

BEST PRACTICES IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO LEARNING RESOURCE CENTER AT BUNTS SANGHA'S S.M. SHETTY COLLEGE OF SCIENCE, COMMERCE & MANAGEMENT STUDIES**Smitha Ravindranath**

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ABSTRACT

With the advent of Information & Communication Technology, Libraries have become a powerhouse of information. Academic libraries too are fast adopting latest technology in providing Library & Information Services. National Accreditation and Assessment Council (NAAC), established by the University Grants Commission (UGC), strives for quality and excellence in higher education and advocates for enhancing the role of Library and Information Services in improving academic environment. This paper discusses about the best practices followed in our Library to provide improved & value added services to its users.

Keywords: National Accreditation and Assessment Council (NAAC), University Grants Commission (UGC), Best Practices, Value Added Library Services

INTRODUCTION

Libraries have undergone tremendous change in the last few decades. Gone are the days of chained libraries or when the libraries were considered as storehouse of books. The advent of Information & Communication Technology has a major impact on the way libraries perform today. Each aspect of a library has undergone change; be it acquisition, circulation, user services or cataloguing. The changes have been felt in all types of libraries & Research Libraries are the most affected with this change. Academic Libraries are too not to be left behind. Today the academic curriculum is no longer restricted to textbook study. Students are required to browse additional reference books & latest articles from newspapers, magazines & journals. Electronic information media has gained importance amongst the students due to its features such as easy & anytime access, easy downloading & search facility. Academic libraries too have adjusted to the technological changes & have introduced new services with the help of Information & Communication Technology. To keep pace with the user's demand, the academic libraries house a variety of collection in print & electronic form & also provide access to various online resources.

All colleges are attached to a university & the University Grants Commission (UGC) has laid down standards for quality in education. National Accreditation and Assessment Council (NAAC) is an autonomous body established by the University Grants Commission (UGC) of India to assess & accredit institutions of higher education in the country. It strives for quality and excellence in higher education and advocates for enhancing the role of Library and Information Services in improving academic environment. It is an outcome of the recommendations of the National Policy in Education (1986) which laid special emphasis on upholding the quality of higher education in India.

NAAC has made quality the defining element of higher education in India through a combination of self & external quality evaluation, promotion & sustenance initiatives. To make this possible NAAC arranges for periodic assessment & accreditation of institutions of higher education & the various units attached to it. Today a Library has become a very important unit of an academic institution due to its demand for more information & knowledge. To fulfil the demand & to serve the users in a better way, an Academic Library need to adopt advanced methodology. This will ultimately pave way for better quality in Library & Information Services in Academic Libraries.

ABOUT LEARNING RESOURCE CENTER (LRC)

LRC at Bunts Sangha's S.M. Shetty College of Science, Commerce & Management Studies, is a fully Air conditioned Library and is Wi-Fi enabled. The reading room is open for 12 hours from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm. The Library houses collection of both Junior & Degree College. The library collection comprises of books, journals, magazines, newspapers, CD-ROMs, geographical sources & previous years' question papers. The Library in-house operations are automated through SOUL Library Software. The Library has subscription to NLIST (by UGC - INFLIBNET), through which students & teachers can access many electronic resources like full-text of more than 6000+ e-journals and 1,35,000+ e-books. The Library has institutional membership to Tata Institute of Social Sciences Library. Students are provided computers with internet facility for their project & study work. The Library collection can be searched through SOUL Web OPAC. Access to many subject related free online journals is provided through Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). The Library houses a separate

Teacher's Corner for Teachers where computer terminals are provided along with printer & scanner. The library is secured by CCTV cameras & fire extinguishers. To encourage & develop reading habits amongst students, the library provides 3 library cards each for textbook, reference book & general reading book. PG students are given extended loan period of 14 days. Orientation programmes & library awareness programmes are arranged to spread awareness about the library & its services. The library also organizes events for students like the annual book exhibition, essay writing, poster making competition etc. The library has its own website wherein information about the library is provided in detail. Library has also created an institutional repository where users have access to old question papers, syllabus copies, e-resources etc.

The best practices followed by us in each section are described below:

ACQUISITION

Aim: Every Reader his / her book

Practice1: The Library invites requisitions from the teaching staff & also the students library purchase. Requisitions are allowed for any type of reading material; textbook, reference book or general reading book.

Practice2: List of new publications are gathered from online bookstores & mailed to the teachers for their consent to purchase.

Practice3: Book Exhibition is organised once in a year & invitation is sent to all readers. A good number of books is procured through recommendation from students & teachers through this method.

PROCESSING

Aim: Books in Need is a Book Indeed

Practice: The Library follows the standard procedure for processing of the library resources i.e. bill wise accessioning & data entry. But if there is an emergency for any title then the library staff ensures that the books in demand are processed first & given to the readers in the minimum possible time.

