



Best Practices And Qualitative Library Services In Academic Libraries

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Abstract:

This paper explains best practices and Library services for Academic Libraries. The best practices are Current Awareness Service, SDI Service, Reference Service, Interlibrary Loan Facility, New Arrivals Display, Library Orientation, SET-NET Training Center, Best Reader Award, Reprography, MOPAC Training Program, Issue Return, MOOCs, Feedback on Books, Wall Magazines, Library Blog, Institutional Repository, Collaboration with other Libraries, BRAIN Activity, Free Library Service to Senior Citizens, OPAC, M-OPAC, N-LIST, E-Zone, Digital Library. The services that are adopted in Academic Libraries are discussed and conclude that with the adoption of best practices in Academic Libraries there will be a continuous improvement in overall performance of Institution.

Keywords: *Academic Libraries, Best Practices, Library Services, Reference Service, CAS.*

Introduction:

Library Services play very vital role in uplifting quality of Academic and Research environment in Higher Education. To satisfy user's needs academic libraries need to identify and adopt best practices. Therefore preparing guidelines founded on the best practices employed by the libraries will eventually enhance value based services of Academic Libraries.

What Is A Best Practice?

"A practice qualifies to a Best Practice if it resulted in high value impact on any aspect of educational activity in an Institution". A best practice is a value-added standard practice. However best practice may depend on viewer's perspective, time and context. A best practice may be innovative and can be a philosophy, policy, program, strategy, process or practice that solves a problem or create new opportunities and have positive impact on

organizations." Best practices are nothing but tailor made services, reaching beyond with available services and delighting customers. Collection and library environment are integral assets of any library especially Academic Library. These aspects develop image of the library. These can be reinforced further with the help of additional best practices.

Challenges Faced By Librarians In Academic Library:

The main challenge of the academic librarians is to realize the educational goals of the institution and try to fulfill them. Academic Libraries encourage reading by procuring materials for study and research, by introducing open access system, by providing long hours of open access, by organizing the library resources in a systematic way and also nourishes the intellect of the student, encourages the researches of the faculty thus

serve the teaching and research needs of the faculty. The academic library and information resource centres act as a vehicle for disseminating information and the related computer technologies through the best practices for utilization by its community of users and also for the exchange of information among its users.

Challenges Faced By Academic Libraries:

- Tremendous growth of information and documents.
- Increased cost of documents and information materials.
- Increase in user's information needs.
- New role of the librarian and greater responsibilities.
- Latest techniques and concepts in handling of information.
- New electronic information environment.
- Formation of databases and its security.
- Marketing of library and information services.

Best Practices Adopted In Academic Library:

The library and information centres of an institution play a central role in facilitating dissemination and creation of new knowledge. Listed below are the best practices which can be adopted by the academic library.

1. Orientation Programme:

Library orientation is the best service of library. With the help of orientation programme Librarian can introduce library's resources and services which will help to increase the library usage. Orientation programme makes the users know the library facility, resources and services. Libraries should provide - introduction of database search techniques and issues of academic integrity. The ultimate goal of library orientation is to empower users to navigate the library effectively, make informed use of its

resources, and cultivate information literacy skills that will serve them in their academic, professional, and personal endeavours.

2. Library Tour:

Library should organize a library tour for new students admitted in each academic year. Library staff should give a demo on library introduction and show all the sections in the library in order to familiarize students to the library. Library tour must be attractive and informative.

3. Information Literacy Programme:

User orientation or user education will create an awareness among the users regarding library resources and their usage in relation to preparation of assignments, project reports etc. Information Literacy Programme can be imparted through various methods viz. lectures, library tour, brochures, PPT presentations, information aids etc. Display of new arrivals in the library, instructions on use of internet and web resources is also provided through this programme.

4. Book Display:

Display the new arrival of books at the entrance of the library and send mail to all the users, in order to bring awareness among the users of the new additions to the library. To organize exhibitions and book display programmes on important dates, and important occasion of famous personalities. This helps and provides an opportunity for users to know the various types of information resources available on a particular aspect in the library.

5. Book Exhibition:

Arrange book exhibition from various publishers. This helps the users to see the new collection on their subjects of interest. It helps to provide the latest information about the books. Book exhibitions help in building and developing the collection of the library.

