UNIT 4  LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES FOR DISTANCE LEARNERS

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4.0    INTRODUCTION

As a distance learner, have you felt the need of using libraries? The answer to this question would be ‘yes’ for many of you. Though distance learners receive a pack of reading materials, it is natural for them to have further inquisitiveness on specific topics to read and learn more. In higher education, we are expected to demonstrate higher order understanding and critical appreciation of ideas and concepts to be expressed in our own words. Therefore, the need to have additional material is obvious. In open and distance learning system, you are expected not only to use materials other than the texts provided but also to develop the abilities to write assignment responses in your own words without verbatim reproduction of textual material. This requires detailed, critical and systematic reading of a variety of sources. There are many resources that we can use as additional reading materials, and in this unit, we shall discuss how to use these resources effectively. You should know about different types of library resources and services available in a library in the context of supporting distance learners. Therefore, in this unit we will discuss the information needs of distance learners and the guidelines for providing library services to them. This will enable you to think, plan and support distance learners in a more systematic manner.
4.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

After reading the unit, you are expected to be able to:

- Discuss the library and information needs of distance learners;
- Use library resources for learning;
- Search library databases and/or catalogues;
- Use the Internet and World Wide Web (WWW);
- Search useful information on the net;
- Assess the quality of information available through online search;
- Avoid plagiarism;
- Acknowledge sources using proper reference techniques;
- Identify different library services for distance learners; and
- Apply the guidelines for library services for distance learners.

4.2 LIBRARY AND INFORMATION NEEDS OF DISTANCE LEARNERS

“The library needs of distant learners are not unique. They are similar to those of on-campus students. Apart from the manner in which they are accessed, requested and delivered, the same resources are required, the same questions are asked, and the same quality of service is expected” (Rodrigues, 1996).

Distance learners receive packets of study materials in the form of specially prepared textual materials, text-books, audio and video materials, multimedia CDs or a combination of these. Most of the times, when a specially prepared material is supplied, it is believed to have the characteristics of ‘self-containedness’, and therefore learners are not expected to search for additional reading materials to complete their studies. This has been a useful blessing for the learners in remote and isolated places, where access to libraries is a problem. However, the use of such materials has been criticized for being pedagogically authoritarian and depriving the learners of developing a critical understanding of the concepts and ideas. “The student runs the risk of being turned into a passive consumer of educational commodities – such as packet of knowledge and educational certificates” (Kaye and Rumble, 1981).

It clearly shows that distance learners need library and information services like their counterparts in the conventional face-to-face institutions. Thus, we can think of the needs of distance learners as similar to that of on-campus students. However, there are impediments to library provisions to all the students. Neither can we supply books to all the students for home reading, nor can the students come to the library regularly. They would like to have appropriate and timely photocopying and document delivery service. To make this effective, the learners need to have access to the information resources of the library online or resources accessible through a reference librarian over phone. In the next section, we will discuss about how to use libraries as a distance learner.
4.3 USING LIBRARIES

A library is the best place to find information on a topic. Most organizations (public/private) these days have their own library. A Library is a collection of documents organized systematically for easy search and retrieval at the time of need. Most of you might have some experience of using a library in your school or college days. However, as a distance learner you may feel constrained to make use of library services provided to you because of various reasons such as lack of time, distance, etc. At the Regional Centre, and at the Headquarters, you can also make photocopies of the documents you require. It is possible that the library of your institution is not near your workplace or home, and therefore, regular access is impossible. But, do you know that there are other libraries that just might have enough resources of your interest and needs? It is also possible that the organization, where you work has an excellent library to support your learning needs!

Libraries are categorized into three types, viz. (a) Public Libraries, (b) Academic Libraries, and (c) Special Libraries. **Public Libraries** are information and resource centres meant for citizens of a state (i.e. everyone), and you can find such a library in most district headquarters in India and even in villages in many states having library legislation. The states having library legislation in India have wide network of public libraries that cater to the needs of public in general, and thus, are highly suitable for subject areas in social sciences and humanities. In order to use a library, you need to become its member. So far, the states having library legislation in India are: Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Kerala, West Bengal, Haryana, Goa, Manipur, Orissa, Mizoram, Gujarat, and Uttarakhand. **Academic Libraries** are those that are attached to educational institutions such as schools, colleges, and universities. These libraries normally do not allow outside members to use their collections, and are accessible only to bonafide students of that institute. However, on special request, some of them may allow you to use their library collection for a shorter duration. **Special Libraries** are subject/area specific libraries attached to different organizations. For example, library in SAIL, ONGC, and many other organizations fall under this category. Apart from keeping documents of special interests in the scope of their organizations, these libraries also cater to general interests of their clientele. If you happen to work in an organization with a special library, you are privileged to use the facilities there in. All types of libraries provide a special facility called Inter Library Loan (ILL) to their bonafide members. Using the ILL facility, you can even get a book not available in your library but available in some other library. In major cities, there are library cooperation networks to facilitate this. Check with your librarian, whether any such facility is available in your library.

