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Library And Information Service Provided By Higher Education Institutions In Chennai For The Students With Visual Impairment

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ABSTRACT

This article examined the various library and information services provided by the higher education institutions in Chennai for the students with visual impairment. The data werecollected from the selected higher education institutions which are affiliated to University of Madras.The researcher interviewed randomly selected 50 students with visual impairment from 9 institutions with an average of 5. The result shows that only 14% of the respondents have excellent opinion, whereas 44% have average opinion on services provided by the library and information centre. Recommendations have been made based on the finding from the study.

1. INTRODUCTION

Equal access to information is the major challenge faced by the students with visual impairment.It has been estimated that the human beings absorb as much as 80 per cent of information about their immediate environment by means of sight (Willetts, 1997). Visually impaired people(VIPs), therefore, are at greatest risk of being socially excluded as a result of poor access to information. It is evident that accessibility to information is limited and the students with visual impairment are struggling to find suitable place in the society. The need for general to academic information, scholarship to higher education, and competitive examination to other carrier prospective make them more vigilant in information seeking process to get right information from the right source. The present study assesses the library and information service provided by the higher education institutions in Chennai for the students with visual impairment.

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2. Higher education institutions in Chennai,which facilitate the students with visual impairment.

The libraries and information centres under the study are identified based on the facilities provided to the students with visual impairment. The institution which has accessible library building, braille books, computer centre with assistive technology or any of thesehas included in this study. The present study selected 9 higher education institutions in Chennai. These are 1)Loyola College – RCDA Resource Centre for the Differently Abled, 2) Queen Mary's College – Resource centre for students with differently-abled, 3) Ethiraj College for Women - Braille section, 4) Stella Maris College – Library, 5) Government Arts College for men, Nandanam, Chennai -Resource centre for person with visual impairment (Enabling unit), 6) Presidency College Chennai – "Arunodaya" Resource centre for students with visual impairment., 7) The New College, Chennai, 8) Madras University Library - Talking Books Library, and 9) Madras Christian College, Tambaram.

3. Review of literature

Majinge (2018) examined the extent to which the electronic and print information sources in university libraries are accessible to the people with visual impairment through review of related literature. The study revealed that, many of the university libraries lack the effective information service to the students with visual impairment. **Cassells and Weber (2018)** tried to determine the best practice guidelines for making academic reading material easily and effectively available for the students with visual impairment at the University of Pretoria. Data was collected using semi structured interview from a staff member in the disability unit and 5 students with visual impairment. The findings revealed that the student with visual impairment felt that the local publishers and staff members must have insight into the academic needs of the students. **Uzohue and Yaya (2016)** examined the provision of library and information service to the pupil with visual impairment in Pacelli School for the Blind in Nigeria. The population of the study consists of 135 respondents. The study aimed to know the various information services, resources available in the library and issues faced. Recommendations were made for improving the library and information service in Pacelli School and these could be generalised as the opinion of other students in Nigeria.

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4. Definition of Visual Impairment

The Government of India, the broad definition of categories of disability is given in Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016. The act categorized visual impairment as blindness and low-vision.(a)"blindness" means a condition where a person has any of the following conditions, after best correction—(*i*) total absence of sight; or (*ii*) visual acuity less than 3/60 or less than 10/200 (Snellen) in the better eye with best possible correction; or (*iii*) limitation of the field of vision subtending an angle of less than 10 degree.(*b*) "low-vision" means a condition where a person has any of the following conditions, namely:—(*i*) visual acuity not exceeding 6/18 or less than 20/60 up to 3/60 or up to 10/200 (Snellen) in the better eye with best possible corrections; or (*ii*) limitation of the field of vision subtending an angle of less than40 degree up to 10 degree.

5. Objective

- **i.** Frequency of visit to library and information centre
- **ii.** Time Spent in library and information centre
- **iii.** Information sources formats preference
- **iv.** Usability of information services provided by library and information centre
- **v.** Opinion about library and information centre
- **vi.** Problem faced in information using

6. Methodology

A pilot study was conducted randomlyselected 10students with visual impairment to identify the major higher education institutions in Chennai which facilitate students with visual impairment. Based on the pilot study a structured questionnaire in the form of a schedule was prepared and interviewed randomly selected 50 visually impaired students. Averages of 5 students were selected from each institution. The data analysis is done with various statistical tools. Rating scale is used with percentage.

7. Data Analysis and Interpretation

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Table-1 shows that out of 50 students 58% are male and 42% are female. Age wise category of analysis shows that 34% belong to the age group of below 20, 42% are of 20-25, whereas 20% are belongs to 25-30 age group and only 4% are of 30 and above. Educational qualification of the respondent shows that 80% of the respondents have with graduation (UG), 20 % with Post Graduation and above

Table.1 Demographic Details

Sl. No.	Description	Category	No. of Respondents (N = 50)	Percentage (%)
1	Gender	Male	29	58.0
		Female	21	42.0
		Transgender	NIL	NIL
2	Age	Below 20	17	34.0
		20- 25	21	42.0
		25-30	10	20.0
		30 and above	2	4.0
3	Education	UG	40	80.0
		PG and above	10	20.0

Table 2 Frequency of Visit to Library and Information Centre

Sl.No	Response	Frequency	%	Rank
1	Occasionally	5	10.0	5
2	More than once a month	10	20.0	3
3	Once in a week	16	32.0	1
4	More than once a week	12	24.0	2
5	Daily	7	14.0	4
	Total	**50**	**100**	

Frequencies of visit to the libraries and information centres (Table 2) shows that majority of the users visit the library once a week (32%) followed by the respondents who are

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visit the library more than once a week (24%). 20% the users visiting more than once a month followed by daily visiting users (14%). Only few users (10%) occasionally visit the libraries and information centres.

