

Teaching Faculty v/s Librarian: Better Collaboration for Academic Development

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Abstract

The paper attempts to answer the question as to whether Librarians are on par with teachers, as indicated by University Grants Commission, New Delhi. Although on paper but when it comes to promotional benefits, there is discrimination between teacher and librarian. Forgetting about this, attempts were made to emphasize on the collective effort on the part of Teacher and Librarian in learning, teaching, research and information service that will strengthen academic environment and build healthy academic development activities. It also mentions the reasons for lack of collaborations among them resulting major crux in the way of building academic curriculum and prospects of research. Further, suggests the areas of collaboration teaching and library activities as an ultimate for smooth sailing of academic and research productivity.

Keywords

Librarian-Teacher Collaboration, Library Development, Team Building.

Introduction

The changing environment in the context of emerging technologies and increasing needs and demands of the users have had an influence and influencing the library and information professionals. Accordingly, administrators are actively engaged in the strategic planning to face the emerging situation in this Millennium. Cooperation among the professionals and faculty of Library and information Science (LIS) has been considered as a powerful instrument for augmenting and strengthening the teaching

learning activity. It is the collaborative, coordinated and co-operative endeavour that aims at extending access to all the resources and services of the participating libraries and faculty of LIS¹.

1. Role of Faculty Vs Librarian

In today's society, collaboration has become the norm in most of the organizations of higher learning and research. Collaboration is based on shared goals, a shared vision, and a climate of trust and respect². The Corporate sectors, Universities and Research institutes from disparate departments work together face-to-face and virtually on common projects to satisfy clients or customers and to benefit the organization.

We maintain that education is a liberating force as also an evolutionary force, which enables the individual to rise from mere materiality to superior planes of intellectual and spiritual consciousness. Our objective in higher education is not only to promote equality and social justice, but also to provide the right kind of work ethos, professional expertise and leadership in all walks of life. Above all, our endeavour is to foster among teachers and students and, through them in society generally, integral development of values inherent in physical, emotional, rational, aesthetic, ethical and spiritual education³

The Universities impart education and research and to cater the academic and research pursuits of the faculty, research scholars and students, Library and Information Centers occupies a significant role and therefore is considered as integral part of the university or any higher educational institution. Knowledge is power and the libraries are the preservers and disseminators of this knowledge for shaping the better future of the academics and contributing

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for development of discipline.

In principle, teaching faculty and Librarian are the two sides of same coin. Teaching faculty either in Universities or colleges and librarians normally has the usual relationship of patron – information provider. Although the librarians are treated as pujari in the temple of learning have assumed the role of user educators, their work tends to occur in isolation. Teamwork is needed so that library instruction can become part of the learning process. Information professionals probably face more library instruction challenges than their colleagues from the more advanced economies, because new students come to the library with hardly any library experience.

The library literature has examined progress toward establishing successful collaborative relationships between classroom teachers and library media specialists since the early 1980s. In 1989, Berkowitz and Eisenberg⁴ acknowledged the gap between the library media specialist's potential as a curriculum consultant in theory and in practice, noting that library media specialists' interest in being involved in curriculum dates back to the 1950s. Assignments developed in partnership between teachers and library media specialists are known to be more "authentic"-exhibiting a higher degree of meaning and significance⁵.

The major challenge before libraries is to optimize the better usage of information resources by the faculty, research scholars and students. For optimization of various information resources in the library and building educational curriculum, the role of Librarian and teaching faculty should be of collaborative and team spirit. "Effective collaborations with teachers," Information power points out, "helps to create a vibrant and engaged community of learners, strengthens the whole school program as well as the library media program, and develops support for the school library media program throughout the whole school." ⁶

2. Higher Education in India

An enduring metaphor for the academic library is that, it is 'the heart of the university.'⁷ The academic library endeavors in meeting the academic and research information needs of the

user community, which derives its life as its laboratories, while scientific research needs a library as well as its laboratories, while for humanistic research the library is both library and laboratory. The University libraries play a pivotal role next only to the instructional staff in its importance for high quality instruction and research activities.

The library is the life-blood of an academic institution performing its function like acquisition, organization, preservation, and dissemination of knowledge. To achieve the academic pursuits of the university, the librarian must build a well-knit team of honest, dedicated and professionally competent professional staff and must have a sound knowledge of human engineering. This demands the Librarian to have an adequate knowledge of the new modern management tools and techniques for optimizing the library service to the academicians at the lowest cost and with reasonable effort.