4.3.1 Types of Documents in Libraries

Libraries contain many different formats of documents. Book is just one of them. Books are essentially of three types, viz. textbooks or general books, reference books, and electronic books. Apart from books, libraries also possess journals, databases, indexing and abstracting sources, theses, microforms, CDs, Maps, etc. in their collection. The IGNOU library at the Headquarters has the following in its collection:
Books are arranged in the libraries in stacks using a specialized classification system. The most popular library classification code is Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC). However, in India the Colon Classification (CC) is also used in many libraries; and the Universal Decimal Classification (UDC) is used in many special libraries. In order to use your library effectively, you need to acquaint yourself with the library classification system used there. Library collections other than books are arranged in separate stack areas.

**Check Your Progress 1**

**Notes:**

a) *Space is given below for your answer.*

b) *Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.*

List the possible collections found in an Open University Library.

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**Reference Books**

The reference books section of a library includes a variety of books that provide ‘quick response’ to many of your questions. The following are normally marked as reference collection in a library:

- Encyclopedias
- Dictionaries
- Bibliographies
- Directories
- Handbooks
- Manuals, etc.

The documents that are marked as reference are not loaned outside the library and some of them may require specialized skills to use. Therefore, do not hesitate to ask for help from a library staff.
Management of Learner Support

Journals

Scholarly journals, also called periodicals, record latest research findings in specialized areas. Unlike books, that provide information on a topic in an exhaustive manner, and are dated, journals cover research articles in micro-areas and book reviews that are up-to-date. You should be using journals, particularly if you are going to work on a research project or project work in your studies. Journals are also categorized into primary and secondary journals. Primary journals record research articles, whereas secondary journals are indexes and/or abstract of research articles on a given subject. For a researcher, the secondary journals in a subject are a starting point. Every year the journals are bound covering all the issues in a volume and are kept separately.

Electronic Resources

An increasingly large amount of information is available these days in electronic format, and libraries are providing access to these. You can use these electronic resources for your research and learning. Some of the electronic resources available are e-books, e-journals and databases.

e-Books

Many books are available these days in electronic format, either accessible on the net or on a desktop PC or through a handheld reader like Portable Digital Assistants (PDAs). Usually the e-books are available in HTML or pdf format. There are many commercial e-book providers/vendors. Check with your library staff for the availability of e-books. You can get access to many e-books through the websites of Project Gutenberg, Online Book Page, Free Books, and the Digital Library of India.

While using e-books, you should particularly take note of the accuracy of the electronic version, authoritativeness of the source, and its complete bibliographic details (including the web address).
### Databases

Libraries subscribe to full-text databases and/or databases on indexes/abstracts either in CD-ROM or online. These provide access to huge amounts of information, and make searching and access to quality information easy. Most of the time, the databases come in specialized areas, and therefore, you should check the availability of electronic databases in your subject of interest in your library. These are highly useful for research. We shall discuss searching and using the databases in the next sub-section.

#### 4.3.2 Searching Catalogues or Databases

The library catalogue is a list of books and other documents in a library that provides multiple search access to the users. Normal access points for a document covered in library catalogues include the author, title, subject headings, editors, series information, etc. Sometimes the catalogues are arranged according to three separate groups, viz. author (including editors), title, and subject headings. Whatever may be the type of catalogue; the information is arranged in alphabetical order. So, if you have information on any of the basic access points for a document, you can directly go to the library catalogue and search the same. The library catalogue shall show you the location of the book/document through the call number (classification number + book number) of the book displayed in the card. These days, the library catalogues are available on computers and the card catalogues are disappearing. The use of computer for cataloguing has brought the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) to the users through a desktop computer and/or available on the Internet/Intranet. Here the OPAC is also a database/bibliographic record of documents available in the library. Databases provide us a range of

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**Directory of Open Access Journals:**
http://www.doaj.org/

**Open J-Gate:**
http://www.openj-gate.com/

**HighWire Press Full-text articles on Science:**
http://highwire.stanford.edu/lists/freeart.dtl

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<td><strong>Open J-Gate:</strong></td>
<td><a href="http://www.openj-gate.com/">http://www.openj-gate.com/</a></td>
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<td><strong>HighWire Press Full-text articles on Science:</strong></td>
<td><a href="http://highwire.stanford.edu/lists/freeart.dtl">http://highwire.stanford.edu/lists/freeart.dtl</a></td>
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search options based on ‘string search’. The string search is also called keyword search, but while searching databases, we can also use a variety of criteria to limit the search and increase the preciseness of the results. Some of the search criteria used are:

- Author
- Title
- Key Words
- Journal name
- Publisher
- Date
- Publication type (books/journals/CD)
- Type of record (full-text/bibliographic data), etc.

