Innovative Library Practices to Enhance Users Output: A Case Study

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Abstract

In the changing digital environment the expectation of users from the library are increasing day by day. It has become a huge challenge for libraries to render effective library services to user community. Best and innovative practices enable libraries to market its resources and services and facilities more effectively. This paper highlights the innovative practices adopted by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Tuljapur Off Campus library to meet the growing needs of the user community. It suggests ways and means to implement these practices to achieve greater success in one's own library.

Key Words: Best Practices, Innovative Practices, Innovative Services, TISS, Academic Library

1 Introduction

The primary goal of any academic library is to support teaching, learning and research activities of its stake holders. The excellence in academic and research largely depends on the quality of library services and availability of appropriate reading material at right time does help achieve the predefined objectives (Kumbhar, 2014). A well built collection with innovative services and facilities would enhance the user's knowledge and more significantly the ranking of the institute at regional, national and international arena.

The advancement in technology has thrown several challenges to the libraries mainly because, the present day generation is termed as 'Y' generation and also called as 'Google' generation. They are well acquainted with the technology and expect information instantly and they do not have patience to wait. To meet the demand of these users libraries need to identify and adopt best and innovative practices for optimum utilization of resources and services and to enhance users output. By exploring the challenges facing libraries in the digital age, Brindley (2006) considers ways in which libraries need to rethink and reshape their services and skills to maintain their relevance and contribution. It is in this context that each library must identify and develop innovative practices based on the local demands.

2 About TISS

The Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) was established in 1936, as the Sir Dorabji Tata Graduate School of Social Work. At the height of economic depression in the 1930s, the trustees of the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust willed to create an institution to train human service professionals to address acute poverty, destitution, unemployment, and other social and economic problems.

The Trust invited Prof. Clifford Manshardt of Chicago University to establish the School of Social Work. In the subsequent decades, TISS influenced the direction of social work education and social research in India and Asia. In 1944, the Sir Dorabji Tata Graduate School of Social Work was renamed as the Tata Institute of Social Sciences. In 1964, the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the Government of India (GOI) recognised the Institute as a Deemed University. TISS celebrated its Platinum Jubilee in the year 2011 - 2012.

The Tuljapur Campus was established following a review undertaken by the Institute in its Golden Jubilee year 1987. The campus was established with the goal of promoting initiatives for sustainable, eco-friendly and equitable socio-economic development of rural communities, with a focus on gender and social justice. Through its programs, the campus seeks to contribute to the revival of the rural economy, society and polity by promoting alternatives in development. In order to achieve this, it has evolved a four-dimensional program comprising teaching, training, field action and research & documentation. Presently nine teaching & research programmes are run from Tuljapur campus.

3 About TISS Tuljapur Library

The Library supports and facilitates teaching, learning & research programs of the institute and acts as a catalyst in accomplishing institute's mission to become one of the pioneer centres with the state of the art research and best quality education in the field of Rural Development. Building excellent collection in the area of Social Sciences and Rural Development is the main goal of the library. It houses print as well as electronic resources based on current needs of the users. It has more than thirty thousand books in its collection which includes significant project reports, thesis & dissertations, back volumes, documentary films and e-books in the form of CD/DVDs. It subscribes to various national & international journals & magazines (print) of repute in the field of Social Sciences and allied subjects apart from subscribing over ten thousand e-journals.

The collection of the library is strengthened by enabling access to the prominent electronic databases and e-books in the field of Social Sciences and allied subjects to further the teaching, learning and research programmes of the institute. It provides seamless discovery and access to these scholarly resources, and assists faculty, research scholars, students, and staff with professional support to find, evaluate, manage, and use information resources.

4 What is Innovation?

According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2014), innovation means "the act or process of introducing new ideas, devices, or methods". Innovation and transformation are important concept in today's libraries especially in the light of the libraries' ongoing transition from acquiring serials to providing access electronically, thus moving toward the virtual library (Carr, 2009). In order to be relevant libraries must follow the fundamental rule of business, that is, to supply what is demanded by their market. The focus of library should shift from books centric to user centric.

5 Innovative Practices Adopted at TISS Tuljapur Campus

In the changing digital environment the focus of the libraries must be on introducing innovative practices to attract the users. As the academic library continues to redefine its role in the digital environment, it needs to leverage its strengths and innovate creating responsive and convenient services (Li, 2006). Central themes identified by Brindley (2006) include; know your users and keep close to them, integrate marketing into the organization, invest more in innovation and digital activities, and develop the people and ensure the right mix of skills.

Following are the Innovative Practices adopted at Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Tuljapur Off Campus Library.

5.1 Library Data on Cloud

The housekeeping operations of the library are fully computerized with KOHA open source library management software. The library users recommend books online and system generated purchase orders will automatically be issued online to vendors. Another major and most significant shift in library is it has done away with physical copy of Accession Register instead it maintains Digital Accession Register thus saving considerable amount of library staff's time.