REFERENCE SERVICE

Aim: Something Better than Nothing

Practice: In the unavailability of textbooks during examination time, students are directed to browse the reference books & e-resources for the topics related to their field of study. Thus our library staff ensures that no student is left disappointed while leaving the library.

CIRCULATION

Aim: Save the Time of the Reader & Staff

Practice: We have a demand slip facility for book issue to students. Students are required to fill up this slip half an hour prior to issue. Library staff helps the students in making correct entries in the slip with respect to course, semester, paper, title, author & publisher. This procedure enables the staff to easily remove the desired books from the shelf & that too in few trips thus saving the staff's time. Students too are at gain as they don't waste their time in searching for the book. This procedure also ensures that there is no theft of books during rush hours. However staff can directly issue the books without filling up the slip.

DIGITAL LIBRARY

Aim: Library as a Learning Resource Center

Practice1: The Library has subscribed to INFLIBNET N-LIST which has a good collection of e-books & e-journals. The Librarian frequently browses the N-LIST database for resources related to the topics mentioned in the syllabus of each course. The teachers & students are informed about it & they can access the same through their respective login.

Practice2: Directory of Open Access Journals or DOAJ provides free open access to many journals in a variety of subjects. The library has identified few journals in each course & the same have been bookmarked in the library computers.

Practice3: Online access to newspapers is available to the readers through the library computers.

Practice4 : Readers are given full time internet access through the library computers. We have a separate teacher's corner so that the teachers can do their work without getting disturbed.

Practice5: Library Web OPAC is installed in all the library computers. The library staff trains the readers in searching the catalogue.

Practice6: Information is also communicated through LED display installed in the Library.

LIBRARY SERVICES**Aim: Information is for Use**

Practice : The Library subscribes to 13 newspapers, journals & academic magazines. Contents of these periodicals are analysed at the time of their inward. There are three notice boards in the library.

'*Information Corner*' in which information related to current affairs, general & additional knowledge is displayed,

'*Career Corner*' in which information about various career options, short term courses, part time jobs, conferences, workshops, seminars etc. are put up.

'*Know Your Library*', which provides information about the library.

Aim: Every Book its Reader

Practice : Every library will have reference books in addition to the textbooks prescribed in the curriculum. These reference books are hardly used by students as their focus is only on textbook learning. Same is the case with fiction books. As a result, these books lie in the library without being used. Every week, a list of 5 such books with a short summary is prepared & is displayed on the library notice board as "Books of the Week". The library also displays its reference & general reading books collection twice in a year to create awareness about the existence & information content of these books available

Aim: Knowledge is Power

Practice1 : Library notice boards & also the LED display is dedicated to provide information about the library & informative articles from various journals, magazines & websites.

Practice2 : List of latest arrivals is mailed to the teaching staff. Hardcopy of the same is also maintained in a file in the library at the circulation counter.

Practice3 : Contents page of subject magazine & journals is scanned & mailed to the teachers.

Practice4: The college library provides an excellent opportunity to enhance one's knowledge through institutional memberships with British Council & Tata Institute of Social Sciences Library

Aim: Know Your Library

Practice1 : User Education Programmes is provided in three ways:

Common Orientation : In the first week of the new academic year, one orientation is given to all first year students in common. This orientation is part of the fresher's orientation programme organised by the college.

Library Visit : Class teachers of the respective classes bring their students to the library for orientation.

Library Awareness Programmes: An awareness programme is conducted for students of all programmes in their respective classrooms. One lecture is devoted for the library aware awareness programme.

Aim: Customer is King

Practice1: Readers are the library's customer & satisfying their requirement is the Library's top priority. Students form the major part of the Library readers. Student representatives are included in the Library Committee as members & they are allowed to give their opinion about the library.

Practice2: Library feedback is taken from both students & teachers & they are discussed in the library committee meetings for the committee's suggestions & action.

Aim: Library is a Growing Organism

Plan1 : Our Library constantly tries to improve its collection & services every year. Very soon we plan to introduce SDI service to the teachers wherein the library will collect information about lecture schedules of various teachers. The library will then make note of the upcoming lectures. Articles from various resources such as library magazines & journals, newspapers, e-journals, e-books etc will be compiled & provided to the teachers a couple of days ahead of their lecture.

Plan2: Additional reading room will be provided to the students.

Plan3: Out of syllabus books will be removed from the active collection & will be stacked outside the library at a different place in order to make space for new collection.

CONCLUSION

The NAAC Accreditation process is a learning experience & it helps the libraries in improving its functions & services. Each area of the library is scrutinized for its process & documentation. Hence academic libraries need to adopt new & improved services to serve the user community. A SWOT analysis of the library if done will help the libraries to know about its strengths & weaknesses & to perfect the library process with supporting documentation. The NAAC team stresses on adopting best practices in each library in order to provide value added services to the users. These best practices if adopted & followed by libraries on a regular basis will enhance the quality of library & information services & will enable to serve the users in a better way

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