# Faculty-Librarian Relationship in Management Institutes in Mumbai

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## Abstract

This paper reports the results of a study aimed at finding out whether the relationship between faculty and librarians improved, deteriorated or did not change with time, and also whether it could be improved further, and how it could be improved. Data was collected from 50 management institutes in Mumbai using survey method. Questionnaires to faculty and Librarians were administered and content analysis of suggestions given by them to improve the relationship was carried out. The findings of the study indicated that a majority of librarians are optimistic about their relationship with faculty. Also, the general trend of faculty suggestions is positive. Improved communication, interaction, collaboration, library services, infrastructure, use of ICTs, organization structure, personal qualities of librarians, mutual respect and trust were the factors investigated out of the suggestions analyzed. More efforts from librarians, faculty and institute authorities are needed to improve the relationship between the two groups. Librarians will have to take the initiative for improving the relationship. However, faculty and management of the institutions also need to cooperate and initiate changes to achieve this goal. Training librarians in relationship building skills and well planned relationship building programs will lead to improved relationship between the two groups.

**Keywords:** Faculty-Librarian Relationship; Librarian-Faculty Relationship; Faculty-Librarian Interaction; Librarian-Faculty Interaction; Management Institutes.

## Introduction

Meaningful work relationships make our work life enjoyable and rewarding, leading to greater productivity and creating an environment conducive to growth of individuals and organizations. Scholarly interest in work relationships has increased considerably in recent years.

*Need and Significance of the Study*

In academic settings, relationship with faculty assume importance for librarians for various reasons.

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Faculty are involved in the administration and governance of the institutes. As members of the library committee, they can influence the working of the library and the librarian. As they are in direct contact with students, they can encourage them to make better use of library resources and services. Academic librarians need to establish and sustain good working relationship with faculty in order to survive and succeed in the academic environment. Lack of research on this topic indicated the need of such a study and motivated the researchers to conduct this study.

The available literature on the topic of faculty-librarian relationship is published by librarians, leading to a somewhat one-sided depiction of relations between the two groups. The present study examined the perceptions of relationship of both faculty and librarians, which provided a clearer picture of the relationship. The study was also first of its kind in the Indian context.

*Practical Implications of the Study are Listed Below.*

Knowing where the relationship stands from the perspective of both groups will provide a more

accurate basis on which strategies for building better relationships can be based.

The results and recommendations in this study list practical action points for librarians and also for faculty and institute authorities, that can help all concerned to take steps to improve the relationship.

The results of this study are expected to lead to further investigation in the area of faculty-librarian relationships.

### Objectives

The primary objective of the study was to find out how the relationship could be improved in the opinion of faculty and librarians. The specific objectives of the study were -

- To find out whether the faculty-librarian relationship improved, deteriorated, or did not change with time,

- To find out the opinions of faculty and librarians as to whether the relationship could be improved, and

- To find out what measures could be adopted to improve the relationship in the opinion of faculty and librarians.

### Scope and Limitations

Management institutes in Mumbai city and metropolitan regions of Mumbai, offering post graduate programs such as MBA or MMS were selected for the study. Institutes established after 2010 were not considered for the study, as it was thought that relationships need time to develop.

## Literature Review

A review of literature on the topic of faculty-librarian relationship indicates that though a lot has been published on the topic, very few studies examined the relationship itself. Some of the noteworthy publications on the topic are discussed in this section.

Biggs [2] studied the sources of tension and conflict between librarians and faculty. She found four main sources of conflict: extent of faculty involvement in library policymaking and procedure, library needs of scholars, the differences between faculty and librarians as individuals, and issues involved in faculty status for librarians. She advised that communication, cooperation, and mutual planning are needed, and must be initiated by librarians, but faculty members need to listen and to participate with as much energy and as broad a view as possible.

