

LIBRARIES@75:

Journey of Libraries towards
Knowledge Resource Centers

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Contents

Acknowledgements

Preface

**PART-I: ACADEMIC, RESEARCH
AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN INDIA**

- 1 Re-engineering Public Library System in India to transform Libraries into Peoples Universities
Dr. A. T. Francis 3
 - 2 Academic Libraries Pre and Post-Independence: A Review
Manisha Tiwari 23
 - 3 Role of Indian Public Libraries in Rural Development
Mr. Dilip S. Nimbalkar 34
 - 4 The Role and Assessment of School Library in India for Educational Development: Special Reference to Rural India
Dr. Santosh N. Wadhawankar
Prof. Kamble Ujjwala Vishnu 50
- PART-II: USES OF ICT AND WEB
TECHNOLOGIES IN INDIAN LIBRARIES**
- 5 Journey of Technology Transformation in Library and Information Science
K. Veeranjanyulu 69

(vi)		
6	Uses of Ict in Academic Libraries Ms. Gopika Menon Dr. Vandana Ravindra Shelar	Libraries@75 78
	<u>PART-III: DIGITAL AND VIRTUAL LIBRARIES IN INDIA</u>	
7	Academic Libraries' Digitization Initiative: Implications, Current Trends and Future Challenges Dr. Ajit Prajapati Hiral Patel Sanjay Parmar	103
	<u>PART-IV: ELECTRONIC THESIS AND INSTITUTIONAL REPOSITORY IN INDIA</u>	
8	Doctoral Research Output of the Marathwada Universities in Library and Information Science: A Demographic Study Dr. Sunita Mane (Saware)	119
9	Institutional Repository (Ir): Easiest Way to Access to Information Dr. Ashok Kolambikar Mr. Rakesh Sopan Wani	145
	<u>PART-V: INNOVATIVE SERVICES AND PRACTICES IN LIBRARIES</u>	
10	Professional Librarian Skills Based on Library Science Functional Laws and The Roles Transformed in The Last 75 Years to Provide Better Information Services Dr. Madhava Rao, A. A. Poornima	159
11	Use of Social Media Platforms in Promoting The Academic Library Services Dr. Maya Carvalho e Rodrigues	178

		(vii)
	<i>Contents</i>	
12	Amazon Alexa Skill as an Artificial Intelligent Tool for Indian Library Services Dr. Santosh Abaji Kharat	193
13	Library Infrastructure and Services for Persons with Disabilities Mr. Sangram A. Killedar Dr. Dhananjay B. Sutar	206
	<u>PART-VI: ROLE OF UGC AND NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY</u>	
14	Role of UGC for Providing Infrastructural Facilities and Services in Libraries to Students With Disabilities V. P. Yadav Dr. D. B. Sutar	223
15	National Education Policy for Libraries Mrs. Sucheta Chandanshive	235
16	Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET) Centre Major Activities: An Overview Dr. Amol R Chnadankhede	249
17	E-Resource Management And Modern Library Dr. C. S. Vijayakumar	267
	<u>PART-VII: LIS EDUCATION AND RESEARCH</u>	
18	Journey of 112 Years of Library and Information Science Education in India (1911 to 2022): Need for Revamping of LIS Curriculum Dr. Shalini R. Lihitkar Dr. Jayant M. Nandagaoli	279
19	Post-independence Growth of Social Science Literature : A Bibliometric Analysis Trushma A. Gohil Dr. Jignesh C. Makwana	299

(viii)

- 20 Corona Virus Research in India Related To
Human Viruses: An Analysis of Core Journals *Libraries@75* 313
Mr. Mangesh S. Talmale
Dr. Nandkishor Motewar
- 21 Metrics Studies: An Overview 334
Pankaj Kumar
Dr. Deepmala
Dr. Ashok Kumar Upadhyay

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— Editors

14

Role of UGC for Providing Infrastructural Facilities and Services in Libraries to Students With Disabilities

