User Education in A Libraries: An Overview

Dr. S. Y. Vaidya, Librarian
Late. Dr. Haribhau Admane Arts Commerce College Saoner.

Tah- Saoner Dist- Nagpur. Maharashtra 440017
Email:- vaidya.s30@gmail.com

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to provide better library services, but there is also a need to educate the users about the proper use of these library services. This paper explains the role of library professionals in creating awareness among the users and guiding them in finding the required information from the library through user education. In the present paper an attempt has been made to describe the concept and overview on user education programs, under which their needs, uses of information technology and multimedia program have been discussed. It highlights components, aims, prerequisites, methods, needs, benefits, problems and barriers to conducting user education programs in academic libraries. It is concluded from the presented paper that the benefits of library resources and services can be extended to the users through user education program.

Keywords User study; Orientation; Resources; Lectures; Demonstration; Seminar; Audio-visual; Multimedia

Introduction

Glossary of Library and Information Science (2013) defines "user education as encompassing all relevant activities designed to teach the users about library services, facilities, organization, library resources and search strategy. This includes instruction in the use of one or more reference sources as part of a reference transaction, library use presentation, and bibliographic instruction." Fleming (1990) defines "user education is in the form of various programs of instruction, learning and exploration that are provided by libraries to users to enable them to make more effective, efficient and independent use of the information sources and services to which these libraries provide access." Fjallbrant and Malley (1984) defines "user education is concerned with the entire information and communication process and one part of it involves the overall interaction of the user with the library. It should be a continuous process, starting with school and public libraries, with the possibility of extension into educational and specialized libraries." Mews (1972) defines "user education is in the form of library instructions provided to help the users to make the best use of the library."

The term user education, user orientation, user assistance, user instruction is deemed synonyms. User education in the library is a continuous process of educating the user to make the best/ most effective use of library resources, library activities, reading materials and its services to the maximum extent possible. To acquire library use skills, users should be given user education. It means educating or help the users make the best use of the library. The right information to the right user can provide new directions in research and development. Educating the users will enable them to use the libraries more effectively in education, research and in development for the rest of their lives.

Here, the role of library professionals is to locate the required information, create awareness among the users and guiding them in finding the required information from the library through proper user education programs. A librarian provides appropriate library advices to their users about the proper uses of the available facilities, resources and services. The ultimate aim of user education is to provide better services in the library, but in this regard, the user needs to be educated about the proper use of the services being provided by the respective library. A study that focuses directly or indirectly on the users of a library to understand their information needs, usage behavior and use patterns is commonly known to as user study or user education.

User education program has mainly four (04) major goals:

a) learning power of the users;

 b) encourage users' independence;

c) maximize the optimum use of library resources; and

d) familiarizing library staff with their users.

Components of user education

User education program in the library should run as a continuous process. Its main purpose is to help the users make the best use of the library's available facilities, resources and services. User education program is presently in the academic library with two major components, namely: a). Library Orientation; and b). Library Instruction In order to make the library orientation and instruction components of user education program successful, they should be organized promptly for the users at various levels and continuously monitored and evaluated. Specifically, user education program in this category is considered as high-level instructional programs in the library, while orientation and other instructional training courses are the initiation types of freshman guidance techniques. Library orientation and other instructional training courses combined as necessary meets to the needs/ requirements of the library users. Planning of user education program is very important in every academic library.

a)   Library Orientation Library orientation means introducing or getting adjusted the new users with the library. Orientation is concerned with enabling the users to get acquainted with the services available in the library, which will help the users know about the library's general use. Library orientation programs include educating or instructing the new users in topics such as introducing to the libraries, its techniques, uses of its information sources and services. Creating awareness among the new users about the information resources and services or making them aware of various organizational tools available in the library.

b)   Library Instruction Library instruction is primarily concerned with enabling the users to obtain the required information by making full use of the information resources and services available in the library and it is also concerned with solving the problems of information retrieval of the users for a specific purpose. Users are examined whether they have assimilated the library instruction properly. Users in the library should be asked to locate, search for any particular relevant information and also be engaged in other information search tests. It also instructs the users how to index bibliographic tools, abstracts and other library reference materials. This method provides direct instruction to its users to find information resources in their area. Provides specific instructions on using and understanding specific information systems, information sources and tools available in the library.

