

## **Best Practices adopted in Academic Libraries and Information Centers: At a Glance**

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### **Abstract**

This paper is mainly focused on various best practices to be followed by academic library. It discusses importance of introducing best practices in academic library to enable it to improve its process and activities, optimize resource utilization and deliver high quality, efficient services to library users. This paper includes traditional best practices, information technology (IT) based best practices like web page, institutional repositories, e-mail alerting services, extension services and general best practices also. This article will be useful guide to other academic libraries to get a idea about various methods can be adopt in their respective libraries to render their services effective manner.

**Keywords:** Academic Libraries, ICT, Information Literacy, NAAC, Library Services, User Education

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the present day scenario the fast- accelerate educational innovations become necessary for continuous review and improvement of the overall functions of the library and information centres. In the present age of information explosion the libraries and information resource centre play not just an important learning-support

function, but the library itself has been emerging as a site of learning, sometimes more important than even the class -room.

Information and communication technologies (ICT) have made a tremendous impact on the functions of the academic libraries and knowledge resource centre. The developments and changes in the ICT have changed the user's expectations from the academic libraries in different ways. The ways to build a library collection and offer services to the end users vary from the recent to past exercises.

## **DEFINITIONS**

**ODLIS** (Online Dictionary of Library and Information Science) describes best practices as follows: “In the application of theory to real-life situations, procedures that, when properly applied, consistently yield superior results and are therefore used as reference points in evaluating the effectiveness of alternative methods of accomplishing the same task. Best practices are identified by examining empirical evidence of success.”

**Oxford English Dictionary** describes 'Best practices as quality of most excellent or desirable type or most appropriate, advantageous, highly improved, outstanding, par excellence services or the customary or expected procedure or way of doing something that is usual or expected way in a particular organization or situation, guidelines for good practices. In this process of developing best practices we take action rather than good ideas, and we improve our skills.'

According to **National Board of Accreditation and Assessment** (NAAC) “Best practice may be innovative and be a philosophy, policy, strategy, program, process or practice that solve a problem or create new opportunities and positively impact on organizations. Institutional excellence is the aggregate of the best practices followed in different areas of institutional activities.”

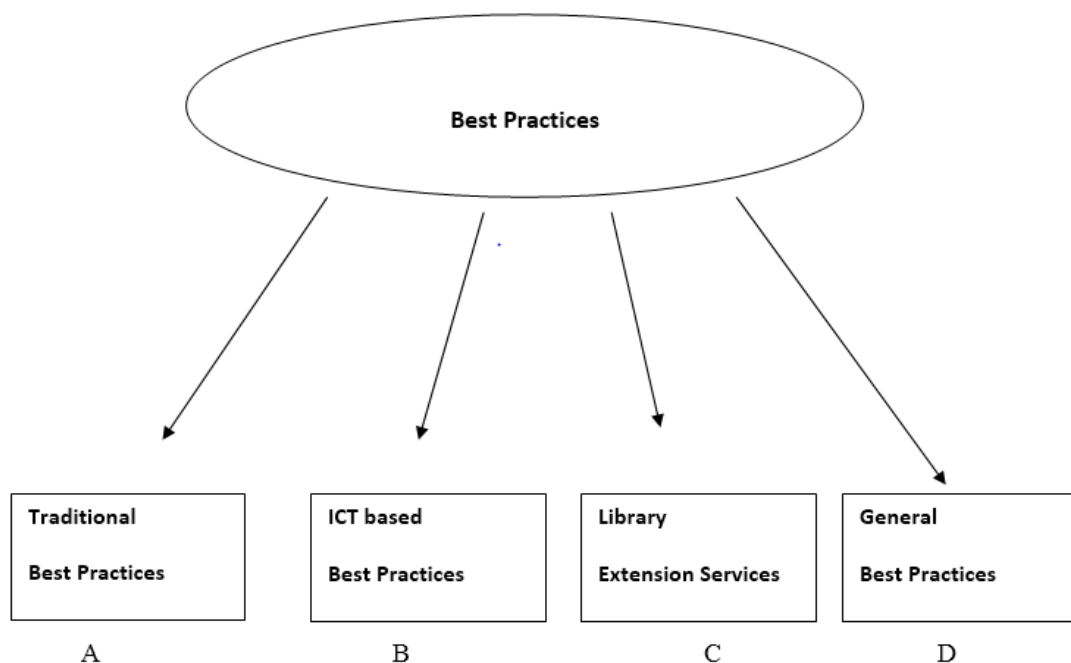
### **NAAC recommended best practices:**

Best practices are available on NAAC website and they assure that regular updating will be made with consultations on contributing institutions. For college and university libraries NAAC has developed the listed below are some of the best practices that can enhance the academic information environment and usability.

