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A Study of the Importance of Academic Research in Social Sciences and the role of University Libraries in A. P.

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Abstract

Research and development are very important and integral aspects in an academic set up as it leads to overall progress and growth of a nation. The key function of universities is to inspire students to do research in areas of interest which affect the local community socially the most. Library resources are vital for teaching, learning and research needs of faculty and students. Careful planning of resources and services prioritizing the needs and concern of the learning community goes a long way in enhancing the research culture in universities. This study was taken to investigate the provision of resources and services, budget allocation and book selection policy in Social Sciences with respect to other subjects by selected university libraries of Andhra Pradesh.

Keywords: Research and Development, Library Resources, Academic Research, Social Sciences, Higher Education and University Libraries.

1. Introduction

Research and development form a core and vital aspect of human life from the age of civilization. Innovation and change being indispensable, research forms the very basis of the process of innovation and change. Research is intrinsic of everything we do in our lives. Research outcomes have invariably led to the progress and development of a nation. Antecedents in research are focusing to meet the changing demands in social, cultural, environmental, economic, industrial, technological and scientific criteria of life.

Centers of Higher Education i.e. the tertiary bodies of learning and research are universities which are established to assist in economic, social and cultural development of a country. They mobilize their knowledge and resources to undertake research as per the local needs and strive to make a difference to the community (Khanna, 2005). Research is a most integral aspect of higher

education. And a university's key role is to facilitate the pursuit of knowledge which invariably leads to research.

Universities impart graduate, post graduate studies and doctoral programs in a number of subjects. They have a key role in producing quality researches in the country in academic, social, scientific and technological spheres of life. Research is done to find a solution to a problem by applying certain scientific methods in a controlled atmosphere, changing a few variables to inquire and direct one's efforts towards the establishment of truth. Constant search and research in any discipline are the guiding factors which help to interpret new data and information. Human beings by nature are curious and explore, and discover new things that may or may not be useful.

Research gives a practical vision to a problem. Determining and surmising the best possible and independent views in any subject is greatly tangible. Valuable information is arrived at for effective understanding of the problem and its solution. Research is considered extremely important in various fields of knowledge. Literature survey or review of research can be thought provoking to the new researchers and enhances the critical and analytical thinking of the students. Research gives additional knowledge to our limited mind or thinking. Analysis of a problem, researching an area of study, create skills in an individual which are helpful to him in other contexts too, as he is better equipped now to take up new challenges in life.

1.1 Academic Research

Basic research or fundamental research is carried out to increase the understanding of fundamental principles in areas of core interests. It is mainly carried out in universities. It is also called as Academic Research. Academic research or pure research has a fundamental aim of advancement of knowledge. It is inquisitive and often behest by the researcher's thirst for knowledge and interest. Academic research can be done in any discipline or subject of study. Sometimes a study undertaken may not be directed towards the solution of any practical problem but it remarkably gives highly significant as well as unexpected results which lead to new inventions.

Many distinguished persons like C V. Raman, Prof. Homi J. Bhabha, Sir J. C. Bose, Sir K. S. Krishnan, Srinivasa Ramanujan, and Prof. Birbal Sahani were at the helm of affairs in the

academic sector and ensured that India gets its due recognition in the global context with respect to its research and scholarly output. They formed the basis for establishing the country's research and development laboratories and trained personnel to man these organizations by expanding from academic to applied research (Chatterjea, 2006).

1.2 Academic Research in Social Sciences

According to the Encyclopedia of Social Science, "Social Science Research aims to extend, collect or verify knowledge whether that knowledge aids in construction of a theory or in practice of an art" (Slessinger and Stevenson, 1930).

It can be said that academic research has contributed the most for industrial innovation. India has excellent Centers of Higher Learning and exceptional research is being done in these institutions, better interaction between local industries and Research and Development organizations is mutually beneficial to all concerned.

