

Essence of Developing Learning Resource Centre in the Context of NAAC

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ABSTRACT

The information society has brought developments in the way information is created, consolidated, and accessed. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has produced larger volumes of information, new ways of packaging information, and new tools for managing information to meet the changing demands of the user community. In view of the complex information needs of the society and for better accreditation from National Accreditation and Assessment Council (NAAC), the library and information centre have to play a greater role in building, developing, and disseminating information products by establishing Virtual Learning Resource Centre (VLRC). Attempts have been made to notify the significance of this learning resource centre (LRC) in catering to the technology based information resources and services to support learning, teaching, and research activities for academics. The study emphasises the role of library managers in developing a strong ICT infrastructure in rendering Internet and E-communication services for optimisation of e-resources and tools and developing anticipatory needs of users like compiling web resource directory of interest etc. The VLRC has to facilitate development of databases, e-learning materials, academic software commons, indigenous e-resources, and library automation, a basic necessity. The paper concludes that for building 21st century libraries, librarians and libraries have to focus not only on their abilities but also to adopt the changes and act as last resort for information access in the VLRC.

Keywords: Learning resource centre, NAAC, ICT services, Internet, VLRC

1. INTRODUCTION

Education today faces two challenges. One being the changing quality perception of what learning is. The other comes from the opportunities that information technology provides. The first challenge is brought by the traditional teacher-centred paradigm as ineffective for student learning, and also educators have proposed that schooling must refocus on learning as well as learner's individual learning needs and needs of instructional practices. The second challenge is the advancement of information technology that provides a new context for teaching and learning. Information and Communication Technology (ICT), combination of computer hardware system, software system, and networking infrastructure, has been a breakthrough for teaching and learning. It provides an interactive multimedia learning and a communicating environment for learning. ICT is a revolutionary innovation across all sectors of society, providing a wide range of services like e-business, e-learning, e-health as well as empowerment through

information. Libraries are the preservers and disseminators of information and hence, the role of libraries is focal in catering to the timely needs of the users in the networked environment.

Library and information services in the academic and research institutes occupy central role in enhancing the quality of learning, teaching and research activities. The National Accreditation and Assessment Council (NAAC) strives for quality and excellence in higher education and advocates for enhancing the role of library and information services in improving academic environment. The assessment of a library, a vital sub-unit, is a key step that integrates itself with the overall evaluation. Library is the fulcrum of support for the entire range of academic activities in an educational campus. In today's high-tech learning environment, the library, as a learning resource, is taking up increasingly more academic space and time in the life of a learner. As a matter of fact and to gain better accreditation from NAAC or All India Council of Technical Education,

it is rather inevitable for the library and information centres in the country to modernise their resources and services by means of developing VLRCs to encompass all the quality indicators enunciated by the accreditation cells, and build better image of librarianship in the competitive world.

2. WHAT IS LRC?

Learning Resource Centre (LRC) is a term which is used in the UK to describe a type of library that exists within an educational setting such as secondary schools, further education colleges and universities. The term library has become more of a traditional terminology owing to technological implications. Availability of various e-resources and user information consciousness, the library needs to transform its activities, services, and outlook for effective information transfer using technology-mediated access, which is now transformed into LRC.

The main objective of LRC is to built libraries to support educational, social, cultural activities of the academicians, and contribute to the information needs to support learning, teaching, and research activities by providing e-resources, indigenous databases, research productivity, learning course instructional materials, academic computing software's in a networked environment using ICT. In other words, LRC aims to support curriculum development in academic and research universities, facilitates changes in teaching practices, encourage new learning styles and methods and stimulates development of professional working environment with organised wealth of information. The mission of the VLRC is to index thousands of best academic information websites, selected by teachers and library professionals

worldwide, in order to provide to students and teachers current valid information for school and university academic projects. The VLRC is both a dedicated index of over 10,000 web pages as well as a meta-search engines that include information gleaned from many of the best research portals and universities and public libraries. It also includes Internet subject guides, recommended by teachers and librarians, that include selected sites in a growing list of subject/information areas including full-text magazines, newspapers, electronic text archives, art history, biography, biology, career information, psychology, history, government information, literature, medical information, social sciences, legal information, american civil war, art, careers, crime, directories, economics, education, English language, electronic texts, foreign languages, geography, genealogy, government information, health/medical, history, legal information, lesson plans, literature, mathematics, music, reference, science, technology, tutorials on the Web, and writing style guides (Fig. 1)¹. With the introduction of VLRC, the teaching-centred programmes would drastically shift to learner-centred paradigms in a networked environment (Table 1).

