EMPOWERING COLLEGE LIBRARY USERS IN THE PRESENT ELECTRONIC INFORMATION ERA: WAYS AND MEANS

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Abstract

Background: most of the college library operates without considering the requirement of users community to whom actually the college libraries or educations are meant for. In reality, it is seen that the college library fails to satisfy the users need in true sense and as a result of which, the incomplete education system as well as back-dated college library service is still running in the present electronic information era.

Scope: the paper would like to discuss some realistic view of the college library users' empowerment programme in traditional as well as technological sense. On the other hand, it would also like to highlight the essence of the users empowerment programme for optimum utilization of the available resources of the college libraries and trying to point out the ways and means of the users' empowerment programme.

Purpose: the basic aim of this paper is to present the need & scope as well as ways & means of the college library user's empowerment programme in terms of the reality and provide some alternatives that can be adopted by the college library to introduce the said programme.

Infrastructure: almost all the college libraries are suffering from the acute shortage of the minimum infrastructure in terms of building, library collections, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) based equipment (those are dream to college library), human resources and positive mentality of all concerned.

Methods and materials: the paper will be based on some literature, practical experiences consultation with some college librarians and authorities.

Practical implications: The paper may help to the appropriate authority to step-up the college library users' empowerment programme in their individual institutions which will indirectly act as catalyst of quality based education and help to achieve successful grade in any sorts of accreditation e.g. NAAC (National Assessment and Accreditation Council).

Keywords

Users empowerment programme, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), Library collection and development, Library human resources.

0.   Introduction

The present society is so fast that the users of library are to be empowered properly to achieve the required library services for a moment and also to satisfy the fourth law of library science i.e. 'Save the time of the reader'. Since, the most of the college imparting under graduate level of education, which may be regarded as entry gate of higher education, so the college library has to be taken proper step to empower the students to enable them to access library collections according to their requirement. In reality, it is also observed that, a large portion of the college library collection and most of the services are completely unknown to its common users.

1.   Objectives of College Library

A college library must fulfill the following basic needs to support the teaching, research and study requirements of the college community, if it is to be or intellectual workshop:

 ➢ A clear statement, which governs the relationship of the librarian and the other components of the college, like the faculty community and provides appropriately shared responsibility and activity among them.
 ➢ Recognition of library as an academic development of the college imparting library centered education to students as well as an academic information center with academic activities including library based teaching.
 ➢ A clearly formulated code of policy of governance in an official document issued by the university to which the college is affiliated.
 ➢ Perception of minimum qualifications for each category of library staff.
 ➢ Nature and composition of the library communities and their function.
 ➢ Doing away with the tradition of having a member of the teaching staff as professor in-charge of the library and making the librarian directly responsible to the principal.
 ➢ Provision of adequate funds to secure minimum expenditure on books on the basis of some recognized optimum per capita standard.
 ➢ Recognition of the librarian and his deputies as members of the teaching staff and their obligation to impart library use instruction to students in the library class.
 ➢ Setting norms and standards for library building and furniture, library forms and stationary, staff length book budget, book collection, technical processing and library services [Saha, 2008].

2.   Factors affecting the growth of college libraries

The proper growth and development of any college libraries is depends upon the several societal factors, where college is established or going to be established. Some of the major factors which are to be taken into considerations are as:

- ❖ Political and social stability of the society
- ❖ High standard of living
- ❖ High rate of literacy
- ❖ Local and national traditions
- ❖ Encouragement from the local, state and national govt.
- ❖ Influence of leading individuals
- ❖ Well established book trade
- ❖ Existence of large Chunks of urban populations
- ❖ Clear and defined status of the college librarian

Social, Political and Economic conditions play an important role in the growth and development of any libraries. In a country like India, support from Local, State and National Govt. is extremely important.

