IT Based Library and Information Services in Agricultural University Libraries in South India: A Study

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Abstract

The present study highlights the hardware and software facilities in agricultural university libraries in south India. It is evident from the study that all five agricultural universities are having computer facilities and one has developed their own library software and other universities are having commercial software. It also highlights access of networks, information services and barriers to information technology applications. The impact of information technology is also assessed in the study.

Keywords: Information technology; Agricultural library.

Introduction

The progress of research in agricultural fields and improvement of production essentially requires timely supply of information to agricultural scientists. It is not possible to achieve self-sufficiency in food production without adequate information supply to agricultural scientists. The concentration of efforts is probably efficacious in informing agricultural scientists of improved methods in agriculture. It also includes an unfortunate parochialism affecting both the agricultural scientists and the information industry. To promote an effective working relationship between research workers who generate new agricultural knowledge and farmers who stand in need of such knowledge, the information system acts as 'middleman' in a position to deliver such knowledge to the required points of distribution. The sources of agricultural information are varied in kind and widely scattered in location with an equally widespread distribution. In the same way agricultural information users are also equally scattered. To bridge this gap, we need agricultural information system.

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So far as the structure of the agricultural information service is concerned, we should remember that in this complex world it is not possible far any individual agricultural library to meet the complete information requirements of the users. The user's requirements are becoming more and more diverse in the quantities and qualities. We also find time factor as pressure on the supply of agricultural information. There is also an imperative need for widening information coverage, extending the sphere of services and accelerating the speed in the supply of information. It is essential to build the requisite information infrastructure for agricultural scientists within the state and nation. This is particularly relevant in the context of 'food for all'. In pursuit of scientific excellence, agricultural information infrastructure is a must and agricultural information service facility keeps track of the latest scientific, agricultural and technological advancement over the world.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data: Librarians Point of View

Thus a university library must have scientifically organized and effectively administered library with all required reading materials in sufficient numbers, so that it becomes an intellectual hub of the university. The university library is not merely a storehouse of books and non-book materials and preservation of them, but it is a dynamic instrument of education. For this it should maintain co-operation between different faculties and staff to promote effective use of the

library. If the collection is to be used in the library, there should be good catalogues, aids and guides. It would be a great drawback if there were no sound catalogue. Apart from the catalogues, there should be a reference librarian to pick literature available in the library. University Library, to demonstrate its usefulness, its ability for speedy service must employ reference personnel.

Table 1: Year wise Establishment of Agricultural University Libraries in South India

Name of the Agricultural University	Place	Abbreviations	Year of Establishment
University of Agricultural Sciences	Bangalore	UASB	1964
Acharya N.G. Ranga Agricultural University	Hyderabad	ANGRAUH	1964
Tamil Nadu Agricultural University	Coimbatore	TNAUC	1971
Kerala Agricultural University	Thrissur	KAUT	1972
University of Agricultural Sciences	Dharwad	UASD	1986

Table 2: IT Based Library and Information Services in Agricultural University Libraries in South India

IT Based Library and Information Services	Librarians Response in Agricultural University Libraries about IT Based Library and Information Services				
	UASB	ANGRAUH	TNAUC	KAUT	UASD
Lending	------	------	√	√	------
Current Awareness Service	------	------	√	√	------
SDI	√	------	------	√	------
Fax	√	√	√	√	------
CD-NET	√	√	------	√	------
Dial Up Service	√	------	------	√	√
Electronic Bulletin Board System	------	------	------	√	------
CD-ROM Search	√	√	------	√	√
Web Based OPAC	√	√	------	------	------
TELENET	------	------	------	√	------
Video Conference	------	------	------	√	------

To know growth and establishment of agricultural university libraries in south India under the study, respondents were requested to provide the year of establishment of their libraries. The collective respondents are given in Table 1 for necessary statistical interpretation. It is observed from the table that University of Agricultural Sciences Library, Bangalore and Acharya N. G Ranga Agricultural University Library, Hyderabad were established in the year 1964, and they are found to be the oldest universities under the study, followed by Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Library, Coimbatore, was established in the year 1971, Kerala Agricultural University Library, Thrissur was established in 1972 and finally University of Agricultural Sciences Library, Dharawad, was established in1986.

Information Technology brings about almost a revolution in the functioning of a library, it has changed the way of information handling and disseminating. Computer is highly productive not only for library operations and management but also equally useful for library users. The university libraries are playing the leading role in the national development to draw attention of the government and other role-playing agencies.

Information Technology is playing a predominant role in library services. Today almost all the university libraries are adopting IT applications in order to speed up the services. Table 2 shows that the different IT based services available in libraries. It shows that University of Agricultural Sciences Library Bangalore is offering SDI, FAX, CD-NET, CD-ROM search and Web-Based OPAC services. Acharya N. G. Ranga Agricultural University Library Hyderabad, is providing FAX, CD-NET, CD-ROM and Web-Based OPAC services. Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Library Coimbatore, is offering lending services, CAS and FAX services, Kerala Agricultural University Library Thrissur is offering almost all same such as Lending, CAS, SDI, FAX, CD-NET, Dial-Up, Electronic Bulletin Board, CD-ROM Search, Tele-Net, and Video Conference services. The University of Agricultural Sciences Library Dharwad is a poor one as for as IT applications are concern. It offers only Dial-UP and CD-ROM services to the user community.

