

Information Literacy Efforts in India with Special Reference to Banaras Hindu University Library System

Agrawal A., Singh P.K. & Mishra V.K.

Central Library,

Banaras Hindu University,

Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, INDIA

E-mail: anilagraw@rediffmail.com; punitbhu@gmail.com; vkmishrabhu@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The libraries are now-a-days more concerned with identifying the increasing information needs of its users and provide them the latest information resources. The advent of information and communication technologies have made a huge impact on all aspects of education including teaching & learning, institutional management, library services, research & development, information dissemination, discovery and its delivery. Libraries are acquiring so much information and are spending so huge amount of money on procuring the information, and, if the users are unable to make optimum use of this information the efforts and money will be a waste. Users should have knowledge to know how to find, evaluate, and use information effectively to solve a particular problem or make a decision. For this purpose, information literacy programme to be conducted by library has become a necessity. In this paper an attempt is made to describe information literacy; what efforts have been taken by government of India to bridge the gap between information poor and information rich people; various information literacy programs initiated by state governments at community level; information literacy at higher education level in different universities; information about the Banaras Hindu University and its library system as well as its collection; information about the various information literacy programme conducted by Banaras Hindu University Library system is discussed.

Keywords: information literacy; university library; computer literacy; Banaras Hindu University

INTRODUCTION

The growth of Internet, its rapid spread accompanied with fast broadband connectivity has transformed the landscape of information society. The rise of tablets, smart phones and other electronic gadgets provide greater opportunity to users to be in-touch with information resources. Moreover, increasing use of these devices is an indication towards paradigm shift in the world of information access and newer technologies and applications built around them. The advent of these innovative technologies have made a huge impact on all aspects of education including teaching & learning, institutional management, library services, research & development, information dissemination, discovery and its delivery. Furthermore, the current scenario mystifies the users in evaluating the quality and authenticity before they consume information. All these

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intricacies pose challenges for individuals in accessing and retrieving information efficiently, shifting and evaluating its authenticity, validity, and reliability for its effective use. Here arises the need for Information Literacy (IL), which nurtures critical thinking and discernment about the whole gamut of information and its varying formats, prior to its consumption (Koneru, 2010).

During the past three decades, the librarians laid more emphasis in the procurement of the resources, listing of the holdings, finding the information, retrieval mechanisms, compiling bibliographies and references rather than user education, instruction programs and information literacy competence building etc. In recent years due to emergence of the information flood, it has become necessity to educate the users in the right way to get their desired information properly and promptly. The information literacy, information search techniques, and search skill development are the big issues for libraries in the recent years. In higher education and academic libraries of India, the information and media literacy is the primary concern now days (Singh, 2015).

INFORMATION LITERACY AND ITS LITERATURE REVIEW

Paul G. Zurkowski has the credit to first use the term “Information literacy” in a proposal to the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science in 1974. He described information-literate individuals as people “trained in the application of information resources to their work,” who “have learned techniques and skills for utilizing the wide range of information tools as well as primary sources in molding information-solutions to their problems” (Zurkowski, 1974). Many definitions of information literacy has already been provided in the literature. Some of these are:

According to CILIP, information literacy is “a term used for knowing when and why you need information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner” (<http://www.informationliteracy.org.uk/information-literacy-definitions/>)

Similarly, the American Library Association Presidential Committee on Information Literacy (January 10, 1989, Washington, D.C.) described “ultimately, information literate people are those who have learned how to learn. They know how to learn because they know how knowledge is organized, how to find information and how to use information in such a way that others can learn from them. They are people prepared for lifelong learning, because they can always find the information needed for any task or decision at hand.” (<http://www.ala.org/acrl/issues/infolit/overview/intro>). It can be interpreted from above that Information Literacy is the set of skills needed to find, retrieve, analyze, and use information.

Wesleyan University opined that information literacy involves recognizing when information is needed and being able to efficiently locate, accurately evaluate, effectively use, and clearly communicate information in various formats. It refers to the ability to navigate the rapidly growing information environment, which encompasses an increasing number of information suppliers as well as the amount supplied, and includes bodies of professional literature, popular media, libraries, the Internet, and much more. Increasingly, information is available in unfiltered formats, raising questions about its authenticity, validity, and reliability. This abundance of information is of little help to

those who have not learned how to use it effectively. Thus an information literate person should be able to

- Identify information needs and determine the extent of information needed.
- Locate and retrieve appropriate sources of information.
- Evaluate information and its sources critically.
- Synthesize the information retrieved, integrate it into one's current knowledge base, and successfully apply it to the original information need.
- Present this newly acquired knowledge so that others can use it.
- Translate these abilities and concepts to new projects and disciplines. (<http://www.wesleyan.edu/libr/infoforyou/infolitdefined.html>)

Julien and Barker defined the term “information literacy” as the set of skills required to identify information sources, access information, evaluate it, and use it effectively, efficiently, and ethically (Julien and Barker, 2009).

