Library personnel always claim that users are not regular visitors in the library and user also claims the same that the library collections are not satisfying the users. Actually, it is due to communication gap between information sources and the users. It is found that the user education programme is the proper media, which can reduce the gap between resources and users in the library. Thus the necessity for user education programme in academic libraries is paramount depth and the area is multidimensional. Some of the dimensions of user education are narrated below-

3.1. Need of User Education

"Give a man a fish, he will have a meal; teach him how to fish, he will eat all his life".

This old Chinese proverb highlights the need of user education for all branches of human knowledge. A demand of user education programme in our country has been emphasized during the last two decades. NISCAIR and IASLIC have sponsored seminars and conferences at local, state and national to focus attention on the user education/user studies.
Change methodology of teaching and learning in higher education in recent years have necessitated the use of literature by students for the completion of their projects, assignments, dissertations, term papers and reports. Due to literature explosion readers and researchers are unable to themselves abreast of the current literature. Now-a-days in libraries, emphasis is on micro documents. Through user education programmes, readers are informed as to how they can keep themselves abreast of the nascent thought. (Sood and Sharma: 1991:99)

The reason why user education is required given below-

1. **The library building**: sometimes, due to the shape, size and some other aspect of its structure, people may be afraid to enter the library. If they do gather the courage to enter, they may be quite lost, not knowing where to find what.

2. **Staff**: library staff can either make the library or break. Unforthcoming staff will ensure that a potential user never returns.

3. **Library tools**: the tools or methods are very tough and difficult to understand easily by the users.

4. **In experience**: people may not have had prior experience in library use, not having undergone even basic training or instructional programmes such as
"know-your-library", etc. That is why users are easily frustrated when the time comes for them to use the library. (Laloo: 2002: 136)

User education is important because all the activities of the library, i.e. preparation of catalogue, bibliographies, indexes, abstracts, CAS, SDI, etc would be rendered useless if the very people do not know how to use these activities which are meant for them. (Laloo: 2002: 134).

It is widely accepted fact that academic libraries are used relatively low by very small group of readers. This is due to the lack of knowledge about the useful resources available in the library.

The Parry committee based on survey of undergraduate use of university libraries in the United Kingdom, conducted in 1967 has mentioned that many students were not using academic library properly. (Kumar: 2004: 149). The report says that-

I) 22% of the students did not know whether or not there was an author catalogue

II) 28% of them did not know whether or not there was a subject catalogue

III) Only 37% of students claimed to know what the abstracting journal is.
User education is an important and essential part of education which communicates the gap between formal education and the education beyond. Patricia B Knapp, while discussing 'User education as preparation for life' says that, "Learning how to use library goes far beyond the traditional programme of being introduced to library resources, services and facilities. It involves in developing the students rational power and encompasses learning how to master to think, how to communicate thoughts and master skills of life long learning." (Kumar: 2004:150)

According to Tidmarsh (1980), 'Library skills are not acquired naturally as a byproduct of students main course of study, but that some kind of systematic instructions is necessary, if he is to realize the potential of a large academic library and given some skills in using its resources'. (Kumar: 2004:150)

3.2 Level of User Education

The user education needs of various user groups in an academic library are as follows:

3.2.1 College Level

Students joining undergraduate courses have no experience of using any large library either close access or open access. It is there fore, necessary to give them adequate introduction of the library, its use and importance in their studies. Libraries should try to inculcate reading habits at this initial crucial stage so that they will become regular and effective users of the future. Librarians help students/faculty in the learning process by
guiding and instructing them in the effective use of library resources and providing information/documents required supplementing classroom teaching through reference and information sources. A reference librarian who finds answer to reference/research questions from documents makes teaching more effective. (Kumar: 1979:2)

3.2.2 University Level

Post graduates are somewhat aware of the general techniques of the library use. In spite of this, they still need training in using large academic library. The research scholars also need special training in literature searching and special services useful for research work rendered by the library. Teachers need user education with the same intensity as the students need. But they should be instructed library use in a different way by which they may not feel as if they are being taught. They should be instructed library use in the most cordial and friendly manner. A casual or friendly discussion should be organized to explain the searching skills so that they may be helpful for them in getting the required literature from the library without loss of time. Once a curiosity is created among teachers and researchers, they will not hesitate in asking anything from library staff. Rather they will be obliged to visit the library more often and devote their time in library.

3.3. Planning of User Education

The aim of planning of the user education should be to develop the skills in the users so that they are able to-
- Know the whereabouts of the library.

- Understand the functions of the library.

- Know how to use the catalogue/OPAC.

- Know how to use equipment.

- Know what services the library offers.

- Be able to use relevant reference tool.

- Be able to retrieve information from abstracts and indexes.

User education is an ongoing process and will never be completed. Our services will change, new equipment will be introduced and the client will change. In these circumstances it is important to have a strategy so that improvements are not introduced piecemeal. It will be helpful if one person has the responsibility for coordinating activities but all staff should be involved so that they all feel responsible for satisfying the needs of users. (Sehgal: 1986:5)

As already mentioned that user education is a continuous programme, it should be offered at different level from the school to university, because the creation of reading habit of a student is started from the school time. Once reading habit is developed in school level then it will continue lifetime. The user education programme should be comprised of two or three stages depending upon the level of users. It should begin with library orientation, the
second stage is subject oriented instruction and finally, it should end with literature search training. Of course, in case of research scholars, obviously it should be ended with creating 'interest profile' which is the last component of user education programme.

