

Best Practices in Academic Libraries: Special Reference to Govt. First Grade Colleges of Raichur District

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Abstract

Quality Improvement without Best Practices and Accreditation can't be viable in today's Academic Realm; Best practices are recognized through inspecting empirical proof of success. At gift there are numerous Best Practices observed in Academic Libraries to enhance the first rate of offerings and professionalism. This paper describes numerous meanings given through numerous dictionaries and council such Online Dictionary of Library and Information Centre and Information Science, Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, National Accreditation and Assessment Council after which discusses the Best Practices It additionally examine the Best Practices with their Goal of the Practice, The Process, Impact of the Practice, Resources required, and Remarks. This paper specializes in guidelines for Best practices in Library and Information Centre concerning NAAC.

Keywords: Academic Libraries; Best Practices; Library and Information Centre Services; NAAC; Quality.

INTRODUCTION

Accreditation activity is gaining traction in our country as people and educational institutions recognize the importance of quality enhancement for the institutions and the country. Libraries play an important role in the accreditation process. Library and Information Centre services have been expanding as they contribute significantly

to the learning process, particularly e-learning. Accreditation is gaining traction in our country as people and educational institutions recognize the importance of quality enhancement for the institutions and the country. Libraries play an important role in the institutional accreditation process. Libraries' services have grown in importance as they contribute significantly to the learning process.

Though the NAAC does institutional accreditation, the assessment of a Library and Information Centre, a vital subunit, is a key step that integrates itself with the overall evaluation; the Library and Information Centre is the fulcrum of support for the entire range of academic activities on an educational campus. All of this emphasizes the importance of scientific Library and Information Centre evaluation in order to protect and enhance the Library and Information Centre's role as the

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focal point of academic development.

The collection, services, and outreaching capacity of the Library and Information Centre are all evaluated as part of the accreditation process.

Significant developments in Library and Information Centre and information services have been reported recently, and libraries are taking on newer responsibilities in higher education. Libraries played an important role in the learning, teaching, and research processes in institutions.

DEFINITION OF BEST PRACTICES

In simple terms, a 'Best Practice' is a practice that paves the way for improving existing functions and assisting in the effective implementation or use of a process.

ODLIS (Online Dictionary of Library and Information Science) defines best practices as follows: "In the application of theory to real life situations, procedures that, when properly applied, consistently yield superior results and are thus used as reference points in evaluating the effectiveness of alternative methods of accomplishing the same task." Best practices are identified by examining empirical evidence of success."

The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary defines best practices as "high quality, excellence, highly improved, outstanding, par excellence service." It refers to the usual or expected way of doing something in a particular organisation or situation, as well as guidelines for good practices. 'In this process of developing best practices, we take action rather than good ideas, and we improve our skills.' What is quality? It is customer satisfaction through a product or service. Students and teachers are the academic community's customers in an academic Library and Information Centre. When we look at the history of higher education in India, we can see that the Radhakrishnan (1948) and Kothari (1964) Commission Reports recognized the role of libraries in higher education.

They had recommended that colleges and universities have first rate libraries. Furthermore, the UGC Library and Information Centre Committee Report (1965), chaired by Dr. S.R. Ranganathan, provided a solid foundation for academic libraries. Since its inception in 1989, INFLIBNET has been providing financial assistance to academic libraries in order to automate Library and Information Centre operations. Today, INFLIBNET claims to have assisted more than 150 universities with Library automation. It is hoped that within a

decade, almost all universities will have Library automation.

On the recommendation of the National Policy of Education (NPE) in 1986, the National Accreditation and Assessment Council (NAAC) and Best Practices, University Grants Commission established a higher education body (whose job it is to assess the quality of universities and institution colleges) in Bangalore in 1994. This is the National Accreditation and Assessment Council (NAAC), which strives for quality and excellence in higher education and advocates for the role of libraries and information services in improving academic environments. According to the NAAC document "Best Practices in Academic Libraries," "best practices may be innovative and be a philosophy, policy, strategy, programme, process, or practise that solves a problem or creates new opportunities and has a positive impact on organizations."¹

Academic libraries are part of larger academic organizations. Since the 1980s, the generation, organisation, and dissemination of information and knowledge have been in constant flux. Most academic libraries have Internet resources to supplement their print collection. These modifications are significant. The problem with us is that we accept most changes as normal. The internet saves time, repetition and redundancy, time lag and delays. We can quickly communicate with information service providers in the event of a problem, change, or addition to an existing collection or service. Library and Information Centre management must become more integrated through software. Librarians will need to research the capabilities of Library software because there are numerous features.

