

ANALYSIS ON INFORMATION LITERACY AMONG THE FACULTY AND STUDENTS OF ARTS AND SCIENCE COLLEGE LIBRARIES: MADURAI DISTRICT

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Abstract

Many predict that the digital age will wipe public bookshelves clean, and permanently end the centuries-old era of libraries. As libraries' relevance comes into question, librarians face an existential crisis at a time when students need them the most. Despite their perceived obsolescence in the digital age, both libraries and librarians are irreplaceable for many reasons. The amazing amount of useful information on the web has, for some, engendered the false assumption everything can be found online. It's simply not true. A fundamental understanding of what the internet is and isn't can help clearly define the role of a library, and why libraries are still extremely important. Online library collections, however, are different. They typically include materials that have been published via rigorous editorial processes and are riddled with quantitative analysis, instead of opinion. Types of materials include books, journals, documents, newspapers, magazines and reports which are digitized, stored and indexed through a limited-access database. A library is a treasure-house of knowledge. A well-stocked library is an asset to the school, college, university or the neighborhood. A library has a librarian to guide and attend to the readers. Books are kept and arranged properly which makes the reader look for a particular book easily. A member of a library can borrow a few books for a particular period and take them home. It is the responsibility of the reader that no pages are torn. If he loses a book, he has to pay for the loss. Each academy has a library of its own. There are also neighborhood libraries and district libraries. It is a boon for poor students. Information technology has helped in improving the library facilities. However, the popularity of internet will not adversely affect the importance of a library. Books are man's best friends. They give him company equally in times of happiness as well as in times of distress. They are one of the main sources of knowledge. The best place for easy access to books is a library.

Key words: Digital Age, Online Library, Treasure-House of Knowledge, Boon for Poor Students, Information Technology and Happiness.

Introduction

Libraries are only next in importance to schools, colleges and universities as means of educating the public. A library is a store-house of books-books of all kinds and on all subjects under the sun. A good modern library usually subscribes to practically all the important newspapers and periodicals. Books, newspapers and periodicals are the main

features of a library and they represent the endeavors, achievements and glory of writers, statesmen, scientists, philosophers and saints. For a person of average means it is difficult to purchase more than one or two daily newspapers, but it is the keen desire of educated people to know all possible shades of opinion as expressed in various newspapers. The obvious course for them is to visit a library during their leisure and glance through the relevant pages of many newspapers which they think are worth the trouble. Generally a person does not subscribe to more than one or two magazines or periodicals and yet in these days of abundant supply of illustrated and pictorial journals most of us would like to have a look at the most attractive and interesting among them. This can be done only in a library which usually subscribes to most of the popular magazines.

The best feature of a library is that it either makes no charge upon the readers or collects a negligible membership fee for making available to them newspapers and journals. This fact is immensely helpful to the ill-paid and poor members of society who, notwithstanding their poverty, are interested in the political, social and religious developments reported by newspapers. To those who are voracious book readers, a library is all the more useful. Only a very rich man can afford to have a large private collection of books, while the desire to read books is now-a-days becoming more and more common. Besides, no private collection can be as big, up-to-date, and varied as the collection of books in a library; one can find books on history, economics politics, philosophy, physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics, literature, and languages. As the needs of various readers are different, a library serves a very useful purpose by meeting the requirements of all readers. The poorest man can go to a library, take out any book he needs and read or take notes from it without having to pay for the privilege. In this way, a single library benefits thousands of readers. Again, some books are priced so high that they are beyond the means of average reader, but they are usually to be found in a library. It is evident that a library confers incalculable advantages on the public only if they care to make use of it.

A library has always a studious atmosphere. As we enter a library, we find ourselves surrounded by books and readers. We see books of all kinds and sizes reposing in their respective places, and earnest readers eagerly devouring the contents of the books they have picked up from the shelves. What is more, all possible facilities are provided to the readers. Comfortable chairs with tables in front, adequate lighting arrangements, and a librarian to help and guide the reader all these factors make the place a veritable sanctuary fit for even the most serious and zealous students. A library is even more useful to research students. A research scholar working on a difficult, obscure subject usually needs books that are very expensive and that are often not available in the market. Sometimes he may need to refer to original manuscripts not otherwise available. In all such cases he will find it very advantageous to visit the various libraries and collect his material.

It is a stimulus to reading. It helps us develop a reading habit. Since its gates are open to all and sundry, to rich and poor, to professors and students, to scholars and lay-a-taste in books. In short, a library is a standing invitation to the public to come and read books as well as newspapers and periodicals. There is a wide choice of books and the library helps us to escape from the practical necessities of this world. And while there is a charge for traveling in a bus, for entering a cinema or a circus, for seeing a cricket match, there is no such charge for entering a library and becoming engrossed in a book. A well- equipped library is, indeed, the best friend, philosopher and guide.

