User Education in Library Science

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Abstract

"If you give a man a fish,
He will have one meal.
If you teach him how to fish,
He will be fed for life."   ----------- Chinese Proverb

In today's world information is the key of success ,but it should be the authentic and up to date.
Technology has also impact on library field. Guiding the users in exploiting library resources is an essential function of librarianship and is known as 'user education' User education programme is essential for library field. Guiding the users in exploiting them so that an individual student may help himself in meeting his course requirement.

INTRODUCTION

Libraries amass vast amount of information, which is available in print form such as books, journals, reports and now increasingly, in non-print forms such as CD-ROMs, e-journals, online databases via Internet and WWW. Information is the basic product that librarians handle and the needs to link effectively these huge and costly stores of information into the requirements of the parent organization curricula are the philosophical, economic and educational reasons for a user education program[1].

This should include the use of modern methods of information handling - the use of bibliographical tools serving the production, abstracting and indexing of knowledge. Dr. Ranganathan emphasized this aspect of library in his Five Laws of Library Science and the "beehive" activity of the library[2]. The Education of user plays a pivotal part and is a major landmark of Academic College Librarianship.

MEANING AND DEFINITION

The term user education has risen from the concept of reference service. The concept of user education was discussed by the American Library Association at its first conference held at the end of the 19th century. According to Norman Highman, there are three aspects of user education: firstly, helping them to use the library; secondly, help them to use the literature; thirdly, using the literature for them[3].

 According to ALA Glossary of Library and Information Science, "User education encompasses   all types of activities, designed to teach us about library services, facilities and organization of library resources and search strategy"[4].

In the Parry Committee Report 1967, it is mentioned "all students should be given primary guidance on the layout of the library, its regulations and procedures. At a later stage, seminars should be held and lectures be delivered on the use of bibliographical tools and on guidance to the literature of students own subject".

On the basis of various type of services

Dr. S. R. Ranganathan has grouped user community on the basis of various types of services enunciated by him. They are, the freshman, ordinary inquirer and specialist inquirer (is one who specialist inquirer and general reader). Here the freshman is the new member of the library, ordinary inquirer is ordinary reader and specialist inquirer is one who specializes in narrow field where as general readers are the associated groups. In order to satisfy these groups, Ranganathan has suggested 4 types of services such as initiation or orientation, ready reference service, long range reference and general help to general readers respectively[5].

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[6].

Today, most of the libraries are using computers for information storage and retrieval. The need for instructing students in the proper use of library resources and services is a continuous one. Thus users need assistance to use library sources at various levels. The need of such programs is.

❖ To acquaint the user with learning techniques

❖ To make user handle library resources independently

❖ To increase the knowledge of the user about CD-ROM databases, Online databases etc.

❖ To increase in the use of resources so that under utilization of the library resources can be tapped.

Important specific objectives

➢ Made aware of the existence of the library, its content, procedures and services.

➢ Create love and books and reading.

➢ To provide the scientists with basic skills for information collection that is, current, retrospective, date or facts, information whatever it may be

➢ To make the scientists aware of the different information holding agencies.

➢ To expose the method for strong scientific information collected on different search topics.

➢ To provide techniques for information search from secondary periodicals, reference sources and other data basis like the online and CD-ROM.

➢ Able to ascertain the relative merit and demerits of reading materials and reference tools.

➢ Able to survey the current affairs in the different periodicals on his own.

➢ Able to understand the time back between the production of information and in its receipt by the user and also availability of various channels of communication between the author and the user outside the preview of the library.

➢ To provide good foundation for the continued self education by readers by during their life time

IMPACT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) ON USER EDUCATION

The introduction of information technology in library has necessitated changes in the user education program. Lectures, Library tour, Printed guides, seminars and workshops, introduction in the orientation program, and audio-visual method etc are the traditional methods of user education. Earlier card catalogue form is mostly used in the library for locating any document. Now a day due to automation of the libraries OPAC has replaced the card catalogue thereby reducing the duplication of work. Initial knowledge of computer is required for users. In the electronic age almost all the users should have preliminary knowledge about the computer. Librarians can educate the user in new systems by showing films, videotape and audiotape etc. Some programs of user education can be fed in these media.

During the last 25 years, from mediated online database searching to the World Wide Web, astounding strides have been made in the accessibility of information. These changes have revolutionized the use of libraries and library instruction. Libraries will be radically altered, as new modes of storage and dissemination of information become available. As access to 93 the, CD-ROM databases, Online Databases, e-journals continue to grow, so does its complexity. Artificial Intelligence and expert systems will facilitate more user-friendly and human- machine interfaces. Natural language questions will replace keyword and Boolean searching. The need for training and education of users will grow, and librarians will find themselves to be the "information educators" on campus. These librarians will be responsible for understanding and using the various electronic media of which the library of the future may solely consist. As the librarians' roles will become more expansive and complex, they will have to be active learners who use and apply the resources they teach. They must keep pace with the changes of the Information Age, with the changes in our society and with technology[7]

The following are the factors, which have influenced the change in the culture of user education program.
1.   Technological Developments
2.   Electronic Publications
3.   Increase in usage of Electronic Information The rate of electronic information users is doubling

4. New Delivery Techniques- The e-mail messages, ftp, bulletin board services, home pages etc. have emerged as new information delivery techniques.

THE INDIAN SCENE

 Instructing patrons on library use is not new for academic libraries in India and is recognized as a significant task for staff. The situation is similar in developing countries especially with the development of electronic information sources since the 1990s. In India user education continue to equate with library orientation.

Users need to learn to retrieve information and also how to organize, evaluate and communicate it. In this sense, in addition to acquiring library skills, there is a need to impart learning and communications skills. A few examples of organizations that have organized user education programs of this nature include: ASCI (Hyderabad) and BHEL (Hyderabad) in association with the INSDOC and the SENDOC respectively.

A few seminars and workshops were promoted by INSDOC, DRTC, ILA, IASLIC, IATLIS, UGC, etc. are:

1. National conference on user education organized by the IASLIC in Waitair in 1981;
2. Seminar on "Development in user studies and user education" held in the Department of Library and Information Science of Osmania University, Hyderabad, on 22 June 1985;
3. National seminar on 'User Education in Academic Libraries in India', organized by the Department of Library and Information Science, Lucknow University, in November 1986.
4. A 51st All India national conference on 'Libraries, Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning', held at Kurukshetra, December 16- 18 2005, organized by the Indian Library Association, Delhi, 2005[8].

CONCLUSION

Library and information professional communities are being affected by a range of ICT developments and so find their roles and so find their roles changing worldwide. The continuous development in the field of IT will continue to influence the library profession. Therefore, the library professionals have to devise the ways and means to make the users lifelong learners. Particularly in electronic environment there is dire need to develop the user education program on the lines of the guidelines and standards brought out by ACRL, UNISIST etc. at International level.

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