Academic Libraries in India Present and Future : An Overview

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Abstract:

This paper is based on the overview of the present scenario and future challenges and opportunities of academic libraries. With the invention of ICT and its application in academic libraries, the shape and working process of libraries drastically changed. The library is shifted from a storehouse of books to a powerhouse of knowledge through the implementation of ICT. The paper discussed overviews of academic libraries, types of academic libraries, the role of UGC in the growth and development of libraries, present state and future trends in academic libraries, and strategies to manage the future of academic libraries. Artificial intelligence and advanced computer technology on the nature of future libraries will be enormous, and the quality differences will be different from what our current work expects.

Keyword: ICT, Academic Library, University Grants Commission, Information Resources, Social Media

Introduction:

Education in India is a way to increase social mobility. A good education is seen as a stepping stone to a high-flying career. The Education System in India currently represents a great paradox. On one hand, we have IIMs and IITs which rank among the best institutions in the world and on the other hand many schools in the country do not even have basic infrastructure. Academic libraries are considered to be the nerve centres of academic institutions and must support teaching, learning, research, and other academic programmes.

Technology is a broader term and plays an important role in every field in today's world. It may not be wrong to say that technology has affected all the shares of human life. Education and social life do come under this share. The cultural norms and behaviour of individuals have changed to the new normal. Current communication technology such as mobile phones, the internet, and inventions such as social media platforms Facebook, Skype, and Twitter have affected human interactions and relationships adversely. Social media and networking technologies create a level of loneliness among people. Most of the population of the world uses mobile for communication and various other reasons (Mishra, 2023).

ICT has drastically changed the face of librarianship as the role of library and information science professionals has shifted from custodians of books to information professionals who are responsible for creating, processing, storing, manipulating and disseminating information electronically. Therefore, there is a need for library personnel to acquire certain skills and competencies of ICTs if they want to be relevant in the 21th century. ICT provides an efficient and effective way to execute information-related activities. It provides convenience in terms of usage for the users; speedy, accuracy and preciseness of information (Babayi…[et.al], 2023).

Education aims to impart knowledge and make good citizens. Libraries are repositories of knowledge and are an integral part of education. Libraries have a long history, starting from the chained and closed-access libraries of the early years to today's hybrid, digital and virtual libraries that use the latest technology to provide information through a variety of services.

Academic Libraries:

Academic libraries are the libraries that serve higher education institutions, such as college or university libraries. The secondary and primary schools are called school libraries. Academic libraries serve two purposes: to support the curriculum and to support teaching, learning and research activities. Earlier, academic libraries mainly collected print-based reading materials consisting of books and periodicals. However, their role in information retrieval has changed significantly since the mid-1980s, when computers began to have a major impact on how libraries provided information. The goal of an academic library is to create and maintain a collection that supports and enhances the educational needs of the institution. The university library of the future will be sparsely staffed, highly decentralized, and a physical plant with little more than special collections and study areas. Thus, there is a need for user retention in modern academic libraries. Finally, the library services rely on data processed by users to understand their information needs and to correct past mistakes and improve future ones. This library can be accessed by users; They determine the efficiency and effectiveness of the various facilities and services provided by the library (Mason, 2010).

The advent of computers has dramatically changed the nature of libraries. Computers are being used in libraries to process, store, retrieve and disseminate information. The traditional library concept is being redefined to access books from one place with the most advanced media including CD-ROM, Internet and remote access to a wide range of resources. Libraries have now metamorphosed into digital institutions. In earlier days libraries were judged by quantitative resources. Today, libraries are surrounded by broad networked data which is connected to a vast ocean of Internet-based services. Moreover, electronic resources relevant to the professions are developing at an unprecedented pace (Mahajan, 2005).

The role of the library in any educational institution can be seen only in the context of the educational philosophy of the institution. Education is a process of learning aimed at developing capabilities in society. Academic libraries which include school, college and university libraries generally have four types of users based on the level of education they are categorized; students, teachers, research scholars, administrative, professional and other employees of the institution. Every library is different with its objectives, functions, sources of finance, qualifications, designations and staffing pattern. According to the types of libraries they hold their collection of books, periodicals, reference books and other reading materials; multi-media materials form an integral part of education, teaching and research. Services like the provision of reading facilities, lending and reference services etc. also different in these libraries. Academic libraries are grouped into three categories. These are; School libraries, College libraries and University libraries (Types of libraries and information centres).

