
INFORMATION LITERACY WITHIN THE LIBRARY: A STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ACADEMIC LIBRARIES OF MANIPUR

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Abstract

Promotion of information literacy and development of an information literacy program in an academic setting is an institutional issue for the college or University as well as the library. Information literacy programmes require inclusion not only the faculty and staff throughout the institution, but also of staff in all library, so an attempt has been made to study some selected academic libraries of Manipur. How does one inform and engage all library employees in the effort. Highlights ways in which library employees can support an information literacy program and suggest that programs will be stronger if members of all library participate, ensuring that the organization is working toward a common institution-wide goal of information literacy.

Keywords: Information literacy, Higher education, AAHE.

1. Introduction

The critical importance of the role of information literacy in higher education is gaining increased recognition. In early 2000, the American Association of Higher Education (AAHE) overwhelmingly supported and endorsed the Association of college and Research libraries (ACRL) document information literacy competency standards for Higher Education. The document states that developing life long learners who are information literate is central to the mission of higher education Institutions. Reference and instructional librarians, as well as many library administrators have played leadership roles in the effort to implement information literacy programs and promote the need for information literacy within individual institutions. Helpful service and positive interactions with the library and with the information resources in general, may assist each student to have a positive attitude towards, and a greater willingness to continue to learn about finding and using information.

2. Scope of the study

The study entitled "Information literacy within the library: A study with Special Reference to Academic Libraries of Manipur" covers only seven (7) selected Academic Libraries of Manipur i.e 1) MU Library, Canchipur, Imphal; 2) RIMS (Regional Institute of Medical Science) Library, Imphal; 3) CAU (Central Agricultural University) Library, Iroisemba; 4) Polytechnic Library, Takyelpat, Imphal; 5) MIT (Manipur Institute of Technology), Takyelpat, Imphal; 6) ITI (Industrial Training Institute), Takyelpat, and 7) LMS (Lairenmayum Sheibyashachi Singh) Law College Library, Imphal. In this paper an attempt has been made to study the problems associated with the rapidly changing Information, information technologies and Information Literacy within the libraries.

3. Methodology

Questionnaire cum interview method was used to collect data form the librarians and staffs of these selected libraries

3. Information Literacy

Information literacy is currently understood as embracing the ability to define a problem, find information to solve the problem, evaluate information and use it effectively. Information literacy as a way to move efficient access, evaluation and use of information should be taken into account and used for improving information end-users. It is a set of information and knowledge of skill that enable individuals to recognise when information is needed and when it is not, how to locate, evaluate, integrate, use and effectively communicate information. In short information literacy means knowing information about information. Information literacy refers to a constellation of skills revolving around information research and use. According to the final report of the American Library Association Presidential Committee on Information Literacy (1989), the information literate person is “able to recognise when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate and use it effectively”. The library professionals should be aware of the potentials of library users/readers.

4. Role of Library Professionals

The role and function of a library and information professional in the changing environment can be described as, he must facilitate information use, navigate knowledge systems and information sources. He should consult and advise on information problems and audit the optimal management of information resources. He must translate between the technical system and cultural resources and transform data and information flowing between systems. He should have the capability of offering information policy support for organizational strategies and provide resources for information literacy. The library professional emerging role and functions brings closer to the needs of the users and therefore should have the capacity to evaluate the precise requirements of the users.

5. Library Professionals of some selected Academic Libraries of Manipur under study

Information as the saying goes is power. The Primary objective of libraries is to organise and provide access to information. Library professions in India, particularly those serving high-tech institutions, are already subject to various challenges. The introduction of computers was a challenge to all librarians. Librarians may have to function more like consulting information engineers than as the traditional passive custodians of information and dispensers of documents. Moving from a collection centered model to one that is access and service – oriented. In Manipur, from the survey, it is learnt that there is no proper infrastructure for application of IT (Information Technology) and also interviewed the library professionals to know in what ways the library professionals make a contribution to information literacy efforts in their libraries.

5.1 Out of the 72 questionnaires distributed 57 were received back. Table No.1 indicates that the number of respondent from each selected Academic Library of Manipur.