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ABSTRACT

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 stated that all higher education institutions (HEIs) should provide barrier-free, inclusive education facilities to all students with disabilities. University Grants Commission (UGC) has published 'Guidelines for Persons with Disabilities Scheme in Universities' in 9th five-year plan (1997-2002) and continued in 12th five-year plan and 'Guidelines for Scheme of Equal Opportunity Centre for Colleges' in 12th five-year plan (2012-2017) and 'Comprehensive accessibility guidelines and standards for higher education institutions and universities' in detail in February 2022. Those guidelines are helpful to provide accessible infrastructural facilities and services to students with disabilities in libraries. National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) have included questions for evaluation of differently abled (Divyangjan) friendliness infrastructural facilities and services provided by HEIs to students with disabilities.

Keywords : Inclusive education, UGC, NAAC, Higher education, Libraries, Students with disabilities, Infrastructural facilities

1. INTRODUCTION

Students with disabilities are facing lot of problems to complete their basic as well as higher education in regular mode because of lack of infrastructural facilities and assistive technologies in education suitable for them. Adopting for infrastructural facilities and services help students with disabilities to complete their education confidently and eagerly. Five laws of library science are important for library facilities and services for all including students with disabilities (Yadav, Sutar and Lihitkar, 2021).

Union Cabinet of Indian Central Government approved National Education Policy in July 2020. One of the main goals of the NEP 2020 is barrier-free and inclusive education to students with disabilities in all HEIs.

UGC has published 'Guidelines for Persons with Disabilities Scheme in Universities' in 9th five-year plan which included two schemes viz. Teacher Preparation in Special Education (TEPSE) and Higher Education for Persons with Special Needs (HEPSN). Those both schemes were continued up to 12th five-year plan (University Grants Commission, 2012a).

UGC has also published 'Guidelines for Scheme of Equal Opportunity Centre for Colleges' in 12th five-year plan. Equal Opportunity Cell provides guidance and counseling to social disadvantaged group including persons with disabilities (University Grants Commission, 2012b).

UGC has published 'Comprehensive accessibility guidelines and standards for higher education institutions and universities' in detail in February 2022. This guideline includes following guidance:

Libraries@75

225

UGC for Providing Infrastructural Facilities...

Introduction

1.1 Need Assessment and Support Provisions

1.2 Accessible Information, Communication, and Learning resources

1.3 Inclusive Mobility Infrastructure

1.4 Universal Accessibility in Built Infrastructure

1.5 Accessible Curriculum, Teaching and Learning

1.6 Accessible Assessment and Examination Systems

1.7 Accessibility of Resources and Services

1.8 Inclusive Campus Life

1.9 Governance and Monitoring of Accessibility and Inclusive Practices (University Grants Commission, 2022)

2. DEFINITION

2.1. Disability

"A disability is any condition that makes it more difficult for a person to do certain activities or effectively interact with the world around them (socially or materially)" (Wikipedia, 2022).

2.2. Inclusive Education

"A process of systemic reform embodying changes and modifications in content, teaching methods, approaches, structures and strategies in education to overcome barriers with a vision serving to provide all students of the relevant age range with an equitable and participatory learning experience and environment that best corresponds to their requirements and preferences" (United Nation, 2016).

3. UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION (UGC)

The University Grants Commission (UGC) was established in 28th December, 1953. UGC Act, 1956 was passed

by Government of India in November 1956. UGC Act, 1956 helps in coordination, determination and maintenance of standards of university education in India.

UGC has published two schemes in 9th five-year plan for inclusive education to persons with disabilities in universities. UGC has also published in 12th five-year plan guidelines for scheme of Equal Opportunity Centre for colleges.

