Chapter 6: Best Practices for Defence Training and Education Institute Libraries

6.1 Introduction:

The survey revealed that DTE libraries are performing well using traditional practices and to support the organizational objectives, learning and teaching. The trends in teaching and learning are shifting in this area and have an impact of ICT and e-learning processes are also developing fast. The future of academic libraries including DTE libraries need to look into this angle to support the e-learning process. If libraries have to support the organizational and user needs properly, then ICT applications need to be implemented and not be restricted only at automation level. The future of DTE libraries are also dependent on educational system which is facing massive changes and have to change in the years to come. Librarians need to plan for the future at this moment and list some best practices to be followed in libraries to meet the user’s requirements and chart out plans to re-engineer libraries. Though libraries are experiencing continuous changes in their functions and services due to the impact of internet and the changing technologies, and library staff has to acquire the knowledge of new systems and also have to adapt the technologies to handle the broad spectrum of information flow. Libraries have to shoulder new challenges and have to meet the ever increasing demands of the users. The library staff has to become an information mediator using advanced technologies.

Libraries in the academic sector are playing a key role in managing information resources for the users of academies and researchers. Library professionals are assisting academic library users in enhancing the quality of education and research by providing different services using modern tools and techniques. In the academic sector, libraries are now treated as resource centers, learning center, knowledge resource center etc. this is due to dissemination of information to users using modern technology and collection. Resource sharing is prominently applied by the libraries to develop proper and economic collection development. Tikam (http://knol.google.com/k/madhuri-tikam/best-practices-in-academic-libraries/35muq6i9t1aro/3#) rightly opines that libraries in academic sectors are changing their face to manage modern techniques and many factors are responsible for this change. The main factor responsible for the change is social and economic,
which has an effect on higher education in general and libraries in particular. Apart from this, the following factors also play an important role for the change.

- Changes in literate habits
- Changes in students (Users)
- Changing curriculum
- Changes in technological infrastructure
- Impact of globalization on students demands
- Limited financial resources and on the other hand information explosion

In such conditions change is inevitable and libraries have to accept the change to keep in pace with the shifting practices in the profession which are beneficial to information society. In such a condition, those libraries which can satisfy the users’ requirements and accept the challenges of modernizing libraries and develop best practices to manage libraries in available resources can only survive.

6.2 What is Best Practice?

Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Best_practice) defines the term best practice as a method or technique that has consistently shown results superior to those achieved with other means, and that is used as a benchmark. Best practice is considered to describe the process of developing and following a standard way of doing things that multiple organizations can use. Best practices are used to maintain quality.

A commitment using the best practices in any field is a commitment to using all the knowledge and technology at one's disposal to ensure success. The term is used frequently in the fields of health care, government administration, education system, project management, hardware and software product development, and elsewhere. It is also used in LIS to improve the quality of services. A best practice may be innovative and be a philosophy, policy, strategy, program, process or practice that solves a problem or create new opportunities and positive impact on the whole organization (NAAC, 2006). Best practice means finding - and using - the best ways of working to achieve the objectives. It involves keeping up to date with the ways
that successful businesses operate - in sector. The term "Best Practice" has been used to describe "what works" in a particular situation or environment better.

“Best practices pertain to the process, practices, and systems identified in public and private organizations that perform exceptionally well and are widely recognized as improving an organizations performance and efficiency in a specific area. Successfully identifying and applying best practices can reduce business expenses and improve organizational efficiency”.

(www.gao.gov.special.pubs/bprag/bprgloss.htm)

From the above definition it is very clear that best practices means use of method or techniques which gives better and quality results. It is innovative and problem solving process of an organization.

6.3 Best practices in Libraries: Scholarly Opinions

Many scholars from the libraries and information centers have explained the need for best practices to be followed to manage the libraries in the present era of information and ICT.

Amudha (2006 has suggested some of the best practices related to human resource development issues related to the library and suggested a set of best practices as follows:

• Adapt to the work culture, team working & work environment creation.

• Bridge, divides and gaps with open mindedness

• Build and guide powerful teams to collaborate and guide change in their organization.

• Positive attitude at work places

• Develop complete action plans

• Effective communication.

• Give real recognition, motivation and /or award.

• Involvement with the organizational activities.
• Seek ideas and get inputs from all.

