

## The Role of Library in Learning

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### 0 INTRODUCTION

The main aim of teaching is to facilitate learning. Teaching and learning go together. It does not mean that there cannot be learning without teaching. Learning is possible with the help of a teacher and also by independent study. The role of library lies in the sphere of independent study/learning.

### 1 LEARNING

To appreciate the role of library in independent study or learning, it is necessary that we try first to see what is learning ?

Learning is usually defined as a relatively permanent change in behaviour. It is a process common to all living organisms. It enables them to modify their behaviour on a more or less permanent basis. It takes place at two planes *i.e.* internalized and externalised. Modification in behaviour is known as internalized learning. When the occurrence of this behavioural change and also the persistence of this change is noticed by some external observer, it is named as externalised learning. One of the other characteristics of learning is that it involves interaction with the external environment. It is rooted in past experiences and does not take place in a vacuum.

### 2 LEARNING PROCESS

Learning process modifies behaviour through a series of events. These phases can be presented in the following tabular form as shown by Gagne<sup>1</sup> :

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<i>Phase</i>	<i>Process</i>
Motivation	Expectancy
Apprehending	Attention
Acquisition	Selective perception, coding Storage entry
Retention	Memory storage
Recall	Retrieval
Generalization	Transfer
Performance	Responding
Feedback	Reinforcement

Motivation phase has the highest importance for independent learning. The role of the library in learning process need to be motivated either by the teacher or by the library with the help of programmes like user education.

### 3 LEARNING CAPABILITIES

After the process of learning, let us now turn our attention to learning capabilities which have a direct bearing on independent study. Out of the five classes of learned human capabilities—verbal information, intellectual skills, cognitive strategies are the very foundations of independent study because the goal of both cognitive strategy and independent study is to help a learner to become a self-learner and an independent thinker. According to David P. Ausubel<sup>2</sup>, cognitive strategies imply three things :

- (a) relating the new material to relevant areas of existing knowledge,
- (b) reconciling new meaning with established knowledge,
- (c) recording it into more familiar and idiosyncratic language.

### 4 ROLE OF THE LIBRARY IN LEARNING PROCESS

After knowing about learning : its nature and characteristics, we may turn our attention to the role of the library in the independent learning process. This is the age of knowledge and information explosion. No teaching can bear fruitful results without substantial recourse to library materials. How much a teacher can give about a topic within a period of 45 minutes or one hour ? He can provide at best a conceptual clarity about the topic. Details will have to be obtained by the learner with the help of further readings which cannot be possible without going to the library. As such the librarians have been giving serious thought to this aspect of learning since 1934. Library literature from this period onwards bears a clear testimony to this fact. It was Louis Shores<sup>2</sup> who threw the concept of "Library

College<sup>3</sup> in 1934 at Chicago Century of Progress Exposition. It was followed by the work of Patricia Knapp and her famous Monteith project.<sup>4</sup> In 1965 a library college Charter was adopted at a workshop organised at James College. The Charter enunciated the main principles of the Library College Concept as "to increase the effectiveness of student learning, particularly through the use of library centres, independent study with a bibliographically expert faculty"<sup>5</sup>.

## 5 CONCEPT OF LIBRARY COLLEGE

The whole concept of library college revolves around independent study by students within the precincts of the library. Classroom becomes insignificant in a library college because all the study including consultation with teachers takes place on the premises of the library. Each student is assigned an individual carrel for independent study within the library. Seminar and small group work areas are set apart in the library for consultation with the teachers. Individual carrels are equipped with various types of electronic apparatus so that the student can view educational television, listen to recordings, study still and motion pictures without interruption and have access to a range of programmed materials.

The idea of library college presupposes:

- (a) Abolition of regular class attendance and the substitution by extensive library learning,
- (b) inclusion of all physical facilities in a library complex,
- (c) complete integration of library trained and subject oriented faculty members,
- (d) a curriculum composed entirely of library study.

