CHAPTER: I

INTRODUCTION

A library attached to any educational institution is known as academic library. The primary characteristic of a good academic library is to make complete identification with its own institution. Academic libraries support the teaching and research needs of institution they serve. To achieve this goal, libraries have developed its resources and adopted various tools and techniques to make users help themselves in speedy searching of their information in the library. It is the library's responsibility to ensure that the use of its information resources and services are maximized to its users. Users may be of different kinds apart from a specialist, a scientist, a student, a housewife, an average layman, a businessman, a teacher, etc. The users may vary depending upon the nature of the library. In a special library the users are specialist or scientist but in a public library or in an academic library, the user may be of different kinds. For a specialist reader or a scientist there is no meaning to teach or educate them for proper utilization of the library. But various new readers would not know about the rules and regulations applied in particular library and also not aware of how to find out documents, pick up particular information from a reference book, journals etc. The library professionals help the users who need that kind of help and by this way it is relatively easier to find out information from the library and also encourage users to make greater use of available resources. This is done by instructions, by teaching, lecturing and as a whole it is termed as 'user education.'
The user education is concerned with educating the users in use of the library with a view to enable them to derive maximum benefit from the materials kept in the library. It consists of familiarizing the users with all those techniques and tools which lead them to grab the knowledge hidden in books and other reading materials.

In short it involves helping the readers to find his information himself. It is a backbone of ‘reference work’ which was discussed for the first time by S S Green in 1876 at the first ALA conference. (Ramaiah: 1996:187)

Ranganathan also has laid marked emphasis on ‘helping readers’. The seeds of user education were, therefore, sown in 1876 with the emergence of the concept of reference work and service. But we cannot say that User education is a part of reference service. Reference services presuppose personalized service and help to the user when he needs, while user education presupposes personalized training and orientation of the user with the presumption that he needs it. Secondly, in reference service the user is helped in finding information but in user education the user is trained in the use of the library so that he could search the document of his interest without anybody’s help. Thirdly, reference services normally don’t require a course related planned program whereas user education does. Similarly, user education aims at making user self dependent. But it can’t be denied that reference service and user education are historically bound because both sub serve that same objective.
1.1 Definition of User Education

User education is mainly concerned with giving guidance and instruction to the users in total use of the library. It may be individually or collectively. A few definitions are given below:

According to Nancy Fjillbrant and Ian Malley (1984) ‘User education is concerned with the whole information and communication process and one part of this involves the total interaction of the user with the library. This should be a continuous process starting with school and public libraries with a possibility of its extension in to academic and specialized libraries.’

According to Sahi (1986) ‘ It is a process of activities involves in making users of the library conscious about the tremendous value of information in day to day life and to develop interest amongst the user to seek information as when they require it’.


UNESCO defines user education as an effort or program which guides and instructs existing and potential users individually or collectively with the objective of facilitating-
a) The recognition of their information needs.

b) The formulation of these needs.

c) The assessment of their service. (Vyas: 1996:52)

It is difficult to have a comprehensive and universally acceptable definition which would take into account all facets of user education. Still standardization has to take place in this area and future developments may alone solve this problem.

From all definitions mentioned above, we may come to this point that user education is mainly guidance to the new users of the library and a communication between the new users and the techniques which are adopted by the library for providing prompt service to them. User education is a continuous process from school to university and from public to specialized library.

1.2 Growth and Development of User Education

User education programme was organized about two hundred years ago. The earliest evidence of it were found at Harvard College in 1820's where the librarian lectured to undergraduates. Such lectures were also common in other academic institutions such as Indiana University and Columbia. Separate courses were implemented in late 1800's by Ray Davis at the University of Michigan and by Azariah Root at Overlian College. (Laloo: 2002:135)
In the year 1900, William Warner Bishop and William Frederick Poole introduced concepts of library instruction that are still valid today. They wanted to make students independent learners.

The development of library user education was largely spread in English-speaking countries- like Britain and USA and later Australia and Canada. Later on it started to develop in the countries like Scandinavia, East Germany, West Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland, Yugoslavia, China and Japan. (Kumar: 2004:142)

The systematic use of the concept of the user education owes its origin to Patricia B Knapp and her project report in 1964 which mainly aimed at ‘exploring methods of developing a more vital relationship between the library and college teaching.’ This project was undertaken at Monteith college of Wayne State University. At this stage the user education was identified with bibliographic and/or course related library instruction with its own strategy.

