

Seminar Libraries of the University of Peshawar: Use and Resources

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Abstract

Students in higher education are to be provided with the facilities necessary for mastering the subject matter, techniques, skills, habits of thought, and methods of work in their chosen field. Classroom instructions alone will not provide all the opportunities needed for attaining all these complex educational objectives. It is here that the libraries come to help the students. The university's seminar library has a prominent role to play in supporting higher education to fulfill objectives of its parent body. This study is a survey of the seminar libraries and of the utilization of their resources and facilities in the University of Peshawar with particular emphasis on their organization, administration and utilization. It also analyzes the services efficiency of these libraries with the help of indices. This study provides a base for the improvement of seminar libraries in the University of Peshawar in particular and other libraries in universities in general.

Keywords: Libraries, Library and Information Science, Information Resources, Role of University Libraries, University of Peshawar.

Introduction

Academic institutions and academic libraries play an important role in giving right direction to the cultural, political, social, scientific and technological development of a nation. These two go side by side and help in promoting the formal education for all-round development of students. If the academic institutions are body, the libraries attached to them function as heart. Without heart there cannot be a body and without body one cannot think of a heart to function. Being heart of the academic institution the importance of libraries is very high. There is no better way to judge the quality of an educational institution than to look at its library. If the library is weak the institution itself is mediocre and as a corollary if the university or college has a strong library, there is every probability that the institution itself is outstanding. The better the library, the stronger will be the faculty.

A university library is a part of a university set up. Therefore, it exists to serve the objectives of its parent organization. Every library program must support university's total program. In other words, a library should aim to advance the functions of its university. It should reflect character of the university (Kumar, 1987).

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By accumulating and organizing books, manuscripts, journals, and other materials the university library serves as an invaluable aid in the conservation of knowledge and ideas and as an active force in the teaching, research, and extension programs of the university. Through direct assistance to the members of the faculty and research staff and through the service of members of the library staff as instructional officers, the university library participates in the interpretative functions of the university. Through its many bibliographical and other reference services the library aids individuals of the instructional and research staff who are engaged in the preparation of materials for publication". Thus a modern university library aims to function as a dynamic instrument of education. It has a significant role to play in the fulfillment of the objectives of higher education (Ahmad, 1984).

University seminar libraries or departmental libraries are the legacy of old universities of Europe and Latin America. These organizations developed as largely autonomous and self-sufficient units separately housed. The seminar libraries were started with the motives to start only a small number of important works, constantly needed for day to day laboratory or consultation work. (Sharma, 1988). According to Lee (2003), a seminar library is a service unit of the Central library which functions under an independent department or faculty. Such libraries are physically isolated from the central library and contain a collection on a specific discipline and serves needs of the students and teachers of the faculty concerned. The fundamental objective of a seminar library is to provide physical convenience to members of academic staff and students of postgraduate classes. The seminar library plays a significant role in the academic process. They support curriculum, help students in information literacy, and help in the process of self-education (Wisconsin Library Association, 2006).

Literature Review

The provision of quality services in university libraries is considered a major issue in university library circles. Librarians see the library more in terms of the provision of and access to service quality than as just a physical place. Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) and automation have also changed the way people perceive libraries. Fewer and fewer professors and students go to the library. They access the internet to collect information instead of using the library in the traditional way (Davis and Herring (2001), Albanese and Oder (2002). As a result, the role of libraries and librarians is also changing. Librarian themselves have been re-evaluating their role as reflected in many discussions and papers. They emphasize the provision of good library service as more important to the user than the mere physical library building. This perspective is evident in several studies conducted by Edwards and Browne (1995), White and Abels (1995), and Coleman et al (1997).

According to Shan and Shaheen (2013), advancement in ICTs has greatly impacted university libraries in Pakistan. Now university libraries are reframing their organizational structures, responsibilities, staffing patterns, collection and services. They

revealed that besides using advanced informational tools, university libraries also need skilled human resources to provide better services. Rehman, Shafique, and Mahmood (2011) have pointed out that despite the processing and propagation of library resources, a key trait of a university library is the services based around personal interaction between users and the library staff. Libraries should make sure that these services show proper levels of customer care and that the information given to the users is useful and at the right level. They further mentioned that the distinguishing features of reference services include a staff designated to provide the service; a collection of reference works accessible to the public in an area set aside for the provision of the service; adequate guides to the library's resources; a high degree of interaction between the staff and the clientele.