In the library college the faculty performs the role of the instructor having rooms adjacent to the library. The student has his class in the library carrel and professional librarians perform the role of faculty also. As a result of all these, the library becomes the heart of the academic institution in the real sense. The essence of library college philosophy is "active student involvement, through commitment by the student to the principle of full personal responsibility for his own education, goal selection, self evaluation and character development".<sup>6</sup> It involves the complete fusion of learner and the resources in which the student, the range of materials, the bibliographic expert and the subject matter specialist are all located in the library and help in the independent study by the student. In a nutshell it can be said that the concept of library college employs the vehicle of independent study to place the student in the centre of the scheme of things in any educational system.

## 6 IMPACT OF THE LIBRARY COLLEGE CONCEPT

As a result of this new thinking in the field of independent learning, experimentation started. Monteith College experiment is the classic example. It was followed by some other colleges like Jamestown College and Stephens College. However, the concept of library college is still to find a complete implementation. It has been implemented only in bits and parts so far. However, the idea of library college established the following facts beyond doubt :

- (a) The aim of education should not be only course related teaching, but it should be both class learning and independent learning.
- (b) Library is a vital element at each level of curriculum and learning.
- (c) Traditional methods of teaching should be supported by such learning techniques which motivate the student to make the use of the library's unique potential in individual problem solving.
- (d) The teacher should be imbued with library centred methods of teaching, so that he can impress upon the students the importance of locating information, of exploiting the range of literature within several disciplines, and of evaluating sources so that mature decisions can be made on the basis of conflicting evidence.
- (e) Professional librarian should be linked with teaching programmes.
- (f) Motivation for independent learning should be the goal of teaching or education.

## 7 USER EDUCATION

Though the idea of library college could not be implemented in its entirety, it is surviving today in the form of user education which has become a common feature of college and university education in UK & USA.

User-education implies user awareness, library orientation, course related bibliographic instruction and interest profiling.<sup>7</sup> It had its birth in the undergraduate colleges of USA. Its main objective has been to make the user independent of day to day dependence upon the teachers and the librarians. The three components of user education are democracy as ideology, education as methodology and library as service. User awareness is all pervasive and primordial. The aim of orientation is to introduce the library to entire mass of newly admitted students. Bibliographic instruction aims at the objective of facilitating course work. Interest profiling is to feed the research scholars and the teaching faculty with the relevant latest literature by matching their interests with the incoming literature in the library.

## 8 OBJECTIVES OF USER EDUCATION

The objectives of user education can be stated as follows :

- (1) To provide every student an opportunity to understand basic library resources and their use in the facilitation of his or her learning.
- (2) To assist the teaching faculty in understanding the contributions librarians are prepared to make to the student's learning and to encourage cooperation to achieve this goal.
- (3) To demonstrate the role librarians can play in motivating students.

## 91 IMPACT OF USER EDUCATION

The result of user education is that :

- (a) The student recognizes the library as a primary source of recorded information.
- (b) The student becomes familiar with the library resources that are available to him.
- (c) The student can make effective use of the library resources that are available to him.

## 92 INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS OF USER EDUCATION

The following is the list of the instructional methods and materials used for user education :

### Tours

#### Conducted tours

- Self-guided tours
- Using printed materials
- Using cassettes

### Lectures to classes

- Workshops, clinics, seminars and telecourses

### Non-print media

#### For groups :

- Slide/tape presentation
- Slides
- Tapes and cassettes
- Television
- Filmstrips

## Films

Multiscreen presentations

For individual use :

Slide/tapes

Cassettes

Filmstrips

Audioscan

Touchstone access carrel

Programmed machines

## Printed media

Subject bibliographies

Student handbooks

Miscellaneous handouts

Programmed instruction

Programmed kits

Self-instruction brochures<sup>8</sup>.

