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A Study on "Role of Academic Libraries and Information Services"

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ABSTRACT

Academic libraries are those libraries which are linked to any academic organization and devoted to their parent institution. These libraries provided services according to the need of parent institution. Academic library can be established at three levels, these can be School Library, College Library and University Library. These libraries serve students, faculty, staff, researchers, and other members of the academic community by offering access to print and electronic resources, such as books, journals, databases, and other materials. Academic libraries often have specialized collections in various subject areas, such as science, engineering, humanities, social sciences, and more. They also provide reference services, instruction and information literacy programs, interlibrary loan services, and other support to help users navigate the complex world of scholarly research. All of these meet the academic community's needs by completing the institution's study and research programmes and assisting in the preservation and dissemination of information.

Keywords: academic, books, collection, database, digital, information, role, students

INTRODUCTION

Role of academic libraries serve an important role in helping students, teachers, and staff with their academic and research needs. They provide a variety of services and resources to promote learning, teaching, and scholarship, including as access to scholarly databases, e-books, print collections, study spaces, and instructional support. In recent years, college libraries have also expanded their digital collections and services to meet the changing needs of users in the age of digital information. This paper explores how librarians must constantly evaluate and adapt their services to meet the changing demands of their users in order to ensure the success of college libraries. This includes creating user-friendly interfaces for accessing and using library materials, giving personalised guidance and support, and establishing creative programmes to improve the learning experience. As higher education institutions continue to evolve, college libraries will remain a vital resource for supporting academic success and lifelong learning.

Academic libraries in colleges and universities support education and research by providing curated print/digital resources, specialized research support (data management, bibliometrics), and information literacy training. Modern libraries act as learning hubs, offering interlibrary loans, specialized software, and study spaces, with a growing emphasis on digital, user-oriented services, especially in India where this study from Open Research@CSIR-NIScPR suggests Research Support Services are emerging, while in others like this research study published on ResearchGate, they are more advanced.

Key Academic Library Services and Trends

Research Support Services (RSS): Libraries now focus on research data management (RDM), scholarly publishing, open access, and research impact measurement.

Information Literacy and Training: Providing workshops on advanced searching, citation management (e.g., EndNote), and digital research tools.

Digital and Physical Access: Offering Access to online databases, electronic resources (e-books, e-journals), and Online Public Access Catalogues (OPAC).

Learning Spaces: Providing flexible spaces for collaboration, study, and research, alongside traditional lending services.

Staff Expertise: Hiring specialized librarians to manage data services and support researchers at different career stages.

Trends in Academic Library Development
Technological Transformation: Information technology has modernized housekeeping (circulation, cataloging) and significantly expanded access to online resources.

Shift from Collection to Connection: Libraries are transforming from merely holding materials to being active partners in research, providing research consultancy and archiving, according to a study from ResearchGate.

Emerging Services: A study focusing on Indian academic libraries indicates that while some services are still in their infancy, there is a strong shift toward adopting research support services, as discussed in the report from Open Research@CSIR-NIScPR.

College Library:
College libraries serve as the primary learning resource and are an essential component of higher education. A college library is a library that is associated with a college and is intended to support the academic and research needs of its students, faculty, and staff. College libraries typically have a wide range of materials, resources, and services that are specifically tailored to the courses and programs offered at the parent institution. College libraries usually have a collection of books, journals, and other reading materials related to various academic disciplines, as well as online databases and other digital resources that students can access from anywhere with an internet connection. They also provide access to research assistance and support services, such as librarians who can help students with their research and citation needs. College libraries typically have a variety of study spaces, including individual study carrels, group study rooms, and quiet reading areas. They may also offer computer workstations for students to use, as well as printing and scanning services. Overall, college libraries play a critical role in supporting the academic and research needs of a college or university, providing a wealth of resources and services that help to promote learning, innovation, and community engagement.

Evolution of College Libraries:
The evaluation of the college library traced back from the British colonial period. In 1818, The first college library was established at the Serampore College in West Bengal. The library was founded by Danish missionary and scholar William Carey, by his books brought from England. The library gradually grew in the period of time and having more than 50,000 volumes at the early of 21st century.

Features of College Libraries:
• It supports teaching and research activities in the colleges.
• College library developed enormous collection of books and journals and broad category of reading materials related to courses.
• It provides access to various online as well off line data base search services for the users.
• It offers variety of facilities such as study and reading space for individual and group study.
• College libraries offer internet services for the users for access of information, printing, scanning, etc.
• It provides research assistance services for the students such as finding information, accessing online databases, reference management, etc.
• It offers inter library loan services for the users.
• Few college libraries have very important rare or unique collection such as historical documents, manuscripts etc. for research purposes.
• It organized various workshop and events to develop skills among the students

Functions of College Libraries:
College libraries perform various functions to support the academic and research activities in the premises. The functions of college libraries are as follows:
• Provides various information reading materials such as books, journals, magazines and other information sources which are relevant to the education and research.
• It offers various kinds of research support facilities such as helping in finding relevant information, plagiarism checking, guiding reference management, etc for the students and faculty members.
• Facilitating various spaces and resources for the academic communities to support learning.
• Working as a repository for preserving knowledge of the society in the form of the historical documents, rare books, or manuscripts, etc.
• It offers various tools and technology for encouraging innovation and creativity among the students.
• It helps in the development of the educated society by providing platform for the intellectual, faculty, and students to share their knowledge and social engagement.