Kotter [8] found that improvement of relations between the two groups is the key to the continued viability of academic libraries and librarianship. He also underlined the need to evaluate the quality of faculty-librarian relations. He enumerated benefits of improved relationship with faculty. The first benefit is increased faculty support of librarians in facing the challenges posed by the changing environment. Secondly, faculty having good relations with librarians are likely to use the library resources and services more, leading to increased usage of library resources by students, and more administrative support to the library. Thirdly, good relations can lead to more effective collaborations. Additionally, an effective working relationship can lead faculty to realize the intellectual demands of librarianship and complexity of library work. The goal of proactive service and scholarly collaboration will not be attainable without a good relationship with faculty.

Christiansen, Stombler, and Thaxton[5] found that there is an asymmetrical disconnection that exists between librarians and faculty members, that the two groups are 'loosely coupled', and even more surprising than the disconnect is the disparity between the two groups in terms of how each perceives this disconnection. In striking contrast to the perspective of librarians, facultyperceive no serious problems in relations between the two groups, nor do they identify any negative consequences arising from this disconnection. The authors explained this disconnection by introducing two frameworks: Organizational issues and dimensions, and social status dimensions. Organizational issues involve physical and temporal separation, differences in organizational subcultures, organizational power that each group commands, and measures of success applied to each group. Social status dimensions involve differences in educational qualifications, and status accorded to 'services' and 'professions'.

Jenkins [7] examined faculty demographics, faculty traits, attitudes, and concerns. He also examined areas of collaboration between the two groups, librarians' role in campus governance and distanceeducation, and strategies to improve the relationship such as outreach and marketing. He concluded that establishing active relationships with faculty members who guide student learning is the best way to make the library a central part of the institution.

Librarians in India have not published much on the topic of faculty-librarian relationship compared

to their counterparts in the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada.

Chadha [4] presented a literature review which included the background of the topic, the benefits of improved faculty-librarian relationship, and measures for improving the relationship.

Sharma, Kumar and Babbar [10] expressed the view that unlike traditional librarianship which is based on transaction, embedded librarianship is based on relationship with faculty or user community. Tripathi [12] explored the relationship of librarians and their users. Factors influencing the relationship were discussed and measures to build long term relationships were suggested. She concluded that Indian librarianship had a long way to go to derive a proper justification of their presence and relevance in research and education.

Literature in librarianship includes descriptions of librarians' efforts to integrate themselves and their libraries into teaching and governance in their respective institutions and to improve their relationships with faculty. These can be grouped as collaboration and partnerships with faculty, outreach/liaison and collegiality or interpersonal relations.

Collaborations described in literature are more in areas such as collection development and information literacy. However, more recently, collaborations in online learning environments, digital repositories and also in publishing have been reported.

Shapely [11] described the library's partnership with the online course development unit, where librarians act as integral team members in course design and delivery along with providing information literacy instruction. Yousef [13] investigated attitudes of faculty members towards collaboration with librarians. He found that most faculty had positive attitude towards collaboration with librarians, especially in the area of collection development.

Boyd [3] advocated increasing interpersonal contact, or the personal touch, by removing the physical separation and using the field librarian or liaison model. According to her, collaboration with faculty is not only a destination, but also a path and bridge to strong relationships with them. Anthony [1] advocated use of outreach to bridge the disconnect between faculty and librarians. She advised academic librarians to reach out to faculty, proactively promote the use of their services, and demonstrably involve themselves in the institution's mission of teaching and research.

Ferrier [6] advised librarians that they should be a part of the interaction that occurs on the average campus and by taking part in that social contact, present an image of professional congeniality that will affect the more formal aspects of their jobs. Without paying attention to the social interaction of the campus, librarians will never really attain peer status and recognition. Librarians need to identify and seize opportunities to interact with faculty. Powdwal [9] expressed a similar opinion by observing that participating in different organizational activities is one way of overcoming isolation, which was addressed to solo librarians but is applicable to majority of academic librarians who tend to be isolated on the campus.

## Materials and Methods

The study adopted survey method to gather data using an instrument developed by the researcher. The instrument used to collect data was a questionnaire of two parts. The first part included the demographic questions including respondents' sex, age, and experience. The second part included the following three questions -

a. Whether the relationship has improved with time/ deteriorated with time/ not changed (Please select the most appropriate option).

b. In your opinion, whether the relationship can be improved, (Yes/No/Can't say).

c. If you think that the faculty-librarian relationship can be improved, please elaborate briefly how this could be done.

