

BEST PRACTICES OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION CENTRE: A CASE STUDY OF B.S. ABDUR RAHMAN UNIVERSITY, CHENNAI

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Abstract *The article stress the importance of libraries in the academic system and what are the innovative services are being implemented in the parent institution to utilize the collections more effectively and efficiently. University Grants Commission (UGC) is giving much importance to the library and information centres and draft line has been framed through National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) for the best practices to be followed in the libraries, which enhance the library users to explore more for their research and academic need.*

Keyword: *Best Practice, B.S. Abdur Rahman University, Library Portal, Library Blog, Orientation Programme*

INTRODUCTION

Library and information centre is an important segment in any academic system. It plays vital role by providing need based information for research and academic activities of the institution. The importance of library could be easily understood by this slogan 'university is a collection of buildings surrounded with library'. After the revolution of ICT, information is over flooding in all the disciplines. Hence, the expectations of library users have changed tremendously from past to present. Therefore, the library needs to adopt new methodologies, which will facilitate research and academic needs of the institution. The online dictionary of library and information science says that 'the application of the theory to real-life situations, procedure that, when properly, applied consistently yield superior results and are therefore used as reference points in evolution of the effectiveness of alternative methods of accomplishing the same task. Best practices are identified by examining empirical evidence of successes.

National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) says that 'Best Practice' simple term is known as the practice which makes the way for enhancing an existing function or an activity and helps in effective implementation or use of the process thereby leading to a continuous improvement and overall performance of the library. The NAAC has prepared a document, where best practices in academic libraries have been mentioned. It has also broadly categorized the best practices in the following four groups;

- Management and Administration of Library
- Collection and Services

- Extent of User Services
- Use of Technology

NAAC has also developed some of the best practices for academic libraries. Apart from the minimum requirements, which library has to adapt to utilize its collections more effectively and efficiently, NAAC is welcoming the libraries to try for innovative ideas to make the library a vibrant one.

- Computerization of library with standard software
- Inclusion of library details in the institution's website
- Compiling staff, student and research scholars statistics
- Internet facility to different user group
- Displaying news paper clippings
- Information about library new arrivals
- Suggestion box
- Library orientation programme
- Organizing book exhibition
- Instituting annual best user award
- Conducting user survey

B.S. Abdur Rahman University

B.S Abdur Rahman University is an institution acclaimed for its quality in teaching and research. Being one of the largest engineering institutions in India, it lays emphasis on innovative research, investment in high-quality facilities and first-rate infrastructure. By making use of the latest technologies and quality teaching, the college is able to offer a wide choice of interdisciplinary degrees in engineering which has enabled students to gain accolades in the global

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level. It is one of the few institutions with all the UG and PG programmes approved by AICTE and accredited by the National Board of Accreditation. This has been upgraded to university status with a view to keep academic in pace with development in industry. Modern hostel facilities are available for men and women students separately within the University campus.

Central Library, BSAU

The Central Library of B.S. Abdur Rahman University has huge collections in the field of Science, Engineering and Technology, Management and Humanities. The library functions 12 hours in a day and Saturdays and Sundays also the library is working. The library is member of Delnet, Malibnet, British Council, Anna University, American Consulate, Structural Engineering Resource Centre. Subscribing online journals as individual member is costlier, therefore the central library of this university has joined INDEST Consortium and subscribing online journals such as ACM, ASCE, ASME, IEEE, ELSEVIER, EMERALD and SPRINGER publications.

Review of Literature

Umesh Kumar revealed that the academic libraries should take initiations of the broad activity to enhance the socio-economic position of the books/documents in the library. The library should create a better environment to use of the latest technological developments for academic and research activities. He further says that the best practices will minimize the gap between the library and the end-user, which will result in the advancement and promotion of higher educational goals and vision and mission of the library. The best practices are evolved from the failures and immediate corrections and through the borrowed best practices the library can enhance its competitive advantage and also enhance the institutional effectiveness.