Table 3 .Time Spent in Library and Information Centre

Sl. No	Time	Frequency	%	Rank
1	Less than 1 hr.	13	26.0	2
2	1-2 hrs.	15	30.0	1
3	2-3 hrs.	12	24.0	3
4	More than 3 hrs.	10	20.0	4
	Total	50	100	

The table 3 shows that majority (30%) of the respondents spent 1-2 hrs. during their visit followed by respondents who spent less than 1 hr. (26%). 24% of them spent 2-3hrs in their visit whereas only (20%) respondents spent more than 3 hrs. in their visits to the centres.

Table 4 Information Sources Formats Preference

Sl. No	Formats	Mean	SD	Rank
1	Ordinary Print	1.48	.814	4
2	Large Print	1.88	1.480	5
3	Braille	2.38	.753	3
4	Audio	4.78	.545	1
5	Accessible E-text	3.24	.744	2

The Table 4 shows that majority of the respondents prefer audio (4.78) format followed by e-text (3.24) whereas Braille (2.38) is the third ranked format followed by large print (1.88). Ordinary print is the least used format (1.48).

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Table 5 .Usability of ServicesProvided by Library and Information Centre

Sl.No	Services	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
1	Lending Service	2.90	.544	8
2	Accessible content sharing	3.56	.837	2
3	Reference service	2.92	.528	7
4	Current awareness	2.86	.670	9
5	Reprography	3.14	.606	5
6	Assistive technology	3.26	.803	4
7	Reading/writing/recording	3.50	.839	3
8	Scribe for exam	4.72	.536	1
9	Job/Exam application	2.94	.793	6
10	Training	2.80	.728	10
11	Recreation	2.24	.591	11

Table 5 shows that scribe for exam (4.72) is the most used service followed by accessible content sharing (3.56), Reading/writing/recording (3.50) is the third ranked service followed by assistive technology (3.26). Reprography (3.14) placed fifth rank followed by job/exam application (2.94), whereas reference service ranked as(2.92) seventh followed by lending service. Current awareness service (2.86) placed only ninth rank followed training (2.80), whereas recreation (2.24) is the least ranked service.

Table 6 Opinion about Library and Information Centre

Sl. No	Opinion	Frequency	%	Rank
1	Excellent	7	14.0	3
2	Above average	16	32.0	2
3	Average	22	44.0	1
4	Below average	4	8.0	4
5	Very poor	1	2.0	5

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The opinion about library and information centre shows (Table 6) that 44% of the respondents have average opinion, whereas 32% as above average. Only 14% of the respondents have excellent opinion, whereas 8% have opinion as below average and 2% very poor.

Table 7 Problem Faced in Information Using

Sl.No	Problem	Mean	S.D	Rank
1	Scarcity of accessible resources	4.38	.725	2
2	Non availability of braille books	3.40	.728	9
3	Time taken	4.04	.781	4
4	Dependency	3.96	.856	6
5	Health issue	3.70	.763	8
6	Financial support	3.84	.792	7
7	Assistive technology skill	4.28	.784	3
8	Accessibility issues	4.56	.541	1
9	Attitude of others	3.98	.589	5

The table 7 shows that majority (4.56) of the respondents are suffering with accessibility issues followed by scarcity of accessible resources(4.38). Lack of assistive technology skill (4.28) is the third ranked problem followed by time taken (4.04) to complete a task. Attitude of others (3.98) ranked fifth, followed by dependency (3.96), whereas financial support (3.84) ranked as seventh followed by health issues (3.70).Non-availability of Braille books(3.40) is the last ranked issue.

8. Major Findings and Recommendation

- Gender wise analysis shows that the number of female students with visual impairment is less than the male, and students with PG and above qualification are less than UG students. Strategic measures should be planned to invite more female to the higher education. Agencies should make sure that VIS should get timely education, and every students get the chance to pursue post-graduation and above.

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- Frequency of library visit can be ensured by facilitating more inclusive resources and service with accessible infrastructure facilities.
- Time spent in library can be improved with efficient and quality library service. Enhanced skills of the students with visual impairment will make the time spent useful. Training can be helpful to improve the skills and time spent.
- Source format used shows that, there is a need for all type of resources. Accessible formats such as tactile, Braille books, large print, accessible digital content including audio, DAISY, Digital Braille, EPUB etc. can be increased by production of born accessible content and conversion of inaccessible materials to accessible format. Production, conversion/transcription and cooperation and networking will improve the collection.
- Services can be improved with latest assistive technology devices and need based service. Library can invite the help from trained volunteers to ensure each and every student with visual impairment receives support for their academic activities.
- Accessible environment with assistive technology facilities will minimize the problem faced by them. Providing assistive technology training will improve the skills and helps to decrease the dependency on others. Health issues and financial support can be ensured with proper monitoring. Making awareness on disability etiquettes will improve the attitude of others.

9. Conclusion

Students with visual impairments always have special needs and the higher education institutions have to be equipped with demanding information needs. The inference from the study shows that the selected institutionhasfacilitating to improve the higher education of the students with visual impairment. The service can further more improved by making the environment physically, socially and intellectually accessible for all and establishment of latest assistive technologies and accessible resources in the said institutions.

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