ROLE OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES ON TEACHING, LEARNING AND RESEARCH PRACTICES IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

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ABSTRACT

An academic library is a library that is attached to a higher education institution which serves two complementary purposes to support the school's curriculum, and to support the research of the university faculty and students. It is unknown how many academic libraries there are internationally. The support of teaching and learning 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. Information literacy has been a major concern of the library profession in India over the past decade. In our economic rationalist world, where value must be seen to be returned for the investment of money and time, academic libraries must show that their resources and services are effective in aiding student learning and supporting the research activities of staff and students. Libraries are seeking to play a key role in the research and development process. An important element in the research process is the accessibility of information resources and services provided by libraries. Students are key producers of research in universities, and an important element in their research process is the access to information.

KEYWORDS
Library Services, Planning of Library Services, Management of Library Services, Impact of IT on Library Services, Evaluation of Library Services.

1. INTRODUCTION

An academic library undertakes some important activities such as acquisition of new books and developing a balanced and up-to-date collection, recruitment of library personnel, designing and developing physical infrastructure, etc. All these elements are the basic and lay the foundation of library services from the perspective of the user. The superstructure of the library services comprises the circulation, reference, and information services. The strength of the academic library lies in the strength of its services through which it can ensure effective use of its information resources and play its role in fulfilling objectives of education. In most of the academic libraries, of late, the emphasis is shifting from mere collection building to providing access to information. The user community is the pivot around which are developed all the library services rendered by the librarian, and their close relationship need not be overemphasized. The user community of an academic library comprises students, faculty members, researchers, and administrative staff of the institution (discussed in another module). The library services to be provided should be developed after assessing the information needs of the users (discussed in another module) which are likely to change over a period of time. The library services must be evaluated and revised in the changing perspective of the information needs. Such evaluation and periodic revision makes the library services to continue to be effective in pursuing education and research activities.

2. PLANNING OF ACADEMIC LIBRARY SERVICES

When planning academic library services it is imperative to work clearly within the parameters of the objectives and mission of the parent institution. For example, the objectives of colleges and universities are to enhance the
educational capabilities of students and undertake research in different subject fields to extend the boundaries of knowledge. The academic libraries therefore have to do planning of such services as would help the teachers, research scholars, and Post-graduate students to develop and increase skills in searching the required material/information from the vast library collection.

2.1. Factors in Planning of Academic Library Services

The library services to the academic community have to be planned in view of not only their present information/literature needs but have also to be taken into consideration their prospective information needs. Such information needs are dynamic and do not remain constant; they rather go on changing under the influence of various factors such as the external environments, user community, and the governing framework.

2.1.1. External Environments

In the present times, the external environments play an important role in the planning process of library services. The external environments bring in many factors which play their own role in changing the library services from time to time. The reference librarian ought to anticipate and relate these environments with library services and respond accordingly. These are mentioned as following:

2.1.1.1. Technological Forces

In recent times there have been many developments in communication and information technology. These developments and changes have brought in various technological systems, structures, and tools to be used for the social good. Their availability with the associated advantages is so compelling as to be used in the various institutions and the academic libraries as well. Also, the users are becoming increasingly computer literate and they are placing new type of demands upon the academic libraries and their services. The academic libraries, of late, have been making use of IT and satisfy user demands to some extent. Through various IT based networks, academic libraries are now making the increased availability of the information. As a consequence, there has been remarkable improvement in the academic library services which is a welcome feature.

2.1.1.2. Social Forces

The social forces contribute to the change in the information needs of the users of the academic library services. They necessitate the change in the purpose of the information requirements of the faculty and the students as well with the change in their projects, research topics, and some mundane needs that may keep them busy elsewhere. The social circumstances may lead to change their priorities as far as usage of literature and information is concerned. It could be, for example, the inflationary situation, increase in prices of daily use commodities, etc which may shift their focus on a new set of social problems of concern to a large section of the society. The academic libraries need to provide information on such socially important and relevant issues.

