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ROLE OF LIBRARIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM IN INDIA IN 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

The present paper reflects the present depiction of government initiatives in the field of higher education and the role of libraries in promoting the utilization of these initiatives for teaching research and extension activities in higher educational institutions. Various movements of libraries for promoting higher education in the era of information communication technology like library networks, library consortium, library portals, digital collection development, online reference services, digital repositories, online catalogues, and information literacy programs have been described in the paper. A few major key roles played by a library as educator, as space, as a personal, as a knowledge manager etc is also explained through this article.

Key Words: - *Higher Education, Library, Information literacy, Open Educational Resources.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades, India has remarkably transformed its higher education landscape. It has created widespread access to low cost high quality university education for students of all levels. The Indian higher education system is one of the largest education system in the world just after the US and China (Hasan and Pande) .When India got Independence there were only 20 Universities and 500 colleges but at present there are 903 Universities and 41,435 colleges (UGC website 31, March 2019). Higher Education is generally considered the synonymous of university education but it also include various colleges, research centers, training centers and professional institutes of law, medicine, theology, business, music, and art etc. Thus providing higher level of teaching is one of the facets of higher education.

A few government agencies of India are formulated for the improvement of higher education in India namely University Grants Commission (UGC); Association of Indian Universities (AIU); All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE); Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR); Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR); and Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), etc. On September 26, 1985, Government of India established 'Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD)' with prime objective to provide basic education and assure overall development to people of the country so that everyone can live a better quality of life. It works through two departments viz. "Department of School Education & Literacy" and "Department of Higher Education" . The second department works for Higher Education, which is providing world class opportunities of higher education and research to Indian academic community so that they could be strengthened for competitions on international platform.

In the present era of ICT, education in most of the universities and colleges is being driven by technology and innovations. The educational Institutions have responded to those changes and embraced the digital mode of education involving both teaching and learning. As technology taking a leap ahead with smart phones, tablets and internet influencing the younger generation, education has started redefining itself. The interactive features and non linear system of content are very interesting to the students than the conventional class rooms. Thus, professional and online education is on the rise and the digital spaces have opened the entire new scope for education system. Digital media is transforming the system of education to a great extent.

2. OPEN KNOWLEDGE MOVEMENT

High cost of scholarly contents in form of text books, journals and other documents has been a major issue for scholar community therefore Open Educational Resources (OERs) came into scene. Knowledge is open if anyone is free to access, use, modify and share it. Open Educational Resources (OERs) are educational contents available in public domain with open licence. Due to open licence policy of these OERs any person is legally eligible to copy, use, modify and share among academic community. These Resources include textbooks to curricula, course notes, lecture material, assignments, online course videos, audios and animations. Some very useful scholarly contents are available in Open Access mode by different academic

agencies and institutions and publishers which provides free access to peer reviewed journals, books, and other research oriented material. Online repositories are another medium benefitting scholar community by providing rich pedagogical material.

2.1 OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES (OER) INITIATIVES IN INDIA

- NPTEL (National Program on Technology Enhanced Learning)
- Ekalavya
- E-Grid
- eGyan Kosh
- Sakshat
- e-PGPathshala
- VLE (Virtual learning Environment of Delhi University)
- CEC(Consortium of Educational Communication)
- National Science Digital Library
- National Repository of Open Educational Resources
- E-BIDYA
- FlexiLearn Open Course Portal
- A-VIEW
- SWAYAM
- SWAYAM PRABHA
- UGC- MOOC
- NDL (National Digital Library)
- NMEICT (National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology)
- Shodhganga

2.2 OERs IN AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION SYSTEM

- Krishikosh
- CeRA
- E- krishiShiksha

- E-Agropeadia
- Krishi – Knowledge based Resources Information Systems Hub for Innovations in agriculture
- agMOOCs
- e-Sagu
- aAQUA
- Agriculture Information Portal

3. ROLE OF LIBRARIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Libraries are considered the profound sea of knowledge emerging from the scholarly output over the years. These are not merely preserves this scholarly content but transmit it to generations. This scholarly output may be in form of text books, research articles, research reports, edited books, research theses or dissertations, etc. The library is such a place where a scholar finds rich information on his specific area of interest. The information resources are now not limited to its boundaries but it has now been extended out of it. Academic community of an Institution is not eligible to the documents kept in the libraries but he is eligible to get access of other documents available in other libraries over the globe. The medium of information is also not restricted to print media but information can be accessed via clouds now. Libraries are always been the mediators of knowledge and knowledge seekers. There are service providers to the scholar community of its parent organization. So there is no doubt in saying that an academic institution cannot survive without a library. And also if any academic institution do not give top priority to its library or neglect it, it will not take much time for its damage or destruction. “The Kothari Education Commission (1964-65) was found very much serious about importance of library in higher educational institution stating that, “nothing could be more damaging to a- pawing department than to neglect its library, give to it a low priority.” So role of a library is considered much more important for higher educational institutions. All educational programmes are successfully implemented with the help and coordination of the library.

