6-1-2006

"Library as Place": Implementation of 5-S System

Maggie L. Y. Liu

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Liu, Maggie L. Y. (2006) ""Library as Place": Implementation of 5-S System," *Journal of East Asian Libraries*: Vol. 2006 : No. 139 , Article 12.
Available at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jeal/vol2006/iss139/12

"LIBRARY AS PLACE": IMPLEMENTATION OF 5-S SYSTEM

Maggie L. Y. Liu   Hong Kong Baptist University Library, Hong Kong

Abstract

The 5-S system, developed from Japanese management techniques, is a useful tool for managing and maintaining a quality environment. It is widely applied in various manufacturing and business sectors. This article shares the experience of implementing the 5-S system in the Hong Kong Baptist University Library in relation to the idea of "library as place". A detailed account of an application of 5-S system is given. It is hoped that it can serve as a reference for the library community in the continuous improvement of library environment. It also attempts to explore the validity of "library as place" nowadays and its compatibility with impacts of information technology development.

I.   Introduction

Tremendous technological advancement has brought us to a new electronic age, when a vast amount of information can be accessed through the Internet. The concept of the virtual library has emerged, and there is a perception in some circles that the physical library has become superfluous. The recent news about Google's massive digitization project with prominent libraries seems to further challenge the idea of "library as place". Does this imply that we can put fewer resources into the management of a library environment? On the contrary, figures tell us that investment in improving library facilities and environment has not ceased even in times of tight fiscal budgets. Nearly 400 academic library building projects were completed in America and Canada between 1995 and 2002[1].

While enormous focus is being put on the enhancement of electronic resources in libraries, proper management of the physical library environment should not be neglected when we aim at providing quality services to our users. Indeed, the library as place is affirmed in the statement of the basic function of a library: the provision of resources to meet information needs of its target community, to promote the use of library materials and to support educational and cultural activities in the context of a pleasant environment.

The acquisition of skills in managing the library environment is important. For the sake of practicality, it is more appropriate for a library to begin adopting a well established and easy-to-follow environmental management technique. One of these is the 5-S system, which can be effectively adopted as a starting point and base for progressing to total quality management (TQM).   A survey of over 300 British and Japanese companies revealed that 5-S practice made a remarkable contribution to the successful implementation of total quality management (TQM)[2].

II.   What is 5-S?

Managing the library environment well is not an easy task, as thousands of issues are involved and need to be settled, ranging from large renovation projects to small details like locations of trash bins. Systematic management guidelines definitely help us proceed efficiently and effectively. The 5-S system represents five important essences for creating, improving, and maintaining a quality work environment through a series of activities. The 5-S concept was originally developed by Takashi Osada in the early 1980s[3]. According to Osada, 5-S practice is intended "to organize the workplace, to keep it neat, to clean, to maintain standardized conditions, and to maintain the discipline that is needed to do a good job."[4] This Japanese management technique has been used in Japan for a long time. In Japanese, 5-S represents Seiri, Seiton, Seiso, Seiketsu and Shitsuke, which could be translated into Structurise, Systematise, Sanitise, Standardise and Self-disciplinise respectively. It is a belief that a good physical workplace is crucial for improving work productivity and efficiency. 5-S practice is widely applied in the manufacturing and services sectors. A leading motor car manufacturer, Toyota[3], and renowned department store, Sogo[5], are some of the prestigious firms that have adopted the 5-S system.

Structurise
"Organization" is the focus for the first 5-S, "Structurise". Simply speaking, we should clearly identify what is needed and screen out what is not needed in organizing a wealth of things. Many people are inclined to keep things. Though they might not have been used for years, people feel these items will be used at some time. However, according to the concept of "Structurise", there is a need to sort through all items, keeping the needed things and removing unneeded items. Things not used for a period of time are regarded as unnecessary and they should be removed or discarded. This not only avoids a massive buildup of waste, but also reduces storage cost.

Systematise
Orderliness or neatness can be used to describe the idea of "Systematise". It is an extension of "Structurise" that focuses on prioritizing the arrangement and location of remaining needed things systematically according to their usage frequency and importance. For needed things, we should further sort and put them in appropriate places with clear location indicators; the most frequently used ones being kept at convenient locations while the lesser used ones are placed in a relatively remote area. Under this orderly and organized arrangement, things will be found more easily and smoothly, saving us time; therefore, it can improve our efficiency in getting work done.

