A STUDY OF INFORMATION STORAGE AND ACCESS IN DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT FOR THE PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN NCR LIBRARIES

ABSTRACT

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The present study aims at analyzing the role of the institutions/libraries in information storage and access in the digital environment for the people with disabilities in NCR region. The access and use of the electronic resources along with the library and information services and ICT facilities by the people with disabilities in the NCR libraries is studied. The various accommodations for the users, Assistive Technology facilities and the Web services provided by the libraries are also examined in the study. The provision of training and orientation programmes for the users as well as staff has been analyzed along with the study of the status of the R&D activities in the various institutions for the people with disabilities. The Descriptive survey was done with the help of questionnaires and personal interviews with the experts, teachers and disabled individuals.

The findings from the data analysis of the libraries reveal that people with disabilities are ‘Dependent’ on the electronic resources to fulfill their information needs and requirements in all the libraries. There are sufficient information services and facilities available in the libraries for the people with disabilities. All the libraries serving the blind/vision impaired users have the Internet facility for the users while majority of libraries serving the deaf community and some libraries serving the locomotor impaired users do not have the Internet facility. The libraries have the specialized staff for serving the users with disabilities and there is a provision of training programmes for the library professionals in majority of the libraries. The ‘Policy Document’ that describes the services for people with disabilities is available in all the libraries. All the libraries serving the locomotor impaired users whereas only few libraries serving the blind/vision impaired and deaf/hearing impaired users are involved in R&D activities in the area of disability. The majority of library professionals in all the libraries rated their ‘Digital Infrastructure and Assistive Technology’ facilities in ‘Good’ status but the users’ responses in all the libraries are not satisfactory in this context. The majority of libraries do not follow any ‘Standards/Guidelines for the people with disabilities’ during the development of their website.

The findings from the ‘User Analysis’ reveal that people with disabilities prefer electronic resources over print resources for the academic/research purpose. Among all the electronic resources, Internet is an important resource of information for the users
with disabilities. The ‘user orientation and training programmes’ is the area of major concern for the libraries as majority of users have not ever attended any orientation/training programme at their or any other institution/library. The users with disabilities are found ‘satisfied’ with the information services and facilities but they are not ‘satisfied’ with the assistive software/hardware facilities available for them at their institution/library. The people with disabilities are actively involved in the various ICT services and applications but they face various problems during the ‘Web accessibility’. The status of the services in NCR libraries for the deaf/hearing impaired people is not good as compared to the people with blind/vision impairment and people with locomotor disability. The information needs and demands of the people with or without disabilities are same therefore libraries need to adopt modern and sufficient aids/equipments for the development of the library and information services for the users in the digital environment.