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A STUDY ON RESOURCE SHARING AND NETWORKING OF COLLEGE LIBRARIES

A Study on Resource Sharing and Networking of College Libraries

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Abstract – The education and library have been inseparables since dawn of civilization. Their co-existence has been attributed to many landmarks in knowledge creation and scholarship. There are number of instances where libraries of educational institutions were the predominantly learning centers and are being quoted in the historical texts and therefore have been one of the integral parts of all education and learning, more so in the institutions of higher learning. The birth of moveable type of printing in the 15th Century A.D. brought the first conceptual change in the content of libraries. The change in type and shape of reading materials made tremendous difference and the universal growth and democratization of education is also attributed to this discovery. Since that time, the libraries started acquiring new media and also a new role to support the academic programmes of all educational institutions.

The library in an educational institution is now considered as actively participating intermediary between the learners and the vast storehouse of information resources, between classroom lectures and the vast sources of information where the content of the lectures are drawn. The librarian has extended his role now from keeper of information resources to become a true friend and a perfect guide for the learners in an academic setting.

Academic library is therefore an integral part of the entire academic system. It promotes teaching, research, learning, and problem solving and provides endless services to the real education and ascertains that it is a veritable center of academic learning for self-achievement.

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INTRODUCTION

Libraries share their resources to serve their users in a cost-effective manner. The impact of information and communication technology has created lasting changes in the overall organization, administration and in the service delivery in academic libraries. With the available cost-effective and user friendly technologies, modern academic libraries automatically adopting ICT based services with positive impacts and gained needed visibility. This has been accelerated with the essentiality of library automation and networking since late 1990s and has been on the accelerated pace since the process of assessment and accreditation of academic institutions was taken up by an autonomous agency of the University Grants Commission the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC).

Resources sharing in academic libraries are even more important because the financial condition in academic libraries in India is far from satisfactory. Indian Universities constitute one of the largest higher education system in the world. Fast changing curricula and frequent introduction of new subjects impose a great demand on the system in general. Indian Universities need to be given the required trust to enter the third millennium with a leading edge. Global competition in education system is forcing the academic institutions to change their curricula frequently and introduce new disciplines, which, in turn, impose greater demand on educational institutions to have good communication and network infrastructure so that researchers, scholars and students can access the most up-to-date information especially in emerging disciplines. It is important for a large country like India to build proper communication and network infrastructure so as to connect all academic institutions with each other as well as with global academic community and enable them to access, disseminate and share scholarly information in electronic format.

Technology is a driving force in the contemporary education system. Proper and reliable communication is a pre-requisite to effective and efficient use of electronic resources available free in the web space or for a fee. Digital communication and networking technologies are key drivers of economic growth and social well-being in the 21st century. Like other physical infrastructure, well-developed National Information Infrastructure (NII) depicts prosperity on a country. Academic institutions are required to upgrade their communication and network infrastructure to tap the maximum benefits from web-based electronic information resources that are proliferate the web space.

A college library plays pivotal role in ensuring the success of higher education and research. The college libraries are the real heart of Indian academic system. In order to cater the need of undergraduate, Post graduate and research students as well as faculty members of the college libraries, it is extremely important to satisfy their individual need. The college libraries all over the world are facing new challenges. The economic crisis and devaluation of currencies have direct and indirectly affected college libraries in the region. At the same time, result of rapid technological advances, all college libraries experience escalating expectations and demands from library users. It is impossible for any college library to work on the lines of being self-sufficient. By enhancing the library cooperation & resource sharing through network among college libraries of the region, can provide significant opportunities to satisfy the information needs of each user.

The tremendous advancement of information technology offers many alternative and opportunities for networking and resource sharing among the geographically dispersed or remotely located libraries. The advent of Internet has been a boost in resource sharing. The pressing need for resource sharing has prompted several national level projects of library networking. Efforts have been already made for networking of the libraries of all the universities and major research libraries of the country through the Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET), program of the University Grant Commission (UGC). The Education and Research Network (ERNET) has been developed to link major academic institutions of the country. In addition to these, a number of other local, regional and national networking schemes in science, technology and other area are being developed.

Libraries of today have assumed a new role in modern society, by that they integrate educational technology, information and communication technology and with the trends of merging electronic media, the profile of the libraries in general and academic libraries in particular is changing at a very steady pace and in the next few decade the advent of hybrid libraries would be an orderly growth in the context of academic libraries. The libraries since their existence have been continuously adapting to contemporary changes in consonance the educational system, influence by the media changes and also adopting to current technological developments.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

A literature review is a body of the text that aims to review the critical points of current knowledge on a particular topic. A literature review uses database, reports of primary or original scholarship and does not report new primary scholarship itself. The primary report used in the literature may be verbal, but in the vast majority of cases, reports are written documents. The types of scholarship may be empirical, theoretical, critical/analytic or methodological in nature. Review of literature is an early step for conducting research. It enables to avoid the duplication of research work and broadens the understanding of the research problem.