The following are some of the guidelines to search databases:

i) Use a proper name or distinct phrase. If you know the exact phrase, enclose it in double quotes, e.g. “eco-feminism”.

ii) Use Boolean operators: AND, OR, NOT e.g. Child AND Labour AND India will cover Child labour in India.

“Distance learning” OR “Distance education” OR “Open learning” will cover open and distance learning/education.

“Cars NOT Red” will result in “Cars that are not red”.

iii) Use proximity, truncation and wildcards e.g. Proximity searching with NEAR: “Journals” NEAR “Open Access” to cover Open access journals

Truncation searching: Stud* shall cover students, study, studying, etc.

Wildcards used in variation of spelling cases; Analy*e to cover analyse and analyze.

**Check Your Progress 2**

*Notes:*

a) Space is given below for your answer.

b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

What is an e-Journal?

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**4.4 USING INTERNET**

Ever since the Internet started in 1969, it has been growing by leaps and bounds. The Internet is a network of computers from all over the world and helps us to communicate with different machines and individuals. It is also often called as the one stop destination for all kinds of information. There are all sorts of organizations (business, govt., military, academic) and individuals who are associated with the Internet. The emergence of the World Wide Web (WWW) in 1991 on the Internet has further revolutionized collection, organization and
distribution of information. By the click of a computer button, you can now find information quickly by using appropriate websites. The range of information available on the web too is very high. From newspaper to research articles all are available on the web, and you can use them for your learning and understanding.

To get access to the Internet and its WWW, you need to have access to a computer with Internet connection through a telephone line, a network, a cable or wireless link. Using the computer and a browser (e.g., Firefox and Internet Explorer), you can use a website for finding information. However, the number of websites is so high that it is practically difficult to keep track of them and find relevant information. There are some search tips that we can effectively use to find information from the ocean of data available on the net. We shall discuss these in the next sub-section.

### 4.4.1 Searching the Web

The web can be mainly searched through three ways, viz. (a) Use of organized directories, (b) Use of search engine, (c) Use of meta-search engines.

**Use of Directories**

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<th>Directory</th>
<th>URL</th>
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<tr>
<td>Yahoo</td>
<td><a href="http://www.yahoo.com">http://www.yahoo.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Open Directory</td>
<td><a href="http://dmoz.org/">http://dmoz.org/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Public Library</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ipl.org/">http://www.ipl.org/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WWW Virtual Library</td>
<td><a href="http://vlib.org/">http://vlib.org/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Librarians’ Internet Index</td>
<td><a href="http://lii.org/">http://lii.org/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Intomine</td>
<td><a href="http://www.infomine.com/">http://www.infomine.com/</a></td>
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A directory is a catalogue of websites collected and organized by human indexers. The websites are organized into subject directories, and therefore, it is often considered as a good starting point. When you don’t have your exact need and would like to browse through, the directories are a great source of help. Browsing a directory is like moving the stack room of a library. Many large directories include a keyword search option. You can just type the key word of your search topic and get the results. There are many web directories available on the net, and Yahoo is the largest of them all. Some of the best directories are listed here for your use.
Search engines on the web are useful tools that make our life easier by using search spiders on the net, and indexing the websites automatically. Google is perhaps the best search engine available that has the largest database of web pages. In order to use the search engines, you need not have to learn a great deal of computer science. You can use most of the database search techniques to search through these engines. However, we advise you to familiarize yourself with the search techniques in their website to effectively use them. To know more about web search engines, visit http://www.searchenginewatch.com or http://www.searchenginecolossus.com/.

Use of Meta-search Engines

The meta search engines are search engines about search engines. The meta search engines do not maintain a database of their own, rather they send your query to different search engines and within a few seconds get back with the results from different search engines in one window. Use of meta search engine is a smart way to find more and quick response. Some of the popular meta search engines are: Dogpile, Mamma, Copernic, and Vivisimo.

4.4.2 Quality of Information

Having searched the large knowledge base of the WWW, you should be able to differentiate “rice and chaff”. Not all information available on the net is of good quality, and is written by qualified people. So, what you get through a web search needs to pass through the test of quality. There are some basic indicators of quality that you can assess yourself considering the context in which you are going to use the information. These are: accuracy, relevance, objectivity, authority, and timeliness. On the basis of these criteria some of the questions you should ask are as follows:
1) Is the information on the web page written by an authority in the area? Can you rely on the data, concepts and other information given there? Websites coming from government sources and academic institutions always provide authoritative information.

