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Orientation/Training Programmes in NCR Libraries for People with Disabilities: A Study of the User's Perspective

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to study users' perspective regarding the importance of library orientation/training programmes for the people with disabilities in the leading academic and special National Capital Region (NCR) libraries of India. Survey methodology has been used as the basic research tool for data collection with the help of Likert-type questionnaires. The total 375 users surveyed in all the 15 libraries are selected randomly on the basis of willingness of the users to participate in the survey with the experience of working in digital environment. The survey results were tabulated and analyzed with descriptive statistics methods using Excel software and 'Stata version 11'. The help of 'Sign Language Interpreters' was taken to communicate with the deaf/hearing impaired users. The Library orientation/training programmes are found 'Essential' for the people with disabilities. Majority of users in all the libraries are not found aware of any orientation programme organized at their institution/library which depicts lack of 'User Awareness Programmes' in the National Capital Region Libraries. The people with disabilities are found aware of latest technologies and rely on training to utilize its benefits. This study is the first to explore the users' perspective regarding library orientation/training programmes for the people with disabilities in NCR libraries of India. The findings will assist the libraries to review their training policies to improve the service quality for the users.

1. Introduction

The problem of disability is gaining more and more importance all over the world. The planners of India very well understand the significance of the problem and therefore various policies and programs are framed by the government for the people with disabilities in India. Various sample surveys and studies are done by the NSSO (National Sample Survey Organization) and Census of India to determine the status of the disabled population in India which includes the studies dealing with the analyses of various dimensions of disability and definitional aspects of disability in India. According to the Census 2001, there are 2.19 crore persons with disabilities in India who constitute 2.13 percent of the total population. This includes persons with visual, hearing, speech, locomotor and mental disabilities. As per Census 2001, out of the total population of 13,850,507 people in Delhi, there are 2,35,886 people who comes under disabled population (MSJE 2009). Therefore, the present paper is mainly focused on the study of the users' perspective regarding the 'Training Programmes for the People with Disabilities in National Capital Region Libraries, Delhi' as there are no previous studies reporting about the provision of any 'Library Orientation and Training programmes for the people with disabilities' primarily in the digital environment.

2. Scope, Purpose and Methodology

The present study is limited to National Capital Region only and the survey population in each library is taken on the basis of availability of the users during the time of the survey. The total number of 25 (=100%) users in each of the libraries was selected as the survey respondents on the basis of willingness to participate in the survey with the experience of working in digital environment.

The purpose of this article is to study users' perspective regarding the library orientation/training programmes for the people with disabilities in the leading academic and special National Capital Region (NCR) libraries of India to increase the awareness about the importance of Library Orientation and Training programmes for the people with disabilities. The main objective for conducting this research was the fact that there are no previous studies reporting the provision of Library orientation/training programmes in National Capital Region libraries in the major thrust areas required by users with disabilities to work in the digital environment today. In this study the term 'People with Disabilities' has been used for the people who are blind/vision impaired (i.e. total absence of sight/person with impairment of visual functioning even after treatment or standard refractive correction but who uses or is potentially capable of using vision for the planning or execution of a task with appropriate assistive device), deaf/hearing impaired (i.e. complete hearing loss/loss of sixty decibels or more in the better ear in the conversational range of frequencies) and people suffering from locomotor disability (i.e. disability of the bones, joints or muscles leading to substantial restriction of the movement of the limbs) (MSJE, 2009). The type of organizations selected for the study includes the leading institutions/libraries serving the people with disabilities in NCR region, Delhi. The total number of 15 institutions/libraries are selected for the research study i.e. 5 institutions/libraries each serving the blind/vision impaired, deaf/hearing

impaired and locomotor impaired users respectively. The list of the institutions/libraries selected for the present study includes:

(Libraries serving Blind/vision impaired users)