Research in Social Sciences is as well important in any society as it helps in the cultural, aesthetic, spiritual, social and educational growth of a country. It aims to answer some of the most fundamental questions that humans can ask about human society, social relationships, concerns and aspects, the common problems that affect the community at grass roots level, apprehensions and anticipations regarding localized problems and their solutions are well sought at through studies and investigations done here.

1.3 Higher Education System in India

India has a huge network of educational institutions at primary, secondary and higher education level comprising of ten plus two plus three/four years of study. The institutions are either government, aided or private affiliated. Universities are at the tertiary level which are established by central government, state government, deemed to be or private affiliated. The main governing body for managing the affairs of universities and granting it affiliation is the University Grants Commission which enforces its standards and guidelines in vogue from time to time. Accreditation of higher education institutions is done by the autonomous institutions established by the UGC (NIC Reference Annual, 2009). Indian universities play a major role in producing, disseminating knowledge by conducting research work and the output of Ph.D. theses

forms an important source of information. It is estimated that every year nearly ten to twelve thousand Ph. Ds are awarded in India. Their purpose is to show how new knowledge is acquired and communicated within the chosen fields. In India doctorate level degrees are offered by the universities and institutions of national level importance, and deemed to be universities (http://vidyanidhi.org.in, 2012).

2. Research in Universities

Professor Frank Rhodes, director of Cornell University has opined that, "Doctoral education is one of the most important of all tasks of the university because it is the foundation for the nation's research and development enterprise" (Chatterjea, 2009). Hence a university is tasked with its commitment to enhance intellectual development and its repute is build up on the quality of research taken up by its students.

Academic Research is a significant part of the national research and development enterprise as universities are important building blocks in the growth and development of the country. Doctoral research being a core function of the university, it helps in advancement of knowledge through original research. High-caliber research programs should be ensured by the universities to maintain the standards, growth of individual discipline and economical gains for our country. Publication and dissemination of research results should be facilitated in scholarly and peer-reviewed journals and safe guard the copyrights of authors.

Very aptly it has been said by (Ricoeur, 1964) that the life of a university gets driven significantly "when research is vigorous it is not only knowledge which moves forward - the entire university is vitalized from top to bottom. Research provides the university with its driving force and its creative stimulus and it protects other forms and levels of education from the dangers of sclerosis and from becoming ends in themselves, by continually obliging them to adapt and renew their teaching". Academic research expands a person's knowledge of the subject, broadens one's career horizons and improves professional competencies.

2.1 Resources for carrying out Research

For the pursuit of new knowledge and the inclination to carry out world class research; academic scholars require library resources and facilities that help in producing high quality

work. Library resources are an important aspect of academic research. For doing full fledged research in any discipline there is a need to have access to relevant and vital information. Access to information is now considered more important than collection building, as university libraries provide information resources and services to carry out the educational programs and academic goals of the university and support research and teaching needs of the faculty and students.

2.2 Role of University Library in Promoting Research

A University Library completely identifies with the University's goals and objectives. The resources and services of the library support its academic pursuits. That is why Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan has said in the Education Commission (1948) that "the library is the heart of all 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 laboratory while for a humanistic research the library is both library and laboratory in one". The Kothari Education Commission also suggested that a long range plan for library development should be drawn up taking into consideration anticipated increase in enrollment, introduction of new subjects and research needs (Walker, 1968). Documentation services are encouraged in libraries to help researchers. University libraries collect and disseminate information through various methods to students, scholars and faculty members, etc.

University librarian works in collaboration with students and faculty, identifies and evaluates many information resources, plays full and active role in the academic and research process in the university and sits on the committee that develops and implements the information policy for the university. In this age of information, the future information needs of the university are taken into account and strategic plans to meet them are developed. Collection development is a major task; acquiring of electronic resources means copyright and licensing rules are met and negotiations with publishers, IT companies and other content providers are addressed.

Libraries provide a rich collection of print and electronic resources with a strong focus on course-related information as well as research-related information. The collection contains both print and electronic resources on areas of research relating to the various disciplines offered by the university. The goals of any library are to develop lifelong learning and critical thinking skills of students and researchers by facilitating access to information sources. These are aimed

at through holistic approaches of regularly updating collection, hassle-free electronic resources and infrastructure to be provided keeping in mind the growing needs of the library.