### Sampling Frame and Sample

The list of management institutes was downloaded from the AICTE website. Using the list as sampling frame, institutes in Mumbai established before 2010 were shortlisted. It was decided not to consider institutes established after 2010 as it was thought that relationship needs time to develop before it can be assessed. Only institutes in Mumbai approved by AICTE and affiliated to either SNDT University or University of Mumbai, offering Master's programs such as MBA, and MMS were considered. Total 61 institutes fitting in the above criteria were included in the final list.

The websites of the 61 institutes were consulted to find out names of faculty members and librarians. This constituted the final sampling frame for the study. Only full time faculty were considered for the study. The total number of regular (full time) faculty from the 61 institutes was 700.

An institute wise list of all 700 faculty members was prepared. Random sampling method was used to select the sample. From the list of faculty, every alternate name was selected to send the questionnaire. Thus, the questionnaires were sent to 350 faculty members from 61 institutes. Responses were received from 250 faculty belonging to 50 institutes. The Head/Chief librarian from each institute was invited to participate in the study. The total number of participants was 250 faculty and 50 librarians.

## Results and Discussion

*Profile of Participants*

*Librarians*

62% librarians were women whereas 38% were men. This confirmed the observation that librarianship is a female dominated profession.

66% librarians were in the middle age group (36-46 years), while 24% were in the younger age group (25-35 years), and 10% were in the senior group (47-57 years).

54% librarians had between 10 to 20 years of experience, while 32% had 1 to 10 years of experience. 14% had 20 to 30 years of experience.

All the librarians had completed MLISc. degree, as it is the minimum qualification required for the post of Librarian. 12% had also completed MPhil, while 8% had completed PhD.

*Faculty*

As opposed to librarians where women were more in number, lesser percentage of faculty (46%) members were women whereas 54% were men. Similar to librarians, the middle age (36-46 years) group was the largest group consisting of 53% faculty. The younger group (25-35 years) was 28%, whereas the senior group (47-57 years) was the smallest, consisting of 18% faculty.

45% faculty had between 1-10 years of experience, whereas 34% had between 10 to 20 years of experience. 21% faculty had between 10-20 years of experience.

63% faculty had MBA or equivalent degree, whereas 2% had completed MPhil. 8% had completed PhD whereas 2% were pursuing PhD. 10% faculty had both MBA and PhD, whereas 11% had neither MBA nor PhD, but had other professional qualifications such as Chartered Accountant (CA), Certified Management Accountant (CMA), Master of Law (LLM), etc. All the faculty members were full time regular faculty.

## Results and Discussion

The responses received for the three questions are presented using simple frequency and percentages. Content analysis was carried out for analyzing responses received to question 3, i.e. how the relationship could be improved.

*Perceptions of Relationship*

The perceptions of both the groups with reference to their relationship as found in this study are described below.

• *Whether the relationship improved/ deteriorated/ didnot change over the years*

An overwhelming majority of faculty replied that their relationship improved with time, whereas 58% librarians replied that the relationship improved with time. 14.8% faculty replied that their relationship did not change over the years, while 42% librarians said that it did not change over the years. Librarians did not find that the relationship deteriorated over time, while 2% of faculty found that it did deteriorate.

Table 1 Perceptions of improvement in relationship with time

| Respondents | Improved | | Deteriorated | | Not changed | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Librarian | 29 | 58 | Nil | Nil | 21 | 42 | 50 | 100 |
| Faculty | 208 | 83 | 5 | 2 | 37 | 15 | 250 | 100 |

**Table 2:** Perceptions of possibility of improvement in the relationship

| Respondents | Can be Improved | | Can't be Improved | | Can't Say | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Librarian | 35 | 70 | Nil | Nil | 15 | 30 | 50 | 100 |
| Faculty | 112 | 45 | 3 | 1 | 135 | 54 | 250 | 100 |

• *Whether the relationship can be improved further*

It can be seen from the above table that a large number of librarians (70%) thought that the relationship could be improved, whereas only 45% faculty thought that the relationship could be improved further. No librarians were of the opinion that the relationship could not be improved, whereas a very small group of faculty thought that the relationship could not be improved. However, in both groups, a fairly large group could not say whether the relationship could be improved.

