

B-108 – INFORMATION SOURCES AND SERVICES

UNIT- V: INFORMATION LITERACY PROGRAMMES

TOPIC: USER EDUCATION

**“IF YOU GIVE A MAN A FISH,
HE WILL HAVE ONE MEAL,
IF YOU TEACH HIM HOW TO FISH,
HE WILL BE FED FOR LIFE”**

- CHINESE PROVERB

INTRODUCTION

- Libraries, regardless of their types, have three basic functions viz: *the collection and preservation of information, the organization of information and the dissemination of stored information to users.* The library collections in whatever form either in print, non print, or electronic, are used for studying, teaching, research, and recreational purposes.
- Further, providing number of resources and services will not be the indication of the effective utilization of the library materials, hence users require skills and knowledge to exploit the resources of the library to the fullest. These skills and knowledge are provided by a well-planned and executed user education programme. This programme will impact skills and knowledge required to use the library resources independently and appropriately.

INTRODUCTION

- The term user education has risen from the concept of reference service. The concept of user education was discussed by the American Library Association at its first conference held at the end of the 19th century. According to Norman Highman, there are three aspects of user education: firstly, helping them to use the library; secondly, help them to use the literature; thirdly, using the literature for them.
- The development of user education originated since 1934 when Louis Shores brought the concept of "Library Arts College" with the objective of developing the student learning through the use of library. *Patricia B.K. Knapp and her 1964 Report* also attempted at "exploring methods of developing a more vital relationship between the library and college teaching". Afterwards various institutions and associations in USA, UK and India as well as UNISIST programme and user education organised seminars and workshops to promote user education.

INTRODUCTION

- The term user education, user orientation, Bibliographic instruction, and user assistance are synonymous and have been often used interchangeably. The word user education is a broader term and encompasses orientation, bibliographic instruction, and user awareness.
- Further, user education is derived as, user education is a combination of two words, User meaning who use anything and Education meaning systematic training and instruction. In the context of library the meaning of user education is systematic training and instruction to those who uses library. At layman level, user education means, 'Guidance or instruction to the library user for using library resources.'

DEFINITIONS

- According to ALA Glossary of Library and Information Science, "User education encompasses all types of activities, designed to teach us about library services, facilities and organization of library resources and search strategy".
- Nancy Fijalibrant and Ian Malley defined user education as "User education is concerned with the whole information and communication process and one part of this involves the total interaction of the user with the library. This should be continuous process starting with school and public libraries and with possibility of extension into academic and specialized libraries“
- According to Mews, "Readers instruction" is taken to mean instructions given to readers to help them to make the best use of a library, particularly academic library.

DEFINITIONS

- Parry Committee Report (1967) mentioned UE as "all students should be given primary guidance on the layout of the library, its regulations and procedures. At a later stage, seminars should be held and lectures be delivered on the use of bibliographical tools and on guidance to the literature of students own subject".
- Fleming,(1990) defined user education "as various programs of instruction, education and exploration provided by libraries to users to enable them to make more effective, efficient and independent use of information sources and services to which these libraries provide access.

NEED OF USER EDUCATION

To acquaint the user with learning techniques

- ❖ To enhance the academic level of students
- ❖ To make user handle library resources independently
- ❖ To develop awareness among users for maximum utilization of its resources
- ❖ To increase the knowledge of the user about CD-ROM databases, Online databases etc.
- ❖ To increase in the use of resources so that under utilization of the library resources can be tapped.

NEED OF USER EDUCATION

Cuming (1990), opined that to learn how to use a library and to acquire interested love of reading are important elements of user education. There are a number of educational and library environments which **necessitate** user education programme service for effective utilization of the library resources, services and facilities namely;

- ❖ Quantitative growth of information
- ❖ Growth in the number of inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary courses
- ❖ Artificiality in the library system
- ❖ Revolutionary changes in the physical forms of documents.
- ❖ Limited fiscal resources and
- ❖ The emphasis on self study.

OBJECTIVES

UNESCO (1998), states the user education programme as any effort which will guide and instruct existing and potential users, individually or collectively with objective of facilitating:

- ❖ The recognition of their own information needs:
 - ❖ The formalization of their needs:
 - ❖ The effective and efficient use of information service: as well as
 - ❖ The assessment of these services.
- The analysis of the above definitions brings out the fact that any instruction or programme of information provided by libraries to users enables them to make more efficient and independent use of library resources and services. In a broad sense, the objective in giving user education is to help the user make the best use of the overall library resources. A carefully planned and robust user education programme greatly ensures the realization of this objective.

OBJECTIVES

According to UNISIST proposals, UEP aim should be to reach a situation at each stage in the progress of science & Technology, when most if not all scientists recognize their information needs & clearly can assess the strength and weakness of existing and experimental service.

