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Library Facilities and Services for Differently Abled Students in Universities of Karnataka: A Study

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Abstract:

Purpose – In Karnataka, there are considerable number of differently abled persons, who are studying in various educational institutions. It has been observed that some of the educational institutions provided with suitable access facilities in Libraries to the disabled, but majority of them are devoid of this facility. In this article, an attempt has been made to study on the facilities being provided to the disabled users in some of the University Libraries of Karnataka. The facilities being provided are briefed under 3 major categories – (1) Access to resources, (2) Physical access to library building, and (3) Services and communications.

Design/Methodology/Approach – Questionnaire method has been adopted to collect data from identified 21 Universities in India. Responses received from the Libraries have been analysed and presented.

Findings – The findings are presented under above mentioned 3 major categories in the body of the article.

Originality/Value – The present work is original in nature. The study will be useful to the disabled to understand on the facilities available for them in the selected Universities of Karnataka.

Keywords - Disabled Persons, Library Facilities, Karnataka Universities, Objectives, Methodology, Scope, Definition / Meaning of Disability; Access to Resources, Physical Access to Library Building, Services and Communications; Responses Received from Libraries, Consolidated Responses, Data Analysis, Conclusion.

Paper Type – Research paper.

1 Introduction

Libraries are the repositories of knowledge and form an integral part of education system. Libraries have a long history, starting with the chained and closed-access Libraries of earlier times to the

present-day hybrid, digital, and virtual Libraries that use the latest technology for providing information through various services. Accordingly, Librarians have also metamorphosed from storekeepers who were mainly concerned with protection of Books against theft, mutilation, and pilferage, to that of Information Officers, Navigators, Cybrarians, etc., who find themselves in the vast ocean of reading material and are busy in satisfying their clients who want anytime and anywhere information.

With the advent of Computers, the nature of Libraries has changed dramatically. Computers are being used in Libraries to process, store, retrieve and disseminate information. As a result, the traditional concept of Library is being redefined from a place to access Books to one which houses the most advanced media including CD-ROM, Internet, and remote access to a wide range of resources. Libraries have now metamorphosed into digital institutions. Gone are the days when a Library was judged by its quantitative resources. Today, Libraries are surrounded by networked data that is connected to a vast ocean of Internet-based service. Moreover, electronic resources relevant to the professions are developing at an unprecedented pace. Academic Libraries are considered to be the nerve centres of academic institutions, and must support teaching, research, and other academic programmes. The situation in Academic Libraries of India is the same as that of Academic Libraries the world over. However, Libraries of Karnataka must provide maximum information with limited resources and Libraries have started changing to make them Inclusive Libraries where resources can be accessible to both abled and differently abled students.

Libraries store vast amount of knowledge where users can access them in different forms like Books, Journals, Periodicals, Newspapers, Patents, Standards, Conference proceedings, Reports, CD-ROMs, etc. Here, users not only mean ones who are physically and mentally abled, perform their routine activities and pursue their educational interests. But, there are considerable number of users, who are not fully fit physically and/or mentally, for continuing education in academic institutions, and cumbersome for them to access the Library. Hence, Academic Libraries, especially, some of the University Libraries, are extending suitable support to the users with disabilities. For example, a simple magnification using CCTV magnifiers can magnify up to 60 times. Also, while accessing a web page, instead of being able to read, an option to listen to the page could be given (as mentioned in the IGNOU website) where visually disabled users can know the contents of the website. In this article, an attempt has been made to study on the facilities being provided to the disabled users in some of the University Libraries of India.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

- To study how University Libraries plan their buildings accessible to the disabled users.
- To study how University Libraries present their collection to the disabled users.
- To study which type of equipments are being provided to the disabled users to access the required resources (Books, Journals, CD-ROMs, Internet, etc).
- To study what help Library professionals are being provided to the disabled users (language translation, sign language, etc.).
- To study which Libraries have already gone forward to becoming Inclusive Libraries.

1.2 Methodology

Data has been collected from below mentioned 2 methods.

- Documentary sources, such as, Books, Journal articles, Internet, Government publications, etc.
- Data from University Libraries of through Questionnaire method.

1.3 Scope of the Study

- Covers only the users who are differently abled.
- Considered disabilities as defined in the Ministry of Statistics and Programme implementation.
- Includes selected 21 University Libraries in Karnataka.

2 Definition / Meaning of Disability

2.1 Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, under “Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act 1995” as person suffering from not less than 40% of any disability as certified by a medical authority (any hospital or institution,

specified for the purposes of this Act by notification by the appropriate Government). As per the act, Disability means - (i) Blindness; (ii) Low vision; (iii) Leprosy-cured; (iv) Hearing impairment (v) Loco motor disability; (vi) Mental retardation; and (vii) Mental illness. A brief description on the same is given below.

