USER ORIENTATION PROGRAMMES IN COLLEGE LIBRARIES

R. Raman Nair*

0. THE CONCEPT OF USER ORIENTATION :

The colleges impart under—graduate and post-graduate education. The college library being the most important adjunct of the college, aims at the realisation of the objectives and programmes of the college. The functions of the college library can be enumerated as follows.

* Helping and assisting faculty members of the college in preparation of their instructional courses and in keeping them abreast of current developments and concepts in different areas of study.

* Assisting the faculty members in their pursuit of higher studies and research and supporting them with relevant literature and information on their subject.

* Making available to the students books and allied reading materials relevant to the courses offered in the college.

* Training the students in the use of the library materials and encouraging them to enrich their knowledge and concepts in different areas of study.

Modern concept of teaching learning process in higher education gives greater emphasis on students self study than on formal lectures. To ensure two-ways participation in instruction; individual and group assignments, seminars, discussions and tutorials are used. For discussions students should acquire beforehand detailed knowledge of the subject matter and for this they require sufficient library and information services. This naturally suggests that the students should be made to use the college library and correspondingly the libraries should be better stocked. With the changing of the collegiate objectives, the college library is increasingly becoming a strategic division of the college.

* Librarian (Grade-I), H. H. Maharaja's College for women, Trivandrum-695014. Kerala.

The information explosion and resultant flooding of recorded documents have changed the nature of collections of live college libraries also. There will be printed and non-printed documents in a college library and many scientific techniques and advanced technology will be used for their organization and services. Even in traditional type of libraries students face difficulty in consulting catalogues, locating the exact document required by them or using the relevant reference tools available in the library. In automated libraries even teachers may face some initial difficulty in information search. To overcome this difficulty college libraries should orient the users.

1. DEFINITION

Teaching the use of library is called 'user orientation' or 'library orientation'. In fact the word 'orientation' simply means familiarisation or adjustment with a particular situation. In this context this familiarisation and adjustment is with the use of the college library. The library orientation programme in colleges uses methods that could help the students to have the full knowledge of the college library and its resources. User orientation is more important in colleges located away from cities where students are without any prior knowledge of library and they relay solely upon the documents available there for studies.

2. NEED FOR USER ORIENTATION

Without the library orientation students feel frustrated during the search for information or use of the information due to their unawareness about the sources of information and the tools for search. To reduce this frustration to minimum, if not to eliminate it fully the library orientation is a must. The factors that necessitate user orientation programmes in College Libraries are that :

(i) The new method of teaching rely less on classroom instructions and more on library study. In fact library is coming to be regarded even as a substitute for

classroom teaching. When students collect by themselves current information to do their assignments, teachers also are forced to update their knowledge for effective interaction.

(ii) The large amount of increasing literature is bound to confuse any student or teacher who is not alerted before.

(iii) Not only the number of documents is large but a great variety of reading materials too, like books, periodicals, pamphlets, conference proceedings, reports, theses etc. compell to organise library orientation programmes for their fullest use.

(iv) Libraries are such a complex system of organisation of the vast and varied reading materials in themselves that it is difficult to understand them without proper instruction. The physical arrangement of each variety of documents also need its own explanation. It is a common experience in colleges to see students wandering round the stacks in a haphazard way, not knowing where to find documents of likely interest to them, and also see them struggling hard in trying to use the catalogue.

(v) Most of the students would hardly have experienced earlier anything resembling a library, its resources and services. They are not aware of the importance of following library rules and regulations. They may not be aware of how the library can help them not only in their curricular study but also in their hobbies, day to day life, and work.

(vi) Students who approach a college library have to write projects/reports/thesis as the partial fulfilment of their course which needs a thorough consultation of various kinds of documents. Before preparing these assignments students need to know about the documents available in the library which may be of use to them.

