Importance of Information Literacy Programmes in Academic Libraries: With Special Rreference to BMK KRC Pune Branch

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides information on how the library takes efforts to educate and help inculcate information literacy skills among different categories of library users. This paper also highlights the need for different types of user education programs for various levels. The author explained how the library is organizing these literacy programmes at different levels. The growth of information technology has brought about a drastic change in society; there is a revolution in the education system. Emerging technology has put forth new challenges and responsibilities for the academic library. Library professionals should know the latest developments and they should make the users of the library about it. Information literacy programs play a vital role in communication between the library and its users.

KEYWORDS: User Education, Information Literacy, Academic Library.

INTRODUCTION

Academic library supports teaching, learning, as well as research activities to achieve the goal of the parent institution. It is the library's responsibility to provide better services to its patrons and make sure that information sources, which are available in the library, are well utilized. The information literacy program aims to expose users to enhance their literacy skills in utilizing the resource collections, services and facilities provided by the library. Information literacy also called bibliographic instruction, User education, library instruction, or library orientation, consists of instructional programs designed to teach library users how to locate the information they need quickly and effectively

The American Library Association's Presidential Committee on Information Literacy defined information literacy as the ability "to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information" and highlighted information literacy as a skill essential for lifelong learning and the production of an informed and prosperous citizens. *(ala,1989)* Information literacy is the ability to effectively find, evaluate, and use information from various sources to make informed decisions, solve problems, and contribute to knowledge. It encompasses a range of skills, including identifying information needs, locating reliable resources, critically assessing information, and using information ethically.

Information literacy is very important for academic success and the professional growth of a person. It enables students to conduct research, write papers, and learn effectively. It helps individuals find relevant information, solve problems, and make informed decisions in the workplace. Information literacy is about becoming a skilled and critical user of information, not just a passive recipient, but also helps in lifelong learning.

Need for information literacy

Information literacy empowers individuals to access information about their health, their environment, and their education and work, empowering them to make critical decisions about their lives, e.g., in taking more responsibility for their health and education. By becoming information literate (IL), people can access information efficiently and effectively, evaluate information critically and competently. It empowers citizens to use information accurately and creatively for resolving the problem at hand, and manage the flow of information from a wide variety of sources. Furthermore, information literacy involves a strong understanding of the ethical and legal considerations related to accessing and using information. (Chakravarty)

In their report, Gibson and Massey (2024) shared experiences at Towson University about teacher-librarian collaboration and positive influences on student receptivity to information literacy concepts. It effect on the overall assignment and results suggest that this knowledge has allowed many students to gain greater independence.

Lauer, and Ariew,(2024) in their case study, mention that the instruction received promoted more in-depth, authentic, and student-centered research. They mentioned that in this study, students gained a better understanding of the research process, which was facilitated through collaboration

As described by Ravi Kumar and Phil, education is a lifelong process. It has no end. As far as library activities are concerned, the users are not aware of information literacy. They need some sought of user education on how to use library resources and services. Because the collection libraries are very complicated. To know how to use and what the services available is etc., they need assistance and guidance (instructions, initiation and education). It has its objectives. Broadly, it means to bring awareness about or to guide the users about library facilities, collection, and services for new users This type of guidance is necessary. *(Ravi Kumar and Phil 2009)*

According to Suchitra Kar to make effective use of library resources is one of the main objectives of every library. To make use of the library efficiently, the user should know all the details about the library. For that, the user has to be educated regarding the library, its objectives and activities. In the past years, many user education programs have been developed. These programs are designed to help the user develop information-seeking skills. These programs range from brief tours of the library for new users to in-depth activities involving the library. There are various techniques for providing user education programs, like lectures, guided tours, etc. However, all these techniques are successful for a small group of users and in many cases, users cannot take part in the program due to individual constraints. One solution for this problem is the use of Computer–Assisted Instruction (CAI), which is particularly suitable for large, ongoing orientation programs. It also requires user involvement in the learning process. It can be an efficient instructional aid in teaching basic skills to use the library. *(Kar, 2001)*

Drucker has defined an educated person as someone "who has learned how to learn, and who continues learning, especially by formal education, throughout his or her lifetime". Library user education programs need to support the concept of educating for a lifetime. In examining the future, what factors will affect change? What will be the impact on libraries and librarians? Finally, after we look at the future, a description of The Gateway to Information will show how and why it may be one response to the demands of future education programs. Librarians are the most capable of all professionals in analysing user needs and meeting those needs effectively. Librarians are perceived as the ones responsible for instructing users in the effective use of electronic resources (and in critical thinking skills) to enable the users to select the best information for their needs. Librarians will need to be more involved with the development of user-friendly information systems. *(Drucker,1994)*

- Information literacy and digital literacy are related.