Disability	Meaning
Blindness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complete absence of sight. - Visual acuity not exceeding 6/60 or 20/200 in better eye with corrective lenses. - Limitation of the field of vision subtending an angle of 20 degrees or worse.
Low Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Impairment of visual functioning even after treatment or standard refractive correction. - Capable of using vision for planning or execution of a task with appropriate assistive device.
Leprosy Cured	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cured of Leprosy. - Suffers from loss of sensation in hands or feet or eye and paresis, in the eye and eyelid and no manifest deformity. - Manifest deformity and paresis, but has mobility in hands and feet to engage in normal economic activity. - In case of extreme deformity, as well as advanced age prevention from undertaking gainful occupation, then the expression leprosy cured has to be constructed accordingly.

Hearing Impairment	- Loss of 60 decibels or more in the better ear in the conversational range of frequencies.
Loco Motor Disability	- Substantial restriction of the movement of the limbs due to disability of bones, joint muscles. - Any form of cerebral palsy.
Mental Retardation	- Condition of arrested or incomplete development of mind of a person who is specially characterized by sub-normality of intelligence.
Mental Illness	- Mental disorder other than mental retardation.

2.2 World Health Organization in 1976 draws a three-fold distinction between impairment, disability and handicap, and defines as follows:

- “Impairment” is any loss or abnormality of psychological or anatomical structure or function;
- “Disability” is any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being; and
- “Handicap” is a disadvantage for a given individual, resulting from impairment or a disability that prevents fulfilment of a role that is considered normal (depending on age, sex and social & cultural factors) for that individual.

2.3 United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities defines impairment, disability and handicap, as follows:

- The term "disability" summarizes as people may be disabled by physical, intellectual or sensory impairment, medical conditions or mental illness and that these impairments, permanent or transitory in nature.
- The term "handicap" means loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the life of the

community on an equal level with others. It describes the encounter between the person with a disability and the environment. The purpose of this term is to emphasize focus on the shortcomings in the environment and in many organized activities in society. For example, information, communication and education, which prevent persons with disabilities from participating on equal terms.

- In 1980, the World Health Organization adopted an international classification of impairments, disabilities and handicaps, and makes a clear distinction between "impairment", "disability" and "handicap". It has been extensively used in areas such as rehabilitation, education, statistics, policy, legislation, demography, sociology, economics and anthropology (Wikipedia).

3 Data Collection and Analysis

3.1 Data Collection

Published literature indicates that about 21 University Libraries of Karnataka are providing special services to the disabled community. Hence, a questionnaire was formulated and sent to 21 University Libraries in Karnataka, in order to collect the required data. The 21 Universities considered for the study are indicated below.

<i>S.N.</i>	<i>University</i>
1	Bangalore University, Bengaluru
2	National Law University, Bengaluru
3	Mysore University, Mysore
4	Tumkur University, Tumkur
5	Karnataka University, Dharwad
6	Agriculture University, Dharwad
7	Ranichennamma University, Belagavi
8	Rajiv Gandhi Health Science University, Bengaluru
9	Visvesvaraya Technological University, Belagavi
10	Karnataka State Open University, Mysore.
11	Karnataka Sanskrit University, Bengaluru
12	Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru
13	PES University, Bengaluru
14	Jain University, Bengaluru
15	Christ University, Bengaluru
16	Dayanad Sagar University, Bengaluru
17	Karnataka State Law University, Hubli
18	Bengaluru Central University, Bengaluru
19	Agriculture University, Bengaluru
20	Mangalore University, Mangalore

In spite of repeated reminders both by mail and phone, only 9 University Libraries responded by filling-up of the questionnaire.

3.2 Data Analysis

The data received from the 9 Libraries has been analysed and presented under following 3 headings as mentioned in the questionnaire.

- Access to Resources.
- Physical Access to Library Building.
- Services & Communications.

As the names of the Universities are lengthy for presentation both in tables and text, following abbreviations have been used.

S.N.	University	Abbreviation Used
1	Mysore University	MU
2	Karnataka University	KU
3	Bangalore University	BU
4	Agriculture University	AU
5	Reva University	RU
6	Indian Institute of Science	IISc
7	Agriculture University, Bengaluru	GKVK
8	Visvesvaraya Technological University	VTU
9	National Law University	NLU

3.2.1 Access to Resources

Q.N.	Questions	Universities									Total
		MU	KU	BU	AU	RU	IISc	GKVK	VTU	NLU	
1	Magnification	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	4
2	DAISY collection (Audio with navigation facility)	Y	Y	Y		N	N	N	N	Y	4
3	Digitized catalog	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	9
4	Web-Braille system	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	3
5	Screen Reader and Screen Magnification support	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	3
6	Alternate Format Services	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	3
7	Accessible Website and Digital Library	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	9
	Total:	7	7	4	2	2	2	2	2	7	35

3.2.1.1 Findings

1. Magnification facility is available in only 4 Libraries, i.e., MU, KU, BU and NLU.
2. Daisy Collection facility available in only 4 Libraries, i.e., MU, KU, BU and NLU
3. Digitized Catalogue facility available all 9 Libraries.
4. Web Braille system facility is available in only 3 Libraries, i.e., MU, KU and NLU.