Information Literacy

A library is a place where not only books but also magazines, journals and newspapers are well-stocked for the benefit of the readers. Beside this one can also get the entire atlas, Encyclopedia, etc. to know even the minute detail of a thing. It is a treasure-house of knowledge. It helps the spread of education. A reader can either read the in the library or borrow the book of his choice and take it home. The library is a popular place in the academic curriculum. A well-stocked library is an asset to a school, a college or a university. There are also neighborhood libraries and district libraries which benefit the readers of the area. A student or a reader can increase his knowledge of various subjects by reading in the library during his spare time. One can update one's knowledge by reading regularly in a library. A library needs a good librarian who should be well-qualified in library science. Such a person can maintain the books properly. He can guide the students to select suitable books. He should be cheerful and co-operative; one who can interact well with the readers. The reader easily gets the books he wants, if he consults the librarian. Thus, the guidance of the librarian saves a lot of time of the readers. A good librarian welcomes suggestions from readers for the improvement of the library. He purchases new books after taking into consideration the needs of the readers.

Normally, a library is housed in a very spacious hall but small libraries are also present in small towns and villages. The furniture inside the library should be comfortable, neat and clean. Students/readers should maintain strict discipline, so that others are not disturbed. The atmosphere in a library should be peaceful and scholarly. A library has thousands of books in stock. It has books on various topics, subjects and events. New books are added from time to time. All the books are kept systematically. They are classified and indexed according to their subjects. The labeling of books helps the reader to get a particular book without any difficulty. To find out the library number of a particular book, one can take the help of the subject and author index. Most libraries keep a book display rack where new arrivals are kept. A library also keeps magazines, periodicals, newspapers and journals. These are kept on the reading table of the library. The readers can keep

themselves equipped with current events and the latest developments in various fields. A reader should handle the books carefully so that no pages are torn or that no books are misplaced. He should keep the book at the proper place after reading. The librarian should see that pin-drop silence is maintained in the library. Readers should abide by the library rules. A library issues membership cards to its readers. A reader or a student can borrow a book for home if he has that card. The books are issued for a limited period. If the reader does not return the book on the due date, he has to pay a fine as per the library rules. If a reader loses a book, he has to replace the lost book with a new one or pay the price of the book. The readers are supposed to keep the books in good condition. The library is a boon for poor students who cannot afford to buy text books or other books of their interest. They can borrow these books and read or study them at ease at home. A library is thus a help to the society. Most libraries have notice-boards. They are used for writing important news of the day. A 'Thought for the day' is also written here. Titles of new books added to the library are also displayed on the notice-board to inform the students. Most libraries are open for a limited number of hours.

In recent years internet has revolutionized the concept of library. Information technology now plays an important role in improving the library facilities. With the growing popularity of internet, which provides loads of information with just a click of a mouse, one may pause to think about the decreasing relevance and importance of a library in today's world. But one should keep in mind that a person goes to a library not only to search and get information from books but also to sit and study there. The ambience and the peaceful and scholarly atmosphere then helps one to concentrate more on one's work and study. Thus, libraries will never become redundant. They will always be there to indicate the presence of a well-read and educated society.

Literacy Fraction among the Arts & Science College Students

These are challenging times for colleges and universities. Graduation rates are important measures. As colleges and universities grapple with this challenge, academic libraries are also seeking ways to communicate their contributions to student learning. The recently revised draft *Standards for Libraries in Higher Education* from the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) signals the importance of this issue for academic libraries. While libraries have made significant progress in user-oriented evaluation in recent decades, libraries still lack effective methods for demonstrating library contributions to student learning. Unless colleges develop adequate instruments (and generate compelling evidence) libraries will be left out of important campus conversations.

As level of study increases, library use increases. Students who do not belong to registered group tend to use library more than those who do belong to any group. However,

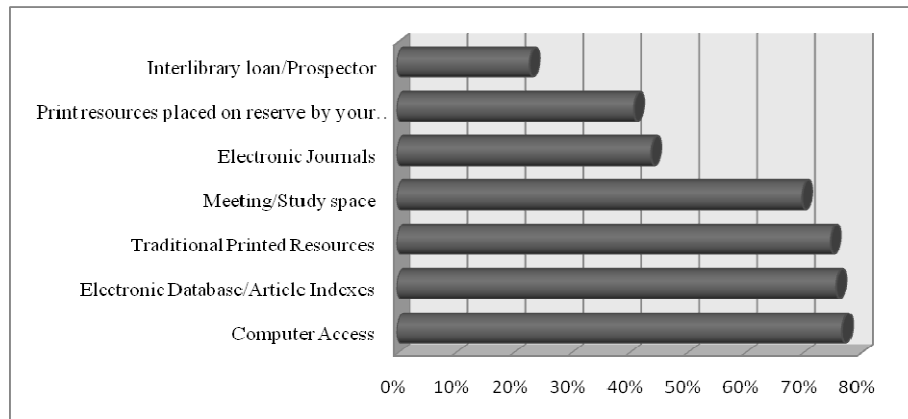
as membership of group type moves from social group to academic group and mixture of social and academic groups, use of the library reduces. As students alternative to library changes from personal internet through personal e-library to textbook and notes, use of library increases. This means that with textbook and notes, students use more of the library. This may be connected to the fact that almost all the students are using text-book and notes as internet connection and e-library are not common among the students and perhaps explain the significance of this variable and where available use of the library is lowered.