Sanitise
Cleanliness is vital to a company or institution, but it is often overlooked by people. Working in a clean and hygienic environment assures health and safety of employees, leading to high morale and

productivity. In addition, a clean and neat workplace greatly improves the image of an organization.

Standardise

Standardized organization, neatness and cleanliness should always be maintained. Standardization of working procedures and conditions provides transparency and helps staff implement and accomplish tasks quickly so as to improve work productivity. Visual management is an important aspect in the context of standardization. For example, color-labeled files facilitate easy access and retrieval.

Self-discipline

Benefits of the above four 5-S are easily seen. However, without the "self-discipline" element for sustainability, the success of a 5-S program is momentary; everything will revert back to the previous messy state. To maintain the advantages gained by adopting the 5-S system, efforts should be taken in instilling the significance of a neat, orderly and safe workplace in our employees and cultivating good working habits in our workplace. Continuous reinforcement and communication with staff members help to build up and promote a culture of self-discipline. Delicately embedding 5-S into our daily routine work will ensure the continuity of gains from 5-S.

III.   Implementation of 5S system in Hong Kong Baptist University Library

Support from top management to create program visibility

The greatest advantage of the 5-S system is that it provides a systematic framework and management skills for realizing the goals of constantly improving work environment and productivity in an organization. Recognizing its benefits, Hong Kong Baptist University Library decided to implement the 5-S system in 2001. It is probably the first university library in Hong Kong to adopt the system. Full support from the senior management in the Library was provided throughout 5-S implementation. Announcement about the launch of the 5-S program was made by the University Librarian to all staff. The University Librarian also signed the 5-S policy statement to declare our determination to implement the 5-S system in the Library. For a better understanding of 5-S principles, some library staff members were chosen to attend a one-day comprehensive workshop conducted by an advocate of 5-S program. Five attendees were further selected to form a 5-S steering committee responsible for launching a series of 5-S activities in the Library. A 5-S overview workshop was also offered to all staff members with the purpose of giving them a basic concept of the 5-S system. Within several months, everyone in the Library was well informed about the launch of the 5-S program.

Implementation plan

A project plan

Before its implementation, a 5-S project plan was developed and submitted to the senior management for approval. The plan included the mission and objectives of the 5-S program--providing a good work environment, improving the quality of services, promoting the library's image, and developing a 5-S
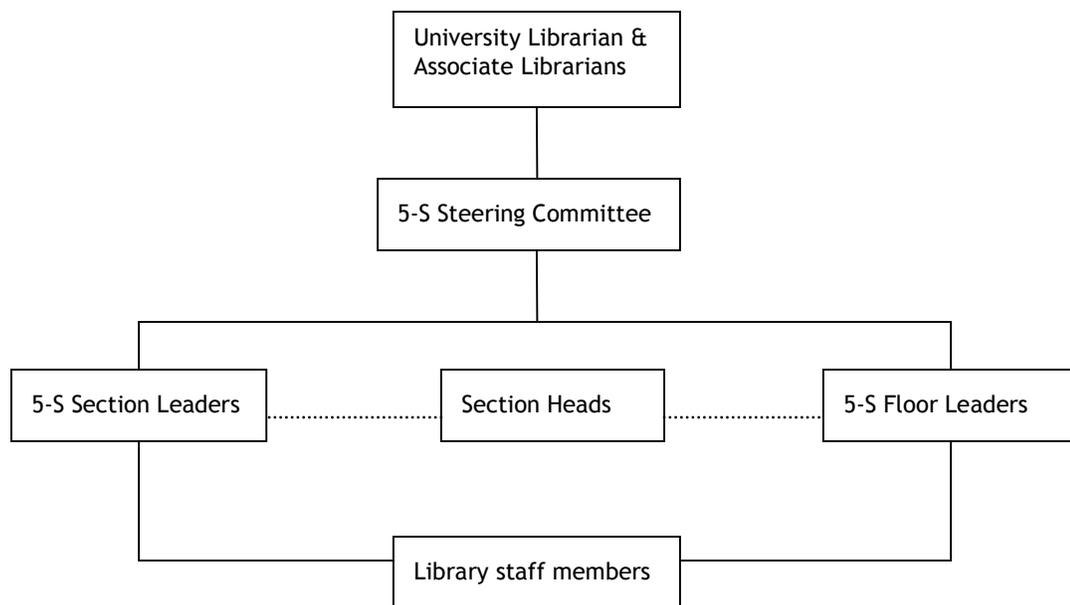
spirit as a part of library culture for all library staff.