Sunitha H K says that best practice is a practice which paves way for enhancing an existing function and helps in effective implementation or use of the process. Use of technology in design and delivering the information products and services in a library will always yield good results. Automation of in-house operations in academic library with bar-coding, user identity and web OPAC facilities is the best practices in totality of library services. she further defines that effectives implementation of user awareness programmes with the new techniques and tools will also be a best practice in extent use of library services.

Kishor Chandar Satpathy describes that to cope up with timely challenges, every library has to identify and develop

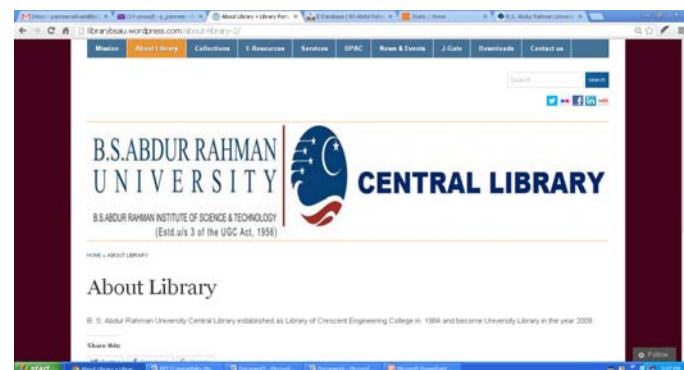
its own tailor made best practices to enhance the collection development process, services dissemination and use of the library as a whole. He further defines that developing best practices, analyzing and revising them at regular interval will lead to continuous improvement in overall performance of the library.

Best Practices at Central Library, BSAU

The Central Library of B.S. Abdur Rahman University initiated some innovative services to its users. The library is spending huge amount to build print and online collections every year. But these

1. Library Portal

Portal is one of the important medium of modern day communication. By the development of ICT, every user is intended explore portals to know more about. Therefore the Central Library of BSAU has developed an interactive portal, which has all the information of library systems and services. Library functioning time, new arrivals, services, collections, staff details and other important information can be viewed in the portal. Also, proper link has been given to access subscribed and openly available e-Journals, e-Books, e-Databases, web OPAC, etc. The users can download Library membership form and book recommendation form from the library portal. University website has a link to connect the library portal.