The use of the library with friend encourages use of the library. Students who use the library with friend are more and are encouraged. As the positive impression of students about opening hours, silence, and power supply increases, use of the library increases. But for closing hours and air-conditioner facilities, as students' positive impression wanes, the use of the library goes up. This indicates that closing hours and air-conditioner facility may not encourage library use and are not statistically significant. This may be due to the fact that students are aware that library must definitely close at a specified time every day of the week and it has been observed that students that patronize the library in the evening towards closing time are not many compared to the number of the students that use the library in the morning. If the library is air-conditioned or not, students will always have needed to go there, though they may complain of the absence of air conditioner.

As relevant textbooks become available, the use of the library increases, similarly as response from library staff and long term loan of textbooks increase, library use also increases. Quick access to textbook, availability of short-term loan overnight loan and photocopy services do not encourage library use; if these are not there, students still use the library. If one increase the library hours spent by students in the library, use of library increases. If the minimum hours spent by the students increase, library use goes down. The location of the library does not discourage the use of the library by students.

Top Seven Library Resources and Services Used by Undergraduates during the Past Year

Computer Access	77%
Electronic Database/ Article Indexes	76%
Traditional Printed Resources	75%
Meeting/Study space	70%
Electronic Journals	44%
Print resources placed on reserve by your instructor	41%
Interlibrary loan/Prospector	23%



Electronic Databases/Article Indexes

Electronic databases and article indexes were extremely popular among both student and faculty ALIS participants. More than 4 of every 5 faculty members (83%) and 3 of every 4 students (76%) utilized this library resource within the past year, making this the second most frequently cited library resource by both undergraduates and faculty.

Print Resources

Print resources were also widely utilized by both groups of respondents. Cited by nearly 9 of every 10 faculty members (87%), this was the most frequently listed library service among instructors. Three of every four undergrads (75%) reported having used library print materials during the preceding 12 months, making it the third most popular response among students.

Computer Access

More than 3 of every 4 undergraduates (77%) reported using computer access at their institution's library, making this the most frequently listed service among students. By contrast, less than half (44%) of surveyed faculty reported utilizing computer access at the library.

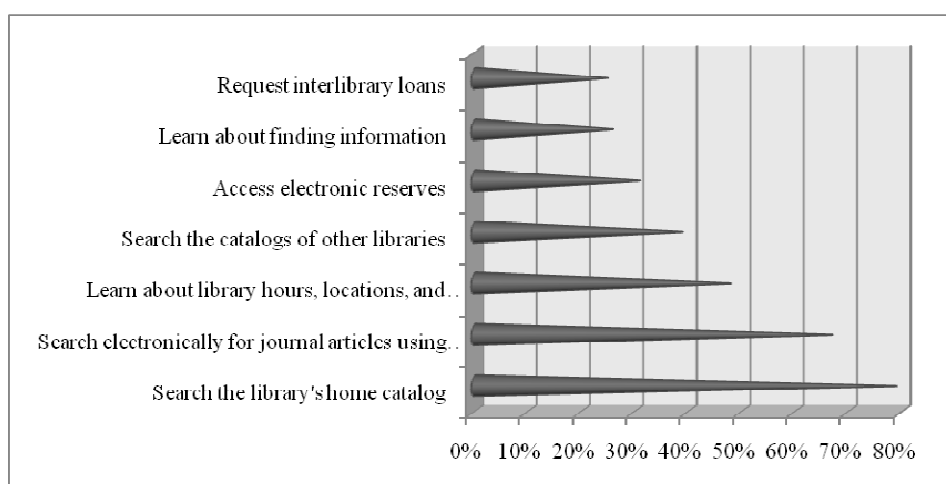
Electronic Journals

Access to e-journals represented another difference in usage patterns between the two groups of survey participants. More than 3 of every 5 faculty members (61%) indicated having used electronic journals available through the library, while less than half of students (44%) did so.

