



THE ROLE OF LIBRARY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

The role of library and librarian in recent era has changed as a result of techno-driven world. Library is considered 'the heart' of a university or an institute offering higher education. After independence, the University Education Commission (1948-49) as well as Education Commission (1964) emphasized the need of academic libraries in India and suggested certain measures for betterment and effective management incorporating its organization, the availability of staff, open access system as well as financial support. University Grant Commission played a vital role for betterment of libraries in higher education by establishing Information and Library Network Centre (INFLIBNET). The SOUL (Software for University Libraries) developed by INFLIBNET centre, made available to its member free of charge, proved valuable in modernizing the entire set-up of academic libraries. The reservoir of Indian theses called Shodhganga, a database of thousands of theses from various universities across India has also become a chief source for researchers and academicians to seek the knowledge generated in various branches. The challenges like effective utilization of digital technologies, supporting access to Open Access Resources, etc. have not been overcome yet in every respect. The laws of library science designed by Dr. Ranganathan should be pursued firmly in a pragmatic manner. A quality education and research is not possible without a modernized library. Library is one of the major resources for the exchange of ideas. Academic and research work is very much preserved by library.

Keywords: academic libraries, INFLIBNET, Shodhganga, digital technologies, quality education and research, resourceful librarian.



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In comparison to primary and secondary education, the role of library in higher education is much more important since library is considered a prime requirement in university education. The entire academic and research process is fully dependent on library network. To facilitate any educational programmes successfully, library proves the essential part. Kothari Education Commission (1964-65) emphasized that the disregard for library and giving it a low priority is more damaging. Academic library is the vital component which develops the teaching-learning and research activity. It serves as a key factor to accomplish the aims and objectives of the higher education.

The system of education has been changing rapidly in modern world. Due to the impact of tremendous advancement in computer and communication technologies, the perception, approaches and techniques of teaching and learning has also been altered gradually. Hence, according to the need of timely change, the entire system of education as well as academic libraries have to keep pace to fulfill the standards of quality education and achieve the projected goals. The modification in the academic world is considered essential to carry out further development of the country. With the advancement of digital technologies, the role of library and librarian in higher education has been widely expanded since a variety of challenges have emerged.

The University Education Commission established in 1948-49 under the chairmanship of an eminent academician and president of India clearly mentioned the importance of library in educational and research field: “ The library is the heart of all the University work: directly so, as regards its research work, which derives its life from research work (Pandey 14)

The aims and objectives of an academic library are:

- To provide the facilities for advanced study and research work.
- To encourage the qualitative academic environment of teaching and research.
- To provide proper guidance and training in order to prepare the students for master and doctorate degree.
- To improve the quality of education at various level.
- To enhance the research output by faculty through useful information resources.
- To cooperate with other institutions with respect of information resources.

Library offers the resources and encourages the thinking process, creativity, inquisitiveness and makes the learning more fruitful. The function of library is to provide textbooks, references, periodicals, research conducted till date on various subjects to students, teachers and researchers. The thirst-area in research field is emphasized and requisite instructional material is also provided to define the concepts more logically.

Dr. S. R. Ranganathan (1892-1972), called the father of library and information science in India, gave the five laws of library which need to be acknowledged and pursued every time:

- Books are for use
- Every reader his/her book
- Every book its reader

- Save the time of reader and staff
- Library is a growing organism

Ranganatahn Committee (1967):

The report submitted by UGC library committee is considered one of the significant steps towards the upgrading of entire library system in higher education. The report entitled 'University and College Libraries' suggested the standards of libraries, building, pay scales and library training to modernize the entire set-up. The recommendations of this committee incorporated the provision that the UGC as well as the state Government should offer financial assistance to the college and the university libraries for purchasing the required books, periodicals, etc. The committee proposed the formula that funding be given at the rate of Rs. 15 per enrolled student and Rs. 200 per teacher and research fellow. The initial library grant in case of new university or department was also recommended in the report. The committee emphasized that open access system should be introduced in every academic library. The committee opined that: "reference service is the essential human process of establishing contact between the right reader and the right book by personal service. Reference service is vital in promotion of reading habit in student [therefore] each library should provide an adequate number of reference librarians to function as library hosts and human converters" (Bhatt 127).

Besides these, the committee also suggested the copying facilities for book/reference material, the appointment of regular committee to investigate the standards at various levels of teaching, examination and research work as well as the regular appointment of full-time teaching faculty in place of part-time teacher. The report of the committee incorporated certain standards in its recommendations that the reader receives the book within two weeks after releasing and due library process, the assessment period of periodicals ought to be three years, the management of regular staff, the proper of books, the co-operation between university and college level library located in the same region as well as the allocation of annual recurring grants in consultation with the concerned librarian along with the faculty members.

Hence, looking to the entire process conducted for betterment of library, substantial development in the university libraries has taken place thereafter and the condition of libraries has improved to a great extent than past years.

