

Role Of Library Professionals In The Promotion Of User Educational Programmes In Academic Libraries

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Abstract

The Academic Libraries have been described as the “heart” of the learning community, providing a place for students and faculty to conduct their research and advance their knowledge. In the education system, an academic library is the centre of academic life. A library attached to a institution of higher education exists to support the goals of its parent organization. It is the libraries responsibility to provide better services to its clients to make sure that information sources, services and resources are well utilized for user’s benefits. Hence user education program is very crucial for library user’s achievements.

User education is nothing but creating awareness to the users about the utilization of the facilities and services available in a particular library. The user education is mainly concerned with providing guidance and instruction to the user about proper use of library collection and services. The paper explores need for user education and the objectives of user education, types of library users; the paper describes the role of library professionals in the promotion of user educational programmes. Further it also focuses problems and barriers in user education.

KeyWords: User Education, Academic Library, Types of users, Library Orientation, Information Literacy.

Introduction

Library is considered as an integral component of any efficient educational system. It plays an important role in the improvement of the organization. The library supports the reading and research needs of its user for particular institution. User education is an educational activity of the library and information organization. The main task of user education is to guide library users to maximize the use of library resources, including collection resources and human resources, as well as training their proficiency in the use of library resources; strengthening user education is an important duty of the librarians. With the rapid development of information technology, applications in the library become more and more common, such as computer technology, network technology and multimedia technology. The big change has happened in constitution of library information resources, information retrieval, approaches to the provision of services, as well as information dissemination methods. Therefore library user education is also facing higher education requirements.

User education becomes an effective way of library to exert social educational functions, make self-advocacy, and improve the utilization of literature only by conducting user education can readers master the library technologies, information resources and literature retrievals skills, so as to improve users ability to access information. Conducting user educational we can deal well with the relationship between collection and utilization to information resources, strengthen the close tie between users and library, and absorb more members o the society to make use of library, thus ensuring the best use of library resources. At the same time, user education can help popularize library knowledge, enhance user’s awareness and because general attention and support for library from the society, then promote the use of library improve libraries social status and develop its multiple functions, so as to promote the development of library cause.

Definition of User Education:

According to “whittaker” a user may be defined as, “a person who uses one or more libraries service at least once in a year” users are individuals who can be divided into different categories on the basis o tasks assigned to them in a library organization.

Fleming defined user education as “Various programs of instruction, education and exploration provided by libraries to users to enable them to make more effective, efficient and independent use to information sources and services to which these libraries provide access.”

According to Shahi- “User education is a process of activities involved in making the users of the library conscious about tremendous value of information in day to day life to develop interest among the users to seek information as and when they requires.”

User education is a ongoing and unending learning process in academic libraries. Users require some sort of user education on how to use library resources and library services. Users should know what services are available in the library and how to use it.

Need for User Education

User education is essential. It helps publicize library services. It improves the image of the library. Tremendous increase in the volume of the publications as well as the resulting complexity of libraries and the methods by which literature is organized and disseminated necessitate the user education. Rapid changes in teaching methods and the resulting trend towards a wider use of multi-media learning resources ranging from the press cutting to slide tapes package and multiple kits, such format has added new dimensions to the learning process in all types of institutions.

Objectives of user education:

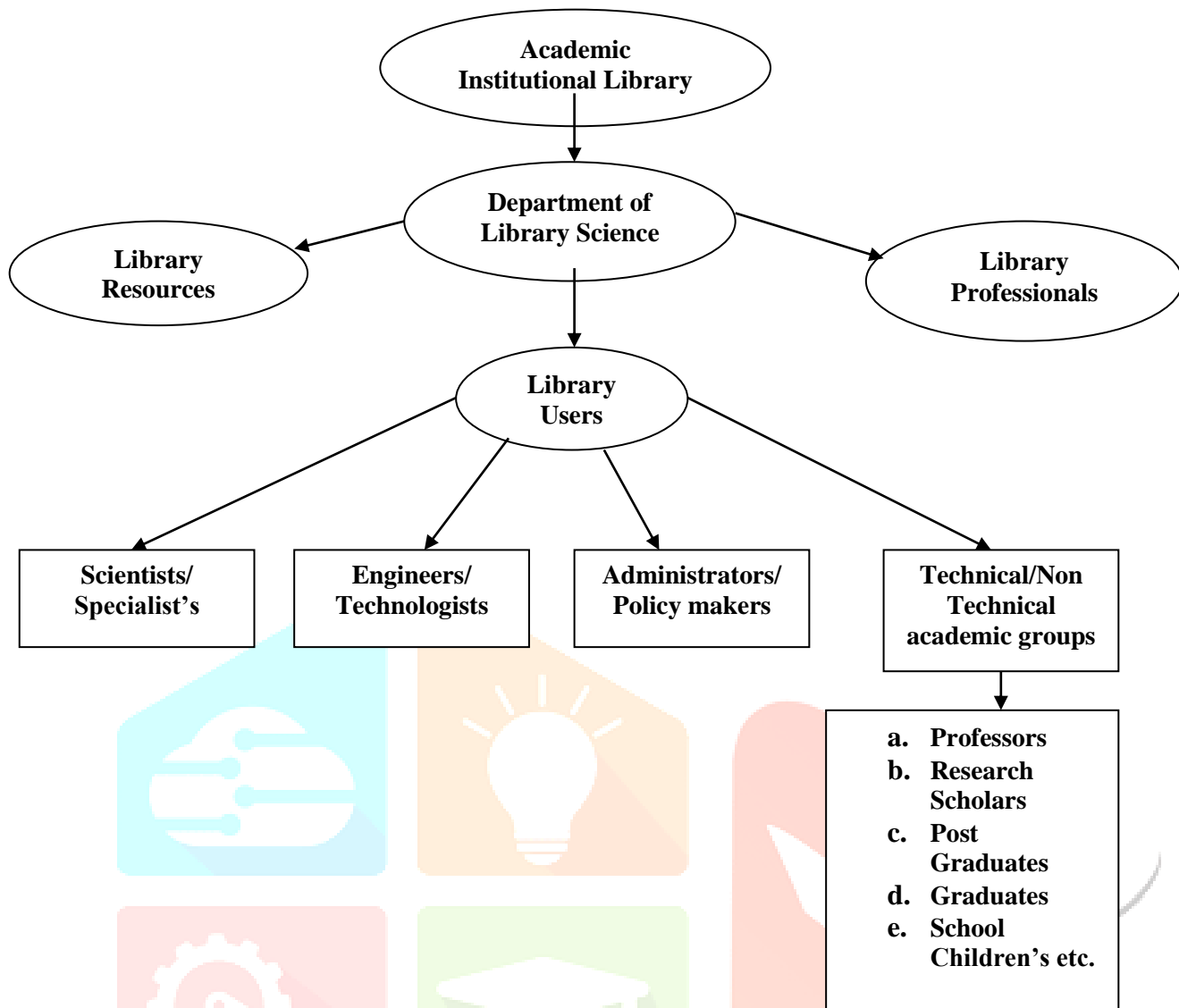
The main objectives of user education are:

- To make the readers familiar with library tools and techniques;
- To introduce information sources;
- To develop initiative ability and self study;
- To help them to express their queries precisely;
- Demonstrate the use of catalogues and understanding the classification scheme;
- Make familiar with different collection of the library;
- Information about other facilities in the library;
- Use of OPAC in automated libraries.

Types of Library users

The users are one type but libraries are different from those of another type. In a public library the users are mainly children, students, housewives, farmers, retired persons, literates and even also researchers. In an academic library the users are students, teachers and researchers, whereas as special groups of users of whom the library is intended. From what is stated above it can be assumed that in the public libraries the users are almost heterogeneous and in academic and special libraries the users are almost homogeneous in nature. For an effective information services as an information manager, he should ascertain about the information requirements of his library users.