Library members' total participation

A 5-S organization chart (Fig. 1) was set up for effective implementation and communication. There are four organizational layers in 5-S hierarchical structure. The University and Associate librarians are at the top of the hierarchy while the 5-S steering committee is at the second level. Section leaders and floor leaders as well as section supervisors occupy the third tier whereas other library staff members form the base of the hierarchy.

The University and Associate librarians take the leading roles in the 5-S structure in the Library, and the steering committee regularly reports the progress of 5-S activities. The 5-S steering committee is mainly responsible for executing all 5-S related programs, including policy setting, implementation, monitoring, reviewing, and evaluation of the programs. Committee members include one professional staff (serving as convenor), one executive officer, and three support staff.

Fig. 1   5-S organization chart

```
                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │ University Librarian &│
                    │ Associate Librarians │
                    └──────────┬──────────┘
                               │
                    ┌──────────┴──────────┐
                    │ 5-S Steering Committee│
                    └──────────┬──────────┘
                               │
        ┌──────────────────────┼──────────────────────┐
┌───────┴────────┐    ┌────────┴───────┐    ┌──────────┴──────┐
│5-S Section Leaders│···│  Section Heads │···│5-S Floor Leaders│
└───────┬────────┘    └────────────────┘    └──────────┬──────┘
        │              ┌────────────────┐              │
        └──────────────┤Library staff members├─────────┘
                       └────────────────┘
```

Section leaders, assigned by their section heads, assume the role of practicing and leading other library members within their sections to actively carry out the 5-S program. The leaders work closely and interactively with their section heads to help with practicing and operating 5-S smoothly in sections. Floor leaders take care of the public area of the Library. Support staff at Hong Kong Baptist University are divided into groups and shelf-read for thirty minutes every morning. Taking advantage of this routine, support staff of each shelf-reading group rotate as floor leaders each semester and are responsible for coordinating the monitoring of public areas in the Library. According to established

procedures, they report to the Administrative Office if shelf-readers find any problems or defects in the Library's public area, e.g. water leakage, lighting, etc., that need to be fixed. Every staff member plays a part in the 5-S system in the Library.

Promotion

In order to further raise interest in the implementation of 5-S and to promote the 5-S program, a 5-S poster was designed with copies distributed to all sections for posting in prominent areas. Briefing sessions about the 5-S campaign were conducted for all staff before the implementation. Each briefing covered 5-S concepts, 5-S organization structure, name lists of section leaders and floor leaders, duty guidelines for section leaders and floor leaders, procedures for reporting defects or problems found in the public areas of the Library, responsibility zones for each floor, and timeline of 5-S activities.

First 5-S cycle: Phase I - Structurise, Systematise and Sanitise

The implementation of the first 3S, Structurise, Systematize and Sanitise, of the first 5-S cycle took place in 2002. It concentrated on the Library's office environment. As an incentive for staff members to actively participate, contests were held on how well sections implemented the first 3S. The 5-S steering committee paid a visit and inspected each section with ratings given based on a designed checklist. At each section, pictures were taken to compare the office condition pre- and post-5-S implementation. In order to get realistic results, the exact dates for inspection were not disclosed to staff members. The section with best performance was given a champion prize award. The first runner-up and sections with best improvements were also given certificates as a token for encouragement. These awards were presented by our University Librarian during library staff meetings as a show of appreciation and to publicize sections efforts in supporting the 5-S program.

Some sections were enthusiastic in participating in the programs and prepared detailed reports about 5-S implementation in their own sections. Comprehensive reports were also prepared and compiled by the steering committee as a detailed record of the processes of 5-S implementation. They included assessment and suggestions for improvement for each section with annotated pictures. All relevant 5-S information was posted on our Library's intranet for the convenience of staff members to access when they wanted to.

First 5-S cycle: Phase II - Standardise and Self-discipline

The activities of "Standardise" and "Self-discipline" were somewhat different from the first 3S. More emphasis was placed on public areas of the Library. Different activities related to standardization and self-discipline took place in 2003 and 2004. When the committee examined all signboards on the exit doors of each level in the Library, it was found that the position of signboards varied without any standardization (Fig.2). After discussion with the Estates Office of the University, a standardized position was set up and all signboards were re-affixed according to the standard. In addition, notices

posted in the Library were of diverse types and sizes (Fig.3). Many of them were out-of-date but remained on display. To provide a clean and neat environment to library users, all the obsolete notices were removed or standardized.

