Role of Libraries in Research Productivity of Social Science Research Institutions: A Case Study

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Abstract

In India, research in Social Science dates back to the establishment of Universities across the country but the pace of research actually accelerated with the establishment of Indian Council for Social Science Research (ICSSR) in 1969. At present, research in Social Science is carried out in different categories of organizations such as specialized research institutions, Universities, Deemed to be Universities, Social Science departments in Institutes of National Importance such as IITs, IIMs etc. With a backdrop argument that libraries play a vital role in research output of social science research institutions, this paper tried to find out the use of libraries by researchers attached to two major social science research institutions in India, viz. the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics (GIPE) and Sardar Patel Institute of Economic and Social Research (SPIESR) by studying the extent of availability of resources in libraries of these two research institutions out of the total number of citations of the publications of the faculty members of these two institutions. It was found that the percentage of availability of cited resources is not encouraging in the libraries of these two institutions and the percentage of availability of cited resources by respective faculty members of these two institutions is more in SPIESR when compared with GIPE.

Keywords: Social Science Research; Role of Libraries; India; Library Use; Open Access

INTRODUCTION

Science is broadly classified as 'hard science' and 'soft science' depending upon the rigour in approach and methodology. In general, all pure science subjects such as Physics, Chemistry, and Mathematics etc. are called as 'hard science' and social science subjects such as Sociology,
Political Science, Economics, etc. are called 'soft science'. This paper focuses on research productivity in social sciences and role of libraries towards enhancing productivity levels in Social Sciences with emphasis on two well known Social Science research institutions in Western India.

DEFINITION

Social sciences can broadly be defined as a branch of science that deals with the institutions and functioning of human society and with the interpersonal relationships of individuals as members of society. It is a disciplined and systematic study of society and its institutions, and of how and why people behave as they do, both as individuals and in

groups within society. The basic differences between Social Sciences from Natural Sciences and Humanities lies in its dealing with subject and methodology. Natural study natural objects and phenomena while Humanities is basically the studies of arts, literature and culture of human being and involves the invisible process in human mind and imagination that results in some tangible physical form. Social Sciences is the study of human behavior. In terms of methodology, Social Sciences, though employs scientific methodology, mostly "rely heavily on intuition and imagination"

Research output or research productivity in Social sciences do appear in different forms such as books, monographs, journal articles, working papers etc. But unlike Natural Science researchers, the researchers working in Social Sciences and Humanities disciplines use considerably less journal articles and more books. Different studies 2-10 suggest that researchers in Social Sciences publish their research output in wider range of materials such as books, book chapters, monographs, discussion papers, working papers etc. apart from journal publishing

SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH IN INDIA

Social science research in India dates back to establishment of Indian Universities in the later part of the nineteenth century. Various Universities in India started offering courses in several social science disciplines such as Economics, Political Science, Sociology, History etc. which led to proliferation of research in the subject. The establishment of several research centres such as Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, etc. also added to the acceleration of social science research in India. Further, the establishment of the Indian Council for Social Science Research in 1969 gave a big impetus to the research activities in Social Sciences. Presently, there are more than 200 government research institutes and autonomous organizations which undertake social science research. Some of the major Social Science research centres in India are (i) Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai; (ii) Visva Bharati, Shantiniketan; (iii) Delhi School of Economics (Delhi University), Delhi; (iv) Different social science departments of Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi; (v) Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune; (vi) Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research, Mumbai; etc. besides other 27 research institutions funded by the ICSSR. The following Table-1 reproduced from a report gives a clear picture of distribution of social science institutions in
India:

Table-1 Categories of Social Science Institutes in India

Universities with social science departments	Government research institutions	Autonomous researchnstitutions	Total
190	67	152	407

Source: Social Science Research in India: A Mapping Report, DFID, September 2011

Hence, it is evident that research in the subject is scattered between University departments, Deemed Universities and specialized research institutions. Even though India has the highest volume of research output in entire South Asia, there is wide

disparity in research activity and output across the country both in terms of quantity and quality. Some of the premium universities located mostly in major cities foster academic research cultures which include interdisciplinary work, knowledge production with emphasis on peer review, and engagement with internal and external learned societies. On the other hand, the quality of research in a large majority of institutions neither conforms to international academic standards nor have they been able to make a significant contribution to social science research, either theoretical or applied and policy-oriented, in the country

However, recently there is a common concern is that social science research in India has been falling short of expectations10-12. Though the main reasons being lack of proper institutional support and funding, lack of assessment of quality of research also adds to these. The Libraries can play a vital role in enhancing the quality of research output in social science research institutions through their multi-dimensional roles.

ROLE OF LIBRARIES IN ENHANCING QUALITY OF RESEARCH OUTPUT

A study by Research Libraries UK and Research Information Network11 identified the following as key 'messages' pertaining to role of libraries in research output

1. Good libraries help institutions to recruit and retain top researchers: Among other factors, the quality, nature, and extent of the library's collections, of its staff and services they provide, and of its buildings are all important factors to attract good researchers towards an

institution.

