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“ROLE OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION”

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Abstract: In comparison to primary and secondary education, the role of academic libraries in higher education is much more important since a library is considered a prime requirement in university education. The entire academic and research process is fully dependent on the library network. To facilitate any educational program successfully, the library proves an essential part. Kothari Education Commission (1964-65) emphasized that the disregard for the library and giving it a low priority is more damaging. The academic library is the vital component that develops the teaching-learning and research activity. It serves as a key factor to accomplish the aims and objectives of higher education. The system of education has been changing rapidly in the modern world. Due to the impact of tremendous advancement in computer and communication technologies, the perception, approaches, and techniques of teaching and learning have also been altered gradually. Hence, according to the need for timely change, the entire system of education as well as academic libraries have to keep pace to fulfill the standards of quality education and achieve the projected goals. The modification in the academic world is considered essential to carry out further development of the country. With the advancement of digital technologies, the role of the library and librarian in higher education has been widely expanded since a variety of challenges have emerged.

Keywords: Academic libraries, Higher education, Library professionals, Knowledge management, University library.

I. INTRODUCTION

Academic libraries in India are huge treasures of knowledge catering to the requirements of people who are connected to higher education, for example, academicians, practitioners, researchers, and others.

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In India, academic libraries have greater roles and responsibilities as their mission and vision are changing. In today's competitive world, policymakers have to help them in the generation of various knowledge hubs, knowledgeable personnel, and information workers. This paper will elaborate on the positioning of academic libraries as torchbearers and how they help in the

integration of the systems of resources and knowledge. The paper will also emphasize a crucial tool for academic libraries that is, Knowledge management, which has been successfully implemented in Indian as well as foreign libraries. The objective of this research paper is to discuss the various opportunities and issues faced by the academic libraries of India and thus, how these institutions play a key role in providing sustained competitive advantage leading to nation-building by conducting research and developmental activities.

Statement of the Problem

The study entitled “Role of Academic Libraries in Higher Education”. There was a few studies have been conducted to know the role of academic libraries in higher education. The role of academic libraries in higher education is less known, so the topic has been undertaken to study the roles of academic libraries in higher education.

Scope of the Study

The scope of the study area is limited to academic libraries only. Like other investigators, the researcher has some constraints or limitations like the time limit, financial resources, and sufficient authority to collect the information. To conduct the study, the researcher has selected academic libraries only. The present study will cover all aspects of the agenda of academic libraries and the roles of higher education.

Objectives of the Study

- To know the status of academic libraries;
- To find out the initiative taken by the librarians to improve the higher education system;
- To find out the roles of library professionals of academic libraries;
- To give awareness about the recent technologies in libraries to the library professionals.

Research Methodology

This study focuses on the role of academic libraries in higher education. In order to do so, the researcher has collected data by using the purposive sampling technique. Data has been collected through a well-designed questionnaire along with some sort of interview and observation. To strengthen the findings, the researcher has also taken interviews with the library staff. It is important to note that all study participants belong to the academic libraries only. The study has been designed, developed, and carried out to determine and analyze the role of academic libraries in higher education.

Review of Literature

Chaudhary (2018), in his research article entitled “The role of libraries in higher education” mentioned that the role of libraries and librarians in the recent era has changed as a result of the techno-driven

world. The library is considered “the heart” of a university or an institute offering higher education. University Grant Commission played a vital role in the betterment of libraries in higher education by establishing the Information and Library Network Centre (INFLIBNET). The SOUL (Software for University Libraries) developed by the INFLIBNET center, made available to its member free of charge, proved valuable in modernizing the entire set-up of academic libraries. The reservoir of Indian theses is called Shodhganga, a database of thousands of theses from various universities across India that has also become a chief source for researchers and academicians to seek the knowledge generated in various branches. The challenges like effective utilization of digital technologies, supporting access to Open Access Resources, etc. have not been overcome yet in every respect.

Foo, Chaudhry, Majid and Logan (2002) mentioned in the article entitled “Academic libraries in transition- Challenges ahead” that the evolving information and knowledge-based economy has resulted in a climate of transition and change in academic libraries around the world. As universities make the transformation to learning organizations, academic libraries, as constituents of its larger parent organizations, are rethinking and exploring new ways to reposition themselves in the campus environment in view of higher

expectations of its various stakeholders, the pervasiveness of information technology, increased availability and focus on electronic resources and services, and the need to become learning and research centers to support a wide range of educational initiatives.

