

INFORMATION LITERACY AND COMPETENCY PROGRAMME IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES: A CASE STUDY OF DULS

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Abstract

The paper introduces the need of Information Literacy and Competency Program (ILCP) in academic libraries. Deliberates the objectives of ILCP in Delhi University Library System (DULS). Describes the methodology adopted to conduct ILCP in DULS. Explains the presentations as vital tool to conduct ILCP. Analyzes the feed back of the audience of entire ILCP program. Shows that such programs are very essential to reap the full benefit of ICT, Internet and other digital resources.

Keywords : Information Literacy/ Academic Libraries/ Information Communication Technology

1. Introduction

From Farming and Horticulture to Business and Commerce, from Aviation to Shipping, from Banking to Life Insurance, from Health Care to Court of Law, Information Communication Technology (ICT) has made its effective presence in almost all sphere of human life. Libraries and information centers are also not untouched with wide spread impact of ICT. It has drastically transformed the way for collection, processing, storage, retrieval and communication of information in libraries. Particularly the Internet has completely transformed the traditional method of processing information from collection to communication. It has emerged as the most powerful medium for storage, retrieval and communication of information. With an unprecedented growth in the quantum of knowledge world wide and the easy accessibility, Internet has become an unavoidable necessity for every institution of higher learning and research. The World Wide Web (www), because of its ability to work with multimedia and advance programming languages, is the fastest growing component of the Internet. The amount of publicly available information on the web is increasing consistently at an unbelievable rate. It has turned into “a gigantic digital library, a searchable 15 billion-world encyclopedia” and is still growing every minute of a day.

Information available on Internet in public domain as well as through different subscription based databases provided by various hosts and aggregators is bound to play a very important role in teaching, learning and research. For maximum utilization of

these resources in academics, the need of the hour is to make the users of information competent enough for retrieving precise and relevant information as per their needs. In this context, the libraries and information centers have a very important role to play. Library and Information Center (LIC) professionals have the task of handling the information explosion and delivering the right kind of information services to the right users at the right time. LIC professionals are expected to guide the users for using the right information and develop the skill of users.

Information Literacy and Competency is the ability to identify information needs, seek out resources to meet those needs, and then analyze, evaluate, synthesize, and communicate the resulting knowledge. It is a core instructional pedagogy in higher education. The role of the ILCP in the context of an academic library is intended to encourage and facilitate life-long learning. In order to empower students in the pursuit of knowledge, the library professionals aim to teach them the skills of identifying, locating, and evaluating information. Among many other things, information literate students are competent, independent learners. Thus, ILC facilitates to seek and evaluate right sources of information and acquire it.

Information is available from many sources and in many formats, such as printed text, television, videos, library databases, web sites, and more. To be “information literate”, one needs to know why, when, and how to use all of these tools and think critically about the information they provide. One can’t become information literate overnight. His abilities will improve over time as he gains expertise in the topics he chooses to investigate and as he practice searching for, selecting, and evaluating the information and ideas he encounter. In nutshell, Information literate students are supposed to:

- Be competent, independent learners;
- Actively engage in the world of ideas;
- Confidently solve problems;
- Know what is relevant information;
- Use technological tools to access information and communicate;
- Operate comfortably in situations where there are multiple answers or no answers;
- Have high standards for their work and use information ethically;
- Create quality products;

Delhi University Library System (DULS) comprising of more than 30 libraries in its fold caters to the information needs of entire University community. In addition to various huge electronic resources in public domain, DULS also subscribes to a large number of databases and is also an active member of UGC-Infonet. DULS has started Information Literacy and Competency Program (ILCP) with a view to empower the students, researchers and faculty members to seek, evaluate, use and create information effectively and efficiently to achieve their educational, social, occupational and personal goals. Information literacy and competency enables to interpret and make informed judgments as users of information sources, as well as to become producers of information

in their own right. It is a well-known fact that researchers are both the consumers and producer of information. At the planning level, it was visualized that in addition to their academic requirements this program will also assist them to access information about their health, environment, and work and empower them to make critical decisions about their future lives. While planning itself, it was also visualized that the young students of today are future researchers, scientists, economists, managers, etc.—i.e., they are the future of our country—and the entire program has been planned accordingly.