Kulkarni (2009) had mentioned two ways of best practices. One is the selection of best practices and the other is an application of best practices. The activities of college library especially at the beginning are all time bound and these are to be carried out without the supporting staff. Therefore initially it is essential to jot down the activities carried out by the library and schedule a time frame for each activity with its probable time required along with when to perform and complete the activity and classify the activities as a regular calendar schedule or a bar chart. Few best practices listed are:-

• Provide value added services and internet based resource generation and services

• Upgrade the knowledge of alert websites which will help to users.

• Create a bibliographic compilation using relevant websites

Vyas (2009) in his article, “Best practices in Academic Libraries in India: A Study” listed the best practices to be followed for academic libraries, and also listed by NAAC, which were grouped into:-

- Management and administration of library
- Collection and services
- Extent of user services
- Use of technology

For college libraries, NAAC has highlighted the following set of best practices which are really helped for the profession.

- Computerization of library with standard software.
- Providing sufficient information about the library in prospectus
- Compiling student / teacher statistics (use statistics)
- Displaying newspaper clippings
- Career employment information services
- Internet facility to different user groups
- Information literacy programs
- Suggestion Box
- Displaying New Arrivals
- Conduct book exhibition on different occasions
- Organizing book talks
- Instituting annual best use award for students
- Organizing competitions annually
- Conduct user surveys periodically

In addition to these Vyas (2009) has suggested few best practices based on technology like developing and updating library web site, maintaining useful statistics, preparation of handouts etc. Accessing different best practices given by the experts the researcher analyzed and prepared set of best practices based on NAAC and current practices implemented in LIS. The different aspects covered in best practices are:

1. Management and Administration of Library: Management of libraries is an essential and vital factor to be considered. For better management of libraries there is a need for:

   - Formation of Academic Library Committee consisting of members from each unit
   - Maintenance of stack
   - Well trained staff and proper deployment of work
   - Generate awareness about library among users
   - Suggestion box for understanding requirements of users
• Motivate users by introducing book review, book talk, book seminars, author talks etc.

• Compile different library statistics for preparing policies, norms and track the progress

2. **Collection Development and maintenance:** Collection of the library is its heart and its use depends on user’s requirement. Collection development might look simple but it is a tedious task. There is a need to set parameters like:-

• Prepare a written statement in terms of Collection Development Policy along with maintenance, retention and weeding out

• Conduct frequent user surveys to assess the needs

3. **User Services:** Library Services are more important as they communicate the availability of information and library resources to users and fulfill the information requirements needed by users.

• Provide CAS and SDI from the collection as well as readymade or tailor made services to users

• Newspaper clippings on specialized topics

• User education program, information literacy program

• Topical Information Alert services to users, TOC services to be initiated

• Assess the prominent users of libraries and assess their requirements periodically

4. **Use of Technology:** ICT changed the faces of libraries in every sector. Use of ICT is very common and information society is now fully aware of use of ICT its use.

• Use extensive ICT tools to minimize manual tasks

• Use proper library management software for automation purposes
• Develop databases of specialized information resources available in the library

• Initiate digital library development to get benefits at a longer run

• Use of Internet is must for all including library professionals and users, as it is an information treasure

• Create a separate qualitative library website and update the data regularly. (helps in knowing the library and its services to users)

• Use of web 2.0 tools for information collection and dissemination

• Develop Institutional Repository to compile and preserve the intellectual assets of organization

• Make better use of e-publications

• Provide online and offline services

The best practices suits to the vision and mission of organization and libraries. Dahibhate et al (2011) elaborate the vision of the future libraries based on the review of different personalities. They emphasize the following aspects:

- E-learning system in practice and accordingly needs of user shift from print to e-prints

- Use of multiple media extensively

- Visual infrastructure use like video display on wall, room theaters, learning cafeterias, and theme centered constructions etc may be more popular.

- Use of e-books, multimedia books, knowledge based packages, exhibits more used

- Virtual conferencing leads the profession, webinars, and remote participation in debates.

- Extensive media storage, virtual reality,
- Academic librarians perform activities like “Cybrarians in InfoSapce”, use of V-mails and diagnostic tools to customize the resources for user centric needs.

