METHODOLOGY

Chapter 3

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The present study was an investigation of research role of university libraries in Kerala. The study focused on the potentialities of research-oriented services, resources and facilities of the university libraries and the level of satisfaction of research scholars on these elements. Hence, the study has two major components. The first being the assessment of university libraries and the second being the analysis of the response of research scholars.

The methodology adopted for the study is described under the following subheadings; Sample used for the study; Sources of data: Research instruments: Data collection procedure and Statistical methods used.

3.1 Sample Used for the Study

There are seven universities in Kerala established by the Acts of legislative assembly. Out of these seven universities, one -Kerala Agricultural university- is a technical university not falling within the sphere of general universities. Its field of study and sources of finance are different and hence comparison with other university libraries will be difficult and unbalanced. The other two Sri Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit and Kannur University are recently established universities where full-fledged university libraries are not yet functioning. Hence, it was decided to concentrate on the remaining four universities to produce a case study of university libraries in Kerala. It was
hoped that from the data collected it would be possible to generalize the conditions of university libraries in Kerala.

Therefore, this study was based on the data collected from the four university libraries in Kerala chosen for their range of size and mission for the provision of high quality information over a substantial period. These are libraries of the following universities:

i) University of Kerala (UK)

ii) University of Calicut (UC)

iii) Cochin University of Science and Technology (CUSAT)

iv) Mahatma Gandhi University (MGU)

The information regarding sources, services and facilities of the four university libraries under study were obtained through a structured interview with university librarians. Questionnaires were administered to the research scholars in the four universities to obtain their response on library system.

The following subjects were involved in the research.

i) Four university librarians

ii) 200 research scholars

Therefore, the total sample size was 204 subjects.

For user survey, the investigator selected only the full time research scholars, as they are more likely to use the library and therefore supply more useful information for the study than part time research scholars do. At the time of the study, 1497 students were enrolled as full time research scholars in the four universities in Kerala. A random sample of 50 research scholars was
selected from each university constituting a total population of 200. Since there was diversity of subjects, and the perception of scholars may vary according to their subject background it was decided to divide the sample broadly into two strata as science and social science. Moreover, effort was made to ensure that there was equal number of scholars from both fields. The break up of the sample is as follows:

- Number of groups = 2 (Science and Social Science)
- Samples in each group = 25
- Samples from each university = 50 (25 \times 2)
- Number of universities = 4
- Total sample = 200 (50 \times 4).

3.2 Sources of Data

Both primary and secondary data were collected for the present study. Primary data were collected thorough questionnaire administered to research scholars in the four universities and structured interview with the four university librarians. Besides this, for personal observation, the investigator visited the university libraries and discussions were made with library professionals in charge of different sections.

The secondary data were collected from library brochures, handbooks, annual reports of universities, university Websites, university diaries, periodicals, published and unpublished research reports.
3.3 Research Instruments

Two research instruments were used in this study.

1) Interview schedule

2) Questionnaire

An interview schedule is a written list of questions, open-ended or closed-ended, prepared for use by an interviewer in a person-to-person interaction (Kumar 126). The Interview schedule used in this study can be found in Appendix-I.

A questionnaire is written list of questions, the answers to which are recorded by respondents (Kumar 126). Questionnaires are extremely flexible and can be used to gather information on almost any topic from large or small numbers of people (Moore 15). The questionnaire used in this study can be found in Appendix-II.

The interview schedule was used to obtain the views of university librarians. It was divided mainly into twelve parts.


Part 1 of the schedule, General information, was aimed at obtaining the name of the library, year of establishment and working hours.
Part 2 of the schedule, Collection Development and Preservation, was designed to acquire data on collection development policies, selection procedure, use of technology for document selection, preservation activities and policies regarding weeding process.

Part 3, Library Resources, was aimed at gathering total number of books in the library and details of electronic resources available through subscription and consortia.