2. Objectives

Information Literacy and Competency Development Program in Delhi University Library System has been initiated with following precisely defined objectives:

- To acquaint the users with the power of Internet.
- To provide an indication as to what is available on Internet related to their course of study;
- To show how web resources could be of immense use in their academic pursuit and research;
- To show the usefulness of various multimedia resources on web related to their syllabi.
- To describe specific features of various databases being subscribed by DULS.
- To promote the use of subscribed databases in academics and research.
- To acquaint the users with various search techniques to retrieve relevant information.
- To recognize the need for information, and to evaluate, organize, interpret, and communicate information in all its formats;
- To promote that Information Competency is for participants' academic and vocational success and also for lifelong learning.
- To provide course-integrated instruction in collaboration with the faculty and in alignment with course objectives.
- To establish a direct interaction between users and library professionals.

It is well understood that the success of the program is based on our understanding of curriculum and course objectives. The more we are involved in a course, the more we interact with faculty, the more effective our instruction and program will be.

3. Methodology

With above objectives in mind, a series of discussions were held amongst selected library professionals to plan the ILCP. Various options were discussed and at the end it was unanimously decided that the program be carried out with the help of highly interactive Power Point Presentations. It was again very challenging to decide the

venue of presentation. There were two options- the first being organizing the program at a central place located in the library and inviting the students from one department to participate and the other option was to go to the departments and make the presentations in classroom environment. After discussing all pros and cons, it was decided that it is better to go to the concerned departments and make the presentations in the classroom environment. After a great thought, it was finalized that the proposed presentations in different departments should be prepared on the basis of prescribed syllabus for postgraduate students. Necessary correspondence with the departments were made and a faculty member from each department was identified to co-ordinate with library professionals in the development of various presentations. The databases subscribed by DULS, UGC-Infonet databases and certain public domain databases were selected for showing and comparing the number of citations. Once the presentation was ready, it was shown and described to the faculty member coordinating with library from the concerned department. In most of the cases, faculty members highly appreciated the presentations and desired that other faculty members from their department should also be invited to attend the presentation. However, in few cases marathon discussion was held with faculty members for inclusion or exclusion of certain web pages. Before the final presentation, a feasibility study as regards to the technological infrastructure availability in concerned department was undertaken and necessary arrangements were made.

4. Presentation

The presentation was initiated with the words of Nobel laureate, Dr. Rabindera Nath Tagore, who opined that, 'It is a better profile of education to know how to use a library than to possess a university degree'. The above opinion of Dr. Tagore was explained in the present day context expending it, as "It is a better proof of education to know how to use a library and its resources and imbibe information competency using www". The students were hailed as future researchers and responsible citizens of country, who are to make the big difference on social, economic, religious, political and cultural level. An introduction to entire DULS with special emphasis to the libraries attached to their course of study was given while various collections, services and facilities were also explained.

The need of information in teaching, learning and research was described to the audience. They were informed that information, in an academic setup, is needed for understanding the basic concepts, for comprehensive understanding of views; for projects and seminars, and ultimately for examinations. Various information sources were explained categorizing them as printed information sources and electronic information sources. The advantages and disadvantages of both the information source categories were also discussed. An indicative list of information sources covering every thing under the sky was shown to the users as Quick Reference Sources and Full Text Sources available in public domain on the web. A comprehensive list of subscribed databases with their URL addresses and brief features were discussed which also from a part of the DULS official web page. How and from where these subscribed databases can be accessed was also described to the audience in detail.

As far as the searching of relevant information is concerned, process for both printed sources and electronic sources of information was explained to the user. A brief discussion on various kinds of searches and search strategy was also made. Some tips regarding the theoretical foundations of effective searching were also given to the audience. Basic and Advance search, Phrase searching, Proximity searching, Boolean operators, Field searching, use of Controlled Vocabulary, Limiting/ Refining / Narrowing of search results were practically described and demonstrated to the audience from the concerned databases.

