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REVIEW ARTICLE

**SERVICES AND RESOURCES OF
LIBRARIES**

Services and Resources of Libraries

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INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, the library is a physical place where collection of information resources in various formats (books, journals, videos, CD-ROMs etc.) is organized in a specific manner to meet the needs of a specific user or group of users. It is a service organization with both tangible and intangible assets. The tangible assets constitute physical documents and the human resources. The intangible assets comprise the invaluable services rendered by the library staff. The library plays an important role in the academic world by providing access to world class information resources and services, and stimulates academic research in the country.

Access to information is not a new phenomenon but it exists through ages. Libraries being the centre for information storage and retrieval did exist from ancient times in one form or the other. The libraries have transformed from museums to digital libraries over the time due to intervention of various technologies. The invention of ink, paper, printing technology and information and information communication technologies (ICT) are the major technological milestones in the history of library transformation. The printing technology helped the mass production of books and other printed materials and brought them to the portal of library as primary storage media. As science and technology advanced, the print media was augmented by non print media such as microforms, audio-visual aids, magnetic tapes and CD-ROMs as the medium of information storage and retrieval. Since 1950s the developments in ICT induced traditional libraries to transform to digital libraries incorporating documents available in electronic formats. The library transformation can be represented as MUSEUMS: **Media**-Clay, Brick etc: **Access**-Physical visit; to TRDITIONAL LIBRARIES: **Media**- Print: **Access**-Physical visit; to DIGITAL LIBRARY: **Media**: Digital: **Access**-Online, Remote.

From ancient times, library is the laboratory for testing or experimenting one or the other technology related to knowledge production, storage and processing. Invention of the computers is the greatest contribution to the libraries and its introduction was traced back in early 80s in the libraries. It has transformed almost every aspect of how the library provides its services

and performs its work behind the scenes. This resulted in automation of library in house operations, open public access catalogue (OPAC), remote access, digitization, and creation of digital libraries. The issues related to current technology discussed or addressed by the present day libraries are:

- Digitization of special collection, establishing institutional depositories, use of integrated library management software;
- Implementation of wireless and mobile technologies for all time remote/ campus access;
- Bar-coded library transactions;
- CD mirror servers and accessing CDs available on network;
- Application of RFID in libraries;
- Web-site development, web-programming and management of the same, integration of web-OPAC and integration of multi language on single platform;
- Production and use e-books and e-journals;
- Services for distance learning students, disabled/handicapped;
- Technology education, training and instructional/education technology to support teaching and learning; and
- Development of technology centers and promotion of information literacy.

Many factors are responsible for a change in the landscape of libraries. Libraries have changed from time to time and they have to change in the future too. Some of the important factors that helped the libraries to change are information explosion, growth in publications, users' expectations, rising expenditure and shrinking resources, rise of competitors, information technologies and digital based resources.

In academic environment, library is a place of intellectual stimulation and knowledge centre. Until 1980s, the information seekers were greatly dependent on print resources and libraries were unique places for provision of such information. The past two decades have seen a great deal of change due to ICT resulting in a demand for new pattern of scholarly information. These technological advancements have made significant impact on the growth of knowledge and unlocking of human potential. In library environment, the impact is clearly visible on information PRODUCTS such as changing document collection, the storage media, and format; PROCESS/FUNCTIONS such as automation of library in-house operations, resource sharing, reprography, communication, internet technology, search engines and instant message, and quality of service; PEOPLE-USERS AND STAFF such as choice of sources, death of distance, diminishing time zone, remote access, basic skills, on-line search, and duties and responsibilities of the library professionals.

Quality is a critical factor for achieving success in any organization. The concept of quality is not a new phenomenon for library professionals as it is rooted in library principles and activities. Though explicitly not stated, Ranganathan's Five Laws of Library Science, particularly the fourth law (save the time of reader) implies the importance of quality in library services. The law emphasizes that library administration be simple and efficient to save time of user. Knowledgeable staff provides seamless access to information regardless of format, whether the user is in the library or at a remote location.

Historically, the quality of library has been measured in terms of size- its collection, budget and manpower. Many librarians believe that quality is directly related to the size of the budget. In recent past, this concept has been changed towards the nature of the service rendered by the libraries and not merely on the collection and size. However, in the present day context, listening to the voice of the user is very important and the reliance on the library from users' perspective.