Website Usage in Libraries

Top Seven uses of Library Website by Students

Search the library's home catalog	79%
Search electronically for journal articles using online databases	67%
Learn about library hours, locations, and services	48%
Search the catalogs of other libraries	39%
Access electronic reserves	31%
Learn about finding information	26%
Request interlibrary loans	25%



Attitudes of Students about Availability of Materials/Resources in Libraries of Arts and Science Colleges in Madurai District

	Agree/Strongly Agree	Disagree/Strongly Disagree
Can usually find needed books	89%	11%
Print Periodicals	88%	12%
Electronic Resources	93%	7%

Source: Primary Data

The Challenge of Linking Library use to Student Learning

Demonstrating connections between library use and student achievement has proven a difficult task through the years. Several authors have suggested outcomes to which academic libraries contribute such as: retention, grade point average, and information literacy outcomes.

Retention

Retention is a measure of the percentage of college students who continue in school and do not 'drop out.' A handful of studies have investigated relationships between library use and retention. A study found a positive relationship between library use and persistence as students who borrowed books from the library dropped out 40% less often than non-borrowers. It explored the impact of library expenditures and staffing levels on retention and found a moderate relationship between expenditures and retention. Several authors report a different 'library effect' on retention: holding a job in the library. This finding is supported by evidence that holding a campus job, especially in an organization that supports the academic mission, is related with "higher levels of [student] effort and involvement" in the life of the college and should logically lead to increased retention. Those of us who have worked in academic libraries have probably observed this mechanism at work with students we have known. However, I believe relying exclusively on this measure is problematic. First, numerous factors influence retention and it can be difficult to isolate library impact on retention without extensive statistical controls. Second, retention is an aggregate student outcome; it is not a student learning outcome. Retention is an important metric in higher education and we should seek connections between library use and this measure, but it does not satisfy our need to know how libraries contribute to student learning.

Grade point average

Several authors have attempted to correlate student use of the library with grade point averages (GPA). A study have revealed many independent variables and found that GPA was not a significant predictor of library use. However, GPA-based studies have their problems.

Information Literacy Outcomes

Information literacy outcomes assessment is the most fully developed approach we have for demonstrating library contributions to academic achievement. Broadly speaking, information literacy skills encompass competencies in locating and evaluating information sources and using information in an ethical manner. Instruction in these skills is a core offering in academic libraries and findings from *Project Information Literacy* suggest there is still plenty of work to do! ACRL has also created a suite of information literacy outcomes to guide the design and evaluation of library instruction programs. Numerous methods have been used to assess information literacy skills including fixed-choice tests, analysis of student work, and rubrics. It is tempting to rely solely on student achievement of information literacy skills to demonstrate library contributions to student learning. Others rarely use the term "information literacy" in their standards. Instead, competencies such as

“evaluating and using information ethically” appear in these standards as general education outcomes to be taught and assessed throughout the college curriculum. In part, I think this reaffirms for us that many in higher education associate information literacy outcomes with general education outcomes such as critical thinking.

Information literacy outcomes are integral to undergraduate education, but these are not the only learning outcomes that stakeholders are interested in. And information literacy is not the library’s *sole* contribution to student learning.

Where to Begin Learning

We can improve our ability to detect library impact on important student learning outcomes by carefully choosing our units of observation. Fortunately we can look to the literature of higher education assessment for clues. Students majoring in the arts and humanities, the sciences, and the social sciences acquire different bodies of knowledge and learn different analytical techniques. Learning activities, reward structures, and morning influences vary by discipline. This suggests the academic major plays a significant role in shaping expectations for student learning outcomes and the pathways by which they are achieved.



Speaking the Language of Learning Outcomes

Assessing information use during upper-level and capstone coursework in the academic major is only part of the puzzle. We also need to link library use to student learning outcomes that are meaningful to administrators and policy-makers.

Conclusion

A college’s library can help boost enrollment, even more so than having a showpiece student center, recreation facilities, or updated dorms. This study ranked the campus library as the second most important facility considered in the decision-making process for students choosing a college. Sounds like a good bit of data for university administrators to consider! *Student* life is the time of learning. They need to learn different subjects. At that time a library helps them a lot. A library is a place where a large number

of books are stored in many shelves. Libraries are the store-houses or treasure trove of knowledge. In the absence of a good library in an educational institution, education has no meaning. Without library students cannot gain knowledge properly. Hence there is library in every educational institute. *Libraries* provide the students very healthy environment. In a library atmosphere is very calm and disciplined. It helps students to keep very good concentration on their studies. Libraries are the only place where we are free from all conventions because reading is absolutely a matter of personal choice. Freedom is the keyword for the libraries. Readers are allowed to read what they like and also read the book according to their own manner. Nobody would check them or disturb them. Since everything is systematic and the atmosphere is calm so students can gain more in less time. One can save time and energy studying in libraries.

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