- Development of problem solving groups of library professionals

- Digital harvesting of information and knowledge, extensive content building, advanced internet usage might play big role

The user’s expectations are also analyzed to develop the future of the libraries. The needs of future users from the libraries especially academic are as under:

- 24/7 services in digital form and deliverable at any suitable place

- Virtual, digital, mobile and real time archives of information

- Library 2.0 and use of e-books using e-readers like Kindle, I-Pods

- Active learning facilities supporting current education system

- Wikis, IR’s, mega information storage or knowledge base

- Use of I-PODS, Blackberry, MP3 players etc in the library premised to easy downloads and synchronization

- User centric and customized services from libraries

- Wireless communication and support to access information using portals, search engines, information gateways, uploading at IR and open access resources as well use of RSS and web 2.0 tools for scholarly communication

- Information availability from distance or distributed learning centers

- Saving of cost and availability of information using partnership moves similar to consortium

From the study of all these, it is revealed that changes are to be accepted and redesigning of libraries are necessary. For this purpose best practices may be framed for providing better facilities to users.
Jotwani (2008) in his article discussed best practices for developing a modern Library and Information Center based on the practice followed in IIT Libraries. According to him best practices are the best ways to perform a process or a function, or an activity that leads to a superior performance. He is of the opinion that to develop modern library, successfully identifying and applying best practices can reduce costs and improve quality of libraries. Best Practices are the means by which leading organizations in any field have achieved top performance, and they serve as goals for the other organizations striving for excellence.

“Best Practice is a management idea which asserts that there is a technique, method, process, activity, incentive or reward that is more effective at delivering a particular outcome than any other technique, method, process, etc. The idea is that with proper processes, checks, and testing, a desired outcome can be delivered with fewer problems and unforeseen complications. Best practices can also be defined as the most efficient and effective way of accomplishing a task, based on repeatable procedures that have proved themselves over time for large number of people.” (Access at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Best_practices. Access on 22 Apr 2012)

6.4 Applications of Best Practices:


1. Identification of best practices
2. Implementation of best practices
3. Institutionalization of best practices
4. Internalization of best practices
5. Dissemination of best practices

The identification of best practices depends on institutional mission and goals, nature of users, global context and local relevance, competencies of staff, infrastructure, and requirements. The implementation of best practices strategy includes planning, resource mobilization, capacity building, monitoring and evaluation. The implementation approach focuses more on performance than on promises. Institutionalization of best practices is the process of making the best practices an
integral part of the institutions functioning. It has been observed that many best practices are institution-specific and individually managed (where individual is the leader or head of the institution). This approach runs at the risk when the individual is changed in such cases, practices are formalized as an essential requirement, it continue to be pursued and implemented without any hindrance. Further many best practices require extra effort and to sustain that effort it has to become an integral part of the functioning of the institution. Institutionalization is an effort to make it more institution centric than leader or individual centric and also to make the best practices as a normal practice.

Internalization of best practices means making excellence an integral part of one’s habit and nature. Such internalization may also be looked upon as making permanent the principle and essence of the best practices as part of the characteristic performance of an institution. The aggregate of such internalized best practices principally goes to make what we loosely call the ‘ethos’ or ‘tradition’ or ‘culture’ of an institution. Internalization is an attitude formation conducive to sustaining quality.

It is not enough for the institutions to adopt best practices, it is equally important for them to disseminate these practices for wider application in the system. Many institutions do not attempt certain practices due to lack of information about the feasibility and adaptability of the best practices. It is a fact that the best practices are borrowed practices and one must learn and benefit from each other’s experience. Even within an institution, at times there are communication gaps which affect the expected outcome of the practice. It also makes building on experience and reviewing the practice difficult. Effective use of recording and reviewing is essential to develop conviction in the system for a particular practice. Institutions may have to evolve suitable strategies like database of good practices, review forums, recording evidences for success etc. to discuss within and among institutions.

6.5 Efforts made to develop best practices:

Jotwani (2008) in his article covers the efforts made at international and national levels to develop best practices for libraries and specifically indicated several attempts have been made at the international level to develop broad-based, generic guidelines / best practices which can be suitably reoriented and implemented.
International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) have developed best practices and guidelines for various types of libraries as well as for specific services (http://www.ifla.org). The Australian Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs has brought out the “Best Practice Handbook for Australian University Libraries” (Wilson 2000). The American Library Association (http://www.ala.org) and its various organs like ACRL have also brought out best practices for various types of libraries and their services. The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), which advocates the use of best practices benchmarking approach in higher education in India, also strives for quality and excellence in library and information services (LIS) in improving academic environment. The NAAC has identified a set of best practices with the help of a few case presentations from selected libraries of the accredited universities and colleges. It sponsored a “National Seminar on Best Practices in Library and Information Services”, which was held at the University of Bangalore, Bangalore from 9-12 August 2006 (Bangalore University 2006). NAAC has also developed “Guidelines on Quality Indicators in Library and Information Service” for universities / autonomous, college, and affiliated / constituent colleges (NAAC 2005 p 11,12). These are welcome steps in encouraging the LICs in identifying, sharing and adopting best practices in India.

