Best Practices adopted in Library: A case study of Shri Binzani City College, Nagpur

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Abstract: The prime job of a librarian is to provide right piece of information to right user at right time. To accomplish this job, a librarian needs continuous improvement in his library by way of adopting best suitable practices. This paper presents a case study of best practices implemented and followed in Shri Binzani City College located at south Nagpur.

Key Words: orientation, OPAC, library visit, competition, cafeteria approach, infrastructure. Internet library, surrounding

Introduction A best practice is a set of procedures to do things in best possible ways. In libraries, best practices are adopted to attract users towards library and to provide them prompt library service at right time in right way. Best practices can be innovative and can be philosophical. It is a way to lay down policy, strategy, programme, process or practice that solves a problem or create new opportunities and positive impact on organization.

Best practices add commendable value to an institution, considered as reliable benchmarking or standards of quality, tools for the continuous improvement of products, process and services. It consistently shows result superior to those achieved with other means. The type of best practices vary from organization to organization. The practice suitable for one organization may not be feasible for another, so the need of user and type of user should be considered before planning best practices for a particular institute.

BEST PRACTICES IN THE ACADEMIC LIBRARY

The concept of education has evolved from being a dispenser of theory to largely passive recipients (students), to a collaborative, thought provoking experience that builds critical thinking skills in individuals. Libraries are also thinking to articulate a vision for the cooperative learning environment, and enhancing their role to be proactive partner in present teaching- learning in the digital age. Further this is the best time for libraries to accommodate the best available practices and show their presence in the society. Therefore, the entire library system and its use need to be re-engineered from the patron's perspective by addressing their needs, bringing together available technologies, contents and services in a physical space which would certainly be different environment from that of a typical traditional library environment i.e. ware-house model. Moreover, there is a shift in library role from organizing books to managing knowledge digitally. This is possible due to unimaginable ICT advances, proliferation of electronic publications, collection management and retrieval of digital information, resource sharing, computerization, library networking, development of human resources, user education and development of non print media. According to NAAC, the library and information services play not only just an important learning-support function, but the library itself is emerging as a site of learning, sometimes more important than even the classroom.

The factors to be considered for developing the 'modern academic library' in the present digital era are:

1.Good digital environment having nose free, natural lighting, ventilation, welcoming environment etc.

2.Comfortable and user convenience practices having and extended opening hours, comfortable furniture etc. so that users can spend longer time in the library.

3.Proper accessibility to the library resources; provision for open access, proper technical processing like classification and cataloguing, proper and logical arrangement of books in the stack area, easy access for the disable users, sufficient number of terminals for OPACs and on line resources etc.

4.Availability of current and timely information resources by updating the latest editions, internet facility.

5.Adoptability of information technology and automation of library activities.

6.Usability of library resources through meticulous shelves arrangements, and proper policy for weeding out of old editions and binding of documents.

7.Proper security to library resources: Installation of CCTV cameras, use of RFID and deployment of security guards.

8.Proper Human Resource development Policy for enhancing staff skills: Attending refresher and training courses, conferences and seminar.

9.Inter Library Loan practice.

10.Evaluation and measurability of library activities and services by keeping statistics of each and every library activities.

11.Timeliness and effectiveness: Personal assistance, proper Xeroxing facility, library automation, open access system, putting signage dtc.

12.Advocacy and marketing of library resources and services .In view of Best practices in Library and Information Services, four broad areas have been identified by the NAAC to strengthen the library and information services.

13.Management and Administration

14.Collection and Services

15.Extract of use services

16.Use of technology

Management and Administration of Library :- The activities performed in relation to the development of vision, goals and plicies of the library, working hours, stock verification methods, membership, budgeting, resources mobilization, technical processing methods, manpower development, basic amenities and facilities as well as collection development management, technical service, etc. would be considered in the management and administration of library.

Collection and Services :- Collection development would include a well defined collection development/ Manag:- ement policy in the libraries so as to maintain an active balanced collection, The user centric services will be most valued, ranging from reference to electronic service to be delivered both, in anticipation and on demand. Every service or operation in the library is based on the holdings it possesses. Apart from conventional document like books, periodicals, reports, theses, proceedings, maps, atlas, globes, photographs, and audio visual materials, etc, the resources in magnetic and optical media like in CDs, DVDs etc and e resources are gaining popularity among the users.

Extent of the Use of Services :-For extending a better and qualitative information services in the academic libraries, the services should be provided by the libraries with a feeling that information is widely available and equal access to all. This is possible if libraries ensure the implementation of the national and international standards. While maintaining the currency of information by updating it and removing unused material, a range of information tools to access information should be available to both the novice and experienced users.

Use of Information Technology :-Today, the success of the modern library is increasingly dependent on the most effective utilization of new technologies in libraries. The impact of Information Technology is prodigious in its magnitude, and has a great impact on all aspects of the library operations, information resources, services, staff skills requirements and users expectations. By using technology, library can offer a variety of services and enhance the quality and users' satisfaction. The main purpose of the Best Practices benchmarking can be summarized as the:

♦ development of an understanding of the fundamentals that lead to success ♦ focus on continuous improvement efforts, and ♦ management of the overall change process to close the gap between an existing practice of the institution and that of the best-in-class institutions with reference to the most relevant key performance variables. A commitment to using the best practices in any field is a commitment to using all the knowledge and technology at one's disposal to ensure success. The term is used frequently in the fields of health care, administration, the education system, construction, transportation, business management, project management, hardware and software product development, and elsewhere. In software development, a best practice is a well-defined method that contributes to a successful step in product development.It is believed that a best practice tends to spread throughout a field or industry after a success has been demonstrated. However, it is often noted that demonstrated best practices can be slow to spread, even within an organization. According to the American Productivity and Quality Center, the three main barriers to adoption of a best practice are:- ♦ a lack of knowledge about current best practicm ♦ a lack of motivation to make changes involved in their adoption, ♦ a lack of knowledge and skills required to do so.