Secondly, a literature review seeks to describe, summarize, evaluate, clarify and/or integrate the content of primary reports. It is done to know about what literature is available or what works have already been done on the particular area of concern. It can also be defined as a survey of progress in a particular subject over a given period of time. It may be ranging from a bibliographical index or a mere list of references to a general critical review of original publications on the subject covered. Literature review on various aspects of resource sharing has been carried out using various bibliographic tools and full text databases, including Library and Information Science Abstracts (LISA).

Fetterman (1974) observed that the cooperation among libraries is not a new practice and has been in practice since ages. Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science defines 'resource' as a person, thing or action to which one resorts to, when needed. To be more specific, we can say the resources in a library are staff, infrastructure, documents, and services. Sharing entails a relationship of reciprocity where the two parties offer their resources to each other for mutual benefit.

Weber (1976) suggests that many cooperative programs were developed during the past century cultural reasons and traditions caused its development particularly in the US area, where many cooperative activities were linked to the Library of Congress and where already one of the still now most alive academic library consortia arose, the Triangle Research Libraries Network.

Jefferson (1977) states that, "No more complicated field of study in librarianship exists than that of library cooperation. By its nature it implies an appreciation of the purposes and functions of libraries of all kinds, and of the needs of the readers who make use or are encouraged to make use of their services. The permutations possible between 'library' and the 'reader' give many opportunities for cooperative activity."

Sewell (1981) describes during the eighties, the concept of cooperation, that is "how libraries can achieve their objective better by working together" has shifted towards the resource sharing concept. Resource sharing is a richer term, which encompasses the strategic aspect to link users with the required information or material.

Sewell (1981) observes that resource sharing may appear to be nothing more than a new term for the familiar concept of library cooperation, but there is a significant difference in the approach. He further observes that the new term appears rather to assume

a range of physical, intellectual and conceptual resources on the one hand and a body of people with library and information needs on the other and covers the activities involved in a organizing the one into a set of optimum relationships to meet the needs of the other.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

The libraries of 21st century should facilitate the transition of today's literate society to a knowledge – based society of tomorrow. Libraries have changed from standalone entities to networks from collection based to access-based; their services moving from document-based to information-based; and from physical existents to electronic and virtual libraries. It is here that the concept of resource sharing has come into picture.

Libraries share their resources to serve their users in a cost-effective manner. Hence, a research under the topic entitled "A Study on Resource Sharing and Networking of College Libraries" has been undertaken to study the problems under the purview of academic libraries.

NEED OF THE STUDY:

There is no field of human activity where information is not a component. Whether it is education, research and development, agriculture, business and industry, the information has to be acquired, processed, stored, retrieved and disseminated for communication. Information is for use. It is capable of converting the natural resources into artifacts and consumable products. With the advancement of science and technology, every field of knowledge is generating information second by second reflecting information explosion. The information explosion coupled with multiplicity of documents has created problems to the generators, users, and the organizers of information. The users of information are finding difficulty in identifying and physically locating the relevant information at the time when it is required.

So, there was some need to integrate all university libraries together so that any user can retrieve the required information. Hence, this study is done. The study will be of practical importance to librarians. There is a great need for a comprehensive study of college libraries.

HYPOTHESES:

The study intends to test the below mentioned hypothesis:

1. The information resources in majority of College Libraries are inadequate.

2. Majority of College Libraries have better IT infrastructure facilities.

3. The financial position of College Libraries in Rural and Unaided colleges are very poor as compared to Urban and Government and Private Aided colleges.

4. Majority of libraries have fully computerized their house keeping operations.

5. Very few college libraries have access to e-journals.

6. Inter-disciplinary research is the most accepted reason to participate in interlibrary cooperation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The study adopts a combined methodology of theory and field work in order to examine the trends of developments compatible with the prevailing conditions of academic libraries. In this context, a survey of methodology is adopted in this study supplemented by some field work in the manner of personally interviewing the some college librarians.

A structured questionnaire is designed to collect the basic facts required for the gathering the data collection and the possible policies and programmes in the college libraries. Repeated visits are made to the selected libraries to make on the spot observation. Also, series of discussions were held with the professionals, experts and fellow researchers to get the clear picture of the concept.