5.2 LAN & Wi-Fi Facility

In a given point of time 125 students can sit and study in the library reading rooms. Seamless Internet connectivity is provided in the library by making provisions of 75 LAN points and also library is fully Wi-Fi enabled. Users can bring their own Laptops and access more than 10000 electronic resources subscribed by the library.

5.3 Cyber Library for Research

An exclusive building for cyber library is created and provided 92 work stations with LAN connectivity for users to conduct their research and to use for their study purpose. A networked printer is installed in the cyber library for users.

5.4 RFID Enabled Library Services

In order to keep pace with latest developments and to satisfy the Google generation users, the RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) Technology is implemented in the library. This is not only enhanced the speed of Circulation desk apart from security to library resources but also enabled to conduct stock verification with ease which is one of the most cumbersome activities of the library. All users are provided with Smart Cards to handle user's transactions. It is further planned to install KIOSK for Self-Check-In/Check-Out and Drop Box in the second phase.

5.5 CCTV Surveillance

To bring discipline and to provide security to resources, the library has installed CCTV. Entire library is covered under CCTV surveillance.

5.6 Current Content Service

Any information relating to the areas of interest of the TISS Tuljapur community is circulated on the group emails. It includes content pages of hard copies of the journals subscribed by the library and the new arrival list as and when new documents/materials are added to the library collection.

5.7 Library Blog

A blog has been created to provide up-to-date information pertaining to the subject field of TISS Tuljapur community. It also has links to relevant sites and resources belonging to social science domain. The URL of the Blog is: http://www.tiss-library.blogspot.com

Figure 1. Library, Tata Institute of Social Sciences blog page

5.8 Online Catalogue (OPAC)

The online catalogue is browser based and all four campuses data is available on a single platform. This enables users to access resources of all campuses and helps in placing request for Inter Library Loan. Users profile is created on the OPAC platform, they can login using their user ID and Password to access their profile for like; search history, issued history, fine, recommend new book, create list, Tag etc. This platform enables users to renew, hold/reserve online form their laptop/desktop from across the globe. On an average half a million users visit online catalogue.

Figure 2. Online Catalogue webpage

5.9 Publication Corner

To give wider publicity and to encourage publication among TISS Tuljapur community an exclusive space is designated to display the publications of the students and Faculty Members in the library.

5.10 Newspaper Clipping Service

The news about the TISS appeared in various newspapers is maintained in Hard copy and arranged year wise. It is also uploaded on the Digital Library for quick reference.

5.11 Digital Repository

The intellectual scholarship of TISS Tuljapur Community is hosted on the Digital Repository to give wider coverage and use. It consists of; Dissertation, Thesis, Faculty Publications, Newspaper Clippings, Question Paper Bank, Project Reports etc. This is accessible both on intranet and Internet.

5.12 Theme Based Book Display

Library organizes display of its own collection based on the important days/themes throughout the year. It helps users to know the various collection of the library and make use of the same. The main purpose of this is to bring to the notice of all users and enhance the use of library collection.

5.13 Dds & Ill

It is fact that no library is sufficient when it comes to house the collection and TISS Tuljapur is no different. However, all efforts will be made to fulfil the request of the users for Document Delivery Service (DDS) and Inter Library Loan (ILL). It is significant to mention here that after shifting to KOHA LMS in the year 2015 the numbers of ILL requests have gone up particularly for other TISS campuses resources. The reason is mainly attributed to the online catalogue facility wherein all campuses data is displayed on a single platform. Since January 2015 till December 2018 there are 194 books issued to other campuses and159 books are borrowed from other campuses. The students will place request on the official library email once the resources are received an intimation will be sent through email and a personal call to the users.

5.14 User Training Programmes

TISS has a rich collection and cutting edge technology is implemented to serve the users better. Apart from Orientation in the beginning of the year, library will organize training sessions to users (students, researchers & faculty) periodically to create awareness about the types and volume of resources. More emphasis will be given on how to access print and e-resources, remote login facility, how to access OPAC profile, place requests for ILL, awareness about Plagiarism, Citation Matrix etc.

6 Conclusions

In the era of knowledge discovery and transformation library professionals are facing several challenges. After the emergence and use of technological advancements for communicating information there were and still there are apprehensions about the sustainability of librarianship in its traditional form (Kumbahr, 2014). Therefore library professionals need to take innovative initiatives and implement so that the library

users would get benefit. Best practices adopted bridges the gap between the library and the users for maximum utilization of the resources, which will result in the advancement and promotion of educational goals and the objectives and goals of the institution it serves (Varma, 2014). TISS Tuljapur Campus library though located in remote area but it has been making concentrated efforts to keep pace with the technology. It has implemented cutting edge technology to enhance the skills and knowledge of library users. The increased ILL transaction itself is a best example in this direction apart from several other significant facilities that have been extended to the users. It is therefore suggested to implement latest technology and strengthen your collection by supplementing e-resources in order to enhance the skills and knowledge of the library users.

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