2) Is it accurate? It would be difficult for you to decide the accuracy if you do not know the subject, but you can try two or more sources/web pages to contrast, and decide.

3) Is it relevant to your needs? How suitable is the information on the website for your immediate and future requirements?

4) Is the analysis objective, and unbiased? Does the source provide a balanced viewpoint on the issue discussed?

5) Is the information up-to-date? Is it outdated and can’t be dependable? How frequently is the information on the website updated?

4.4.3 Educational Web Sources

The web has also become a source for a variety of educational materials. Teachers at all levels of education prepare learning materials and put them on the net for use by their students and others. Completely online courses are now available in many institutions that use the power of the Internet and the World Wide Web. As the WWW is based on the hypertext transfer protocol, and is capable of handling multimedia materials (in text, audio, video, animation), a large amount of education resources are also available that are primarily designed to help people learn. Though much of such materials are not available through the search engines, there are open source and open content initiatives that collect and organize such materials. As a learner you can make use of some of these to collect additional materials for your learning. Several institutions and government agencies have taken steps to make such materials available to all. The Govt. of India through the Ministry of Human Resource Development has taken one such step to create an educational web portal, called SHAKSHAT. This web portal has five functional modules: Learning resources, scholarship information, educational testing, tracking of super achievers, and interaction with experts in synchronous and asynchronous mode. The IGNOU has also taken steps to develop a National Digital Repository of Learning Resources, called eGyanKosh. The repository intends to have all learning materials of IGNOU, in print, audio and video, made available through the web. Some of the educational web resources are given here for your use and browsing.

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<th>Learning Space:</th>
<th>Wikipedia:</th>
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Library and Information Services for Distance Learners
### 4.5 USING AND ACKNOWLEDGING SOURCES

For preparation of your assignments and project report, you will normally use various kinds of sources of knowledge. But what is important is to acknowledge the source of the document, when you prepare assignments and/or project reports, there are two very important points, you must know in relation to acknowledging sources (i) not to plagiarize, and (ii) provide reference of the source correctly.

#### 4.5.1 Avoiding Plagiarism

Plagiarism occurs when you take the ideas of a source and either do not acknowledge them or present them as your own. Most students become prey to copying the sections of learning materials for their assignments, and this is how they get poor grades. Most learners face these problems, and sometimes unknowingly become prey to
plagiarism. To avoid plagiarism you can put the content/quotations in a quotation mark and give the source after the end of the quotation mark. You can also paraphrase the idea in the quotation and put the reference at the end of the sentence or paragraph. However, quoting at length from various sources without critical viewpoint of your own does not make your writing original. Therefore, it is essential that you present various viewpoints/facts taken from different sources within a critical and constructive story of your own. In order to avoid plagiarism, you should follow the following:

- Note down the exact source of information (with page number, if it is a quote)
- Give reference in-text and also at the end
- Use your own expressions
- Ideas taken from others, even if expressed in your own words need referencing
- Treat plagiarism as an offence.

4.5.2 Referencing

There are various patterns of referencing used in books and journals. There are certain conventions to academic referencing, and we should follow them. For the Indian Journal of Open Learning, a research journal published by IGNOU, we provide few guidelines for citations and references, which can be used for any other similar purposes in preparing assignments and project reports. We reproduce below the guidelines.

Citations of other works should be limited to those strictly necessary for arguments. Short quotations should be included in the text within inverted commas (“…”), and quotations of more than 30 words should be placed in a separate paragraph indented from the main body of the text. However, all the quotations should be accompanied by precise reference, in author date style.

References should be indicated in the text by giving the name of the author(s) with the year of publication in parentheses. If more than one paper by the same author(s) from the same year is cited, a, b, c, etc. should be put after the year of publication. All references should be alphabetically listed at the end of the paper in the following standard format.


4.6 TYPES OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES FOR DISTANCE LEARNERS

While there seems to be a need for library and information services for distance learners, the actual use of libraries by distance learners are not very encouraging (Appavoo and Hansen, 1988). However, Unwin (1994) reported that distance students wish to see themselves as real students, and that using the library is regarded as an important component of an authentic learning experience. A study by Stephens et al (1997) revealed that students use the public libraries the most, and the need of students to use library was underestimated by the course providers. Continuing reporting of this study, Bolton et al (1998) stated that training in library use is a significant factor in use of library and its services amongst distance learners. Students also preferred cooperative arrangements for use of libraries of other institutions. Providing library and information services to distance learners should be a policy of every distance teaching institution. Having appropriate policy in place help the librarian to plan and develop the collection to provide appropriate and need-based services. Some of these are discussed below:

- **Collection Development:** Any library service to distance learners shall be dependent upon the quality of books and journal collection it has. Libraries supporting distance learners need to understand the needs of their learners, and keep books that are given as references and further readings in the study material supplied to them in multiple copies. These are the most commonly needed books by students in the Study Centres.