3.   Functions of College Library

A college library is expected to support the objectives of the college. Thus the basic function of a college library is to assist its parent body to carry out its programme. This means that it must adequately serve the needs and requirement of the teachers and students towards reading, study and research. This can be achieved, if facilities and services are made available towards the end. A College Library is not a substitute for formal education. It is a complement to it; rather it is an integral part of the College. In order to advance the objectives of the college education, a library should perform the following functions along with the routine work associated with the direct library operation (Accessioning, Classification, Cataloguing, Shelving, issuing etc): -

- ❖ To acquire and display books and periodicals to meet the varying needs, demands of interest of College students;
- ❖ To encourage reading habit amongst the Students;
- ❖ To provide reading and audio-visual material to supplement the class room;
- ❖ To provide reading material and information for students;
- ❖ To provide them an opportunity for life long and functional education;
- ❖ To keep the library collections ready and up to date, so that these can be provide immediately after the users demand; and
- ❖ Follow and carry out the Library rules for the successful operation of the College etc. [Paul, 2008].

4.   Activities of College Library

A college library has to perform several activities as pre-requisite to offer effective library services for its users. In most of the cases college librarian is the single man who is responsible to perform the series of activities. The major activities are as below:

- ❖   Fund Allocation
- ❖   Resource Selection & Placing Order
- ❖   Resource Receiving, Verification, Bill Clearance etc.
- ❖   Accessioning & Processing (Classificationing, Cataloguing, Spinning, Labeling, Pasting etc.)
- ❖   Book shelving and maintenance of Shelves (Book binding, Preservation etc.)
- ❖   Membership registration & issuing 'NO DUES' / 'LIBRARY CLEARANCE' certificate
- ❖   Circulation
- ❖   Overdue notice
- ❖   Answering queries
- ❖   Administrative communication
- ❖   Organization of reading room
- ❖   Physical stock verification and
- ❖   Others [Saha, 2008].

5.   College Library Services

Library services may be provided lending service, instruction in the use of the library, assistance in the location of documents or use of library catalogue or understanding of reference books etc. in addition with the above a College Library can provide a variety of following services: -

- ❖ Display the materials and information;
- ❖ Reader's advisory service;
- ❖ Assistance in the use of catalogue;
- ❖ Reading Room service;
- ❖ Providing of information on request;
- ❖ Assistance in the use of reference books;
- ❖ Assistance in locating and searching of library holdings;
- ❖ Prepare bibliographical lists on request;
- ❖ Preservation of materials;
- ❖ Multiple-copy services;
- ❖ Career and Job oriented information.

❖ Service to attempt and face Competitive Examination (SSC, PSC, SSC, Bank PO, Rail and LICI etc).

❖ ICT oriented library Services like guide to access e-resourse through UGC Consortia (e.g. NList, subscribed E-journals, Purchased E-Books, etc.). [Paul, 2008].

6.   What is library users' education?

All the activities involved in teaching users how to make the possible use of the library resources, services, and facilities, including formal and informal instruction delivered by a librarian or other staff member one-on-one or in group. Also includes online tutorials, audiovisuals materials and printed guides and pathfinders.

7.   Why College library users' empowerment is essential?

To ensure the maximum / optimum utilization of the available resources in the college library in systematic manner by its all kinds of users, as per their requirement and achieved pre-stated objectives thereby.

7.1.   Learning to use electronic resources

Over the last decade, however, the number and variety of information sources available, whether locally or remotely via the WWW, have increased greatly, and users in many cases have not been able to keep up with all of the choices now open to them. In addition to the classical "reference interview" mentioned earlier, therefore, librarians in most institutions of higher education have greatly enhanced their provision of user education, especially as regards electronic sources of information, to the point where this is now perhaps the dominant activity for professional staff in academic libraries -- circulation duties, for example, being delegated to paraprofessionals. This must be seen as an enhancement of the status of library staff, since it renders them more equal partners with teaching staff in the educational activity of the university. They now have contact in a training role with both academic staff and students. The areas in which training is given would include not only the use of electronic primary journals from many different publishers, but also the use of abstracts and indexes databases, databanks, CD-ROM publications, document delivery services, and electronic short-loan facilities for reading-list materials. Training may even be given to academic and research staff and research students in authoring for electronic publication.