Haider (2004) has conducted a study on issues faced by university libraries in Pakistan and found that university libraries in Pakistan are ill equipped, the collection is inadequate, readers' services are absent, physical facilities are missing, support from the university authorities is lacking and ICTs are applied only limitedly. Similar concerns were also shown by Ali (1990), Khan and Kazim (1987), Jaswal (1980), and Hanif (1986). A study conducted by Amin (2006) on the collection management policy of university libraries in Pakistan reported that librarians in the university libraries of Pakistan have little voice in the collection development process. The study reported that librarians were in favor of an up-to-date and coherent collection development policy but did not prepare such a policy in the literal sense. The reason behind this deficiency is lack of basic know-how and practical training. The study provided several recommendations in order to improve the situation in this regard. Amin and Haider (2013) reported that university libraries in Pakistan spend a large amount of their budget on book purchase which is the most important part of libraries' collections. The study reveals that the factors affecting successful execution of the practice of effective selection in the university libraries include dependence on faculty members for book selection, non-availability of book selection sources, and incapability of librarians to select books through the internet etc. The study suggested some strategies in this regard.

Khalid, Mahmood and Wilson (1997) conducted a comparative study on the use of cataloguing practice in university libraries in Pakistan, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia and found that there is an overall uniformity in the use of technical services in the university libraries of Pakistan, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia. They found a trend of automating all library services while traditional library services are being replaced by online approaches. Saeed et.al (2000) found that university libraries in Pakistan still need much improvement especially in the field of ICTs. The ICTs' infrastructure in most of the university libraries in Pakistan is inadequate. Non-availability of funds and lack of interest by the university authorities in library matters were reported to be the main barriers in improving the current structure of university libraries in the country. Similar issues were also found by Haider (2004).

Objectives of the Study

Following are the main objectives of the study:

- To assess the existing state of seminar libraries of the University of Peshawar with respect to the administrative set up, organizational efficiency, mode of financing, method of book selection and acquisition, technical processing, servicing, personnel and physical facilities.
- To assess the study facilities and resources in the seminars libraries in terms of their ability to cater to the various requirements of modern higher education.
- To study the service efficiency of the seminar libraries of the University of Peshawar with the help of indices like the rate of use of library resources and facilities by students and teachers of the University.
- To work out solutions for some of the crucial problems, so as to ensure a more efficient organization and more effective and fruitful operations.

Methodology

Survey method of research was used to collect data for this investigation. An overall 29 Seminar libraries of the University of Peshawar, having sufficient collection and enrollment of students, with selection as sample were visited personally. Both qualitative and quantitative data procedure was used. For qualitative data collection, the librarians were interviewed and their responses were analyzed. Besides that, two structured questionnaires were also prepared, one for the librarians and one for both teachers and students, which were administered to both groups of respondents. For the students and teachers, convenient sampling technique was used.

Data analysis and Results

Different variables like collection, book selection, availability of textbooks, journals and general books, library services, frequency of library visits by the students, borrowing of books, duration of library use by the students etc., were taken into account for the analysis and interpretation of the collected data. The observations and analysis are grouped below:

Book Selection

The head librarians pointed out that the primary book selection source was teachers' suggestions while, Publishers/booksellers catalogues was the second source of book selection. It is significant to note that book reviews published in subject journals and newspapers, which are considered to be authoritative, were rarely used as book selection tool in the seminar libraries of the University of Peshawar.

Book Acquisition

When asked about the mode of acquiring books for the libraries, the head librarians, replied that books were purchased from the booksellers who offered the highest discount. The maximum rate of discount offered by booksellers was 40 per cent, while the minimum was 12 per cent. Most of the librarians and students pointed out that as a result of this practice most of the treatises, advanced textbooks, and reference books essential for teachers and post graduate students were not supplied by the booksellers, because on such type of books, the publishers normally did not give a high discount to booksellers.

Book Collection

It was found that 26per cent seminar libraries of the University of Peshawar has a collection of less than 5000 volumes, 30 per cent has 5000 to 8000 volumes and 44 per cent has a collection of more than 8000. If we look at these figures, it becomes clear that the collection is reasonable, but according to the students and teachers of the departments concerned, most of the collection is outdated, and not according to the demand of readers. Hence it does not meet their needs properly. About 60 percent of the libraries of the University of Peshawar were not properly classified and catalogued.