- Academic libraries should include digital topics in information literacy training.

- Information literacy should be trained at the start of university education and before students begin dissertation writing. (Akakpo, M. G. (2023).)

- Information literacy occurs in various forms such as formal class settings, small group sessions, one-on-one encounters, written guides and brochures, audiovisual presentations, and computer-assisted instruction. Library orientation and instruction are among the programs used to enhance library skills for the new students. These programs help students to know various types of library facilities, as well as library resources and services.

- Information literacy programme is provided when the enrolment process takes place, before registration in the University. The purpose of User Education is to provide better services to make sure that information sources, services and resources are well utilized for library users. To do so following User Education programs are organized by the library.
  - Basic Library Orientation & Awareness Programs
  - Workshops
  - Lectures
  - Hands-on practice and demonstration

The library provides a multi-faceted user education program for the members, including students, academics, and administration staff. The program is designed to bridge the gap between users and the library's materials, services, and facilities. The information displayed contains information about opening hours. Library information rules, Library timings, and staff maintenance. Lecture methods may be formal/informal, a workshop about the CD-ROM, online services practice workshop. Advertising papers, journals, posters, pamphlets.

Among the contents or classes offer are as follow:

- Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC)

- All databases subscribed by the library

- How to write a bibliography

- Lecture series on internet searching

- Hands on experiences on internet searching

Information literacy programmes at SNDT Women's University Knowledge Resource Centre, Pune Branch:
The SNDT Women's University Library (BMK KRC) supports the teaching, learning, research and extension activities of the University by providing to students, faculty and support staff, information and documentary resources and services, relevant to their needs. Being an integral part of the university, the library is committed to play a proactive role in the empowerment of women through dissemination and use of information and knowledge. Members include students, faculty, university staff, patrons from society, and guest/temporary membership privileges include use of reading room, audio-visual facilities, borrowing rights and reference services.

Information literacy/User education/Orientation programs designed as,

A. Basic Library Orientation & Awareness Programs
B. Introduction to library techniques
C. Introduction to information sources and services.
D. Introduction to databases and searching techniques which includes literature search techniques online and offline.

A. Basic Library Orientation & Awareness Programs

In the past years many information literacy programs were developed. These programmes designed to help the user to develop information-seeking skills. These programs depend on the educational level of the reader and range from brief tours of the library for new user to the in-depth activities involved in the library. Information literacy programme takes place at the beginning of the year.

i) About the Library: a brief introduction about the library. As part of the library's efforts to increase the IL skills of the readers the library offers orientation programmes to the readers. The main idea behind this is that the user should know all the details about the library and the information sources and materials in order to use of library efficiently. It helps to guide students in independent scholarly pursuit of knowledge in their subject and to create an awareness of the resources of the library and the skills required to exploit them. It also sets up a channel of communication between the library, the students and the faculty.

ii) Library timings: opening and closing hours on weekdays and holidays, closed days, timing for issue and return of books.

iii) Layout of library building, floors, areas, collection, etc. location of various sections, services.

iv) Library rules and regulations: number of books to be issued according to category of borrowers; types of books, loan period for reference books, periodicals, general books and other categories of books, overdue charges, reservation of books.

v) Staff: Introduction to the in-charge of each section.

vi) Procedures: Membership and registration, borrowing procedures.

vii) Facilities: What facilities knowledge resource centre provides to them. For eg. Book bank facility, so that students can issue book for a longer duration in the long vacations. Audio-visual room facility, in this student can sit and listen music and also can watch a movie.

viii) Others: Students are introduced about some special features like 'Granthotsav'. Library organizes yearly Granthotsav, a festival of books. Library has been organizing this since 1993 successfully until this year. The basic

purpose is to encourage the reading habits among the readers. In this programme well-known personalities. On the occasion of the Granthostsav Competitions are organized for the students include various activities like memory game based on book titles, quiz competition, dumb-charades, crossword, slogan, debate competition etc. Three days book exhibition and sale were also held during the Granthotsav. Madam personally visits to all the programs all three days. She encourages faculty and students to attend the program and select books from the exhibition.