Sl. No.	Category	No of questionnaire distributed	No of question received	Total collection
1.	MU Library	30	27	27
2.	RIMS Library	20	12	12
3.	CAU Library	08	05	05
4.	Polytechnic Library	05	04	04
5.	MIT Library	04	04	04
6.	ITI Library	01	01	01
7.	LMS Law College Library	04	04	04
	Total	72	57	57

6. Area of Contribution to Information Literacy Efforts in the Libraries

An attempt has been made to study under the following areas:

6.1 Circulation Staff Information Literacy Contribution:

- Recognise that the circulation desk is often the first point of contact for a user and that the user's first impression is important;
- Train all staff for positive "first point of contact" interactions;
- Involve student staff in training, discussing approachability and describing the information literacy goals for the library.

6.2 Inter Library Loan Information Literacy Contribution:

- Help users to determine what is available within the library;
- Refer when appropriate;
- Use interlibrary loan request as an indicator of collection need.

6.3 Reference Information Literacy Contribution:

- Teach how to find at point of need;
- Collaborate on researchers;
- Use a "Please disturb" sign at the reference desk;
- Conduct a reference interview;
- Identify what users are really asking for;
- Do not hide things!

6.4 Administrative Information Literacy Contribution:

- Share information literacy plans with all staff ;
- Help library staff promote information literacy ;
- Make personal contacts across campus;
- Add information literacy support to job description, as appropriate.

6.5 Acquisitions, Cataloguing and Serials Information Literacy Contribution:

- Make it possible for faculty, staff and students to make collection request Online, as well as using request cards;
- Acquire new (and needed items) in a time;
- Notify requesters about the acquisition of new items;
- Stay in close touch with the curriculum;
- Provide links to web sites and online journals from within the catalogue.

6.6. Library Web Page Design, Systems and Network Information Literacy Contribution:

- Computer operation knowledge and skills, (which constitute computer literacy), such as how to operate OPACs or microcomputer workstations, how to use modem with communication software to dial in systems and to download files, how to use stand alone or net-worked printer to print information, how to use CD-ROM devices etc.;
- Network knowledge such as some basic concepts on networking technology, overview of library network environment, different network systems' features and usage of LAN and online cataloguing systems, WAN especially Internet related, WWW, Email, and FTP functions, CD-ROM databases, necessary functions and commands to use networking systems such as login/out;
- Multimedia knowledge and skills for graphic/image resources, sound information resources, and other devices such as scanner with OCR applications;
- Networked information available in network systems, in their contents of databases(in subjects), coverage and formats, structure of files and records, information intended market for users and uses, information de-livery services, types of information such as utilities and index tools (Yahoo and Lycos in WWW, Veronica and Jewels in Gopher), resource guides and subject guides, bibliographic lists and full text/full-image electronic publications, email discussions groups (listserv) and training resources of different purposes;
- Information re-trieval skills such as Boolean logic searching; and
- Standards and methods to evaluate information results for effective use of information. (<http://www.ifla.org/iv/ifla62>)

The study reveals that the library professions/staffs were not able to provide/contribute towards the Information literacy promotion as there were many factors; but interviewed with the librarians have found out that, the libraries are unable to contribute to some extent as in the Table No.2 . It indicates that except MU Library, RIMS Library and CAU Library, the contribution made by the staff is very poor.

Table No.2

SL. NO.	Contribution Area to Information Literacy	MU Lib.	RIMS Lib.	CAU Lib.	Polytechnic Lib.	MIT Lib.	ITI Lib.	LMS Law College
1.	Circulation staff Inf. Literacy contribution.	04	02	01	01	01	00	01
2	Inter-Library loan Inf. Literacy contribution	02	01	00	00	00	00	00
3.	Reference Inf. Literacy contribution	06	03	01	01	01	00	01
4.	Administrative Inf. Literacy contribution	02	01	01	01	01	00	01
5.	Acquisition, Cataloguing and serial Inf. Literacy contribution	12	03	02	01	01	01	01
6.	Library Web Page Design, systems and Network Inf. Literacy contribution	01	02	00	00	00	00	00
	Total	27	12	05	04	04	01	04

