

Library as an Information Resource Centre

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ABSTRACT:

The librarians have come out with more and more knowledge products in this competitive information society by making continuous efforts to develop their skills. This may include implementing the various techniques, and methods related to KM aspects including evaluation of websites for streamlining information organization and content development. By adopting this strategy only libraries would be recognized as knowledge resource centres in true sense.

KEYWORDS: *Library resources, Knowledge resources, Knowledge centre.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) is premier national R&D institution as a world's largest publically-funded organization under the Ministry of Science & Technology, Govt. of India. There are 38 national laboratories, 39 outreach centres, 3 innovation complexes and 5 units under its network. CSIR is basically a learning organization which puts much emphasis and focus on its R&D in the broad area of S&T. Traditionally speaking, libraries have always been a store house of information representing and providing valuable guidance to convert the same in to useful knowledge for the benefit of mankind. With the evolution of computer and communication technologies, libraries are getting transformed in to knowledge centres going beyond the traditional printed matter in the form of books, journals, etc. Libraries can support networking of knowledge and people to the maximum extent if the desired content and the requirements of users are available with them in machine readable form. This ensures best use of resources of knowledge available with CSIR. The information and knowledge combined with technology not only helps in matching user's needs with knowledge resources, but also helps in taking decisions in the wide perspectives of global importance.

Keeping this in view, CSIR renamed the libraries as Knowledge Resource Centres in 2008, for providing information support to the scientific/technical staff of the CSIR laboratories using both archival and contemporary digital resources for libraries. In this context, CSIR brought out a Manual of Procedures and Practices with the main objective of helping library professionals of CSIR in matters of standardization and harmonizing the prevailing procedures and practices with respect to financial, purchase, and management aspects.

II. METHODOLOGY

With a view to solicit up-to-date information and useful input from libraries, a questionnaire was prepared which was divided in to various headings as major components, viz., basic information, infrastructure, budget, staff, membership and collection details, users services/facilities and projects. Besides these components, the views of librarians/HODs regarding knowledge management (KM) initiatives taken, problems/issues faced by them, and the perceived future challenges were also sought. The questionnaire was sent as an attachment file at e-mail addresses to librarians/HODs working in their respective CSIR labs. A complete list of such labs is available at http://csir.res.in/external/heads/aboutcsir/lab_directory.htm. Out of 41 respondents the filled in questionnaires were received from 21 libraries. For remaining libraries the respective websites were visited to collect required data/information wherever available.

III. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

(a) In some cases of the libraries, the data pertaining to infrastructure, collection and equipment, and budget with breakups, could not be traced since the same were not readily available even in Annual reports, though the total budget figures of the labs have been provided with few exceptions.

(b) In almost all the libraries, the latest annual reports were not available either in print or e-form on the websites, so the figures for infrastructure may not be up to date particularly those pertaining to budget data.

(c) In the text at many places, names of certain labs have been indicated as examples only. It is possible that there may exist more number of labs falling under the respective category in a particular context, so the same may be taken as representative and not the exhaustive list.

IV. ANALYSIS

4.1 Infrastructure

Almost all the libraries provide the basic details like URL/website presence, e-mail address, face book address (if any), other social media presence, memberships, and whether any branch/regional centre of the same exists. These libraries have their own separate website with links on the homepage of the lab except a few, e.g., NISTADS, IGIB, etc., which are described along with the home page of the lab itself with the help of some links. Regarding face book or social media presence only a few libraries, e.g., CSMCRI, NBRI, and NISCAIR have included the same in their areas of activities. Regarding membership all the libraries are members of National Knowledge Resource Centre (NKRC) included as the one of the projects of NISCAIR and a few libraries like NISTADS and CSIR HQs are members of DELNET and CLRI for MALIBNET (Madras Library Network) also. Almost all the libraries have their own buildings though the area varies from 528 to 25,000 sq.m. Seating capacity in the libraries may range from 4 to 200 users maximum. Regarding library membership, there are 4 categories of membership, viz., faculty, researchers, students, and staff. Total library members vary from 9 to 1700 with maximum percentage share of staff category. Regarding IT infrastructure, almost every library has computers, printers, and scanners with either wi-fi or LAN facilities and internet connections. The total numbers of such equipments vary from 5 to 41 depending on the budget of the respective library.

4.2 Library Budget

Due to non availability of clear cut figures for library books, journals and other print and digital material, a total budget for books and journals were collected. This figure varies from Rs. 32 to 169 lakh. It is observed that in many cases this is clubbed with total budget for other staff also. Similar is the case with figures for IT infrastructure's budget.

4.3 Staff

The staff strength of libraries varies from 3 to 17 while most of the libraries have less than 10 staff members. There is also a practice of nominating senior scientist as the HOD or coordinator for the respective library. Also for the rush work and routine jobs hiring of temporary staff as outsource is not uncommon.

4.4 Collection

There is variety of library material in print as well as digital/audiovisual form. However, the print material dominates. The print collection of books varies from 1620 to 87000. The latest breakup figures for other types of material, i.e., journals, reports, conference proceedings and digital media could not be made available.

