



Role of Library Services and Facilities in Quality Enhancement of Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract:

Libraries in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) play a pivotal role in ensuring academic excellence by supporting teaching, learning, and research. Beyond being repositories of knowledge, they function as dynamic centers of information access, research facilitation, and lifelong learning. This paper highlights how various library services—such as circulation and lending, reference and information services, and user support programs—contribute to enhancing institutional quality. It also examines the importance of modern facilities, including ICT-enabled infrastructures, digital repositories, research databases, collaborative learning spaces, and support for differently-abled users, in meeting the diverse needs of academic communities. The integration of technologies like Integrated Library Management Systems (ILMS), RFID, plagiarism detection software, and virtual reference services has further transformed user experiences and expanded access to global information. The paper argues that overcoming these challenges through innovative strategies, collaborations, and user-centric approaches is essential for libraries to sustain their role as key drivers of quality enhancement in higher education.

Keywords: Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), Library Services, Quality Enhancement, ICT, Information Literacy, Research Support, NAAC, NBA

Introduction:

Libraries play an important role in developing students into competent professionals and researchers by ensuring accessibility, diversity, and high-quality resources. Additionally, they serve as centers for lifelong learning, knowledge exchange, and academic networking.

Higher education institutes (HEIs) relies primarily on their libraries. They directly support the improvement of institutional quality by promoting research, education, and teaching and ensuring academic excellence (Shoaib et al., 2025; Muzvondiwa & Marutha, 2022). The vital role of libraries in preserving academic standards is emphasized by

accreditation bodies like the NBA, NAAC (India), and international entities.

The modernization of library services and facilities is therefore not just a support role but also a strategic element in the accreditation and quality improvement of institutions of higher learning. The function of libraries in advancing academic standards is highly valued by grading and evaluating organizations like the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), the National Board of Accreditation (NBA), and other international quality frameworks. This is because libraries ensure equitable access to resources, develop research culture, and

support innovations in curriculum and lesson delivery.

The delivery of knowledge at higher education institutions has changed as a result of the integration of ICT, digital libraries, e-resources, institutional repositories, remote access systems, and research assistance tools. Facilities like research databases, computer terminals, collaborative learning areas, plagiarism detection software, and high-speed Internet give teachers and students access to innovative information and international academic exchange. User-oriented services such as virtual reference desks, orientation seminars, reference assistance, and information literacy programs also give students the tools they need to successfully access and use information.

Library Services Supporting Quality Enhancement:

1. Circulation and Lending Services:

Circulation and lending services are among the core functions of academic libraries in HEIs. These services ensure that knowledge resources are effectively organized, accessed, and utilized by students, faculty, and researchers to support teaching, learning, and research.

Circulation service refers to the management of library materials and user transactions such as issuing, renewing, reserving, and returning books or other resources. It acts as the frontline service point in a library.

HEI libraries increasingly use ICT to modernize circulation:

- Integrated Library Management Systems (ILMS) like Koha, SOUL, LibSys.
- Barcoding and RFID Technology for automated issue/return.

- Self-check kiosks for user convenience.
- Online renewal and reservation via OPAC/mobile apps.
- Email/SMS alerts for due dates and overdue notices.

Academic libraries at HEIs rely significantly on circulation and lending services. In addition to regulating resource borrowing and return, they also include innovative tools like RFID and ILMS to provide effective, user-centered services that directly improve the standard of research, teaching, and learning in higher education.

2. Reference and Information Services:

Reference and information services are among the most vital functions of academic libraries in higher education. They provide personalized assistance to students, faculty, and researchers in finding, evaluating, and effectively using information resources for study, teaching, and research. Modern / Digital Reference Services include the Virtual Reference Desk (via email, chat, and video calls), Online FAQs, LibGuides, subject pathfinders, and access to e-resources, databases, and discovery tools. Inter-Library Loan (ILL) and Document Delivery Services (DDS). Technology-Enabled Reference Services includes Integrated Library Management Systems (ILMS) for seamless access, AI-powered chatbots for 24/7 assistance, Remote access tools (VPN, Shibboleth, EZproxy) and Digital reference kiosks and mobile-based services. Also the Digital and ICT-based Services includes access to e-resources (e-journals, databases, e-books), Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) and discovery tools, Institutional repositories and open access resources and remote access facilities (VPN, EZproxy, Shibboleth).