3. INFORMATION ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES AT VLRC

In this knowledge arena, one can foresee a role reversal in the increasingly learner-centric educational effort wherein the library is becoming the primary learning resource with conventional classroom teaching playing mainly a facilitating role. The services of the libraries have been expanding as they contribute significantly to the learning process, particularly, the e-learning process. The best possible information services, as stipulated by the NAAC, a library in the form of VLRC



Figure 1. Home page of VLRC.

Table 1. Teacher-centered shift to a learner-centered paradigm through VLRC

Learning components	Teacher-centred paradigm	Learner paradigm in VLRC
Information resources		
Information resources	Traditional Resources in print	E-resources – e-books, e-journals, e-databases
Learning materials	Notes and lectures confined to class	Learning materials and course materials developed within and outside, made accessible under network
Academic commons	Subject based software's are individual property	Subject based software's are accessed under LAN for all
Learning theory		
Concept of knowledge	Accumulation of facts	Transformation of facts
Learning Process	Reception of facts; repetitive practice of discrete skills	Exploration of knowledge; integrating and actualising new ideas
Learning period	Fixed period	Life-long
Demonstration of success	Quantity of information received	Quality of understanding
Role of teacher and student		
Teacher's role	Fact teller	Facilitator
Student's role	Listener	Autonomous Learner
Learning environment		
Location	Within university	Anywhere connected
Boundary	Confined and isolated	Networked and globalised

could provide to support the learning, teaching, and research activities are given in the following sections.

3.1 Internet and E-communication

A strong ICT infrastructure with the state-of-the-art technological gadgets comprising computers systems, high-end-servers including CD/NAS server with a structured cabling and leased Internet connectivity is a must to accommodate maximum number of users in the library. For optimisation of e-resources and tools, following mechanism is developed.

- ⊕ Add on favourites of Internet/Netscape/Mozilla browsers under various categories providing link to web sites, which provides websites on their desktop without remembering the site address that is frequently used by them.
- ⊕ UGC Infonet/INDEST e-resources/consortia resources
- ⊕ Search engines
- ⊕ Subject gateways
- ⊕ Results of academic interest
- ⊕ Free journals
- ⊕ Universities/research institutes

- ⊕ Scholarships/fellowships
- ⊕ Important sites of academic interest.
- ⊕ A comprehensive directory of websites of various disciplines have to be compiled and updated as and when found either through browsing the net or learnt from discussion forums. Any DBMS/ library software package like SOUL/LibSys can be used for creating such directories comprising fields like Title, URL, Description and Subject. 'Website of the Day'—a column that should be on the display of the Internet lab.

3.2 Databases and E-learning Materials

The abstracting databases like LISA/INSPEC/ BIOSIS, etc. can be made available on the CD/NAS server by creating mirror images of the CD/DVDs and instructional materials on various subjects accessible under network within library. Further, efforts be made to download a wide range of information technology and personal development-based learning materials as well as over free e-books and videos and the CDs/ DVDs accompanying books, and kept on the server with proper indexing. This will be helpful for the academic and research community in their educational endeavour. The learning material as shown in screen shot of

websites (Fig. 2) has to be downloaded as an active service than passive.

3.3 Academic Software Commons

The important software concerned to each discipline like SPSS, MatLab, ChemWindow, etc., and e-books, CD/DVDs and manuals for academic and research work useful for teaching faculty, research scholars and students have to be made available in the centre to serve as a one-stop point for the entire gamut of knowledge.

3.4 Develop Indigenous E-Databases/E-Resources

As a knowledge manager and mediator of information delivery, efforts have to be made by the library scientists to develop indigenous e-resources like PG syllabus and question papers of Masters Degree, MPhil, NET/JRF syllabus of each subject, application forms of research projects/fellowships/miscellaneous like UGC major and minor project, Department of Science & Technology, ICSSR Funding, INSA (Indian National Science Academy), etc.

