

User Education in University Libraries of Pakistan

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Abstract

The change in educational system of the academic institutions, emergence of new technologies, education shift from annual to semester system and economic matters are the major issues in what is being called “dramatic changes in libraries”. These factors have changed the taste and flavor of the library users. Some opined that technology has changed the traditional meaning of the library and also there is less need of library instructions, other believes that technology is the supporter not replacer of the library. The later claim is more genuine and valid. This view supports and promotes the existence of more and more state of the art libraries. In order to make these information centres more appealing, user education/ library instruction is indispensable.

Basically the term user education comprises of two ingredients; user and education. The user means the person who uses the library. User is sovereign, is the king of all library activities, and all activities centered on him/her. Literary “education” or instruction highlights the methods by which the user is being taught and made aware of library contents.

The prime aim of research paper is to determine the desired objectives in light of the objectives framed for this study. For the achievements of our desired goals and objectives, a mixed approach (qualitative and quantitative research) was adopted. The extensive literature and web assessment are used for in-depth understanding of the problem. The total population of the present study is the public sector universities of country. The Higher Education Commission website had helped the researcher for knowing the addresses, emails and contact numbers of the respondent. It is reported that about sixty percent of the university libraries provided user education to the readers. This practice has a more positive impact on readership rate of the university students.

Keywords: *User education- Pakistan, User Education-University Libraries, User education, Information Literacy*

Introduction

The change in educational system of the academic institutions, emergence of new technologies and economic matters are the major issues in what is being called “dramatic changes in libraries”. These factors have changed the taste and flavor of the library users. Some opined that technology has changed the traditional meaning of the library and also there is less need of library and library instructions, other believes that technology is the supporter not replacer of the library. The later claim is more genuine and valid. This view supports and promotes the existence of more and more state of the art libraries. In order to make these information centres more appealing, user education/ library instruction is indispensable.

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of all library activities, and all activities centered on him/her. Literary “education” or instruction highlights the methods by which the user is being taught and made aware of library contents. It is a tool which enables the readers to make actual use of facilities and resources available in the library. In the broader sense, user education or library instruction, formal or informal, make the students and the faculty of the university aware of the policies, facilities, rules and regulations, nature of services and library holdings so that user could meet educational and intellectual needs in accordance with their requirements. This ensures library awareness among users.

The user education programs of libraries are not new. Its need was felt as back in 1880. The importance of user education is directly proportional to the diversified types of material in the library, extension of library services, and explosion in literature, information provision techniques, changes and development in librarianship.

Definitions

According to Mew “Instruction given to all readers to help them to make the best use of the library.” User education is a method of educating the readers about the library holdings; to meet the demand of regular users; to minimize the hesitations of uninitiated; to motivate the potential users; to create sense of service among members of the library staff, and initiate user friendly atmosphere between user and advisors.

User education is the acquisition of the art of utilization of the library resources. Training in how to use the library, where information is available, why to use a particular search, what other sources can help and how to exploit them further. Salony was just right is saying “The systematic nature of the efforts to teach something in order to accomplish a predefined set of objectives”. To enable one to work at his own. User education, information literacy, bibliographic instruction, library instruction, library orientation and reader’s instruction are all the terms used in the field of librarianship to describe educating library users in the independent use of library resources effectively and efficiently.

Library orientation and bibliographic instructions are recognized as two arms of user education. The three major components of user educations are:

- a) User awareness of library resources
- b) Library orientation and teaching library skills and
- c) Bibliographic instructions

They all stress on education the users.

Literature Review

It is an established fact that most of the university libraries have huge collections, both in print and soft form. But it is evident from various survey reports that effective and efficient utilization of these resources is a question mark (Bunday (2004) & Suleiman (2012)). Various writers had shed light on the fact that acquisition of information and its positive usage has a very impressive impact on the academic achievements of the students. It will also upgrade the teaching and research outcome in universities (Bhatti (2010), Madoako (2013) & Stone & Ramsden (2014)). A librarian can make the library a dynamic and creative institution. He/ She can attract readers by developing a conducive environment suitable for the pursuit of knowledge. Librarian should, therefore, build a harmonious contribution of professional duties and scholarly aspirations. In short, librarian should try to become “Professor of books” by introducing user education programs which include imparting library skills and bibliographic instructions to the freshmen in collaboration with the readers. In this way, students and teachers will flock to the library where

the librarian will play prominent role in learning process. User education provides the first rationale for teaching function of the library. The main motto behind the practice of user education is not to compel the students to depend on library staff but to make them learned about the existing library resources (Coonan (2011) and Okoye (2013)).

