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ROLE OF LAW LIBRARIES AND LIBRARIANS IN LEGAL EDUCATION

5.0. INTRODUCTION

The librarians have a lot of responsibility for the selection, acquisition, storage, arrangements, and delivery of right and useful information source of legal relevance in convenient and speedy ways suited to the nature of the legal research of their users. In doing this, they can play a vital role in the administration of justice, in the support of scholarship and the promotion of quality of legal education, and in the functioning of a social system which adheres to the rule of law as judges, researchers have no time to find out relevant judgment reports and acts, allied rules etc which are spread over vast variety of sources, and only option is to relay upon the librarian and his professional skills which enhance the capability of any researcher to arrive at early conclusion stage in his research work. To achieve this the librarian or Library and Information Professionals serving in law institutions including colleges could take a leadership role such as working with the legal writing program, creating special training modules, joining with the faculty in developing the necessary curricular components for enhanced training of students in the use of technology in research such as use of legal databases in legal research.
5.2 ROLE OF LAW LIBRARIES

The law has always been information based and information intensive. As organizations seek to harness and derive value from information ever more efficiently, the net for relevant information is thrown more widely, particularly in law firms. The relevant legal information is no longer contained solely in published form or in house documentation, expertise, and information deriving from the practice of law and from discrete legal transactions. Many types of information are now drawn in to more formal information systems and become intellectual capital within these vigorous competitive environments. This, in fact, is an embarkation of any library/information system.

5.1.1 Law College Library as Special Library

Even though the basic education and the core competencies of law librarians are similar to those of other types of librarians, there are sufficient differences in mission and responsibility to separate them. The law librarians and the law libraries play a unique and integral role in shaping the quality of the legal system at all levels by the virtue of their unique collection and services. They are a part of the process from the very start. They participate in legal education, and now play an increasing role in helping the public protect its legal rights. They are also a part of the legal effort at the other end of the process, protecting the availability and quality of legal information at reasonable cost, and ensuring open and equal access to legal information for everyone.
5.1.2 Collection in Law Libraries

The documents related to legal affairs always require special skills to handle; especially court judgments, legislative enactments, constitutions, treaties, ordinances and administrative rules and regulations. Apart from these text books, reference books and professional journal publications are the core contents of the any law library. The law library holdings can be categorized as follows:

**Primary Sources**

1. Constitutions of the Nations
2. Statutes, Acts, Rules, Ordinances - Central and State Government bodies
3. Parliament Debates/Proceedings – both Upper and Lower Houses’
4. Gazettes – both Central and State Governments
5. Court Judgment Reports – of Supreme Court, State High Courts, Tribunals, Special Courts, Commissions.
6. Legal Periodicals
7. Thesis and Dissertations produced by the legal institutions
8. Government Publications – A number of publications are brought out from time to time by the central as well as state governments. Most of them consist of reports of various committees and commissions. The reports of such bodies are of great help in any legal research without referring to them will not be complete.
Secondary Sources

1. Compiled Bare Acts of Parliaments and Legislative bodies,
2. Manuals containing Government Department’s rules and notifications,
3. Compilations of International Treaties
4. Text Books

Tertiary Sources

5. Judgment Citators
6. Digests of judgments on particular subjects – Yearly, Conquennial, Decennial
7. Legal News and Reviews
8. Index to statutes

5.1.3 Online Legal Information Sources

There are several legal information sources, mainly websites of government departments and the Supreme Court and the High courts are the authentic sources of information. One should not rely upon the online blogs, opinion expressed through the social networks like Orkut, tweeters etc. legal knowledge should be confined to its authenticity otherwise it may end up with complications which are irreversible and potential to cause harm to the person or institutions in any extent. The law librarian should be cautious in acquiring or providing such legal information. ‘Selection policy and purchasing decisions require not only critical evaluation of subject matter, but also consideration of the efficacy of particular formats (e.g., print, online, CD-ROM, microform, etc.), space limitations, user access, cost and other relevant factors. The knowledge and use of cost-benefit

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analysis techniques are essential to the collection management processes (Hazelton, 1993).

5.2 ROLE OF LAW LIBRARIANS

The ideal law librarian is in harmony with the values at the heart of the legal profession and the librarianship is completely knowledgeable about everything relevant to legal information, and has all the necessary character traits, attitudes, and skills to be a superbly effective legal information specialist. The competencies of law librarians are similar to those of other types of librarians. There are sufficient differences in mission and responsibility to separate them. The law librarians and law libraries play a unique and integral role in shaping the quality of the legal system further evidence of the consensus that law librarians don’t need to be lawyers themselves, following are the few essential tasks performed by the law librarians:

- Assist in the use of electronic legal resources
- Provide customized reference services on law-related topics
- Evaluate the authenticity and accuracy of legal sources
- Be well-versed in the legal profession
- Monitor trends in specific legal fields
- Assist non professionals visitors in accessing the law
- Understand planning, budgeting, and control in the law library setting

The law librarians are part of the legal effort at the other end of the process, protecting the availability and quality of legal information at reasonable cost, and ensuring open and equal access to legal information for everyone. The law library
is a place for students to work and study, then on the value of the instruction that
law librarians offer to students faced with an increasingly complex and perhaps
confusing legal information environment.

5.2.1 Training of Citation Methods

Legal professionals are following their own mode of citations for
references. The legal citation methods are different from other general citation
methods. Any new comer may not be well versed with the mode of references
given in the legal documents. The librarians should have to instruct the new
students on how to search and quote the judgments, and how to find the relevant
citations.

“This complex and comprehensive system of standardized intellectual
organization of library materials allows customization for local use as necessary.
Applying this classification system to the physical arrangement of materials in the
library, highly skilled and specialized library professionals assist in the research
process and help guide researchers to the materials that are most relevant and
useful to their individual pursuits, these library professionals must survey,
understand, and be sensitive to the search behaviors and requirements of legal
researchers in order to help them avoid wasted research time and labor” (James &
Alan, 1997).

5.2.2 Keeping track of legal updates

In the new millennium, several legal databases are created and made
available in both online and offline form. It is necessary to train the students how
to use the databases which are readily available in the library. The librarians have
to keep track of legal changes in the society, national and international level going through news papers, professional publications like parliament proceedings, statutes which reveal the introduction of new bills, introduction of new Acts or amendments to the existing Acts. Now a days these are all quite common at the state and national level, hence the libraries must keep track with such types of developments. Then only it is possible for them to update the knowledge of students and the members of the faculty including researchers.

5.2.3 Value added services

Helping the students and researchers through the compilation of relevant bibliography and collecting the available books, the journal articles from the book stack or from any other sources like internet so that students engaged in the moot court participation, the preparation of assignments, dissertation project writings etc. should get the actual physical documents or information itself than pointing them to the locations by mere supplying the bibliographic details. This makes the value added service of the library.

5.2.4 Assisting in Moot Courts

As per the new UGC Curriculum for legal faculty, participation in moot court competition is compulsory for the LL.B degree aspirants. “Organisation of artificial court for the law students is called moot court on a specific subject or issue or an imaginary case prepared for this purpose”(Rai, 2001). Various legal institutions are conducting moot court competition at national and International level. Participation in moot courts helps students to develop legal skills, presentation skills and interaction skills which help the students to become a
successful lawyer. These qualities are achieved only by practice fortified by library services.

The moot court participants have to collect the legal materials relating to the case and thereby assisting the court in arriving at a correct judgment. In such cases library can organize a display of legal materials relevant to ‘moot court problems’ and the preparation of bibliography will help to retrieve the original documents easily and quickly in the need of hour for participants. The law librarians, therefore, are the best equipped to guide students, faculty, and support staff in making choices about which formats to use in which research situations. Because of their expertise in both legal doctrine and legal bibliography, the law librarians can distinguish between the factual and conceptual aspects of research problems and can assess the impact of format and resource selections in addressing these different types of issues. The law students, faculty, and staff also frequently seek law librarians’ assistance on hardware and software issues and their advice about electronic research, computer purchases, and the Internet connectivity.

5.2.5 Assisting in Legal research

The law librarians’ challenge is to go beyond merely training students to find sources of legal information. In doing their research, students must learn to analyze and assess the relative authority and credibility of the sources that they find. The law librarians must teach students not only how legal authority is located within published electronic and print sources, but also how to select and adopt the most reliable, cost-effective, and efficient research strategies and sources.
5.2.6 Current Awareness Services

Information is an important resource for the legal profession and without it the profession cannot function, the Current Awareness Service can be very useful to inform researchers in the legal field, because the slightest change to legislations, rules or interim report of any ongoing trials can alter the legal world and practice. The CAS can be made more effective by using modern communication technologies like group mail facility, SMS through the mobile phones, by creating Online 'blog', or a News letter for providing CAS this will help the entire legal fraternity including practitioners.

5.2.7 Book Exhibition during the Legal Aid/ Awareness Programmes

It is one of the main tasks of the law colleges to create awareness about the importance of law in the minds of the common man. To achieve this law schools are organizing legal awareness/Aid programmes for common people. “Legal aid becomes merely a generic term for the provision of publicly funded legal services, and the different aspects of it are to be known as advice, assistance and representation” (Matheson, 1988). The Statutory bodies like Legal Service Authority and some time Karnataka Institute for Law and Parliamentary reforms are funding for the purpose. A group of students and teachers visit the nearby villages and create awareness through the speeches and simple stage Acts on day today essential knowledge about the laws for the common man such as women and child rights, laws relating to domestic Violence, Land laws etc. During such programmes a small exhibition of books relating to the topic will definitely help the due purpose of such activities.
The librarians face additional challenges because of the nature of their work. Although librarianship was built upon the philosophy of service, the services librarians offer can no longer be delivered effectively without the application of technology. In the digital environment, the librarians must exploit computing expertise to deliver effective services that give the library a competitive advantage over other providers of information and services. An academic law library is different in its content, organization, and use than other types of academic libraries. Providing bibliographic access to scholarly research in general relies heavily on subject matter expertise and familiarity with specialized resources. As bibliographers, the librarians must possess sufficient levels of these qualifications to organize and manage information and to guide researchers to ample and appropriate information. In the field of legal research, however, these requirements are compounded by the structures of common law and statutory research. Information must be organized and presented according to the interconnected hierarchies of laws. These additional constraints affect every aspect of the law library, from the assistance offered at the reference desk and the service provided to the organization of physical space and the collection. Furthermore, law librarians must possess highly specialized knowledge, expertise, and experience in providing services that affect the property, lives, and liberty of their ultimate end users.
5.7 Conclusion

The academic law librarians are likely to be more involved in the mission of the law school than ever before, to place greater emphasis on skills training, to be actively engaged in the teaching of information skills and themselves to formally acquiring teaching skills, to be involved in the management, organization and delivery of electronic information locally and at a distance, perhaps be collaborating in the construction a portal or a virtual learning or research environment, and be assisting in the selection and administration not only of information products but also their delivery mechanisms.

Law is dependent on government documents as they are essential for comprehensive legal research even though legal research material, such as statutes and judgments which are now available in commercial sources. Thus legal faculty members use these documents which are current as well as historic as they learn to read and analyse statutes, cases and regulations. Hence, the academic law libraries have a significant role in developing collection resources that can add value to government information as well as for the legal researcher. Because of the demanding nature of legal practice and the impact of legal research on life, liberty, and property, the law librarians are called upon to impart these analytic skills and techniques much more than the general academic librarians in order to meet their responsibility to the legal community that their students are destined to join. The law librarians must continually educate students to apply critical criteria to electronic research tools and techniques so that these future lawyers are able to protect their clients’ interests effectively with the sound legal knowledge/information.
References


6. Resolution No. 2/66. The Bar Council resolved that a law degree obtained after 1st October, 1966 by a non-graduate would not be recognised by the Bar Council.