- ❖ A general orientation to available facilities and resources
- ❖ The teaching of the organization of literature in various disciplines as well as basic reference tools in each discipline
- ❖ To create an awareness and understanding of the basic relevant library and information sources and services
- ❖ To bridge the gap between the potential user and the collections
- ❖ To enhance user's abilities to select appropriate information sources and systems for a given information need
- ❖ To offer instruction in the effective and efficient use of the available library facilities and resources
- ❖ To teach basic skills and strategies required to handle information in print and electronic form.

OBJECTIVES

Imam (2008), listed the specific aims of the UEP to include:

- ❖ To enable the library user to make effective use of the resources available.
- ❖ To create awareness of print and non print materials available in the users discipline.
- ❖ To contribute to the personal and intellectual development of the user after his/her career.
- ❖ To provide the library user with the capacity of researching any problem.
- ❖ To enable the library user to use the varied information sources to solve academic and professional problems.
- ❖ To make the library user independent in accessing the library materials.

UEP: PGI UNESCO

According to General Information programme UE should help the user in:

1. The recognition of their own information need
2. The formulation of these needs
3. Efficient and effective use of information sources and services

It means that UE should be designed to acquaint the users with

1. Resources of the library
2. Variety of documents and their peculiarities
3. Use of tools and techniques of IT
4. Use of retrieval aids and tools
5. Organisational structure of the library
6. Do's and Don't in the library premises

USER EDUCATION PROGRAMME

The library user education programmes consist of the following interrelated components depending on each library's perception and experience:

- User Awareness
- Library Orientation
- Bibliographic Instruction
- Interest Profiling
- Library Skills
- Information Literacy
- Library Use Instruction.

SOURCE: FJÄLLBRANT, NANCY. PLANNING A PROGRAMME OF LIBRARY USER EDUCATION
FIG. DEVELOPMENT OF A COURSE OF EDUCATION

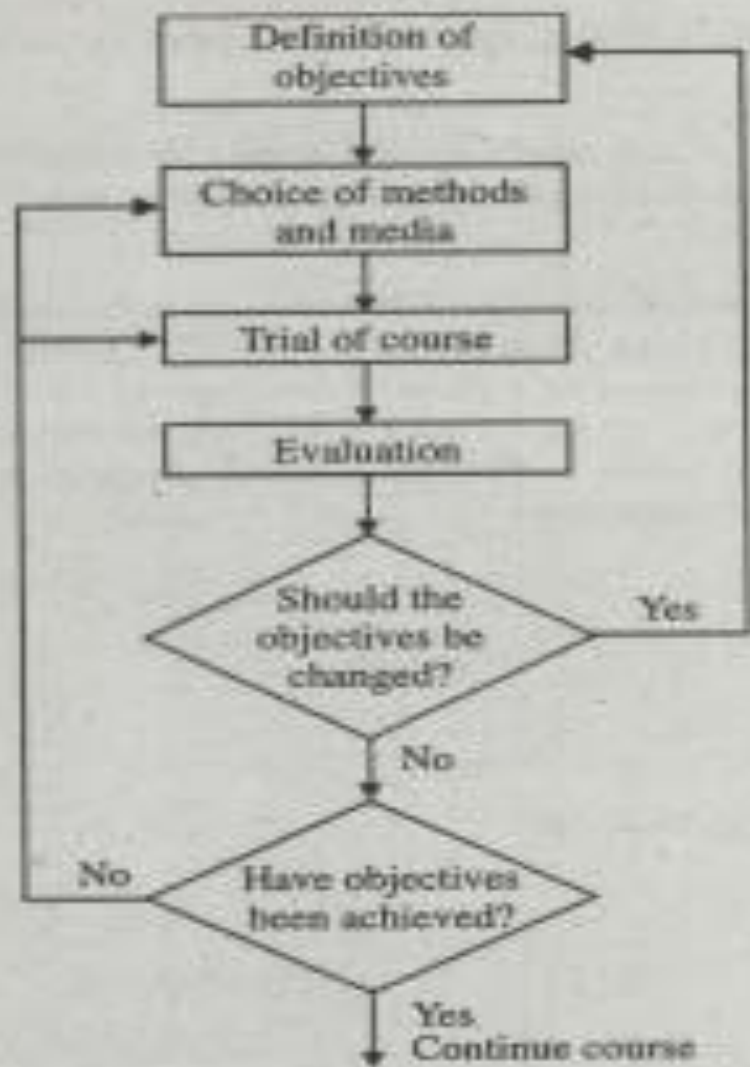


Fig. 1: Development of a course of education
Source: User Education in Libraries by Nancy Fjällbrant and Ian Malley

UEP SHOULD TRY TO DEVELOP

- ❖ **Task definition-** definition of problem/need
- ❖ **Information seeking strategies-** brainstorm sources
- ❖ **Location and Access**
- ❖ **Use of information-extract** relevant information
- ❖ **Synthesis-organize** the relevant information from multiple resources
- ❖ **Evaluation-** judge the process (efficiency) and product (effectiveness)