For the maximum utilization of library resources, the entrance of user education is very important. The Library catalogue is an asset of the information centre and can act as an authentic key for the guidance of the library patrons. It provides bibliographic description about documents with call number. The library catalogue which represents its available resources is still a veritable 'key' for this purpose in most institutional libraries as it provides bibliographic description and the subject aspect of a book (or other source) with call number designating class and author.

S.K. Jain recommended a well- planned and organize course of library use instruction to students as under:

“The librarian can do a great good teaching to the students, the best use of whatever library resources of information available to them during their students life and in their career after graduation. It includes a well-planned and organized course on library instruction which would be very elementary for the fresher and could be advanced as the students advance.”

John (2008) described the benefits of user education program. This program will produce more and more library patrons. Clarcke (1999) discussed the pros and cons this library program. The arguments in favour and against it one by one, Saunders (2002) emphasize that teaching method is the most important method used by the librarians for library instructions. This method had a profound impact of students learning about library resources. The information literacy and emerging trends should be introduced for education of library users about library services and resources.

Objectives of the Study

The prime goal of this study is to know the status of user education in Pakistan. However, the following specific objectives have been framed:

- 1- To know about the provision of user education in University libraries of the country
- 2- To examine frequency and timings of user education in University libraries
- 3- By whom and how the user education is provided to the library users is also an area on interest of this study
- 4- To study the impact of user education on university library usage

Material and Methods

As mentioned, the present study is designed to know the status and impact of user education in libraries in the public sector universities of Pakistan. To meet the specific objectives of the present investigation, a quantitative research methodology along with a comprehensive literature review and web analysis has been employed. The universe of the present study is delimited to the public sector university libraries of Pakistan. The website of Higher Education Commission (www.hec.gov.pk) was used to identify the names, status and web addresses of the public sector university libraries. A total of 70 questionnaires were distributed to the public sector university libraries of Pakistan. The response rate was recorded as 87%. The information from the questionnaire survey was updated through interviews with librarians and observational visits to the libraries. The data collected were processed by using the Excel software package.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Table 1- Delivery of User Education Program

Provision of User Education	Total	%
User Education Provided	37	61
User Education Not provided	24	39
Total	61	100

The interpretation of Table 1 depicts that Most of the libraries provide user education to their clientele while rests have not yet started this practice for the facilitation of their users. The in-depth scrutiny of the collected data reported that about half of the population in Islamabad, Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provide this important segment of library awareness while libraries at Balochistan are lag behind in providing this education to the reader community.

Frequency and timings of user education

The following Table provides facts and figure related to frequency and timings of user education provided.

Table 2- The threshold of user education provided

Frequency	Islamabad	Punjab	Sindh	KPK	Balochistan	AJK&NA	Total
In the beginning of academic year	06(54%)	06(60%)	05(71%)	04(57%)	01(50%)	01(50%)	23
In every semester	02(18%)	02(20%)	01(14%)	01(14%)	01(50%)	00(00%)	07
When requested	01(09%)	02(20%)	01(14%)	02(29%)	00(00%)	01(50%)	07
Total	09	10	07	07	02	02	37

The responses regarding the frequency and timings of this program were recorded. It was observed that majority of the respondents delivered user education in the beginning of each academic year. A small proportion of the population claimed that they provide this mode of education to the users at start of each semester. The same number of respondents opined that they provide user education when requested.

It was observed that majority of the university libraries in Punjab and Sindh provide user education to the users at start of each semester. For the same style of user education, the responses of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan were not satisfactory in this regard.

The user education when requested is provided by a very small number of universities in the country.

Duration of User Education Program

The respondents were asked to express their views regarding the duration of user education program of their concerned University Library. The responses acquired were tabulated in Table 3

Table 3- Duration of User Education Program

Duration of User Education	Total
Half an hour	07
One hour	17
One day	12
Two days	01
Total	37

The assessment of Table 3 reveals that about half of the respondents reported that they provide one-hour user education to their patron while a reasonable number of university libraries provides one-day user education to their users. Few university libraries provide this sort of education for half an hour to their users. A very small number claimed they provide two-hour user education program.