Therefore, this research work has used multi methods to collect analyze and consolidate the data. The Questionnaire is administered to collect the required data. To test the suitability, reliability and relevance, a pilot study was found necessary. The first draft of the questionnaire was distributed among selected 10 librarians working in Degree College libraries. Based on the feedback received, the questionnaire was then adequately and suitably modified and mailed to the selective samples of 195 librarians working in different colleges. A regular follow-up was done and repeated reminders for non-respondents were sent from time-to time, over postal mail and e-mail.

Among the total samples of 195 librarians, 158 librarians (81.03%) responded to the survey. Given the relatively high responses rate, it is reasonable to assume that the answers represent the views of all the college librarians. The responses received were analyzed by using statistical methods.

Medhi Mayuri (2010) in the present knowledge or information society, whatever we may call it, is dominated by the largest global network offered by Internet technology. Networking is the pre-requisite of

the present society to be member of it. Therefore, to become the member of the library, network has become essential without any scope for any option or alternatives. The present professional challenge is that resources may not be available in own collection, but are to be made accessible wherever these are available.

Kaul Sangeeta (2010) observes a success story from India's Developing library network (DELNET) which provides resource sharing facilities both nationally and internationally. It is self sustaining financially which is mean fact given the lack of success generally in India with self sustaining networks. Its document supply service is particularly popular.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The main objectives of this study are:

1. To study the existing collections, infrastructure and services offered in selected college libraries.

2. To understand the existing resource sharing activities and the adopted methods in college libraries.

3. To explore the feasibility of introducing resource sharing and networking activities and to record willingness of library professionals to participate in such activities.

4. To propose a model for the college libraries networking and to frame guidelines for effective resource sharing activities.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

The systematic efforts in data collection and its scientific analysis lead to the following important findings:

1. The steady growth in the number of degree colleges established after independence it is observed, reached the highest peak during 2001-2010.

2. Among the degree colleges ,under study majority of colleges numbering 85 (53.79%) belongs to the private un-aided colleges. The remaining 41 (25.95%) colleges are the government and 32 (20.25%) colleges are private aided colleges.

3. The majority of colleges offer B.A. degree courses 98 (62.02%), followed by 64 (40.50%) colleges offer B.Sc. degrees and 61 (38.60%) colleges offer B.Com courses.

4. The study of the postgraduate courses show of 11(6.96%) PG courses offered in the M.Sc degree and 9 (5.70%) colleges offered M.A. courses, 8 (5.06%) colleges offered MSW course and 6 (3.80%) colleges offered M.Ed programmes.

5. It is clearly noticed that there is a proportional increase in the addition of newer and newer disciplines at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, leading to the provision of research programmes in some of the established degree colleges.

6. The majority of the degree colleges have got NAAC status.

7. The college libraries under study possess a large collection of print materials like books and periodicals. The collection of audio visuals, storage media and electronic resources is very meager.

8. The potential users of degree college libraries are the faculty and students.

9. The major source of finance to degree colleges are UGC, State Government and Management of the respective colleges. By all measures, it seems, the funds are inadequate to meet the requirements.

10. Major expenditure is concentrated on print materials, and the expenditure on electronic resources is slowly picking up.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

The scope of this study is limited to degree college libraries. As the situation with regards to electronic collection and use is very meager in all college libraries, and there are hardly very few studies in this respect.

The Study is based on the primary data collected from librarians, and it does not cover the user opinion in view of the vast geographical area as well as the large number of user's population. In this present study, researcher has covered around 158 colleges of India. Amongst them 41 Government colleges, 32 Private aided colleges and the remaining 85 colleges are Private and un-aided.

CONCLUSION:

Libraries are involved in a wide range of media and the librarian is compelled to be aware of the emerging media. In fact, the library of the recent past was not like the library of today, and obviously the library of the future will be quite different from what it is today. In the information society, Information has been considered as one of the key factors of production. A library is the main source of information.

Academic libraries are in transition due to changes in socio-economic, cultural and technological fields. Recent trends have profoundly reshaped the library service landscape. As a dynamic institution, academic library must continue to evolve with reference to the changing scenario. For the past three –four decades, the development of Information Technology has been responsible in changing every aspect of library

services. Today library professionals must be proactive to new changes by maintaining the flexibility, creativity and making easy access to information to meet the increasing demands of the users at different level.

Information technologies present a great potential for knowledge managers to customize what we access and what we know according to highly individualized needs. Customized access is based on a professional knowledge of the resources as demonstrated in the resources' surrogates. Knowledge managers will provide this customization in the most appropriate presentation format for individualized information needs. This value-added service is especially expected of the knowledge managers in corporate information systems where it is perhaps the fastest growing and first innovation seen in the profession. In conclusion, change is the only constant for knowledge managers. Change is occurring faster today than ever before in the history of libraries and change is discontinuous and not part of a pattern.

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