Rasul and Singh (2010) wrote an article on the role of academic libraries in facilitating postgraduate student research, where they mentioned that Universities are seeking to play a key role in the research and development process. An important element in the research process is the accessibility of information resources and services provided by libraries. Postgraduate students are key producers of research in universities, and an important element in their research process is access to information. This study examines postgraduate students’ views on the role of the academic library services in facilitating their research and their satisfaction with the sources and services currently provided wrote an article on the role of academic libraries in facilitating postgraduate student research where they mentioned that Universities are seeking to play a key role in the research and development process. An important element in the research process is the accessibility of information resources and services provided by libraries. Postgraduate students are key producers of research in universities, and an important element in their research process

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Hart and Kleinveldt (2011) in their study "The role of an academic library in research: researchers' perspectives at a South African University of Technology" mentioned that Academic libraries typically identify research support as a central pillar in their mission. But they need to examine how their mission statements relate to the perspectives of researchers themselves, especially in view of reported changes in researchers' information seeking and sharing in the

online environment. For various historical reasons universities of technology lag behind in terms of their research output and in recent years CPUT has prioritized research. This is reflected in the virtual unanimity among the 102 respondents that research is essential to their job despite their heavy teaching loads. Overall, the study finds that most (over 65%) continue to rely on the library for access to print and electronic resources. It finds a heavy emphasis on the traditional functions of an academic library, such as resource and information management.

Role of Academic Libraries in Higher Education

The library is not just a repository, or a service like any other, or a place for study: it is all these things. It can also be a partner in research and in teaching, and institutions that fail to capitalize fully on this asset will find it harder to compete in the future.

16 reasons to value academic libraries:

1. The library continues to fulfill its role as the heart of the university, despite the move away from print and toward electronic resources. The work the library undertakes contributes directly to the institution's academic mission and to equipping students with the skills and knowledge they need to achieve academically and maximize their employability.
2. Investment in e-resources has a

direct impact on the productivity of an institution. Where academics and students have good access to e-content, effectively the library is now open 24 hours irrespective of building opening hours, and finding books and journals has become fast and immediate, freeing time up for research and for teaching.

3. It was found that the economic benefits of a university library are considerable. A number of studies have undertaken an economic benefit analysis showing that accessing a book or journal through the library rather than via another route saves significant time and resources.

4. For an individual university, good quality library resources can help attract and retain academic high flyers and contribute to the prestige of an institution.

5. These resources can also help universities attract and retain graduate students

6. The quality and depth of those resources are also a determinant of the quality of research a university's academics can produce. Per capita expenditure and use of e-journals are strongly and positively correlated with papers published, numbers of Ph.D. awards, and research grants and contracts income.

7. Many institutions will also involve their library staff in the process of research, including in developing bids for funding.

8. Universities that invest in their library see a return in terms of the quality of

the grant applications they are able to make, and ultimately therefore to grant income.

9. The library is much more than a passive repository for knowledge. For the undergraduate, the library as a place, and the library as a service are central to their experience of university. The library represents an important point of continuity for students during their time at university as does their relationship with its staff. This growing understanding of the role of the librarian as a student advisor is now helping to drive convergence between the library and support services within HEIs.

10. The quality of the library is more important even than teaching contact time for prospective students considering which university to attend.

11. Despite the move to e-resources, students are visiting their university library more often and spending more time when they do. Particularly in the arts and humanities, undergraduates may well spend more time with their librarian than with their lecturer. That time is spent supporting students to become self-directed learners.

12. Investing in the teaching and support services offered by the library can increase the employability of a university's graduates. The ability to source and manage information, and to use electronic resources and technology effectively, are skills that are highly valued by employers.

Universities with libraries that spend more

on materials and employ more staff also have greater retention rates.

How Academic Libraries Affect Student Success

Student libraries are educational centers that fuel students with academic resources, working spaces, and the opportunity for self-development. They also encourage thinking processes, creativity, and inquisitiveness.

Overall Purpose of Academic Libraries in the Higher Education Field

The role is to provide students with any type of informational resources: physical and digital textbooks, references, and periodicals. This role extends to librarians providing guidance and tutoring for the students' upcoming academics projects (e.g., master's and doctorate degrees). Librarians are integrated into several academic activities to help students, such as referencing and research consultations.

Thus, student libraries focus on fully supporting their visitors with facilities for advanced study and research work.

These learning centers also allow the students to use individual or group learning workspaces and areas. Investigations of student library usage have found that the primary usage of academic libraries is individual-focused learning, meaning that there are a lot of students who prefer to have their personal working area in their college library.

Another major focus is information literacy

instruction, which is the ability to identify, locate and access appropriate sources of information to meet the information need. A lot of American libraries are employing a person with the sole responsibility to instruct others. Information literacy is an important skill, especially in a learning environment since it is considered the foundation for independent and lifelong learning. It teaches students how to sort and use information effectively.

Conclusion

The role of academic libraries and librarians has changed basically in the techno-driven world. The advancement in context to sharing resources should be used for the benefit of students and teaching faculty in the best possible manner. The adequate infrastructure is one of the major barriers because universities provide connectivity, but how and to what extent it is used is more important. Though access to required information and reading material is possible through internet technology even from outside the campus, it also needs proper care and guidance.

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