Information Literacy in Banaras Hindu University Library System

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ABSTRACT

Information literacy is the vital process in changing world. The paper discuss about information literacy of BHU library system, components of information literacy, importance of information literacy, information literacy and information technology, information literacy and higher education, BHU library and information system, information literacy and BHU library system.

**KeyTerms:** Information literacy, Information technology, Higher education, BHU library system

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INTRODUCTION

The phrase information literacy first appeared in print in a 1974 report by Zurkowski, written on behalf of the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science. Zurkowski used the phrase to describe the "techniques and skills" known by the information literate "for utilizing the wide range of information tools as well as primary sources in molding information solutions to their problems".

Information literacy is a set of abilities requiring individuals to "recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information." Information literacy also is increasingly important in the contemporary environment of rapid technological change and proliferating information resources. Because of the escalating complexity of this environment, individuals are faced with diverse, abundant information choices in their academic studies, in the workplace, and in their personal lives. Information is available through libraries, community resources, special interest organizations, media, and the Internet and increasingly, information comes to individuals in unfiltered formats, raising questions about its authenticity, validity, and reliability. In addition, information is available through multiple media, including graphical, aural, and textual, and these pose new challenges for individuals in evaluating and understanding it. The uncertain quality and expanding quantity of information pose large challenges for society. The sheer abundance of information will not in itself create a more informed citizenry without a complementary cluster of abilities necessary to use information effectively.

Information literacy forms the basis for lifelong learning. It is common to all disciplines, to all learning environments, and to all levels of education. It enables learners to master content and extend their investigations, become more self-directed, and assume greater control over their own learning. An information literate individual is able to:

- Determine the extent of information needed
- Access the needed information effectively and efficiently
- Evaluate information and its sources critically
- Incorporate selected information into one's knowledge base
- Use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose
- Understand the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information, and access and use information ethically and legally.

Information Literacy may be described therefore as "the ability to identify, locate, evaluate, organize and effectively create, use and communicate information to address an issue or a problem."
Why is Information Literacy Important?

Information has become important for development. Information is being generated in many form and published in different formats. Now days, it is very difficult to identify, to receive and to use the right information due to variety of sources and information overload. Information in the early 21st century is characterized by overabundance (information overload), unequal distribution, a strong tendency to triviality, and increasing concerns about credibility.

In its 2001 "Statement on Information Literacy for all Australians", the Australian Library and Information Association emphasized the importance of Information Literacy as a prerequisite for:

- Participative citizenship
- Social inclusion
- The creation of new knowledge
- Personal, vocational, corporate and organizational empowerment
- Lifelong learning

Information Literacy and Information Technology

Information technology skills enable an individual to use computers, software applications, databases, and other technologies to achieve a wide variety of academic, work-related, and personal goals. Information literate individuals necessarily develop some technology skills. Information literacy, while showing significant overlap with information technology skills, is a distinct and broader area of competence. Information literacy focuses on content, communication, analysis, information searching, and evaluation. Information literacy, on the other hand, is an intellectual framework for understanding, finding, evaluating, and using information. Information literacy initiates, sustains, and extends lifelong learning through abilities which may use technologies but are ultimately independent of them.

Information Literacy and Higher Education

Developing lifelong learners is central to the mission of higher education institutions. By ensuring that individuals have the intellectual abilities of reasoning and critical thinking, and by helping them construct a framework for learning how to learn, colleges and universities provide the foundation for continued growth throughout their careers, as well as in their roles as informed citizens and members of communities.

Information literacy is a key component of, and contributor to, lifelong learning. Information literacy competency extends learning beyond formal classroom settings and provides practice with self-directed investigations as individuals move into internships, first professional positions, and increasing responsibilities in all areas of life.

Present time, information resources are often available through networks and other channels, and distributed through technology. Incorporating information literacy across curricula, in all programs and services, and throughout the administrative life of the university, requires the collaborative efforts of faculty, librarians, and administrators. Faculty also inspire students to explore the unknown, offer guidance on how best to fulfill information needs, and monitor students’ progress. Academic librarians coordinate the evaluation and selection of intellectual resources for programs and services; organize, and maintain collections and many points of access to information; and provide instruction to students and faculty who seek information. Administrators create opportunities for collaboration and staff development among faculty, librarians, and other professionals who initiate information literacy programs, lead in planning and budgeting for those programs, and provide ongoing resources to sustain them.

BHU Library System & its Collection

Banaras Hindu University is an internationally reputed temple of learning, situated in the holy city of Varanasi. This creative and innovative university was founded by the great nationalist leader, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, in 1916. The area of the main campus of this premiere Central University is 1300 acres. The Central Library of the Banaras Hindu University is situated at the centre of this University. The Central Library serves the students, faculty members, researchers and other staff members.

The Banaras Hindu University with 15 Faculties comprising 123 subject Departments, has a library system with the Central Library at the apex, three Institute Libraries, namely, Institute of Agricultural Sciences, Institute of Technology, and Institute of Medical Sciences. The library has a unique collection of about 7227 manuscripts, besides the collection of rare books, doctoral dissertations, staff publications, local history collections etc.