University Education Commission during 1948-49 under the headship of **Dr. S. Radhakrishnan** described clearly that “teachers must have the necessary tools for teaching

purpose in the shape of libraries and laboratories as also the right type of students.” According to him “The library is the heart of the University’s work; directly so as regards its research work and indirectly as regards its educational work, which derives its life from research work. Scientific research needs a library as well as its laboratories, while for humanistic research. The library is both library and laboratory in one. The training in higher branches of learning and research is mainly a question of learning how to use the tools, and if the libraries tools are not there how can the students learn to use them.”

In 1957 when SR Ranganathan participated in UGC agenda regarding ‘Role of library in academic development’ following observations were made:

- “The library is the heart of education;
- Methods & fashion in education change from generation to generation, but each generation uses the library as a means of realizing its items; hence the library remains the great conservator of learning;
- A quality education is impossible without a quality library;
- A library is vital organ for proper exploitation of our intellectual resources;
- A library is essential for maintenance of free access to ideas, and to the functioning of the untrammelled mind.”

Considerable developments were made in higher education during 1980s and in present scenario these become faster with more advancements of ICT in education sector and constant support from MHRD. Keeping in view the importance of libraries in progress of higher educational academic institutes, govt agencies like UGC and ICAR have been providing consistent support to the libraries of these institutes so that informational resources available in any mode could be optimized properly by the scholar community. Dr S. R Ranganathan who is considered father of Library Science framed “five laws of library science” regarding best utilization of libraries may be differently used in present scenario as:

1. Information is for use
2. Every bit of Information has its consumer
3. Every consumer has its information.
4. Save the time of user.
5. Information is increasing vastly.

In Ranganathan framed first four Laws were contacting the word 'books' in place of 'Information' and the fifth law was 'library is a growing organism'.

4. CONCURRENT MOVES OF LIBRARIES IN PARENT ORGANISATIONS

Quality in higher educational institutes has always been the quest for excellence and this excellence is obviously depends on the quality teacher, quality students and quality informational resources. For bringing excellence one statement must be keep in consideration that "As we read so we produce". Here comes the actual role of Libraries. Libraries are the collector and provider of quality content to its academic community of its parent organization, thus promoting directly. Libraries are playing "significant role in providing a good education and knowledge of high quality. Individuals around the world, no matter how poor they may be, can access whatever knowledge and information they need by visiting libraries via the internet, such as the library of congress"(Pareek, and Gangrade). The existing activities of libraries for Indian higher educational institutions are:

- **Library Websites and Research Help:** In India almost all institutional libraries are hosting their own separate websites, through which they are giving access to online catalogues, subscribed resources, free and open access resources, other e- contents and also create the virtual environment by providing real tie chat service also.
- **Research Assistance:** Almost all the libraries are working as 'Research guides' by providing research help facility through their webpage or portals for research scholars. Under this facility, a real assistance is provided to all research scholars throughout his/her research period or process. This service is provided with provision of subject specific documents, directories, research quick start guides, subject wise arrangement of various kinds of resources, manuals regarding creating references/bibliographies, managing citations, use of reference tools etc.
- **Digital Collection Development:** With print content digital and online content is also being developed. This digital collection include- e-books, e-journals, e proceedings, e-databases, citation databases, plagiarism software's, statistical sites , reference tools etc