1. Amba Dalmia Resource Centre (ADRC), Miranda House
2. Durgabai Deshmukh College Library (DDCL), Blind Relief Association
3. Braille Library (BL), University of Delhi
4. Hellen Keller Unit (HKU), Jawaharlal Nehru University
5. Ram Nath Batra Talking Book Library (RNBTL), National Association of the Blind

(Libraries serving Deaf/hearing impaired users)

6. All India Federation of the Deaf (AIFD)
7. Daulat Ram Library (DRL), Amar Jyoti Research and Rehabilitation Centre (For Deaf/Hearing impaired users)
8. All India Deaf and Dumb Society (AIDDS)
9. Noida Deaf Society (NDS)
10. Lady Noyce Secondary School for the Deaf (LNSSD)

(Libraries serving Locomotor impaired users)

11. Central Reference Library (CRL), Jawaharlal Nehru University
12. Central Science Library (CSL), University of Delhi
13. Daulat Ram Library (DRL), Amar Jyoti Research and Rehabilitation Centre (For Locomotor impaired users)
14. Model Integrated Primary School Library (MIPSL), Pt. Deendayal Upadhyaya Institute for the Physically Handicapped
15. Zakir Husain Library (ZHL), Jamia Millia Islamia

The total number of respondents surveyed in each of the libraries is 25 (i.e. =100%) constituting as a whole population of the individual library. The total number of users surveyed is based on random selection and categorized as Faculty members, Research scholars, Graduates, Post-graduates, High school and Intermediate students enrolled in various academic and vocational training courses in different institutions in National Capital Region, Delhi (India). The total three sets of Likert-type questionnaires were prepared for the three different groups of the users (i.e. Blind/vision impaired, deaf/hearing impaired and locomotor impaired). The help of 'Sign Language Interpreters' was taken to communicate with the deaf/hearing impaired users.

USER'S RESPONSE RATE					
BLIND		DEAF		LOCOMOTOR	
Library	Response Rate	Library	Response rate	Library	Response rate
ADRC	80% (20)	AIFD	80% (20)	CRL	84% (21)
HKU	80% (20)	LNSSD	72% (18)	ZHL	80% (20)
BL	72% (18)	NDS	72% (18)	CSL	72% (18)
RNBTBL	72% (18)	DRL	64% (16)	DRL	72% (18)
DDCL	60% (15)	AIDDS	60% (15)	MIPSL	60% (15)
Total	91 users	Total	87 users	Total	92 users

The present study used survey method with the help of Likert-type questionnaires along with the personal interaction with the experts of the institutions/libraries serving the people with disabilities. The survey results were tabulated and analyzed with descriptive statistics methods using Excel software and 'Stata version 11'.

3. Review of Related Studies

A major reward in serving patrons with disabilities is finding the solutions that make inaccessible library resources accessible to the users. Training is an essential component of effective library service as training empowers library users with disabilities by teaching new ways to access information and knowledge (Holt and Hole 2003). A combination of improvements to access technology and adoption of 'design for all' principles along with staff and user training have shown the raised awareness and positive results (Brophy and Craven 2007, p.970). In an earlier study, Kishore (1999, p.4) discussed that in order to create an efficient and effective library training programme for the disabled users, libraries need managers who keeps them updated with the latest developments that can have profound effect on their services. The users need to be given individual attention so as to understand their strongest communication mode. Also, the study focus on various aspects which are essential to develop a model training programme for the disabled like training of library staff, developing user assistance schemes and offering special services to the users.

The users with disabilities have varying degrees of need and demands based on the type and the nature of the disability they have. So, libraries should develop a training plan which broadly encompasses the needs of the disabled that can help librarians to become agents of social change (Kishore 1999). In a particular study, Graubart (1996, p.39) suggested that library instruction programme for the users with sight impairments can consist of the course material like guides on how to find books and periodicals, the large Typefont and Braille guides, quick reference sheets on using the adaptive workstations, using the keypad to invoke the speech