• *How many librarians gave recommendations to improve the relationship?*

Even though 54% of faculty were not sure about whether the relationship could be improved, 73% gave suggestions to improve the relationship. 34 librarians (68%) offered suggestions for improving the relationship. Out of these, suggestions which were too general and did not include any specific action points were not considered for further analysis. Suggestions which included specific action points for improvement of relationship were analyzed using content analysis method. The analysis is presented in the next session.

**Results of Content Analysis**

All suggestions to improve the relationship as given by the participants were grouped according to their content. Ten final categories of suggestions emerged including communication, interaction,

library services and procedures, collaboration, personal qualities of the librarian, organizational culture, use of ICT, mutual respect, infrastructure and trust. It was found that the categories of suggestions from faculty and librarians were common to both groups, although the ranking of each group was different. One category, 'trust', was not found in librarians' suggestions.

It can be seen that while majority of faculty thought that improving communication may be the best way to improve relationship, majority of librarians thought that their relationship with faculty will improve by providing faculty various services more promptly or more effectively, or introducing new services. It may be noted that while librarians stated only 'library services', faculty stated 'library services and procedures', indicating the importance of procedures as perceived by them. Procedures which are perceived as not user-friendly may affect the relationship negatively. Interaction ranked highest in faculty list after communication. Various ways of increasing interaction such as meetings with faculty, visit to faculty offices, book fairs and other events are suggested by faculty members.

Collaboration was also ranked high on the list, both by faculty and of librarians. According to faculty, librarian can involve faculty in library matters, and faculty should involve the librarian in teaching and research. Some interesting suggestions are collaboration in curriculum design, and active participation in teaching. Personal qualities of the librarian may help in improving the relationship, in faculty members' opinion.

Approachable and cooperative attitude, courteousness, good manners, and proactivity are the suggested qualities. Librarians have also listed 'service with a smile' as one of the ways to improve the relationship.

Organizational culture is seen as important by both faculty and librarians. The extent to which the librarian is involved in faculty concerns such as teaching and research will depend mostly on the culture of the institute. Inviting
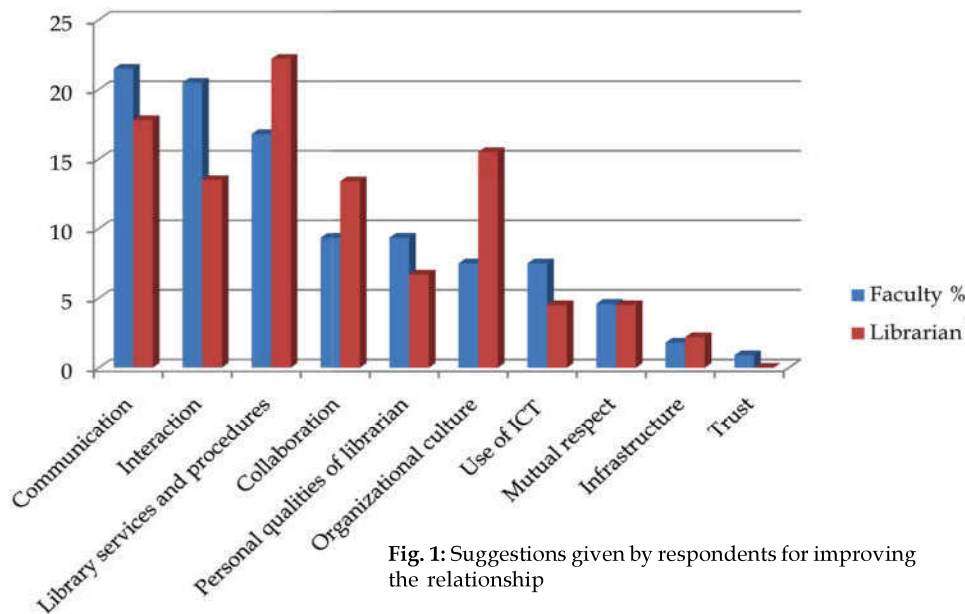