2.1.1.3. Economic Forces

The adequate availability of financial resources to faculty as well as the academic library helps in expanding the base of the library services, commencing the new services to satisfy the changing and the rising information needs with the passage of time. The faculty may be engaged in a new research project, for example, funded by a national agency; it will lead to change in the information needs as per the requirements of the new project. But in the present era of budgetary cuts, the axe fall on library and its services are adversely affected.

2.1.2. Internal Environments

To some extent the internal environments also play an important role in shaping the information needs of the user community.

2.1.3. User Community

For planning academic library services the user surveys/studies must be undertaken to determine their information needs. The librarian and other professional staff need to know the profile of the user community. This will help the library and information professionals to match the various aspects of their needs with the information resources available in the library. In view of the change in the demands and needs the library manpower need to prepare themselves for such eventuality. They may equip themselves with the other facets of information resources to meet with the demands adequately.

2.1.4. Governing Framework
While planning library services the policies of the governing bodies need to be encouraging. The development of information resources, manpower resources, financial resources, physical and other resources is linked with the policy framework of the university. The policies of the academic library have to be within the governing framework of the institution. These policies need to be developed into a written document of objectives, mission and vision so that the user community is well served.

3. MANAGEMENT OF LIBRARY SERVICES

Once library services have been planned on the basis of the information needs of the user community and the expanse of the subjects studied in the institution, these need to be managed for their proper delivery in an effort towards solving the problems. Girija Kumar affirms that the principles of management of library services are best understood in terms of the „classic management” cycle as advanced by Peter Lawrence. In his cycle, Lawrence has identified the following three stages:

1. Planning: includes forecasting, making policies and priorities, setting objectives, and determining the means to achieve these objectives;
2. Organizing and Coordinating: includes deploying resources, developing structures, and integrating activities; and
3. Controlling: includes setting up a feedback mechanism to ensure that the things are going according to plan.

On the other hand, management guru Peter Drucker has also identified similar stages with some additions:

1. Setting objectives;
2. Organizing;
3. Motivating and communicating;
4. Measuring; and
5. Developing people.

Drucker has added two new categories to Lawrence„s stages. These are:

1. Motivating and communicating, and
2. Developing people.

Girija Kumar states that in the context of library services, these two categories are very important as they directly impact the user community who are the end users of library services. The academic library services in this context must be well organized and well managed so as to make them effective for the user community. The perception of the users about the library, in academic setting, needs to be changed. They may be received in the library with a proverbial „Monalisa smile” and treated well so that they feel comfortable in a new library environment. Library and information managers may go a step further and make them take in that „the user is the king”. These words may be prominently displayed near the entrance to give them due importance that their every need for information will be met in the library and they may ask anything unhesitatingly.

4. ORGANIZATION OF ACADEMIC LIBRARY SERVICES

The following types of library services are generally organized in a large academic library such as a university library:

4.1. Reference Service and Work

S. R. Ranganathan was quite enthusiastic about reference service, hence he regarded it as the essence of librarianship. Accordingly, he defined it as „the process of establishing contact between reader and book by personal service”. This indicates that for establishing the contact between the two some human agency in the form of reference librarian is required. Here the emphasis is on personalized service hence reference service becomes subjective in nature. But initiating the user and instructing him/her as to how to use the library and its resources is objective in nature because it encourages the user to make use of library services and information sources independent of human agency. However, he elaborated on the following four categories of reference service which, according to him, need attention of the reference librarian:

1. initiation;
2. directional instruction (general help to reader);
3. ready-reference service; and
4. long-range reference service.

While explaining reference service, he clearly delineated ready-reference and long-range reference service in respect of the following elements:

i. the time involved;
ii. the material used; and
iii. the nature of information sought.
4.1.1. **Ready Reference Service:** It is based on the nature of information sought by the users. Mostly the users would ask a reference librarian such ready reference questions as

“Where was Kalidasa born?”, “What is the capital of Cuba?”, “Where can I find a book on Simla Agreement?”, and so on.