- **Document Delivery:** As the distance learners can’t come to the library, the library must reach the learners. The second law of Library Science pronounced by Dr. S.R. Ranganathan in 1928 says “Every reader his/her books”. In other words, it is morally binding on the part of the library professionals and institutions to provide document delivery services to distance learners.

- **Local Study Centre:** Access to libraries and books can be provided to distance learners through local study centres of the distance teaching institutions through partnership/collaboration with public libraries and other educational institutions.

- **Network Access:** With the advancement of information technology, it is possible to provide access to electronic databases, e-books and e-journals subscribed in the library to individual distance learners through individual user id and password.

- **Photocopying Service:** It is also a form of document delivery service that provides photocopies of required article or pages of a book by following appropriate copyright procedure. This is often
an additional need-based service to the learners, and/or the learners have a specific limit of requesting photocopies.

- **Reference Services**: Distance learners need quick information service through phone and email. A qualified reference librarian can help distance learners to access the reference collection of a library and improve their access to knowledge.

- **Book Bags**: Some distance teaching institutions, use a concept called “book bags” through which the students are given a set of 15-20 books in the beginning of the year on returnable basis at the end of the year. This is also called book bank in conventional set-up, where it serves the need of economically poor students who can’t purchase textbooks. The same concept can also be used for distance learners to identify a set of books and supply them to the distance learners.

Now let’s look at some of the library and information services of reputed distance education providers in the world:

**Athabasca University**

Canada’s Open University – the Athabasca University (AU) was established in 1970 in the Province of Alberta. It provides university education through:

- Flexible distance education teaching and learning strategies
- Competitive tuition fees that includes cost of all course materials and text books
- Course choice within programmes
- Minimal residency requirements
- Coordination of transfer credits
- Challenge for credit options
- Collaborative arrangements

The Library of AU believes in enhancing learners’ academic success by providing library service, including distance library service to students. The following library services are available to students who are enrolled in an AU courses. AU students:

- May borrow materials from the AU Library collection.
- Can search AUCAT, the online catalogue of library materials.
- Have access to library assistance and instruction from the Library Information Desk.
- Can request Inter Library Loan (ILL) for journal articles.
- Have access to AU online full-text Databases.

The AU Library makes reasonable attempts to provide library services. The learners have 24 hour access to Library Information Desk, and can borrow materials from the library in person, or they can request materials by mail, phone, fax, e-mail, or online. Books are normally mailed to the home address of the learner with an appropriate return card included for return of the materials to the AU library. The journals subscribed by the library are also available to the users through its webpage. Other services are: Digital Reference Centre,
Management of Learner Support

Digital Reading Room, Digital Theses and Project Room, and access to E-books collection. Photocopy of library materials are also provided to the learners on request on payment.

Indira Gandhi National Open University

The Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) is the apex body of Open and Distance Education in India, offering large number of programmes at Certificate, Diploma, Graduate, Post Graduate and Research degree level. Established in 1985, it has grown into the largest Open University in the world. It has a three tier structure and operates at the Headquarters, Regional Centres and Study Centres level. At each of these places there is a library for the use of the students. However, these are only reference libraries, and books are not loaned to the students for home use. Over the years, the central library’s main focus was to support the staff in development of quality learning resources, and the Regional Centre and Study Centre libraries supported the learning needs of the students. At the end of 2008-2009, the Regional and Study Centre libraries had a cumulative collection of 248800 books. Recently, the IGNOU has initiated a project entitled National Open and Distance Learners’ Library and Information Network (NODLINET) to develop an online platform and consortium/network of libraries of the Distance Education Institutes, State Open Universities and National Institute of Open Schooling. The NODLINET envisages providing access to library/learning resources and services to distance learners. It would encourage that the library system of distance learning institution should either (a) own the resources itself or provide appropriate direct service, (b) provide electronic access or (c) have formal agreement in place for provision of materials and services by other organizations.