Objectives of user education:

User education or user study is mainly meant for the assessment of the actual needs of the users in the library and it is also helpful in improving the working knowledge of the library staff. Through user education programs, library staff can provide better services to the users without wasting time in checking the information needs of the users from the resources available in the library. Its main objective is to motivate its users to use the library resources and its services efficiently and effectively. The key to the success of user education program in every library is providing the right information to the right user at the right time. User education program is to teach the reading habits

and develop the library understanding amongst the users.

Pre-requisites of user education:-

Every academic institution needs to train its users to make regular and rational use of its library's information resources and services. User education is as essential a part of every library as general education in every academic institution. The ability and skills to use the library provided by the institution are meant to meet users' needs beyond formal education. Therefore, there are some pre-requisites for introducing a user education program in any academic institution, which are as follows

Basic library skill or library briefing;

ii) Subject/course-related orientation instructions; iii) Faculty involvement; iv) Active participation of the users; v) Online databases searching skills; vi) Technological advances; and vii) Web-based instructions 5.

Need of user education:-

User education is essential for making the best use of the library collection and its services. So that, the needs and demands of the users can be easily met by the library. Following are the main reasons for the need of user education in the library: a) Literature explosion: Day-by-day new research works are being done on different subjects in the field of information and knowledge, due to which the situation of literature explosion has arisen due to the publication of excessive literature. As a result, the library collection is also increasing with the explosion of literature. That's why user education is needed in the library. b) Implementation of five principles of

library science: Father of library science, Dr. S. R. Ranganathan, have been propounded by five principles of library science, which are as follows, Books are for use, every user should get a book, every book should get a user, time of the users should be saved and the library should be a growing organism. User education is useful for implementing these five principles in the library. c) Increase in the number of users in libraries: Over the years, while on one hand there has been an increase in the readership, on the other hand there has been a decrease in the number of staff in the library. As a result, the library users' problems are not being solved at the speed at which it should be done. So, user education is very important in the libraries. d) Limited finance: Presently, every library is passing through a crisis of financial limitation. As a result, there is a continuous decrease in the number of staff in the libraries. Due to this we are not able to provide as much help to the users in the library as they should be provided. Therefore, there is a need for user education so that users can find their study materials in the library independently. e) Changes in teaching method to meet the information demand: With the changing times, there has been a lot of changes in the teaching method such as the preparation of notes, research projects, dissertations, presenting seminars, etc. due to which the use of library has increased to a great extent. Therefore, user education is necessary to meet the information demand of the users. f) Use of ICT technology in libraries: With the emergence of ICT, libraries are using latest technology for classification, cataloguing, collection of e-resources and administration services etc., which are essential for the understanding of the users. That's why user education is needed in the library. g) Collection and use of e-resources in the libraries: Modern libraries constantly add eresources to their collection, but most users are unfamiliar with them. Which is a problematic task for the users and the staff. That's why there is a need for user education to understand the e-resources in the library

Information technology and user education: -

Now-a-days, Computers are increasingly being used for information-related activities. With the development of today's information society, computer/ information technology has become an important tool in information retrieval. Currently in the age of IT, many e-journals, e-books and edatabases etc. are made available in the library for the higher study purpose of the users. ICT refers to the application of computers and other technologies in library practices to provide various services to its users, such as accessing to OPAC, keeping the library databases up-to-date, automated circulation of library materials, automating the operation of library resources, etc. ICT services enables libraries to provide remote access to their online resources, making it easier to access library information for users from anywhere.

In this era of information technology, it has become necessary to changes in the user education program. It is essential to conduct information technology education for the library user. Many organizations produce databases and computer-based stored information files. The proper use of this method depends on the education of the users and also on the availability information retrieval and proper functioning of the library. There is a growing need for support in the form of training for effectively exploiting online resources and imparting necessary skills to the users. Using these databases and online