ICT Application in the BHU Library

- Computerization of Library Holding: Library purchased a Library Software (SOUL: 2.0). The software has been installed in the Central Library, IT Library, MMV Library and in some of the departmental libraries. The Central Library established number of terminals for searching library holding in place of Card Catalogue. Library completed about 5 Lakh volumes of books and periodicals database.
- Networking Activities: The Sayaji Rao Gaekwad Library is one of the top five libraries chosen by UGC for automation and networking under INFLIBNET programme. The library has access to the Internet using 2Mbps broad band VSAT connectivity provided by ERNET under the UGC-Infonet programme. With the available infrastructure, the university provides campus wide Internet access facility to all the teaching departments, students, hostels and the branches located across the campus including Administrative blocks of the university.
- Hardware and Software: At present BHU Library has more than 135 nos. of computers and Servers on Linux platform with available backup devices of DVD-ROM and USB hard disk etc. The SOUL 2.0 Software (multi-user) is being used for automation and for digital access of manuscripts and rare documents. Techfocus Digital Library Software is being used. Library also has high power scanners, printers, photocopiers.
- Library Services: The library facilitates its users by providing the Research Journals, Books, Ph. D. Theses, United Nations & Government Publications, Text Books and Reference Books in order to assist the students in their study and research work. Some of the important information services of this library are mentioned below:
Electronic Services:

- Internet Facility.
- UGC-INFONET Consortia journals, Science Direct, Web of Science, E-books etc.
- Service for Visually Impaired Users.

Document Delivery Service:

- DELNET, INFLIBNET.

Reprographic Service

- Manuscript Consultation Facility

Information Literacy and BHU Library System

- User Training Program: Time to time different types of training programs are organized to literate the library users.
- Demonstration of Electronic Databases: Different types of database/e-journals publisher/suppliers demonstrate their resources merits and how to use the resources supplied by them.
- Cyber Library and ICT Training: ICT area is very dynamic and ever changing area. It changes day by day. To update with the changes, training programmes are organized to train library professional i.e. computer, internet and library software training etc. A cyber library with more than 200 computers also established to provide 24*7 internet facility to use e-resources.
- Lectures: Short classes and tutorials designed to teach the essential skills of information finding and evaluation, focusing on specific topics or issues of immediate relevance to the user community. In the beginning of the academic session, lectures are delivered in class rooms at departmental/ faculty levels to train students, researches, and faculty members about how to use the library and library resources.
- Seminars/Conferences/Workshop: National/International conferences and workshops in Information Literacy where national authorities share their expertise with colleagues and thus communities through a process of cascade training for developing ideas and to discuss relevant topic, the library organizes seminar/conferences on National/International level. The BHU library system has organized seminars on “right to information”, “print to e-resources” recently. Workshops are the good approach to learn something. The BHU library also organize workshops to literate their staff and users to promote information use. Approximately 10 workshops on national/international were organized in last 5 years on manuscripts, ICT, N list programme, agriculture literacy etc.
- Personalized Assistance: Emphasis on personalized assistance with the key processes of finding and accessing information: for example, constructing search strategies and selecting appropriate resources. The BHU library also provides personalized service to library user for using information effectively.
- User Manuals and User Guide: Library publishes user manual and users guide for help of users to use the library resources.
- Library Brochure: Library brochures and handouts explaining the key concepts of information literacy, particularly why it is important to the local community and society as a whole.

The BHU Library also publishes brochure for help of users to use the library resources.

- OPAC: It is an online catalogue facility that enables speedy searching of library database including books, journals, periodicals and manuscripts. Web OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue) facilitates a user to browse library’s entire document collections with ease and promptness. The bibliographic data is presented in a read only manner and user can reserve the documents from his/her desktop. It has provided a much-needed relief to the library users in accessing, retrieving and using the learning resources of the library. The documents can be searched by title, author & editor and keywords.

Library Website: The BHU library system also provides information/tips through its website. Development of websites and other Internet resources in a range of languages for teachers, librarians and others critical to the teaching and promotion of information literacy skills.

- Visually impaired students: There is a special section for visually impaired students in the premises of central library to provide the information through brail literature and audio recording of course materials. Time to time, a number of awareness programmes are also conducted to promote the use of services.

- Library Orientation tours to make prospective information users feel welcome and promote general awareness of the information resources and services available to them in their community.

- As with mainstream literacy, the BHU library has been promoting information literacy through a non-print media “LCD display” of current and relevant information like new arrivals, important sources of information etc., that attract the non-literates to the library so that they will gradually overcome the fear of literary environments and want to learn more by improving their reading and writing skills.

CONCLUSION

The BHU library system has more than 40 academic libraries within the university, having more than 15 lakhs collection of reading material. The library system is constantly doing efforts to maximum use of its resources. For this, the library system is doing many activities to ensure maximum use of its resources e.g. User training program, Demonstration of electronic databases, ICT Training, Lectures, Seminars/conferences, Workshop, Reference service, User manuals and user guide, Library Brochure, OPAC, Website, Virtual tour of the library, Visually impaired students awareness program, Organize days e.g. librarian day, library establishment day.

REFERENCES


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