2. Libraries help researchers win research grants and contracts: Normally, researchers don't consult libraries for information about research grants and contracts. Libraries can help researchers in finding out the research grants. Libraries, if their involvement in this activity is

formalized by research intensive institutions or universities, also use their skills to help researchers improve the quality of their funding applications, and thus, to enhance the institution's success in winning research grants.

3. Libraries promote and exploit new technologies and new models of scholarly communications: Libraries can play an important role helping researchers to exploit the full benefits and opportunities of the networked world, such as open access, social media, research tools etc. Hence, libraries need to establish stronger links with researchers and re focusing their services to promote and exploit new technologies and new models of scholarly communication.

4. Repositories increase the visibility of the institution and raise its research profile: Institutional repositories (sometimes called as digital libraries) store and make available institutional assets such as research papers, theses and digitized contents of various documents. But repositories are only as valuable as the content they hold. Hence libraries should try to build an institutional culture of making it routine for researchers to deposit their outputs in the institutional repositories.

5. Outward-facing libraries contribute to institution-wide initiatives: Presently, some of the libraries mostly situated in western countries have demonstrated that they can seize the opportunities to help institutions respond to the changes in research environment. In fact, the 'Embedded Librarianship' model which in the research context could be a

librarian working with information resources as they are generated over the course of the research, such as data, to prepare them for dissemination beyond the project personnel for re-use by others, or for long-term preservation. Another example could be a librarian designing workflows and systems to

organize, manage, and deliver project documentation or other needed materials (Carlson, 2011).

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materials (Carlson, 2011).

6. Specialist staff work in partnership with academic departments: Information specialists and subject librarians focus on the needs of the researchers. Information specialists/ subject librarians need to take a proactive role by working in partnership with academic departments can contribute significantly towards enhancing the quality of the research output of social science institutes.

7. Connecting with researchers enhance the value of the library's services: One of the disadvantages of digital revolution seems to be a sort of complete separation of the library staff and the researchers. Hence, libraries are trying to find ways to reconnect with them, and to fill the gaps in their knowledge and understanding of researcher's needs.

8. Dedicated spaces provide a better work environment for researchers: For many researchers, the physical library building as a place to work and study. Hence, a space conducive to the needs of researchers should be provided in the library building for better work environment for researchers.

9. Easy access to high quality content is a key foundation for good research: Access to high quality content is crucial to research. Libraries spend huge amounts to sustain develop their collections, ad researchers across the sector now have access to more content then ever. However, some factors such as downward pressure on institutional budgets, continuing increases in subscription costs ad fluctuations in exchange rates puts a lot a pressure on libraries. This holds good especially for social science libraries in India most of which are struggling to sustain their collection (especially journal subscription) and services.

10. Libraries are a physical manifestation of the values of the academy and of research: Libraries are traditionally considered as heart of the academic institutions but in a period of austerity they are being asked to justify their existence, which is a very unhealthy trend. Libraries

have been and shall remain crucial to research and academic environment in any academic institute.

The basic idea behind all the above messages is to convey that libraries are essential for a research set up and can play a vital role in the research output of any organization. However, the author has not come across any study where the actual research output of a researcher is studied to examine the percentage of materials available in the library of his/her parent organization which are used by him/her for finalization of the research output.

21 THE PRESENT STUDY

With the above in the backdrop, a study is made to examine the role the libraries play in the research output of two prominent social science research centres in India, viz. the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune (GIPE) and Sardar Patel Institute of Economic and

Social Research, Ahmedabad (SPIESR). Besides identifying the general features, the study was focused on analyzing the library use by researchers in these two institutions by studying the extent of materials used by them in their research output.

THE LIBRARIES OF GOKHALE INSTITUTE OF POLITICS AND SARDAR PATEL INSTITUTE FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESEARCH

The Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics (GIPE) was established in 1930 and is considered as one of the earliest centers of social science research in India. The Library of the Institute, namely Dhananjayarao Gadgil Library, however, dates back to 1905 (25 years older than the Institute). It was started as a public library under the aegis of the Servants of India Society founded by Gopal Krishna Gokhale. The Library, which was given to use for the Institute by Servants of India Society in 1930, presently houses about 2.80 lakh of documents comprising books, periodical bound volumes, reports, annual publications and it is also a depository library of the publications of the United Nations and its agencies. Besides, it also subscribes 375 current periodicals. The Harivallabhdas Kalidas Library of Sardar Patel Institute for Economic and Social Research started in 1969 along with the Institute is a specialized in social sciences with key focus on economics and other development areas. Presently, the Library is having a collection of around 50 thousand books and procures 50 current periodicals, both Indian and foreign and subscribes many electronic databases such as prowess, IndiaStat.com etc. (Das, 2013). Both the libraries provide services such as lending services, reference services, current awareness services, additions list etc. for the benefit of their users. While both the libraries have online public access catalogue (OPAC), the Library of the GIPE also has a digital library developed using DSpace.