- **Online Reference Service:** Many a libraries are providing internet based reference services via e-mail, real chat, instant messages, online submission forms, teleconferencing, etc. ‘Ask a librarian’ is a very popular reference service. Under this service replies are submitted via e-mails. Nowadays various social media tools and apps are being used to provide digital reference services. Facebook, Instagram, Whatup are a few popular examples. This service undoubtedly saves the time of scholar by providing quick assistance, guidance and interaction.
- **Online Catalogue:** Maximum utilization of informational resources may be accelerated through these catalogues users can know the availability and the biblio details of documents irrespective of time and place. Almost all the libraries have made their online catalogue available on web. Some libraries have also provided list of open access resources on their catalogue.
- **Digital Repositories:** Digital repositories of some institutions or organizations are managed and maintained by its libraries. Creation of different communities or folders containing some sort of specific type of material are created by libraries in these repositories and then collection of related documents are uploaded on repositories to make them accessible to all. These repositories not only preserves the important scholarly material of all kinds but the academic material or research output produced by the faculty or the research scholars of the university.
- **Information Literacy Programmes:** There are thousands of OERs, Open Access documents, useful portals, sites, consortia and various types of other documents and services are available for academic purposes but if a user of library is unaware of the information there will be wastage of all resources of a institution. Therefore Information literacy programmers in the form of course curriculum, workshops seminars, lectures are the ongoing activities in every library. Library trainings are organized for all level of students and faculty to ensure the optimum utilization of e-resources and web resources for their academic rationale.
- **Display of Latest collection:** If a library subscribes some latest informational resources in any type of format, awareness of the same must be spread among their users by

displaying it in display racks, boards or via electronic devices. Latest collection can be display on front page of OPAC also. Proper display of collection of a library creates curiosity among users to use them for their academic purposes.

- **Implementation of Software:** To provide access to multiple subscribed e-resources and digital contents, libraries are implementing or opting such softwares through which users of parent institution can access to its resources sitting at any corner of the world using remote access ID and password. Ezproxy, Refread, Fedgate, etc are examples of such softwares.

- **Library Networks:** To fulfill and satisfy the informational need of academic community libraries started connecting with each other and established some library networks' Library networks are such platforms through which the member libraries can share their information resources and services under some mutual agreements. After establish formation of such networks many of challenges of academic institution were solved like costly documents, budget constraints, duplicity of documents in libraries etc. Under library networks, libraries are performing sharing of resources on demand basis. "The concept of library network came into light after 1985 when the working group of the Planning Commission reported a modernize plan on National Policy on Library and Information System to the Ministry of HRD, Govt of India on the seventh five year plan". Following are some Library Networks established in India during 1988-1998 to promote utilization of informational resources at optimal level:

- Ahmadabad Library Network (ADINET)- 1994
- Bangalore Academic Library Network (BALNET)-1995
- Bombay Library Network (BONET). 1992
- Calcutta Library Network (CALIBNET). 19993
- Developing Library Network (DELNET). 1988
- Indore Library Network (INDOLIBNET)
- Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET)-1991
- Madras Library Network (MALIBNET)1993
- Mysore Library Network (MYLIBNET) -1995

➤ Management Libraries Network (MANLIBNET)-1998

- **Library Consortium in India:** The concept of resources sharing has provided the common platform for the libraries by forming a consortium among them. Agreements were done to share each other resource among the member libraries. The library co-operation was based on inter library loan services. The users can borrow books, periodicals and other documents which were not available locally. The requests were sent and delivery of materials only through the postal, fax and courier services. Major Indian consortia are:

- CSIR E-Journal Consortium
- Consortium for E-Resources in Agriculture (CeRA)
- Department of Bio-Technology e-Library Consortium (DeLCON)
- Forum for Resource Sharing in Astronomy (FORSA)
- Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Consortium
- Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India (ICICI) Knowledge Park
- Indian National Digital Library in Engineering Sciences and Technology-INDEST-AICTE Consortium
- Health Science Library and Information Network (HELINET)
- MCIT Library Consortium
- UGC-DAE- Consortium for Scientific Research
- UGC-INFONET Digital Library Consortium

5. KEY ROLES OF LIBRARIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

In brief there are following key roles of a library in promoting higher education:

- **Leads in bringing Institutional Effectiveness:** To achieve the prime mission of any Institution, libraries identify and develop such outcomes which leads towards bringing institutional effectiveness which ensure the continuous improvement in every requisite facet of Institution. They develop outcomes which are associated with accreditation guidelines required for any institution.