synthesizer screen reader and printing in large fonts. The information material can be provided to individual user group in the form of packets containing the appropriate language version of the guides, a library glossary, and a guide to using interlibrary loan with the evaluation forms to be filled out at the end of the sessions by the users. The prescriptive training packages are very difficult to compile as there are too many variables to consider like people and their disabilities, different browsers, frequent changes and upgrades to browsers and a variety of adaptive equipment and software. Therefore the content of the training can vary accordingly (Williamson, K. et al. 2000). For example, in a library orientation or training programme organized for the hearing impaired students by the libraries, a sign language interpreter can be hired to sign the librarian's presentation. The library instruction programme for the disabled users can also consist of guide to the library including how to locate and check out materials and how to utilize interlibrary loan and various other library services. The users can be given the opportunity to try out some of the tools (Graubart 1996, p.40) and techniques taught to them.

Huang and Russell (2006, p.162) states, "People with disability are only half as likely to have access to the internet as those without a disability". To overcome these problems, users need to receive adequate training and educational opportunities that can enhance their use of the computer and internet with the help of few vital skills like evaluating search engines, choosing alternate keywords and initiating their own searches to achieve optimal results in their quest for information (Russell and Huang 2009, p.72). Libraries should offer the ICT related training to the people with disabilities by giving prime importance to the blind and visually impaired. User feedback on self-reported competencies for online activities and information processing can be taken through a feedback form. ICT trainings can help the users to overcome the mental and technical ICT barriers and to participate online in educational, social and institutional activities (Puffelen 2009). According to Brophy and Craven (2007, p.955-956), user training can also be organized for the use of the various assistive technologies like JAWS which is a powerful screen reading software that provides the user with many options in terms of Web site navigation. The lack of familiarity with electronic equipment and a lack of support and training in the use of adaptive technologies are also identified as a barrier to accessibility of information. An earlier study of 1990s demonstrates that professional library services depend largely on the continuous upgrading of staff through training on a regular basis (Kishore 1999). "Libraries should provide training opportunities for all library employees and volunteers in order to sensitize them to issues affecting people with disabilities and to teach effective techniques for providing services for users with disabilities and for working with colleagues with disabilities" (American Library Association 2001). The aim of providing disability awareness training is to raise awareness and offer practical advice to the front-line staff so that they could offer the best possible services to the library users with disabilities. Disability awareness training helps the staff to know that, how to communicate with deaf people, what can be done for blind readers or simply which colors of

paper can be best for leaflets for dyslexic readers. The effective disability training can be carried out by the libraries, either in-house or by means of outside speakers according to their relevance and videos can also be used to widen the scope of the training. Also, if a training programme is delivered with certain clear, practice oriented values in mind; libraries can significantly upgrade the quality of front-line services delivered to the disabled users (Charles 2005). The online training module can be developed by the libraries to explore the views of library staff on the effectiveness of an online training module in the area of disability awareness and to evaluate the appropriateness of this method of delivery for staff development in an academic library. The suggestions and the opinions of staff on the effectiveness of the training programme can be obtained to know about any increase in participants' awareness and knowledge of the subject. The online training method assist the library staff to learn more about the information needs and requirements of disabled people and to provide an excellent customer-focused service to all users (Forrest 2007). There is a growing recognition of the need for deaf awareness training among library staff as libraries play an important role in providing information to the deaf people as well. There are a variety of training resources available for deaf awareness training with a checklist of good communication skills with deaf community. Librarians need to focus on these training resources on how to improve communication with deaf/hearing impaired people (Forrest 1997). While disability awareness is still an essential training for the library staff but there can be specialized staff in the library which can be trained fully to get expertise in all the assistive technologies to help the disabled users as and when required. The assistive aids/devices that provide access to internet and various software packages to users have expanded over the last few years therefore, it is important for the staff to get the training in this area to keep pace (Charles 2005, p.455) with the changing technologies.

The above studies review the importance of training in the libraries, both for the people with disabilities as well as the library staff. The studies mainly emphasize on the user training on the use of ICT and Assistive Technologies to navigate the Internet for accessing the material from the online resources to work independently in the modern digital environment. The users with disabilities have varying degrees of need and demands based on the type and nature of the disability they have therefore orientation and training programmes can be framed accordingly by the libraries. The provision of disability awareness training should be made in the libraries to enhance and develop better communication skills between the library staff and the users.

