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THE INFLUENCE OF LIBRARY USAGE ON UNDERGRADUATE ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Dr. Niraj T. Khobragde

ABSTRACT: -

In order to assess university library effectiveness in terms of tangible outcomes to undergraduate students, a study was conducted at the University of Western Sydney, Macarthur, which sought to establish the influence of library usage on academic success. Two hundred and fifty-one students were asked to complete a questionnaire detailing the quantity and diversity of their library usage during one semester, and these data were compared with their academic results. A positive correlation was found between academic achievement and the use of a number of different library resources and services. The article is based on a dissertation of the same title for the award of Master of Applied Science (Information Studies), Charles Sturt University, 1994.

KEYWORDS: Library, development, expression, academic, Influence.

INTRODUCTION:

The effectiveness of libraries has often been measured by the volume of library materials available to clients, the amount of use of services and resources and the apparent or quantified satisfaction of clients. Very little research has taken into account the objectives of the clients. This is probably because the library plays an indirect role in the process of a client achieving objectives and it is difficult to assess the exact contribution the library has made. Moreover, the clients' objectives are not always known. However, we need to keep in mind that the use of libraries is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. Undergraduate students at a university have known objectives: their main aim is in terms of academic success. Therefore, it was this category of client that was selected in a recent study conducted at the University of Western Sydney, Macarthur, to assess the effectiveness of

the library by investigating the outcomes for the clients. The study aimed to gain an indication of the significance of the library in relation to the university's mission of academic success. The actual value of information to university undergraduate students may be both intangible and tangible. The intangible value may be the contribution to development of intellect or the inspiration to pursue topics further and this is difficult to measure. Indeed, the value to the individual may be unconscious. The tangible value relates to whether the information enables the student to attempt an assignment or to sit for an examination or to attain a higher mark than would have been the case otherwise. The difficulty of assessing the extent of the library's contribution to the ultimate academic achievement of



the student results from the fact that a number of other factors are involved between the acquiring of the information and the end result: for instance, the synthesising of the information and the development, expression and presentation of ideas. Further, many variables may affect academic achievement: environment, stress, motivation, intellectual ability, time devoted to studies, quality of teaching, etc. While the Macarthur study recognized that a correlation between library usage and academic success would not prove a direct cause, it was considered that it could at least suggest an influence.

UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN MEDIEVAL INDIA

The presence of scholastic libraries amid the medieval time of Indian history isn't known, however the Muslim rulers patronized libraries in their own particular castles. A solitary special case, in any case, was a library connected to a school at Bidar, having an accumulation of 3000 books on various subjects. Aurangzeb got this library exchanged to Delhi to blend it with his royal residence library. Amid the medieval period, because of Muslim attacks and political inconveniences, the intense domains and kingdoms of Indian rulers fell one by one. This influenced advanced education and the improvement of scholastic libraries too.

LIBRARIES IN MODERN INDIA (1757-1947)

Amid the British lead in India, quantities of scholarly foundations were set up by the East India Company, and by the Christian preachers. A portion of the value saying occasions which prompted the development and advancement of advanced education in India amid this period were the foundation of the Calcutta College in 1781, Jonathan Duncan, at that point a British specialist, established the Banaras Sanskrit College in 1792. The Calcutta Fort William College was established in 1800. Every one of these universities were having their own libraries. The Charter Act of 1813, the establishment of Fort William and Sera pore Colleges, Calcutta, Madras and Bombay colleges and their libraries, Hunter, Raleigh and Calcutta University Commissions, library preparing programs, the foundation of Inter University Board, Sergeant Report and arrangement of the University Grants Committee, the foundation of Madras University, University of Bombay, University of Calcutta and their libraries, the constitution of Inter University Board, the arrangement of Hartog