Qualitative academic pursuits of teaching, research and intellectual excellence is only possible in a university by having a library well managed by latest management techniques as a central organ to serve the whole user community of the institution. The University Libraries have a very significant role to play in teaching and learning processes. The teacher and the taught both need the library to retrieve information on a particular subject for interactive learning and acquiring skills for advancement of their carriers and lives. The importance of libraries in university education system has been emphasized time and again by several commissions and committees constituted by the Central Govt. and University Grants Commission and thanks to the NAAC for emphasizing the significance of libraries that have really strengthened the libraries in the country. With the advent of electronic media and Internet technology has revolutionized the information storage and retrieval process. The present library system was designed by the earlier librarians to fulfill the needs and aspirations of the higher education. However the present prospective, erstwhile library system needs drastic changes to meet the challenges of modern times with the help of gadgets of

information technology.

3. Crux of Impediments for Collaboration

With the advancement of Science and Technology, the country is experiencing the tremendous growth of information resulting information explosion, it is putting a tremendous pressure on University Library and Librarians to keep pace with the changing time by knowledge acquisition and catering to the increasing number of users through traditional media. Increasing cost of books and Journals coupled with multiplicity of subjects in recent years has made it imperative for educational administrators to review the existing libraries to meet the aforesaid challenges and provide quality based services.

Unfortunately, not everyone has embraced the idea of the teaching library and faculty-librarian partnership. Many professors underestimate librarians and view them as subordinates, sometimes as research assistants or babysitters for classes during out-of-town conferences. Some professors do not work with librarians because their students are part of a

special population, such as honors or graduate students, who are mistakenly thought to be more knowledgeable and accomplished than typical undergraduates. Some faculty has simply never thought of how librarians could help them achieve course goals. Sadly, teaching itself is not valued on some campuses, so faculty may not choose to engage in cooperative instructional projects. Faculty may have encountered librarians who were unresponsive to faculty feedback and requests, had little enthusiasm for building coalitions, or may not have been interested in greater involvement in teaching or Psychology as a discipline. Social factors also affect collaboration. A fair number of professors and librarians spend most of their time working alone or with close colleagues and may have substantially different professional cultures. Finally, as with any relationship, there are a host of personality variables to consider.

4. Teaching Faculty Vs Librarian: A Comparison

Efforts were made to differentiate between Teaching Faculty and Librarian as under:

Teacher	Librarian
Guru Brahma Guru Vishnu Gurudevo Maheshwara Guru Shaksha Para Brahma Tasmai Shree Guruve Namaha	Pujari of Learning temples and acts as Knowledge Manager enriches the society with nascent information in building information conscious society
Teacher	Teacher of teacher
Teaching and research	Information facilitator
Trainer	Trainer of trainer
Confine to Specific subject	Deals with Universe of knowledge
The future of students lies in Teachers Hand	To achieve, Library supports with their information treasure
Asks librarian for resource suggestions.	Suggests for information resources for curriculum
Equal partner with librarian in planning, teaching, and evaluating the curriculum unit.	Equal partner with classroom teacher in planning, teaching, and evaluating the curriculum unit.

5. Ways and Means for better collaboration

Teaching Faculty and Librarian's collaborative effort is an integrated approach in promoting the student information literacy and increasing the capacity of information access and optimization of information and thereby reduces the gap of teacher and librarian. Thus, the teaching faculty and the librarian working together will create positive and effective library experiences for students and research scholars. The areas wherein the faculty and librarians can collaborate in many different ways are:

5.1. Designing Educational Curriculum and assignments

The curriculum of the courses and assignments to the students and research scholars are directly proportional to the information resources available in the Library. It is often complained by the students about the non-availability of needed books/other resources in the library against the curriculum or assignments. The reason is mismatch between desired/ expected and the actual demand especially in the university environ. This is inspite of the fact that, the information resources are developed purely based on the recommendations of the department. As Librarian are the managers of the information deal with universe of knowledge and professional in information management to support the academic and research pursuits. There is nothing wrong in the interest of the academic community to work together in designing the curriculum and assignments, so that the information demanded is met to the users.

It is also desirable to have a subject called 'Information Management Skills' at the PG level in the university environ and definitely, with the better collaboration between faculty and librarian and better interaction between librarian and students, the information needs will improve better, increase in optimization of library resources and thereby better image to bridge the gap of teacher and librarian.