Preparation of Strategic Planning for Library Most of us are being taught that planning, organization, staffing, directing and controlling are the basic components to the functioning of management. In recent past, however, the focus has been shifted towards the tactical management or strategic management to achieve desired goals and to manage resources efficiently and effectively as well. The quality, service, innovation and productivity are important for the libraries, which are undergoing a dynamic phase of transformation. Basically, planning is linking knowledge to action and being able to visualize future implication of present decision. Strategic planning is a management tools and systematic approach to prepare for a better future. It is a continuous and proactive process, which assesses, and adjusts the organization in response to changing market opportunities in a dynamic environment. Such type of planning would assist in articulating the organization's mandate and focus to achieve a better job by increasing the level of commitment, communication and cohesiveness across the organization. In this ever changing and competitive environment, strategic planning in the library will be helpful in sharing the vision for the future of library services.There are some direct outcomes to be achieved by introducing strategic planning for example, enhancement in credibility of the library services, team building, improvement in library services and level of customer satisfaction, creativity, better technology, better relationship with stakeholders, job satisfaction, better financial planning, skill development, sense of belonging, awareness of current trends, sharing a vision etc.

For effective strategic planning in the library, four basic questions need to be answers:

1.Where is our library? (Context: The environmental Scanning and the SWOT Analysis) 2. Where do we want our library to be? (Objectives, mandates, goals) 3.How will we station our library there? (Actions: Strategies) 4. Did our library make it? (Success: evaluation)

Strategic management is more than a planning, which includes the ability to implement the vision. Apart from this, other key elements like- mission, values, environmental scanning and actions required are crucial for academic institutions and their libraries in particular. Moreover, leadership is crucial to the effectiveness of strategic planning. Following practices are followed in Shri Binzani City College, Nagpur:

1.Orientation :- Students are called class wise for one hour orientation. They are taught everything in computer classroom environment with the help of ppt presentation. They are explained about the resource wealth of the library that includes reference sources, their concerned textbooks, CDs available in library (e resources), about classification scheme, use of OPAC, various search strategies, library timings, library rules, issue return policy and reading room rules.Students are taken around the library so that they can view the resources available there, their arrangement and other things. Through orientation, they get a chance to interact with the librarian and other library staff and it helps in fading away their hesitation.

2.**OPAC** :-We have started four terminals two for ladies and two for gents) for online availability of library catalogue. Students are given training to search book vide online catalogue using various search parameters and a document containing guidelines/searching criteria is made available to them and kept near the OPAC terminal.

3.Infrastructure: The infrastructure of library is designed in such a way that it attracts maximum no. of users. It is made airy and lightened with the help of broad windows. Proper lighting arrangement has been made in the library. In summer, cooler ducting facility is provided so that students can study in cool environment during examination. The library resources are placed in a two storey building. The first floor is meant for PG students and they have been provided open access facility on the first floor itself.

4.Common Facilities in the library building: Students are provided basic facility like drinking water, separate rest room for ladies and gents, photocopying facility, net facility, news paper clipping facility in the library itself so that students can utilize the library with full zeal without any hesitation.

5.Separate seating arrangement for girls and boys: Reading room has the arrangement to accommodate 120 students at a time. There is separate seating arrangement for boys and girls. Reading room has been partitioned into two so that 60 boys and 60 girls can seat separately at same time. Old library furniture has been replaced with new comfortable furniture and now they spend maximum time in the reading room during examination.

6.Cafeteria: Our college cafeteria is adjacent to library building so that students are not required to go far away for tea or lunch and they can spend maximum time in library. So they can concentrate on their study without disturbance.

7.**Arrangement of Competitions for students**: We arrange various types of competitions in library like quiz, poster presentation, slogan, debate, essay writing etc. so that students get inclined to search book of their interest which results in their interest towards library. Competitions are arranged on different subjects, hence while preparing for the competition, they are required to move through various book and they learn to search information of their interest.

8.Pleasant surrounding outside the library: The library building is surrounded with greenery. There is a park in front of the library that adds beauty to library building and everybody loves to visit such pleasant atmosphere library.

9.Internet Library: In the first floor of the library building, we have arrangement for internet facility for students. 20 computers have been installed so that students can search information through net as well as can use Inflibnet NLIST database at the library.

Conclusion: It is concluded that continuous renovation and improvement in library services attracts maximum number of users towards library and use of library resources is extended in the best possible way. A best practice is a practice which paves the way for enhancing an existing function and helps in effective implementation or use of the process. Use of technology in designing and delivering the information products and services in a library has always yielded good results. Automation of all in-house operations in academic libraries with bar-coding, user identity and web OPAC facilities is a best practice in totality of library services. Effective implementation of user education/ awareness programs with the new techniques and tools will also be a best practice in extent of use of library services. In the present era of IT, the academic libraries need to re-orient to the highly qualitative information collection and services.

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