- ❖ Computerization of library with standard software.
- ❖ Inclusion of sufficient information about the library in the college/ university prospectus.
- ❖ Compiling student/teacher attendance statistics and locating the same on the notice board.

- ❖ Displaying newspaper clippings on the notice board periodically.
- ❖ Career/Employment Information/ Services.
- ❖ Internet Facilities to different user groups.
- ❖ Information literacy programs.
- ❖ Suggestion box and timely response.
- ❖ Displaying new arrivals and circulating a list of those to academic departments.
- ❖ Conducting book exhibitions on different occasions.
- ❖ Organizing book talks.
- ❖ Instituting Annual Best User award for students.
- ❖ Organizing competitions annually.
- ❖ Conducting user surveys periodically.

In order to be able to provide best services to the users, the library adopts processes and practices that are not only considered to be the best but are comparable with the best in the market. The best practices are mainly classified under the following broad areas are :



**A. Traditional Best Practices. :-**

**i). Book Exhibition :-** Arrange book exhibition on different occasion (i.e. National Library Week, World Copyright Day, Independence Day etc.) display rare books, newly added books or books of particular subject which are available in the library. This will lead to increased awareness among readers about knowledge wealth the library possess they can demand the books accordingly.

**ii). Library Hour: -** Library should start Library hour for students, It made compulsory for all the students by adding it in their daily class schedule. In Library hour students should. Visit the library for spending an hour in the library for reading materials. By keeping an hour in their time table students spend an hour in the library which brings them closer to the reading materials, indirectly it helps to increase reading habits to of students.

**iii). Orientation Programme** Orientation is one of the best practices to create awareness among the students about the library resources, services good reading habits and activities for maximum utilization of the library. The orientation helps & useful to the fresh students at the beginning of each academic year about the importance of the library, exposing the students to its various library services.

**iv). New Arrivals** Putting the list of newly available books on notice board will make the reader aware about the new reading material so that accordingly he could demand for those new books & get it.

**v). Library Brochure:** It is one of the important sources for creating exactitude about the library environment, services & collection of the library students can be provided the information broacher at the time of Admission. The information brochures include information about the library facilities, like Xerox, internet etc, latest publications, latest editions to the library, CD / DVD list, book bank facilities, library rules & regulations, electronic resources & online information services etc.

**vi). Book Reviews :** User should asked to read all the book and give his review on book. At the end Librarian should collect it & displays it on notice board under the name of reviewer.

**vii). Readers Club :** Library should give its facility to outside reader campus. Library also establish a reader club. This club maintain good relation between library & outside users.

**viii). Library short Term course :** The aim of this practice is to create understanding about library, use of ICT equipment in library & to know the mechanics of library. For this library should organize a two to three months duration course for the benefit of user community. In this course, feeding of data entry for books, creating reader profiles, generating barcode printing & scanning the photo of reducing etc training should be given.

**ix). Training to use E-Resources :** Training programmes should be conducted for student, teacher every year for two to three days as per their need. In this programme, how to find out library books by using Library OPAC, use of library consortiums, free online journals (DOAJ), link to various useful websites etc. training should be given so that library resources, services use more effectively & efficiently.

**x). Indexing & Abstracting Services :** An indexing and abstracting service is a service that provides shortening or summarizing of particular documents and assigning of descriptors for referencing documents.

**xi). Staff User Meet :** The libraries may organize activities to staff users, which involving to work & share their ideas with each other relating to the new information services & their requirements. This helps to keep abreast the staff & the users about the latest developments & trends in library principles & practices, thereby bridging the gap between the staff & users for this arrange various activities such as workshops, seminars and guest lectures.

**xii). Best Library user Award :** This practice should encourage students/ staff to make maximum use of library resources & services for every academic year.

**xiii). Carrier Guidance Cell :** User come to library for searching information regarding their carrier or educational development. Today competition is going on top level, students must aware of this situation. In this context Library and Librarian should play a important role to solve their problems. Library should have very rich collection of competitive examination. Library should invites to guest lecturer for guiding to users for bright carrier.

## **B. ICT based Best Practices :-**

**i). Computerized Library with Library Software:** Software consists of the step-by-step instructions that tell the computer what to do. In a University Library, the most common computer software used are library automation software, database management software, antivirus software and application software. Many software packages for various applications in the field of library & information services and management are New Gen Lib, Autolib, SOUL, LIBSYS, KOHA etc. used for automation purposes.

