



BEST PRACTICES IN

ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

Issues and Challenges

Editor

Dr. Jnyandeep Saikia

Naren Sarmah Library

DKD COLLEGE, DERGAON

BEST PRACTICES TO MOTIVATE LIBRARY USERS AND TO FULFIL THEIR INFORMATION NEEDS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE SELECTED COLLEGES OF SIVASAGAR DISTRICT

Jyotika Borthakur

Librarian, SMD College, Sivasagar

Sangeeta Roy

Librarian, Sonari College, Sivasagar

Shyam Thakuria

Assistant Librarian, NIRD, Guwahati

ABSTRACT:

In today's information and technology environment, it has become a necessity for every student to study various subjects for their knowledge. For this purpose, academic libraries, especially college libraries are functioning not only as a knowledge centre for disseminating knowledge but also as a repository centre for future. For this reason, a college librarian is responsible for motivating its users to use the library collection fully and sensibly. A librarian is the backbone of the library because she/he knows the library resources, use them appropriately and planning for future also. In this paper, a study has been made to show the motivating patterns and meeting the demands of the users and information seeking patterns of the users of selected colleges of Sivasagar district. A study has also been made to improve

the steps to meet the demands of information seekers of the college.
Keywords: Users Motivation, Information Needs

1. INTRODUCTION

A library is the backbone of any educational institution. Libraries function as an essential integral component in higher education system. Today, college libraries are functioning as a hub of knowledge in disseminating knowledge. The library environment is currently undergoing a rapid and dynamic change which is attracting its users to use the library to its maximum. To meet the end-users demands effectively, the college libraries need to identify and adopt good practices to motivate its users and satisfy their information needs.

Effective library management skills (eg. Open access), instructional programme (eg. User awareness program) are necessary to motivate the library users of a college which comprises students, teachers, research scholars, staffs and solve their information needs. Meeting their demands not only stimulate their intellectual curiosity but also encourages them to continue seek information and exploration. Effective library and information skills and instructional programs help the students to acquire the skills they need to solve their information needs.



Fig1. Location map of the study area in Sivasagar District of Assam.

Library services in higher education plays a central role in enhancing the quality of academic and research environment. Best practices are applied in an innovative way for a positive impact. A college librarian is responsible for attracting its users to use the library effectively and sensibly. S/he uses or applies best skills to motivate the users and gives best services to its users to satisfy their information needs. In this paper, we have made an attempt to discuss some vital issues which are needed to be developed by the college librarians for more effective ways to motivate its users and satisfy their information needs.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objectives of the study are as follows:-

1. To know the best practices applied by the college libraries of Sivasagar district.
2. To know the best methods to motivate the users to use the college library.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study is mainly based on the primary data collected from

the librarians in the selected college libraries of Sivasagar district, Assam. A structured questionnaire was formed based on the objectives of study and the same was sent to the 13 colleges of Sivasagar district. The data obtained by these colleges have been tabulated, interpreted and analyzed in the light of objectives of the study and result have been depicted in the succeeding section.

4. SURVEYED COLLEGE LIBRARIES OF SIVASAGAR DISTRICT:

A College library is defined as "a library established, maintained and administered by a college to meet the needs of its students and faculty" (Ray, Prytherch; 1990). The basic common effort of all college libraries should be to meet the legitimate needs and demands of all the college communities. The basic function of the college library should be to assist both curricular and extra-curricular activities of college education and for shouldering the higher responsibilities in future life.

The govt. of Assam through an act The Assam College Employees (Provincialisation) Act, 2005 provincialised the general degree colleges in Assam. Our present study includes only the selected government provincialised colleges of Sivasagar district. Out of all the government provincialised degree colleges of Sivasagar District we have selected thirteen (13) colleges and their libraries for our study.

5. BEST PRACTICES TO MOTIVATE USERS:

5.1 Administration and Management

- **Maintenance of the Service areas:**

Library is a place where many people visit to read, consult and borrow reading materials. It is necessary the atmosphere in the Library is inviting with cleanliness of areas in and outside of the library. Maintenance of calm and neat atmosphere in the reading and stack areas is a must for concentrated reading and searching of materials.

5.2 Collection and Services:

- **Collection Development:**

A college Library should contain the quantity of resources as

prescribed by the government, UGC and other governing bodies. They may generally be in the form of books, text books, standard reference, current journals which include national, international and peer reviewed journals, back volumes, e-resources such as full text/secondary databases, CDs/DVDs, AV materials, etc.

- **Library Book Exhibition:**

College library can organize book exhibition inviting some leading publishers throughout the country. Students and faculty members may select books on spot and it will help to motivate the users in the college libraries.

5.3 Extent of the use of services

- **User Education:**
- To raise awareness about library services
- To optimum utilization of the library
- To provide guidance on accessing the library resources.

- **User Orientation Programme:**

Library has been conduct orientation programme to the new students admitted every academic session. Students attend the programme according to the time table drawn by the library. Students are explained about the resources, facilities, services, the library provides them. They are taken round in the library apart from the training them in searching library databases, e-journals, OPAC search etc. Students find it useful to know about the resources available in their discipline. This programme will certainly motivate the user community of the college libraries.