In India, IASLIC organized a national debate on user education and its conference held in Waltair in 1981. The department of library and information Science, Osmania University organized a seminar on ‘Developments in users studies and user education’ on 22nd June’1985. The Department of Library and Information Science, Lucknow University organized a national seminar on ‘User Education in Academic Libraries in India’ in Nov’1986. NISCAIR produced an instructional kit entitled ‘let us find out’ meant for the use of libraries by school children. SNDT women’s University Library developed a tape-slide presentation for user education in mid 1980’s.
1.3. Objective of the Study

It is observed that although most of the libraries are full of important resources but, these are not properly utilized. When libraries are totally utilized by the users, the skill and knowledge will be increased and it will develop the society in the long run.

The objective of the study is to find out or examine how academic libraries are responding to challenge of task of teaching students about information seeking skills in this rapidly changing information environment.

The study is to be conducted with the following objectives-

a) To find out the existing position of user education level and implementation in academic libraries in Assam.

b) To undertake an exhaustive survey of user awareness at different level.

c) To find out dimension of user education of in academic library in Assam.

d) To find out the ways of user educations.

e) To find out the user education planning, policy and objectives.

f) To find out the current problems and barriers to user education programme.
1.4. Scope of the Study

The study on the user education in academic libraries in Assam, an attempt is made to have an exhaustive study on the latest user education system in our academic libraries, which is most important for proper utilization of the library resources available in our libraries. Libraries are contented with most important resources but these are not properly utilized by users due to lack of expositions and having no idea on it by the users.

Now-a-days UGC has formed National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), an autonomous institution of the UGC for quality improvement of higher educational institution throughout India. NAAC assess the colleges and universities and use to provide grade like A, B, C and D. From this accredited status one can understand the quality of the institution. In Assam 192 colleges has been assessed by NAAC as on 2007 (Annexure-III). To face the NAAC peer team institutions along with their libraries modified themselves in terms of services, resources and quality, etc so that they can acquire a good accredited status. The authorities of the institutions also paid attention to development of libraries. Thus, the quality of libraries have to some extent improved then before. In view of shortage of time and resources the study is limited to academic libraries in Assam mainly colleges which are assessed by NAAC along with all university libraries. On the other hand IIT, Guwahati and NIT Silchar are though considered as deemed universities still they are treated as special in terms of user, mode of collection, fund and year of existence. Therefore the study excluded these institutions. Again school libraries are purely academic in nature but in Assam there are no libraries worth the name, either at the primary level or secondary level
of education, hence students would have never used a well organized library in their schooling years. Therefore school libraries are excluded from the study.

1.5. Hypothesis Adopted

The study is going to prove that

(1) Most of the resources in the academic libraries in Assam are not used properly because of the poor awareness among users.

(2) User education programme is the urgent need of the hour to address the situation effectively.

1.6. Methodology

The methodology and techniques to be applied for conducting the study are as follows:-

- Thorough study of standard books, manuals, journal articles, seminar papers etc and various websites.

- Personal visit to concerned libraries to get required information.
Method is mainly survey and statistical method and the data collection tools are mainly questionnaire and personal discussion with professional heads of the institution.

In order to collect the necessary information under respective headings two questionnaires (Annexure-II A & B) are prepared one for institution and another for user on the basis of the guidance given by the guide and distributed to the different libraries in Assam.

1.7. Review of Literature

An evaluation of user education literature reveals the importance of user education in academic libraries. For development of any kind of research studies, different reviews and literatures of relevant earlier studies are considered to be of great practical importance. This part of the chapter deals with some of the literature available regarding various studies on user education programme. The content is divided under the following heads for relating the literatures with proper direction of the study.

1. Concepts and needs of user education.

2. User and user needs.

3. Information Technology and User education.
4. Management in Academic libraries.

5. Planning of User Education.

In this field of study, different macro and micro forms of literature covering various aspects relating to the subject matter has been studied. Some selected sites in internet are also surfed for collecting necessary information and data in order to have proper knowledge on the subject of the study. Following is an attempt to reflect the literature sources studied and scanned for the work.

1.7.1 Concepts and Needs of User Education

B M Gupta (1976) in his article ‘user’s orientation programme’ published in Library Herald observes regarding the user education that the existing libraries have not been fully utilized because of the wide gap between the kind of required information and the kind of information available.

A Neelameghan (1982) in the article “User Education and Orientation: some issues with special reference to developing countries” said that better performance and utilization of the information system could result form an understanding of the system, i.e. its information sources, functions, capabilities and methods of operation- by its users. Neelameghan’s “understanding” is nothing but the user education through which proper utilizations can be held.
S S Sahi (1986) in his article “User education in academic libraries” pinpointed the need and definition of the term User Education.