Regarding the type of material used in such situations, it may be mentioned that such questions can be answered using one or two general reference sources. However, as far as possible these sources must be kept up to date. The time involved in answering such ready reference questions generally is the minimum from one to five minutes. It may, however, be mentioned out that in the era of Internet such online information portals as Google can easily provide answer to ready reference questions and their number might have diminished at the Reference Desk in academic libraries. But Cassell and Hiremath are quick to point out that “Nevertheless, ready reference remains a corner stone of information services, and librarians should be primed to provide it at any time”.

4.1.2. **Long Range Reference Service:** It is generally based on research questions which are more complex in nature. They may, therefore, take much longer time than that in answering ready reference questions. The research questions also require the librarian to provide to the users a variety of sources. The users can look into those sources to cover different viewpoints of scholars to draw conclusions from them at a later time. It is experienced that sometimes questions that initially seem like ready reference questions turn out to be complex or even more complex for the reason that many hidden facets of the user’s question are gradually revealed. A good interview with the user requires skills and abilities which the librarian must continually evaluate and improve them. With the increasing complexity of user’s question, the variety of reference and other sources also increases. The users with complex questions need to be taught how to use the bibliographic sources, citations, etc. The old saying that giving a man a fish feeds him for a day while teaching him how to fish feeds him for a lifetime proves quite true in such circumstances. After Ranganathan many developments in this area have taken place including the conceptual developments, application of computer for information retrieval, reference process, and so on.

The role of reference librarian is of much importance in reference service and reference work. The reference interview brings the user and the reference librarian in interaction with each other. The user feels a gap in his knowledge about his/her subject and to obtain the required information approaches the reference librarian with a problem, and during the interview the query of the user for information is interpreted, appropriate search strategy is formulated, and literature search takes place to locate the required information from the variety of sources available in the library. The information thus located is delivered to the user and the reference staff keeps a record. In an academic library the scope of reference service is very wide. The search for information is not restricted to the general purpose reference works such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, yearbooks, handbooks, and the like, but it also brings in its ambit several other categories of materials available in academic libraries. In addition, the instruction and guidance to the users (particularly students) is perhaps the main function of reference service in academic libraries.

4.2. **Bibliographic Services**

In the present times of information technology (IT) and its impact on library housekeeping operations, the utility of various types of traditional bibliographic services is still intact in most of the academic libraries in India. The application of IT has facilitated the efficient compilation of these services and thereby provided better access to the whole range of resources. Although not many academic libraries in India provide such services yet these are regarded essential because the reference librarian is invariably called upon to help the users in conducting literature search for a research project, a seminar paper, an assignment, a doctoral dissertation, etc.

4.2.1. **List of Additions:** A list of new additions to the library may be brought out regularly, say on quarterly basis. This will update the faculty and the students about the latest books and other documents available in the library for their use. Thus it serves as an important current awareness service.

4.2.2. **List of Contents:** Larger academic libraries may also venture to bring out such a list based on the contents pages of the journals/periodicals. It may be an unannotated list of the contents pages of journals on different subjects and, if possible, may be circulated among the faculty for their use and suggestions.

4.2.3. **Ad-hoc Lists:** Some ad-hoc reading lists may also be compiled on the occasion of holding a seminar, conference, etc. Such lists prepared in anticipation or on demand serve a useful purpose and unfold the treasure of information to the participants.

It may be mentioned that with the introduction of computers in academic libraries the compilation of bibliographic services has been made a simple operation and helps to avoid the lengthy, labour-intensive and costly manual process of their compilation.