6. Staff User meet:

Academic libraries should organize various programmes for staff and users meet e.g. orientation, lectures on related issues, topics, workshops, seminars, which focuses on the issues useful to the users as well as to the staff. The libraries may organize programmes in information handling in the present digital era, knowledge networking, role of librarians in the electronic era, subject searching, time management, public relations, knowledge based systems, this helps to keep and update knowledge of the staff and the users about the latest developments and trends in library principles and practices, thereby bridging the gap between the staff and the users.

7. Library Information brochure:

The main aim of the library brochure is to provide guidance regarding the library. This is the best way to educate the users and how to use the library resources. The library brochure should contain the various library services provided by the library, as well as explain how to use the resources. Attractive and descriptive library brochure is helpful for the user to market and increase the library usage.

8. Database Training:

As a part of its commitment to serving the university community's research needs, the library's Reference Department offers many opportunities to its constituents to learn more about the library and its resources. Library instruction is offered via classroom lectures, individual instructions and workshops. It is completely customizable based on individual needs.

9. Developing Virtual Reference:

Virtual reference is reference service initiated electronically, often in real-time, where patrons employ computers or other Internet technology to communicate with reference staff without being physically present. Communication channels are used

frequently in virtual reference which include chat, videoconferencing, Voice over IP, co-browsing, email, and instant messaging.

10. Table of Contents:

Table of content of current journals should be sent to the users, who will find the articles of their interest as it saves the time of the user; this is a best service for the researchers and faculties.

11. Abstract services:

Libraries send the abstract of articles to the researcher, which will help them to find out the article useful to them. Researchers and Faculties will be alert about the new knowledge of their respective disciplines.

12. Reference Desk:

The reference desk or information desk of a library is a public service counter where professional librarians provide library users with direction to library materials, advice on library collections and services, and expertise on multiple kinds of information from multiple sources. Library users can consult the staff at the reference desk for help in finding information. Using a structured reference interview, the librarian works with the library user to clarify their needs and determine what information sources will be suitable to them.

13. Ezy Proxy:

Library can provide off campus access to its subscribed e- resources with the use of ezy proxy. Faculty, research scholars and students can get Ezy proxy remote access authentication. It effects a lot, on the use of e-resources if it can be accessed remotely from outside the campus, and users can access it whenever they get time.

14. Extension of library hours:

During examination time the library time can be extended and the reading/reference hall can be kept open for longer hours. This will not only help the students, but also in using the library resources.

15. Library best user award:

To attract more students to visit the library and use the resources, libraries can announce the best user award. Award is given to the student who had made maximum use of the library. The winner can be judged by searching the visitor register, circulation of library item data and observation by the librarian.

16. User feedback practice:

User feedback is collected on all aspects of library formally through suggestion boxes, feedback form and library services evaluation forms. Appropriate actions are initiated regularly on the suggestions received from the users which help the librarian to improve the services. Library is service center and it is necessary to provide new and improve services. It is necessary to get feedback on a regular basis. Implementation of new services, to streamline or to modify to suite the requirements of the end users.

17. Recommendation boxes:

Recommendation boxes are also kept at stack room, reference and reading halls and at strategic places in the library, in order to encourage the users to recommended books, journals, other resources for additions to the library. Necessary action is then initiated and user is kept informed. This helps in collection development.

18. Previous years question paper:

In an academic library, this is most important service because all the students need to see the previous year's question paper. The library staff upload these papers on to the library website, which will help the students.

19. Database Hub (Internet access facility):

Providing online access to information is one of the most important job of the librarian, for this purpose library needs a computer room with internet facility where

users can and access online databases and e-resources.

20. Staff training programme:

Staff members are given the opportunity to familiarize and expertise with the library automation, e- library services by arranging in-house and external training programmes. Job-rotation of staff of the various sections are provided with on-job training. It is important to motivate to enhance their skills and expertise in conventional and e-library associated services and operations.

21. Institutional visit:

The library staff members are taken for a visit to other college or institutional libraries to study their functioning, the purpose is to refresh them and also make them aware about the best practices followed by others. Library staff members who are open minded can learn the best practices from other libraries and follow in their library.

22. Inter library loan:

In today's information world, the whole information cannot be got at one place so inter-library loan is useful to complete the users information needs. User can borrow the required material from other libraries.

Conclusion:

For a better and qualitative library services, the academic libraries need to play a significant role. They have to build the user's trust in the academic library services and to get them to use the services to capture information once, and then to share it across all relevant services to make information widely available and to provide equal access to all. Use of technology in designing and delivering the information products and services always made good results. Focus on staff behavior, updating marketing practices and user-oriented services. With a dedication to meet the

information requirement/needs of the user's, a user focused library is achievable.

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