Journals

The librarians of the seminar libraries of the University of Peshawar were requested to forward a list of journals subscribed by their libraries along with the duly filled questionnaire. But only 66 per cent of the libraries responded, out of which only 1.51 per cent of the libraries used to subscribe to 49 journals, 6.06 per cent libraries receiving six journals, while rest of the seminar libraries subscribe to less than six journals. Moreover, all head librarians pointed out that the facility of HEC digital library is made available to all students and teachers within their seminar libraries.

Stock Verification

Annual stock verification was conducted in 30per cent libraries under study. In all of the libraries the librarians were held responsible for the loss of books and the cost of the lost books were to be recovered from them. If this undesirable practice is allowed to continue, chances are that the library staff will advise ways and means to hinder the use of books, concentrating their attention, all the while, on how to preserve them to ensure their safe custody. This will result in defeating the very objective for which the libraries are established. Loss of books is inevitable in a library in view of the social and economic conditions prevailing in the society. The library staff should not be held responsible for the loss unless gross negligence or dishonesty is proved.

Library Services

Book lending was the main service rendered by the seminar libraries. 90 per cent of the libraries permitted students to borrow books on all working days, while in the rest of the libraries specific days in a week were fixed for the issuance of books to students. In 75 per cent of the libraries, students were allowed to retain a book for the whole academic year, while in 25 per cent libraries a book was to be retained for a maximum of 90 days. A maximum of three books were to be issued to a student at a time.

Library Staff

The study reveals that 59 per cent of the seminar libraries of the University of Peshawar possessed professional staff. In 41 per cent of the libraries, there was not even a single professional librarian. The study also revealed that only 27 per cent libraries were given class four staff like peons, cleaners, sweepers etc.

Attitude of Library Staff

Students and the faculty members of the library concerned were asked whether the library staff were helpful and friendly. In all, 48 per cent of the students and 62 per cent of the teachers gave positive answers. This indicates that the majority of the students and a good number of teachers of the various departments of the University of Peshawar have complaints about the general behavior of library staff.

Physical Facilities

In 80 per cent of the seminar libraries, the furniture available was reported to be inadequate, out molded and uncomfortable. In some of the libraries books were arranged in several rows on the shelves due to shortage of space and furniture, which made locating books very difficult. Eighty eight per cent of the libraries did not have washrooms in the library. As such the physical facilities available in most of the seminar libraries were miserably poor and totally inadequate for the proper functioning of the library and the effective use of library resources. Seventy one per cent of the teachers were of the view that the physical facilities in the seminar libraries of the University of Peshawar were not conducive to the proper pursuit of studies.

Use of Seminar Libraries by the Students

In a developing country like Pakistan, it is difficult to provide ideal education facilities, including library facilities. In such a situation, the fact that the academic community does not utilize even the meager library facilities available properly complicates the issue. Considering this, an attempt was made to assess the extent of utilization of available library resources and facilities in the seminar libraries of the University of Peshawar by the students. Utilizing of library resources by the students was assessed by studying the

frequency of their library visits, the incentives for use, the time spent in the library, and the borrowing of books etc.

Frequency of Library Visits

The students were asked to indicate the periodicity of their library visits from a list of six intervals. On analyzing the responses, it was found that only 30.55 per cent students visited the library every day, a total of 33.14 per cent of the students visited twice or thrice per week, and 21.91 per cent only once a week (see table 1). Thus on the whole, the frequency of library visits by the students was found to be satisfactory.

Table 1: Frequency of Library Visits by the Students

| Interval | Frequency | % |
|--------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Every day | 55 | 30.89 |
| Twice or Thrice per week | 59 | 33.14 |
| Once in a week | 39 | 21.91 |
| Once or twice in a week | 10 | 5.61 |
| Very rarely | 12 | 6.74 |
| Never | 3 | 1.68 |
| Total | 178 | 99.97 (100) |

The question whether there is any variation in the frequency of library visits by the students according to their subject of specialization - arts subject and science subject - was investigated.

Table 2: Frequency of Library Visits by the Students According to the Subject of Specialization

| Interval | Frequency | | % | |
|------------|-----------|---------|-------|---------|
| | Arts | Science | Arts | Science |
| Frequently | 60 | 57 | 68.18 | 63.33 |
| Sometimes | 22 | 25 | 25.00 | 27.77 |
| Never | 6 | 8 | 6.81 | 8.88 |
| Total | 88 | 90 | 99.99 | 99.98 |

The data in table 2 indicated that there was no significant difference in the frequency of library visits by the students according to their subject of specialization.

