

## **User Education in University Libraries**

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### **Abstract**

User education is mainly concerned with providing guidance and instruction to the user in the proper use of library collection, individually or collectively. Difference between user education, orientation and initiation is mentioned and the need for user education in the libraries is emphasized. Objectives and methods of user education are provided. Though many institutions, universities and associations in India have organized seminars and conferences on the topic in the past, the necessary infrastructure and the innovation of suitable library instruction methods to suit the Indian conditions are yet to be developed. Therefore, it is the duty of the profession to develop such teaching aids which are suitable to meet the Indian requirements. It has become more urgent due to the heavy use of advanced technologies in libraries and information centres.

### **Introduction**

User education means educating the users of a library to make use of the library reading materials in its maximum extent possible. Educating the user would introduce the students to the right methods that would enable them for the rest of their lives to use libraries more effectively in education, research and development.

User education is mainly concerned with providing guidance and instruction to the user in the proper use of library collection, individually or collectively. Such programmes are organised to ascertain the users information needs to help the users in the expression of their requirements and to enable them to use the library effectively and efficiently.

User education is a process of activities involved in making the users of the library conscious about the tremendous value of information in day to day life and to develop interest amongst the users to seek information as and when they require it<sup>8</sup>.

## **Difference between user education, orientation and initiation**

The user education, user orientation, user assistance, user instruction, initiation have been used synonymously with mutually inclusive meanings. In recent years, differences between them are also made, especially between user education and other concepts. The orientation and initiation are meant only for new readers of the library, user education is meant for new as well as existing and potential users of the library. As a matter of fact orientation and initiation are part of user education.

## **Need for user education**

Due to information explosion, readers and researchers are unable to keep themselves abreast of the current literature. To find out required information necessitates the need for help the user. Without training or instructions, the library user would not be able to make efficient and effective use of all the information that is available in the library. Many readers are reluctant to approach staff members with their problems. Hence university libraries offering a formal training in the use of libraries, will encourage them to approach the staff and at the same time make them more independent, as they will be able to solve many of their library problems for themselves.

Some times the user may not know how to make use of the catalogue, computer, indexing system, different reference tools, and other modern instruments.

Under the circumstances, it is essential to conduct the user education. User education is one of the most effective ways of stimulating users and introducing them to the vast amount of available information in the library. Librarians and their Universities will fail if they send their graduates out into the world without the knowledge of library use.

## **Objectives of user education**

The objectives of user education in University libraries are :

1. A general orientation about available facilities and resources.
2. The teaching of basic research skills and strategies
3. The teaching of the organisation of literature in various disciplines as well as the basic reference tools in each discipline.
4. To train the user in handling information products like printed forms and electronic forms of material.

5. To train the user to use information sources and services available through online, internet, inhouse database etc.

### **Methods of user education**

There are many methods of user education. No single method could be suitable for all occasions. In Indian university libraries, looking to the available facilities, any one of the following methods or a combination of two or more methods can be adopted :

1. Shelf guiding
2. Orientation week
3. Lecture method
4. Library tour
5. Audio-Visual methods
6. Printed booklet

Selection and application of a particular method depends upon the objective of the programme.

### **User education programmes in university libraries**

The needs and behaviour of users differ from one library to another library environment. For example, in university libraries, the needs of the user are different from those in special libraries or information centres.

In Western countries user education programme is an integral part of library activity, whereas in Indian unvesity libraries the value and worth of user education programme has not yet been fully recognised. This is due to complete lack of teaching aids required for this programme, the necessary infrastructure and the innovation of suitable library instruction methods to suit Indian conditions have not been developed so far.<sup>4</sup> However, since last 10 years or so the need for organising user education programmes has been felt. Many institutions and associations in India have organised seminars and conferences on the topic which has motivated libraries to undertake user education programme. In Karnataka almost all university libraries have started orientation programmes for the newly admitted students.

### **Conclusion**

The user education programme plays a vital role in the process of information dissemination and maximum utilization of resources in

University Libraries. It is the duty of the profession to develop teaching aids which are suitable to meet the Indian requirements. Now a days the need of user education programme has become more and more important due to the heavy use of advanced technologies in libraries and information centres to carry out various activities of the library and to meet the information needs of the user.

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