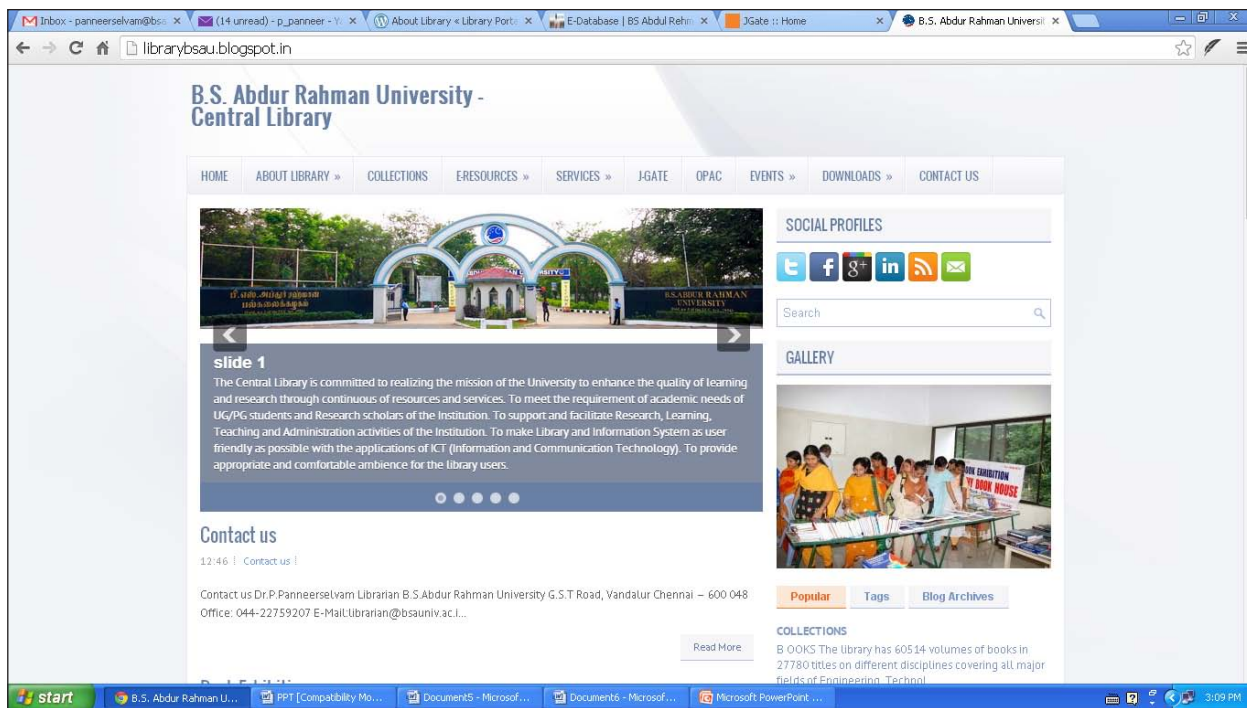


2. Library Blog

The central library has an information site called blog to bridge the communication between library and end-user. The blog has been updated regularly with the relevant information. Proper link has been given from the library portal for easy access of library blog.

3. Library and Information Bulletin

The library publishes information bulletin in every quarter. The bulletin has all the information of the university such as Research and development activities, News from Academic section, Research and Department activities. The library is also compile the information of paper publications by the faculty and students, conference organization and



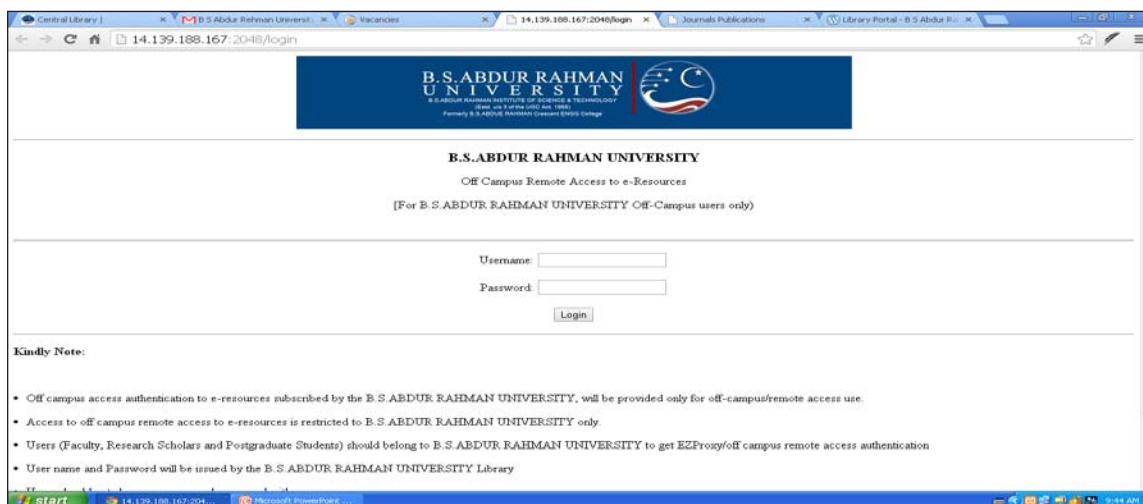
participation, eminent visitors, lab development activities, society activities, placement news, details from physical education, library details, new arrivals, higher studies, etc.

The bulletin is being published as hardcopy and the softcopy is maintained by the library as PDF format. Great advantage of the bulletin is, whenever the university needs any information about the institution, it can be given within a minute since all the information have been covered under the above areas.