There are various barriers in successful applications of IT in the libraries. We have listed various barriers for IT application and request them to tick which one they faced. The sought information is tabulated in Table-3. The table clearly shows that as for as University of Agricultural Sciences Library, Bangalore is concerned the major barriers for IT

application are insufficient funds, inadequate trained IT personnel.

Acharya N.G. Ranga Agricultural University Library, Hyderabad is facing the barrier like insufficient funds, inadequate provision of recurring cost and operational cost going higher year by year. As for as Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Library, Coimbatore, is concern it faced the barriers like insufficient funds, inadequate provision of recurring funds, inadequate trained IT personnel's, lack of IT knowledge on part of users, lack of professional recognition by the authorities. It often disturbs the routine work of the library. Utilization of IT application will increase the number of supporting

Table 3: Barriers of IT Applications in Agricultural University Libraries in South India

Barriers of IT Applications	Librarians Response in Agricultural University Libraries about Barriers of IT Applications				
	UASB	ANGRAUH	TNAUC	KAUT	UASD
Insufficient Funds	√	√	√	------	------
Inadequate provision of Recurring cost	------	√	√	------	------
Inadequate trained in IT personal	√	------	√	√	√
No support from the authority for applications in the library	------	------	------	------	------
Lack of IT Knowledge on The part of the users	------	------	√	------	------
The library professionals are not deputed in learning IT	------	------	------	√	------
Lack of professional recognition by the authorities of the library	------	------	√	------	------
It often disturb the routine work of the library	------	------	√	------	------
Utilization IT applications will increase the number of Support staff	------	------	√	√	------
IT affects regular budgeting provision	------	------	√	------	------
IT takes major share from the library	------	------	√	√	------
Annual maintenance cost of IT products affects the collection development	------	------	√	√	------
Operational cost are exceeding year By year	------	√	√	√	------
Higher salaries for a trained staff also affecting the collection development	------	------	√	√	------

Table 4: Impact of IT Applications in Agricultural University Libraries in South India

Impact of IT Applications	Librarians Response in Agricultural University Libraries about Impact of IT Applications				
	UASB	ANGRAUH	TNAUC	KAUT	UASD
IT applications are improves the Quality of Library and Information Service	√	√	√	√	√
IT improves the efficiency of the Library	√	√	√	√	√
IT uses to enhance the knowledge and experience	√	√	√	√	√
It promotes integration among the organization	√	√	√	√	√
IT applications uses to improve the communication facilities	-----	√	√	√	√
IT applications helps to get right information at the right place	√	√	√	√	√
IT applications improves the status of the Library	√	√	√	√	√
IT application reduces the work load of the Library staff	√	√	√	√	------
IT application takes over the traditional way of information handling in the library	------	√	------	√	------
It helps in effective resource sharing and networking	√	√	√	√	√
IT application allow more control over the Library	√	√	√	√	------
Utilization of IT application make library more stable	√	√	√	√	------
Utilization of IT applications reduced the number of professional staff	√	√	√	√	------

staff, which affects regular budgeting provision. It takes major share from the library, annual maintenance and operational cost go high year by year, and higher salary for trained staff also affects the collection development of the library. Kerala Agricultural University Library Thrissur faces the following barriers of IT applications such as inadequate trained personnel, the library personnel's are not deputing to learn IT applications, and utilization of IT will increase the supporting staff. It

takes major share of the library. Annual maintenance cost goes high, which affects the collection developments, operational cost is more and higher salaries for trained personnel are also affect the collection development. As for as University of Agricultural Sciences Library Dharwad is concerned it faces only the inadequate trained personnel's to introduce IT application in the library. It is observed from the table that, there were no such big hurdles for IT applications. But there must be whole-hearted support from the staff. In addition to this the financial support from the authorities is also required.

Table 4 shows clearly that all most all the libraries under the study have agreed that there was a wonderful impact of IT applications which has improve has the quality of library and information service. IT improves the efficiency of the Library and also enhance the knowledge and experience, It promotes integration among the organizers, IT applications help to improve the communication facilities and helps to get right information at the right place and also improves the status of the library, IT application reduces the work load of the library staff and also takes over the traditional way of information handling in the library, It helps in effective resource sharing and networking. Utilization of IT application make, library more stable and reduces the number of professional staff.

Conclusion

Since India is a land of farmers, here Socio-Economic developments depend on the education of the farmers and their information level. They need information to become enlightened and rational so as to take quick and correct decisions to improve the rural life. The nature and efficiency of the information services provided by the agricultural university libraries vary from one to another, owing to the whole range of interest of the user community. However with the emergence of the computer and revolutionary changes in communication technology, it has become possible for a agricultural university libraries to provide a variety of technology based information services to the users community with a vide range of interests, which was not possible earlier. As a matter of fact all these activities and services are interdependent, interrelated and direct towards maximization of the usefulness of the agricultural university library systems. To overcome this, the librarians should approach their concern authorities and get adequate funds to meet the IT based information requirements of the users.

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