putting it to actual use. Pre testing helps in further improving the questionnaire and works like a measuring yardstick, seeking perfection. Once the final questionnaire is printed then there is no room for corrections and improvement. If the researcher tries to make corrections it will be expensive as well as difficult. To pre test the questionnaire it has to be circulated to the sample population to receive useful comments and the researcher can revise accordingly. Pre test also includes verbal communication with sample population about confusing questions, difficult questions, over lapping categories, etc. In this method the sample first fills up the questionnaire and then discusses with the researcher on the unintelligible questions. Formal pre testing is an invaluable part of questionnaire design process. It is a learning process for the researcher as well. Pre testing helps the researcher in recording, simplifying, transforming some of the questions. The process generally involves drafting the questionnaire and discussing it with colleagues and also circulating it among the small sample of the population for whom the questionnaire is designed. This helps in removing any problem relating to clarity, understanding of technical or professional terminology, order of questions, etc. Paul Burton (1990) states, pretesting may therefore go through a number of iterations, but this is a necessary part of questionnaire design. Pretesting, also called pilot survey, is very much desirable to finalise the questionnaire. Krishan Kumar (1992) has also suggested that a

second pretest must be carried out with a revised questionnaire. He further observes that if some difficulties cropped up, another pretest might be required. Pretest also indicate the time required to fill up the questionnaire. It is a practice not to include the pretest sample to the actual population.

Self Check Exercise

Note: i) Write your answer in the space given below.

ii) Check your answer with the answer given at the end of this Unit.

5) Why pretesting is required before finalisation of questionnaire?

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17.5 DISTRIBUTION OF QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire can be either distributed personally or through mail/ by e-mail/ Internet.

Each of the system has its own merits and demerits.

In Person:

Questionnaire can be distributed personally to the respondents. For example, if the researcher is surveying the use pattern of a particular library, then the questionnaire can be given at the time when users enter the library. If, by chance, the researcher does not find respondents there then it can be given to them personally at the place of work or at their residence.

Questionnaire can be sent by post to the target population with a self-addressed envelope stamped/pre-paid so that the respondents can return the filled questionnaire in time without any trouble. Mailed questionnaires should also accompany a covering letter stating the objective of the survey, requesting the respondent to fill it on time, etc.

In order to deliver the questionnaire to the respondents in person, a number of visits have to be made to their place of work, study or to the libraries, which they usually consult. As it is not possible to contact each of the respondents some questionnaires may be left with the library staff or with the department where they work or study with the prior permission of the librarian / authorities.

Through E-mail

Nowadays with the coming of the Internet connectivity it is possible to circulate the questionnaire through e-mail. In this method the respondents who have e-mail id as well as the Internet connectivity can receive and send the questionnaire as an e-mail attachment. This is a quick, easy and cost effective way of distribution

and collection of questionnaire. It can easily be extended or resent to respondents any time at any place. E-mail based questionnaire is easy to construct, distribute and manage the results. Through this method online surveys can be made available to any one with Internet connectivity.

The pre requisite of this method is the Internet connectivity and list of e-mail addresses of the respondents.

Web Questionnaire

There is another method of distribution and collection of questionnaire where the population is widespread, covering state, country, etc. making it difficult for the researcher to reach or meet the target population. In this method the questionnaire is put on the website. Whosoever comes under the purview of the survey can fill the questionnaire and submit it giving the required details. Web questionnaire also require a time frame to complete/submit. This type of questionnaire also has a set of respondents, for example, if the survey is on the “Use of Search Engines by the Central University Teachers of India in the field of Indian Politics” only the Central University teachers of India should fill up the Questionnaire. It has the same layout, open as well as close ended questions. The close-ended questions can be filled up with the help of mouse click. For open-ended questions the respondents can simply type the answer and after completion, the questionnaire can be submitted. A specimen of web questionnaire is given below for your information.

Designing of web – based questionnaire

It should be designed in such a way that attracts the respondents to fill and submit it. Here also the length should be restricted to achieve high response rate. Only those questions should be included which are important and meaningful to the research. It is advisable to use clear and specific wording for the questions. Reassurance should be given to the respondents regarding the privacy measures taken for their answers.

Advantages and disadvantages

The researcher gets answers from a large, widespread population. With this size of the population, the old data analysis methods may not be suitable. It is for the target population to access, fill and submit. The data may be accessed in a short span of time. It is easy, fast and inexpensive. Researcher is free from the trouble of collecting properly filled questionnaires. For example, if a respondent fills a question wrongly, outside the defined range of answers or s/he misses some of the questions: the web-based questionnaire program can detect the error and direct the user to answer the particular question again and then submit. The data received from the web-based questionnaire is automatically validated.

Some of the disadvantages are as follows:

This type of questionnaire may not successfully attract a representative sample of the population. Since the population is widespread, it is not possible for the researcher to personally contact them. Due to technical snags like server crash or browser freeze, a lot of data may be lost. It is advisable to keep such questionnaire small. If it has a number of pages, the respondent has to submit the answers page wise. If a web-based questionnaire has six pages and after filling up five pages the server crashes, in such a situation the data of those five pages already submitted may be captured. There is a possibility that after submitting the questionnaire an error message occurs in front of the screen and the respondent may not fill it again. To overcome such a situation, it is necessary to test and retest the questionnaire. Alternatively the web program should have a very soft and humble error message, which prompts the respondent to return and fill it.