4.3 **User Education**
The importance of user education lies in providing the library user necessary skills and knowledge in making the optimum use of library resources and services in the changing education scenario. There have been many terms in vogue such as library instruction, orientation, bibliographic instruction, initiation, user education, user instruction, that explain this library programme and its various activities. Of late, it is also known by the term information literacy which may range, according to Cassell and Hiremath, from showing a user how to use, say, the library’s online catalogue and basic print reference sources to formal classroom sessions about conducting research in the library. In academic libraries the main purpose of user education, according to Fjallbrant and Malley is to stimulate the library use, and that “user education is concerned with the whole information and communication process and one part of this involves the total interaction of the user with the library. This should be continuous process starting with school and public libraries and with possibility of extension into academic and specialized libraries”.

4.3.1. Orientation

In most academic libraries across the globe, library orientation remains the most popular method of imparting user education. Library orientation is mostly targeted at the freshly admitted students in academic institutions so that they could be familiarized with the layout of the library building, information system and its services, location of various information sources, and other library tools used in obtaining information. For this purpose, some libraries prepare printed leaflets giving outline of library collections, brief summary of classification scheme, arrangement of library catalogue, various types of library services offered, rules and regulations, etc. There are different methods of orientation followed in different libraries. However, the most popular methods are as follows:

1. Direct Methods: These include:
   a. Lecture method
   b. Library (guided) tour
   c. Individual help
   d. Practical exercises
   e. Tutorial/seminar/demonstration

2. Indirect Methods: These include:
   a. Film
   b. Video tape
   c. Tape/slide
   d. Audio tape
   e. Printed guide
   f. Self-instructional material

4.3.2. Bibliographic Instruction

It is generally said about bibliographic instruction programme that it is designed and planned by the librarians to teach students about library resources and information sources so as to motivate them to make effective use of library resources and information sources and satisfy their information needs. The purpose of experiments of bibliographic instruction programme in the USA and elsewhere, according to Patricia Knapp has been “to stimulate and guide students in developing sophisticated understanding of the library and increasing competence in its use to achieve this end, it proposes to provide students with experiences which are functionally related to their course work”.

Bibliographic instruction programme, when designed and developed may have three guiding principles, that it is:

a. course-related
b. demonstrated, and
c. graduated

Such a formal programme in bibliographic instruction and research methods, if adopted in academic libraries, may prove to be most helpful in infusing information seeking habits and enabling students and other library users to be independent in self-service in locating information from various library sources, perhaps without the intervention of reference staff. Library service here can be characterised by reaching out to regular users to teach them in conducting research. It may, however, be stated that although user instruction is always an important part of reference work and service, the degree to which librarians go about providing it may vary and depends upon situation to situation. This also depends upon the mission or purpose of the academic library. It is desired of the reference librarians to play the role both of the bibliographic instructor as well as that of the information provider.

4.3.3. Information Literacy

The concept of information literacy is not new to the extent that it has its roots in user education and/ or user instruction. However, according to Bruce, with the emergence of information society and other accompanying
changes in technology used to generate, disseminate, access and manage information has led to the spread of information literacy. Information literacy, according to Bruce and Candy, therefore, “is the ability to locate, evaluate, manage and use information from a range of sources for problem-solving, decision-making and research”. In the new environment of electronic information sources and online catalogues, the academic library users need additional knowledge and skills in retrieving information from electronic sources. “The basic component of information literacy”, according to Cassell and Hiremath, “includes demonstrating how, when, and why to use various reference sources in an integrated way that will capture the user’s attention at the teachable moment”.

In this context, the role of academic librarians assumes more significance and they must transfer new skills and competencies so direly needed in the present digital libraries environment to make their users information competent. But in today’s educational settings, ironically, using electronic sources is becoming easier and learning the traditional research strategies to find in-depth information is perhaps missing!