3.3.1 Planning at College and University Level

There are four different potential groups availing the facilities of a college or university libraries such as undergraduate, post graduate, research scholars, faculty and supporting staff. Of course, in Assam the higher secondary section is also attached with the degree colleges. This section of the students has no idea about the library. They do not feel the necessity to avail library services because of the ignorance about the library services available. For planning a user education programme in these institutions we have to consider some important activities-

a) Assess the needs of users.

b) Define goals and objectives of the programme.

c) Course contents of the programme/what to be taught.

d) Choosing appropriate methods and medium of instructions.

e) Time /duration when the readers are to be taught.
f) Who should teach them?

g) Evaluating.

A flow-chart of user education programme for college and university libraries has been given below-

User Education Programme Flow-Chart

Start
↓
Identify user group and assess their needs
↓
Identify goals
↓
Identify objectives
↓
Choose resources
↓
Formulating course contents
↓
Choosing appropriate methods and media
↓
Implementation
↓
Evaluation
↓
Yes — Revision need — No
↓
→
Think again
↓
End
Before introducing the user education programme, we should look into some infrastructure facilities for this programme. These are-


b) Library aids such as guides, pathfinders, bay guides and self guides, etc.

c) Physical facilities and competent library staff.

d) Well managed library resources and services.

Besides, the duration of user education programme is also one of the important factors which we have to think carefully. It should not be long otherwise the students start losing interest. The students get enough time to interact with library staff. It is seen that the university libraries have not paid much attention to the user education for Teachers and Research scholars. U Bhatnagar (1967) has mentioned “A few learned scholars were interviewed and were found not to be very conversant with the method of collecting for themselves information about the needed material on a specific topic through consultation of bibliographies, indexes, union catalogues and the like. Besides, the students and research scholars, even many teachers do not seem to possess good knowledge of the utility of indexing and abstracting periodicals which the library is subscribing. Such periodicals often lie buried in the shelves of the library stack room”. (Kesarwani and Bhatt: 1991:121)
3.4. Tools for user education programme

For providing user education programme, a variety of tools are used. Following are some important tools for providing user education programme which can be easily affordable by college and university libraries-

a) Pamphlets/Handbook- A small size book or pamphlets that refers to material produced by an individual library and describing that library’s rules, collections, etc., to commercially published works that describe the use of books and libraries.

b) Guides- Guides are the most important in a library because, it can provides a general introduction of the library to user. Guides may include following information-

i) Introduction to a particular library.

ii) Literature guide dealing with a particular subject.

iii) Guide to use of bibliographic resources, and

iv) Guide to library related skills and knowledge.

c) Library Pathfinders- It is an alternative to the traditional printed guides. It is a kind of map to the resources of the library; it is an information locator for the library user whose research for recorded materials on a subject of interest is
just beginning. A library can also prepare pathfinders on its own to meet the requirements of the users.

3.5 Methods and Media

The choice of teaching method and media should depend upon learning / teaching situation, the students and teachers, subject material available in the library. A combination of teaching methods and media will be the best suited approach for the user education programme. Keeping in mind, the infrastructure of the college and university libraries of Assam, lectures, guided tour, seminars and demonstrations and individual help are regarded as useful methods and media.

3.5.1 Lecture

Though it is a traditional method but it will be most popular in the context of Assam due to lack of infrastructure. A class room lecture should be planned or allotted at the beginning of each academic year. Of course some college and university libraries using their reading room for this purpose. In that case it would be desirable that a teacher should bring them to the library because only then student would be willing to take advantage of the programme. Sometimes, some teachers and research scholars of university would not need this programme because they might have been members before hand. In case of university we should keep in view that many of the freshmen would already have used another library. Their level of attainment and subject background are other important considerations.
3.5.2 Guided tour

A library tour means a conducted tour involving a staff as a guide leading a new member or a group of members around the building. The basic aim of a tour is to introduce the new members with locations of different sections and services available.

3.5.3 Seminars and demonstrations

These can be one to one or small groups, often focusing on specific needs of the user. They can be very effective but are obviously very expensive in staff time. Therefore the only solution of this problem is to involve students' assistants to provide instructions to juniors, according to respective areas of specialization.

3.5.4 Web pages and computer assisted instruction

In a computerized (online/offline) information system the user gets oriented as they sit at the terminal and starts making use of it. In a man machine dialogue the computer will ensure the query raised by the user and thus user orientation is instantaneous and in built in to the machine.
3.6 Components of User education

There are four interrelated components of user education as given below-

a) User awareness

b) Library orientation

c) Bibliographic instruction

d) Interest profiling

When the users are aware of the library as primary source of information, then they should be oriented to library facilities i.e. user awareness is the initial stage, preceding library orientation. Library orientation and bibliographic instruction form basic components of user education. Library orientation precedes bibliographic instruction. Bibliographic instruction means introduction to the user of the information resources available in particular subject disciplines and the techniques of making use of those resources.

The three components of user education, namely, library orientation, bibliographic instruction and user awareness are not able to take adequate care of the needs of research workers. Therefore interest profiling is an important component of user education for solving the aforesaid problems.