Limitations of college libraries:
College libraries are having few limitations as follows:
• College libraries are having limited access to the library users because it is not open as university libraries.

• College library have very limited collections of reading materials that unable to full fill the information need of the library users.
• Many university libraries are offering maker space for the library users for innovation and learning. But college library have very limited space in the libraries during examination period when each and every students wants to study in the very silence place.
• College libraries offering limited information technology facilities because of the nonavailability of latest technology or obsolete technology which affects the productivity of the users.
• College library will act according to the institutional policies which may restrict some services and collection.
• College libraries have limited funds facilities which affected the purchase of information resources, development of the infrastructure, and starting new library services.
• Very limited staff is appointed in the college library which affect the services of the college library.

As science and technology advanced, the print media was augmented by non-print media such as microforms, audio-visual aids, magnetic tapes and CD-ROMs as the medium of information storage and retrieval. Since 1950s the developments in ICT induced traditional libraries to transform to digital libraries incorporating documents available in electronic formats. The library transformation can be represented as MUSEUMS: Media-Clay, Brick etc: Access-Physical visit; to Traditional Libraries: Media- Print: Access-Physical visit; to Digital Library: Media: Digital: Access-Online, Remote. Traditionally, the library is a physical place where collection of information resources in various formats (books, journals, videos, CD-ROMs etc.) is organized in a specific manner to meet the needs of a specific user or group of users. It is a service organization with both tangible and intangible assets. The tangible assets constitute physical documents and the human resources. The intangible assets comprise the invaluable services rendered by the library staff. From ancient times, library is the laboratory for testing or experimenting one or the other technology related to knowledge production, storage and processing. Invention of the computers is the greatest contribution to the libraries and its introduction was traced back in early 80s in the libraries. It has transformed almost every aspect of how the library provides its services and performs its work behind the scenes. This resulted in automation of library in-house operations, open public access catalogue (OPAC), remote access, digitization, and creation of digital libraries.

The issues related to current technology discussed or addressed by the present day libraries are:

- Digitization of special collection, establishing institutional depositories, use of integrated library management software;
- Implementation of wireless and mobile technologies for all time remote/ campus access;
- Bar-coded library transactions;
- CD mirror servers and accessing CDs available on network;
- Application of RFID in libraries;
- Web-site development, web-programming and management of the same, integration of web-OPAC and integration of multi-language on single platform;
- Production and use of e-books and e-journals;
- Services for distance learning students, disabled/handicapped;
- Technology education, training and instructional/education technology to support teaching and learning; and
- Development of technology centers and promotion of information literacy.

Many factors are responsible for a change in the landscape of libraries. Libraries have changed from time to time and they have to change in the future too. Some of the important factors that helped the libraries to change are information explosion, growth In academic environment, library is a place of intellectual stimulation and knowledge centre. Until 1980s, the information seekers were greatly dependent on print resources and libraries were unique places for provision of such information. The past two decades have seen a great deal of change due to ICT resulting in a demand for new pattern of scholarly information. These technological advancements have made significant impact on the growth of knowledge and unlocking of human potential. In library environment, the impact is clearly visible on information products such as changing document collection, the storage media, and format; process/functions such as automation of library in-house operations, resource sharing, reprography, communication, internet technology, search engines and instant message, and quality of service; people-users and staff such as choice of sources, death of distance, diminishing time zone, remote access, basic skills, on-line search, and duties and responsibilities of the library professionals. Quality is a critical factor for achieving success in any organization. The concept of quality is not a new phenomenon for library professionals as it is rooted in library principles and activities. Though explicitly not stated, Ranganathan's Five Laws of Library Science, particularly the fourth law (save the time of reader) implies the importance of quality in library services. The law emphasizes that library administration be simple and efficient to save time of user. Knowledgeable staff provides seamless access to information regardless of format, whether the user is in the library or at a remote location. Historically, the quality of library has been measured in terms of size- its collection, budget and manpower. Many librarians believe that quality is directly related to the size of the budget. In recent past, this concept has been changed towards the nature of the service rendered by the libraries and not merely on the collection and size. However, in the present day context, listening to the voice of the user is very important and the reliance on the library from users' perspective.

CONCLUSION

College libraries are serving to the users which are associated to the college. Some time they are also offering visitor library service for the student and researchers for the outside of the college. College libraries basically intended to serve or full fill the academic and research information need of the students, researchers, and faculty members. Now the librarian is not working as a house keeper of the books but they are working as a service provider which has a user centric approach. The college library structure is very small compare to university library. But now a day many college libraries are subscribing electronic resources through consortia subscription and compiling open access information resources for the library users.

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