Legal Learning Support Services through Building Collections and Capacities in Libraries

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Abstract

The law profession and its challenges are pervasively known to professionals of other disciplines as well as people in society. The Libraries have been playing a great role in supporting the Law profession by providing the legal information resources and services at great precision and speed. The paper explores the literature for the current practices applied in various libraries in different parts of world as well as discusses the collection building in law information services. The paper also highlights the capacity building at libraries through various services and collection building at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) library in context of serving the academic users in the field of Law and Governance. The in-depth literature review provides a wide spectrum of legal information scenario.

Keywords: Law; Collection Building; Legal Information Services; India.

Introduction

Need to understand the Law Libraries and Users

The law profession demands continuous update of the current developments as well as retrospective information. Due to the intricate legal system in the country and the diverse resources in the field, the distinct working system of law libraries specially catering to the services to lawyers and judicial officials needs introspection and rethinking.

The functions of libraries are designed to meet the purpose and information needs of law professionals. The information seeking methods of law students, lawyers and other legal information users vary due to variations in their motives and aims. There are some very high end users of the law libraries such as top notch judges and legal luminaries and then there are students who are preparing for examinations or

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moot courts etc. To study users may require a large level of sampling but the close observation of law practitioners brings some others musings before libraries. Sometimes the questionnaire serves as a tool that functions effectively to collect data whereas at other times, the use of "the focus group interview method" may prove fruitful to understand the users' problematic behaviors.

The observations and interviews provide qualitative data about the role of legal information systems and their relation with law professionals.

This paper attempts to look at the issues concerned with library-user relationship as well as collection building efforts by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Central Library and the library of the Centre for the Study of Law and Governance (CSLG) which is based in Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India.

This is a fairly new Centre which has rapidly established itself as a citadel for higher learning in the field of law and governance through law. It conducts M.Phil. and Ph.D. prgrammes in the field of law and as is evident very fine and novel and path breaking legal areas are taken up for consideration by the centre.

Considering the uniqueness of the Centre, it increases the need for a very robust legal research system in the Centre.

Designing of Law Collection, Services and Serving the Users

The legal learning and its ancillary services and tools have been based on continuous application of information technology in the form of inclusion of online resources and services meant for speedy access to the resources. In the past, inclusion of "know how database systems, marketing and training functions, business information specialists and information technology (including online access)" has been popular. The designing of law library may require forecasting space requirements and proper lighting, requirements for electronic data access. Consideration of law libraries' practice using computer laboratories has been discussed by Margeton (1995) along with bringing traditional features together with technology. Miles (1996) discussed about the concern of law firm's library to be modernized involving the outsourcing in the areas such as cataloguing. Studies have been conducted to understand the information search behavior and practices (Stephanie Ellis, Stephann Makri, Simon Attfield, 2014) of law information seekers. The legal information demand is accompanied with keeping up-to-date with newly arrived information as well as legal developments. As more and more quasi-legal bodies and judicial fora are created in the country there is an ever increasing need to tabulate and collate the decisions made by such authorities which are relied upon by researchers in the field. This raises the challenges of the library systems that are in place. A unique feature of legal research is that many of the previous judgments and decisions serve as precedents for future cases and therefore their sanctity and original character has to be preserved while providing library services.

The concept described as "maintaining awareness of developments in an area (known as "monitoring")" has been instrumental in information needs fulfillment. The necessity to reach and access to the information in order to update the self-knowledge is inevitable. The professional requirements of law scholars and lawyers compel them to seek the latest as well as retrospective information. The identification of various kinds of "electronic, printed and people-based current awareness resources" is helpful in creating awareness of publishing literary developments. Such factors determine the choice as well as decisions made regarding the usage of them. The monitoring behavior of law information seekers invite attention "to feed into the design of new and improvement of existing digital current awareness resources." The response and feedback from users is significant to assess the current awareness among the law scholars and utilization of resources (Terry Ballard, Anna Blain; 2010). The table of contents replaced by 'virtual shelves' can be helpful for creating awareness the library staff as well as users. Law users are keen to explore the IT based facilities such as web OPAC in university system.

