



Library Equipment's and assistance for the differently – Abled users: A study of the central universities in India

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Introduction:

The accessibility of library services for persons with disabilities is an important and complex issue that has garnered increasing attention in recent years. As libraries strive to be inclusive and equitable spaces for all members of the community, it is essential to address the unique barriers that individuals with disabilities may encounter when accessing library resources and participating in library programs. This literature review aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the current landscape of accessibility in library services for persons with disabilities, highlighting the challenges, accommodations, and areas for future improvement. By examining the existing literature and initiatives in this field, this review seeks to contribute to the ongoing dialogue on promoting accessibility and inclusivity in library services for persons with disabilities.

The researcher focused on collecting the literature from 2016 onwards, as the year is very prominent for this study in light of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 by the Government of India. This legislation provides a legal framework for promoting accessibility and inclusivity across various domains, including library services. Further, the researcher has considered the earlier literature reviews in this area of research discussed in the subsequent sections.

The general search in Google Scholar with the search string: "library services" and users with disabilities has yielded 22,300 results. With a focused search string: with 'and India' the results were 9,380 as of May 12, 2024. The filtered search string with the year of publication from 2016 to 2024 has resulted in 3,970 articles. This clearly indicates that there is a substantial focus on this subject post 2016 resulting in almost 45% of the total publication in this domain. The researcher has considered Scopus, Google Scholar, ResearchGate, EBSCO, ProQuest and the institutional repositories for the articles in this study.

Need for library services for persons with disabilities

Library services for users with disabilities are not just a matter of convenience; they are a fundamental right that ensures equal access to information, education, and knowledge (Bhardwaj, 2018). The research work by Gul & Khowaja (2020) has observed that persons with disabilities often face unique challenges in accessing library resources, whether it's due to physical barriers, limited availability of materials in accessible formats, or the lack of awareness and understanding among library staff about their specific needs. The observation is also prominently made by the many other authors (Chaurasia & Singh, 2022;

Dhiman, 2022; Khot et al., 2022; Mohapatra, 2018; Nazim, 2021; Sanaman & Kumar, 2014; A. K. Sharma, 2022) in the Indian context.

Library services play a crucial role in addressing these challenges. The prominent research work from Indian library professionals and researchers (Barua & Rahman, 2020a; Dodamani & Dodamani, 2019a; Nazim, 2021; B. Yadav & Singh, 2022a) has opined that accessible formats such as braille books, audio recordings, and digital materials enable individuals with visual or print impairments to access information effectively. Additionally, assistive technologies such as screen readers, magnification software, or adaptive keyboards can substantially enhance the accessibility of digital resources for users with disabilities. Moreover, well-trained library staff who are knowledgeable about disability issues and equipped to provide appropriate support can greatly enrich the overall library experience for users with disabilities (Indumathi & Sophia, 2019; Nazim et al., 2021a; Salauddin, 2022a)

Sample

The sample of a study is simple the participants in a study. The library staff and the differently abled library users of the central university libraries of India are the sample of this research work.

Statistics used

Statistics play an important role in research of almost any kind because they deal with easily quantified data. The study of statistics enables researchrs to look at a large set of data and condense it into meaningful. The software SPSS 20, used as statistical tool. Data analysis has been done following frequency distribution and pictorial representation using bar and pie diagrams.

Analysis and interpretation of data: library staff

Differently abled users in the university library

No of different abed users	No of libraries	Percentage
= 10	9	25.7
11-12	9	25.7
21-30	6	17.1
31-50	3	8.5
51-100	2	5.7
100	6	17.1
Total	35	100.0

This table shows that out of 35 libraries 9 libraries have 10 or more than 10 differently abled users, again 9 libraries have 11 to 20 differently abled users, 21-30 differently abled users are there in 6 libraries. Three libraries have 31-50 libraries 51 to 100 and 6 libraries have more than 500 differently abled users.

Budget for the differently abled users

Budget for the differently abled users	No of libraries	Percentage
100000	2	5.7
1000000	3	8.5
No provision	3	8.5
Not fixed but privilege of additional budget as per requirement	1	2.8
Not mentioned	2.5	71.4
The budget for differently abled users is included in total budget	1	2.8
Total	35	100.0

Of the 35 libraries 2(5.7) libraries have Rs 100 or more budget amount for differently abled users, and 3(8.5) libraries have less than Rs 100. Three 8.5 libraries do not have any budget provision for the library users with disability.

Printed journals magazines

General collection: journals/magazines	No of libraries	Percentage
50	6	16.7
51-100	8	25.0
101-200	7	19.4
201-500	8	22.5
500	6	16.7
Total	35	100

It is seen from table 4.10 and figure 4.8 that there are six 16.32 central university libraries having 50 or more journals magazines eight 22.8 libraries have 51-100 journal magazines. Seven 20 libraries have 10 to 200 journals magazines libraries have 201-500 and 6 (16.32) libraries have more than 500 journal.

Theses dissertation

General collection theses dissertations	No of libraries	Percentage
0	1	2.9
200	10	28.6
201-1000	6	17.1
1000	13	37.1
Total	35	100

This table shows that 13 (37.1) university libraries have more than 1000 these dissertations, 6 (17.1) have 201-1000 (17.1) and 10 university libraries have 200 or less theses collection.

E – Contents (electronic books, journals, reference books)

General collection E contents	No of libraries	Percentage
0	3	8.6
1000	16	45.7
1000	15	42.9
Not responded	1	2.9
Total	35	100

Its shows that 16 (45.7) universities have the collection og e contents of numbering 100000 or more 15(42.9) libraries do not have any collection and 2.9 library did not mention anything.

Working professional staff

No of working professional staff	No of libraries	Percentage
1-20	25	71
21-40	8	22
41-60	2	5
Total	35	100

In this table indicates that out of 35 libraries 3 (8.5) Libraries have only 1 professional working staff and 1 (2.8) library has maximum 56 staff. There are 25 (71.4) libraries which have 1-20 working staff, and 8(22.8) libraries have 21-40 working staff and 2(5.7) libraries have 41-60 professional working staff.

Facilities in the library building

Facilities in the library building	No of libraries	Percentage
Ramp	27	77
Handrails	15	42
Rest room as indicated by signs	4	11
Elevator	2	5
Lift	9	25
Floor guide map	30	85
Talking zone specially for the visually disabled user	7	20
Signs in braille	4	11
Toilets for the differently abled users	7	20

Type of disability

Type of disability	Respondents	Percentage
Neurological	1	.5
Mental	0	0
Speech	8	3.7
Deaf or hard of hearing	9	4
Visual	132	60
Physical or locomotor	78	35
Learning disability	0	0
Other	0	0

A total sample of 219 respondents was used for the study as indicated in table 5.5 which indicates that 132 are visually impaired and 78 are mobility impaired. The rest 18 belong to different disabilities.

Conclusion:

As per UGC official website, there are 44 central universities, out of which 35 have responded during the survey. The response's which have been received are quite satisfactory, and on that basis the analysis has been done with help of SPSS version 20.

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