Quality in the context of a higher education institution is multidimensional. One such dimension is the operation of a Library and Information Centre. The need to improve the accuracy of the accreditation process is constant, and the opportunity to do so exists alongside it. The NAAC is always busy.

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT AND ACCREDITATION COUNCIL (NAAC)

The National Assessment and Accreditation Council is an autonomous body established by India's University Grants Commission (UGC) to assess and accredit higher education institutions in the country. It is the result of the recommendations of the National Policy on Education (1986), which placed a special emphasis on maintaining the

quality of higher education in India. To address quality issues, the National Policy on Education (1986) and the Plan of Action (POA-1992) advocated for the establishment of an independent national accreditation body. As a result, the NAAC

was established in 1994, with its headquarters in Bangalore. NAAC's primary function is to evaluate and accredit higher education institutions and/or their units throughout the country.²



Fig. 1: National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)

According to the new methodology introduced by NAAC in April 2007, higher education institutions are assessed and accredited in two steps. The first step is for the institution to seek 'Institutional Eligibility for Quality Assessment (IEQA),' and the second step is for the institute to be assessed and accredited under the grades 'A,' 'B,' and 'C' for accredited institutions, and 'D' for those that are not accredited.³

NAAC has identified seven criteria:

1. Curricular aspects
2. Governance and leadership
3. Infrastructure and learning resources
4. Innovative practices as the basis for its assessment procedure
5. Research, Consultancy and extension

6. Student support and progression
7. Teaching learning and evaluation

Need For Best Practices

Libraries are in the service business so it has to ensure quality in service. The most important product they have is service. Without service, libraries are indistinguishable from museums or they are a combination of a maze and morgue for books. Service is a pervasive ethic of the profession of librarianship. (Gorman, 1999)

College libraries must provide facilities that promote effective and interactive access to and use of information resources for all users. In terms of physical facilities, libraries must provide a safe, comfortable, well lit, clean environment with adequate and appropriate seating arrangements to

ensure effective use of the Library and Information Centre's resources, including digital resources. College libraries are required to consider study space needs when allocating seating space, with special attention paid to reserve collection. To provide better services to users, libraries must develop well-defined rules and guidelines regarding access hours, circulation policies, and other regulations.

Best Practices for Academic Libraries

While assessing the quality of higher education in the country, NAAC has provided useful guidelines to improve the overall quality of Library and Information Centre and the services provided by these centres. To effectively meet the challenges posed by global technological changes and to meet the multidimensional information needs of Library and Information Centre end users, NAAC has developed a set of forty eight best practices for libraries and information centres. NAAC collected data on best practices from libraries across the country in a specific format⁴. The best practices are proudly divided into four categories:

1. Management and Administration of Library and Information Centre.
2. Collection and Services.
3. Extent of User Services.
4. Use of Technology.

The best practices suggested by the NAAC in its quality indicators in Library and Information services to the constituent colleges listed below.

1. Automation of Library and Information Centre with Integrated Library software.
2. Inclusion of sufficient information about the Library and information in the college website and prospectus.
3. Compiling students/teachers attendance statistics and locating the same on the notice board.
4. Displaying/filing newspaper clippings on the notice board periodically.
5. Display of Career/Employment Information on the notice board regularly.
6. Internet Facilities to all the user groups.
7. Information literacy programs.
8. Suggestion box and timely response.
9. Displaying new arrivals and circulating a list of those to academic departments.

10. Conducting book exhibitions on different occasions.
11. Organizing book talks.
12. Instituting Annual Best User award for students.
13. Organizing competitions annually.
14. Conducting user surveys periodically.

Best Practices for Libraries

Predetermined weightage of 20 marks out of total 1000 are given to the Library and Information Centre under the Criterion IV named as Infrastructure and Learning Resources. Those institutes and colleges are preparing for NAAC accreditation; they can follow some suggestions to get good marks. They should provide best services to users as mentioned below.

Best User Award

Library and Information Centre should be organized annually seminar/workshop/conference and Awarded "Best User" For Regular Visitor of Library and Information Centre.

Newspaper Clippings

Library and Information Centre should maintain clipping files on different subject of students Interest and as per Institute demand. Some informative news clips stick on notice board also. Librarians should maintain Notice File which contains one copy of every notice in this file. Current Awareness Service (CAS) service provide to users by email and notice board. Library and Information Centre should displays different websites information on notice board.