METHODOLOGY
The study identified the research output of some of the researchers in these two social science institutes in the recent past and examined the reference list in their respective publications to study the percentage of materials consulted by them are available in their respective libraries. As this study was based on reference list and library collection only, it does not consider such avenues that researchers might have resorted to refer the materials as by other means outside the library and through inter-library loan. A sample comprising 18 faculty members of various cadres and 87 papers contributed by them during last three years are taken. Altogether 2397 references including both print and e-resources are checked in the Respective

DATA ANALYSIS

As stated earlier, a total number of 2397 references have been taken for analysis of availability of references in the libraries of GIPE and SPIESR. Out of the total, 780

references are cited by Professors, 1295 references are cited by Associate Professors and remaining 322 references are

consulted by the Assistant Professors. The percentage of the references cited by different categories of teachers is given below: libraries.

Graph.1 Percentage of references cited by different categories of faculty members of both the institutes

TABLE 1

Information about Availability of Cited Resources in the Libraries of Both The Research Institutes

Category	No. of Papers	No of No References	No of No References in Print form available in the libraries	No of References in Non-Print form accessible in the libraries	% of References available in the libraries of both the institutes
Professor	23	780	323	90	53%
Associate Professor	51	1295	618	139	58%
Assistant Professor	13	322	113	46	49%

Graph 2: Resources in Different Format available in libraries of both the institute

A close look at Table No. 1 and Graph No. 2 reveals that about 55% of the total references cited by the faculty members of both the research institutes are available in the libraries, which is not satisfactory considering the importance of libraries in such eminent research institutes. Among the categories of users, Associate Professors seem to use the library materials more compared to Professors and Assistant Professors. Let us examine the extent of use of library materials for research publications by the individual libraries of both GIPE and SPIESR.

ROLE OF LIBRARIES IN RESEARCH PRODUCTIVITY SPIESR:

A study of the data pertaining to the library use by faculty for research in SPIESR reveals that unlike the combined trend, the percentage of available references cited by Assistant Professors is highest among all the three categories, followed by Professors and Associate Professors respectively.

GIPE:

A study of the data pertaining to the library use by faculty for research in GIPE reveals that the percentage of available references cited by Associate Professors is highest among all the three categories, followed by

TABLE 2
Information pertaining to no. of references and availability in the Library of SPIESR

Category	No. of Papers	No of No References	No of No References in Print form available in the libraries	No of References in Non-Print form accessible in the libraries	% of References available in the libraries of both the institutes
Professor	18	532	233	78	58%
Associate Professor	31	1042	478	114	57%
Assistant Professor	07	163	74	29	63%

Graph 3: Availability of resources in the Library of SPIESR.

SPIESR:
A study of the data pertaining to the library use by faculty for research in SPIESR reveals that unlike the combined trend, the percentage of available references cited by Assistant Professors is highest among all the three categories, followed by Professors and Associate Professors
respectively.

GIPE:
A study of the data pertaining to the library use by faculty for research in GIPE reveals that the percentage of available references cited by Associate Professors is highest among all the three categories, followed by

TABLE 3
Information Pertaining to References Cited by Different Category of Teachers of GIPE

Category	No. of Papers	No of No References	No of No References in Print form available in the libraries	No of References in Non-Print form accessible in the libraries	% of Reference available in the libraries of both the institutes
Professor	23	248	90	12	41%
Associate Professor	51	252	140	25	65%
Assistant Professor	13	159	39	17	35%

Graph 4: No. of resources available in different formats in GIPE Library

Professors and Assistant Professors respectively. Hence, individual studies of both the institutes give a contrasting picture. However, the overall percentage needs to be improved if the library has to establish itself an integral part of research work for faculty members

CONCLUSION

Though the study is based on data of selected faculty members for last three years only, it gives a overall picture of the extent of library use by faculty members by both the research institutes. The results of the study, however, are quite puzzling because the kind of library material and services available in GIPE Library is better in the sense that it was one of the earliest libraries to host its OPAC on Internet, it has its own institutional repository unlike the library of the SPIESR, and also being the Library of a deemed to be university, GIPE Library has access to quite a number of databases and e-journals under UGC Info net Programme. However, the overall use of Library resources by faculty members for their research publications is not satisfactory in both the Institutes and the libraries need to adopt a strategy as stated in the RIN and RLUK report cited earlier. Also, the libraries need to champion the cause of open access publishing which is a suitable model to disseminate research output in a more effective way within a limited budget. Being libraries of research intensive institutes, the libraries can play a greater role towards enhancing research output of the parent organizations which is very much essential to ameliorate the quality of social science research in India.

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