

# Revealing Excellence: The Art and Science of Library Best Practices

Partha Sarathi Mandal

Sukumar Mandal

Sailendra Malik

## Abstract

*The library is the hub of an academic system. With the active collaboration of a library, the whole academic functioning will be complete. Best practices are a powerful and much-used tool in today's trending conditions. They need a system for checking, evaluation and also to enhance the library and information services. The concept of best practices has been explored and outlined in this book chapter. The importance of their implementation cannot be underestimated, as they may create opportunities for the facilitation of the processes, optimal resources distribution, and the delivery of the top-quality services to the patrons. The best practices investigated in the study vary greatly, as the spectrum includes the usual processes and IT-related solutions such as web pages, email alerts, institutional repositories, extension services, and operational excellence. This study deals with best practices, unraveling the amalgamation of art and science that underpins excellence in library management. Drawing upon a synthesis of empirical research, theoretical frameworks, and practical insights, it illuminates the multifaceted dimensions of library operations, user engagement, and community impact. Through a systematic analysis, this study explains the critical factors that contribute to the cultivation of excellence within library settings, offering valuable implications for both practitioners and scholars in the field.*

**Keywords:** Academic Libraries, Assessment, Best Practices, Librarianship, Role of Librarians

## 1. Introduction

Libraries are important for sharing knowledge, preserving culture, and empowering communities. In today's fast-changing world, it's crucial for libraries to provide excellent services. Best practices are refined ways of doing things to get the best results. They attract users and meet their needs effectively. These practices can be new ideas or basic principles that guide how libraries operate. They help solve problems and improve the entire library. By using best practices, libraries build up quality over time and keep getting better. Each library should consider its own users' needs when choosing practices. Libraries aim to constantly improve their services and adopt the best ways of doing things. This study explores how libraries can use best practices to make their services better for everyone.



## 2. Definition of Best Practices

Best practices represent a comprehensive range of methodologies and strategies recognized as exemplary within a specific field. They embody the most efficient approaches to collection management, patron services, and organizational governance (Web Junction, 2022) in library and information science. According to “Online Dictionary of Library and Information Science”, best practices bring the result for the application or procedure of theory to real-life situations (Reitz, 2021). Wikipedia (2021) suggests that best practice is a technique for gaining widespread acceptance due to its ability to yield superior results compared to alternatives in standard approach. Oxford Advanced Learners’ Dictionary suggests it as “high-quality standards, improved, and excellent services” (Simpson et al., 1989). Developing best practices requires action rather than mere conceptualization, emphasizing the importance of honing skills through practical implementation. Best Practice, a management concept, posits the existence of techniques, methods, processes, activities, incentives, or rewards that outperform others in achieving specific outcomes. National Assessment and Accreditation Council (2007) says that best practice is an innovative and philosophical approach encompassing a range of elements such as policies, strategies, programs, processes or practices for resolving challenges, fostering innovation, and positively impacting organizations. Best practices for academic libraries are as follows:

- ❖ Use standardized software;
- ❖ Share library info in prospectuses;
- ❖ Keep stats for students and teachers;
- ❖ Show newspaper clippings regularly;
- ❖ Offer career information;
- ❖ Provide internet access;
- ❖ Develop technological skills;
- ❖ Use suggestion boxes;
- ❖ Display new arrivals;
- ❖ Give awards for engagement etc.
- ❖ Do user surveys for improvements

In his article, S. D. Vyas (2009) contributes several noteworthy library practices, including:

- ❖ To help the people to find their requirements;
- ❖ Keep the library neat and clean;

- ❖ Make a complete list of all the magazines and journals.
- ❖ Update the library website regularly so it stays useful.
- ❖ Show important statistics on a wall magazine.
- ❖ Make checklists for different subjects to help with certain services.
- ❖ Set up a temporary committee to look after operations and improvements.
- ❖ Give out helpful handouts to library users.