B. Introduction to library technique

Online Public Catalogue (OPAC): How to use an online catalogue, how to find book number with the use of Online Library Catalogue (OPAC). Library staff gives a demonstration and hands on sessions on OPAC, so that students can find the class numbers. In this scheme of classification: its features, class numbers representing broad subjects, arrangement of subjects all things are explained.

C. Introduction to information sources and services

Types of reference books and information sources, e.g. directories, encyclopaedias, bibliographical directories, gazetteers, subject encyclopaedias, subject bibliographies, year books, primary and secondary information sources, use of non-traditional sources. arrangement of the books and the facilities available. Borrowing of Library material, Photocopying, inter library loan, audio visual Room, Reading Hall, internet, Online databases, CD-ROM databases, Information Retrieval using search Engines.

For those in Junior college, a tour of the library is given and the use of basic reference sources like dictionaries and encyclopaedias are taught. For undergraduates, the same tour is supplemented by showing them the uses of periodical literature, searching through the recent periodical literature and abstracting periodicals besides use of the internet. Recent trends in education have increased the need for helping the library user to become capable of finding material relevant to her need. Types of services provided by the library to its users, like reference service, circulation service, CAS, etc

D. Literature search techniques

Use of indexing and abstracting periodicals, thesaurus, citation indexes, APA style manuals, how to use citation, prepare bibliographies etc. Intensive subject wise library instructions are given to post graduate students, research scholars and faculty members who has newly joined, at the beginning of each academic year. So that they can make the use of the library throughout the year.

The instructions are based on 'Bibliographic Pathfinders' (S.N.D.T.Women's University Library 1991), which have been prepared by the library. The pathfinder contains list of class numbers useful for the subject along with its alphabetical subject index under sought headings; annotated list of periodicals; annotated list of reference and bibliographic sources. The pathfinders are constantly updated to include new sources, changes in curriculum, and developments in the subject field and so on.

Presently most of the scholarly information is converted and stored online. The library is connected to a network that allows users to gain access to electronic products, services and databases such as J-Stor, Proquest and Ebsco. During

orientation, students are also taught to use these electronic products and services and are also taught to search various search engines for their research work. There are hands on sessions for both students and faculty throughout the year. Instruction is also imparted on the preparation of their reference list and bibliography as per APA or any other standard required. Thus, the orientation programme and the continuing programmes help in laying the foundations of lifelong information literacy.

But as stated by the Peacock, some barriers signify longstanding issues—such as the lack of pedagogical training in library science curricula. However, changes in the higher education landscape, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, have raised the urgency for planned IL programmes. This research draws attention to the fact that, if the barriers that limit effective delivery of online instruction by academic librarians are going to be reduced, institutional investment has a key role; professional development opportunities need to be increased, and important curriculum in library science programs need to be reformed. Active advocacy that legitimizes and advances online library instruction will be an essential component of academic librarianship. (Peacock, 2025)

CONCLUSION

The main aim of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is to modernize India's education system by making it more holistic, flexible, and student-centered, while also promoting multidisciplinary learning and a student-centered approach that encourages creativity, critical thinking, and lifelong learning. It aims to transform the education landscape, ensuring that students are equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in the 21st century. (NEP,2020). Right information to the right user can pave the way to new directions in research and development. It is imperative that to achieve this objective, we should understand the library user, how they interact with the system, their pattern of search and their pertinent information requirement. (*Chaturvedi, 1994).*

The main objective of every library is to make effective use of the library resources. To fulfil this, a user has to be educated regarding using the library. Information literacy initiatives in academic libraries for higher education play an important role in preparing students for success in today's digital and media-rich environment. Academic libraries are positioned as central hubs for promoting information literacy skills among students and faculty. Academic libraries offer a wide range of resources, services, and instructional programs to support information literacy. Library professionals must engage with their users to understand their needs, preferences, and challenges, and arrange their services accordingly. collaboration and partnerships with faculty members, academic departments, and other campus stakeholders are essential for the success of information literacy initiatives in academic libraries. Libraries must extend their services beyond the student community to reach lifelong learners, underserved populations, thereby promoting digital inclusion and equitable access to information resources.

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