The Collection Building for Law Discipline

The collection building and capacity of library in the context of law subject depends on the factors such as:

- Identification of information needs, variation in demands and futuristic approach.

- Understanding of micro-subject areas collection, their usage and analysis in the perspective of collection building as well as expenditure.

- Evaluating the users' approach by classification of users and their respective needs.

- Inducing and studying the level of information literacy among users. The variation of level may exist due to nature and needs of various kinds of professional necessities.

- Creation and increasing level of awareness of various collections and gaps within among the users. This may help in increasing the capacity of an existing collection and may build a new one, too.

Collection Building of Law Information Resources at JNU

Table 1: Print books purchased by the JNU Library

Name of the School/ Centre	2013		2014		2015	
	Recommended Titles	Titles Acquired	Recommended Titles	Titles Acquired	Recommended titles	Titles Acquired
CSLG	50	35	13	10	45	37

Table 2: Online Data bases

CSLG	2015	2016	2017
Hein Online	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lexis-Nexis	Yes	Yes	Yes
Manupatra Online	Yes	Yes	Yes
Westlaw	Yes	Yes	Yes
Integrum Profile	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 3: Print Journals

CSLG	2015	2016	2017
Harvard International Law Journal	Yes	Yes	Yes
Environmental policy and Law	Yes	Yes	Yes
India Journal of International Law	Yes	Yes	Yes
Journal of Law and Economics	Yes	Yes	Yes

** Above journals are recommended by School of International Studies

Table 4: Books recommended and acquired during the years

Name of the School /Centre's Name	2013		2014		2015	
	Recommended Titles	Titles Acquired	Recommended Titles	Titles Acquired	Recommended titles	Titles Acquired
CSLG	50	35	13	10	45	37

Table 5: Student Strength and Budget for the CSLG (PRINT AND E-BOOKS 2017-18)

Name of the School	Centre's Name	School-wise strength of Students	Break-up strength of Students	Total School-wise	No. of Faculty	Break-up strength of Faculty	Total Students and faculty as per school/Centres
CSLG		119	119	₹ 89,947.34	10	₹65,466.50	₹155,413.84

Table 6: Student Strength and Budget for the CSLG (PRINT AND E-BOOKS 2016-17)

Name of the School	Centre's Name	School-wise strength of Students	Break-up strength of Students	Total School-wise	No. of Faculty	Break-up strength of Faculty	Total Students and faculty per school/Centres
CSLG		119	119	₹ 59,965.29	10	₹32,733.22	₹92,698.51

The data from Table 1, 2 and 3 reflect the collection building of Law related information resources in various media as well as scattered in last couple of years. The presence of significant databases, purchasing of printed books along with subscribing the journals are primarily done on the recommendations of faculty members as well as requests from students of JNU. The table related with print books is showing data of years during 2013-15. The online databases and journals related information is presented since the years 2015 and till 2017. The library is providing access to major databases in the field of law.

The above Table 4 reflects the data about recommended titles by the Centre for the Study of Law and Governance (CSLG) during the three consecutive years from 2013 to 2015. The number of titles acquired till 2015 since 2013 is 82. The demand of recommended titles is specific in nature and covers the wide range of topics related to law and governance.

The Tables 5 and 6 inform about the budget allocation for the financial years 2016-17 and 2017-18. The student strength is provided along with the budget provisions for CSLG. Whereas the collection building comes in scenario, the understanding of collection usage is very instrumental. This helps in finding the micro areas of learning as well as usage patterns. The collections of varying sizes may belong to different specializations in 'law' field' yet leave

scope for further inclusion or extension. Few studies have indicated "overinvesting in legal materials" thus stressing on researching the collection needs. Michael Levine Clark, Margaret M. Jobe (2009) have suggested the following aspects: In lean budgetary times, understanding collection use is key to making informed decisions about resource allocation for collection development.