### **3. Art and Science of Library Best Practice**

Library best practices create a lively and inclusive atmosphere for learning. Innovation and adaptability are what make libraries exciting spaces for lifelong exploration — and these do not come by chance. Libraries need to be user-focused so they can offer services that are both accessible and useful. Best practices go beyond just program implementation to also include the physical aspects of a library: based on evidence, they are continuously refined. With the use of data and assessment, libraries can understand resource usage by people as well as the impact of their services; this calls for creativity blended with research in what is shared among others within the field. An aesthetic knowledge and science based practice is essential for library best practices.

### **4. Types of Best Practices**

Best practices depend on the nature and focus of the library, but they typically stress excellent service delivery, technology adoption, community involvement and equal access to information for all. Different types of libraries have their own best practices like:

**4.1. User-Centric Approach:** The fact is that library does have to collect data to act decisively and address the issue in the productive way.

**4.1.1. Digital Resources:** Libraries must consider increasing their digital content like e-books, audio-books and online databases.

**4.1.2. Staff Training:** Library especially should run the training and adopting user orientation program to help getting access for students.

**4.2. Academic Libraries:** Academic library is drawer books and gateway to knowledge. It provides for research assistance, collaboration, arranging of samples, and digitally advanced tools to assist.

**4.2.1. Information Literacy Instruction:** Organize workshops and tutorials which will help students to develop research and information literacy skills. These two approaches are designed to prevent water infiltration and protect the privacy of residents.

**4.2.2. Collaboration with Faculty:** Form collaborations with lecturers to offer faculty administrative, analytical, and marketing support such as access to the right resources.

**4.2.3. Collection Development:** The mission of the library should be creating and maintaining a collection that is in line with curriculum and research interests, which would assist people within the academic community.

**4.2.4. Open Access Initiatives:** Give access to publication fees funds and take part in those efforts to open access to institutional repositories and the open access publishing.

**4.2.5. Digital Preservation:** Advise on methods of digital materials preservation and permit the continued availability of these records.

**4.3. Special Libraries:** Libraries (for example, corporate, medical, law libraries) which are for special use can prove of great value to organizations by analyzing processes of accessibility of information, knowledge management and client satisfaction.

**4.3.1. Customized Services:** For instance, special library tends to the specific circumstance of the institution or group.

**4.3.2. Current Awareness Services:** Through industry trend notifications and regulations updates, your platform helps the users to acquire the useful information.

**4.3.3. Knowledge Management:** Encourage organizations to align their knowledge aspects to effectively manage internal knowledge assets.

**4.3.4. Professional Development:** Aid the workers with the availability of the resources that will encourage going on the continuous education and training for professional development.

**4.3.5. Confidentiality and Data Security:** Build in a range of stringent privacy policies that will ensure the secrecy of secret information.

**4.4. Digital Libraries:** Digital libraries concentrate on the information assimilability and policies of the innovation. The libraries are accustomed to metadata standards so as to ensure the provision of user-friendly interfaces. Utilizing the internet for personal and educational purposes has had a profound impact on society. This technology has transformed how we communicate, collaborate, access information, and consume media. With digital libraries, digital preservation has been facilitated through the improvement and collection of system records that are modifiable by users.

**4.4.1. Metadata Standards** – Librarians must cope with prescribed protocols of metadata standards in order to maintain the continuity and mark the possibility of cooperation between the databases.

**4.4.2. Data Entry** – Ability to maintain user-centered and welcoming interface systems that make easy recall and recognition of the digital resources.

**4.4.3. Digital Preservation** – Library shall be providing digital preservation strategies on a regular basis through which services can be made more sustainable and worthy of integrity of digital holdings.

**4.4.4. Copyright Compliance** – Digital libraries shall neither violate the copyrights and licensing rules irrespective of the fact that they do the scanning and give the copyrighted materials to the readers.

Digital library requires a security and authenticating mechanism (authentication) to deny access to sensitive digital content.