To support the idea of self-discipline, a 5-S talk about office safety was conducted for staff members. The talk covered topics related to ergonomic workstations, proper lifting procedures and fire escapes. A three-dimensional triangular block with wording for "Self-Discipline" was also created for every staff member as a visual reminder to encourage them to take five minutes everyday to clean up their desks before leaving the office.

Difficulties Encountered in the first 5-S cycle
Because the 5-S implementation was not firmly established in the initial stage of the first 5-S cycle, library staff were not initially well aware of the need for and significance of implementing 5-S in the library's daily operations. Some sections were not as enthusiastic as others in the 5-S program. With persistent effort, proactive approaches in the implementation of 5-S programs, support from the senior library management team, as well as ongoing experience, the 5-S system became well organized and received positive support from library staff.

Pre 5-S (No standardization)		Post 5-S (With standardization)
Fig. 2 Signboards at fire exit doors		
Fig. 3 "Keep silence" notices		

Second 5-S cycle

The 5-S program has been launched in the Library for nearly four years, and great progress has been made in the first cycle. In order to prevent the program from becoming stale and static, the committee has designed a whole year 5-S activity calendar. As it is important to maintain the 5-S spirit among staff members, a variety of activities and promotional campaigns will be launched at different times. At the beginning of the new cycle, the committee designed a 5-S game related to office environment for staff to participate in, with an award given to the most outstanding group. 5-S tips in the form of funny cartoons are emailed to colleagues on a regular basis. It is our vision to create and maintain a pleasant work and study environment and have colleagues both know more about 5-S and its importance to an orderly work environment, as well as be motivated to put it into practice.

IV.   Conclusion

The 5-S system in the Library has become a mature and sophisticated program. It has been well received, with encouraging feedback. Visiting librarians have also shown a great interest in the 5-S system after learning of our implementation of the system. The success of the 5-S program can be attributed to the strong cooperation and active involvement of all library staff members as well as top management's generous support. Efforts to improve the library's physical environment continue. The 5-S system also serves as a model of participative management, with cross-sectional collaboration to create synergy in managing the physical library environment.

People may think that the advancement of technology and development of the physical library are incompatible: as one flourishes, the other shrinks. There is no doubt that the impact of enormous and rapid technological development has fueled the question of the existence and value of a physical library, with the emergence of concepts such as the virtual library, paperless library, and library beyond walls. Are they really incompatible or can they be complimentary? Why are library renovation projects not diminishing? A survey conducted in 2003 showed that 80 percent of libraries in America and Canada experienced increased library usage after completing renovation projects, and it was found that an expansion and improvement of technological facilities in libraries accounted for the growth[1].

The role of the library is to enhance learning in the information age. The idea of "library as place" is still valid today. The 5-S system suggests a framework and provides guidelines for creating and maintaining an inviting, pleasant environment for library staff to work in, and for library patrons to study, learn, think, socialize, and to be inspired in.

References:

1. Shill, Harold B. and Tonner, Shawn. "Does the building still matter? Usage patterns in new, expanded, and renovated libraries, 1995-2002." *College & Research Libraries* 65, no.2 (March 2004): 123-150.

2. Ho, Samuel K., Cicmil, Svetlana and Fung, Christopher K. "The Japanese 5-S practice and TQM training." *Training for Quality* 3, no. 4 (1995): 19-24.

3. Low Sui-Pheng. "Towards TQM – integrating Japanese 5-S principles with ISO 9001: 2000 requirements." *The TQM Magazine* 13, issue 5 (2001): 334-340.

4. Osada, Takashi. 1991. *The 5S's: five keys to a total quality environment*. Tokyo: Asian Productivity Organization.

5. Ho, Samuel K. M. 1999. *The Hong Kong 5-S campaign*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Baptist University.

6. Low Sui-Pheng and Khoo, Sarah Danielle. "Team performance management: enhancement through Japanese 5-S principles." *Team Performance Management* 7, no. 7/8 (2001): 105-111.

Maggie Liu is the assistant librarian of the Hong Kong Baptist University Library. She is a multi-media cataloger and supervisor of technical processing of the Library. She is also a convenor of the 5-S Steering Committee in the Library. Contact: The Hong Kong Baptist University Library, 34 Renfrew Road, Kowloon Tong, Hong Kong. Email: lliu@hkbu.edu.hk. Phone number: (852) 3411-5398. Fax: (852)