Libraries may be able to use the data to better manage the information materials, budgets and collecting practices. Utilization of library collections in JNU may be observed in the perspectives of following parameters:

- The usage of web-based resources

- Various methods of browsing and access to the collections

- The role of library staff in making the collection accessible

- Creating awareness of new additions as well as the extent of use of previous collections

Resources on Internet and Web-based Legal Information Services

The use and popularity of internet and sources available has been investigated (Robert Hinson, Raymond Atuguba, Dan Ofori, Julius Fobih; 2007) in a qualitative manner. The study and investigation of internet related behavior of law professionals is exploratory in nature. It is significant to understand the nature, behavior and patterns of law professionals because there are a number of areas in which the law professionals provide contributions. Studies have shown the impact of internet in terms of improvement in productivity and a communication tool. Internet plays the role of a platform as information provider as well as maintaining the professional relations.

The web-based information delivery system (Rita John Okeke; 2008) also demand introspection in law libraries in academic set up due to increased interference of World Wide Web. The benefits of interactive web technologies are pervasive in law information services to fulfill the demands of profession such as finding and interpreting the law. The web based information services related to law profession have been discussed in literature at broader level.

The web technologies related to web 2.0 are creating blogs, RSS feeds, and various channels of exchange of information such as instant messaging, and podcasting have been popular.

Law Information Seekers and Common Mistakes while Seeking Information

While the usage of digital information in wrong manner (including downloading or sharing in a way that is prohibited) requires the learning lessons for students, there has been a study in Taiwan (Huan Chueh Wu, Chien Chou, Hao Ren Ke, Mei Hung Wang; 2010) with the aims "to explore common copyright related problems that arise when librarians promote the use of digital library resources; and to investigate college students' misconceptions of copyright laws that arise when the students use these resources". The marketing of digital library resources informs about various ways to access and explore these resources but the users forget the limitations mentioned in the licenses etc. The law students should also be taught about the copyright aspects while using and downloading the digital resources. In the study, the identified facets of such problems are "systematic downloading, distribution to unauthorized users, and going beyond the purpose and character of academic use." The authors have shared the misunderstood areas on the part of students such as:

a. The digital resources should be shared;

b. The downloaded digital resources are all legitimately authorized and permitted;

c. All educational use is fair use; and

d. Any downloading is permitted as long as students are paying tuition.

The librarians need to develop instruction tools in a manner that can cope with the raised questions and doubts in the minds of law researchers as well as practitioners for using the electronic information. The understanding of users' behavior and patterns of browsing are sure components of librarians' concern. Chou, Chan and Wu (2007) have found out the few misconceptions in the minds of students. These framed ideas are related with resources available on Internet and their usage such as:

a. All internet content is open for the public to use;

b. The internet is always free; and

c. All educational use is fair use.

Academic Users of Law Resources and Legal Information

The law faculty members have also been a concern for library researchers. The law teachers, as other faculty members use information as well as direct the law scholars to the library resources. The libraries are center for providing information resources in

print and digital format for legal education and legal research. With the availability of various information products such as databases including law cases, the information behavior of users as well as relation with library has witnessed tremendous changes. With the advent of compact information products as well intricate information needs, the perception of users and library staff are continuously changing. The law subject academicians can help libraries in building the law collection. The aspects such as "update a core, qualitative and need-based collection" are imbibed in library's services to the fulfillment of information needs of users. The law teachers have a wide range of purposes to seek information. This range is not limited to only imparting teaching, conducting and guiding the research and other needs. Sometimes a component of information literacy may help the faculty members as well as the law students to explore the available law resources. The knowledge of databases such as 'HeinOnline', 'Westlaw India' and 'Manupatra' in Indian context may prove advantageous among users. The usage of these law online research tools is complex and requires training to be imparted. There are various ways in which the Supreme Court and High Courts judgments can be accessed. Then there are the All India Reporters, Labour law journals etc. The date, forum and level of court are various aspects that need to be kept in mind while deciding this issue.