**Fig. 1:** Suggestions given by respondents for improving the relationship

the librarian to attend faculty meetings and student-faculty interactions, and also occasionally to the classroom, sharing of teaching plan with the librarian, and get-togethers and picnics that can be organized by the Human Resources department are some of the suggestions in this category. Use of technology in providing services, interactive platforms, and use of social media in offering or promoting services is listed both by faculty and librarians. Respect for each other and for knowledge sharing is considered important by both faculty and librarians. Good infrastructure as suggested by librarians and better ambience in the library and separate seating arrangements for faculty as suggested by faculty may help improve the relationship. Trust is stated by faculty as important in order to improve the relationship. However, librarians have not stated trust as a factor.

### Time as a factor that can affect the relationship

It is indicated by the following comments that with the number of years working together, the relationship improves.

As observed by a librarian having 30 years of experience:

- "After a number of years' working together, we come to know the choice and style of requirements of faculty. We directly approach them for any kind of library matter".

This was reciprocated by faculty as observed bya faculty member with 10 years of experience:

- "It's already good and communication is improving year by year as more closeness comes in the relationship".

### Librarians' role

Faculty perceive librarians as support staff or the librarian's function as a support function, albeit a very important function. This can be seen from comments such as 'librarian is one of the most important support staff members. Librarian should be assisted, motivated, and guided by the faculty', and 'librarian is the backbone of professor at Management Institutes. It has to function as efficient and effective support staff'. This view is reciprocated by librarians as can be seen from comments such as 'librarian's role is to assist faculty and students in their scholarly achievement with thehelp of information resources. If you are able to create that impression, things will improve', and 'librarian should always be willing to provide useful, pin point information to faculty members'.

### Responsibility for improving the relationship

Most of the comments indicate that faculty members view the relationship with librarians as important. However, most of them seem to be of the opinion that the onus of improving the relationship lies with the librarian. This view seems to be supported by librarians as their suggestions mostly relate to what they themselves should or could do to improve the relations.

### Library services

Providing the required information or materials promptly is recommended by both faculty and librarians. For faculty, better library services ranked third most important measure that can be adopted to improve the relationship after communication and interaction. According to faculty members, if books are requested by faculty they should be made available promptly to avoid delay and inconvenience in preparation for courses.

Librarians agree that improvement in services can lead to improvement in relations. Librarians have recommended various services like CAS, Newsletter, and providing required information promptly in order to improve the faculty-librarian relationship.

### Organizational culture and constraints faced by librarians

Faculty membersexpressed the view that maintaining relationship is part of organization culture.Both faculty and librarians have suggested inviting the librarian in faculty meetings, in curriculum development and other activities as a measure of improving the relationship.

One positive indicationis that faculty do understand constraints faced by the librarian as can be seen from comments such as 'allowing librarians to work on suggestions given by faculty' and ' empowering librarian to procure books on behalf of the institute'. This indicates that very often, the librarian lacks the autonomy or decision making power to carry out her responsibilities as promptly as possible in an efficient manner. This view is reiterated by librarians.

### Collaboration

Faculty members seem to think that collaborating with librarians will benefit the students. Collaboration could be in the area of collection development, curriculum design, teaching process, and research projects. This is seen from comments from faculty

such as 'involvement of librarian and library staff at the stage of curriculum design itself will help making the relationship more effective', or 'regular grooming of students in terms of research domain can be carried out if faculty and librarian have a positive relationship'.

The willingness and desire for collaboration is reciprocated by librarians as can be seen from comments indicating that librarian can help to develop new subjects and syllabus, and also contribute in designing training programs.

### Positive Trend

Though a large number of faculty were not sure whether the relationship could be improved, the suggestions given by both faculty and librarians in the present study indicate a positive trend. Faculty, at least some of them, also seem to understand the constraints under which librarians function as can be seen from the suggestions given by them pertaining to organizational culture.