Types of Academic Libraries:

Academic libraries serve educational institutions and support the teaching, learning, and research activities of students, faculty, and researchers. There are several types of academic libraries, each with its focus and mission.

An academic library is a library attached to educational institutions such as schools, colleges and universities. An academic library more specifically serves the students, research scholars, faculty and staff of an educational institution. The main objective of an academic library is to give maximum learning materials to its patrons so that they may be fully educated at

their respective levels. Academic libraries are classified into school libraries, college libraries and university libraries.

School Library: School libraries are located in primary and secondary schools (K-12). They support the educational needs of students and teachers by offering age-appropriate books, reference materials, and educational resources.

A school library is like a learning laboratory, providing various instructional mediums, essential for optimum support of teaching and learning. The purpose of the school library is to meet the objectives of the educational program. A school library is a learning laboratory, providing a variety of learning media necessary for optimal support of the learning program. The purpose of the school library is to achieve the objectives of the educational program. It is concerned with the development of effective ways of thinking, developing social attitudes, acquiring important information and promoting growth and development in children. The function of the school library is to help students in their process of self-discovery, adopt higher ideals in life, improve academic performance through self-study and develop critical thinking skills.

College Library: College plays an important role in the educational like; teaching, learning and research process. A college without a library is like a tree without roots. The status of each college is measured by the status of the library. Therefore, every college library is supposed to become a teaching tool itself. A college library is expected to support the fulfilment of the objectives of the college. Thus, the basic function of a college library is to assist its parent institution in carrying out its programmes. Therefore, every college library should become a support of the teaching tool itself. A college library is expected to support the fulfilment the objectives of the college. Thus, the basic function of a college library is to assist its parent institution in carrying out its programmes. College libraries are associated with undergraduate colleges and community colleges. They primarily serve the needs of students pursuing bachelor's degrees, postgraduate degrees and sometimes doctoral degrees. These libraries may have smaller collections compared to university libraries but still provide essential resources for students and faculty.

University Library: University libraries are typically affiliated with universities and offer a wide range of resources across various academic disciplines. They support undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral programs and provide research materials, study spaces, and academic support services. A library is more important in a university because a library can do without a university, just as a university cannot function without a library. A university library is an integral part of the institution. It is mainly maintained for the benefit of students, officers, faculty members and those engaged in research work. It plays a very important role in the national life of society by acquiring materials for educational use for the benefit of students and teaching departments (Lisbdnetwork, 2016).

Many academic institutions may have a combination of these library types, depending on their size, mission, and academic offerings. Each type of library has a unique role in supporting the educational and research goals of its affiliated institution or community.

Role of UGC in the Growth and Development of Libraries:

After gaining independence in 1947, the national government of India constituted the university education committee in 1948 under the chairmanship of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. The committee proposed many suggestions for the development and progress of higher education in the country.

One of them was to give extension and empowerment to UGC as a university grants commission, which was established in Delhi in 1953. Dr. C. D. Deshmukh was its first chairman. Since then, UGC has been functioning as an autonomous organization and has been working well for the development of colleges, universities and their libraries in the country. Some functions and roles of UGC are as follows:

1. UGC and academic libraries.
2. UGC and library committee
3. UGC and scales of library staff
4. UGC and library science training
5. UGC and computers
6. UGC and reprographics service
7. Establishment of INFLIBNET (Velmurugan, 2012).

The University Grants Commission (UGC) in India plays a significant role in the growth and development of libraries, particularly academic libraries in universities and colleges. Its role is instrumental in shaping library policies, funding, and standards in higher education institutions across the country. Here are some key ways in which UGC contributes to the growth and development of libraries:

Funding Support: UGC provides financial assistance to universities and colleges for the development of libraries. This funding is crucial for acquiring new books, journals, digital resources, and infrastructure improvement. It helps libraries stay current and meet the evolving needs of students and faculty.