4. Data Analysis and Findings

4.1 *User's Perspective Regarding Library Orientation/Training Programmes*

The specific Orientation/Training programmes in the libraries for the people with disabilities can improve their efficiency and skills in locating/accessing the various resources and services of the library. In this context, the following Table 1 explores the user's perspective regarding the need of library orientation and training programmes in the libraries.

Table 1: User's viewpoint regarding the importance of Orientation/Training Programmes

Name of the Library	User's Perspective				
	Essential	Very Important	Important	As and when required	Not required
ADRC	12(48%)	6(24%)	2(8%)	-	-
DDCL	8(32%)	7(28%)	-	-	-
BL	13(52%)	3(12%)	2(8%)	-	-
HKU	13(52%)	5(20%)	1(4%)	1(4%)	-
RNBTBL	5(20%)	12(48%)	1(4%)	-	-
AIFD	13(52%)	3(12%)	1(4%)	1(4%)	2(8%)
DRL	9(36%)	5(20%)	2(8%)	-	-
AIDDS	11(44%)	3(12%)	-	-	1(4%)
NDS	1(4%)	14(56%)	3(12%)	-	-
LNSSD	15(60%)	3(12%)	-	-	-
CRL	10(40%)	8(32%)	2(8%)	1(4%)	-
CSL	7(28%)	8(32%)	2(8%)	1(4%)	-
DRL	9(36%)	7(28%)	2(8%)	-	-
MIPSL	13(52%)	2(8%)	-	-	-
ZHL	6(24%)	12(48%)	2(8%)	-	-

Note: n=25 (i.e. equal to 100%), Representative population from each Library

It can be clearly noticed from Table 1 that maximum number of users in all the libraries except RNBTBL, NDS, CSL and ZHL found library and orientation programmes 'Essential' for the users. While 14 (56%) in NDS, 12(48%) respondents each in RNBTBL and ZHL and 8(32%) in CSL stated that library and orientation programmes are 'Very important' for the users.