UGC has published 'Comprehensive accessibility guidelines and standards for higher education institutions and universities' in detailed in February 2022 which includes 10 chapters. Chapter No. 5 'Universal Accessibility in Built Infrastructure' has given guidelines for infrastructural facilities. UGC has suggested to follow 'Harmonised Guidelines & Standards for Universal Accessibility in India, 2021' issued by Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India. Chapter No. 8 'Accessibility of Resources and Services' sub point 8.3 has given guidelines for library facilities and services to persons with disabilities. Chapter 10 'Governance and Monitoring of Accessibility and Inclusive Practices' sub point 10.6 to 10.9 has given information about questions related to disability facilities in HEIs in NAAC accreditation and NIRF ranking.

4. LIBRARY INFRASTRUCTURAL FACILITIES TO STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Following standards of infrastructural facilities are referred from 'Harmonised Guidelines & Standards for Universal Accessibility in India, 2021' (Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, 2022).

4.1. Wheelchair

- Turning Space - Minimum 1500 mm (150 cm)

4.2. Accessible Car Parking

- Marked with International Symbol of Accessibility

Library

• UGC for Providing Infrastructural Facilities ...

• Minimum dimensions / size - Length 5000 mm (500 cm)

• Width 3600 mm (360 cm)

• Loading / Unloading area - 1200 mm (120 cm) wide

4.3. Access Routes / Walkways

- One Way Traffic - Minimum Width - 1200 mm (120 cm)
- Two Way Traffic - Minimum Width - 1800 mm (180 cm)

4.4. Tactile Guiding Surface Indicators

- Tactile Guiding Indicators - Line Type
- Tactile Warning Indicators - Dot Type

4.5. Ramp

- Minimum Width - 1200 mm (120 cm)
- Maximum Gradient - 1:12
- Length - not more than 9 meters (9000 mm & 900 cm)
- Railing - 900 mm (90 cm) and 800 mm (80 cm) high railing on both side of ramp
- Guiding Block - 300 mm (30 cm) away from start and end of ramp
- Use non-slip resistant material

4.6. Handrails

- Circular - 38 mm (3.8 cm) - 50 mm (5 cm) in diameter
- Minimum clear space of 40 mm (4 cm) - 60 mm (6 cm) from the walls
- Height - 750 mm (75 cm) to 900 mm (90 cm)

4.7. Entrance / Exit Doors

- Maximum width of doors - not less than 900 mm (90 cm)
- Clear height of a doorway - not less than 2000 mm (200 cm)
- Thresholds - not exceed 12 mm (1.2 cm)

4.8. Elevator / Lift

- Lift door - not less than 900 mm (90 cm)
- Minimum size - 1900 mm (190 cm) * 1900 mm (190 cm)
- Closing of automatic door - time more than 5 seconds
- Call button height - 800 mm (80 cm) to 1000 mm (100 cm)
- Control panel height - 900 mm (90 cm) to 1200 mm (120 cm)
- Audio and visual indicators

4.9. Unisex Accessible Toilet

- Size - 2200 mm (220 cm) * 2000 mm (200 cm)
- Minimum clear maneuvering space - 1800 mm (180 cm)
- Water Closet (WC) seat height - 450 mm (45 cm) - 480 mm (48 cm) from the floor
- Wash Basin height - 750 mm (75 cm) - 850 mm (85 cm) from the finished floor

4.10. Staircase

- Minimum width - 1500 mm (150 cm)
- Riser - not more than 150 mm (15 cm)
- Tread - not more than 300 mm (30 cm)
- Height - not more than total 11 risers

4.11. Drinking Water Fountain

- Height - Maximum 900 mm (90 cm) to 1200 mm (120 cm) for a wheelchair user

4.12. Telephone

- Height - 800 mm (80 cm) to 1000 mm (100 cm)

4.13. Signage

- Height - 900 mm (90 cm) to 1800 mm (180 cm)
- Viewing Distance & Height of Letters