Library's planning and organization for providing the sources and services are important. Maintenance of the facilities provided should be continuous and adequate. The impact of information technologies on academic libraries especially university libraries has been unparallel. In view of the tremendous potential of technology, a number of organizations support the advancement of university libraries at the national as well as international level. The UGC besides offering funds also helps the university libraries in the modernization process in other ways also. INFLIBNET, ERNET, DELNET, CALIBNET, INFONET, etc., had emerged at the scene, which contributed towards better library services in a networked environment (National Knowledge Commission, 2007). The Government of India realizing the potential of networking of libraries is taking steps to connect all university libraries and institutions of repute in India through exclusive optical fiber.

Universities have to respond to the overall national educational plans of the country by developing research infrastructure according to it. Library resources and materials form the crux of the infrastructure required for doing world class research. By following the trends in research in each area, libraries can plan their collection development. Access to necessary information sources and materials provides impetus to the research program of the research scholars. Collection development in university libraries is no less important now than in the past, due to the fast changing technology. Collection development plays a direct role in planning resources for a library; matching teaching and research needs according to the available budget.

Since the library resources are vital for teaching and research, it is essential that information resources and services be planned on priority basis with utmost concern. Emerging electronic information has to be taken in view along with the traditional sources to design a library for future library users. Though print form has wide acceptance, electronic form is emerging very fast. These changes should be integrated well in planning the resources for the library. Well equipped and properly organized library is vital for the advancement of research and teaching needs of the academics, faculty and scholars.

2.3 Research resources

There are namely three types of information sources. They are primary sources, secondary sources and tertiary sources. Primary sources are new or original materials on which other research is based. They are usually the first formal appearance of results in physical print or electronic format. They present original thinking, report a discovery, or share new information. Research resources are often peer reviewed or refereed journals, scholarly articles, lab notes, trade journals, etc. Secondary sources are derived from primary sources; they are interpretations and evaluations of primary sources. They are a work that interprets or analyses on historical event or phenomenon. They include text books, bibliographies, dictionaries, encyclopedias, etc. Tertiary sources are those that are based on primary and secondary sources of information. It consists of information which is highly condensed and aids to search primary and secondary sources. They include indexes, abstracts, fact books, almanacs, chronologies, etc.

3. Literature Survey

Georgion, Panos and Tsakonas, Giannis (2010) have written in their paper that technological advancements and emerging political issues have helped libraries to reinforce their relationships with scholars and developed services that deal with the entire information lifecycle rather than just the end. Scholars who are integral part of the information life cycle needs support from a reliable partner that is willing to share know-how and adaptive services. Thus through long term cooperation and services, libraries have developed a keep understanding of the interests of scholars and their need to ensure the most effective and widest impact of their research.

Hundeka, S.G and Shollapur, M.R (2005) have said that the knowledge created through research activities in the universities would be of great benefit to the various stake holders in the society. The research output especially in the field of social sciences seek answers to questions of what, where, when, how and why of a number of socio economic problems concerning individuals, institutions and society as whole. A strong drive of search for truth carries the research process and opens up the socio economic mysteries that are normally hidden. Thus research offers insights for promoting socio economic changes. In addition to its practical utility research output also contributes to the development of new research concepts, tools, techniques

and theories. The academic excellence of a university is synonymous with the quality of research output.

Ramiah, L.S (2008) has said that man without information is a beast and information without man is a myth. Information is a fundamental resource like land, sky, light, fire and air. Human development had undergone many paradigm shifts in the past, it will continue to undergo even in the future. Knowledge – based human capital is replacing the all other forms of capital as the crucial resource. Library has traditionally come to store the information in various formats. They have become 'gateways' of information in society. In the twentieth century the ingenuous human mind developed computers. The internet, networking for sharing the crucial resource of human life called the information. Information super highways, information databases and websites are common sights. The internet is the modern mantra for access to information.