Library Grants: UGC offers grants and schemes specifically designed to enhance library services. These grants may support the digitization of library resources, the creation of digital repositories, the modernization of library infrastructure, and the improvement of library facilities.

Quality Standards: UGC sets and enforces quality standards for academic libraries. These standards ensure that libraries are well-equipped, adequately staffed, and capable of supporting teaching and research effectively. Compliance with these standards is often a requirement for receiving UGC funding.

INFLIBNET: UGC established the Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET) Centre to promote the integration of information and communication technology in libraries. INFLIBNET provides access to e-resources, library automation, and network services to libraries across India, strengthening their digital capabilities.

Promotion of Open Access: UGC encourages open access initiatives and mandates universities to set up institutional repositories. This promotes the open sharing of research outputs and increases the visibility of academic work.

Library Consortia: UGC encourages the formation of library consortia, enabling institutions to pool resources and negotiate for better deals on electronic resources, databases, and journals. This helps smaller institutions access a broader range of materials.

Library Modernization: UGC supports the modernization of libraries by promoting the adoption of library management software, digital catalogues, and other technologies that enhance library services and efficiency.

Faculty Development: UGC may provide funding for library staff and faculty to attend training programs, conferences, and workshops. This allows attending various programs on the professional development of librarians to enable them to better serve their institutions.

Research Support: UGC provides grants and funds for minor and major research projects related to library and information science. These projects help improve library services, explore innovative solutions, and address challenges in the field.

Advocacy for Libraries: UGC has advised libraries in higher education and research. It also makes awareness about the role of libraries in academic excellence and innovation in research.

Library Committees: UGC often recommends the formation of library committees within universities and colleges to oversee library operations, ensure adequate funding, and promote the development of libraries.

In summary, the UGC plays a vital role in shaping the growth and development of libraries in India by providing financial support, setting quality standards, promoting technology integration, and advocating for the importance of libraries in higher education and research. This support is crucial for ensuring that libraries continue to evolve and meet the changing needs of the academic community.

Present State And Future Trends In Academic Libraries:

Academic libraries in India, and elsewhere in the world, have played a significant role in recent years and continue to perform and transform to meet the needs of students, faculty, and researchers. Here's an overview of the present state and future trends in academic libraries in India:

Present State of Academic Libraries:

2. **Digital Transformation**: Academic libraries in India have made significant progress in digitization of collections. Many libraries provide access to e-resources such as e-books, e-journals, and digital databases, making it easier for library patrons to access information remotely.

3. **Collaboration**: Libraries are significantly collaborating with other institutions, wide both national and international, to increase their resources and provide a broader range of services. Consortia agreements have become common for resource sharing.

4. **Learning Spaces**: Modern academic libraries are not just about books but also about providing comfortable and technologically equipped learning spaces. Libraries often have study rooms, computer labs, and collaborative spaces to facilitate learning and research.

5. **Information Literacy**: Libraries play an important role in promoting information literacy. They offer workshops and resources to help students and faculty effectively find, evaluate, and use information in the digital age.

6. **Open Access**: Many libraries support open access initiatives, making research more accessible to a wider audience. They may host institutional repositories and advocate for open-access publishing.

Future Trends of Academic Libraries:

1. **AI and Automation**: Academic libraries are likely to take the benefits of artificial intelligence (AI) and automation to increase library services. Artificial Intelligence-powered chatbots, for instance, can provide instant assistance to users. Automation can streamline tasks like cataloguing and resource management.

2. **Data Management Services**: As research becomes more data-driven, libraries will likely offer data management services to help researchers store, organize, and share their data effectively.

3. **Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR)**: Some libraries may incorporate VR and AR technologies to create immersive learning experiences and virtual tours of library collections.

4. **Sustainability**: Libraries may focus on sustainability by adopting eco-friendly practices in their operations, such as energy-efficient buildings and sustainable collection management.