7. Impact of IT Towards Contribution of Information Literacy

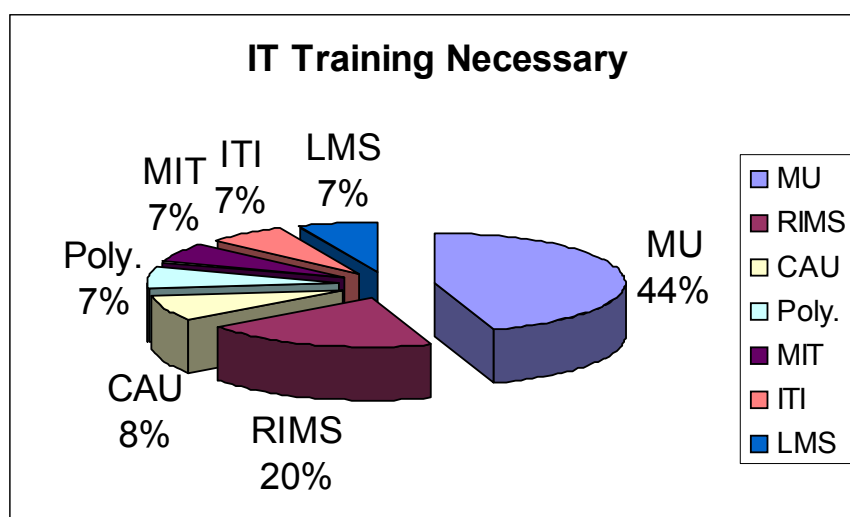
The staff opinion revealed that most of the staffs interested to go for IT application towards the contribution of Information literacy within the library. Table No.3 indicated their interest towards the application of IT in the library for contribution of Information literacy in the library.

Table No.3

NO.	Category	Generate interest	Search & Evaluation becomes easy	Tedious work can be eliminated	Library services will be improved	Total respondent
1.	MU Library	22	23	21	20	27
2.	RIMS Library	11	10	08	11	12
3.	CAU Library	05	04	02	04	05
4.	Polytechnic Library	04	04	03	04	04
5.	MIT Library	04	04	04	04	04
6.	ITI Library	01	01	01	01	01
7.	LMS Law College Library	04	04	04	04	04
	Total					57

7.1 Staff Opinion on IT Training

It is revealed from the study that the majority of the staff is not able to handle the computer but they are interested to go for training. The given pie-chart shows the percentage of respondents.



8. Findings and Suggestions

From the study it is revealed that most of the library professionals are not able to contribute Information literacy within the library due to the following problems faced thereby:

- Most of the libraries functioned with inadequate number of staff ;
- Absence of IT education ;
- Lack of active participation in conference/Seminar workshop, in-service training ;
- Lack of professional competency.

9. Suggestions

The electronic environment of the 21st century will demand arrange of skill from the library and Information Science professional in the promotion of information literacy within the library. Information literacy development in United States are based on national collaborations. The national work groups, professional organizations and task forces have worked together to define the components of Information literacy in higher education.

It is strongly suggested that:-

- To conduct workshops to begin a dialog with all the library Professionals/librarians and staff on what Information literacy is;
- To encourage each staff member to examine his /her work for ways in which he/she (either directly or indirectly) contributes to information literacy efforts;
- Collaborating faculty, librarians and other staff to promote Information literacy program;
- Forming a National Information Literacy Forum in the networks of education and library organisation and association;
- Designing the National Information literacy policies, standards and framework;
- Carrying out survey and studies on the usefulness of Information literacy;
- University Grants Commission (UGC) should take initiative in directing the higher educational institutions to integrate to Information literacy across the curriculum by designing a separate paper at the undergraduate/post graduate level students ;
- A dedicated Information literacy website where the information regarding Information literacy programmes can be made available;
- Government should made efforts in preparing policy guidelines and standards at National level.

10. Conclusion

The goal of an educational institution is to create a community of learners; we can all help foster the atmosphere that supports the goal. Information literacy is becoming an important part of collaborative efforts on campus. Library professionals should be ready to participate in the process of generating and distributing information and knowledge for quality of life and education for all. In short library professionals must unite to with stand the resolutions that will occur in the information and communication fields. Technology alone cannot help bring about the required changes. Attitudes, practices, and policies need to change, the more library professionals' network literacy, the more they may obtain relevant information. India is in urgent need of the National Information Literacy Forum where issues related to Information literacy can be

discussed at National level. India needs a strong movement of information literacy. The network of organisations and professional associations engaged on the Information literacy promotion and implementation are to be established. There should be well-developed library and information systems and networks. Educational institutions should understand the importance of information literacy and lifelong learning skills and educate their students how to find, evaluate and effectively use information. Each educational setup should have well-trained information and library professionals because they are the one who will be collecting, organizing and disseminating the information for productive use and development.

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