8.   Training of users in the Electronic Information Era

In the context of research institutes and commercial and industrial organisations, librarians and information officers often carry out information searches on behalf of research and managerial staff. In the electronic era this will undoubtedly continue to be the case, as many members of other professions have neither the time nor the inclination to carry out searches themselves. These areas (sometimes referred to as the "emerging market" for information and

library professionals) continue to show growth in employment as the electronic revolution proceeds. The academic world is slightly different, since a relatively small number of library staff has to serve very large numbers of staff and students, and it has clearly never been feasible for them to undertake all the searching on users' behalf. It is necessary for users to do the work themselves, and academic staff indeed have often wished to do so, not being very willing to delegate their "keeping up with the literature" to someone else [Rowland, 2008].

9.   Roles of the stakeholders

In any academic library system, basically, library professionals and teachers has to share jointly the responsibilities to empower the student-users of college library. Again, library professionals have to take the responsibility to empower the teacher, non-teacher and other-users of the college library. All of these, student-users are the main component of college library users in terms of number as well as their requirement. Therefore, enough care is to be taken to empower the student-users of the college library and hence the role of the both library professionals and teachers is truly important and mutually co-operative game. Basically, library professionals don't have any direct contact with the students and teachers are the only media who can make the bridge in between the library and its student-users. Teachers have to instruct and motivate the students to visit/use the library and library professionals have to extend their co-operation such a way so that the students will encourage coming again in the library. On the other hand, teachers have to be interested enough to possess fundamental information about the library, so that they will be enable to cater primary information to the students and it is a continuing process. To do the empowerment programme successful, there should be proper understanding among the library professionals, teachers and authority of the institutes and the objective of the institute as well as library will be clearly defined to all and will response as good as member of the common team.

According to Manish Kumar, "in the present electronic environment, academic librarians are required to work independently or as a team to deliver service-oriented and user-centered applications, instructions, programmes, projects and services in addition to general qualification and requirements, a commitment to excellent user-centred services, effective oral and written communications, as well as team collaborator must poses additional capabilities, experience, knowledge and skills." [Kumar, 2010].

Gaddagimath and others categorized the role of librarians in the present ICTs based society under six major heads. They are as:

- As an information therapist:
- As an educator:
- As content manager
- As a positive attitude librarian
- As a leader

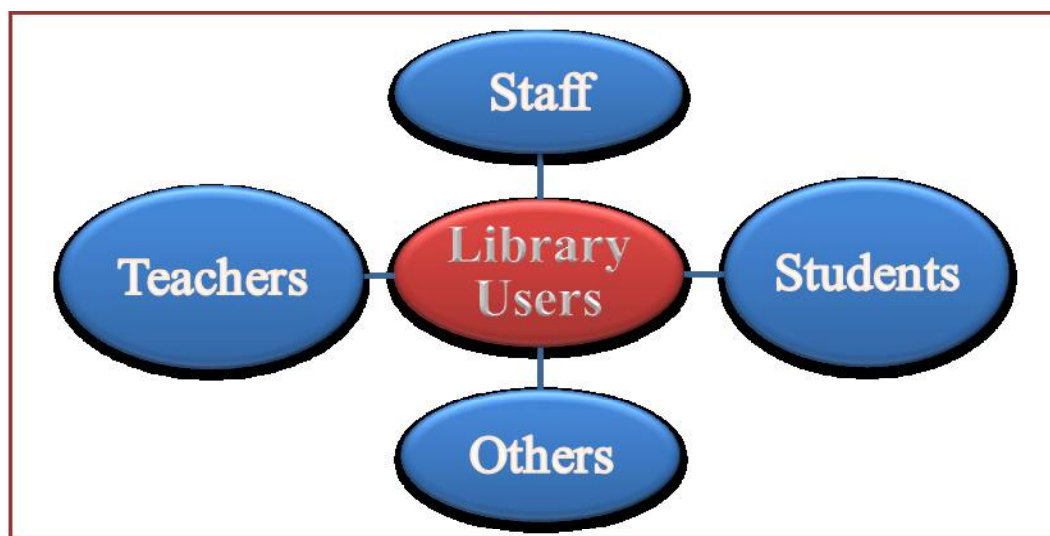- As an innovator in service excellence [Gaddagimath, 2006].

According to Saha, the role of the librarian may be pointed out as below;
- The collection developmental role
- The information consultation role
- The instruction role
- The archival role
- The incredibility important and under-appreciated role
- The role of library in providing

Not only spaces for group study or digital media creation and viewing, but for individual reflective work – for people who don't care a whit for an "information common" and do not need or want to work or study with others. [Saha, 2010].