3. User Support Services:

User Support Services in HEI libraries refer to a wide range of assistance, training, and facilitation activities designed to help students, faculty, and researchers effectively access, understand, and utilize library resources. These services focus on enhancing user experience, promoting information literacy, and supporting academic and research success. In the Orientation and Induction Programs, which are conducted at the beginning of academic sessions for new students and faculty, they introduce users to library facilities, resources, services, and rules. And also for the demonstrations on using OPAC, databases, and e-resources. The Information Literacy and Training Programs are conducted for Teaching users how to search, evaluate, and use information resources effectively. Workshops are arranged for the effective use of online databases (e.g., JSTOR, IEEE Xplore, Scopus), advanced search strategies (Boolean operators, keywords) and for evaluating sources for credibility. These workshops also promote independent learning and critical thinking. In Research Support Services provides guidance in preparing literature reviews, bibliographies, and research proposals, training in citation management tools (Mendeley, Zotero, EndNote), assist with plagiarism detection tools (Turnitin, Urkund) and Bibliometric and scientometric analysis (h-index, impact factor, citation counts).

In the User support services, the reference and Consultation Services include reference Desk Services for answering user queries, One-to-one research consultations with subject librarians and Support in identifying relevant resources, journals, and databases. In the User Awareness and Outreach programs HEI's focuses on Current Awareness Service (CAS), Selective

Dissemination of Information (SDI) and library newsletters, bulletins, and social media updates. Document Delivery and Inter-Library Loan Services includes supplying copies of journal articles, conference papers, or book chapters not available in the home library. Collaboration with library networks and consortia (e.g., INFLIBNET, DELNET, Shodhganga). Technology-Enabled User Support service provides- Remote access to e-resources (via VPN, EZproxy, Shibboleth), Online chat or virtual reference services, Self-check kiosks and RFID-enabled borrowing systems and Mobile applications for accessing library resources.

User Support Services in HEI libraries are user-centred, proactive, and technology-driven. They ensure that every member of the academic community—students, faculty, or researchers—receives the guidance, tools, and skills necessary to effectively engage with information resources, thereby contributing directly to the enhancement of quality in higher education.

Library Facilities Contributing To Quality:

In library facilities most of the libraries under physical infrastructure provides a spacious, well-designed building that accommodates print and digital resources, functional zones such as circulation area, reference section, periodicals section, stack area, digital labs, and reading halls, flexible layouts to adapt to new learning styles (individual study, group discussions, collaborative research) and Safety measures: fire alarms, CCTV, security gates, emergency exits. The Reading and Study Spaces includes General Reading Halls with sufficient seating capacity, Individual Study Carrels for quiet and focused learning, Group Discussion Rooms to encourage collaborative learning, Research Commons / Learning Commons for

advanced study and project work, 24x7 Reading Rooms in some HEIs to support continuous learning.

Physical infrastructure also includes Furniture and Equipment, having ergonomic chairs and reading tables for user comfort, Open-access shelves for print resources, Lockers and storage facilities for personal belongings and Notice boards, digital displays, and signage for navigation.

The ICT and Digital Infrastructure, which is a part of the physical setup, includes Computer Labs for accessing e-resources, High-speed Internet and Wi-Fi access across the library, Printers, photocopiers, and scanners, digital kiosks for catalogue search and self-service and RFID-enabled security gates and self-check machines. Most of the libraries provide Special Facilities for Differently-Abled Users, Wheelchair ramps and elevators, accessible reading desks and workstations, assistive technologies: screen readers, Braille printers, magnifiers, and talking books, reserved seating areas to promote inclusivity. Multimedia and Technology-Enhanced Spaces provide facilities of Audio-Visual Rooms for multimedia learning, Smart classrooms or seminar halls connected with the library, Makerspaces, innovation labs, and digital literacy labs (in advanced HEIs) and Projection systems, interactive whiteboards, and video conferencing facilities. Reprographic and Printing Facilities is the most common facility provided by HEI's libraries which includes Photocopying, printing, and scanning services for academic needs, Digital printing facilities for project reports and research material and On-demand document delivery support.

The facilities also feature adequate lighting, ventilation, and air conditioning for a comfortable study environment. Cafeteria,

refreshment corners, or vending machines (in modern HEIs), rest areas or lounges for informal study and relaxation and washrooms and drinking water facilities at convenient locations. For Security and Safety Measures includes RFID tags and anti-theft detection systems, CCTV surveillance across all sections, fire safety equipment and alarms and also Secure entry and exit with access control systems.

Physical infrastructure in HEI libraries is not just about buildings and bookshelves, but about creating a dynamic learning ecosystem that integrates study spaces, ICT facilities, accessibility features, and user-friendly amenities. A modern, well-equipped library infrastructure directly contributes to academic excellence, research productivity, and quality enhancement in higher education.

Role in Teaching, Learning, and Research:

Academic libraries in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are not just repositories of books but act as knowledge hubs. They provide the resources, facilities, and services that directly support teaching, enhance learning experiences, and foster high-quality research.