3. USER ORIENTATION METHODS :

User orientation programmes in college libraries should be designed in such a way that it can brtng quick, efficient results and fulfil the aims and objectives set for it. Suitable techniques depending upon the nature, need and standard of clientele and type of documents should be used, Basic problems and procedures involved in the use of the library should be explained with simple examples from day to day processes, special services, arrangements of documents, rules and regulations, use of catalogue, search techniques, etc. Students should be made sure that library personnel are always at their service for help to save them from any kind of frustration.

Some normally used techniques for this programme are given below. Any one of them alone may not prove useful and effective. Therefore several can be used together to make this programme more lively, interesting, meaningful and useful.

3,1. Lecture :

This is most popular method and most used device in the libraries. The number of lectures depends upon the need. They must explain classification scheme in brief, the catalogue, general and subject reference sources existing !n the library, services offered, charging system, reservation facility, rules and regulations to be followed and finally whatever the librarian expects the students to know about the college library. For orientation programmes films, slides and other audio-visual materials can be used freely. A few problems students face in using the library may be identified by the lecturer and others could be pointed out by the students. These problems can be discussed in the orientation lecture. Some three or four hours of the first semester or term of every course can be devoted for library orientation lectures.

3.2. Library Tour :

Often a library tour is arranged after the lecture to show the physical existence of what has been told in the lecture. The

students are taken around to show them the college library and other book collections if any in the college. This tour is much more effective immediately after the lecture because students strengthen their new knowledge by seeing it in actually before they forget what has been told.

3.3 Brochures :

Brochures can be distributed to students during the lecture or the tour to read at leisure or when they wish to have that information later. Some visual pictures can also be printed to explain some processes clearly. Normally brochure has the same information as transmitted in the lecture. This information can also be provided in detail in college calander or college handbook.

3.4 Other Methods :

There are some other direct and indirect methods like informal meetings with the students. library guides, display methods, audio-visual methods etc. But none of them is useful when used alone. Blending of several methods make an effective orientation programme.

4. COLLEGE LIBRARY PERSPECTIVE·

The main aim of the orientation programme is to minimise the gap between the students and his library resources. We cannot prepare good orientation programmes without knowing our library resources and the needs of the students and other users. Let us see how a college library looks like and what are its users' needs.

4.1 Reference Section

Every college library will have a large collection of general reference sources consisting of various types of encyclopaedias e g Encylopaedia Britanica, Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, Encyclopedia of Science and Technology, Encyclopaedia of World Biography etc, dictionaries, year books, hand books and manuals; specialised and general. The college libraries which

utilise information technology for efficiency will stoak information sources in microfisch, floppy disk, CD ROM etc. These sources are not found in most libraries so extensively and so they will not be very familiar to students and teachers. But present day library users who are serious in their information search has to use these sources daily in their reference or research. So it is necessary for them to have a good idea about how to use these information sources.

4.2 Subject Book Section :

After the Reference Section every college library will have many subject book sections, from which the books can be borrowed. In a college library normally books on all subjects taught in the college will be available for loan from these sections. To know these sections fully and extensively users require a good knowledge of the classification scheme used in the library. because all materials in the library are arranged according to their classified order. If the library uses Dewey Decimal Classification Scheme then the user must be familiarised with the order and sequences of that scheme. Knowledge of classification scheme helps users to find their information easily and quickly and also have an idea of all related materials available.

4 3 General Book Section :

In all college libraries there will be a general book section. The fiction books and other leisure time reading materials will dominate this section. These books will be available for loan and can attract students to the library so that gradually their interest can be diverted to subject books and serious reading. Orientation programme should introduce them to such general collections.

4.4. Text Book Section :

Every college library will have sections that keep books prescribed for various courses. Usually these books will be available for study inside the library during working hours. In some colleges overnight lending is done, The orientation programmes should introduce such sections and services also.

4.5. Reservation Section :

This is also an important section of the library. It is found in most college libraries and it may be possible that the students know about it and its use. But in the absence of library orientation programme about this section some new students at least will be deprived of a substantial part of the services that may available to them.