V. SERVICES AND FACILITIES

There is wide range of services being made available by libraries. The most common services in large number libraries are: Online searches, readers services; OPAC, reading room, photocopy service, reference/referral service, book reservation, book renewal, links of open access resources in library website and databases. Some of the services like, union catalogue, document delivery services, and translation share the facilities of NISCAIR.

5.1 Circulation

This, being a most basic service, would continue till the print literature is available. Regarding the current status for automated circulation system the bar code-based circulation is mostly in practice. For example, CFTRI, IHBT, IIIM, IMTECH, NAL, NIEST, NPL, CSIR HQ, and CSIR-Madras complex are using this type of circulation. However, a few libraries like CGCRI, CIMFR, and NCL have also adopted RFID technology.

5.2 Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC)

Almost all the libraries have created their databases using one or the other of the integrated library automation systems. This facility is used mostly on intranet and for walk-in users to the respective libraries. Among the libraries adopting Web OPAC, CBRI, CCMB, CDRI, CECRI, CFTRI, CIMAP, CLRI, IIP, NIEST, and NPL are worth mentioning.

5.3 Document Delivery

This is one of the oldest services of libraries. With the spurt of institutions websites, this manual service has been replaced with the electronic documents which are stored on the server and providing link to the requester to pick it up. Alternatively the same can be sent as mail attachment, which seems to be simpler. Almost all the libraries are delivering documents to their clientele which includes Inter-library-loan (ILL) also.

5.4 Reference to Referral Services

There has been a long practice of offering this type of service using the print reference tools which may still continue for some time. However, with the availability of access to the internet resources to every user, the user prefers to seek information for his/her needs over internet. But the popular search engines may not cater to the specific users/customised requirements. So, the links to various reference tools for specific subjects/areas of knowledge available on internet are provided from library/lab server to cater to the specialist's requirements.

5.5 Database and Bibliographic Search

Despite the trend for directly accessing full-text journals, the importance of bibliographical searches will continue, since they are more comprehensive and cover various publishers, document types, etc. Both commercial and non-commercial bibliographic databases exist today. Though these databases are available in various forms-CDs, online, besides print but can be searched with standard techniques only to retrieve desired information.

5.6 News Clipping Services

Recently, many libraries have started web-based News Clipping service. The better option would be to assign one of the libraries the responsibility of collecting such information from different sources including web resources. Then the same could be shared with rest of the libraries thus facilitating their access through website. However, establishing such service in its own niche domain to cater to select clientele is not uncommon. As an example, CECRI, CGCRI, CSMCRI, IHBT, IIIM, IRTC, NAL, NBRI, and NPL have been following this practice.

5.7 Translation Services

NISCAIR is the unique institution to provide and maintain this service out of all the libraries. It covers translation of S&T documents from 20 foreign languages into English. The languages include Chinese, French, German, and Japanese etc. The clients include R&D labs, S&T institutes, universities, research scholars, etc. NISCAIR also provides reverse translation (English into foreign language) though up to a maximum one page. Translation of full English documents into Japanese and also the interpretation and consultancy assignments in Japanese language is a unique service.

VI. RECENT TRENDS

6.1 Implementing Knowledge Management Concepts

There are many techniques to adopt KM concepts, e.g., maintain information on knowledge repositories, providing integrated access to information, creating expert and inventory databases. It would be desirable to develop links with resources both physical such as institutions and individuals, and, electronic such as e-resources available through the internet; capturing knowledge from projects, assignments, gray literature, case studies, experts, etc., on given subjects and make them accessible in database form. This must be supplemented with training component for users in accessing information and guiding the users to appropriate resource. Eventually, a full-text KRC on topics in digital form will get developed with links and in-house resources all ready for use of the users 24 hours throughout the year. So the libraries have to deliver and prove the values.

6.2 Digitization

The institute's reports and other grey literature can be digitized and made available over the network. Major initiatives like institutional repositories, e-prints archives, multimedia databases, etc., form part of the digital libraries. As digital collections grow in number and variety, concerns grow about the general lack of long-term planning for their preservation. So, a time bound strategic planning and implementation of establishing standards for creating, accessing, and preserving digital content should be prepared so that an effective utilization of ever expanding information resource is ensured.

6.3 Use of Mobile Devices

Mobile devices are changing the way information is delivered and accessed. An increasing number of libraries provide services and content delivery to mobile devices. In this context a reference is here made of the

2011 Pew Internet Project which finds that 25 % of US adults with smart phones use them as their primary information source.

6.4 Changing User Behaviours and Expectations

Convenience affects all aspects of information seeking-the selection, accessibility, and use of sources. Libraries usually are not the first source for finding information. When queried, respondents describe the library as 'hard to use,' 'the last resort,' and 'inconvenient.' Convenience is a significant factor in both academic and everyday-life information-seeking situations⁴. With the widespread use of the internet and search engines such as Google, individuals have little or no problem finding sources. Since libraries are now competing for user attention, the current challenge is to provide immediate, seamless access to sources and information to remain in the game.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

An overview of status, issues and possible trends for CSIR libraries as reflected in the main text ultimately points out the major responsibility towards the librarians. There are many challenges before them, out of which the main concern is how to survive and sustain their position as one of the important and crucial stakeholders in the process of S&T information dissemination.

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