Service quality is one of the most talked about topics in the business as well as service sector. In services marketing literature, service quality is viewed as the comparison of what the customer expected prior to the use of services and the perceived level of services received. The foremost principle of quality management is customer focus, which means meeting and exceeding customer requirements and expectations. Although the concept of quality is not new, measuring service quality as a management technique has gained importance over the last few decades in service industries. The concept of service quality in the field of library science in Indian scenario is still in its infancy and very few studies of similar nature have been conducted in Indian library environment.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Today's academic libraries are confronted with challenges on several fronts: Information availability, rising costs, mega bookstores, online information providers, multi media products, document delivery services, and other competitive sources of information are apparently threatening their role and even their very survival. With evolving technological innovations and the variety and abundance of information that is becoming available to information users, competitive pressures will continue to intensify for academic libraries. The products/services introduced in the library should match the requirements of intended users. The majority of the services introduced by the librarians in academic university libraries are based upon their past experiences. There is little attempt to access new services from users' perspective. Thus a study on assessing the impact of technological-based products, processes/functions and staff would definitely be beneficial for library administrators and policy makers to adopt appropriate services in their libraries.

Availability of new facilities in libraries may increase the transactions and demand for services, which in turn require additional staffing, computing facility and larger collection. Meeting future demands for library services will require careful planning. Thus an in-depth study of IT based facilities and services provided by university libraries in Haryana would indicate the status of IT and serve as model for conducting similar studies in other states as well. This proposal is an attempt to undertake an in-depth study of technology-aided services and their impact on quality of services in university libraries. However, such a study would also be beneficial to know:

1. awareness or otherwise of the librarians of the information technology will help policy/decision makers to take necessary decisions/ steps for coping up with the digital/ virtual libraries;
2. the current status and level of training and reorientation needed for the library staff in using the electronic media and IT products;
3. the study will be useful for such libraries who are in transition and are taking steps to switch over from their traditional roles and routines into modern libraries embracing new technologies;
4. the expectations and perceptions of the customers for appropriate services.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The primary objective of the study is to understand the nature of Technology- supported resources, facilities and services provided in university libraries

in Haryana and assess quality of those services as perceived by customers/ users. The specific objectives of the proposed study are:

- 1 To find out the status of information, information technology and physical infrastructure in university libraries in Haryana for meeting the ever growing demands of users;
2. To know the impact of Technology on library functions as perceived by library professionals and users;
3. To find out the status of computerization of university libraries;
4. To find out the participation and contribution of university libraries in various networks;
5. To assess customer expectations, perceptions of service quality and gaps in perceived service quality;
6. To know the problems experienced by librarians during technology adoption and their future plans; and
7. To suggest ways and means for bridging the gap to improve the situation, if warranted.

OPERATIONAL TERMS:

IMPACT:

The Webster's Dictionary (1976) defines it as a concentrated force producing change (V.2, p.1131)

The Random House Dictionary (1987) defines it as influence, effect or the force exerted by a new concept or technology (p.958).

In general Impact can be defined as the effect, impression or influence caused by a new concept, idea or technology.

DIGITAL LIBRARY: "It is one in which all the information exists in digital electronic format. They do not contain any conventional document. The information can be accessed simultaneously by many (geographically distributed) users at a low cost".

ELECTRONIC LIBRARY: is one in which the core processes of the library become basically electronic in nature. There is more widespread use of electronic media (both digital and analogue) for storage, retrieval and delivery of information.

VIRTUAL LIBRARY: is one with little or no physical presence of documents, reading space or support

staff, but one that disseminates selective information directly to the distributed costumers usually electronically.

TECHNOLOGY: is the evolution of an idea. It is the thinking of a man or women who sees before them an opportunity to improve a process, or to create a new device or object that facilitates, improves or aids something or someone else.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY:

"The technology used for study, understanding, planning, design, construction, testing, distribution, support and operations of software, computers and computer related systems that exist for the purpose of data, information and knowledge processing" (The International Foundation For Information Technology).

"The study, design, development, implementation, support or management of computer-based information systems, particularly software, applications and computer hardware. IT deals with the use the use of electronic computers and computer software to covert, store, protect, process, transmit, and securely retrieve information".(The Information Technology Association of America).

INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT):

"ICT is concerned with storage, retrieval, manipulation, transmission or receipt of digital data". So, ICT will cover any product that will store, retrieve, manipulate, transmit or receive information electronically in a digital form.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

When a study is planned based on open literature and questionnaire for collecting data, the researcher has to proceed on certain assumptions. The facts and data obtained through the survey would form the basis for the inferences and conclusions drawn. So, it is assumed that the professionals participating in the study would frankly and clearly state their responses without any bias and psychological inhibitions. It is also presumed that the respondents would report accurately and honestly without concealing any fact. Apart from these general limitations, there are also some specific limitations pertaining to the individual studies.

1. Limitation due to questionnaire design: Questionnaire method has its own limitations. Apart from response, it suffers from difficulty of translating the objectives into a set of simple questions. Further ambiguity in, questions are prone to misinterpretation

by the respondents, who may give ideal answers rather than real, factual answers.

2. Limitation due to coverage of institutions: To cover the entire gamut of institutions/ universities libraries is too huge to be adequately dealt by a single survey. Thus the study is limited to the university libraries of Haryana state. There are universities which have come into existence very recently and don't have sufficient infrastructure. So, it is futile to approach those libraries.

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