The concepts selected from the Post-Graduate Course content were at the very beginning defined with the help of Google and Xreferplus, a unique electronic reference database of more than 150 well established reference sources including encyclopedia, general dictionaries, subject dictionaries, biographies, etc. Goggle can be used to define any concept under the sun. Simply put the term in the search browser with “define: the term” and one can get relevant definitions from the web with a hyperlink to the document. Full text presentations in the form of pdf papers or web pages were also included to describe the usefulness of e-content as far as the course studies are concerned. The next step was to present and describe how much information is there in various databases on different course concepts. A web page was prepared with total number of citations from different databases on a given concept. Almost each of the databases was searched with both the options- Basic and Advance search. Primarily phrase searching or field searching was used as a basis for advanced search. In addition to citations, various multimedia information means including animation, images and videos were also included in the presentation to describe that concepts can be better comprehended with the help of multimedia items. The images and videos were culled out from public domain and were found very comprehensive and educative by both the faculty members and the students.

Besides this, an attempt was also made to orient the audience with useful websites available in public domain related to their course of study. These included the web sites, scholarly societies, organizations and associations, bibliographies, glossaries, etc. in their respective subject fields. From the subscribed databases, comprehensive list of journals of the concerned subject was compiled and included in the presentation to make the audience aware and increase its usage.

5. Feed back Analysis

Any kind of workshop, orientation or user education program is incomplete if it does not make provisions for feed back from the participants. Keeping in view the necessity, the participants were given a well-designed feedback form at the time of presentation in all the departments. The effectiveness and success of the entire program is well reflected in the feedback and thus has emerged as the most important aspect of the entire ILCP. The ILCP till date has been carried out in the following departments.

- Department of Economics
 - Department of Geography
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- Department of Sociology
 - Department of Commerce for MIB & MHROD Courses
 - Department of Philosophy
 - Department of Psychology
 - MBA (North Campus)
 - MBA-MS (South Campus)

Feedback from the audience were sought on the selected statements where they were requested to select one option -strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree and not sure. The statements were:

- The Presentation is focused on materials and skills that are relevant to current course assignments.
- The Concepts are clearly explained.
- Instructional material (e.g. multimedia websites, etc.) are useful.
- The physical environment is suitable for instructions.
- Students are more prepared to use library and www services for class assignments as a result of this session.
- If these presentations are made available online through library website, it will be more useful.
- Do you feel that this instructional presentation is appropriate for the need of the class?
- I am now more aware of the library services available to me as a student.

Besides, they were also asked to grade the over all presentation as, excellent, good, fair or poor. An open-ended question was also asked to share any general comment or suggestion regarding the presentation or any other library services. A detail analysis of the total feedback is made hereunder.

Information Literacy and Competency Development Program has till date been conducted in above-mentioned eight departments in which 451 students have participated. Through out the presentations the students maintained pin drop silence. All responses to each of the statement have been analyzed and presented in table No. 1.

Table No.1

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A or Respondent	Not sure
The Presentation is focused on materials and skills that are relevant to current course assignments.	29.49%	66.74%	1.11%	0.44%	1.55%	0.67%
The Concepts are clearly explained	23.06%	67.63%	3.77%	0.89%	1.77%	2.88%
Instructional material (e.g. multimedia websites, etc.) are useful.	45.45%	49.45%	1.77%	0.44%	0.89%	2%
The physical environment is suitable for instructions.	20.18%	54.99%	11.31%	3.77%	5.54%	4.21%
Students are more prepared to use library and www services for class assignments as a result of this session.	33.48%	54.99%	3.10%	0.67%	6.43%	1.33%
If these presentations are made available on line through library website it will be more useful	58.54%	33.26%	3.10%	1.11%	2.88%	1.11%
Do you feel that this instructional presentation is appropriate for the need of the class?	32.15%	60.75%	3.33%	0.67%	1.77%	1.33%
I am now more aware of the library services available to me as a student.	41.01%	53%	3.10%	0.67%	1.55%	0.67%