Previous Year Question Papers

All subjects question papers of previous year should be arranged in file. Scanned question papers should keep in digital Library for users. Besides its eBooks, Syllabus, E-resources are the part of Digital Library.

Suggestion Box/Register

Suggestion box should be in the Library and Information Centre for valuable suggestions of users or keep suggestion register in the Library and Information Centre and put before the Library committee to resolve the user's problems.

Institutional Library and Information Centre Membership

Librarian should be member of Delnet, National

Digital Library, Inlibnet, British Council Library, American Library and other institutional Library and Information Centre membership.

Budget

Library and Information Centre department proposed annual budget for the year. There should be a proportionate growth in the Library budget. Budget for different documents such as books, journals and other resources and ICT infrastructure are to be defined as to the scope of the institute.

Sources of income other than state, central and UGC grants may be identified for enhancing the collection and services. In Library and Information Centre, last five year's budget file should be in the Library and Information Centre.

Book Exhibition

Librarian should organized book exhibition in the institute for books selection. Faculty members and students visit in the exhibition and aware about new titles of books.



Fig. 2: Book Exhibition

Digital Library and Information Centre

A digital Library and Information Centre is a collection of documents in organized electronic form, available on the Internet or on CD-ROM disks. Depending on the specific Library and Information Centre, a user may be able to access e-resources, magazine articles, e-books, papers, audio, and videos. In digital Library and Information Centre should have minimum 10 computers for users? Report of e-resource users should be arranged in year wise.

ILL & MOU

Library and Information Centre department should has memorandum of understand (MOU) with other organizations to share reading materials and E-resources. Library and Information Centre becomes member of Delnet, it provides Inter Library and Information Centre Loan (ILL) facility to users.

Career Information Services

Library and Information Centre should provide career information service to students, keep separate section of this service and keep job related reading material in this section.

Library and Information Centre Advisory Committee

The formation of the Library and Information Centre committee with an equal representation by faculty and students, and the role of the committee and its functions in developing the Library and Information Centre services are to be well defined. The Library and Information Centre Committee works for the strategic development of the Library and Information Centre Committee convene meeting twice per year and additional meeting, if required and record the minutes of meeting for the same.

Library and Information Centre committee is constituted with the following members:

- Senior most Faculty Head
- Dean Member
- All Head of Department (HoDs) Member
- Faculty In-charge Member
- Librarian Member Secretary

Library and Information Centre Policies

The Library and Information Centre should have approved policies on the collection development support, Books issuance, introduction of new services, support in terms of fund, annual budget, book bank, binding procedure, weed out books, and policy on loss of books and an ongoing commitment of the institution in deputing Library and Information Centre professionals for continuing and further education.⁵

NAAC strives for Quality and excellence in higher education and advocates for enhancing the role of Library and Information Centre and Information Services in improving academic environment. Document prepared by NAAC for Best Practices in Academic Libraries says “Best Practices may be innovative and be a philosophy, policy, and Strategy program, Process or Practice that solves a problem or create new opportunities and positively impact on organizations.” NAAC developed a set of Best Practices followed in academic Libraries and

presented under the following four broad areas:

- Management of Library and Information Services
- Collection and Services Provided to Users
- Extent of the Use of Services
- Use of Technology

NAAC Peer Team Members Can Ask

1. Are the qualifications, experience and pay of the Librarian as per government/UGC norms?
2. Does the Library and Information Centre have extended and appropriate working hours before/after the class hours?
3. Does the college have a Library and Information Centre Advisory Committee? If yes, what is the role of the Library committee?
4. Does the Library and Information Centre function on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays to facilitate use by students and faculty members?
5. Has the librarian attended/participated in orientation/refresher courses and workshops/seminars/conference?
6. Does the Library and Information Centre have separate premises of its own? Does it contain minimum infrastructure facilities such as utilities, staff area, reading hall, periodicals section, circulation counter, service area, Information Display, etc.?