4.4 Referral Services

Academic libraries have been providing short-range and long-range reference services from the documentary sources in their collection in order to meet information requirement of their users. Sometimes, users’ needs are not met through the in-house documentary collection, and may be met by referring them to the resources of other libraries. This is called referral service. Referral service, therefore, directs or refers the user to a source of information, which may be a document, an individual or even an organization. It is a process of linking a user with a need with a service or person which is likely to meet the need of the enquirer. It seems difficult to refer to another more appropriate source, such as a specialised library, a librarian, or any other expert. It is incumbent on the referring library/librarian to possess detailed knowledge of the resources with a reasonable chance of success.

4.5 Resource Sharing

In academic libraries occasions arise when their users ask for documents not available in their immediate collection. Libraries at individual level are unable to acquire, due to high increase in published information, shrinking budgets and costly material, as many information resources as they require in their collection. This calls for access to external resources as collectively these libraries constitute a vast resource of books, periodicals, and other documents, enough to meet such requirements.

Resource sharing has since long been regarded as a mechanism of library cooperation for exploiting resources otherwise scattered in a large number of libraries. Therefore, resource sharing provides the basic framework for pooling, sharing, and putting to use the mines of such vast resources. The academic libraries, however, need to design and develop union catalogues to locate documents requested by users but not available in the host libraries. It is pertinent to mention that INFLIBNET has been engaged in compiling such union catalogues of books and journals available in large academic libraries.

4.5.1. Library Networks: This concept of cooperation and sharing of resources has been further extended through participation in networks at international and national level such as INFLIBNET, DELNET, ERNET, INDEST, etc. and through them to distant databases.

INFLIBNET is providing a significant programme for academic world, particularly for colleges, known as National Library and Information Services Infrastructure for Scholarly Content (N-LIST) programme. Colleges in the country can register to obtain this service from INFLIBNET to have access to e-resources including more than 6,000 e-journals and above 97,000 e-books. Many academic libraries have been using computers for various housekeeping activities for quite some time now, and they have developed own computerised databases, hence their participation in these networks will make them information rich.

4.5.2. Library Consortia: This has led to the development of another concept of consortium where a group of libraries join hands with common interest, say sharing of information resources. It is, therefore, a cooperative arrangement among groups or institutions formed to increase the purchasing power of the participant institutions to expand the resource availability and to offer automated services. Library consortia may be formed at local, regional, national, or international level on a subject basis or functional basis.

4.6. Indexing Services

Indexing and abstracting journals are most frequently used sources of scientific and social science information. The value of indexing services lies in furthering the cause of research. Their necessity hardly needs any emphasis for current information service, retrospective literature searches, quick retrieval, and delivery of diverse material acquired in the library. The purpose of preparing in-house indexing service is to fill in the time gaps until the receipt of the commercial indexing and abstracting services.

Indexing services may be initiated in those subject areas for which commercial services are either not received in the library or are not available. It may, however, be pointed out that in India it is all the more important to bring out in-house indexing services as most of the Indian journals and other documents are not adequately covered in the international services. Large academic libraries, like university libraries, must take initiative and motivate their staff to produce well-planned and classified indexing services in attractive format, covering largely the Indian periodicals.
4.7. Reprographic Services
To support teaching and research activities in educational institutions, reprographic services have become indispensable in the present day academic libraries. Photocopying service has not only come to stay but also has become quite popular among the library users. Even in document delivery under resource sharing system, reprographic services have proved quite useful in providing copies of material demanded by the users. According to C. V. Penna and others, reprographic facilities have other usages also. Microforms, for example, fulfill the following basic reference and information purposes:

a. preserving material issued on poor quality paper,
b. providing readable copies of very rare or precious material,
c. increasing the accessibility of documents which are unique or few in number,
d. reducing storage problems, and
e. providing a means of publication for specialist material uneconomic to publish commercially.

Further, for quick communication of information and for providing copies of the documents to the users, reprographic services are indispensable.