Information literacy is the competency that empowers one with the required knowledge about information, its nature and available formats; skills to fetch the relevant information by sifting the irrelevant, and attitude for consuming and sharing information, by ethical means and practices (Koneru, 2010).

INFORMATION LITERACY EFFORTS IN INDIA

The huge digital divide in India is due to the poor infrastructure, low literacy, low computer literacy and skill, unstable governments and its policies, barriers like economic barrier, content barrier, language barrier, and socio-economic factors such as gender, disability, age, geographical differences, and behavioral aspects etc. Many initiatives have been taken by central and state governments to bridge the gap between the information poor and information rich such as Akshaya, Anand, free Laptop distribution to meritorious students in Uttar Pradesh, Bhoomi Project of Karnataka state, E-Chaupal across five states (Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh), CARD Project, E-Seva and Sourkaryan in Andhra Pradesh, Gramdoot, India Agriland, Janmitra, Gyandoot project for a rural information network in Madhya Pradesh, Lokamitra project in Himachal Pradesh, The Fast, Reliable, Instant Efficient Network for Disbursement of Services (FRIENDS) Project in Kerala etc. The Government of India has set targets through its planning, policies and implementation processes. Its initiation of e-governance, and related ICT applications are positive steps towards progress (Singh et al, 2015).

Most of these initiatives are establishing information kiosks or cyber cafes at the village and the semi-urban areas, with the hardware, software, network, telephone and power supports from the respective institutions involved, and with the participations of the self-help groups or volunteers who will run the information kiosks at the doorsteps of the villagers and common citizens. VSAT terminals are also provided in few initiatives, like, Community Information Centres and e-Choupal, where telephone connectivity is not adequately available. These community information initiatives deliver e-literacy programmes to the common citizens where basic skills of using computers and Internet are imparted. These initiatives also deliver information literacy training to the users of information kiosks, where learners know how to use information resources available within the respective initiative’s portal, intranet and Internet, and how these

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information can be used in solving the problems of individuals in their vocational (e.g. agricultural knowhow), personal (e.g. getting a certificate) and social (e.g. sanitation) life.

In the institutions of higher learning in India, user education, library instruction and bibliographic instruction programmes are provided. In universities for research degree programmes, a course on research methodology is included where library research techniques are also included. Some universities and research institutions subscribe to the electronic resources, on consortium basis or individual basis. The producers or vendors of these electronic resources conduct user training programmes for use of those resources. The Indian Medlars Centre of National Informatics Centre conducts a user-training programme in every four months on their information products and services, like, IndMed databases, medIND open access journal literature, OpenMED open access archive, UNCat union catalogue databases, etc., which are designed mainly for health professionals and health librarians. Some orientation programmes and refresher courses also impart information literacy competency to the learners. The Universities also conduct from time to time the orientation programme to their academics for use of electronic resources. In the corporate organizations and corporate R&D centers, information literacy competency is an essential trait of the researchers and knowledge workers. The researchers and knowledge workers are being taught the about latest discipline oriented information resources available within the organizations and outside the organizations (Ghosh and Das, 2006).

The leading Indian university libraries have also taken initiatives to offer information literacy programmes. Some of these are Delhi University Library System (DULS); Central Library, Jawaharlal Nehru University; Jamia Milia Islamia University Library; Jamia Hamdard University Library; Guru Govind Singh Indraprastha University Library etc. The information literacy programmes of these libraries generally include computer literacy, web literacy, e-resource literacy, library orientation, etc. which is scheduled every year on the occasion of new session to aware the students, research scholars and teachers.