Fig. 3: NAAC Peer Team members asked questions to Librarian

7. What is the ratio of the seating capacity to the users (students and faculty members)?
8. Is the Generator facility extended to the Library and Information Centre?
9. What are the measures for overall maintenance and cleanliness of the Library and Information Centre?
10. Does the Library and Information Centre have computers and Internet facilities?
11. Are the Library and Information Centre functions automated? If yes, are they fully/partially automated?
12. What are the financial/funding sources other than the state, central and UGC grants?
13. Is there any defined policy for collection development, stock verification, promotion and training of Library and Information Centre staff?
14. How many International, National, Peer Reviewed Journals?
15. Journals subscription details and list of e-journals.
16. DELNET Membership, Inter Library and Information Centre Loan (ILL) facility
17. How many Magazine and Newspapers?
18. How many Volume and title?
19. Which Library software used and Bar coding on books?
20. Which secret page of books?
21. Which type Reference books in Reference section?
22. How many Encyclopedias and Dictionaries?
23. How many Foreign Authors books?
24. How many books purchase in this year (with Bills)
25. Audio-Video Materials (Non Book Materials)
26. How many Handbooks and Reports?
27. Book issuance report of Students
28. Stock verification report and missing books list.
29. Reprography services (Photocopy facility to users)

Best Services for Academic College Libraries

The Library and Information Centre has a key role in supporting the academic activities of the institutions by establishing, maintaining and

promoting Library information services, both quantitatively and qualitatively. The Library and Information Centre offers a wide range of services from reference to electronic information services. College libraries may answer the following basic questions for ensuring appropriate services to the academic community. Performance evaluation of college libraries needs to be carried out at regular intervals in order to sustain and enhance their quality. Normally, the evaluation can be made on compilation of use statistics.

Now a day's ICT plays a very important role in Library and Information Centre. Number of books, Journals are available in the form of CD's, DVDs, E-books, E-journals, E-Resources and online databases etc. also the libraries & there Bibliographical Databases available Online.

Accreditation criteria need to introduce IT in Libraries, and also colleges are highly involved in research activity so they need recent information, online journals, Internet facility etc., After evaluation it is found that the college libraries in Rural area are introduced IT in their Libraries, also the colleges of science faculty are mostly used the IT services in there libraries.⁶

Listed below are some of the best practices that can enhance the academic information environment and usability.

- Computerization of Library and Information Centre with standard digital software.
- Conducting book exhibitions on different occasions.
- Compiling student/teacher attendance statistics and locating the same on the notice board
- Inclusion of sufficient information about the Library and Information Centre in the college prospectus.
- Displaying new arrivals and circulating a list of those to academic departments.
- Displaying newspaper clippings on the notice board periodically.
- Career/Employment Information / Services
- Internet Facilities to different user groups.
- Information literacy programs.
- Suggestion box and timely response.
- Organizing book talks.
- Instituting Annual Best User award for students.

- Organizing competitions annually.
- Conducting user surveys periodically.
- Special care of Physically Disabled persons to search reading material.
- Give all questions reply positively with smile.

Suggestions

- Make Library and Information Centre PPT which has contains last five years data of Library and Information Centre, i.e., footfall of users, Users statistics, books, journals, Newspapers, magazines procured.
- Collection of previous year's Question Papers for last 5 Years and provided to students on demands
- Extra Library card issue to Topper Students
- Book Bank facility to students
- News Paper clipping file should be arrange year wise.
- Suggestion Box or Suggestion register should be in the Library and Information Centre For valuable suggestions.
- ICT-Enabled Services - Digital Library Services
- Resource Development & Management
- Library and Information Centre should be neat and clean.
- Print journal's scanned contents should be sent via email to regarding faculty members, if they required full article then visit in the Library and Information Centre.
- Students and faculty member's Library and Information Centre entry records in the Register last 5 years.
- E-Resources usage statistics of users.
- Indoor plants should be in the Library and Information Centre for green environment.
- Stock verification records file.
- New Arrivals are displayed in separate section
- Book Exhibition/Workshop/Conference organize every year by Library and Information Centre department.
- Best User Services to users by Library and Information Centre staff.
- Dr S.R Ranganathan (Father of Library and Information Science) Jayanti Celebration every year and Dr S.R Ranganathan's photo should be in the Library and Information Centre.
- Best User Award given to the users.

It is suggested to NAAC that the best practices followed in British Libraries and American Center Libraries operating in India should have been taken into account. There are areas which we have not been able to find out as best practices. A few examples of such areas are: index to periodicals, real time reference service, preparation of various statistics of the use of e-resources and many other areas.

CONCLUSION

The best practices are help for improving quality of library services. The best practices adopted in academic institutes should bridge the gap between library collection & user community for maximum utilization of the resources. Library adopted various best practices in its administration, management, collection & services, extent of the use of services and use of technology. The technology based services are essential for providing up-to-date information to user community. In its effective implementation that make significant change in enhancing the use of information sources/services and users satisfaction level.

The above best practices by every academic institution library creates its own image in the mind of students, faculty & society. The nature of the students to look library professional is a knowledge manager.

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