6.6 Best Practices for Modern Library:

Library and Information Centers (LIC) in institutions of higher learning play a central role in facilitating dissemination and creation of new knowledge. In today’s high-tech learning environment, the LIC as a learning resource is taking up increasingly more academic space and time in the life of a learner. Thus, it is timely to identify a set of best practices that can lead LICs to improve their processes and activities, optimize resource utilization, and deliver high quality, value added services to their users. In ICT era LICs become partners in the achievements of the institutions’ mission and goals. Its collections, systems and services reflect the organizations’ objectives. The best LIC can be said to have following characteristics for any library (Jotwani 2008).

1. Reflects the values, mission and the goals of the institution
2. Accommodates new information and learning technologies and the way information is accessed and used

3. Act as an extension to classroom; it embodies new categories including collaborative and interactive learning

4. Offers user-focused, service-rich environment supporting contemporary social and educational patterns of learning, teaching, and research

5. Enables acquiring lifelong information gathering skills so that they can acquire, access, evaluate, and use the information whenever they need even after completion of their formal education.

6. Facilitates technology-enhanced distance and continuing learning

7. Collaborates with users in service creation, evaluation and updating

8. Rapidly changes - flexible enough to adapt to the changing scenario in terms of size of the collection, user requirements, technology application, organizational structures, and periodic upgradation

9. Makes library space (both virtual and physical) more interactive, collaborative and driven by community needs

10. Chief Knowledge and Learning Resource where one can truly experience and benefit from the centrality of an institution’s intellectual community.

6.7 Best Practices for Defence Training and Education Libraries:

DTE institutes occupy an important place in national defence management and are well supported by education and training programs for new entrants. These are a specialized group of DET institutes and are well supported by Library and Information Centers. The mission of these institutes is the education and training in the area of defence for the national safety.

The survey of these libraries revealed that the development of these libraries is not in tune with the present trends. The system needs to be reengineered keeping in mind the use of ICT in libraries and networking of these libraries for better resource
sharing. In order to be able to provide better facilities and services to the users, the DTE libraries need to adopt processes and practices that are the best and comparable with the best in the era of technology. DTET libraries have to re-engineer their practices in the light of technology used in the field.

To re-engineer DTE libraries efforts are needed towards:

- Proper resource development and management
- Resource sharing plans to achieve economic and useful electronic resources
- Participate in consortium plans
- Subscription to e-publications and resources and network them
- More users centric library services
- Automation of libraries and use of internet for resource gathering
- More use of ICT
- User awareness and information literacy programs.

6.7.1 **Collection Development:**

Collection is the heart of any library and DTE institutes also have collections in different forms. Proper collection development is the main task of the librarian which fulfill the user needs and institutional goals. For this purpose a collection development policy in written form is required. The main objective of the collection development is to make available all kinds of required reading material, i.e. books, reference books, text books, reports, theses, serials, journals, electronic and multimedia resources etc to support learning, teaching and research pursuits of the students, faculty and staff within shortest possible time and at a reasonable price.

**Best practice:**

A collection development policy consisting selection, de-selection, maintenance, retention and weeding is to be drafted. Similarly an expert library committee is to be established for decision management. A proper collection in library as per the policy and objectives of institution and user need based is required. Selection of resources through suggestions from users, procurement of standard resources useful to group of DTE libraries is the need with economical purchase.
6.7.2 Finance:

The libraries procurement depends upon availability of finance i.e. budget. For DTE libraries Defence Ministry is the parent organization providing the finance to all DTE libraries. The budget that is fit for procurement in traditional ways is not working due to increase in prices, increasing needs of users and information growth. Though libraries initiate resource sharing projects to achieve economy but more efforts are required in practicing.

Best Practice:

DTT libraries have to develop plans to coordinate a procurement system. Every organization apart from the core collection has to go for resource sharing among the group of libraries. DTE libraries need to initiate consortium activities and share the resources. More collation in the form of electronic media is preferred which is economical as well as sharable also.