Multimedia and User education:-

Multimedia integrates text, audio, video, graphic, images and animation film. A wide array media is being used to communicate, including spoken language, gestures and images. Here, the availability of multimedia output would be a valuable feature in the libraries for several

key applications such as analysis of information retrieval, training, decision support etc., and now-a-days it is being used for developing various user education programs. Multimedia provides maximum interactive programs. Hence, it is quite easy for the users to understand and implement it for optimum utilization of library resources. Multimedia-based user education program will educate or instruct the users more efficiently and effectively about the library information, library techniques, library resources and different types of services provided by the library. Multimedia helps the users in the library to access information from various media sources in one platform. The multimedia package is one of the most effective tools in library user education, which helps the user not only know about the library activities but also helps identify the staff and consult them. They are easier to handle and efficient in the learning process as it involves user interaction, facilitating effective transmission of learning experiences to teachers and students. There are several multimedia applications

Benefits of user education:-

The following are the major benefits for conducting of user education program in academic libraries: i) Helping the users to keep updated information related to the library; ii) Helpful in facilitating the use of library collection and its various services; iii) Helpful to enable the users to get the desired information as per their requirements; iv) Helpful to the libraries to understand and meet the needs of the users; v) Helpful in evidence-based decision-making; vi) Helpful in fulfilling al the five principles of the library; vii) Helpful in saving valuable time of the users; viii) Helpful in solving the library related problems of the users; and ix) Helpful in achieving the major goals of the university

Barriers of user education:-

The following are the major barriers in the effective conduct of user education programs in any academic libraries: i) Shortage of professional staff in the library to handle large number of users for conducting user education program;

Conclusion :-

The main objective of every library is to make effective and efficient use of the collection of library resources and its services for its users. In this context, user education is very important because information about the available resources and services is provided to the users. To accomplish this, the users must be educated/ aware of the use of the library. Thus, the main objective of user education is to educate the users or help them to make the best use of the library. Every library should adopt user education. User education is becoming more relevant day by day, especially in the present context when new sources of information are being created. Now-adays a library user wants more and more information and that too in a matter of within seconds, so he has to be educated not only about the use of different sources of information but also about the various complexities involved. Suppose the user education program in a library is not properly organized. In that case, the library is not likely to achieve its objective of helping its users become efficient and competent in using the library

References

1)   American Library Association. (2013). ALA glossary of library and information science, edited by Levine-Clark, Michael, & Carter, Toni. Chicago: American Library Association.

2)   Behrens, S. J. (2013). User education at tertiary levels: A review of recent literature. South African Journal of Library and Information Science, 61

(3)   124-130. 3) Chaturvedi, D. D. (1994). Academic libraries. New Delhi: Anmol Publications.

(4)   Devarajan, G. (1989). User's approach in information in libraries. New Delhi: Ess Ess Publication.

(5)   Devarajan, G. (1995). Library and information user and user studies. New Delhi: Beacon Books.

(6)   Dhiman, A. K. & Sinha, S. (2002). Academic libraries. New Delhi: Ess Ess Publications.

(7)   eGyanKosh - a national digital repository. Unit-12. User education. IGNOU. 24-39. Available online at https://egyankosh.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/3 3052/1/Unit-12.pdf

(8)   Fidzani, Babakisi T. (1995). User education in academic libraries: A study of trends and developments in Southern Africa. IFLANET: 61st IFLA General Conference Proceedings - August 20-25, 1995. Available online at https://origin-archive.ifla.org/IV/ifla61/61- fidb.htm

(9)   Fjallbrant, N. & Malley, I. (1984). User education in libraries. 2nd ed. London: Clive Bingley.

(10   Fjallbrant, N. & Stevenson, M. (1978). User education in libraries. London: Clive Bingley.

(11)   Fleming, Hugh (Ed.) (1990). User education in academic libraries. London: Library Association Publishing Limited.

(12)   Fox, P. (1997). The role of libraries in the teaching of library. European Research Libraries Cooperation, 7(3/4), 383-394. 13) Guha, B. (1978). Documentation and information. Calcutta: World Press.

(13)   Ranganathan S. & Babu, K. S. (2012). Awareness and use of library information resources and services in Osmania University, Hyderabad. International Journal of Library and Information Studies, 2(3), 42-54.

(14)   Ranganathan, S. R. (1961). Reference service. Bombay: Asia Publishing House.

(15)   Saikia, Mukesh & Gohain, Anjan (2013). Use and user's satisfaction in library resources and services: A Tezpur University (India) study. International Journal of Library and Information Science, 5(6), 167-175.