- **Enhance Professional Values in Users:** Libraries bestow professional values among users by defying works for censoring resources, protecting rights of users of keeping their privacy as well as confidentiality, supporting institution's integrity applying check on plagiarism through policy and education. Encouraging collaborations within campus and outside the boundaries of Institution.
- **As Educator:** Libraries educates users through various ways like train them with different techniques for retrieving required data and efficient searching of scientific information, effective use of Internet, Providing self-instructional materials, and declining distances. Library provides all kind of required tools and supplements for best teaching in classrooms, help in designing online tutorials, and such type of several activities. Users are supported in discovering required information available in different formats, using technology in searching information and knowledge organization. Users are provided one-on-one assistance through multiple platforms to help them in finding information.
- **As Space:** Libraries give a platform to intellectuals for interacting with each other, sharing their ideas within the physical boundary and virtual surroundings, safely and securely to extend learning & facilitating new innovation and ideas. Under physical space facilities like network connectivity; adequate and well-maintained equipments and furnishings; clean, hygienic and adequate environment conducive to study; convenient hours; personnel, resources, and collections.
- **As Knowledge manager:** Libraries makes available different kind of adequate, quality, scoopful and latest resources in different formats- print, digital and electronic to strengthen teaching, research and other prerequisites of an institution. Libraries ensure long-term availability or access to the intellectual records so that they may be utilized by users at maximum. The library partners with multiple institutions (e.g., via collections consortia) to increase cost-effectiveness and to expand access to collections.
- **As Personnel:** A good number and skilled staff is available to ensure excellence among academic fraternity by providing continuous help and support to meet their diverse teaching and research needs. Libraries are committed for overall pedagogical development in parent institution by developing maintaining and enhancing skills and knowledge of every professional. For providing better opportunities to the

targeted user, library personnel always keep themselves updated with new and existing technologies, skilled in working on multiple applications, and participate in ongoing training programmes.

- **Strengthen External Relations:** Libraries engage the campus and broader community through multiple strategies in order to advocate, educate, and promote their value. They continuously make efforts in developing “external relations through communications, publications, events, and donor cultivation and stewardship, communicate with the campus community in a timely way using a variety of methods and evaluates the communication for effectiveness and convey a consistent message about the library to expand user awareness of resources, services, and expertise”(Shumaker, John, W).
- **Delivery Satisfaction /Satisfaction Relationship:** Libraries must assess that what the user willing to do and what are their expectations from the libraries. In libraries services need to be user oriented and for this libraries must setup the priorities, manage expectations of users, and obviously work in smarter ways applying new mechanisms to provide quick and consistent services. User expectations are not static and change with time so libraries are required to offer new services in changing environment as per the users’ expectations.

6. CONCLUSION

Education and libraries are called the two facets of one coin. They are very much interdependent on each other as education without libraries and libraries without education are paralyzed. Libraries cannot be separated from education. The provision of libraries is crucial and essential to education around the globe. In ICT era, when informational sources have been emerged in online publishing and digital mode and available on web, role and responsibilities of libraries have increased in terms of managing information, assessing quality, ensure access, storage and preservations, and such other activities. Digital resource has direct impact on productivity and efficiency of the libraries where library can able to give twenty four hour service irrespective of its opening hours. A library with good quality resources attract and retain ambitious faculty and hence can bring honor and prestige to the institution. Libraries have not been longer just the store house of books but now libraries have expanded its walls beyond the

boundaries. For users resources are now not limited to in-house collection only but libraries through different library networks, consortia, e-reference services, social media, repositories, national and international collaborations have expanded collection for them. Documents at your doors services like document delivery and inter library loan has been initiated by libraries. For higher education, libraries encourage research and extension activities, helping academic fraternity in achieving their pedagogical missions. Libraries should not be neglected in any institutions otherwise it will bring its destruction only rather they are supported well they will bring a bright future of higher education in India. On the other hand Libraries must also be users centric. Services need to be user oriented and for this library must setup the priorities, manage expectations of users, and obviously work in smarter ways applying new mechanisms to provide quick and consistent services. It is not necessary that if a library is provides quality service its user will become satisfy. For this libraries should not only follow the transaction relationship with its user but also the satisfaction relationship. It is a very important for library if it s having a least satisfied user because only a least satisfied user can give the feed back to library for its further improvement in quality service. But one more thing is to identify the two type of dissatisfied users. One user may be dissatisfied and another is chronic dissatisfied. First type of users could be satisfied after making some changes in service delivery as per his expectations and another category can never be satisfied as their expectations are beyond reach. In the present scenario the quote “Think like a User, Act like an Administrator” is very important of any library

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