A close analysis of the total feedback provides encouraging figures and facts. A total of 96.23% of the respondents have either strongly agreed or agreed that the presentation is focused on materials and skills that are relevant to their current course assignments, whereas 90.69% of the total respondents falling in both the categories of strongly agree and agree have found that the concept selected from their course of study is clearly explained. If we look to the other side of the coin, negligible fraction of the total respondents have opined other wise. Only 1.11% disagree, 0.44% strongly disagree, 1.55% not sure and 0.67% respondents did not respond to the statement that the presentation is focused on materials and skills that are relevant to their current course assignments, whereas 3.77% disagree, 0.89% strongly disagree, 1.77% not sure and 2.89% respondents did not respond to the statement that concepts were clearly explained.

As far as the usefulness of instruction materials such as multimedia and websites are concerned, 94.90% of the total respondents falling in both the categories of strongly agree and agree (45.45% Strongly Agree and 49.45% Agree) have found that instruction

materials are useful for their course of study. Whereas only 1.77% disagrees, 0.44% strongly disagrees, 0.89% not sure and 2% of participants did not respond to this statement. A total of 20.18% of the respondents have strongly agreed and 54.99% of respondents have agreed that the physical environment was suitable for instructions. Since the presentations were made in the concerned departments, the physical environment was different in these departments. In most of the departments, it has really been very nice whereas in some departments it was not so good. That was the reason as to why 11.31% of the total respondents have discarded the suitability of the physical environment.

We also tried to gauge the impact of the entire presentation on the future use of library and www services in their course of study and class assignments. The success of all our dedicated efforts directed to make this presentation become a reality is aptly reflected on this issue. A total of 88.47% of respondents (33.48% strongly agree, 54.99% agree) have accepted that as a result of this presentation they are now more prepared to use library and www services in their study and class assignments. A total of 58.54% of respondents strongly agreed and 33.26% of respondents have agreed to the statement that if these presentations are made available online through library website, it will be more useful. Efforts are being made to make these presentations available online through DULS website. Since a good portion of the presentations requires certain modification to make it online the process is delayed. As regards the appropriateness of this instructional presentation for class needs, a total of 92.90% of respondents (32.15% strongly agreed, 60.75% agreed) have found the presentation appropriate to the needs of their class and again a negligible fraction of 0.67% disagree, 1.77% strongly disagree and 1.33% did not respond. The basic purpose behind this entire effort was to make the users of DULS aware about the library services in general including the electronic resources. Keeping this objective in view, some feedback was necessary regarding the impact of presentation. In this context a total of 94.01% of the respondent (41.01% strongly agree, 53% agree) have opined that after the presentations they are more informed and aware about the library services available to them as a student. This response again supports the findings regarding the futures use of library discussed above.

As for as the overall grading of the presentation is concerned a total of 88.92 % of the respondents have graded the presentation from excellent to good. It has been adjudged fair by 10.86 % of the respondents. Only 01 respondent from 451 total respondents has graded the overall presentation as poor, which amounts to 0.22 % of the total respondents and is negligible and meaningless.

The general comments or suggestions regarding the presentation or any other library services given in response to the open ended questions provided for the purpose are also encouraging. The audience has appreciated this effort with open heart. Some of the remarks are: 'Very good'!!! 'You people rocked'!!! 'Great effort, awesome presentation'. 'No-doubt the work effort being put towards the E-library is appreciable & going to benefit us in our future studies'. 'It was a very good attempt as well as initiative on the part of DULS to provide these kinds of services and this should be continued program. Thanks

a lot'. A student has categorically remarked 'I am from South Korea and using "Internet" is really common in Korea. I hope to use Internet freely in India also. And today's presentation was so good to me. It'll help in my study I believe'. Appreciating the videos a student puts 'Videos, which are being linked with the concept, were just wonderful'.

The success of our well-planned ILC development program was evident from the standing ovation and applause we got in all the departments when we finished our presentations. As far as the views and suggestions of the respondents as given above are concerned, high capacity infrastructure and resources are needed to meet out the suggestions.

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