Self Check Exercise

- Note:** i) Write your answer in the space given below.
 ii) Check your answer with the answer given at the end of this Unit.
 6) State the advantages of web-based questionnaire.

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17.6 RESPONSE RATE

Response rate in survey research is very crucial. Different types of surveys have a different response rate. For example, very high rate of response is required for census survey. If the researcher fails to get adequate response then there is a need for introspection. The reasons may include: i) the target population at the top-level may not answer due to time constrain, ii) difficulty in approaching the scattered respondents, iii) respondents refuse to answer due to ignorance of the topic under research, iv) lengthy questionnaire or the use of highly technical language discourages the respondents, v) if the questionnaire seeks more views from the respondents they get conscious of their privacy and may not like to reveal their opinion.

A researcher can increase the response rate to a point by contacting the respondents frequently, on the phone or by mail or by meeting him/her personally. The researcher may have to make repeated visits or may send soft reminder letters periodically persuading the respondents to return the completed questionnaire. If the questionnaire is short and simple, it generates a good response. Timing of the distribution is also important in getting responses. If teachers or students are given the questionnaire during vacations or weekends, it will generally yield higher response.

A polite reminder letter along with another copy of the questionnaire should follow two weeks after the specified date of return the questionnaire. A second copy is required because there is a possibility that the respondent has misplaced the questionnaire. Researcher should be polite and patient while distributing and reminding or receiving the questionnaire.

17.7 ADVANTAGES AND LIMITATIONS OF QUESTIONNAIRE METHOD

Let us look at some of the advantages of the questionnaire method:

- Easier and quicker to collect data. Through this method large amount of data can be generated in a short span of time.
- Direct responses can be obtained.
- Information received is quantifiable. Quantitative as well as qualitative responses can be procured. Back ground information of the respondents, which is otherwise difficult to obtain, could be collected.
- Empirical data can be collected.
- It is cost effective.
- Response from a large population can be received covering a wide geographical area.
- High rate of response can be generated from an educated population.
- Respondents get a chance to prepare and revise their answers before finally answering the questionnaire.
- Researchers also get a chance though pretest to revise the final questionnaire.
- Responses are easy to analyse and tabulate.
- Questionnaire method provides the respondents to express their views on any given topic freely.
- Questionnaire has a fixed format with a given number of questions. This helps in eliminating variation in the questioning process.

Limitations of the Questionnaire Method:

- Difficult to receive adequate response rate. People often do not return the questionnaire on time.
- Reliability of data can be questioned.
- Truthful answers cannot be ascertained.
- It is a time-consuming activity, which includes preparation, pretest, revision, distribution and sending reminders adding to time and cost of data collection.

- Incomplete answers also cause problem during the analysis stage.
- Researcher cannot observe the respondents reaction at the time of filling up of the questionnaire.
- The questions can be wrongly interpreted which can affect the analysis.
- Assumptions of the researchers for certain things may prove opposite to the respondents perceptions.
- Technical jargon/ professional terminology may play havoc for the respondents. It may be possible that the questionnaire is returned with substantial number of unanswered questions.
- Complex worded questions also fetch poor results.
- There is a possibility that the questionnaire may be biased. It may not have included certain important questions, due to the preference of the researcher.
- Verification of the accuracy of the responses received from questionnaires might be difficult.

17.8 SUMMARY

Paul Burton has very rightly said: “Properly designed and analysed questionnaires can be a rich and reliable source of research data, both quantitative and qualitative”. Hence, proper attention has to be paid to carry out a questionnaire survey. If not done properly, it may lead to misleading results.

This Unit has described the method of construction of questionnaire. It has also highlighted the type of questions to be asked and precautions to be taken while listing the questions. Merits and demerits of asking open and close-ended questions have also been discussed. Questionnaire is an effective tool to gather both quantitative as well as quantitative data in survey research.

17.9 ANSWERS TO SELF CHECK EXERCISES

- 1) What should be the length of the questionnaire has been debated for a long. There is a belief that if it is lengthy, the respondents may not fill the questionnaire and leave it incomplete, resulting in low response rate. If the questionnaire has less number of questions there is a possibility of getting high response rate.
- 2) Covering letter explains the objective of the survey and it requests the respondents to fill the questionnaire. The researcher through this letter assures the respondents the confidentiality of their answers and the usage of data for research purpose only.
- 3) Open ended questions are those questions where the respondents give answer in their own language. They freely express their views and answer according to their interpretation. These questions are also called unstructured questions. Close-ended questions are structured questions. Every question has a number of alternate answers. A respondent has to select one answer. These questions are also called precoded questions.
- 4) Rating scale is a measuring tool that requires the observer to assign the rated object to categories or continuum that have numerals assigned to them.

- 5) Pretesting as the name suggests is a process of finalising the questionnaire before putting it to actual use. It is essential as it alerts the researcher to the weaknesses, trouble points, and ambiguity in the questions. After pretesting, the researcher revises it and circulate it to the target population.
- 6) Web-based questionnaire has an advantage over printed questionnaire. The former can be distributed and received back from the large, widespread population automatically. The answers can be validated. It is easy, quick and inexpensive.

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