Fleming (1990) defines user education “As various programmes of instruction, education and exploration provided by libraries to users to enable them to make more effective, efficient and independent use of information sources and services to which these libraries provide access”.

D Goswami and R Goswami (1992) in a related study discussed the nature of orientation programme in Assam Agricultural University.

In a related study, Barman and Goswami (1996) and D Choudhury (1996) surveyed the user education programme available in libraries of Assam with special reference to K K Handique library, Gauhati University. Choudhury surveyed the nature of the libraries in greater Guwahati and the importance of educating college library users the fullest possible use of the facilities available to them. Also highlights the existing situation of user education programme in the college libraries of greater Guwahati.

### 1.7.2 User and User Needs

The expenditure on library or information systems can be justified if needs of users are effectively met. The primary component of entire information transfer cycle is the user. According to L S Ramaiah (1996) the library collection, the efforts, programmes, and services of the library personnel are attuned to the benefit of the user.
According to B K Laloo (2002), “In the library set up, it is extremely important to understand who the users are, what their needs are and how those needs can be satisfied by the library.

Regarding user needs P S G Kumar (2004) he added that the need of the users varies with the kind of the user. The user’s needs are to be satisfied at the earliest possible time.

1.7.3 Information Technology and User Education

A Cox (1997) while discussing IT based user education said that the World Wide Web is also used for library instruction. For example, one can sign up for free courses with the Spectrum University-lessons arrive by e-mail and there is also a classroom. Some e-mail causes have associates discussion lists and one can join an electronic conference for exchange of experiences among students. One can work through the many World Wide Web based tutorials.


Keeping in view the literature explosion, technologies development and need of the users, there is a dire need to import necessary training to the librarians in the developing countries to use the new technologies.

V Kasirao, et.al (2006) while discussing on application of IT in academic libraries, said that the application of IT in different types of libraries in India has gained sufficient momentum and it is of continuing interest to the information professionals in order to provide IT based services.

1.7.4 Management in Academic Libraries

Strategic planning is a disciplined effort to produce fundamental discussions and actions that shape and guide what an organization is, what it does and why it does it, with a focus on the future.

S L Lalwani (2007) while discussing of TQM in academic libraries, said that it is the integration of all functions and possesses within an organization in order to achieve continuous improvement of the quality of goals and services.

1.7.5 Planning of User Education

R L Sehgal (1986), P S G Kumar (2002) has been discussed elaborately about the planning of user education programme.
1.8 Chapters

Following chapters are prepared to make the study more convenient and easy.

a) Introduction

b) User and their Needs for Information

c) Dimensions of User Education

d) Information Technology and User Education

e) Strategic Management of Academic libraries in Assam: an analysis

f) User and User Education in Assam: a survey report

g) Conclusion: Findings and Suggestions

1.8.1 Chapter-1: Introduction

This chapter is introducing the brief discussion of the study and explains the basic objectives, scope, outline of chapterization and methodology used for collecting data and information in the field of study.
1.8.2 Chapter-2: User and their Needs for Information

The main aims and objectives of academic libraries are to satisfy the users. To achieve the goal of library management has to study the types/nature of the user and their requirements, then only library personnel can meet the multidimensional query of the users, various terms of users, various approaches and their requirements. This chapter discusses the nature of users and their requirements.

1.8.3 Chapter-3: Dimensions of User Education

The area of user education is multidimensional. Here in this chapter a few of them has been discussed briefly.

1.8.4 Chapter-4: Information Technology and User Education

With the advent of ICT the libraries are naturally introducing new tools and techniques which will be difficult to understand for the users. The library personnel will act as mediators in making information available to users in addition to help themselves using their new techniques. This chapter discusses the need of user education in ICT environment of a library.
1.8.5 Chapter-5: Strategic Management of Academic Libraries in Assam: an analysis

The topic demands to discuss about the academic libraries and its management for proving user education programme. Since the main purpose of an academic library is to function as an auxiliary to the parent institution in carrying out its teaching programme effectively. Here in this chapter, the management of library resources and services are discussed elaborately.

1.8.6 Chapter-6: User and User Education in Assam: a survey report

The study surveyed the nature of users in college and university libraries of Assam. Imparting education to the library user in college and university level libraries of Assam is studied in this chapter which is the important part of the research. The study highlights the present position of user education in University and college libraries of Assam.

1.8.7 Chapter-7: Conclusion: Findings and Suggestions

On the basis of the exclusive survey to be made, findings will be analyzed and conclusion will be prepared at the end of the work, appendices, bibliography and references will be added.