Part 4, Library Funding, was planned to obtain data regarding sources of funds, changes in library funding over the past five years and details of marketing strategies adopted by the libraries.

Part 5, Human Resources, was designed to acquire the number of professional staff, staff structure, vacant positions, librarians’ views on staff shortage in relation to overall library development, information regarding career development programmes and events conducted by the libraries.

Part 6, Library Automation, was intended to attain status of library automation, particulars of library software, availability of online cataloguing searching, and initiatives of digital library projects Institutional repositories were also inquired.

Part 7, ICT Infrastructure, was proposed to get available communication infrastructures and hardware equipments in the library.

Part 8, User Population, was designed to obtain membership details of different category of users.
Part 9. Information Services, was intended to acquire details about lending services and information services offered by the library including methods adopted for user education. Detailed information concerning lending services was inquired in this section.

Part 10, Technical Processing, was intended to gather data on the classification schemes and catalogue codes used to process library materials. Information on the availability of online catalogues was also inquired in this section.

Part 11, Networking and Consortia, was designed to get facts on involvement of libraries in networking and library consortia.

Part 12, Library Building and Environment, was planned to obtain information on the availability of special reading areas for research scholars, reading space and librarians views on existing condition of library buildings.

Questionnaires (Appendix-II) were administered to research scholars with the aim of gathering information required for the study. The survey questionnaire was divided into seven parts: 1) Bio-data. 2) Reading Habits and Library Use, 3) Library Resources, 4) Library Services, 5) Library Tools and Techniques, 6) Facilities and 7) Suggestions

Part 1 of the survey questionnaire, Bio-data, was designed to obtain basic user characteristics, including research department, university library experience and reason for choosing the university as the centre of research.

Part 2, Reading Habits and Library Use, was intended to inquire reading habits, purpose of library visit and library use pattern.
Part 3, Library Resources, was planned to find out views on the adequacy and organisation of the existing library sources including primary, secondary and electronic. Users’ opinion on the up-to-datedness of library collection was also inquired. Five options were given to point out their opinions as ‘Excellent’, ‘Good’, ‘Average’, ‘Poor’ and ‘Very Poor’.

Part 4, Library Services, was designed to obtain research scholars views on information services provided by the libraries. ‘Excellent’, ‘Good’, ‘Average’, ‘Poor’ and ‘Very Poor’ options were given to point out their opinion. A column ‘NA’ was also given to denote the non-availability of a particular service.

Part 5, Library Tools and Techniques, was intended to inquire research scholars’ opinion on different kind of library tools and techniques for information retrieval.

Part 6, Facilities, was projected to find out the level of satisfaction of research scholars on facilities available in university libraries. Library timings, IT based infrastructure, reading areas, library atmosphere, views on library staff were included in this section.

Part 7, suggestions, was intended to invite research scholars’ views to improve the library.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

For the purpose of the interview, a prior permission was sought from the university librarians. All librarians agreed and later personal contact was made to arrange the appropriate date and time when the interview could take place.
The researcher made notes during the interview that were later compiled. Statistical data were collected from concerned library sections.

In the user survey, the first stage was pre-testing of the questionnaire with 20 willing respondents in Cochin University of Science and Technology (CUSAT). Thereafter, modifications were made in the questionnaire.

For final data collection, the questionnaires were hand delivered to 200 respondents selected for the study. Necessary discussions were made with them and some of them asked more time to fill the questionnaires and self-addressed stamped envelops were given for them. All the respondents sent back the questionnaires in time. The response rate was 100%.

3.5 Statistical Methods Used for the Study

The data collected using the tools selected for the study were analysed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Scientists). Tables and diagrams with frequencies and percentages were drawn to exhibit the relevant data. Detailed analyses were made from two different angles.

1. General analysis, consisting the whole population

2. Research discipline wise analysis

Statistical techniques like percentages and Chi-Square tests were employed as and when required for analysis and interpretations of data. Conclusions were derived and recommendations were made based on the study.
REFERENCES


2. Ibid.,