Duration of Library Use

The students were asked to specify the duration of the time spent on an average per week in the seminar library from the eight alternatives provided.

Table 3: Duration of the Library Use Per Week by the Students

| Duration | Frequency | % |
|------------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Few minutes | 57 | 32.02 |
| 30 minutes to one hour | 39 | 21.91 |
| 1-2 hours | 37 | 20.78 |
| 2-4 hours | 25 | 14.04 |
| 4-6 hours | 13 | 7.30 |
| 6-8 hours | 7 | 3.93 |
| 8-10 | - | - |
| More than 10 hours | - | - |
| Total: | 178 | 99.98 |

As indicated in table 3, majority of the students (53.93 per cent) spent less than one hour per week, whereas 20.78 per cent students claimed to be spending 1 to 2 hours per week. As against this 14.04 per cent students spent 2 to 4 hours. A small group, 7.30 per cent, mentioned that they spent 4 to 6 hours on an average per week in the seminar libraries. The percentage of students who spent 6-8 hours per week was seven. It is noteworthy that no students spent more than 8 hours per week in the seminar libraries. This shows that the duration of library use by the students, overall, was not considerable.

This was probably due to the lack of seating as well as other physical facilities in the library, inconvenient and insufficient library working hours, inadequacy of the library collection, textbook centered method of teaching, the overemphasis on examination. On investigation of the differences in the duration of library use by the students of arts and science subjects, no significant difference was noticed. Both the groups of students were homogenous with respect to the duration of the time they spent in the seminar libraries, as indicated by the data presented in table 4.

Table 4: Duration of Library Use Per Week by the Students According to the Subject of Specialization

| Duration | Frequency | | % | |
|-------------------|------------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|
| | Arts | Science | Arts | Science |
| Less than 1 hour | 46 | 50 | 52.27 | 55.55 |
| 1-6 hours | 40 | 35 | 45.45 | 38.88 |
| More than 6 hours | 02 | 05 | 2.27 | 05.55 |
| Total: | 88 | 90 | 99.99 | 99.98 |

Borrowing of Subject Books

On analyzing students' responses to borrowing of books per month, it was found that as many as 50 (28.08 per cent) students did not borrow subject books. Seventy-one (39.88 per cent) students reported that they borrowed 1-2 books. Only 32 (17.97 per cent)

students borrowed 3-4 books per month, and just 25 (14.02 per cent) students issued more than 5 books a month (See table 5 for details).

Table 5: Borrowing of Subject Books Per Month by the Students

| Number of books borrowed | Frequency | % |
|--------------------------|------------|--------------|
| 0 | 50 | 28.08 |
| 1-2 | 71 | 39.88 |
| 3-4 | 32 | 17.97 |
| 5-6 | 15 | 08.42 |
| 7-8 | 04 | 02.24 |
| 9-10 | 03 | 01.68 |
| Above 10 | 03 | 01.68 |
| Total: | 178 | 99.95 |

The details of the data, presented in table 5, indicate that borrowing of subject books by students from seminar libraries, in general, was not satisfactory. In other words, the practice of reading subject books, other than the prescribed ones in the syllabi, was not very much in existence.

Borrowing of General Books

The use of the seminar libraries of the University of Peshawar by the students in terms of number of general books borrowed was studied in order to ascertain the general reading habits of students and the extra-curricular use of seminar libraries. Students were asked to specify the number of general books borrowed from the seminar libraries on an average per month.

Table 6: Borrowing of General Books Per Month by the Students

| Number of books borrowed | Frequency | % |
|--------------------------|------------|--------------|
| 0 | 43 | 24.15 |
| 1-2 | 81 | 45.50 |
| 3-4 | 39 | 21.91 |
| 5-6 | 10 | 5.61 |
| 7-8 | 02 | 1.12 |
| 9-10 | 03 | 1.68 |
| Above 10 | 00 | 00 |
| Total | 178 | 99.97 |

As shown in table-6, nearly one fourth of the students did not borrow any general book. 45.50 per cent borrowed as few as 1-2 books and only 21.91 per cent borrowed 3-4 books. While 8.40 per cent students issued above 4 books a month. Thus, it can be concluded that the borrowing of general books from the seminar libraries by the students

as a whole is very meager. This unsatisfactory state of affairs is possibly due to the fact students are more concerned with passing the examination than with any real learning and acquisition of knowledge.

Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations

The study revealed that the use of seminar libraries by the students of the University of Peshawar, with respect to frequency, purpose, duration of visits and borrowing of subject as well as general books, is not satisfactory. Nor is the condition of seminar libraries of the University of Peshawar up to the mark. And it is very unfortunate that even the available library facilities are not fully exploited by the students.

A summary of the findings of the study of the utilization of library facilities and resources of different seminar libraries of the University of Peshawar by the students and teachers is presented here:

Collection and Services

The seminar libraries of the University of Peshawar did not follow any principle for selecting books. Hence, there was an imbalance in the book collection. Teachers were compelled to go for comparatively inexpensive titles due to lack of sufficient funds. Even very useful or essential books would be left out, if they were costly. The librarians had very little voice in selecting subject books. Catalogues supplied by the publishers and booksellers were the basic tools used for selecting books in the seminar libraries.

Books were properly classified and arranged according to modern schemes of classification only in a few seminar libraries. The study established that the book collection in most of the seminar libraries was not adequate to meet the requirements of students and teachers. The scholarly journals subscribed by the seminar libraries were totally inadequate to meet the requirements of postgraduate students and teachers.

The only library service rendered by all the seminar libraries was book lending, no other modern service was provided. Teachers often violated the rules regarding the use of books, number of books to be issued on loan and period of loan. They were allowed to borrow an unlimited number of books for indefinite number of period in a good number of seminar libraries. The open access system was a very rare phenomenon. In most of the libraries.

Library Personnel

Almost all of the Librarians possessed Masters degree in Library and Information Science. The pay scales of the librarians were not as per their qualification. The Seminar libraries were facing acute shortage of supporting staff. In most of the libraries there was only one attendant who also performs the job of a cleaner. In the absence of

professionally qualified library professionals and an adequate number of supporting staff, technical processing and organization of the library collection were hardly attempted in a vast majority of the institutions.

Physical Facilities

In most of the Departments of the University of Peshawar, the space provided for libraries was totally inadequate. Majority of these libraries were housed in improvised halls, poorly designed and ill equipped to serve the needs of a modern library.

Use of Libraries by the Students

The study revealed that the students, as a whole, made a reasonable number of visits to their seminar libraries. The students used the seminar libraries for extra-curricular requirements rather than for the curricular requirements. The students specializing in arts subjects mainly used the libraries for course requirements, whereas the students of the science subjects used the libraries for purposes not related to their courses. The duration of time spent in the seminar libraries by the students, as a whole, was not considerable. Borrowing of subject books from the seminar libraries by the students, as whole was not satisfactory. The number of subject books borrowed by the students of arts subjects was significantly more than the number of books borrowed by the students of science subjects.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study on seminar libraries of University of Peshawar, with respect to their finance, book selection, acquisition, technical processing, collection, services, personal and physical facilities, an attempt is made here to suggest a set of methods, procedures and programs which will help to ensure proper functioning, utilization and development of the seminar libraries. An adequate book-fund is indispensable for the building up and running of a standard and worthwhile seminar library. Whenever a new department is established, the university should allocate at least 10per cent of the total budget of the faculty/department to the library at least for the next ten years. The library budget may be reduced to 05per cent afterwards.

Library fee at the rate of Rs. 1000/- per student should be collected from each student at the time of admission in the University. The library fee and the library grants from the university will form a substantial amount, which can be utilized effectively for library matters. All the teachers of the department should be encouraged to participate actively in books selection. Each teacher should be instructed to submit a special list of books required for teaching his/her subject, and utmost care should be taken to see that all these books are made available in the seminar library within the shortest possible span of time. The library collection must be properly classified and catalogued according to some modern scheme of classification such as DDC etc. Efforts should be made to computerize

the whole collection. Moreover, there should be open access system with sufficient seating facilities. There should be a collection of reference books of all kinds in each of the seminar library. Faculties/departments of the same locality can cooperate with one another in the procurement of costly reference books.

Information literacy programs should be organized by each department periodically for the orientation of fresh students. All seminar libraries should employ modern library techniques and devices in library operations and services so as to save the time of the library users and the staff. The equipment and furniture of the library should be attractive and aesthetically designed. There should always be water, fans, toilets etc. so that users who have to spend long periods in the library should not feel any inconvenience at all.

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