Kothari Commission: (1964-66)

Another significant change initiated with 'The Education Commission' under the chairmanship of Dr. D. S. Kothari. The commission paid due attention towards the development of university libraries and stressed on positive steps to modernize the framework of library. The committee introduced norms for financial support and suggested required equipment in the library, facilitating the students for the better use of books, proper documentation and inter-disciplinary communication. The report of Kothari Commission ardently mentioned that: "nothing can be more damaging than to ignore its library and to give it a low priority. No new college, university or department should be opened unless adequate numbers of books in the library are provided" (Bhatt 129)

University Grants Commission (1953):

The role of UGC is noteworthy in enriching the academic libraries in higher education through financing as well as the systematic planning and vital leadership. UGC allocates grants to number of universities for building construction. In addition to this, a liberal financial assistance has been ensured based on a tentative formula of Rs. 15 per student and Rs. 200 per teacher and research fellow for the annual purchase of books. The new university libraries are granted a special initial grant. UGC has helped the professionally qualified academic libraries to get better pay scales equal to the teaching members of the university (Bhatt 130) UGC has been allotting more funds for the development of academic libraries. The provision was made to initiate the work for this function in the 5-year plans of the country.

INFLIBNET:

UGC has established a national information network named INFLIBNET in 1986 at Gandhinagar. It functions the information communication of the libraries of all universities, higher educational and research institutes of our country. The centre INFLIBNET updates the libraries of universities and college at national level. The task of automation of libraries, digitization of resources, software development of libraries and conducting training programme, etc. are well-managed by this centre. The more considerable step towards advancement in this field is the development of software for university libraries (SOUL) which is available free of cost to INFLIBNET members. The centre has developed *Shodhganga*, a reservoir of Indian theses which has a database of thousands of theses from a number of universities across India.

In order to improve the prevailing system in education, several commissions were set up by government of India since independence. The system of education has been continuously reviewed and the appropriate measures have been suggested by central or state government commissions. The New Education policy was adopted in 1986 in order to make the education system more effective and productive. The new education policy focused on the teaching of science and technology to meet the diverse future-challenges. It insists that there should not be any kind of restriction in learning process. Academic institutions should be open for all without any bias. It emphasizes the equity as well as access to all who are keen to learn, read and conduct research work.

The new education policy recommended the perspective planning to face the challenges in the techno-educational fields, the planning of a good liaison between library and its users and providing easy accessibility to all the users. It has been considered that 'the direct use of library' should be identified for the common good. Besides, the clients should have all reasonable freedom to avail the various service and resources. The accountability of services, resources and users should be honestly studied (B. Ravi Kumar 27) as per the norms of this new policy.

Rajesh Kumar Pandey in an article on "Academic Libraries in India: Opportunities and Future Challenges" observes certain challenges and appropriate strategies to overcome them may be enumerated as:

- Effective utilization of digital technologies in supporting education and research to meet demands of academic institutions, faculty, students, scholars, others both at personalized level as well as community level.
- Promoting access to Open Access Resources by identifying, discovering relevant scholarly web resources and getting these resources available to user community through a user-friendly information gateway.
- Emergence of mobile technologies, its popularity and its various implications in the society has opened a new vista for academic libraries too. Scope of suitable and effective implementation in this area must be explored and looked into for the benefit of user community (*University News* Vol. 55)

The challenges either in the form of innovative system of publications, intensive use of digital resources or function of Information and Communication Technology, etc. are the most compelling factors before academic libraries. Consequently, librarians will have to

adapt to these challenges and acquire the innovative skill in order to meet the demand and expectations of reader community. The librarian is expected to discover practical approaches and fitting methods to deliver the information requires. Google is big challenge to the academic libraries and their performance as it offers the easy access and serves as one of the major resources in modern world even in absence of a library and librarian.

Some scholars of modern library science also consider the scope of extending the 'Five Basic Laws' classified by Ranganathan to the 'Web', an internet system. Gorman (1995) has interpreted Ranganathan's laws in present-day's context and gave 'Five new Laws of Library':

1. Libraries serve humanity.
2. Respect all forms by which knowledge is communicated.
3. Use technology intelligently to enhance service.
4. Protect free access to knowledge.
5. Honour the past and create the future (Crawford and Gorman 8).

Gorman laws have been framed from the viewpoint of 'function of librarian' engaged in a technological society, which needs to be considered at this stage for further progress in existing set-up.

Hence, the role of library and librarian has changed basically in the techno-driven world. The advancement in context to sharing resources should be used for the benefit of students and teaching faculty in the best possible manner. The adequate infrastructure is one of the major barriers in India because universities provide connectivity, but how and to what extent it is used is more important. Though, the access of required information and reading material is possible through internet technology even from outside the campus, but it also needs proper care and guidance.

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