4. Objectives of the Study

The following objectives were formulated to take up the present study –

- To study subscription of print and electronic journals with respect to other subjects
- To study collection development with respect to other subjects
- To study the access provided to e-resources
- To study the services provided by the university libraries
- To study the budget allocation of the university libraries
- To study the book selection policy of the university libraries

5. Methodology

The study was taken up to evaluate the role played by the libraries of selected universities in Andhra Pradesh comprising of Sri Padmavati Mahila University, Tirupati, Andhra University, Vishakapatnam, Acharya Nagarjuna University, Guntur, Sri Krishna Devaraya University, Anantapur and Sri Venkateshwara University, Tirupati. Techniques used were questionnaire, interview and observation. The questionnaire has been designed to obtain data on library membership, physical facilities, finance, collection development, library orientation, library services, online services, etc. from the librarians to elicit data on -

- User data

- Sources of finance

- Basis for budget allocation

- Book selection policy

- Library collection

- Services availed by users

- Resources in Social Sciences

- Online services

6. Data Analysis

The analysis of the data gathered reveals the following findings.   All the university libraries that are selected for the study have reasonable collection both print and electronic included to render effective and efficient services to the research scholars. The collections ranges from print resources like books, journals, bound volumes, thesis and dissertations , newspapers, news files, magazines, reference materials, indexing and abstracting journals and research reports to electronic resources like on line databases, CD-Rom databases, Online journals, Magnetic tapes, DVDs, Microforms, etc.   The research also reveals that the print journals subscription in Social Sciences and other subjects (Sciences and Humanities) is in the ratio of 2:3.

Electronic journals of the university libraries are accessed via the UGC –INFONET which cover the entire disciplines offered under the UGC curriculum.   The E-journal distribution has a break up of 48% collection in science and technology, 46% collection in social science and 6% collection in arts and humanities according to the UG-INFONET E-journals consortia.   The study also reveals that the university libraries allocates budget on the bases of 40% for Social Sciences, 50% for Science and 10% on   Humanities.

E-Resources are optimally used by research scholars today as they are more techno-savvy. They relate to the information available in electronic form more easily and effortlessly. Therefore all the university libraries are providing electronic access to their research scholars 24X7, e-resources have become an indispensable part and parcel of the libraries today.   And the

libraries are making relentless efforts to make the best of acquirement and use of e-resources according to the needs and requirements of the readers.

It is also observed that the services provided by the university libraries are lending of books/ Circulation, OPAC, Reference, Current Awareness Service, Indexing, Abstracting, Online Search, CD-ROM Search, Net Browsing and Reprography. The services that are being provided on partial bases in some libraries are reservation; inter library loans, bibliographical and translation services.

UGC grants, state government funds, library fee and fines make up the most of the budget sources in the university libraries. The breakup of the budget allocation subject wise in the selected university libraries is - all most all the universities spend 40% of their total budget on Social Sciences, 50% on Sciences and 10% on Arts/Humanities. The books selection policy takes into consideration the Heads of departments or staff recommendations and request of students. The library also has the autonomy to select general books, general books on subjects, etc.

Designing, establishing and maintaining the infrastructure is more important in an organization so as to impart information services, more so in a library and information centre as it has got a direct impact on users hence all the university libraries have local area network (LAN) in the campus.

7. Conclusion

The impact of IT on academic libraries especially university libraries has been significant. Recent changes in technology have ensured that the entire library scene be restructured. Libraries have to compete with the changing technology. But in the broader perspective, in the field of higher education, we have to perceive the entire picture in totality. The socio-cultural, political, economic and other related issues are to be taken into consideration. The aim of education remains more or less the same that is to achieve overall development of mind and personality; character building which can be achieved by facilitating best teaching, learning and research culture. Libraries of twenty first century have to be the foremost platform for both pursuing and disseminating of knowledge in all the disciplines. Research in Social Sciences is also being

given an impetus in this era of technological onslaught as has been observed in the selected sample university libraries.

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