Role in Teaching:

Role of HEI's libraries in teaching provides textbooks, reference materials, and supplementary readings aligned with syllabi and maintains reserves for prescribed course materials. It also support faculty in preparing lectures, course outlines, and multimedia content. HEI's libraries provides access to teaching aids (e-books, e-journals, AV materials, case studies). For faculty development, they help teachers update knowledge with the latest research and pedagogy trends. Conduct workshops on digital teaching tools, plagiarism, and copyright. An integration of ICT in Teaching

provides smart classrooms, multimedia labs, and e-learning platforms, and it also enables access to MOOCs (SWAYAM, Coursera, edX).

Role in Learning:

Role of HEI's libraries in learning provides access to knowledge resources such as Print (books, journals, theses) and digital (databases, e-books, open access), Institutional repositories and OERs (Open Educational Resources). For student support they provide Book banks for disadvantaged students and Career guidance resources (competitive exam materials, job alerts). For information literacy development libraries support for training in searching, evaluating, and citing information. Workshops on research skills, reference management, and plagiarism awareness. There is 24x7 study spaces in advanced HEIs for this they provide reading halls, group discussion rooms, and digital commons.

For lifelong learning, libraries also provide support to encourage independent and self-directed learning, as well as skills for continuous knowledge updating.

Role in Research:

Research Resource Support provide access to scholarly databases (Scopus, Web of Science, IEEE Xplore, JSTOR) and Inter-library loan and document delivery services. For Research Skill Development, HEI's library gives support in training in literature review, citation styles, and academic writing, guidance on identifying authentic journals and avoiding predatory publishers. Impact and visibility of research support in creating researcher profiles (ORCID, Scopus ID, Google Scholar) and also provides bibliometric/scientometric services (citation counts, h-index).

For research scholars, they also provide Plagiarism and Ethics Support, having plagiarism detection services (Turnitin,

Urkund), awareness on copyright and academic integrity.

For research data management and preservation, institutional repositories are used for theses, dissertations, and faculty publications. Most of the libraries provides Collaboration and Innovation to promote cross-disciplinary research through access to global knowledge and provide spaces like research commons and innovation labs.

Challenges in Library Services and Facilities:

Although libraries in HEIs are evolving into digital and knowledge-driven hubs, they continue to face several challenges that impact their effectiveness in supporting teaching, learning, and research. The Financial Constraints include limited budgets for procuring print and digital resources, rising subscription costs for e-journals and scholarly databases, and difficulty in maintaining a balance between print and electronic collections. Technological Challenges include rapid changes in ICT requiring continuous upgrades, limited integration of AI, machine learning, and big data tools in many libraries, dependence on external vendors for digital platforms and access and inadequate cybersecurity measures to protect digital resources. Also, Infrastructure Limitations include insufficient reading halls, study spaces, and discussion rooms, outdated or poorly maintained furniture and equipment, a lack of accessibility features for differently-abled users and limited high-speed internet and Wi-Fi coverage in some HEIs. For Human Resource Challenges, there is a shortage of trained professional librarians with ICT and research skills, a need for continuous professional development in digital literacy and resistance to change among staff while adopting new technologies.

In User-Related Challenges, there is a lack of awareness among students/faculty about available services, inadequate information literacy and research skills, over-dependence on free internet sources (Google, Wikipedia) rather than scholarly databases and low participation in library training and orientation programs. In the area of Access and Licensing Issues, there are restrictions on multiple simultaneous users in some databases, complex licensing agreements for e-resources, and difficulty in ensuring off-campus access to digital resources. For Plagiarism and Academic Integrity, there are rising cases of plagiarism and unethical publishing practices. Lack of awareness about predatory journals and limited institutional policies for research ethics.

HEI libraries face challenges that range from financial and technological issues to user behaviour and sustainability concerns. To overcome these challenges, libraries must adopt innovative strategies, provide staff training, foster collaborations, and adopt user-centric approaches. Strengthening these areas will help libraries maintain their pivotal role in the quality enhancement of higher education.

Conclusion:

Libraries in higher education institutions are no longer confined to their traditional roles of book lending; they have transformed into multifunctional knowledge hubs that directly contribute to the teaching, learning, and research missions of academic institutions. By offering a wide spectrum of services—ranging from circulation and reference assistance to user support, information literacy, and research facilitation—libraries strengthen the academic foundation and enhance institutional quality. Modern facilities such as digital repositories, ICT-enabled infrastructure, collaborative

learning spaces, and assistive technologies have made libraries more inclusive, user-friendly, and globally connected.

At the same time, libraries face persistent challenges, including limited budgets, rapid technological changes, access restrictions, and skill gaps among both staff and users. Addressing these challenges requires innovative strategies, collaborative networks, continuous training, and user-centric approaches. If effectively managed, HEI libraries will continue to serve as catalysts for academic excellence, quality enhancement, and institutional accreditation success while fostering a culture of innovation, ethical research, and lifelong learning.

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