5.2 Developing Collections of the Library

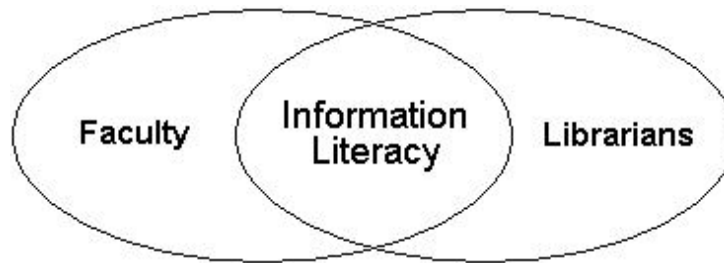
The responsibility for developing qualitative based information resources to the library is not only lies in the hands of the Librarian but at the same time the teaching faculty should also involve themselves, as they are also the users of it. Mere acting as recommending authority and then start grumbling in most of the cases that, there is matching between the recommended documents and the actual purchase, for which the Librarian is also equally be blamed. Better coordination among teacher and librarian and regular communication about the books/ other information resources recommended, ordered and received is must, rather than working in isolation.

5.3 Working together in Classrooms and other academic related work

National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) has been established in India for ensuring quality and excellence in higher education and has developed a set of objective indicators for the library, as it is the fulcrum of support for the community of academic and research pursuits.⁸ Thus, imparting teaching on one side and facilitating the relevant information materials especially for the students is another side and acts as a two sides of same coin. It would be ideal to work together even in the classrooms and also in the related academic work. For instance in Research project proposals or executing the Projects, definitely the role of libraries and the librarian cannot be underestimated.

5.4 Educating and training Information Literacy Skills

Information Literacy is too important to be left to any one institution, agency or profession; collaboration is essential. Information Literacy is a prerequisite for participating effectively in the Information Society and is part of the basic human right of lifelong learning.⁹ The areas of information literacy could be how to use the OPAC catalogue, Web OPAC, information searching skills from ocean of information, How to use online databases, How to use CD-ROM resources, How to do Internet navigation, How to use selected web sites, use of Citations etc.



5.5. Counseling and Higher Education for better future of students

Dynamic Librarian - Faculty interaction is most important in order to build strong collaborative counseling and higher education programs to the students. Proper guidance and access to right information at the time occupies much significance and many times, we miss the opportunity just because of information gap. In this context, the role of faculty in guiding the students for proper specialized course and the means and ways of applying, eligibility, mode of preparation etc. needs assistance from library staff.

5.6. Ethics of Research, Wisdom and Plagiarism

It is essential to educate the philosophy of research, acknowledgement pattern, right spirit of education and citation trends for which the role of Librarian is more important than Faculty. Better collaboration will help the students to develop wisdom and understand the ethics of research and avoid plagiarism. Research Methodology is one of the important subject and opportunity be given to the Librarians in handling at least some sections of the subject to really help the students in building the moral and skills of research and citations.

6. Best Practices of Faculty-Librarian Collaboration

Efforts were made to trace the university/ institution where faculty-librarian has worked out for development of goals of organization in the Indian context. Even the literature about faculty-librarian collaboration based on Library and Information Science Abstracts (LISA) 1969-2005 published by Indian authors is not much seen. Of course these practices of collaboration have been reported and practiced especially in USA. Hannelore B. Rader¹⁰ has provided some

of the examples wherein the faculty and librarian have collaborated together for building curriculum for the millennium. It is alarming trend to the Library professionals both teaching and non-teaching librarians not only to conduct research and publish articles on these topic but also to innovate new services in the interest of better visibility of librarianship.

7. Conclusion

Teacher - Librarians need to develop a sense of collaborative relationships with each other in the best interest of the students and research scholars for want of information to support academic programs of the institution. Librarian and information professionals must make sincere efforts towards building partnerships by carefully knowing the faculty, contents of the curriculum, information needs of the community and accordingly plan for better ICT infrastructure and timely information services and regular feedback and evaluation in team spirit. The complexity of superiority, egoism and un-practicable philosophy should be kept aside and ways to collaborate with Library colleagues by the teachers and vice versa will help the student community to develop the spirit of collaboration during their professional preparation programs that carries them into their professional careers and becomes a natural part of their daily activities as professional educators. To conclude, efforts be made to have collaboration at least between Librarians and teaching librarians of the department, which would be more than enough and forget about collaboration among other teaching faculty of the different departments. If we could succeed in bridging our own gap of librarianship between librarians vs. teaching librarians acting as two sides of a coin, definitely the Librarianship would be visible on par excellence with other profession and none to next.

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