4.Remote Access

Communication became more easy and faster after the revolution took place in the field of information and communication technology. Remote access is one them and

it capitulate the library user to access its online contents anywhere in the world by 24x7. The libraries need to spend huge amount for e-books, e-journals, e-databases, etc. But there is a question always in the mind of authorities that spending of such huge amount is worthful? The collections are being utilized? Remote access has the answer for the above questions. The library users can access these online collections from their home, travel, and so on, by which the access rate can be increased. Also, most of the faculties in the university are given other responsibilities apart from their regular day-to-day works. Therefore, it's very difficult to find time to access journal articles. Hence, the library decides to have this kind of facility to enhance online access without boundary, and its being widely appreciated.



5. Library Brochure

The library is publishing an information brochure once in a year. This brochure will be distributed to all the students and staff who have joined in the recently. The fresher can understand about the library and its facilities through this brochure. Library rules and regulations, membership, book borrowing details, fine amount, book transaction time and other important information have been given in the brochure.

6. Orientation Programme

The library conducts orientation programme for the fresher's to make them understanding about library systems and services. A power point presentation will be done by the Librarian to explain the details of library for the fresher's. Apart from the above the librarian conducts orientation programme of online resources. The renowned publishers will be invited to explain on how to use their products with maximum level, which will enhance the staff and students to understand and utilize the products effectively and efficiently

7. Personality Development Centre

The Central Library has developed personality development centre (PDC) to improve the soft skills of student community. Books, journals, newsletters, audio and video materials related communication skills, puzzles, aptitude and attitude, etc are made available in this section. Computer systems with internet facility have been available in the PD centre. Also 29 inch color television has been purchased for above purchase.

8. Merit Card

The Library issues an additional library card to the toppers in university exams. They are eligible to borrow one more book apart from their prescribed numbers. As a token of appreciation and to motivate the students, the library initiated this innovative idea and its being widely appreciated.

9. Faculty Publications

Every faculty is publishing journal articles on their area of interest. The Central Library is collecting these publications and made available for everybody's use. These collections are available in hard and softcopy, hardcopy is arranged in a separate rack under faculty publications. Softcopy of the articles are being compiled as a separate file and proper link has been given from library portal and library blog, which helps the authors to refer their publications by wide audience.

Citation index and h index are the important factors in publications industry. These indicate the author's productivity and value of their publications. These ratios have played an important role in applying for research and funding. Citation index will increase when the articles will be referred by many people.

10. Organizing Book Exhibition

The Central Library is organizing book exhibition, regularly. Reputed publishers and leading book sellers in the city have been invited to take part in the exhibition, which help the staff and students to go through huge collections under one roof. Each department will assign their department library in-charge and senior faculty to recommend books for library purchase. The students can also recommend books, by which, the library meets the end-user's requirements. The book exhibition also facilitates the staff and students to purchase books for their personal use at discount price.

11. Group Mail ID

The Central Library has created group mail ids for students and research scholars, separately. It's been easy to communicate them by a single click about library new arrivals, conference / seminar / workshop announcements, employment details, scholarships, higher studies, etc. The research scholars and students can also send such information through this group mail id, the librarian, moderator of this e-mails will approve such information.

12. Library Advisory Committee

The Central Library has advisory committee to advice on funding needs, services to be provided, general policies, library programmes and other related issues. The committee has the policy makers of university as the internal members and subject experts are the external members. The committee meets twice in a year and as and when the requirement arises.

Apart from the above committee, the central library has library committee, where the department library in-charge and student representatives as the members. These members play an important role between the library and the departments. Books and journals requirements and related issues are being communicated through this committee.

CONCLUSION

The Library and information centres should adopt new ideas and methodologies, which can offer new services to the users, will always yield good results. Over flooding of information is one of the technological revolutions, all form of the information are freely available to the multi sections of the society. Library was the only source of information in early days, it has been changed and further development is, the user need not come to library for any information. He/she can get this information from any nook and corner. Therefore, the library needs to adapt innovative ideas to impress the users, which can facilitate them to use library collections. Library and information centres can take the advantages of ICT by which it can offer right information to user's desktop at right time.

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