**ii). Library Webpage:** A library website provides a library with a website to offer its services and to tell its story to its community. In most of the library website online catalogue is included. A library web page or Universal Resource Locator (URL) facilitates single window access to various web enabled library services.

**iii). Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC):** It is the computer form of library catalogue to access materials in the library. It is an online database of materials held by a library or group of libraries. It is a computerized library catalogue available to the public. Most OPACs are accessible over the Internet to users all over the world.

**iv). Electronic Document Delivery Services:** At present, a document delivery service typically involves a combination of paper, digital and electronic media; document delivery is a "hybrid" medium. Libraries are implementing ICT based interlibrary lending system using electronic networks to deliver copies of journal articles and other documents in digital format [mainly in Portable Document Format (PDF)] to library users' desktops.

**v). CAS & SDI Services:** A selection of current-awareness services in the form of Table of contents' (TOC) alerts, List of new arrivals of journals and Books, Press Clippings, Research Digest, including Abstracting and Indexing Service have been started by the library. Selective Dissemination of Information refers to tools and resources used to keep a user informed of new resources on specified topics.

**vi). Electronic Mail (E-mail):** This medium can also be used to send and receive mails. This is commonly and widely used with the internet facilities. E-mail is very useful for sending messages to and from remote areas with enhanced network. Further, it is also useful in various aspects of library environment. Thus, it may be stated that e-mail may play a significant role in information dissemination services.

**vii). Electronic Resources:** The e-Resources on magnetic & optical media have a vast impact on the collections of university libraries. The commonly available electronic resources are accessed electronically through traditional medias like CDROMs, or through internet as electronic journal, online database databases, eBook, or in the form of OPACs, blogs, wikis, podcasts, etc.

**viii). Institutional Repository:** An institutional repository is an online archive for collecting, preserving, and disseminating digital copies of the intellectual output of an institution. Library should develop institutional repository of Question paper, Syllabus, Research papers, Notes, carrier guidance etc can be made available for user community.

**ix). Online Full Text Service:** A full-text database is a compilation of documents or other information in the form of a database in which the complete text of each referenced document is available for online viewing, printing, or downloading.

**x). Online Readers Advisory Services:** Libraries are implementing Web based versions of readers' advisory services and reference services. It helps to find the right information/reading material for the right person at the right time and provide the best information that matches their needs, interests, and reading level.

### **C. Library Extension Services :-**

**i). External Membership Facility :-** To provide service to the society, this facility is useful, in which membership facility for general users can be given for some nominal caution deposit.

**ii). Inter Library Loan (ILL):** ILL is a service whereby a user of one library can borrow books or receive photocopies of documents that are owned by another library. The user makes a request with their local library, which, acting as an intermediary, identifies owners of the desired item, places the request, receives the item, makes it available to the user, and arranges for its return.

**iii). Document Delivery Service (DDS):** DDS delivers copies of journal articles and book chapters owned by users to request these items and have them delivered electronically to their desktop. For many campus users this is a free service.

**iv). Learn and Earn Scheme** (Internships i.e New books processing, Stock Verification etc.)

**v). Reprography.**

**vi). Suggestion Box:** Library users can share their ideas/ views regarding the maintenance of the library, services etc. they can drop their valuable suggestions in this box.

**vii). Newspaper clipping services:**

**ix). Career Notification**

**x). Feedback register:** It is very useful register for library activities. It covers library collection, library services etc, the library users can write their opinions in this register.

**xi). Library Help Desk :** - To Guide the users about Library resources.

**xii). Library Security:** - CCTV camera, RFID technology at entry gate, separate property counter.

#### **D General Best Practices :-**

**i).** Regular Library Advisory Committee Meeting.

**ii).** Binding of books & periodical Volumes.

**iii).** Inclusive of Library Information in prospects & College Websites.

**iv).** Intercom facility for easy communication among various departments.

**v).** Pasting of barcode, spine label and stamping in a definite place on the books.

**vi).** Question Paper sets of previous examinations.

- vii).** Library Calendar of Activity & Events.
- viii).** Use of pesticides for keeping away book worm & damage of books.
- ix).** Display of various library chart.
- x).** Keeping the library premises neat & clean.

## **CONCLUSION**

The best practices are help for improving quality of library services. The best practices adopted in academic institutes should bridge the gap between library collection & user community for maximum utilization of the resources. Library adopted various best practices in its administration, management, collection & services, extent of the use of services and use of technology. The technology based services are essential for providing up-to-date information to user community. In its effective implementation that make significant change in enhancing the use of information sources/services and users satisfaction level.

The above best practices by every academic institution library creates its own image in the mind of students, faculty & society. The nature of the students to look library professional is a knowledge manager.

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