PROCEEDINGS OF NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PARADIGM SHIFT IN LIBRARY SERVICES

26th November 2016

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Proceedings of

National Conference on

Paradigm Shift in Library Services

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Library services to distance learners: A Study of YCMOU Library

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Abstract

Present paper discusses aims and objectives of Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University, Nashik. Also discussed various library services given to the distance learners of various programmes of the University.

Key Words: Library Services in Digital Era, ICT and Library, Library in the Digital Era, Importance of Library Services in the Digital Era.

Introduction

Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University established in the year 1989 through Act XX of the Maharashtra State Legislature. To become 'Mass varsity' it tried to provide Vocational, Technical& Professional as well as General Education programmes to the society.

Objectives of the University

The major objectives of the University are:

- To make higher, vocational and technical education available to the large section the population.
- To give special attention to the needs of disadvantaged groups, in particular in the rural areas and women.
- To relate all courses to the developmental needs of individuals, institutions and the State

- To provide innovative, flexible and open systems of education by using distance teaching methodology and by applying modern communication technologies to education.
- To provide continuing adult and extension education. Special attention is to be given to retraining adults in new skill to enable them to adjust to a changing technological environment.
- To provide post-graduate studies and research opportunities in all fields of knowledge, especially in Educational Technology, Distance education, and Development Communication. YCMOU is responsible to provide educational opportunities at State Level through Open and distance mode. It develops linkages so as to become instrumental in the development and transformational process of the society around.

Educational Programs

General Programs

Professional/ Vocational Programs

Technical Programs

Research Programs

All these programmes are knowledge and skill oriented. There are about 200 educated programmes in various disciplines given to the society. The academic Programmes are modular and are characterized by the particular number of credit points which is the necessity for the completion of said programme. The organizational structure of YCMOU is devided into two important areas. Developmental activities execute in schools of studies and operational activities done by division and centres. School having major role to designing course material supported by other units to facilitate it for services. The services includes admission, academic counselling. Evaluation and Library Services.

Open and Distance Education

Open and Distance education has become very popular in the world as well as in Asian Region. So far as our country concerned there are 14 state Open Universities and 1 Central University. Various Regular traditional universities are also trying to impart distance education programs in various disciplines. Learners in these Programmes are heterogeneous as the diversity of the programs on offer. The Popularity of those programmes due to its flexibility in terms of time, place and pace of learning.Also it facilities learning while earning. Learner receives support from the OU for self study in the form of printed books, assignment, tutorials supported by counselling at study centres. Printed material is designed carefully so that students can able to learn at their own. In another words printed material can replace the role of teacher as face to face teaching is not available and also not possible. The learning process in distance education

system is based on use of resources, counselling and support given by the Institutions library as the learners are at the distance. This is the very critical reflection on the place of library of open and distance education institute and due to technological enrichment it is possible for provide better services to the distance learners.

Library of Distance learning Institute characterized in ILA sectional committee as follows.

- The library has a prominent role to play in facilitating learning.
- Libraries in Open and Distance Learning Institutions have hierarchical systems: Central library at the Headquarters and Regional and/ or Study center libraries at the grass- root level.
- There are different formats of resources available for the learners.
- Users need material, facilities and information services.
- All kinds of libraries public, academic and special, have to make combined efforts to meet the diver's requirements of the widespread learners.
- The use of modern technology has a special role in providing effective library services
- Development of information literacy skills to the learners

So taking into consideration the students learning, distance education programme designers must give attention towards provision of the library services at the basic minimum.

The personnel involved in providing library services must be professionally qualified and taking into consideration the nature of open and distance learning, there must be library staff at study and regional centers also. So far three tier structure of open and distance education system it is necessity to have central library at head quarter, regional centre library and library support at study centers.

YCMOU Library.

The library of YCMOU came into existence with the establishment of the University. The functions of library are as follows

- Support academic activity of in house academics and outside experts by providing information sources for the development of learning material.
- Support references and information need of post-graduate, research students and students of job oriented and agricultures programmes of YCMOU by creating appropriate facilities at the head quarters as well as poet graduate and research study centres.
- Provide document and comprehensive reference and information services in the area of open and distance education for other distance education institutes in the state.
- Provide assistance to the school of studies for the developmental activities of Library and Information Science Programmes of the University.

Technology in LARC

LARC started automaton programme in 1992. In order computerize the function of library the DOS based in house software was developed to maintain its acquisition, cataloguing, circulation , serial and housekeeping and not useful for supported network.

In the year 2002 'SOUL' software developed by INFLIBNED centre of University Grants Commission (UGC) has been installed and data stored in old software has been transferred to it. The SOUL software satisfies the need of both staff and user.

The 'SOUL' software is also provided free of cost by University to all M. Lib, I. Sc centers as a part of syllabus for IT component. This enabled all the students to get familiarized with library software as against general purpose DBM software. Internet facility is made available in the library for its users.

Another important IT based service services made available by LARC is the online databases for the distance learners. These database covers EBSCO online journals. All the Databases are made available to research and post-graduate students of the university. The database covers various subjects like Humanities, Social sciences, Education, Mathematics, Statistics, Business Management. Library Science etc. It provides access to full-text journals as well as abstracts. This database covers 4500 online journals out of them 3300 journals are peer reviewed. These journals are available to the students via this University's website. For that purpose each student has been provides separate login and password. The students are suppose to use this facility for completing their literature review activity which is essential for research work as well as study the various courses of programmers. This is the real distance learning library service offered by LARC.

The UCG INFONET consortia-based resources are available at headquarters. This is IP based facility covers following e- resources

Economic and Political Weekly

ISID Database

J-Gate Plus

Springer Link

Now the consortia named as e-shodhsindhu a consortia on for higher education electronic resources. It provide current as well as archival access to core and peer received journals and number of bibliographic, citation and factual databases in different disciplines. It provides qualitative electronic resources and bridge the digital divide and move towards information rich society.

Resources available at library

Sr No	Perticulars	Total
		52000
1.	Printed Books printed	60
2.	Periodicals	
3.	Databases EBSCO Art and Architecture Business Sources Complete Tourism &Hospitality Management J-Gate Management & Social Sciences Science & technology E-shodhsindhu Consortia (About 15000 online Journal)	
4	Thesis & Dissertation	11,000
5	Reports	300
6	CD/DVD	3117
7	Archival Material	52,000

Providing library service at the distance is the important function of any distance education institute. At present YCMOU library trying to reach by providing some of the services to the distance learners with the help of Technology.

In future library plans to provide maximum library services to the Distance learners with the help of Technology.

Future Plans

Taking into consideration the nature of Open and Distance Learning and necessities of distance learners, following are the Future plans.

- Development of Multimedia Learning center covering various resources with necessary infrastructure.
- Development of interactive website for the Provision of services to the distance learners
- Rendering reference and Information services through various communication mediums.
- Effective Development and maintenance of libraries at the Regional centres of YCMOU.
- Development of cloud based infrastructure for the effective implementation of library function and its services.

- Development of 'Information package' for study center counsellors which is supportive and useful for their contact session.
- Development of mobile library services.

Conclusion:

The University Library has a big responsibility of providing academic support to the faculty and distance learners. Due to the nature of open and distance learning the learners are scattered geographically. Hence it is necessary to use maximum technological aspects while providing library services. For this purpose YCMOU Library needs skilled enough manpower for accepting the big responsibility.

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