BANARAS HINDU UNIVERSITY

Banaras Hindu University, internationally reputed temple of learning, is the one of the major research university of India. It is founded in 1300 acres of area by great visionary and national leader, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya in 1916 with the help of great personalities like Annie Besant and donations from common man to kings. At present, the university family consists of more than 30000 students, 1700 teachers and about 5500 non-teaching staffs (Singh, 2010). The university has large setup comprising five Institutes, sixteen Faculties, one hundred thirty four Departments, two Inter-disciplinary schools, a constituent college for women's and three Constituents Schools, spanning a vast range of subjects pertaining to all branches of humanities, social science, technology, medicine, science, fine arts and performing arts. It has six Centres of Advanced Studies (CAS), ten departments under Special Assistance Programme (SAP) and a large number of specialized research centers. Four Degree Colleges of the city are affiliated to the University. Bharat Kala Bhavan, the reputed museum of the university, is a treasure of rare collections (<http://internet.bhu.ac.in/aboutus/history.php>).

BANARAS HINDU UNIVERSITY LIBRARY SYSTEM

The BHU Library system is the largest University Library System in the country. Banaras Hindu University Library System have one central library (Sayaji Rao Gaekwad Library) which includes Cyber Library Study Centre running 24X7 and having more than 400 computer terminals for its users, one south campus library, three school libraries, four institute libraries, eight faculty libraries, and more than thirty departmental libraries. At present, the university library system is serving more than 30000 students, 1700 teachers and about 5500 non-teaching staffs along with the consultancy to the outside users (Singh & Singh, 2015). The Banaras Hindu University Library has unique collections of Manuscripts and Rare books, Books, Theses, Periodicals and Journals (both hard copies and on-line) ranging from almost all disciplines of Ancient Indian Culture, Philosophy, Religion, Arts, Humanities to Modern Sciences. Table 1 represents the document wise collection of BHU library till March 2016: (<http://internet.bhu.ac.in/bhulibrary/services.htm>)

Table1. Collection of documents in BHU Library System

Document	Count
Books	9,76,411
Journals (Bound Vols.)	1,33,792
Current Journals	406
Theses	14,748
Manuscripts	7,233
UN & Govt. Publications	35000+
Online Journals	11,272
Databases	10
E-Books	52,560

The Cyber Library web resources portal was started in May 2013. The e-content constitutes the databases, digital library (Mahamana Digital Library), e-books, e-journals, open access e-resources, and search engines. Table 2 reveals the types of e-resources and its providers (Singh et al, 2015):

Table 2. E-resources through Cyber Library portal

Types of Resources	E-	Publishers
E-Journals		American Chemical Society, American Institute Of Physics, American Physical Society, American Society Of Civil Engineers, American Society Of Mechanical Engineers, Annual Reviews, Banaras Law Journal, Cambridge University Press, Economic & Political Weekly, Emerald, Institute Of Physics, Jstor, Manupatra, Nature, Oxford University Press, Portland Press, Project Euclid, Project Muse, Royal Society Of Chemistry, Sage HSS Online Journals, Science Direct, Science Online, Siam, Springer Link, Taylor And Francis, Westlaw India, Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, Indian Journals
Databases		Web of Science, Annual Reviews, MathSciNET, Scifinder Scholar, CAB Abstract, GALE, Indian Citation Index, Springer Protocols(1980-2013), ErMed, Pubmed, NOPR
Digital Libraries		Digital Library of India, World Digital Library, Universal Digital Library, Project Gutenberg
E-books		Sage E-Books, Springer E-Books, Taylor & Francis, Cambridge University Press, Encyclopedia Britannica, Pearson E-Books
Open Access		OpenDoar, Doaj
Search Engine		J-GATE PLUS, SCOPUS, SCIRUS

INFORMATION LITERACY PROGRAM OF BHU LIBRARY

Sayaji Rao Gaekwad Library (Central Library), Banaras Hindu University is conducting information literacy programmes every year at the beginning of the academic session in order to acquaint the students, research scholars and faculties of various disciplines about the various types of e-resources as well as prints resources available in their respective subject areas and how the users can make optimum use of these available resources. In this program users are told about the process of searching online public access catalogue, how to search e-books, e-journals, e-databases and how to use anti plagiarism software. The users are also told about the various types of freely available e-resources which are available through the internet. The information literacy programme gathered momentum since the beginning of the year 2006 when e-journals and e-books were made available to the users. The modules and topics discussed in the information literacy programme is given in Table 3.