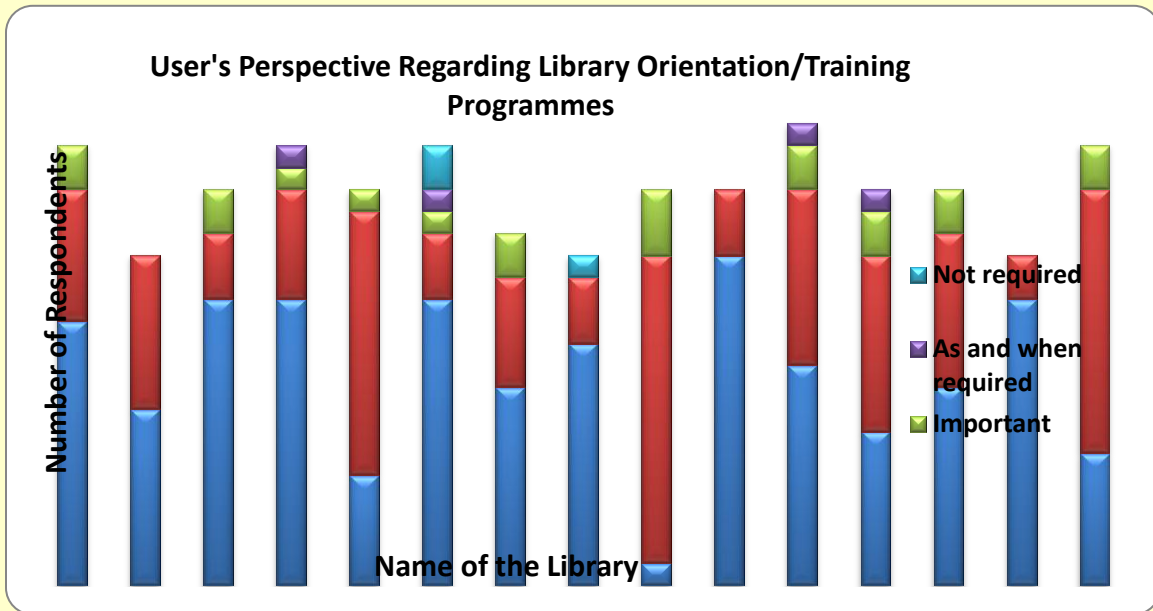
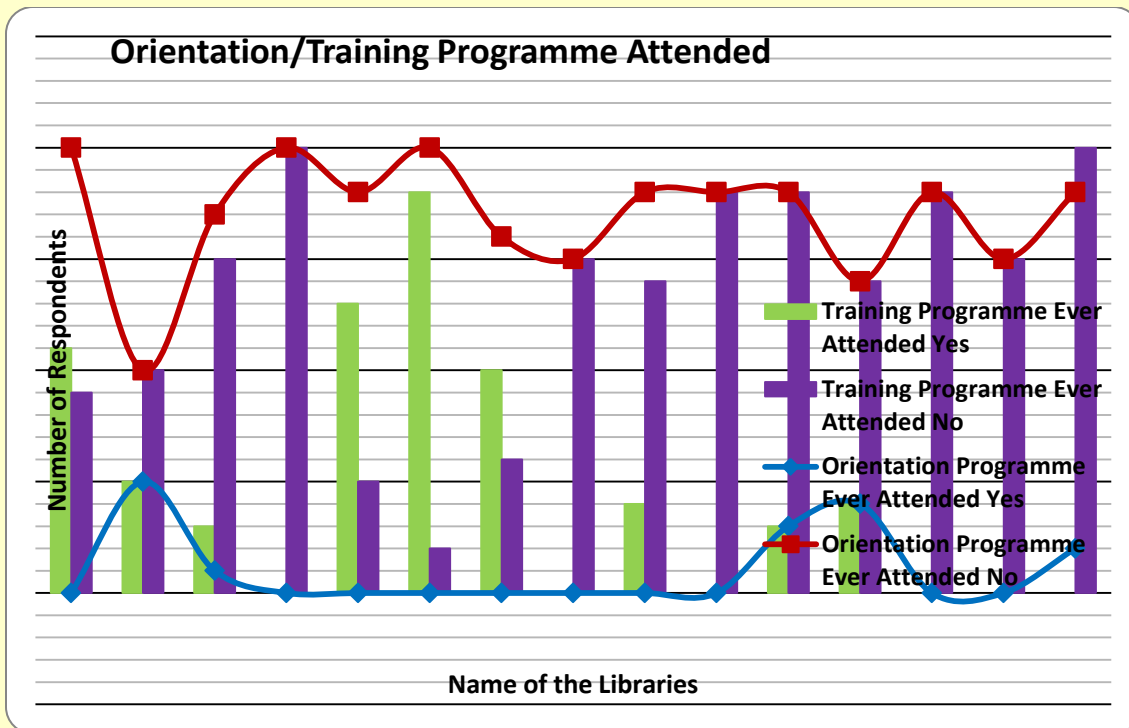


Figure 1: Users’ Opinion Regarding Library Orientation/Training Programmes

4.2 Library Orientation/Training Programme Ever Attended by the Users

The library Orientation/Training should take place periodically for the people with disabilities as and when new resources or assistive technology is introduced in the library. Basically, the regular orientation/training programmes organized specifically for the people with disabilities can lead to the maximum utilization of all the resources of the library by them. But, Figure 2 clearly shows that maximum number of users in all the libraries have not ever attended/undergone any orientation programme at their or any other library/institution. Majority of users in all the libraries responded that they are not aware if any such orientation programme is organized by their libraries. Out of all the libraries, only few users at DDCL (5; 20%), CSL (4; 16%), CRL (3; 12%) and ZHL (2; 8%) respectively responded that they have attended the orientation programme at their institution/library and found it useful.