5. **Global Collaboration**: With the globalization of education and research, academic libraries may strengthen their ties with international institutions and libraries, offering access to a more extensive range of resources.

6. **Preservation of Digital Content**: Ensuring the long-term preservation of digital content will be a growing concern, and libraries will invest in digital preservation strategies.

7. **Crisis Preparedness**: Libraries of the future can focus on ensuring that they are prepared for crises with proper plans for services and remote access to e-resources.

8. **Inclusivity and Diversity**: Libraries will continue to emphasize inclusivity, diversity, and equity in their collection, service, and facilities.

9. **Adaptive Spaces**: Libraries of the future can be adaptive spaces that can quickly respond to changing needs and technology

The future of academic libraries in India will be shaped by technology, evolving user expectations and the changing landscape of higher education and research. Libraries will remain essential partners in the educational and research efforts of their institutions.

The pace of technological progress today is unprecedented. Emerging new trends are setting the standard for today's academic libraries. Given the competition these libraries face from alternative means of information collection, they need to change or face extinction. Academic librarians need to start thinking beyond the days of the library as a mere collection's repository to something much more powerful. (Men, n.d.).

Strategies to Manage the Future of Academic Libraries:

Managing the future of academic libraries effectively requires a strategic approach that takes into account the evolving needs of students, faculty, and researchers, as well as technological advancements. Here are several strategies to help academic libraries thrive in the future:

1. **Embrace Digital Transformation**: Investing in digitization efforts will make the physical collections accessible online. It expands e-books and e-journal collections to meet the growing demand for digital resources. There is also scope to develop user-friendly interfaces and search tools for accessing digital content.

2. **Enhance Information Literacy Programs**: Offer workshops and courses on information literacy to help users navigate the complex information landscape.

3. **Focus on User-Centric Services**: It continuously collects the user's feedback to know their needs, expectations and preferences.

4. **Promote Open Access and Open Educational Resources (OER)**: Advocate for open-access publishing and open educational resource adoption to reduce the cost of education. Support faculty in creating and adopting open educational resources.

5. **Strengthen Digital Preservation**: Develop robust digital preservation strategies to ensure the long-term integrity of digital collections. Regularly back up digital assets and convert them to current formats as needed.

6. **Collaborate and Form Consortia**: Collaborate with other libraries and institutions to share resources and reduce costs. Join library consortia to negotiate favourable terms for purchasing electronic resources.

7. **Support Multimodal Learning**: Create flexible and adaptive learning spaces that accommodate various learning styles. Incorporate technologies such as virtual reality and augmented reality for immersive learning experiences.

8. **Cultivate a Diverse Collection**: Ensure that the library's collection reflects the diversity of the academic community and supports a wide range of research interests.

9. **Invest in Professional Development**: Provide ongoing training and development opportunities for library staff to keep them updated on emerging technologies and trends.

10. **Advance Library Marketing and Outreach**: Promote library services and resources through effective marketing and outreach efforts. Utilize social media, newsletters, and events to engage with the academic community.

11. **Advocate for Library Funding**: Advocate for adequate funding and resources from the university or institution. Communicate the value of the library in supporting academic and research missions.

By implementing these strategies, academic libraries can position themselves as dynamic and indispensable resources that continue to support the evolving needs of their users and contribute to the success of their institutions.

Conclusion:

The present and future of academic libraries in India are marked by significant transformations driven by technological advancements, changing educational paradigms, and evolving user expectations. Presently, academic libraries in India are adapting to the digital age by digitizing collections, promoting information literacy, and offering a blend of physical and digital resources. They play a crucial role in supporting teaching, learning, and research activities in higher education institutions across the country. Looking to the future, academic libraries in India are poised to undergo further changes to remain relevant and effective. The adoption of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, data analytics, and virtual reality, will enhance the user experience and expand access to knowledge. Libraries will continue to advocate for open access and open educational resources, making education more accessible and affordable.

Ultimately, academic libraries in India are well-positioned to face future challenges and opportunities. By embracing digital transformation, fostering innovation and responding to the changing needs of the academic community, they will continue to be important pillars of academic excellence and research advancement in India.

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