All these materials can be given link by creating dynamic library website or OPAC. Besides, the political, cultural, economical, social and developmental information of the region in which university/research university resides have to be developed so that local information of all aspects is available in the library for the benefit of regional society. Also, research productivity of teaching faculty and research scholars in the form of books, journal articles/conference papers, research

projects have to be developed using OSS like GNU Eprints/DSpace.

3.5 Library Automation

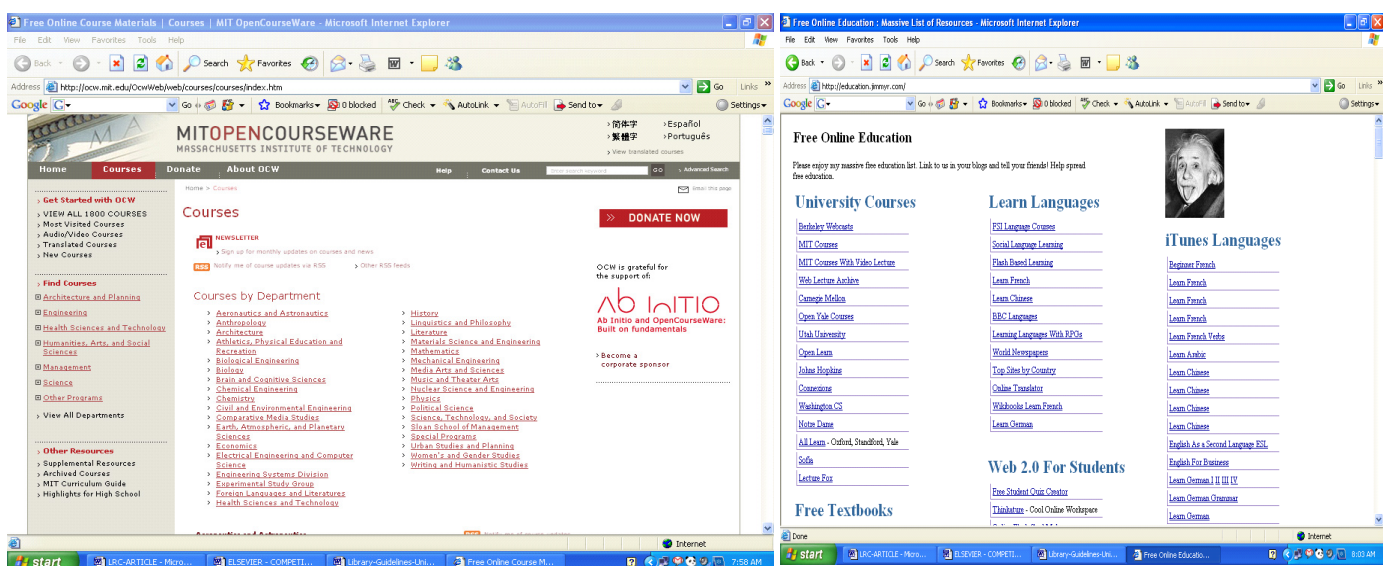
In the changing scenario, the library should not forget the first and foremost duty to automate its library activities using dedicated library software provisions for charging and discharging, and facilitating integrated flow of library activities and services with powerful OPAC facility to the user community.

4. CONCLUSION

Nothing can be accurate, but zeal and urge to serve the users within the limitations of ICT infrastructure, general university environment and support from the management, should be made to improve the usage of information resources in general and e-resources in particular. The world of library and information centres has been witnessing a sea changes due to development of ICT, which has not only changed the way information is generated, organised, stored, and distributed but more importantly have become indispensable tools for teaching, learning, and research. Therefore, for building 21st century libraries, the librarians must focus on their abilities and that of libraries to not just adapt to change, but to prepare for it, facilitate it and shape it especially developing a VLRC to encompass an one-stop information point for academics.

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<http://ocw.mit.edu/OcwWeb/web/courses/courses/index.htm>

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Figure 2. Screen shot of learning material.