Board, the Montague-Chelmsford changes of 1919, the Government of India Act of 1935, and the Sergeant Committee Report and so on established framework for foundation of libraries in different parts of the nation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Professional academic library associations, including the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) and the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), have recommended and used many tools and methods for assessment of library services and resources. Standardized tools include suite of services that allows libraries to survey users' opinions in order to measure, understand, and take action to enhance the quality of services; Project SAILS, which helps librarians assess students' information literacy skills;5 and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), which collects student participation data through the College Student Report survey. The shortcoming of survey assessment tools, however, is that the data may be of limited utility to libraries for purposes of securing funding because, even if the data suggest that students love the library, they will probably like other areas better. Libraries have also adopted common business evaluation methods to measure their services. Such methods include value-added assessment, return on investment (ROI) analysis, and impact evaluation models. These strategies may be particularly appropriate in certain contexts.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Orr was one of the first proponents of the case for 121 Downloaded by [150.242.27.49] at 03:18 27 November 2017 AARL June 1995 evaluating libraries in terms of outcomes. He stated that the emphasis should be on how much good a library does rather than how good a library is. 1 Blagden also emphasised the purpose of the user in justifying a library's existence: We are in the communication business rather than the book/photocopy/information distribution business and therefore must be concerned with what effect the

documentation that we so blithely promote has on our users. 2 In the 1970s, performance measures largely emphasised input rather than outcomes. The 1980s produced a mass of data on techniques, tools and models recommended for performance measurement but little real progress was made on measuring output. Henty gave a reason why the wealth of literature on library effectiveness evaluation contains so little on outcomes research: There is general recognition that it is too difficult to evaluate library effectiveness, if effectiveness is seen to be the contribution which the library makes to the intellectual output of the parent institution.'

UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

College libraries everywhere throughout the world have their own place of significance in the plan of higher learning. Libraries are archives of information as well as distributors of such learning. There is almost certainly that where libraries of colleges and foundations of higher learning are overlooked or not given due acknowledgment, the nation in general endures in light of the fact that the benchmarks of study, instructing and look into vigorously rely on the subjective and quantitative administration rendered by the college libraries. The Radhakrishnan Commission (1948-49) communicated that "the library is the core of all the college's work, straightforwardly along these lines, as respects its examination work and by implication as respects its instructive work, which gets its life from look into. Logical research needs the library and also its labs while for humanistic research the library is both library and the lab in one. Both for humanistic and logical examinations, a top of the line library is basic in a college

The Macarthur Study:-

In the study at University of Western Sydney, Macarthur, the amount of time spent in the library and the diversity and frequency of resources and 123 Downloaded by [150.242.27.49] at 03:18 27 November 2017 AARL June 1995 services used were investigated as measures of library usage by undergraduates and compared with their academic grades. An assumption was made that the greater the variety of library use by students, the more likely it is that they possess some knowledge of the library and the research skills needed to use it effectively. The data collected were also used to survey the library usage of undergraduates within particular subject groups.

METHODOLOGY:-

Several types of instrumentation were considered for collecting the data relating to library usage. Having the students fill in diaries recording the time spent in the library and the resources used was thought to be the most likely to provide accurate information. However, past studies (egHiscock) have found that students either forget to fill them in or are not motivated to do so. This results in a poor response rate and information which is in fact not necessarily accurate. Personal interviews were ruled out because of difficulties with time constraints, which would have reduced the size of the sample, and because of the loss of anonymity for the subjects. It was decided to use a questionnaire to collect the data on use of the library. It consisted generally of closed questions offering alternative answers covering the following: subject being studied, frequency of library visits, average time spent in library per visit and the use of services and resources provided in the library. These included frequency of use of the catalogue and assistance given by library staff; and quantity of usage of CD-ROMs, journal articles, books borrowed, books used in-house, reference books, printed indexes and items in reserve collection. The questionnaire also included a statement which the students were requested to sign, giving consent for the researcher to obtain their academic results for comparison purposes. It was made clear that the student's name would not be linked to the result and that the grade would be obtained via the student's university ID number, which was also requested on the questionnaire. The quantity of time was able to be computed directly from the responses: the number of library visits per semester was calculated from the frequency indicated multiplied by the average time spent in the library. In order for the diversity of library usage to be measured, a number of points was assigned to each possible response to the relevant questions in the questionnaire in order to calculate a score for each participant's usage (known as 'weighted library usage'). A range of scores was then allocated for 'High Usage', 'Medium Usage' and 'Low Usage'.