Following these criteria, NAAC listed the following best practices for a college library:

- ❖ Library & Information Science PG Teaching Department
- ❖ Digital Library E- Zone
- ❖ N-LIST
- ❖ OPAC
- ❖ Free Library Service to Senior Citizens
- ❖ BRAIN Activity
- ❖ Institutional Repository
- ❖ Library Blog
- ❖ Feedback on the Library
- ❖ Feedback on Books
- ❖ MOOC (Massive et al.)
- ❖ Wall Magazines: Free Digital Material, Open Courseware. Open Universities and Library Science Opportunities
- ❖ Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) Service
- ❖ Current Awareness Service (CAS)
- ❖ Journals
- ❖ Reprography
- ❖ Reference Service
- ❖ Library Tour & Visit
- ❖ Best Reader Award
- ❖ OPAC Training Program
- ❖ NET-SET Training Center
- ❖ Reading Room

- ❖ Display Screen
- ❖ New Arrivals Display Record Keeping
- ❖ Library Orientation
- ❖ Inter Library Loan Facility
- ❖ Record Keeping

### **5. Importance of Best Practices**

The implementation of best practices secures optimal resource employment and effectiveness in service delivery (OCLC, 2019). Best practices are like quality standards that help libraries give consistent service. They also encourage libraries to change and try new things to keep up with new ideas and technology. But even if a practice has worked before, it might not work for every library without some changes. Overall, best practices follow industry rules and try to go beyond them when possible. Like other organizations, academic libraries use best practices to share information and make learning better. Technology is now so common that it's like a basic rule for libraries. If a library follows these rules, it's more likely to do well. People expect libraries to have these technologies and practices. But it's not just about money; libraries need freedom to make decisions. Money isn't the only thing stopping libraries from using best practices. This does not mean the budget is the only constraint for implementing best practices. The best practices will lead to the benchmarking of the libraries, which satisfies and gives good scope for getting attributes as required by the accreditation agencies:

- ❖ **Improves Library Performance:** Best practices aim to make the library and its services better, meeting users' needs and performing well. By comparing different practices, libraries can find what works best and even discover new ideas to try.
- ❖ **Increases User Satisfaction:** Following best practices makes the library work more efficiently, which leads to happier users.
- ❖ **Improves Upper Management Support:** Using best practices can help gain support from top management by solving problems and achieving goals more effectively.
- ❖ **Builds Professional Relationships and Learning Culture:** Best practices create a sense of professionalism among library staff and contributors, which helps the library grow and fosters a culture of continuous learning.
- ❖ **Substantiates Library's Value:** Best practices demonstrate the value of the library's resources and the hard work of its staff, especially in well-funded institutions like universities and autonomous institutes.

### **6. Application Areas of Best Practices in Library Services**

Library users, including students and teachers, follow Best Practice standards in various aspects like services, facilities, collections, and budget. Examples of best practices in libraries include digital resources,

---

online catalogs, services for senior citizens, collaboration with other libraries, and feedback systems. These practices cover a range of services such as reference assistance, interlibrary loans, and training programs. Sivakumar (2017) highlights the pivotal role played by these elements in the process of drafting self-study reports. Therefore, meticulous attention to maintaining daily records is imperative. Effective enforcement of library rules and cultivating user awareness, alongside the vigilance of library staff, emerge as essential prerequisites. The implementation of best practices stands as a foundational approach applicable to any library. Lavate (2017) provides insights into key considerations for enhancing services and other aspects within college libraries to realize the objectives of best practices.

**Table 1: Areas of Best Practices in Library Services**

<b>Sl. No.</b>	<b>Areas for Best Practices in Libraries</b>	<b>Functions</b>
a.	Library Management	Library management can efficiently use computer software for administrative tasks like acquiring reading materials, cataloging, circulation management, and serial control.
b.	Collection Management	The primary goal of collection management is to provide sufficient reading materials like reference books, textbooks, journals and non-book materials for academic excellence.
c.	Book Exhibition	The library can display their holdings in various occasions like birthdays and notable events.
d.	Library Orientation	The library conducts annual orientation programs for newcomers. They receive training on how to use the library and its resources.
e.	Usage Statistics	The library records data at all service points, with a main register at the entrance tracking daily footfalls for decision-making processes.
f.	Book Bank	The College can offer a Book Bank Facility for economically disadvantaged students.
g.	Inter-Library Loan	College libraries can initiate inter-library loan facilities with neighboring institutions to exchange reading materials.
h.	Career Counseling Services	The library should expand its extension services to the users for UPSC, PSC, and Bank competitive examinations. They should arrange a Career Counseling program for the students.
i.	Web Based Service	The library can offer web-based services through its website like virtual tours, a reference desk, librarian assistance, e-books etc.