6.7.3 Collection Management:

Library collection is organized in different parts as per the utility and demand for the resources from users. The collection is properly processed (Classified, catalogued and indexed), and organized into groups in all DTE libraries but the majority of the collection in the DTE libraries is print based and generally organized in to following groups:

1. General and text books
2. Reference books
3. Current journals
4. Bound volumes of journals
5. Reports, pamphlets and theses
6. Multimedia products, CDs, DVDs, Videocassettes etc
7. Offline and online databases
Best Practices:

The collection is properly organized based on traditional practices but new technologies are to be used for retro conversion of rare documents, databases of rare and valuable collection, OPAC etc. More e-resources are to be procured to minimize the collection management.

6.7.4 Library Automation:

DTE libraries are not up to the mark in automating their libraries even though slowly this practice is being initiated. However 50% of the libraries like NDA, AFMC are fully automated using library management software’s. But no uniform software is used for automation purpose in these libraries.

Best Practice:

To automate DTE libraries uniform standard library management software is to be used in all the DTE libraries. Since automation is the first step towards modernization of libraries, all DTE libraries must be fully automated. After automation collection in digital form is to be developed for economy of space. Internet based information services are to be managed in libraries. OPAC and web OPAC helps users in coordinating all DTE library resources and its availability in libraries.

6.7.5 User Services:

From the survey of DTE libraries it is found that DTE libraries are providing following services to their users.

- Reference service
- Reprographic services
- Reading room services
- List of addition
- Library catalogue
- Inter library loan
- News paper clipping service
- Home lending

**Best Practice:**

There is a need to use ICT and provide advanced services to the users of all DTE libraries like:

- Current awareness
- User centric services
- Alert services
- Topical bibliographies
- SDI services
- Web OPAC
- Databases searching (Offline / Online)
- Institutional Archive
- Table of Contents
- Institutional specialized databases
- Consortium
- Internet based services
- Virtual reference desk services
- EDDS
- Library portal or home page linked to various resources (Gateway)
- Web tool based services like face book, blogs, RSS, List serves, chats
6.7.6 User Education Programs:

The use of ICT has made changes in the practices of all libraries and this requires user education or awareness programs for the user to familiarize himself with the new technology or new media.

Best Practices:

To educate the users of the DTE libraries following awareness programs need to be conducted through libraries. Libraries are also procuring e-publications and subscribing to databases. This needs orientation for the proper usage of the resources.

- User Orientation Program
- Library tours
- FAQ’s
- Ask librarian

6.7 Library Modernization:

DTE Libraries are still following traditional methods and ICT has been used only in a very few prominent libraries like NDA, AFMC etc. Therefore for managing advanced library practices, modernization of libraries are essential.

Best Practices:

Libraries are changing face due to applications of ICT. To modernize libraries use of ICT is an essential task. ICT helps in modernizing libraries and plays vital role in

- Automating libraries,
- Digital Library initiatives,
- Virtual libraries,
- Retro-conversion of libraries,
- 24/7 libraries,
- User centric services from libraries,
- Database development,
- Internet based services to users,
- Networking and resource sharing among libraries,
- Use of RFID and Bar codes etc.
- Safety measures to protect collection

6.7.8 Library Manpower:

Library manpower is an essential factor in managing libraries and have to have traditional skills as well as technology skills to face the challenges in the profession.

Best practice:

(Shah 2008) had suggested some practices to be adopted by the library professionals to fulfill the challenges, such as:

- Service as a motto and desire to serve users before self.
- Practice new technology and have training to manage them properly.
- LIS professionals have to develop learning attitude and net worked related competencies to reap the benefits of ICT in the profession.
- Library rules should be flexible and users oriented while providing the library services in any type of environment, do not be rigid on the rules.
- Accept and implement changing role of librarians. Accept challenges. Redefine librarian’s role when ever needed.
- Provide value added services, develop communication skill, and try to market services.
- Create awareness about library services and inform users how library can help them.
- Arrange training programs to change the mind set and change attitudes towards library staff.
• Improve the visibility of libraries search and retrieval methods.

• Try to provide quality library and information services.

• Provide sufficient facilities to the users

• Have a long term plan and vision for development of library

6.8 Summary:

To cope with the timely challenges, every library has to identify and develop its own best practices to enhance the collection development process, services dissemination and use of the library as a whole. Appropriate planning, for thinking, a detailed analysis of user base, objectives of the affiliating institution and its future strategies should be taken into account while planning any best practice. In fact it requires active participation, willingness, creativity and problem solving attitude from the library stakeholders. Developing best practices, analyzing and revising them at a regular interval lead to continuous improvement in overall performance of the library and the whole institution.

References:


