INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The march of human beings from the hunting and gathering society to the present knowledge society passing through, horticultural, agricultural and industrial societies is a saga of great significance. For 99 percent of human history, our ancestors were hunters and gatherers who neither produced nor preserved food. About 10,000 years ago, human beings became food producers. Around 6000 years ago, they improved productivity through intensive agriculture (Gelles 186-90). Some 250 years ago, the Industrial Revolution gave birth to new productive and economic systems based on machines (Wander 87). The emergence of so-called knowledge society is traced back to the second half of the twentieth century.

The postindustrial society is called knowledge society because of the increased use of knowledge as a resource and a source of power. Knowledge has replaced land, labour, capital and machines and become the chief source of production (Drucker 6). Knowledge also serves as a wealth and force multiplier. It can be used to augment the available force or wealth or, alternatively, to reduce the amount needed to achieve any given purpose (Toffler 16). For unlike land or machines, which can be used by only one person or firm at a time, the same knowledge can be applied by many different users at the same time - and if used cleverly, by them, it can generate even more knowledge. It is inherently inexhaustible and nonexclusive (Toffler 61). It is the truly revolutionary
characteristic of knowledge that it can be grasped by the weak and poor as well. Knowledge is the most democratic source of power (Tollers 20).6

Knowledge is critical for development, because everything we do depends on it. In the knowledge society, access to opportunities to acquire needed knowledge, skills, and competencies is essential for social progress and economic growth. Nations of the world are trying to build their economy on knowledge. Knowledge, ideas, innovation, understanding, adaptability and creativity are the foundations of economies.

The World Development Report 1998/99 examined the role of knowledge in advancing economic and social well being with the realization that economies are built not merely through the accumulation of physical capital and human skill, but on a foundation of information, learning and adaptation. Knowledge has become perhaps the most important factor determining the standard of living—more than lands, than tools, than labour. Today’s most technologically advanced economies are truly knowledge based (World Bank 16).7

The systematic acquisition, creation, and diffusion of knowledge of all kinds and its application to all fields of human activity have become the fundamental pursuit of every society. The process of knowledge creation and its application is not an easy task for nations. It depends on the availability of various factors. The system of higher education and research existing in a country is the most important factor for not only creating new knowledge but also selecting and absorbing knowledge from all over the world. The role of universities is highly important in this regard.
1.1 Universities as Knowledge Creators

Universities function as the focal centre of higher education. They are dynamic and innovative institutions of advanced learning and scholarship, committed to higher quality research across all disciplines. They play a key role in the generation, transfer and application of new knowledge and provide trained manpower for industry, agriculture, administration, services and all other sectors. The intellectual dynamism, resourcefulness and economic prosperity of a country are reflected in the quality of university education. The role of universities in societal formation, nation building and scientific development is very big and all pervasive. Universities are widely regarded not only as teaching establishments but also as organizations that create new knowledge and innovation through research. University research is the most powerful way of opening new frontiers as the world over universities are regarded as cradles of invention (Sharma 19). In most developing countries, university research units are the main organizations that create new knowledge (Chataway and Wield 803–24).

University research findings have transformed our lives over the last century. New medicines and therapies, changes to transport systems and machinery, new materials and energy sources, and previously undreamed of channels of communication have increased life expectancy and hugely improved the quality of our lives. Most of the technological advances in the second half of the twentieth century including new biotechnological industries, information technologies, telecommunications, and advanced materials such as fiber optics
and semiconductors have their origin in university research. In addition, research has given us a growing appreciation of our place in the natural environment, and a better understanding of social, economic and cultural forces. The Universities UK, the umbrella group representing universities of United Kingdom, has published a long list of discoveries made through research at British universities. Association of American Universities has also compiled and published a lengthy list of research findings illustrating the breadth and depth of the contributions that have been made by America's universities (AAU)\textsuperscript{10}.

Given the important role played by universities in knowledge creation through research, all nations put much emphasis on their universities. The most advanced countries have more number of universities. Japan for its 12.7 crore people has 684 universities. USA with 27.6 crore population has 2364 universities. UK with 5.58 crore population has 104 universities and 231 autonomous institutes. Germany for its 8.2 crore population has 330 universities. The developing countries have less number of universities compared to the developed ones. For 100 crore people India has 345 universities. (Kale l-11)\textsuperscript{11}.

The number of universities does not guarantee the quality and speed of university education and research. Among various factors that ensure the value and vigor of university research, the information support deserves much attention. The success of research carried out at universities depends very much on the accessibility to high quality and relevant literature in all formats with the support of a dedicated team of professionals in an environment conducive to learning and absorbing. The role of university libraries and the services they
offer are highly important in this perspective. The advanced economies have not only established a sound system of universities but also attached well-resourced libraries to them.

1.2 University Libraries

University libraries are the major components of university education system that support and sustain the mission and vision of universities. University libraries advance learning, research, scholarly inquiry and open exchange of information and ideas by building, preserving, interpreting, and providing access to rich and diverse collections; by teaching the effective use and critical evaluation of information sources; by developing creative and responsive services for individual user communities; and by capitalising on innovative technologies to foster intellectual growth.

1.3 Need and Significance of the Study

University libraries have an important role in the knowledge society. The mission of university libraries in supporting the process of learning, teaching and research has been widely recognised by different commissions and committees from time to time. It is a fact that the value of research is very much dependant on the availability of a sound document collection, innovative information services, inspiring learning and reflecting environment, information and communication technology infrastructure, and continuing support of the library staff. The present study is an attempt to investigate the role of university libraries in supporting research in universities in Kerala.
The study focuses to examine the existing resources, services and facilities in university libraries in Kerala. Since university libraries stand mainly for supporting research, the research scholars are the essential component of university library system. The response of research scholars on the system is important for its evaluation. Hence, the study tried to evaluate the functioning of university libraries through the feedback of research scholars. The present study is expected to examine in detail the performance of university libraries in supporting research. The facts revealed through the study would help the university libraries in Kerala to identify the real strength and weakness of their collection, effectiveness of their services, competency of their staff and other supporting factors. As university libraries are essential for research excellence, this kind of understanding is very much important. The study also expects to help the university libraries to adopt right strategies towards implementation of new services and facilities. The study is significant in the sense that it attempts to understand the current position of university libraries in Kerala. Since the absence of a creative university library system shall adversely affect the prospects of research and knowledge creation process in the state and the country at large, such an understanding is highly essential.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

The problem of the present study is entitled as “ROLE OF UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN RESEARCH IN KERALA: A CASE STUDY”
1.5 Definition of Key Terms

The following are the definitions of key terms used in the study.

**Role:** Role is a function performed by someone or something in a particular situation, process, or operation (Webster’s Third New International Dictionary 1968)\(^{12}\). The International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences describes “role” as representing “the behavior expected of the occupant of a given position or status” with emphasis on expectations (beliefs and cognitions) and enactment (conduct) (Sills 546)\(^{13}\).

**University Libraries:** According to International Encyclopaedia of Information Technology and Library Science, university library refers to a library or group of libraries, which are established, maintained, and administered by a university to meet the information needs of its research scholars, students and the faculty members (Rawat and Kumar 1367)\(^{14}\). For this study, university libraries mean central libraries at the four universities in Kerala being taken for the study.

**Research:** Research is a search or investigation directed to the discovery of some fact by careful consideration or study of a subject: a course of critical or scientific inquiry (The Oxford English dictionary 507)\(^{15}\). Research is the systematic and objective analysis and recording of controlled observations that may lead to the development of generalizations, principles, or theories, resulting in prediction and possibly ultimate control of events (Best and Khan 20)\(^{16}\). In this study research means research undergoing in university departments in Kerala.
Case study: A case study in librarianship or information science is a descriptive record of circumstances and events relating to the emergence of a particular issue or problem in a specific library or information center (Kent and Lanoir 241).1

Kerala: Represents the state of Kerala in the Republic of India as a geographical entity selected for the study.

1.6 Objectives of the Study

1. To study the university libraries in Kerala with regard to information sources, user services, infrastructures and human resources.
2. To ascertain research scholars' perception of the information sources and their organisation in university libraries in Kerala.
3. To investigate whether the existing library services in university libraries are meeting the information requirements of research scholars.
4. To examine the library use pattern of research scholars.
5. To find out whether the infrastructures available in the university libraries in Kerala are conducive to research process.

1.7 Hypotheses

1. Science research scholars and social science research scholars are similar in their satisfaction on primary sources available in university libraries in Kerala.
2. Research scholars of science and social science differ in their satisfaction on the adequacy of electronic sources.
3. The level of satisfaction of research scholars on personalised services provided by the university libraries in Kerala differs from university to university.

4. The effectiveness of Internet based services varies from university to university.

1.8 Methodology in Brief

There are seven universities in Kerala. However, the investigator has selected four universities for the present study. Data on the existing resources, services and facilities of the university libraries in Kerala were collected from the university librarians through structured interview supplemented by physical verification through personal visit. A random sample of 50 full time research scholars was selected from each of the four universities for obtaining their response on the system. Questionnaires were administered to obtain data. The data collected through questionnaires were analysed electronically using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Scientists).

1.9 Scope and Coverage

The scope of the study extends to cover the four university libraries in the state of Kerala. It focuses on a detailed analysis of the existing resources, services and facilities that are aimed at supporting the research scholars for the successful completion of their study. The study also covers the research scholars from the four university libraries for their response on the system. Therefore, the study provides:
i) Information on existing sources, services and evaluation of their effectiveness, which is vital for formulation of viable development plans for university libraries in Kerala.

ii) Identifies some of the reasons for the existing gap between expected roles and actual performance.

iii) Offers some practical solutions to problems facing university libraries in Kerala.

1.10 Limitations of the Study

Though there are seven universities in the State of Kerala, the present study is limited to the four universities namely the University of Kerala, Mahatma Gandhi University, Cochin University of Science and Technology and the University of Calicut. The rest of the universities were excluded from the study due to the following reasons. The university library system was in the initial stages of development at Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady and Kannur University, Kannur. The Agricultural University offers research in the field of agriculture and related fields. The sample selected from such an environment may affect the result of the study. The study was carried out during the period of five years from 2001-2006. The study is limited to the full time research scholars working in the four Universities in Kerala.

1.11 Organisation of the Report

The report of the study is organised under seven chapters as follows:
Chapter 1 - Introduction

It sketches the emergence of knowledge society, the worth of knowledge as a resource and a raw material for socio-economic development, the significance of knowledge creation, the role of universities in the process of creating knowledge through research and the role of university libraries in supporting the process of research. It also outlines the significance of the study, operational definitions, objectives, hypotheses, scope and limitations and organisation of the study.

Chapter 2 - Reviews of Related Studies

A chronologically arranged reviews of related studies are presented in the second chapter.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

The third chapter describes the methodology adopted for the study.

Chapter 4 - Role of University Libraries in Research

The theoretical explanations and foundation of the study, the role of university libraries in research and the review of library websites of top ranking universities that focus research oriented information sources and services are discussed in fourth chapter.

Chapter 5 - University Libraries in Kerala

This chapter provides background information on the state of Kerala, origin and development of universities, and detailed study of university libraries obtained through interview schedule.
Chapter 6 - Analysis and Presentation of Data

The sixth chapter provides the analysis of data obtained through the questionnaire to research scholars.

Chapter 7 - Summary, Conclusions and Suggestions

The last chapter, seven sketches major findings, conclusion, recommendations and suggestions for further research.

The dissertation ends with a general bibliography listing books, articles and websites consulted and accessed by the researcher for the preparation of this work.
REFERENCES


5. Ibid., p.61.

6. Ibid., p.20.


<http://www.aau.edu/resuniv/SocContr.html>