Best practices find application across diverse areas of library operations. These are in the followings:

- ❖ Collection Development and Management: Curating and maintaining collections to meet user needs.
- ❖ Reference and Research Assistance: Providing expert guidance to patrons accessing information resources.
- ❖ Digital Services and Access: Ensuring seamless access to digital collections and online resources.
- ❖ Programming and Outreach: Engaging diverse user groups through innovative programs and initiatives.

### **7. Role of Librarians in Best Practices**

Librarians are feeling the pressure of keeping up with the fast-paced digital world. Even though human values are important, technology's speed is changing how we live. This fast pace can make it hard for librarians to keep up. The value of traditional librarian skills persists, notably within academic environments. Librarians need to adapt new technologies to enhance effective knowledge sharing. Librarians should not merely be service providers but rather experts who contribute towards creating an enriching library environment. Advocating best practices and fostering a culture of innovation and optimal performance within the library are key responsibilities of librarians. Their roles include:

- ❖ Information Experts: Librarians organize collections so users can easily find and use relevant resources.
- ❖ User Support: Librarians help patrons with research and using library resources, giving personalized help.
- ❖ Technology Integration: Digital resources are managed by librarians who assist users with technology;
- ❖ Community Engagement: Events organized by librarians for bringing the community together to learn and have fun;
- ❖ Advocacy: Librarians fight for the importance of libraries and access to information;
- ❖ Professional Development: Libraries keep on learning in order to always be updated about new trends and methods;
- ❖ Leadership: Working with others and ensuring that library goals aligns with its mission is what librarian does;
- ❖ Assessment and Evaluation: Improvements can be made based on data and feedback from librarians concerning how well the library is doing;
- ❖ Ethical Stewardship: Ethical standards are applied so that every individual can feel safe, fair, and open in the library.



## 8. Examples for Best Practices

The following chapter of the book explains how the best practices can be applied in a library. It provides three actual examples on availability, accessibility and usage of best practices:

- ❖ Sir C.V. Raman discovered his winning of the Nobel Prize through Madras University Library's library services.
- ❖ Mr. T.N. Chaturvedi, a Former Governor, got a book from Bombay University Library right away, even breaking library rules.
- ❖ Prof. Mehta, a Former Pro Vice-Chancellor, quickly got access to Bombay University Library when he asked for using the library. Without wasting time, Dr. Anderson provided all facilities to Prof. Mehta.

These stories exemplify what best Practice is in practice and how it changes the library's outcomes and patron satisfaction. Best practices depend on availability, accessibility and utilization.

## 9. Discussions and Suggestions

Traditional best practices are evaluated with book exhibition, library hours, orientation programs, new arrivals, library brochure, book reviews, and readers' club, award for best library users etc. Now, at present the library depends on information and communication technology. Traditional best practices are evaluated with book exhibition, library hours, orientation programs, new arrivals, library brochure, book reviews, and readers' club, award for best library users etc. Now, at present the library depends on information and communication technology. Best practices consider here with these parameters like Software, WebPages, OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue), e-resources, Institutional Repository, online readers' Advisory services, (CAS (Current Awareness Services) and SDI services etc. (Prabhakar and Manjula, 2017). Assessment and evaluation are necessary for measuring the effective library services. Best practices in assessment and evaluation include performance metrics, user feedback and continuous improvement. According to Dempsey and Malpas (2019), strategic planning, proper resource allocation enhance library operation and services. This study concludes by asking readers to "discuss" the problems and solutions associated with best practices in a library. The doubt and enact section were then analyzed in terms of case studies. The audience was urged to think about other ways they may have doubts. It calls for libraries coming together to collaborate and share ideas and experiences on how best to provide library services. For best practices, libraries can introduce bibliotherapy, clinical therapy with books (Mandal and Mandal, 2024) which is used for clinical counseling of the users. For best practices, library should follow the following suggestions:

- (i) The academic libraries should maintain adopt proper Curation, prevention and security measures (Mandal and Mandal, 2023) for best Library practices.
- (ii) The parent bodies like UGC/AICTE and other accreditation agencies should make it mandatory implementing the best library practices.