The above clearly shows that user education is following the same methods as are now being experimented in teaching. The use of non-print media is increasing day by day. This has been possible due to rapid advances in educational technology.

## 93 EXAMPLE OF EARLHAM COLLEGE

To illustrate the idea of user education, an example from Earlham College, Indiana<sup>9</sup> can be cited.

The student body of the Earlham College consists of 1200 and the teaching faculty and other staff are about 150 in number. The library has a strength of 20 members supplemented by 45 part-time student assistants. 100 user education programmes are conducted by library staff every year. It is provided in the form of course related bibliographic instruction in the class rooms. The guiding principles of the programme are that it is (a) course related, (b) demonstrated, and (c) graduated. It is imparted by librarians through class lectures by outlining a proper search strategy and preparing an annotated bibliography of specific reference sources. It is graduated in the sense that one level of bibliographic instruction builds upon another.

Bibliographic instruction is provided in six steps : (a) general types of reference works, (b) indexing and abstracting periodicals, (c) library catalogues, (d) principles of knowledge organization, (e) search strategy, and (f) subject analysis.

The basic features of Earlham programme can be summed up as : (a) close relationship between the faculty and librarians in designing courses, (b) delivering of library lectures as a part of normal curriculum followed by sessions with individual students, (c) supervision of students' course assignments, and (d) constant evaluation of bibliographic instruction.

#### 94 SITUATION IN INDIA

User education in India has yet to find a place in our academic institutions. The only worthwhile experimentation in India has been carried out by volunteers like Subbiah Arunachalam<sup>10</sup> of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research. They have demonstrated the effectiveness of user education with the help of tape/slide kits, cassette recorder and an automatic slide projector by moving from one centre of research institution to another. Another effort worth mentioning is that of the Indian Agricultural Research Institute. The Institute offers a special course on library use, reference compilation, scientific paper writing and proof correction for agricultural scientists. The contents of the course consist of : (a) library use (two lectures), (b) literature search (five lectures), (c) preparation of scientific-documents (three lectures) and (d) critical literature evaluation (three lectures).

It may not be out of context to record the experience and efforts of the authors in experimenting the user education programme in their respective universities. The establishment of the centre of Educational Technology is a land mark in the development of the North Eastern Hill University, Shillong. The author being a University Librarian is closely associated with this centre to design a programme to develop the concept of independent learning with help of the library. So also in Karnatak University, Dharwad, the author is given adequate support to educate the students community in making the best use of the library for their learning and research, through the lectures and demonstration in some of the PG departments of the University.

#### 95 CONCLUSION

There is need to introduce user education in India at each and every level of academic institution. Every academician and policy maker appears to be convinced in this age of information explosion of the fact that class teaching is not the only instrument for learning. It should be supplemented by tutorials, seminars and library use and the student should be motivated for independent learning. Library is the greatest centre for independent learning. It is considered as resource centre for learning. The resources of libraries today include all learning media regardless of format or use as books, periodicals, pamphlets, films, phonograph records, cassettes, television,

graphics, projections, computers and all other programmed materials. On the other hand the phenomenon of the use of this vast resource being accumulated in libraries is far from satisfactory. As a result of it, independent study/learning is at its lowest ebb among students. Hardly 15 to 20% of the student population make use of the library for independent learning. Most of the students visit libraries merely for course books. The situation needs to be remedied if education is to be imparted in its true sense. This can be achieved by changing attitudes and by motivating the students for independent learning. The concept of teaching-learning will have to be extended by including library use and independent learning in its fold. Close coordination will have to be fostered between faculty members, librarians and the students. Lessons in library use will have to be introduced at each and every level so that an awareness about library resources and its role in learning is created among the student body and they are able to make the maximum use of the library resources for independent learning. Latest educational technology will have to be used for preparing lessons on library use. Last but not the least, the teaching faculty also will have to change their attitudes and impress upon the students the importance of the library as learning centre. They will have to design library related curriculum and encourage independent learning.

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