

Research Article

USER EDUCATION: ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines user education programmes in academic library. This paper discussion focuses on the planning of user education, change in information services in academic library, need for user education and implementation of these programmes and web based user education in academic libraries and information technology user education programmes. **Copyright © www.acascipub.com, all right reserved.**

KEY WORDS: User education, academic library, web technology, information technology etc.

1. INTRODUCTION

Academic libraries are at a turning point. Historically, college and university libraries were the natural destination for students, faculty, staff, and researchers seeking information. These users came to the library by default. Academic libraries served as the repository for published information as well as the intermediary for acquiring material from the outside world.

2. DEFINITION OF ACADEMIC LIBRARY

An academic library is a library which serves an institution of higher learning, such as a college or a university — libraries in secondary and primary schools are called school libraries. These libraries serve two complementary purposes: to support the school's curriculum, and to support the research of the university faculty and students. The support of teaching requires material for class readings, and for student papers. In the past, the material for class readings, intended to supplement lectures as prescribed by the instructor, has been called reserves. In the period before electronic resources became available, the reserves were supplied as actual books or as photocopies of appropriate journal articles. Traditionally, one copy of a book was made available for

each 10 students — this is practical for large classes only if paperback copies are available, and the books reused from term to term.

Academic libraries must decide what focus they take in collecting materials since no single library can supply everything. When there are particular areas of specialization in academic libraries these are often referred to as niche collections. These collections are often the basis of a special collection department and may include original papers, artwork, and artifacts written or created by a single author or about a specific subject.

An academic library is defined in the Instructions section of the survey form as an entity in a postsecondary institution that provides all of the following:

1. An organized collection of printed or other materials, or a combination thereof.
2. A staff trained to provide and interpret such materials as required to meet the informational, cultural, recreational, or educational needs of clientele.
3. An established schedule in which services of the staff are available to clientele.
4. The physical facilities necessary to support such a collection, staff, and schedule.

This definition includes libraries that are part of learning resource centers.

Branch and independent libraries are defined as auxiliary library service outlets with quarters separate from the central library that houses the basic collection. The central library administers the branches. Libraries on branch campuses that have separate NCES identification numbers are reported as separate libraries.

3. SOLUTION HIGHLIGHTS FOR ACADEMIC LIBRARIES:

- Comprehensive applications including an integrated library system, information portal and federated search application, Open URL Resolver, e-resources management and statistical analysis portal
- Inherent scalability and flexibility to manage metadata, collections in multiple formats, multiple databases and multiple locations
- Support for standard data formats and protocols such as MARC21, Uni MARC, Dublin Core, CDWA, XML, Dublin Core, Unicode, Open URL, OAI-PMH, Z39.50, SRU/SRW and many others
- Electronic resources management including full interoperability with third-party systems and applications
- Web-based statistical portal to analyze trends and facilitate decision making
- Digital repository management to disseminate scholarly publications (support for the OAI harvesting protocol and repository upload)
- Multi-lingual support
- Support for Inter Library Loan (ILL)

- Course and resource management including integration with Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs), CRM applications and data harvesting environments using Web Service-based Service Oriented Architecture (SOA)
- Support for stack requests
- Interoperability with RFID and self-check systems
- Highly flexible search and resource discovery environment with federated searching, Open URL linking and a graphical Web OPAC including enhanced content
- Information delivery functionality for users to receive customized information in the right place at the right time (SDI, RSS news feeds, journal availability and more)
- Web OPAC 'Reading Lounges' to provide students access to course materials in reading lists

4. THE CHALLENGE IN INFORMATION SERVICES

Information has become more complex and expensive. Organizations that furnish investment and other types of information, such as information that helps a firm monitor its cash position. Agency or department responsible for providing processed or published information on specific topics to an organizations internal user, its customers, or the general public. In this context, the basic challenge is to convince and convert traditional users into users of Internet-based resources and services. The aim of information literacy is to make information users capable of locating, retrieving, and using information. Information literacy can contribute to developing information technology (IT) related competencies among end-users as it includes basic computer and network literacy.