Note: n=25 (i.e. equal to 100%), Representative population from each Library

Figure 2: Orientation/Training Programme Attended by the Users

The results also shows that majority of the users in AIFD (18; 72%), RNBTBL (13; 52%), ADRC (11; 44%), and DRL (10; 40%) respectively have undergone training on different areas and found it useful in the access of the electronic resources at their institution/library. Not a single user in HKU, AIDDS, LNSSD, DRL, MIPS L and ZHL has undergone any training programme at any institution/library.

4.3 Specialized Areas of Training Programmes attended by the Users

There are various leading institutions/libraries in National Capital Region (NCR) which organize different types of training programmes for the users with disabilities to enable them to better access the information and resources in the new digital age. Therefore following Table 3 identifies the specific training programme/s attended by the users at their or any other institution/library of Delhi NCR.

Table 3: Areas of Training Programmes attended by Users with Disabilities

Training Programme attended by Blind /vision impaired users	Name of the Library				
	ADRC	DDCL	BL	HKU	RNBTBL
Basics of Computer Applications	✓	✓	✓	-	✓
Mobility Training for the Blind/Vision Impaired	✓	-	-	-	-
Internet and Web Training	-	-	-	-	✓
Training Programme attended by Deaf /hearing impaired users	AIFD	DRL	AIDDS	NDS	LNSSD
Basic Computer Training	✓	-	-	-	-
Photography, Printing and Graphic Designing	✓	-	-	-	-
Basic Training in Lip reading and Sign Language	-	✓	-	-	-
DTP, MS Office, Typing	-	-	-	✓	-
Hardware and Networking	-	-	-	✓	-
Training Programme attended by Locomotor impaired users	CRL	CSL	DRL	MIPSL	ZHL
Storage and Access of Online Study Material	✓	-	-	-	-
Access of Internet resources and Services	-	✓	-	-	-

Note: n=25 (i.e. equal to 100%), Representative population from each Library

As indicated in the above Table 3, 'Basics of Computer Applications' is the common area of training undergone by blind/vision impaired users of all the libraries except HKU. The

majority of deaf/hearing impaired users in AIFD (72%) and DRL (40%) have undergone training on different areas like 'Basics of computer applications, Training on Photography, Printing and Graphic Designing and Basic training in Lip reading and Sign Language' which helped them in the increased and effective use of the library resources (i.e. Electronic resources). Only few users from NDS (i.e. 16%) have undergone training on DTP, MS office, typing (6 months) and Hardware and Networking (4 months) and found it useful in the access of the resources at their institution/library.

Lastly, in all the libraries serving the locomotor impaired users, majority of users have not undergone any Training programme at their or any other institution/library. Only few users from CSL (16%) and CRL (12%) have undergone training programme on the 'Access of Internet resources and services' and 'Storage and access of online study material' respectively.

4.4 Training Areas that need to be taken into Consideration by the Library

The feedback of the potential users of the library can help the librarians to design and develop the effective training programmes for the people with disabilities. Also, users with different type of disability have different types of needs and requirements', thus the below Table 4 identifies the specific areas of training suggested by the users with disabilities of leading academic and special institutions that need to be taken into consideration by the libraries to enhance their skills and awareness to handle the latest technology and web applications.

