

USER EDUCATION IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

Edited by
N.R. SATYANARAYANA

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PREFACE

The Department of Library and Information Science, Lucknow University had organized in November 1986 a National Seminar on User Education in Academic Libraries in India which can rightly be called the first-ever All India Seminar on the subject. In all 38 professional Library and Information experts, Librarians and Information Scientists from all over the country participated in it, giving the seminar a truly national character. The seminar was held with the financial support of the University Grants Commission, New Delhi.

The need to organize such a seminar was being felt by all of us in the profession for several years. The importance of educating the library user in how to make the fullest use of the facilities available to them, has been gaining attention ever since the emphasis on self-education and the use of tutorials in the higher education sector. The need for such user-instruction for positive action to overcome the communication barrier between the user and the document the actually felt. There has been growing interest in library user-education in many kinds of Libraries—public, special, school and more so in academic.

New developments in information technology and the increasing use of computers in Academic Libraries, especially University Libraries, create avenues for new kind of services in the libraries. Their effective use Libraries in turn requires instruction to the users.

As averred by Professor P.B. Mangla in the introduction to his book *Library and Information Science Education in India* (Delhi, Macmillan, 1981) an important aspect which deserves mention here and which has considerable relevance for the Library and Information Science training and research programmes in the country is the recognition of the fact that Libraries, documentation centres, and information centres play a vital role in the development of education and research as well as in the overall socio-economic development of a country.

A public library today is considered an essential element in the life of a community; an academic library is an integral part of an educational institution; and a special library or technical library is indispensable in the Government development, research institution, business or industrial organization. The trend for developing these libraries, documentation centres or information centres has got accelerated during the past two decades or so, particularly after World War II, primarily because information resources in a country are now recognised as being as vital as other resources such as energy and minerals. The acquisition, organization, and dissemination of these information resources provide an essential basis for the progress of human civilization and society as a whole.

Two important phenomena in the universe of knowledge, viz., 'information explosion' and 'interdisciplinary research' have generated new demands on the service to be provided by these libraries, documentation centres or information centres. In order to meet these varied, changing and complex demands of the different user-groups such as scientists, scholars, decision makers, planners and even laymen, different techniques and services (such as SDI, CAS, repackaging of information) have been developed so as to provide the users the required information exhaustively, efficiently and effectively, as well as in a form which would best serve their purpose. Computers and various other electronic gadgets have already been introduced by the 'information industry' so as to make the process of information storage and retrieval all the more speedier and efficient.

In this age of information explosion it is necessary for libraries to process, catalogue, classify information in specialist detail for the ready use of library-users. This requires two things: one 'that the Librarian has more than a mere technical acquaintance with the material he is handling, and two, that the user should know what he can obtain at which point and in which detail from Library'. Libraries have become the information retrieval system, and unless one knows the code, the user would be unable to retrieve the information he wants.

We have known great libraries even in the past. Takshshila and Nalanda are reported to have had over 50,000 items in

their manuscript division and the Chinese King Lao Po had a personal library that is said to have over a million items in stock. The British Museum in London; the Library of Congress in Washington; the Lenin Library in Moscow; the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris and the New York Public Library are giant libraries and they have so perfected the system of information retrieval that any user can get the information he needs within the shortest possible time. Such a system, therefore, ought to be familiar to the user.

The Lucknow Seminar discussed the interaction between the user and the library. It gave great thought to the help the user could be given to know what to expect and the librarian to know what they ought to cater for. It is through such interaction that knowledge can grow and the libraries best serve the cause of scholarship and research. The papers collected in the present volume constantly reflect this bias.

The Seminar was inaugurated on 6 November 1986 by Professor S.P. Nagendra, Vice-Chancellor, Lucknow University. Professor Gopala Sarana, Dean, Faculty of Arts, Lucknow University presided over the inaugural function. Professor C.G. Viswanathan, formerly Head, Department of Library and Information Science, Lucknow University presented the key-note address.

The work of the Seminar was divided into six technical sessions :

- Session — I : User education : Conceptual Framework
- Session — II : User education programmes at different levels—case studies
- Session — III : Teaching methods and media : need for user-education programmes
- Session — IV : Bibliographic Instructions; and
- Session — V : Users' reactions to libraries.

In the concluding session there was a great deal of discussion among the participants on various problems. A draft of resolutions was moved and suggestions and comments were invited from the participants, which formed the basis for formulating the final set of recommendations.

As the material contained in the papers is most relevant many participants in the seminar felt that the seminar papers should be edited and published in the book form.

I must express my sincere thanks to all those who have made it possible for this volume to see the light of the day. In particular I express my thanks to the contributors for their permission to include their papers in this volume. Ess Ess Publications (Mr S.K. Sethi in particular) deserve my thanks for accepting the manuscript for publication and also for taking all possible steps to bring out the volume in the best possible format.

Sarvasri S.N. Agarwal, R.K. Srivastva, Harish Chandra and Yogendra Misra, all local librarians, stood by me in the organization of the seminar. I am extremely grateful to them. Ms N. Kamala Kumari and Ms N. Ganga Bhawani, my sisters, extended their help to make the manuscript ready for publication for which my thanks are due to them.

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July 31, 1987

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AREA 1

CONCEPTUAL FRAME-WORK

USER EDUCATION IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES : AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE

C.G. VISWANATHAN

Under the generous auspices of the University Grants Commission, New Delhi, this National Seminar on User Education in Academic Libraries is being conducted by the Lucknow University Department of Library and Information Science. All of us should feel grateful to these two august bodies for evincing interest in this aspect of libraries of the academic institutions. Indeed the problem of user education of libraries comprises of vast dimensions, as academic institutions range from the primary to the highest stages of education, including research and special libraries. To cover the total area within these three days is a formidable task. So it is suggested that the discussions are limited in scope to the libraries of higher educational institutions, colleges and universities, for the reason most of us here have to do with those libraries, and have had little experience of libraries at lower levels.

The two prestigious documents, the *Challenge of Education*, and the *National Policy of Education* of the Ministry of Education, Government of India are still in a stage of final conclusion about the new system of education for the country.

The objectives of the seminar and the areas on which group discussion should take place, and the relevant papers read and discussed have been specified in the first information note. As