- **Library Best Reader Award:**

The objective of the best reader award is to attract more students to visit the library and also increase the use of resources in the library. Data is collected through the visitors register maintained in the college library. Usage data is compiled

through circulation of library items. Based on the above data and observation of the librarian this award is given to the students who has made maximum use of the library. At last award is given to the winner at the time of the annual programme of the college. Cash/Book in the form of award can be given to the best user from each discipline.

- **User feedback Practice through suggestion Box:**

This is the way to know the users need and motivate the users in the college libraries. User's feedback is collected on all aspects of the library services formally through suggestion box. Appropriate actions are initiated regular basis on the suggestion received. Book recommendation boxes are also kept in different places in the library to encourage the readers. It will helps in the collection development, changes and improvement in facilities and services of the college libraries.

5.4 Application of IT in the library Services:

- **Opening free Browsing Unit (Internet Access Facility):**
College library should open free browsing unit to provide access to the web resources, to educate users.
- **Library Home Page for dissemination of information:**
College library should create library homepage for dissemination of current information. It should be updated regularly for the attraction of the user community. All the latest happenings of the library are to be uploaded in this page.
- **Automated circulation system:**
College library should create the environment of automated circulation system. Smart card technology, bar-coded identity card should be introduced in the library for the benefit of the user as well as the staff.
- **Web OPAC:**
Library collection availability and its status are very important for the users. The card catalogue is converted in to machine

readable catalogue to make it available for the access over the internet.

6. RESULTS:

Table 1: Table shows the total Collection of the Surveyed Colleges.

Sl. No.	Name of College	Year of Establishment	Total Collection			
			Printed Books	Printed Periodicals	Manuscript	News Papers
1.	Sibsagar Girls College	1964	31,000	19	-	12
2.	Aimguri College	1967	17,000	12	-	8
3.	Nazim College	1981	12,000	20	-	9
4.	SPP College	1970	26,620	30	-	15
5.	Gargan College	1999	30,000	16	-	9
6.	Sibsagar Commerce College	1989	21,500	11	150	9
7.	HCDG College, Nitaipukhuri	1965	10,000	10	-	10
8.	SMD College, Charing	1964	16,000	20	-	7
9.	Sibsagar College	1947	54,000	40	-	14
10.	Dakshinamurthy College	1982	16,000	9	-	9
11.	Densow College	1975	14,000	17	-	8
12.	Sonnet College	1970	17,280	17	-	6
13.	Mizan College	1978	29,000	45	-	16

- Total library collections of 13 provincialised colleges of Sibsagar district have been shown in the above table.
- All the colleges have good number of collection in order to motivate and attract its users.
- It gives us a positive result that the Librarians of these colleges have been successful in rendering up-to-date services to the users.
- Books, journals, magazines and newspaper collection shows us that users are needed these collections to use a library fully and sensibly.

Table 2: Table shows total number of users of the surveyed colleges.

Sl. No.	Name of College	Total Users			Total
		Students	Teachers	Others	
1.	Sibsagar Girls College	1500	55	20	1575
2.	Amguri College	1500	-	8	1508
3.	Nazim College	850	40	20	910
4.	SPP College	1500	40	15	1555
5.	Gargaon College	1700	74	35	1809
6.	Sibsagar Commerce College	1000	-	-	1000
7.	HCDG College, Nitaipukhuri	700	22	10	732
8.	SMD College, Charing	550	29	12	591
9.	Sibsagar College	1400	76	36	1512
10.	Dikhowmukh College	500	25	10	535
11.	Demrow College	1000	30	5	1035
12.	Sonari College	1500	58	15	1573
13.	Moan College	2500	72	22	2594

- > Total number of users of these colleges show that the users are using the library regularly and the Librarians have been successful in motivating the users and giving information services to them.
- > The table shows us that not only the students but also the teachers and other staff members are visiting and using the library which gives us a positive result about its users.

Table 3: Table shows services provided to the surveyed College Libraries

Sl. No.	Services Provided	Total Numbers	Percentage
1.	Circulation Service (Computerized)	2	15.38%
2.	Reference Service	13	100%
3.	Photo copying service	13	100%
4.	Book Bank Service	13	100%
5.	Internet service	13	100%
6.	N-List service	6	46.15%
7.	UGC Infonet service	1	7.69%

- > The above table shows us that all the college libraries are rendering satisfying services to the users.
- > Except three services, other four services is giving us cent percent positive result.
- > The result shows us that computerized circulation system, N-List service and UGC Infonet services have to be developed by most of the college libraries.

Table 4: Table shows the System of Access of the surveyed College Libraries

Sl. No.	System of Access	Total Numbers	Percentage
1.	Open Access	10	76.92%
2.	Closed Access	3	23.07%

- > The above table gives us the result of 76.92% open access facility in most of the libraries whereas only 23.07% still follows close access system.
- > 76.92% result shows us that due to open access system users are using the library fully and it is a motivating step to motivate the users and rendering them services.
- > 23.07% result shows us that remaining three colleges are needed to follow open access system for motivating more users.