Table 3 shows that small proportion in Punjab, about one third in Sindh and in KPK and half number university librarians in AJK& NA has half an hour user education program. It is also revealed from Table 3 that more than half university libraries in Islamabad, half in Punjab, less than half in Sindh, about one-third in KPK, half university libraries in Balochistan and AJK&NA have one-day user education program.

Table 3 reported that about half of the university libraries at public sector in Islamabad, one-third in Punjab and Sindh and fifty percent university library in Balochistan provides one day user education to their clientele.

The above Table 3 also depicts that a small number of university librarians in KP reported that they provide two days User education program for their users.

Who to conduct user education

When the respondents were enquired about the query “Who is responsible for providing user education to the users”. The response of the respondents were analyzed in Table 4

Table 4 -How and who to conduct this training session

The person Responsible for User education	Islamabad	Punjab	Sindh	KPK	Balochistan	AJK&NA	Total
Librarian	08(89%)	08(80%)	07(100%)	06(85%)	02(100%)	02(100%)	33

Assistant Librarian	01(11%)	02(20%)	00(00%)	01(15%)	00(00%)	00(00%)	04
Faculty member	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	00
Any Other	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	00
Total	09	10	07	07	02	02	37

It is shown from Table 4 that majority librarians are considered as held responsible for undergoing of this program at their respective libraries. A small proportion of the respondents claimed that this act is usually delivered by the Assistant librarian.

The analysis shows that majority university librarians in Islamabad, Punjab, Sindh, KP, Balochistan and Azad Jammu Kashmir & Northern Areas are held responsible for educating their clientele. It is also observed from Table 4 that a very few university libraries in Islamabad, Punjab and KP have assigned this duty to Assistant librarian.

Impact of user education program on library and information centres usage

The respondents were investigated to give their views about impact of user education on university library services and resources. The responses of the respondents are recorded in Table 5.

Table 5- Impact of U.E on the library services and resources

Whether UEP has positive Impact on Library services and Resources	Islamabad	Punjab	Sindh	KPK	Balochistan	AJK&N	Total
Yes	09(100%)	10(100%)	07(100%)	07(100%)	02(100%)	02(100%)	37
No	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	00
Total	09	10	07	07	02	02	37

It was responded by the library managers that this important motivating practice has a more positive impact on university library services and resources. This will improve the image of the library and will inculcate reading habits among the patrons.

Ways to Improve User Education Program

The respondents were asked to suggest means and ways for the improvement of this program. The following table explains the responses of the respondents.

Table-VI: Ways to improve user education program:

S.No	Items	Mean(X)	S.D	Variance
1.	Easy to understand teaching methods	1	0.36	18.00
2.	Creation of awareness	2	0.76	38.00
3.	Allotting more time to user education	2	0.70	35.00
4.	Use of audio visual materials	1	0.47	23.50
5.	Training staff	2	0.50	25.03
6.	Thorough planning and execution	2	0.83	42.30
7.	Provision of sufficient fund	1	0.46	23.12

Note: 1- Strongly Agree (SA) 2- Agree (A) 3- Disagree (D) 4- Strongly Disagree (SD)

The analysis of Table VI reflects that librarians of the libraries under study were strongly agreed with the query “*Easy to understand teaching methods*”, *provision of sufficient funds*” and “*Use of audio visual materials*” (X=1; S.D=0.18, 0.46 and 0.47). It is also evident from the scrutiny of the Table-VI that respondents were agreed with the queries “*Training staff*”, “*Allotting more time to user education*”, “*Creation of awareness*” and “*Thorough planning and execution*” (X=2; S.D=0.50,0.70,0.76 and 0.83).

The overall assessment shows that the above mentioned ways can improve the user education program in university libraries of the country.

Discussion and Conclusion

The analysis of the responses collected from the respondents reflects that user education program is the backbone of library culture for university libraries in Pakistan. The findings revealed that Islamabad, Punjab have gone far ahead followed by KP and Sindh in educating their readers. The province of Baluchistan needs improvement in this connection.

It is recommended that the librarians should deal the users with smiley face. The attitude of the library staff should be user-friendly. The users should be interviewed for digging out their problems. Procedures like e-mail alert system, short messages and rewards for the regular, frequent and potential library users should be taken into consideration by the librarians as this method can promote and encourage the readers and reading habits country. The librarians of the main libraries of the universities should be trained by library personnel for the development of their skills. They should share their expertise with rest of the staff of heir concerned libraries. The librarians should be made capable of creation, operation and dissemination of digital objects. They should have to the ability to train their users in latest technologies including digital library of Pakistan.

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