4.14. Corridors

- 2-3 Meters - 15 mm (1.5 cm)
- 6 Meters - 20 mm (2 cm)
- 8 Meters - 25 mm (2.5 cm)
- 12 Meters - 40 mm (4 cm)
- Use - Colour contrast for signs
- Size - 60 mm (6 cm) * 60 mm (6 cm) for doors
- 100 mm (10 cm) * 100 mm (10 cm) for corridors
- 200 mm (20 cm) * 200 mm (20 cm) to 480 mm (48 cm) * 480 mm (48 cm) for external

4.15. Reception / Information / Library Counter

- Width between 1500 mm (150 cm) to 1800 mm (180 cm)
- Height - 750 mm (75 cm) to 800 mm (80 cm)
- Clear knee space - 450 mm (45 cm)

4.16. Book Shelves

- Height - 450 mm (45 cm) to 1200 mm (120 cm)
- Aisle between shelves - 900 mm (90 cm)

4.17. Fire Hydrant

- Height - 1200 mm (120 cm)

4.18. Evacuation Plan / Safety Measures

- Emergency evaluation routes and guidelines must be display
- Emergency Audio and Visual Alarms
- Evacuation route obstacle free

5. LIBRARY FACILITIES AND SERVICES TO STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

5.1. Students with Physical Disability

- 5.1.1 Wheelchair
- 5.1.2 Adaptive Furniture
- 5.1.3 Adaptive Keyboard
- 5.1.4 Text Books
- 5.1.5 E-Books
- 5.1.6 Accessible OPAC
- 5.1.7 Accessible Self-Service Circulation Stations
- 5.1.8 Book Delivery to Home
- 5.1.9 Information available on Accessible Website

5.2. Students with Visual Disability

- 5.2.1 Braille Printer / Embosser
- 5.2.2 Closed-Circuit Television (CCIV)
- 5.2.3 Tactile Image Enhancer
- 5.2.4 Talking Calculator
- 5.2.5 Refreshable Braille Display
- 5.2.6 Zoom-Text Magnifier / Reader
- 5.2.7 JAWS (Job Access with Speech)
- 5.2.8 Kurzweil 3000
- 5.2.9 Multilingual / Bilingual OCR
- 5.2.10 NVDA (Non-Visual Desktop Access)
- 5.2.11 DAISY (Digital Accessible Information System)
- 5.2.12 Braille Books
- 5.2.13 Audio Books on CD / DVD
- 5.2.14 Talking Books
- 5.2.15 Large Print Books
- 5.2.16 Easy-to-read Books

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5.3. NAAC for Providing Infrastructural Facilities...

- 5.3.1 Tactile Picture Books
 - 5.3.2 Accessible OPAC
 - 5.3.3 Accessible Self-Service Circulation Stations
 - 5.3.4 Book Delivery to Home
 - 5.3.5 Information available on Accessible Website
- ### 5.3. Students with Hearing Disability
- 5.3.1 TDD (Telecommunication Device for the Deaf)
 - 5.3.2 Visual Signal Systems
 - 5.3.3 Assistive Listening System
 - 5.3.4 Closed Captioned Video
 - 5.3.5 Audio Induction Loop
 - 5.3.6 Hearing Aids
 - 5.3.7 Video Captioning Software
 - 5.3.8 Books on Sign Language
 - 5.3.9 Films and Videos including Closed Caption Video
 - 5.3.10 Easy-to-read Text
 - 5.3.11 Picture Books
 - 5.3.12 Accessible OPAC
 - 5.3.13 Accessible Self-Service Circulation Stations
 - 5.3.14 Book Delivery to Home
 - 5.3.15 Information available on Accessible Website

6. NATIONAL ASSESSMENT AND ACCREDITATION COUNCIL (NAAC)

NAAC was established in 1994. It is an autonomous institution of the UGC. Its headquarters in Bengaluru. Assessment and accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) is done by NAAC for quality, inclusive and accessible education to all stakeholders. NAAC has 7 criterions.

Criterion VII is 'Institutional Values and Best Practices'.