Table 5: Table shows the facilities of the Surveyed Libraries

Sl. No.	Infrastructure	Total Numbers	Percentage
1.	Well furnished Furniture	13	100%
2.	Spacious Reading Space	7	53.84%
3.	Good Reading Environment	13	100%
4.	Air Conditioned Reading Room	2	15.38%
5.	Orientation Hall	0	0
6.	Wi-Fi Connectivity	0	0
7.	Proper Lighting facility	13	100%
8.	Library Home Page	0	0
9.	LAN Connectivity	10	76.92%
10.	Development of e-resources	6	46.15%

- The above table shows us that most of the libraries have more or less all the facilities in order to give appropriate services to the users.

Table 6: Table shows the best practices to motivate the Users

Sl. No.	Best Practices	Total Numbers	Percentage
1.	User Orientation	13	100%
2.	Book Exhibition	9	69.23%
3.	Spot book selection	0	0
4.	Best Reader Award	10	76.92%
5.	Film Show	0	0
6.	Virtual Library Tour	0	0
7.	User Suggestion Box	4	30.77%
8.	Library Committee	13	100%
9.	Separate Sections	10	83.33%
10.	Use of OPAC	7	53.84%
11.	Web OPAC	0	0

- The above table shows us that some practices are successful in motivating the users.
- User orientation program is giving cent percent result of all the colleges.
- Book exhibition, Best reader award, presence of every separate section (e.g., periodical section, reference section etc.) are giving us positive result for motivating and giving services to the users.
- Film show, virtual library tour, user suggestion box, Web OPAC etc. are yet to be implemented by all the college libraries which if get implemented will give us 100% positive result in motivating more of its users.

7. DISCUSSION:

1. The collection development policy is limited in all the college libraries of Sivasagar district. All the surveyed college libraries collect only printed books, journals, magazines and daily

newspaper. Some of the Colleges have E-book, e-journal, e-databases in their libraries.

2. (46.15%) of the college libraries provide the services of N-list programme of Infolibnet. Only one (7.69%) surveyed college library provide UGC Infolibnet service.
3. Open access system is followed in 10 (76.92%) of the college libraries of Sivasagar district. Only three numbers (23.07%) of colleges follow closed access system.
4. 12 numbers (92.3%) of college libraries implemented SOUL software for automation of library activities.
5. Broadband internet service is connected in 12 (92.3%) college libraries. One (7.69%) college library presently using data card for internet connectivity.
6. Reference Service, Information Service and photocopying service is provided in all the surveyed college libraries of Sivasagar district in Assam.
7. (16.66%) college libraries using Barcode technology for circulation management for saving the time of the user. Other college libraries yet to be implemented this technology. They still follow the manual system for issue/return of library documents.
8. All (100%) surveyed college libraries conduct User orientation programme for library awareness of the user.
9. Library video show is effective to the user to know the different sections and their activities. It is yet to be implemented in the college libraries of Sivasagar district. One few colleges provided library orientation classes through LCD Projector (slide show)
10. Library website is not available in all the colleges of Sivasagar district.
11. Best reader award is offered in 10 (76.92%) surveyed college libraries. Only 3 colleges are yet to be offered this award to motivate the user.
12. Book fair is conducted to aware the reader about new arrival in their discipline. Nine (69.23%) of the surveyed college libraries conduct book fair in the college premises.

13. Reading room environment is found good in most of the college libraries. (15.38%) of the surveyed college libraries provide air conditioned reading room facility.
14. Seven (53.84%) college libraries provide OPAC facility to the user. Other 46.15% college libraries yet to be implemented the OPAC facility to the user.

8. SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION:

The following suggestions were drawn for the college libraries for motivation and satisfy the information needs of the users:

- > College libraries should be enriched with the latest collection of books, journals and magazines in different formats. Students and the faculty members to be encouraged to select their required documents by organizing book exhibition cum spot book selection programme in the college premises. The college librarian should take proper initiative for organizing the same to motivate the users.
- > Orientation Programme should be organized in frequent way to encourage not only the students but also the faculty members of the college. Internet training, Awareness programme on latest development (such as e-resources, searching technique, and OPAC use, N-List) should be organized in the libraries to satisfy their information needs of the user.
- > Best reader award should be offered in all the surveyed college libraries in each discipline. They may be awarded in the annual programme of the college, so that others are motivated to visit the library.
- > Library interior design should be attractive to motivate the users. The library furniture and the sitting arrangement should be standard one to encourage for reading inside the library. The College librarian should maintain a reading atmosphere in the library.
- > Open access system should be introduced, not only for the Textbook and General books but also for the Reference collection of the libraries.
- > There should be Broadband connectivity for the internet connection. Local Area Network provision is essential in the college libraries.

- > All the surveyed college libraries should registered their name for UGC, Inernet and N-List Services for the user community. Users should be trained up about these two services and their utility.

No academic institution can survive without a library, which is indispensable for the achievement of the vision and mission of its parent body. To survive in the rapidly changed technology college libraries should constantly gauge and examine user's needs. Professionals need to change their mindset with the changes of the technology. If the users see the value of library's services, they will support and use the library services more.

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