4.6 Other Sections :

Journals and secondary services have an important role to play in education and need special care, attention and awareness to use them. All college libraries will have journal sections. Students must be given special orientation on this section and how and when to use them. A college library may also have pamphlets, conference reports, presidential addresses, constitutions directories etc. Students will have to use them during their information search. So this section should also be shown and explained to them fully. Manuscripts, films, pictures, newspaper cuttings etc. should also be introduced to the students if a college library has the provision of such services.[4]

5. RULES AND REGULATIONS :

Every library has rules and regulations about its use. For college library user also this information is necessary and important. Opening and closing days and hours, charging system, fine system, reservation system, membership, facilities available in the library such as bindery, photocopying, library cooperation, and all such information for ordering outside materials through the college library should be told in advance to the students through orientation programmes so that they can make their fullest use of the library if they want to.

6· Students Requirements :

College library is used by students, researchers and teachers. Students, staff and researchers who continuously use the library becomes familiar with the resources and services of the college library. Others who are irregular in using the library

and occasional visitors get reference service on floor. A student who comes afresh to the college library has two main needs, first he has to pass his examination for which he has sought the admission in the college and secondly he may like to enrich his general knowledge. Others come for their recreational or casual informatisn needs. Any college library should satisfy these two primary needs. To satisfy their information requirement the students should use reference section and subject book section extensively For satisfying the recreational need use of general book secticn is sufficient. Rules and regulations are important for everybody but will have more effect on serious users. For students reference service on floor is recommended and is currently in practice in many developed countries. This complies with the Second Law of Library Science formulated by Dr. Ranganathan that is 'Every User His Book'.

7. DESIGNING A PROGRAMME :

The process of learning in higher education is mainly the ability to know the library and utilising it effectively. It feeds the intellect of the student, encourages the research efficiency and acts as laboratory in education, Urquhart has very aptly described the situation of a student in connection to the use of the libraries by tracing the genesis of the library user. After leaving the school he goes to the college and during the first week in this entirely new environment he is shown around. Part of this tour include a hasty tour through the library. At that stage he has little idea of what his eventual library needs will be. In time, with luch, he graduates and becomes a post-graduate student and afterwards a research student. At first he may receive the impression that his guide knows all that is to be known about existing literature in the narrow field in which he will work and the library is there to hold the papers on the subject which his guide knows ail about. Of courses his guide grew up like the student did, believing that any intelligent man knows how to use a library and that the necessary skills are innate. So we have a position in which blind leads the blind.

This situation is not only with him, rather most of the students either developed or developing country enter the university with tha same notion that they or those who directed them know what will contain their required information and the search methods they adopt is fool proof. Therefore each college library should make serious efforts towards relieving this notion in the users especially the freshmen who comes to the library. Orientation programme is a bridge to meet two ends, at one side the college library resources and services and on the other side students' needs. For one who knows library resources and services and students' expectatations from the library it is not very difficult to design an orientation projramme. One thing that should always be kept in mind while designing the programme is that if any information is missed now, it will certainly affect on the student's behaviour throughout the period of their study. Students might be deprived of making the fullest use of the library resources and services because of that missing information Therefore orientation programme should be designed and run very carefully to make sure of its full success. That will give least botheration to college library staff and students during the use of the library.

8. NEW TECHNOLOGY :

The explosive growth of recorded knowledge, has made library orientation programme a significant activity in every college library in recent times. Due to the complexity and intricacy involved in locating the available information it has become very essential to educate and train the students to know about the existing information sources and services for a more effective and efficient utilisation of the library. The technological developments and new approacnes in information handling and the use of computers and other sophisticated equipments like microfiche, audio-visual materials and CDROM has added a new dimension to the problem for user education and training in western countries. But developing countries are still very far from this situation. Students and teachers of underdeveloped and developing countries are to a large extent ignorant of method of

using the current medium in which information is stored, the nature and type of services available and also the existence of information sources that may be of relevance to their serarch. So an user orientation programme in college library should try its ufmost to minimise the gap between the student and his information by explaining everything in a way in which the student can grasp them and use them.

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