The following diagram shows various categories of user group in academic institutional library



Need of Information Technology-In Academic Institutional library

The academic institutions have accepted programmed instruction or computer-aided instruction (CAI) as a method of teaching. This now being, used by several libraries and information centers. Most of the CAI is prepackaged and thus learning time for providing user education is forced to concentrate on the essentials. CAI programs take care of library instruction program on their own.

Computer can be used in a number of ways to assist users:

- As a training device in which computer acts as links between the instruction program and the student.
- As an interface between the user and the real online/ offline systems. A computer is used to simplify the search procedure and process for the user.
- To provide practice on a real online/ offline systems using a subset of a database or several databases.
- By providing diagnostic message and responding to the help command during searching.

Advantage of Computer Aided Instruction:

There are several advantages to the CAI for educating the users:

- CAI provides one to one interaction with the user, as well as instantaneous response to the answers selected and allows users to proceed on their own
- CAI is particularly useful in subjects that require library staff can devote more time to their library routine.
- CAI can be used diagnostically and once user problem has been identified, it and then focus in the problem areas.
- It assists the users to make their query on their own.
- These CAI programs are user-friendly so that user can carry out their search using several easy methods.
- For online information retrieval it has automatic log on procedure.
- Storage of search output on desks to allow editing or reformatting to meet individual requirement.

Currently, in the age of information technology various new disciplines are emerging. New methods of information storage techniques for information searching and retrieval have been developed and are working well.

Designing Of User Education Programs and Role of the Library Professionals:

Library professionals should be plan and careful when the designing user education programs. A lot of preparation is needed on the part of the library personnel. Prior to planning a user education program, the library should assess the knowledge of the user community about the library and library services. For this designing of user education programs you may be follow some methods for collecting the information from the users. Like that questionnaires, interviews, suggestions.

User Education Programmes:

- Library professionals may be follow lecture method, just like class room instructions.
- Library professionals maybe conduct Seminars, Tutorial Classes etc.
- And conduct Guided Tours and Demonstration Classes.

Role of Library Professionals in the Promotion of User Educational Programmes:

- Library personnel maybe follow Audio-Visual methods for educate the library users
- With the help of computer technicians, can conduct Computer-Aided programmed instructions.
- On the demand of user can provide individual instruction.
- Advertising is also educating the users; library professional may be provided advertising also.
- Workshops maybe given a good practical knowledge to the users.
- Library/Brochures may help the library users.
- Library Orientation Programme is the very important method for user education.
- Bibliographic Instructions through this program we can give how to utilize the library catalogue, abstracts, indexes etc.

Problems and Barriers in User Education Programmes:

Library professionals may face some problems from the user community and also you may be facing some barriers when you designing user education programmes. Some of the difficulties are given below.

- User may be illiterate in computer knowledge.
- Technical problems
- Lack of standards.
- Lack of computer terminals
- Copy right problems.

- Access problems.
- Financial sources may not sufficient.
- Staff may be shortage.
- Time shortage.
- Increase the number of users.
- Explosion of the information

Suggestions for the Solving the Problems and Barriers:

- Every library professional should be train up on up-to-date technologies.
- Recruit qualified staff only as library 'professionals
- Library professionals should be attend conference, seminars etc.
- Should be provide up-to-date information on displays for the users.
- May be arrange good infrastructure in the library, it may be helpful to the users.
- A team work is very important among the library professionals.
- Co-ordination is the very important among the faculty and library professionals
- An interaction between the users and library professionals may be helpful.

CONCLUSION

User education provides the users about the best utilization of library resources and services. User community has fundamental right to enjoy the services and retrieval the information from the library. Library professional have responsibility to provide the information to the users in time without the barrier. In the age of information technology, rapid changes are coming when you providing the user services, but the user community confusing to draw the information without the help of library professional. So the library professional should be design proper user education program for creating awareness in the user community. It may be more useful to the user community. Ultimately we satisfy the "Five Laws of Library Science" and we reach the main motto of the library.

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