IMPACT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ON LIBRARY SERVICES

In recent times information technology (IT) has begun to have a major impact on academic library services. It may be mentioned that in the twentieth century the library services were responsive because they were rendered at the request of the library users. However, by the beginning of the twenty first century the library services have become more positive and proactive because these are now offered not only on the users’ request but also at the initiative of the library personnel. The information technology is the application of computers and other technologies to the acquisition, organization, storage, retrieval and dissemination of information. The impact of IT is seen in providing efficient and effective services, helping to control the rapid growth of information, facilitating cooperation, etc. Information technology has not only changed but also speeded up the services in the following areas:

1. Format of documents: IT has influenced the format of the books, periodicals, etc. and they are now available in non print format also. The IT has been transforming printed books and journals into digital format and storing them for posterity.

2. Operational activities: IT has its impact on such housekeeping activities as circulation control, acquisition, cataloguing, serials control, etc. Automation of these activities has made them more efficient and effective. The routine activity of issue and return of documents, with which most of the users in academic libraries are more concerned, has become faster than earlier situation.

3. Library OPAC: The Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) of the library can provide improved access to information retrieval system. It can be placed on the library website and users can have access to the library databases from any part of the world.

4. Management processes: Information technology has been helping academic libraries in managing the library stock, financial management, and so on.

5. User orientation: User orientation activities have been changing for the benefit of the users with the application of IT. The interaction between the user and librarian/information personnel has speeded up and making library resources and services more accessible.

6. Access to Information Resources: IT has impacted to broaden the access points of the users to the library / information resources to their advantage. It has made possible online, easy, and continuous access with multiple user access facility to the entire range of collection including the electronic resources. This saves precious time of the researchers and academicians alike.

7. Online Databases: With the growing demand of computer- savvy users, IT has helped to make available more and more e-databases in bibliographic as well as full text sources. The web enabled databases are easily accessible from the user desktops.

8. Current Awareness Services: academic libraries can generate current awareness services by using Internet data in combination with existing information resources. These can be delivered in a form compatible to user requirements.

9. Library Networks: Many library and other networks have been made possible by IT and its applications in libraries. These include INFLIBNET, DELNET, ERNET, NICNET, UGC-INFONET, and so on. They have helped in widening the mechanism of library cooperation, resource sharing, and library consortia.

As a result of IT, the face and nature of reference and other library services has been changing for better. The time for virtual reference is there to stay in the twenty-first century indicating the possibility of paradigm shift. It may, therefore, be stated that information technology will continue to improve the effectiveness of academic library services in the times to come.
6 EVALUATION OF LIBRARY SERVICES

The need for evaluation of academic library services has been felt since long. Librarians desire to evaluate the services they provide to their users to assess their rating, may be in terms of good, indifferent, excellent or bad. Evaluation, therefore, is a systematic determination of merit, worth, and significance of services using criteria against a set of standards. The focus of evaluation should be on facts as well as value laden judgements of the programmes, outcomes and worth. The main purpose of library service evaluation can be, according to Stake and Schwandt, to “determine the quality of a program by formulating a judgment”.

Before evaluating librarian/reference librarian must ask few questions regarding the objectives of evaluation: “why evaluate library/reference services?”, “what is the planning after the study results are known?”

Cassell and Hiremath believe that it is not only the evaluation of library services but also that of the reference librarian/staff as well as reference collection that is important in every reference environment. They think that the effectiveness of reference service may be evaluated from the quality of reference interaction between the user and the reference librarian as well as a good reference collection. One way of evaluating reference and other library services, therefore, is evaluating the reference personnel and reference collection.

6.1 Evaluating Reference Collection

Reference librarian and other personnel have been heavily depending upon the accuracy of strong reference collection. Since long there has been well established process of building up a good reference collection in the libraries. In library literature, librarian finds many catalogues of “the best of reference”, or the “core collection” of reference sources, etc. But there is no end to such lists, and who will decide what is “best” for whom? Probably this is why Hernon and Dugan observed that “A measure of library quality bas ed solely on collections has become obsolete”. Moreover, reference sources are now available in a number of formats which brings in another problem of preferring electronic or print resources. Also, the funds for the purchase of the reference sources are also depleting by the year putting another challenge before the librarian.