Open University, United Kingdom

The Open University was established in 1969, and it paved the growth of other open universities around the world. It is the pioneer in promoting the concept of specially designed learning materials for the students, and thereby *unintendedly* relegated the library service to distance learners as secondary. This has been criticized by many as lack of understanding of the library needs of distance learners, and the packaged reading materials as too simple for not promoting critical thinking. We have discussed these issues previously. The Open University Library at Milton Keynes is a highly sophisticated system that aims to broaden and improve the learning experiences of the Open University students and staff. It provides access to OU theses, course materials, books and journals. It has also developed the online resource on Skills for Accessing, Finding and Reviewing Information (SAFARI) (see http://www.open.ac.uk/safari/index.php). For most of the online databases students have access through individual user ID and password. The Open University encourages students to make use of libraries near their homes. The SCONUL (Society of College, National and University Libraries) Access facility at the OU library allows students to access a library near their home through a simple registration and borrow books. To know more about the Open University Library and its services, you may visit the website at http://library.open.ac.uk/

Open University of Hong Kong

The Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK) was established in 1989 as Open Learning Institute of Hong Kong, and later on became the Open University of Hong Kong in 1997 through a charter of the Government. Being a city based university, it has some advantage over many other
Library and Information Services for Distance Learners

While the learners are not dispersed, they are mostly busy people and are working. They have access to Internet and therefore, the OUHK has adopted an e-library system to provide online access to most of its resources to the students. Students can reserve books online and also borrow books by visiting the library. More about the library of OUHK can be read at http://www.lib.ouhk.edu.hk/index.html

Check Your Progress 3

Notes: a) Space is given below for your answer.
      b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

Write a brief description of Hong Kong Open University Library.

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4.7 GUIDELINES FOR LIBRARY SERVICES TO DISTANCE LEARNERS

Library services to distance learners started way back in 1906 at the University of Wisconsin (Goodson, 2001). In 1966 the Board of Directors of the American College and Research Libraries (ACRL) approved the Guidelines for Library Services to Extension Students. Later on ACRL released the Guidelines for Extended Campus Library Services in 1981. Sheila Latham (1991) while analyzing the literature in this area attributed the interest in library services to distance learners to the emergence of open universities in the 1970s, and off-campus distance education programmes in the 1980s by the traditional post-secondary institutions.

Today, many guidelines for library services are available for the needs of distance learners. The National Council of the Indian Library Association (ILS) approved a set of Guidelines for Library Services to Distance Learners (Prepared by the Sectional Committee on Distance Education, Chairperson: Neela Jagannathan, and Convener: Sanjaya Mishra) on 28th July 2001. We reproduce below the guidelines to help you think, plan and provide library services to distance learners in the most possible professional manner.

Indian Library Association

(Sectioonal Committee on Distance Education)

Guidelines for Library Services to Distance Learners

Introduction

Distance Education has become very popular in the Indian sub-continent. At present there are 14 state open universities, one national Open University, and more than 200 Correspondence Course Institutes/ Distance Education Directorates operating in regular universities of the country. The range of courses/programmes on offer varies from academic to professional and vocational to technical in nature. All disciplines including science, technology, agriculture, medicine, nursing
etc. have distance education programmes. The learners are also heterogeneous as the diversity of the programmes on offer. More and more individuals are joining these programmes, as distance learning provides flexibility in terms of time, place and pace of learning. In other words, it facilitates learning while earning. Mostly the learners receive packets of printed learning materials presumably self sufficient in nature for self study and learn. These learning materials, though many a times designed very carefully by a team of experts in the field/subject, can’t be termed sufficient for effective learning equitable to face-to-face teaching and learning. In face-to-face teaching and learning systems, the learners after having attended the classroom teaching undergo a variety of learning tasks including consultation and use of library materials. In distance education, the print materials have just replaced the classroom teacher allowing the learners to be independent self-learners. Therefore, for a complete learning experience, the distance learners need to make use of resources other than printed materials provided by the educational institution. The situation calls for a critical reflection on the place of library in distance education. Various scholars have emphasized that:

- The library has a prominent role to play in facilitating learning.
- Libraries in Open and Distance Learning Institutions have hierarchical systems: Central library at the Headquarters and Regional and/or Study Centre libraries at the grass-root level.
- There are different formats of resources available for the use of the learners.
- Users need material facilities and information services.
- All kinds of libraries, public, academic and special, have to make combined efforts to meet the diverse requirements of the widespread learners.
- The use of modern technology has a special role in providing effective library services.

In order for effective use of library resources and development of information literacy skills to play a significant role in student learning, distance education programme designers must consider and give special place to library services at the course/programme design stage itself. Therefore, the “Guidelines” call for a paradigm shift in provision of course materials as “sufficient” to “basic minimum” for distance learning.

Mission

To ensure the provision of equitable library services to distance learners by assisting in the development and improvement of library services for new and existing distance learning programmes.