Table 3. Modules and Topics Discussed in the Information Literacy Programme

Modules	Topics Discussed
Introduction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction to BHU Library system 2. User Instruction and Library Rules 3. Introduction to different collections of Library 4. Introduction to different services provided by Library
Computer Literacy and Internet Search Skill	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Short Introduction to computer 2. Short Introduction to Ms-Office 3. Short Introduction to Internet 4. Basic and Advance Search Techniques
Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) and its Search Techniques	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How to search OPAC 2. How to search Books according to Author, Title and Subject 3. How to do advance search
Subject Oriented Subscribed E-Resources and its Search Techniques	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information about subscribed databases 2. Information about subscribed E-journals 3. Information about subscribed E-books
Subject Oriented Consortia Based E-Resources and its Search Techniques	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information about Consortia based databases 2. Information about Consortia based E-journals 3. Information about Consortia based E-books
Subject Oriented Open Access E-Resources and its Search Techniques	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction to Open Access databases 2. Introduction to Open Access E-journals 3. Introduction to Open Access E-books
Anti Plagiarism Software	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Description of Anti Plagiarism Software 2. Process of getting the Articles or Thesis plagiarism checked by Anti Plagiarism Software
Other Useful Links	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information about the Websites supporting the education and research
Miscellaneous	Copyright issues, Referencing styles etc.

The information about the participants (according to subject) who attended the information literacy programs organized by the library during the last three academic sessions is provided in Table 4. The participants include Under Graduate students, Post Graduate students as well as the research scholars.

Table 4. Number of Participants according to Subjects

S. No.	Subjects	No. of Participants (in year)		
		2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
1.	Agricultural Sciences	135	156	141
2.	Biochemistry	30	27	54
3.	Biotechnology	27	29	22
4.	Chemistry	104	81	123
5.	Botany	89	78	92
6.	Zoology	76	67	53
7.	Mathematics	54	70	86
8.	Physics	74	85	109
9.	Statistics	NA	NA	39
10.	Environmental Sciences	20	31	28
11.	Visual Arts	NA	81	78
12.	Commerce	137	89	96
13.	Economics	43	NA	57
14.	Management Sciences	31	57	43
15.	Hindi and Sanskrit	45	52	76
16.	Others	24	41	36

Apart from this, library organizes several Author workshops from different publishers in which the user are told by international experts about how to write research article and get it published in highly ranked journals (see Fig. 1 and 2). These author workshops have benefited several students who were able to publish research articles in highly ranked journals.

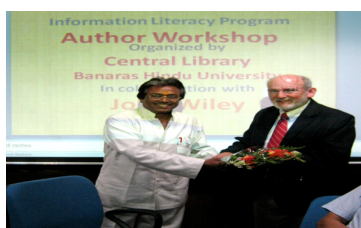


Figure 1. Author Workshop by John Wiley



Figure 2. Author workshop by Springer & Edanz

Important international agencies like USAID is also organizing its information literacy programme in the field of Agriculture time to time. Fig 3 is the one of the example of ILP organized by USAID.



Figure 3. USAID Information Literacy Program for Agricultural Sciences

As India is the country having 22 languages, spoken in different parts of country and the Hindi and Sanskrit is the most used literary language after English. In order to help the users of Hindi / Sanskrit language, library has developed Hindi/Sanskrit Web Resource Portal. This web portal is very useful for the students and research scholars in Hindi/Sanskrit language and literature to gather required information and it also plays a very important role in providing plenty of information published not only at national but also at international level in Hindi/Sanskrit Language. This is the unique web portal started by BHU Library system in India for the development of the Hindi / Sanskrit language and literature.



Figure 4. Hindi/Sanskrit Web Resource Portal for Hindi/ Sanskrit Students

CONCLUSION

Information literacy involves how to find, evaluate, and use information effectively to solve a particular problem or make a decision, whether the information can be retrieved from a computer, a book, a government agency or any of the other possible resources. The process of exploring, identifying, and selecting properly the required information has become complex. The information explosion and paradigm shift towards electronic media and resources have changed the needs of the users as well as the responsibility of librarians. It also revolutionized the information systems and services worldwide. Information literacy program to the students has become the necessity for the optimum use of the available resource at higher education level. It needs strong place in academic programs. Librarians are capable enough to develop the skills of Information Searching, Web Content Evaluation, Information Storage and Retrieval, and Information Handling Skills.

Banaras Hindu University Library System is the one of the leading higher education library system in India which offers information literacy program time to time to aware the students, research scholars and teachers about the available e-resources. Authors

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workshop and USAID Information Literacy Programme uplifted the academic and research work. It is needful to train the users concerning about search mechanisms, web 2.0 tools, consortia resources, ICT tools & techniques, etc. Development of subject gateway at institution level is quite helpful to the students as well as libraries to optimize the use of the e-resources. Availability of the online information literacy webpage is the demand of the present situation. Hence, the information literacy programs to be conducted by libraries have become the need of the hour.

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