In spite of the positive nature of most comments given by faculty, it is also indicated by them that conflict situations do arise in the library, especially over library rules and procedures. Training in conflict handling and resolution will prove useful to librarians.

### Recommendations

This section includes recommendations for librarians, for faculty, and for institute authorities which can help in improving the relationship between librarians and faculty.

### Recommendations for Librarians

Librarians should make concerted efforts to improve the communication by identifying the channels and modes of communication best suited to their situation, taking into consideration their organizational climate, faculty characteristics, available staff and other resources, etc.

It is seen that library procedures and services is an important factor that can influence the relationship between faculty and librarians. Librarians should review the services offered and procedures of the library from the point of view of the faculty and make them more user centered. Language used while framing rules and regulations should be positive as far as possible.

Librarians should take initiative and plan collaborative projects with faculty in research projects. Though the specific areas of collaboration may vary from institute to institute, finding new areas for collaboration will help bring more visibility to librarians in their institutes.

Librarians tend to work in isolation. This can adversely affect their relationship with faculty. Librarians should make conscious efforts to overcome their isolation and to increase faculty awareness of library resources, services, and the competencies of the librarian herself which can lead to a fruitful collaboration between librarian and faculty. Increased interaction between faculty and librarians will strengthen the relationship. Librarians should plan events such as regular meetings, book fairs, personal visits to faculty, while encouraging faculty visits to library.

Personal qualities such as courteousness, approachability, helpful nature, respect to others can help strengthen the relationship. Librarians need to demonstrate their approachability by proactively seeking out faculty, and maintaining professional and collegial attitude while dealing with faculty.

Librarians should learn how to resolve conflict in a positive manner. Conflict resolution training will be of great help to librarians to resolve conflict situations in a positive and timely manner, without weakening the relationship.

### Recommendations for faculty

Faculty consider communication as the most important way of improving the relationship, as found in this study. Though faculty and librarians both expect librarians to take initiative in improving the communication and thus the relationship, faculty should respond by attending the meetings and events organized by the librarian, responding promptly to emails, and being more receptive to librarians' efforts in this regard.

Though library procedures are often seen to be a source of conflict, faculty should try to understand that without rules and procedures, it will be difficult for librarians  tomanage the library efficiently. If change in procedures or rules is deemed necessary by faculty, a feedback given in a positive manner will help the librarian to find a solution to the problem.

Mutual respect is very important in maintaining good relations, as realized by both faculty and librarians. Faculty should treat librarians are academicians like themselves.

### Recommendations for institute authorities

Organization culture has been identified by both faculty and librarians as an important factor which

affects faculty librarian relationship. The institute authorities can help to improve the relationship between faculty and librarians by making structural and procedural changes. Some of the ways in which this can be done are listed below.

Involving faculty in library programs and librarian in faculty programs and meetings will help both to understand each other's perspective and will lead to increased understanding. Involving librarian more in teaching learning process will lead to increased commitment of the librarian toward the primary objective of the institute. Librarian's inputs will help faculty. Also, the librarian will be able to satisfy information needs of faculty and users in a timely manner. Occasional get-togethers and relationship building activities will in strengthening the relationship. The Human Resource department heads may take up the responsibility.

## Conclusion

The findings of the study indicate that a majority of librarians are optimistic about their relationship with faculty. Also, the general trend of faculty suggestions is positive. However, more efforts from librarians, faculty and institute authorities are needed to improve the relationship between librarians and faculty. It is librarians who need to take the initiative in this.Seeking feedback from faculty about the library services and procedures and regular review of the same will result in services and procedures which are more user centered, resulting in better relations with faculty. Relationship building is a critical leadership skill, which can be developed with training. Training programs in this area could be designed by library associations and library schools. Well planned relationship building programs that are focused on increasing faculty awareness of library resources and services, and seeking opportunities for communication, interaction and collaboration with faculty proactively will lead to improved relationship between the two groups.

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