Scope

The guidelines are generic in nature and are applicable to Open Universities, Correspondence Course Institutes/Distance Education Directorates, Open Schools, and other Private Distance Education Providers using print, multimedia, teleconference, and web-based or any other course delivery methods. These are applicable to all credit and non-credit based certificate, diploma, degree, post-graduate degree, postgraduate diploma, and research degree programmes.
Target Groups

The guidelines are aimed at administrators of distance learning providers, distance learning programme coordinators/managers, library professionals in charge of managing distance learning services and other support staff responsible for effective implementation of the distance learning programme. As a secondary target group, the guidelines may also benefit various accreditation bodies in the country.

Definitions

Chief Professional Librarian: A professionally qualified librarian, who has been designated by the Distance Education Provider to look after the library system.

Distance Learners: Students enrolled in a distance learning programme.

Distance Learning Programme Coordinator: An academic in charge of conceptualization, organization, preparation and delivery of a distance learning programme.

Distance Learning Provider: The organization usually responsible for offering and funding courses and programmes through distance mode.

Professionally Qualified Librarian: A person holding at least a Bachelor’s degree in Library and Information Science from a recognized institution.

1) Philosophy

1.1 Access to library resources is essential for quality education regardless of the location of both the learner and programmes.

1.2 All registered distance learners and course tutors are entitled to library services equitable to those provided for learners in face-to-face educational institutions.

1.3 With distance learners being disadvantaged in terms of library access, special services need to be designed for them. In other words, traditional library service designed for on-campus users will not meet the requirements of distance learners.

1.4 Effective library support requires advance planning by the distance learning programme coordinator in consultation with the library professionals of the institutions. In other words, the programme/course design committees should have at least one library professional.

1.5 Since resources are scarce, partnerships, networking, and resource sharing are essential ingredients of effective library resources for distance learners. For this the distance education provider may use MOU with local institutions and/or technology based networking systems.

1.6 It is for the Library and Information Science professionals to create awareness and demand for library and information services in the distance learning mode.

2) Management

2.1 The head of the distance education provider should ensure through a designated Chief Professional Librarian, the adherence of national and international standards in library services, and provide for appropriate fund, staff, and other resources as may be required.

2.2 The Chief Professional librarian should demonstrate leadership
in developing relationships and methodologies (including partnerships, networking and access to remote databases) to address the library needs of the institution's distance learning programmes.

2.3 The distance learners being geographically dispersed, access structures of the libraries should be in accordance with the institutional support structure (e.g. IGNOU has a three tier structure with Headquarters at New Delhi, Regional Centres, and Study Centres across the country).

2.4 The library services should be planned and monitored by a Library Committee in the institution. The Committee should include amongst other members, representative of partner institutions, regional and local libraries, and learners.

2.5 The Chief Professional Librarian should prepare all such reports required for decision-making by the Library Committee.

3) Finance

3.1 The distance learning provider should make adequate funding available to ensure that its distance learners receive quality library services.

3.2 The library budget should take into consideration the following factors:
- The number of programmes on offer;
- The size of the distance learning programmes in terms of number of learners and access centres activated for the programme;
- The type and number of library service planned for the programme.

3.3 Funding for library services should generally come from the institute’s operating budget. However, specific library services may be offered as fee-based services. In addition, a specific percentage of student fee collected should be given to the library budget. As such there should be three major sources of finance for the libraries as suggested under:

i) 6-10% of the institute’s operating budget;
ii) 2% of the fee collected from the learners; and
iii) Fee collected from specific services.

4) Personnel

4.1 Personnel involved in providing library services to distance learners should be professionally qualified.

4.2 The distance learning provider should designate a Chief Professional Librarian for coordination of the different library access points and for the overall management of the system to work under the advice of the Library Committee.

4.3 Each library access point should have professionally qualified personnel as full-time or part-time staff in accordance with the institutional policy of support services to support the Chief
Professional Librarian for achieving the goals and objectives of the institute.

4.4 As distance library services require specialized skills, personnel with specialized skills in non-print media, networking and online services (including databases handling) should be recruited and/or specialized training be provided to the employees on a regular basis.

5) Facilities

5.1 The distance learning provider should provide adequate space, equipment and communication links to enable the designated staff to operate effectively as service units. Examples of suitable arrangements include but are not limited to:
   - Space for reading room(s);
   - Space for holding library materials;
   - Space for office staff;
   - File storage cabinets;
   - Dedicated telephone line for learner queries;
   - Access to Fax, Internet, Photocopier;
   - Access to packaging and mailing services;
   - Access to audio, video, and multimedia equipment;
   - Access to appropriate computer facilities.

6) Resources

6.1 Library resources should include materials in all kinds of formats (physical and electronic). However, they all should meet the requirements of learners, faculty, and other support staff.