Key Indicator 7.1 is 'Institutional Values and Social Responsibilities'. Metric No. 7.1.7 is 'The Institution has a Divyanggan-friendly and barrier-free environment' which includes following 5 sub points.

1. Ramps / lifts for easy access to classrooms and centres.
2. Divyanggan-friendly washrooms
3. Signage including tactile path lights, display boards and signposts
4. Assistive technology and facilities for persons with Divyanggan access website, screen-reading software, mechanized equipment, etc.
5. Provision for enquiry and information: Human assistance, reader, scribe, soft copies of reading materials, screen reading, etc. (National Assessment and Accreditation Council, 2020).

7. NATIONAL INSTITUTIONAL RANKING FRAMEWORK (NIRF)

NIRF is established by Ministry of Education, Government of India in 29th September, 2015 for ranking of HEIs in India. NIRF has five parameters. Parameter No. 4 is 'Outreach and Inclusivity' which include following three questions related to 'Facilities for Physically Challenged Students (PCS)'

1. Do your institution buildings have Lifts/Ramps?
2. Does your institution have provision for walking aids, including wheelchairs and transportation from one building to another for handicapped students?
3. Do your institution buildings have specially designed toilets for handicapped students? (National Institutional Ranking Framework, 2022).

NAAC and NIRF questions help to evaluate accessible infrastructural facilities, assistive technologies (hardware and software) and disability awareness staff training to students

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 UGC for Providing Infrastructural Facilities ...

If HEIs are failed to provide above facilities then that HEIs should follow 'Harmonised & Standards for Universal Accessibility in India, 2021' to improve their same facilities and services. Then only persons with disabilities are able to complete their education on equal basis and without discrimination.

CONCLUSION

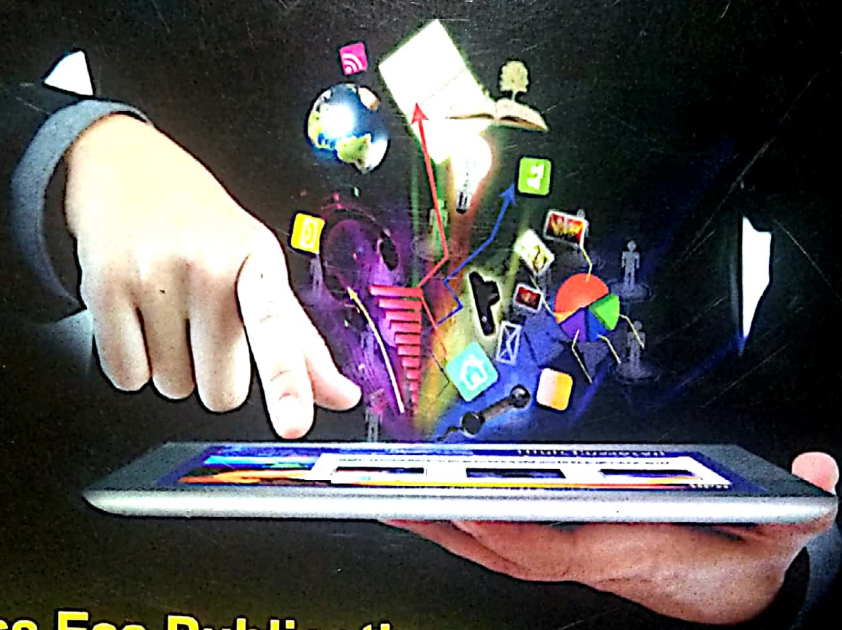
UGC is playing a vital role in HEIs through its guidelines helpful for providing inclusive education, disability friendly infrastructural facilities and services to students with disabilities. Libraries must provide disability friendly infrastructural facilities and services to students with disabilities for equal opportunity of education to all. In this Information and Communication Technology (ICT) era, libraries should think about 'How library shall go to them in virtual and digital environment?'

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