- (iii) Authority and Government should arrange a sufficient budget for introducing various plans and programs.
- (iv) Library should adopt new Information Technology initiatives and tools to provide latest IT infrastructure
- (v) To introduce best practices, libraries should arrange various innovative interaction programs like information literacy programs.
- (vi) Social media can be used for marketing library products and services.

## 10. Conclusion

Implementing best practices in libraries improves their appeal to users and benefits society. Using technology helps build stronger networks and makes better use of resources. Online services make it easier to find accurate information and support new research. When colleges use best practices, they show their unique strengths, and librarians are seen as experts in teaching and information. By blending traditional and modern approaches, libraries stay relevant in the digital age. They adapt to changes like moving from physical records to online searches. Innovation helps libraries survive and grow by meeting users' needs and collaborating with other libraries. Best practices need to be regularly updated to meet new challenges and improve services. This ongoing improvement makes libraries and institutions more desirable.

## 11. References

1. Abeysekera, K. H. T., Balasooriya, A. H. K., & Marasinghe, M. M. I. K. (2020). Best practices in library management during covid-19 pandemic: Case of the library, the open university of Sri Lanka (Ousl). *Sri Lanka Journal of Management Studies*, 2(2), 147–154. <https://doi.org/10.4038/sljms.v2i2.43>
2. Best practices. (2024, January 4). OCLC. <https://www.oclc.org/research/activities/shares/best-practices.html>
3. Dempsey, L. (2016). Library collections in the life of the user: Two directions. *LIBER Quarterly*, 26(4), 338. <https://doi.org/10.18352/lq.10170>
4. Mandal, P. S., & Mandal, S. (2023). Curation, prevention and security measures for library. *Pearl : A Journal of Library and Information Science*, 17(4), 175–178. <https://doi.org/10.5958/0975-6922.2023.00021.9>
5. Mandal, P. S., & Mandal, S. (2024). Bibliotherapy in library: A tool for developing reading habits. *Pearl : A Journal of Library and Information Science*, 18(1), 25–30. <https://doi.org/10.5958/0975-6922.2024.00004.4>
6. NAAC. (2007). *Best Practices in Library and Information Services*. Bangalore, Karnataka, India. [http://www.naac.gov.in/best\\_practices.asp](http://www.naac.gov.in/best_practices.asp)

7. Prabhakar, S.V.R., and Manjula Rani, S. V. (2017). Best Practices adopted in Academic Libraries and Information Centers: At a Glance. *International Journal of Librarianship and Administration*, 8(1), 7-15.
8. Reitz, J. M. (2021). Online Dictionary for Library and Information Science. [Online] Retrieved August 25, from <http://www.abc-clio.com/ODLIS/searchODLIS.aspx>
9. Simpson, J. A. (1989). Weiner, E. S. C., & Oxford University Press. (1989). *The Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
10. Sivakumar, C. (2017). Roll of NAAC Policy in College Libraries for maintaining Quality. *International Journal for Innovative Research in MultidisciplinaryField*, 3 (9), 96-98.
11. Tripathy, P. K. (2021). Digital best practices in Bhopal library: Engaging users with transformative library solutions during covid-19 pandemic. *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-Journal)*. <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/6417>
12. Wikipedia (2021). Best Practice. Retrieved August 28, 2021 from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Best\\_practice](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Best_practice)

#### **About Authors**

**Partha Sarathi Mandal**, PhD Research Scholar, Dept. of Lib. & Info. Sci., The University of Burdwan, Burdwan, West Bengal

Email: [mandalpsm@gmail.com](mailto:mandalpsm@gmail.com)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7685-258X>

**Dr. Sukumar Mandal**, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Lib. & Info. Sci., The University of Burdwan, Burdwan, West Bengal

Email: [sukumar.mandal5@gmail.com](mailto:sukumar.mandal5@gmail.com)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1415-402X>

**Sailendra Malik**, PhD Research Scholar, Dept. of Lib. & Info. Sci., The University of Burdwan, Burdwan, West Bengal

Email: [sailendra.malik113@gmail.com](mailto:sailendra.malik113@gmail.com)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0581-0072>