5. USER EDUCATION HAS BEEN DEFINED AS

... Instruction which equips library users with the skills to enable them to be independent and sophisticated users of libraries and their resources.

...all the activities involved in teaching users how to make the best possible use of library resources, services and facilities, including formal and informal instruction delivered by a librarian or other staff member one-on-one- or in a group

6. NEED FOR USER EDUCATION

Tremendous increase in the volume of publication 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 kit. Such format has added new dimensions to the learning process in all types of institutions.

7. PLANNING FOR USER EDUCATION

Programming and planning of user education programme is very important particularly in academic and research libraries. It needs a careful planning. According to “Thomas G. Kirk” planning of user education programme requires four things namely.

i) Orientation.

ii) Bibliographic Instruction

8. LEVELS OF USER EDUCATION

It is generally agreed that there are three levels of user education which have been summarized by Rathore (1992):

1. At the beginning of every academic year or semester ... applicable to all those who are using the library for the first time, e.g. Library orientation and library tour
2. Subject oriented instruction for undergraduates at a stage when they are admitted to a special branch or subject of their choice or at the time of project work
3. Literature search training ...provided at the beginning of their research work

OTHER LEVELS OF USER EDUCATION

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|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|---------|-------|
| 1. | Undergraduate | Level | |
| A general introduction to the geography of the university library, as well as some useful information about the library catalog, reference sources, etc. | | | |
| 2. | Post-graduate | Level | |
| In addition to the above information, instruction on classification system, bibliographies available, library services offered, etc. | | | |
| 3. | Research | Scholar | Level |
| detailed info about literature search, compilation of bibliographies for their projects, technical writing, giving footnotes, etc. | | | |
| Faculty | | | Level |
| to conduct fruitful research and enable faculty to teach, they need to know the steps in literature search, information retrieval, technical writings, interlibrary loans, relevant library services, etc. | | | |

Knowing which level of user education is required by a particular group of students enables the librarian to determine the aims and objectives of the session.

The three main aims of user education regardless of level are:

- to train the user to exploit the library resources effectively
- to provide the user with the skills for independent information seeking

to encourage the user to seek the assistance of library professionals

9. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND USER EDUCATION

With wider Internet connectivity, educational institutions in this country are beginning to tap the opportunities offered by the information society. Currently, many e-journals and e-books are available to library users. There are many traditional methods of user education. The advent of information technology in library has necessitated changes in the user education. Lectures, Library tour, Printed booklet, guides, seminars and workshops, orientation week, display and audio-visual method etc. are the techniques of user education. According to Bauwens (1993), knowledge of how to navigate the Internet is now becoming a basic requirement for information professionals. This would enable librarians to carry out instruction on the use of the Internet. Users need to be introduced to different on-line catalogues and their search procedures. Currently none of the libraries examined include instruction on the use of the Internet in their user education programmes. Libraries should not only see themselves as users of Internet but also as providers of information from the Internet. There is a growing need to support users in the form of training to provide them with skills needed for effective exploitation of online resources.

10. WEB-BASED USER EDUCATION

The web-based user education provides a high degree of interactivity and flexibility to the users. Web guides and teaching tools are found everywhere on the Web because they are easily updated, accessed, and printed on demand. The library web sites can use web-based user education for imparting training to users in teaching the basic library skills along with glossary of library terms, using Library OPAC, locating books, magazines, biographical data and other library materials, understanding how to navigate the libraries website and how to select the most relevant database, instructions for searching CD ROM and guidance in locating web-based databases and other electronic resources and instructions on subject searching training, using Boolean operators and searching internet resources through search engines.

11. CONCLUSION

At this time college and university libraries face enormous challenges and opportunities. The development of new technology makes direct access to information easier for users, and, while information skills are required to collect and present that information, in the future there is likely to be less of a role for information workers as intermediaries between users and information sources. Academic libraries support the teaching and research needs of institutions they serve. Multimedia and the Internet have further made the job of library and information professionals more challenging. the academic libraries developing continuing professional education and training programs for the library and information professionals, as well as the end-users will have to develop learning attitude and network related competence to us by the information and communication technologies.

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