6.2 Evaluating Reference Librarian

The American Library Association’s Reference and User Services Association has developed “Guidelines for Behavioral Performance of Reference and Information Service Professionals” which are meant to be used, inter alia, for evaluating reference professionals includes some of the following factors:
1. Approachability: The approachability of reference librarian and other reference personnel is important. Is the reference librarian easily available for help to the library users?
2. Interest: Do the reference librarian and other staff display and express a high degree of interest in the reference queries of users to search an answer?
3. Listening/Inquiring: In order to make the user feel at ease, does the reference librarian identifies the user’s information need? During the enquiring and/or listening time, do the reference personnel make use of good communication skills?
4. Searching: Is the librarian skilled enough at creating search strategies that yield accurate and relevant results?
5. Follow-up: Does the librarian determine whether the user is satisfied with the results of the search/interaction?

The abovementioned elements must form the basis of any instrument or mechanism or guidelines library chooses to develop for the performance evaluation of its staff. Such an evaluation tool could be in the form of a simple self-evaluation checklist, a peer evaluation tool, or a formal evaluation system.

There is another method of evaluating the performance of reference librarian and other staff. A Library can use some quantitative measure to assess the efficiency of its staff by recording the number of questions the reference librarian has answered during a particular time. It can also measure the frequency with which the print or electronic sources are consulted by librarian and other staff to answer the users’ enquiries. In small libraries the number as well as the type of questions asked by the users and answered by the librarian can be easily counted on daily basis. On the other hand, in larger libraries, daily count of 13 queries may not be possible, hence one-week periods count every one or two months may be used to estimate the total number of queries asked and answered during a year.

6.3 Evaluating Reference/Library Services

Evaluation of reference and other library services is of predominant importance for the reason that it helps to assess the satisfaction of the end user. However, the good reference collection and efficient reference personnel are equally significant in this process. For evaluating reference services, the librarian should make a thorough analysis of the reference process. A broad plan may be prepared, keeping into consideration the library objectives, cost, personnel, etc. to make necessary changes from the present to future time. Harold Jenkins said in this context that “if we cannot say why we are doing what we think we want to do, we should then question the wisdom of doing it at all”. Therefore, such evaluation methods may be used as to be helpful in evaluating the users’ satisfaction from reference services.
Librarians generally employ the following methods to evaluate reference services:

a. Questionnaires
b. Surveys
c. Observations
d. Interviews, etc.

The favored method of evaluating the reference and other library services among librarians is the library survey wherein all possible sources of data and means of analysis may be used to assess the quality of library and reference services.

These days reference service is no more a one-dimensional process; it has rather become multidimensional in approach. The reference librarian will have to use a combination of techniques or methods for appropriate assessment. The main purpose of evaluation of existing practices, procedures, services is to make the current reference environment successful and make a sound projection for the future where library services are made available 24x7 leading to virtual reference service which is growing slowly.

7. CONCLUSION

This module discusses about the need of library services in academic libraries for their user community which primarily comprises of faculty, students and researchers. The library services are more often than not viewed as an integrated part of the academic library system. For planning effective library services, it is necessary to assess the information behavior and needs of the user community. The external and internal environments are to be necessarily considered as important factors in planning library services. The management of library services, taking into view decision-making and problem-solving, is linked with the planning. Discusses about the organization of various types of library services which include reference services, user education, bibliographic services, information literacy, resource sharing, and so on. In view of changing environment, considerable attention is paid to the impact of information technology in various areas of library services to improve over the existing scenario. Presents the need for evaluation of reference and other library services to know their current status and future potential. To measure the user satisfaction various methods and techniques of evaluation of reference collection, reference personnel, and reference services have been suggested. It helps to measure the strengths and weaknesses of library services whenever the librarian realizes the need for improvement.

REFERENCE