Table 4: Training Areas suggested by the Users of the Library

Training Areas suggested by Blind /vision impaired users	Name of the Library				
	ADRC	DDCL	BL	HKU	RNBTBL
Training on access of Internet resources and services	10(40%)	6(24%)	3(12%)	6(24%)	9(36%)
Training on effective use of the Assistive Devices newly introduced by the Library	1(4%)	2(8%)	4(16%)	6(24%)	4(16%)
Learning more about Search Engines and Library Portals	1(4%)	2(8%)	-	-	2(8%)
Training on extracting information from the complex table layouts	4(16%)	1(4%)	-	1(4%)	-
Training on the access of Web resources dealing specifically the blind/vision impaired people	3(12%)	4(16%)	2(8%)	7(28%)	6(24%)
OPAC searching	4(16%)	1(4%)	-	4(16%)	8(32%)
All of the above	8(32%)	3(12%)	14(56%)	9(36%)	2(8%)
Training Areas suggested by Deaf /hearing impaired users	AIFD	DRL	AIDDS	NDS	LNSSD
Training on Access of Internet Resources and Services	7(28%)	8(32%)	13(52%)	9(36%)	14(56%)
Training on Effective use of the Assistive Devices Newly Introduced by the Library	-	6(24%)	5(20%)	3(12%)	-
Learning more about Search Engines and Library Portals	6(24%)	-	2(8%)	2(8%)	3(12%)
Training on the Access of Web Resources dealing Specifically the Deaf/Hearing Impaired People	15(60%)	7(28%)	11(44%)	17(68%)	15(60%)

OPAC Searching	-	-	-	1(4%)	3(12%)
Training Areas suggested by Locomotor impaired users	CRL	CSL	DRL	MIPSL	ZHL
Training on Access of Internet Resources and Services	7(28%)	5(20%)	10(40%)	7(28%)	5(20%)
Training on Effective use of the Assistive Devices Newly Introduced by the Library	2(8%)	8(32%)	5(20%)	6(24%)	-
Learning more about Search Engines and Library Portals	13(52%)	14(56%)	-	2(8%)	9(36%)
Training on the Access of Web Resources dealing Specifically the Locomotor Impaired People	2(8%)	2(8%)	3(12%)	-	-
OPAC Searching	5(20%)	7(28%)	-	-	6(24%)

Note: n=25, where percent exceeds 100% as users were allowed for multiple responses.

Table 4 identifies that majority of blind/vision impaired users in ADRC (40%), RNBTL (36%) and DDCL (24%) are interested to receive the training on the access of the various Internet resources and services. In BL (56%) and HKU (36%) maximum users responded that libraries should provide them Training on all the latest aspects like OPAC searching, Training on the access of Web resources dealing specifically the Blind/vision impaired people, Training on extracting information from the complex table layouts, Training on effective use of the Assistive Devices newly introduced by the Library and Training on access of Internet resources and services.

The majority of deaf/hearing impaired users in NDS (68%), AIFD (60%) and LNSSD (60%) are interested to receive the 'Training on the access of the Web resources' dealing specifically the deaf/hearing impaired people. In AIDDS (52%) and DRL (32%) maximum users responded that libraries should provide them training on the 'Access of Internet resources and services'.

Lastly, the majority of locomotor impaired users in CSL (56%), CRL (52%) and ZHL (36%) are interested to receive the training on the easy and more 'Accessibility of the Search Engines and Library Portals'. In DRL (40%) and MIPSL (28%) maximum users responded that libraries should provide them 'Training on the Access of Internet resources and services'.

5. Conclusion and Suggestions

The survey findings show that Library orientation/training programmes are found 'Essential' for the people with disabilities. Majority of users in all the libraries are not found aware of any orientation programme organized at their institution/library which depicts lack of 'User Awareness Programmes' in the National Capital Region Libraries. The 'Basics of Computer Applications' is the common area of training undergone by blind/vision impaired users of all the libraries except HKU. Majority of deaf/hearing impaired and locomotor impaired users have not undergone any training programme at their or any other institution/library. The people with disabilities are found aware of the latest technological trends and interested to receive training on the areas like 'OPAC searching, Training on the access of Web resources dealing with specific type of disability and Training on the access and use of the Search Engines and Library Portals'.

Libraries can have a great impact in the lives of people with disabilities if they have access to the relevant information and resources with the help of the appropriate software and hardware available today to assist them. Therefore, the necessary ICT skills need to be developed by the libraries among the users with disabilities by providing regular trainings and orientation programmes including seminars and practical workshops on latest technologies.

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