UEP: LEVEL

- **Orientation-** introducing the new user to the layout and structure of library building and resources and services of library
- **Subject orientation-** guides to use of particular subjects resources, periodical use, use of reference sources
- **Literature Search-** use and preparation of A&I sources, searching the information in different sources

UEP: DIRECT METHODS

The direct methods are:

- ❖ Library instruction programme organized as part of the institution's general studies programme.
- ❖ An informal meeting at educational or cultural function.
- ❖ Library orientation, a series of lectures on library activities and conducted
- ❖ library tour.
- ❖ Library user educations bibliographic instruction organized as examinable courses to be taken by all fresh students.
- ❖ Reader librarian dialogue while rendering reference service.

UEP: INDIRECT METHODS

- ❖ Library Brochure
- ❖ Library Tours
- ❖ Lecture
- ❖ Library guides
- ❖ Circulation of documents list
- ❖ Display
- ❖ Directional signs
- ❖ Library handbook
- ❖ Audio-Video Lecture
- ❖ Printed Guides
- ❖ Demonstration
- ❖ Individual Instruction
- ❖ Small Group Instruction
- ❖ Special Promotional Activities
- ❖ Role Play/Simulation activities
- ❖ Scheduled Workshop/seminars

PRESENT DAY

But due to impact of IT on library resources and services, libraries have adopted new methods to introduce the users to electronic information resources and services, the new trend in user education methods are;

- ❖ Computer-Assisted-Instruction (CAI)
- ❖ Online Instruction
- ❖ Online tutorial
- ❖ Virtual tour of Library
- ❖ Web based user education program
- ❖ Programmed Instructions

UEP: METHODS

As no single method of user education is panacea for all categories of users, many methods are available for this purpose. Nancy Fjallbrant and Ian Malley have identified the following three groups of methods:

1. *Group Instruction*: For providing instructions to users in groups they included :

- ❖ Lecture method
- ❖ Seminar/Tutorial/Demonstration method
- ❖ Guided tour

2. *Individual Instruction*: Teaching methods generally used for individual instruction are:

- ❖ Practical exercise
- ❖ Self-instructional material (tours, signs, etc.)
- ❖ Individual help

UEP: METHODS

3. ***Group and Individual Instruction:*** For providing instructions both to groups and individual, the following methods are included:

- ❖ Films
- ❖ Video tape
- ❖ Tape/slide
- ❖ Audio tape
- ❖ Printed media (books, printed guides, etc.)

It may, however, be mentioned that the choice of teaching methods depends upon learning/teaching situation, the users, and the subject material available for the purpose.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF UEP

- Properly designed and meticulously executed user education programmes are intended to ensure the effective utilization of the library resources, services and facilities by the users. Through the user education programme, the user is able to get any information he/she desires as well as developing the skills to use the resources, services and facilities of the library independently. The integration of ICT in almost all the activities of many libraries, it is important to explain the workings of a library to a new user in detail. User education is very necessary to promote a full exploitation of the library's resources, services, facilities including the human resources

BENEFITS

- ❖ It enables the library to raise the capacities of users to make use of literature and information resources or to improve the information consciousness of the library user.
- ❖ It exposes the user to the organizational structure of the library, thus enhancing effective use of the library.
- ❖ Better understanding of the library rule, and regulations governing the conduct of activities in the library
- ❖ Users become familiarized with techniques and method of use of the library and retrieval of information.
- ❖ The user education programme will inculcate in the users the life-long habit of self-discovery and learning through effective library use.
- ❖ It helps to save the librarians and the users' time. It is the library's responsibility to ensure that the use of its resources, services, and facilities are maximized to benefit of users, hence, the necessity for robust user education programmes.

CHALLENGES

- ❖ Absence of well developed curricula that will help the teaching of user education programme
- ❖ Lack of funds for library user education programme implementation
- ❖ Over dependence on one is a two hours tour of the library by new users during the week of their general orientation
- ❖ The use of unqualified personnel to teach the user education programme
- ❖ Faculty resistance to collaborate with librarians in teaching user education programme
- ❖ Inadequate library staff to cope with the amount of work involved
- ❖ Lack of time for teaching and practical work.
- ❖ Inadequate information resources for learning.

CONCLUSION

- New library members coming first time in the library have difficulties and certain confusion, as a result, they cannot use the library resources, services and facilities exhaustively and expeditiously. Library user education programme encompasses all types of activities designed to teach new users about library services, facilities, organization, resources, and search strategies in order to equip them with the basic skills and knowledge to enable them to make effective, optimal, efficient and independent use of information resources and services available in the library. Okon (2008) stated that if users cannot retrieve and utilize the available materials and services due to lack of possessing library skills, the huge investment on cost of materials, staff, building and energy would become wasted.

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