6.2 Multiple copies of specific library items should be made available.

6.3 Master copy of all non-print media should be preserved carefully.

7) Services

7.1 In order to meet the information needs of the distance learners, faculty and other support staff, a wide range of services may be necessary. The kinds of services that may include, but are not limited to:
   - Reference service either in person, by telephone, or fax, or through e-mail;
   - Bibliographic services (manual and/or computerized) to faculty;
   - Borrowing of copies of library materials;
   - Obtaining specific copies of articles for course work in compliance with copyright regulations;
   - Preparation of “Readings of Articles” in print and/or online on specific topics after copyright clearance;
Management of Learner Support

- Access, from remote locations, to the Website and OPAC of the library and other library networks (e.g., DELNET, INFLIBNET);
- Access to online journals, databases located at different servers through student password;
- Access to interlibrary loan services;
- Mobile library services for remote areas;
- Access to Book Bank or recommended “Set of Books”;
- Access to reading rooms; and
- Establishment of Learning Resource Centres at Public and Private Libraries through MOUs.

7.2 Some of the library service may be fee-based as per the institutional policy.

7.3 The services should be available during all working hours for optimum access by the users. Efforts should be made for providing services during holidays.

8) Documentation and Research

8.1 Library policies should be printed and made available to all patrons.

8.2 Library statistics (including use of the services and about collection) should be prepared regularly.

8.3 User guides, membership forms, and other user-related documents should be made available easily.

8.4 All the addresses of the key library professionals along with their duties and responsibilities should be printed in the user guide/manual.

8.5 Evaluative research studies should be conducted at regular intervals to measure the effectiveness of existing library services and design new library services. Internal staff may do the evaluation or external agencies specialized for such activities may be asked to do the job on turn key basis.

9) Publicity

9.1 Access to library facilities, resources, and services should be clearly advertised and promoted in the programme guide.

9.2 Library timings should be clearly mentioned in the signboards and other documents of the institution.

10) Library Education

10.1 To enable the initiation of an academic professional specialization in distance learning library services, Universities should include in their Master’s curriculum, an optional special paper on Distance Librarianship.
Continuing professional development programmes of short duration on all areas of Distance Librarianship should be conducted at regular intervals by professional associations and library schools.

4.8 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we focused on the library and information needs of distance learners and emphasized that their needs are similar to that of the students in conventional face-to-face education. However, they need materials to be delivered at their doorstep, and with the introduction of information and communication technologies, it is possible to provide comparable library services to distance learners. We discussed how to locate information, search, access, and evaluate them for our educational needs. In the process we discussed how you could make use of the library facilities near by your place of work, residence, office, and above all the public libraries. We also discussed the types of information sources available in the libraries and how you can make use of them. Guidelines to search databases were also discussed. With the emergence of the Internet and the WWW, the collection, organization, and dissemination of information on the net have changed considerably. While discussing these, we discussed the search techniques for the web. In course of our discussion of the web search techniques, we identified three major ways of finding information on the net: use of directories, use of search engines, and use of meta-search engines. We have given you a number of examples to give you the starting point to work on. We hope you will have access to the Internet and practice finding information on your own. The list of educational web resources including the Sakshat portal of the Govt. of India and the eGyanKosh of IGNOU shall be two websites that you should bookmark and visit regularly, as these will be providing more and more digital content online for your additional use. We also have strongly advised you to avoid plagiarism and develop the referencing skills. In this unit we have discussed different types of library and information services that you can plan and provide to the learners. Some of these are: document delivery, network access, collection development, photocopy services, local library services, library bags, etc. We also described the library practices of some of the leading open universities as examples. At the end we described the guidelines for providing library and information services to the distance learners as approved by the Indian Library Association. Using this, you may be able to plan better library services for your distance learners.

4.9 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS


### 4.10 FEEDBACK TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

#### QUESTIONS

**Check Your Progress 1**

1) An Open University library possibly has the collections mentioned below. This is so because without these sources, learners who stay at a distance and pursue studies in a distance university/institution will be deprived of getting the required academic services.

- Books
- Reference books
- Journals
- Magazines
- Databases
- Microforms
- Theses
- Newspapers
- Question papers
- E-Resources

**Check Your Progress 2**

E-Journal is an abbreviation of electronic journal which is now available on the web across the globe. These can be accessed irrespective of time and location. The e-journals come in different editions, such as electronic version of print journals, or electronic only journals. Most journal publishers today provide online access to their collections either free with print subscription or on payment of some additional amount.

**Check Your Progress 3**

In the Hong Kong Open University (HKOU), learners are mostly busy and are working people. They have access to HKOU library through Internet and therefore the HKOU has adopted an e-library system to provide online access to most of its resources to the learners. They can reserve books online and also borrow books by visiting the library.