The Sample:-

The sample consisted of 251 students enrolled in first and second year undergraduate course units in the disciplines of Chemistry, Psychology, Communication, Economics, Sports Studies, Literature, History and Sociology. Of the 246 who completed the questionnaire, 149 were female and 97 were male. This reflected almost exactly the gender balance of the total student population of UWS, Macarthur. Their ages ranged from 17 to 58 with a mean of 22.8 years; 209 students (87.4% of the sample) were under 30.

DATA COLLECTION:-

The questionnaires were administered at the beginning of official tutorials in lecture rooms: the academics lent authority to the project by introducing the researcher, encouraging students to participate and allowing them time to fill in the questionnaire immediately. This resulted in an extremely high response rate (246 out of 251 Downloaded by [150.242.27.49] at 03:18 27 November 2017 Wells: The Influence of Library Usage on Undergraduate Academic Success 251). Of the completed questionnaires, 17 were not able to have a grade appended, either because they did not give permission for the researcher to attain it (7) or because they did not complete the course unit requirements at the same time as the rest of the cohort (10). The data on these 17 questionnaires were not able to be used to test the two main hypotheses which depended on linking library usage to academic results but were included in the minor hypotheses relating to the nature of undergraduate student usage. The data relating to academic achievement were collected from university records after grades were awarded. Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated for all variables by means of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) as well as the frequencies of all variables. The sample was then divided according to the nine subject groups and correlation coefficients and frequencies calculated for all variables in the sub-sets.

Hundred Years of Library Education in India:-

In recent times, LIS profession is facing the problem of identity crisis. The library science, information science, knowledge management and other similar nomenclature have been a part of the LIS discourse. But we have not been able to identify ourselves in one umbrella. The one set of professionals who are part of traditional (college or university) libraries are part of library profession and other who work in special and corporate libraries are part of information or knowledge management profession. The ambiguity of various nomenclatures associated with library and information profession has created identity crisis in LIS field. This is appropriate time to discuss some of the issues raised above to herald a new era of Library and Information Science education in India.

FINDINGS

Quantity of Library Usage

Every student in the survey visited the library at least once during the semester, with 65% visiting at least once a week. Most (76%) spent on average between half an hour and two hours on each visit. The Pearson correlations test between the variables of grade achieved and total time spent in library during semester revealed a positive correlation coefficient of .0550 but this was not statistically significant. Likewise, positive but not statistically significant correlations were found between the frequency of library visits and grade achieved, and between average amount of time spent in library and grade achieved.

Diversity of Library Usage

When the weighted library usage, derived from the application of pointscores to a number of the questions in the questionnaire, and the grade achieved were subjected to the Pearson r test, a positive correlation coefficient of .1763 was produced. This was found to be statistically significant to the level of 1% and therefore the hypothesis that there is a positive correlation between academic achievement and the use of a number of different library resources and services.

Implications for Further Research :-

This research was in the nature of a pilot study: the sample was relatively small and came from a single institution. A larger sample across a number of institutions would give a better indication of the validity of the results. The quantity of time spent in the library was not found to be significantly associated with academic success. It would be of value to investigate in future research the proportion of time spent in the library which is devoted to study, the proportion spent using library materials and the proportion which is academically unproductive. While it is acknowledged that academic success is the result of many factors, such as student intelligence and amount of work put in, this research has indicated that the diversity of library resources and services used by undergraduates has some influence on academic success. However, the effectiveness of library usage would be measured more accurately if a particular assignment for a course unit was selected and the students' use of the library in writing that particular assignment recorded and compared with actual marks gained. The advantage of this method is that it should give more differentiation in results and would be a more direct indication of the library's role in the student's achievement.

CONCLUSIONS

The Information Revolution has resulted in dynamic changes in information dissemination services. It is difficult for most people to understand the dynamic causes, processes, and the effects of these changes on the information world. In view of this the role of a librarian is very crucial. Good libraries influence student's achievement and there are studies to prove it. Several reports provide evidence that access to a good library has positive correlation to knowledge levels of the users.

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