Factors behind the Innovative Legal information Services

A study in neighboring country reflects (Ghalib Khan, Rubina Bhatti; 2015) the "determinants" of usage of resources and exploring services of the academic law libraries. The primary use of library resources is related with providing teaching services and other professional reasons. The law libraries have special clienteles with urgent and time bound information needs (Khan *et al.*, 2011). Where the ICT has paved way for speedy information, the diversity in information sources and media has been playing a supportive role in information access. The digital law libraries are modern wonders. The use of personal libraries, conversing with senior advocates is among the few significant steps towards information access. Brandon Nichole Wright (2016) identifies the challenges in a different scenario, other than the academic environment. Their study explores the evolution of "the prison law library doctrine". Their interesting findings include the outcome that there is no clear definition of alternative measures to a prisoner's right to access a library in the doctrine. The study can be helpful for various stakeholders

such as information providers, lawyers, community leaders as well as the prison inmates to inform about "the vital information necessary to uphold the prisoners Due Process right to meaningful access to the court."

Variation in Law Professionals' Information Needs and Methods

The lawyers require information (Thanuskodi, 2010) for a variety of needs. The information needs of lawyers are related with case preparation. Use of law reports is very common in various studies the personal library and collections are preferred place (Thanuskodi, 2010; Al-Daihani and Opprenhein, 2008). This is the reason why all courts and judicial authorities usually have rich libraries in their premises. During the course of proceedings it is not uncommon to find judges and lawyers heavily relying on the library resources.

The lawyers are seen seeking adjournments to rush and procure a previous decision of the court to win arguments before the judicial bench. With the advent of technology this information can now be available at the click of a button. So many times the interaction with library staff along with guidance from the library tends to be supportive. Tahir *et al.* (2008) have mentioned the "consulting with experts" as a preferred method along with "conversations with colleagues". The other resources from library supply the information to the practicing lawyers. Updating the information is also very significant (Makri *et al.*, 2008)where the information seeking methods and models functions as "theoretical lenses to analyse users' behavior", certainly "at a high level of abstraction".

Law information in Indian Scenario

The law profession in India has been prominent and the library services for the same have been specific and speedy kind. The availability of information sources has been associated with the well-coordinated services with the inclusion of web 2.0 applications. In a study, Bhardwaj and Madhusudhan (2016) have found out that "legal information sources are lagging behind in exploiting the full potential of Web 2.0 features." They studied the relation of legal information source and integration of Web 2.0 tools in context with:

i. Contents,

ii. Provision to contribute the contents by user any time,

iii. Location.

The e-resources are devoid of few features such as:

i. Search features,

ii. General features,

i. Web 2.0 tools,

ii. Better help features,

iii. Provision to contribute contents by the users.

Also, it has been found out that mobile-based view is not available in majority of sources, and open access resources are lacking user-friendly features and citations search parameters. The libraries can redesign the services and maximize the utilization of law related resources by additional guidelines, and help features.

The law libraries keep on studying their users' behavior as well as the impact of services on users. The application of various methods such as "monitoring behavior", "large-scale analysis", and "strategic-based measures" has been implemented. The interactions with law faculty members, scholars, practitioners and library and information science professionals provide insights into the current practices as well as relevance of resources and services. The attention is required towards the factors such as (Ghalib Khan, Rubina Bhatti, Amjid Khan, Rahim Jan, (2017):

• Outdated collections

• Scarcity of information

• Communication technologies

• Budgetary issues

• Inactive roles of regulating bodies and professional associations

• Limited roles of professional library staff

• Limited access to the Higher Education Commission digital library

• Absence of proper library setup and

• Moral obligations and responsibilities of institutional administrations

Conclusion

With the advancement and rapid expansion of the legal profession in India there is a heavy reliance on the digital law library resources to augment the already existing civil and criminal jurisprudence in the country. The libraries have to rise to challenge and provide standardized and reliable tools to the practitioners and users of legal education in the country. Also, the current trend is the five year law courses which have almost overtaken the three year law degree courses. The five year law programmes are much more in-depth and require much more resources at the disposal of students. These students are also participating in national and international moot courts where there is heavy reliance on the library resources. This will be an interesting area to watch out for and for the law libraries to augment their resources and capabilities with the dynamic scenario. There is already tremendous competition amongst the current lot of online databases. It needs to be seen if the library resources can match upto the ever changing demands of the legal profession.

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