Chapter 1

Students' Attitudes towards Library Facilities and Information Resources of University Libraries in Tamil Nadu:
A Survey

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ABSTRACT

The present century ushered in the knowledge economy whereby information, access to it, and the ability to use it to create new knowledge becomes the single most important skill that individuals need to acquire in order to succeed. The workplace is asking for university graduates who have acquired a stronger intellectual framework for using information for discovery. This calls for a change in the university educational landscape and a pedagogic shift from the closure learning system where students and the teacher communicated and interacted face-to-face to include a new learning system that is virtual, distributed, problem-based, more student-centered, and facilitated by global information networking systems. This is a knowledge-based pedagogy and requires that both students and teaching faculty acquire information seeking and management skills. E-learning, open access to resources, distance education, interdisciplinary and cross-institutional collaboration enhanced by information communication technologies are major developments that are reshaping library services. Consequently, new roles and services have emerged for university librarians. Taking up the characteristics of an electronic information resource, librarians are more "distributed" and play a central role in the teaching/learning programmes of the university: they serve as consultants in information resources management and coordinate information technology applications they provide instructions on research methods and other areas that deal with incorporating information communication technologies into learning, and are more actively involved in providing information instructional programmes to both faculty and students. The present study evaluates the use

of library facilities and information resources in university libraries in Tamil Nadu. A survey of 518 students from 5 universities in Tamil Nadu was conducted through a set of questionnaires. The collected data covers the use of library resources, services, (e.g. reference services, photocopying services), etc. The chapter concludes that the main intention for the use of libraries has been the academic interest of the students.

INTRODUCTION

A well-equipped and well-managed library is the foundation of modern educational structure. The importance of library in higher education can be appreciated, properly and precisely only if we try to understand the changing concepts of education of the present day. The user is an important component in any information system. The user community in academic library system constitutes faculty, students, and educational administrators. To create information awareness and to promote the use of information, it is necessary to know the needs of users. Assessment of user needs has been developed by the present age of information explosion. Witnessed by the libraries and information centres especially after the Second World War.

HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM IN INDIA

Education in ancient India was highly advanced as evident from the centres of learning that existed in the Buddhist monasteries of the 7th century BC up to the 3rd century AD Nalanda (Perkin, 2006). In these centres, gathering of scholars gurukula used to be engaged in intellectual debates parishads in residential campuses. A few of these centres were large and had several faculties. Historians speculate that these centres had a remarkable resemblance to the European medieval universities that came up much later. The ancient education system in India slowly got extinguished following invasions and disorder in the country. Till the eighteenth century, India had three distinct traditions of advanced scholarship in the Hindu gurukulas, the Buddhist viharas, and the Quranic madarasas, before the British set up a network of schools to impart western education in English medium (Perkin, 2006) The first such college to impart western education was founded in 1818 at Serampore near Calcutta. Over the next forty years, many such colleges were established in different parts of the country at Agra, Bombay, Madras, Nagpur, Patna, Calcutta, and Nagapattinam. In 1857, three federal examining universities on the pattern of London University were set up at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. The existing 27 colleges were affiliated to these three universities. Later, more universities were established. At the time of independence in 1947, there were 19 universities and several hundred affiliated colleges (CABE, 2005a). The higher education system in India grew rapidly after independence. By 1980, there were 132 universities and 4738 colleges in the country enrolling around five per cent of the eligible age group in higher education. Today, while in terms of enrolment, India is the third largest higher education system in the world (after China and the USA); with 17973 institutions (348 universities and 17625 colleges) is the largest higher education system in the world in terms of number of institutions. The number of institutions more than four times the number of institutions both in the United States and entire Europe. Higher education in China having the highest enrolment in the world (nearly 23 million) is organized in only about 2,500 institutions. Whereas, the average enrolment in a higher education institution in India is only about 500-600 students, a higher education institution in the United States and Europe would have 3000-4000 students and in China this would be about 8000-9000 students. This makes system of higher education in India as a highly fragmented system that is far more difficult to manage than any other system of higher education in world.

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