5. Availability of Screen Reader and Screen Magnification Support is seen only in MU, KU and NLU.
6. Alternate Format Services are seen in only in three Universities, namely, MU and KU and NLU. These universities have got books in Braille, books in large print, and digital talking books. In addition to this, UC has got play talk, CD reader and Braille translator too.
7. All nine universities provided Accessible Web Site and Digital Library Services.

3.2.2 Physical Access to Library Building

Q.N.	Questions	Universities									
		MU	KU	BU	AU	RU	IISc	GKVK	VTU	NLU	Total
1	Parking	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	8
2	Entrance with suitable clear opening doors	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	9
3	Ramps	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	8
4	Elevators/Lifts	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	2
5	Adjustable tables/ideal shelves	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	2
6	Reserved section	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	3
7	Accessible self-service circulation stations	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	4
8	Accessible Public areas such as toilets	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	3
9	Wheel chairs	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	6
	Total:	9	7	5	4	2	4	4	2	8	44

3.2.2.1 Findings

1. All nine university libraries provided Parking slots closer to the entrance of the Library and also provided separate unobstructed pedestrian route from main university gate to the Library. MU, BU and KU provided only parking slots closer to the entrance of the library.
2. Nine University libraries provided entrance with suitable clear opening doors step-free route facility.
3. All nine university libraries having slopping ramps in main entrance of the library.
4. Only one Library namely NLU has provided Lift facility and no library having elevators.
5. In terms of Accessible Furniture where the design and height of all the tables used by staff and also accessible for people with mobility impairment, two Universities namely, MY and NLU provided such facility.

6. Four Universities, namely, MU, KU, GKVK and NLU provided self-circulation stations wide and step free.
7. Only three universities namely MU, KU and NLU having separate sections (reserved section) for differently abled students in the Library
8. Only one University namely MU provided special design toilets for people using wheel chairs, and BU and NLU provided wide path way to make Toilet accessible.
9. Only MU and NLU provide step free exit routes like Elevators for wheel chair access

3.2.3 Services and Communications

Q.N.	Questions	Universities									
		MU	KU	BU	AU	RU	IISc	GKVK	VTU	NLU	Total
1	Sensitizing training for the staff	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	3
2	Special service to patrons with disabilities	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	4
3	Providing Information to patrons with disabilities	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	9
Total:		3	3	2	1	1	1	1	1	3	16

3.2.3.1 Findings

1. When it came to Training staff, MU, KU and NLU were the ones that actually had short 'Disability Sensitization Trainings' for all their Library staff.
2. Special Services like the postal services for providing them with required information is present in MU, KU and NLU. BU and AU on the other hand provided guidance to differently abled students.
3. When it came to Guided Tours, last but not the least, all nine universities provided them. In addition to Guided Tours, provides information booklet followed by them and also alternate formats.

3.3 Ranking of University Libraries

A study of responses received from 9 University Libraries for the points mentioned in the questionnaire has been made. Based on the number of responses for the queries, the University Libraries are ranked as mentioned below in a descending order.

S.N.	Universities	Total Number of Responses
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1	Mysore University	19
2	National Law University	18
3	Karnataka University	17
4	Bangalore University	11
5	Agriculture University	7
6	IISc	6
7	GKVK	6
8	Reva University	5
9	VTU	4

3.3.1 Findings

It has been found that Mysore University occupies the top position, Visvesvaraya Technological University at the bottom and rest falls in between.

4 Conclusion

Disability among Library users include - blindness, low vision, leprosy-cured, hearing impaired, loco motor mental retardation, mental illness etc. Differences between impairment, disability and handicap are indicated in detail. Due to above mentioned three factors, they are prone to devoid of Library services to the fullest extent. In order to serve such differently abled students, some of the University Libraries in Karnataka have taken steps to provide suitable exclusive alternatives so that they can visit the Library and avail the services on par with abled users. In some Libraries, it is found that the physical access in the form of parking slots, un-obstructed pedestrian routes, accessibility of circulation desks, accessible furniture, toilet, etc., have been provided. With regard to services and communications, the most provided service was sensitizing training for the staff and information booklet, followed by postal services. In terms of access to resources, alternate format service is the most popular service, followed by accessible Library website and Digital Library.

Finally it can be concluded that physical access for library building was most prevalent services followed by access to resource services, and services and communications facilities. When the aggregate services or total number of responses are considered, Mysore University provides maximum number of facilities followed by National Law University, Karnataka University, Bangalore University, Agriculture University, IISc, GKVK, Reva University, and VTU

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