Available online at www.sciencedirect.com

SciVerse ScienceDirect

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/iilr

Users' perceptions of library effectiveness: A comparative users' evaluation of central libraries of AMU, BHU, ALU and BBRAU

Abdul Mannan Khan*

Integral University, Lucknow, India

Abstract This study examines user perceptions regarding level of satisfaction with library collections, organization, facilities as well as traditional and IT enabled services. A questionnaire was administered to the faculty members, research scholars and students of the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), Banaras Hindu University (BHU), Allahabad University (ALU) and Baba Bhim Rao Ambedkar (BBRAU). Overall, respondents indicated that library collections are adequate. In the case of newly centralized university libraries, users were dissatisfied with library collections, particularly at BBRAU, though they were satisfied with the existing infrastructure. Overall, satisfaction levels of users at old centralized universities are good.
© 2012 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Introduction

A library can exist without an institution but an institution can't exist without a library. A library is considered as an important and integral component of any high quality academic institution. University libraries are no exception to this. Users must have full knowledge about the library to fulfil their needs in order to properly exploit library resources. The users' satisfaction is considered to be reliable criterion for determining library effectiveness. It helps the library to meet its users' information needs in an effective way by providing standard and suitable library services needed by them. A user oriented approach has

been found to be more suitable for measuring library effectiveness.

In this paper the perceptive view points of the users, including faculty members, research scholars, and students of referred institutions is undertaken for measuring library effectiveness. An attempt is made to bring about a comparative evaluation of users' perceptions with regard to libraries effectiveness in terms of collection development, organization and services. The study has essentially taken all the standard parameters of users' perceptions to determine the library's effectiveness.

Review of literature

Users' assessments can provide invaluable data to libraries in re-orienting their collections, services and activities for effectively meeting their information needs (Eager & Oppenheim, 1996; Fidzani, 1998). Mannan and Bose (1998)

* Tel.: +919411414910.
E-mail address: abdulk78612@gmail.com.

reported a relationship between the level of users' satisfaction and their library use and assistance sought from library staff. The study found that a majority of satisfied library users frequently sought assistance from librarians for obtaining needed materials. Majid, Anwar, and Eisenschitz (2001) investigated those factors that contribute positively in shaping users' perceptions of library effectiveness. A questionnaire-based survey of five major agricultural libraries in Malaysia was conducted. It was found that the adequacy of collections, services, and facilities were closely linked to the perceptions of library effectiveness. Certain other factors contributing positively to the perception of library effectiveness were the adequacy and effectiveness of library promotion, involvement of users in the selection of library materials, convenient library location, participation in user education programs, and availability of assistance for using library resources and facilities, and subject background of library professionals. The paper suggests that for any reliable library effectiveness study, all factors associated with user satisfaction should be investigated together.

Adequacy of collections is one important factor that determines the effectiveness of any library in meeting the information needs of its users. In fact, a majority of the information services offered by libraries are collection-based. Periodic collection assessment is necessary to determine to what extent library collections are relevant, current and adequate in meeting the information needs of users (Osburn, 1992). Singh (1999a,b) implemented a study to find the users' opinions (IIT Kanpur) of the following user needs: (a) adequacy of the categories of documents; (b) awareness of the services provided by the library; (c) the reservation facility provided by the library; and (d) photocopying services provided by the library. The important findings of the study were that a majority of the users were satisfied with the library collection and services, but attitude of staff is average. However, most found photocopying services unsatisfactory. Seth, Ramesh, and Sahu (1999) conducted a study of the current status of library and information centres in Orissa in order to study and improve job anxiety and job satisfaction and their inter-relationships. To study demands for manpower in different types of libraries, a survey of 30 different libraries in Bhubaneswar was implemented to assess the human issues relate to HRM in these libraries. The findings reveal that special libraries are more service oriented than academic and public libraries. LIS personnel working in some libraries are highly qualified professionals. Non-professionals are engaged in some libraries like public and departmental libraries. A majority of the staff are satisfied with the public and departmental libraries and working conditions. More than 60 percent of the L & ICS have in-house reprographic facilities, and few have access to Internet service. Singh (1999a,b) discussed in her study the acquisition, use, and adequacy of the IIT Bombay library collection. She also examined user and librarian awareness as well as suggestions. Biradar and Kumar (2000) conducted a study on the evaluation of information services and facilities offered by DVS Polytechnic college library to assess the existing library service and facilities through the questionnaire method. The study further examined the impact of professional attributes like nature of work and

sex on the opinions about library services. The findings indicated that the present system of services offered by the library were inadequate. Chandran (2000, pp. 124—127) discusses the use of Internet resources and services in the S. V. University (Tirupathi) environment. The author inquired through a questionnaire respondent opinions about using Internet services, their knowledge about the networks, sources through which they learn about the Internet, and the avenues through which they access the Internet. The author observed that most of the users were between the ages of 20—25 years, and a majority of them were students of B. Tech and MCA and were aware of VANL, ERNET, e-mail services and access to the Internet at the computer centre. Crawford and Daye (2000) conducted a study to describe the use of electronic information flood (EIF) located in Glasgow Caledonian University's Caledonian library and information center. The survey used both observational and questionnaire methods and found that most respondents were full time students and PC rather than Mac users while only 18 were using the EIF. Overall, Crawford and Daye (2000) concluded that information searching is an uncommon activity and that the volume of non-curricular activity is substantial but unqualified.

Kaur and Nandan (2000) led a study to determine the impact of IT on university libraries through a case study of Bhai Gurdas Library, GNDU, and Amritsar. The main objective of the study was to investigate the development of the Internet, Intranet, Extranet, web servers, and multimedia that enable users to access wide variety of resources. The authors inferred that the use of new information and communication technologies in Bhai Gurdas Library facilitated the library's computerization and helped in creating an in-house database of the collection, generate current awareness about services such as the databases of books and periodicals, and to provide e-mail and Internet service. But, complete transformation of this library into an information centre is yet to be achieved.

Kibrige and De Palo (2000) conducted research on the sources of academic research information, the frequency of Internet use by end users, to find the most popular search engine, to gauge the use of online and CD-Rom databases in the library, and the use of search engines in libraries and information centres. The questionnaire method was used to collect the necessary information. The authors observed that users prefer search engines to locate topical information on the Internet. They also suggest the need to re-educate Internet users in several aspects of the information super highway and online databases available. Monopoli and Nicholas (2000) conducted a case study on user-centred approaches to the evaluation of subject based information gateways. The study primarily aimed to find out user opinion regarding the use of the SOSIG gateway information system and to determine whether the Internet suffers from its remoteness. Monopoli and Nicholas (2000) collected data through an online questionnaire made available on the SOSIG website for one month. Overall, they found that since SOSIG's introduction, there was a marked increase in the number of user requests and that women seemed to have more difficulties with the Internet than men.

Naushad Ali (2000, pp. 78—92) conducted a study on the use of the Internet and its use at Aligarh Muslim University.