10.   Ways and means of empowering the College library users'

Before to designing an empowerment programme and imparting empowerment to the library users, it is better to have some idea about the nature of the college library users. College library users may be divided into different categories. According to the nature of the library users they may be categorized in to following heads; e.g. active users, potential users and non users. The orientation/empowerment programme is meant to acceleration of library use by the active users only. In addition to this, special drive is to be taken to convert the potential and non users into active users of the library. Again, according to the educational level as well as involvement in the institution, college library users may be grouped under teachers, staff, students, and others which may be shown with the help of the following diagramme;

College library users may be categorized from the several corners. It will be more acceptable if empowerment programme is designed as per the need and educational level of the users and offered accordingly as well as regularly.

10.1. For teachers

i)   The existing rules of the college library is to be made clear to the members of faculty;

ii)   Initiation is to be given about the handling of card   catalogue / OPAC (if any) to find out the call number etc.

iii)   Provide latest sources of Information about the electronic   (DOAJ,   DOAR,   N-list etc.) and print resources through ILL services;

iv)   Offer assistance in using proper search engine/strategy for   retrieve   precise   and required information from Web; and

v)   Provide instruction as well as referral services to them for accelerating R&D activities.

10.2. For Staff

i)   The existing rules of the college library are to be made clear to the members of Faculty;

ii)   Initiation is to be given about the handling of card   catalogue / OPAC (if any) to find out the call number etc.

iii)   Provide instruction as well as referral services to them, if they required the same.

10.3. For scholars/students

i)   The existing rules of the college library are to be made clear to the members of Faculty;

ii)   A lecture with slide presentation is to be given in the class room at least once in a year (at the beginning of the session) about why and how   they   have   to   use   their library resources;

iii)   Quarterly lecture is to be arranged in the reading room of the library about the wrong / misuse of the library resources with case reference;

iv) Initiation is to be given about the handling of card   catalogue / OPAC (if any) to find out the call number of the library resources.

v) Insist them to consult reference books by assisting the ways to access the same as well as help them to have required resources from the same;

vi) Provide clear concept about the text book, Reference Book, journal print as well as electronic format;

vii) A leaflet (library brochure) containing the brief information about the library resources, services and service hour is to be given to each and every student;

viii) Some selected students may be invited to assist in the work (labeling, pasting, spine writing, shelving, data entry etc.) and learn them how to use the library with the caption "earn while learn"

ix) A clear picture about the services offered by the library is to be given to the students; and

x) The best library users' award is to be given in any programme day of the college or on the occasion of observing of Librarians' Day (9th August) or Library Day (20th December) in every year.

10.4. For Others

Initiation is to be given on spot as per the requirement of the users' concerned keeping in mind of the value of time. Here others means, basically the members those are like to use the library as temporary members to meet the temporary needs relating to the research/academic works. This can be done by deputing one staff with him/her to listen his/her actual requirement and the modalities one has to be satisfied for accessing the library resources e.g. photocopy of the affiliation/identity, forwarding/introductory letter by the appropriate authority, etc.

11. Conclusion

The ICT based empowerment programme is to be offered to the library users in a continuing and need based way so that they can feel free to use the library resources. Thus when libraries address clear roles, organizational structure, education, and training orientation/learning for library users, ICT application in libraries can successfully be achieved its target objectives. An analysis of the emerging electronic publication era leads to the conclusion that it is likely to be a complex and confusing scene, in which staff and students whose major concern is necessarily their own subject field, and not computer and information sciences, will not be able to look after their own information needs without assistance. However, there is a widespread impression that retrieval of information from the

Internet is both easy and cheap, and a lack of appreciation of the complexities. The present paper is trying to direct the ways and means to empower the users of college library as a whole and it will be fruitful one only when all the living facets of education (Authority, Library professionals, Teaching and Non-teaching staff) will considered the mission of users-empowerment) is a participatory as well as collaborative task. On the other hand it may be stated that, library professionals has to seek co-operation from the teachers and authority to empower its users and vis a vis, otherwise instead of empowering users it may create chaos among the users communities.

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