

Utilization of Library Services by Teachers of a Medical College in India

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Abstract

Any large institution with thousands of students and hundreds of teachers should make an effort to find out the pattern of utilization of library by them, from time to time. The feedback so collected is important in deciding about new policies, improving services and also provides information about what are the expectations of the users. **Objectives:** To find out the extent of use of library by faculty, to identify utilization of facilities other than books in the library by them and to suggest ways to improve the resources in the library. **Subjects and methods:** The study was carried out in a medical college in South India. All the teachers in the departments of anatomy, physiology, bio-chemistry, pathology, pharmacology, microbiology, forensic medicine and community medicine were included in the study. The data was collected by using a pre-tested structured questionnaire. **Results and conclusion:** Seventy six teachers belonging to nonclinical departments responded. Junior teachers attended library more often when compared to senior teachers. Frequency of library visits decreased with the increase in the seniority of the teachers. One of the reasons could be that most of the teachers without higher qualifications [junior teachers] were preparing for higher studies hence likely to have spent more time in central library in preparation for various entrance examinations. Availability of internet facilities throughout the campus and the fact that all senior faculty are provided with personal laptops, probably decreases the need to attend central library frequently.

Keywords: Library; South India; Medical college; Faculty; Teachers.

Introduction

Major purpose of library is to provide information.[1] As medical science is a continually evolving discipline, the use of library resources by both faculty and students is a very important mean for acquiring new information.[2] The role of well equipped medical libraries in order to meet the needs of the medical students and teachers can not be overemphasized.[3] However utilization of library by the teachers may not entirely depend upon the quality of the books and journals available. Others like personal choices, environment in the library, inconvenience of

working hours and distance from place of residence, all may influence the use. Teachers of various disciplines of medicine update their knowledge from library resources. Acquiring and then disseminating such knowledge is the most important part of a quality teaching programme. As the field of medicine is ever changing, teachers have a great responsibility to give latest information to students.[4] Traditional documents found in a library used to be the most important source of information. Although every teacher and research scholar now has convenient and unlimited access to online resources, the role of books and journals is still important.[5] Moreover, faculty involvement in library resources decisions is not only common place, but essential in making decisions.[7]

It was felt by the authors that any large institution with thousands of students and hundreds of teachers should make an effort to find out the pattern of utilization of library by them, from time to time. The feedback so

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collected is important in deciding about new policies, improving services and also provides information about what are the expectations of the users. The effectiveness of a library as a tool of learning is determined by the success with which it provides the user with the information he is looking for. The library can fulfill its role as the source of knowledge and information best by pursuing a policy of constant self-evaluation in order to be alert to the changing needs of its user.[6]

Objectives

To find out the extent of use by faculty.

To identify utilization of facilities other than books in the library.

To suggest ways to improve the resources in the library.

Subjects and Methods

The study was carried out in a medical college in South India. This institution is reputed to have one of the best stocked libraries among medical colleges in this part of India. There is a common library [Central library] which is accessible to every student and teacher of the institution and in addition, every department has a library where common text books required for undergraduate teaching is available.

All the teachers in the departments of anatomy, physiology, bio-chemistry, pathology, pharmacology, microbiology, forensic medicine and community medicine were included in the study. Permission was obtained from the ethics committee of the institution and only those who were willing to sign the informed consent, after the objectives of the study were explained, were included. The data was collected by using a pre-tested structured questionnaire. The content validity of the questionnaire was done by four experts in the field. Questionnaire was pre-tested among a group of teachers of department of pharmacology. The questionnaire has the following details-demographic data, utilization parameters and personal opinions.

Statistical analysis

The data was tabulated and analyzed in SPSS version 11.5 and findings were presented in the form of appropriate tables and graphs. Data was expressed by calculating percentages.

Results and Discussion

Among 81 teachers in various departments-preclinical [Anatomy, Physiology and

Table 1: Frequency of visit to library by faculty

Frequency of visit	Designation of teachers				Total
	Junior [%]	Assistant professor [%]	Associate professor [%]	Professor [%]	
Every day	11 [56.1]	-	-	-	11 [14.5%]
<once a week	2 [10.55]	9 [37.5%]	7 [35%]	5 [38.5%]	23 [30.3%]
Occasionally	6 [33.35]	15 [62.5%]	13 [65%]	7 [53.8%]	41 [53.9%]
Never	-	-	-	1 [7.7%]	1 [1.3%]
Total	19 [100]	24 [100]	20 [100]	13 [100]	7 [100]

Table 2: Time spent in the library by faculty per visit

Time spent in [each visit]	Junior	Assistant professor	Associate professor	Professor	Total [%]
2 hours or less	9	17	19	10	55 [72]
3-4 hours	-	6	1	2	9 [12]
5-6 hours	5	0	0	1	6 [8]
More than 6 hours	5	1	0	0	6 [8]
Total	9	24	20	13	76 [100]

Table 3: Purpose of visit to library

Purpose	Junior	Assistant professor	Associate professor	Professor	Total [%]
Prepare for teaching	10	6	1	4	21 [27]
Research	3	7	5	2	17 [22]
Both	6	11	14	7	38 [51]
Total	19	24	20	13	76 [100]

Table 4: Opinion of teachers about facilities available in the library

Enquiry	Opinion	Junior [n=19]	Assistant professor [n=24]	Associate professor [n=20]	Professor [n=13]	Percent [n=76]
Working hours	Satisfied	16	20	20	13	90
Use of internet facility	Every visit	14	19	9	9	67
Lay out of text books	Satisfied	17	22	20	11	92
Availability of reference books	Satisfied	18	22	19	12	93
Availability of learning aids	Satisfied	18	23	19	13	96
Availability of journals	Satisfied	15	16	10	11	68
Borrowing facility of books	Satisfied	16	22	19	13	91
General environment	Satisfied	17	23	18	12	91
Effective use of Library by UG/PG students	Satisfied	19	22	18	9	89
Visit to department. Library everyday	Yes	18	19	16	13	90

biochemistry-31, 38%] and paraclinical [Pharmacology, Pathology, Microbiology, Community medicine and Forensic medicine-45, 62 %] 93% [76] returned the questionnaire. Among the teachers who returned the questionnaire those without post graduate qualifications were grouped under 'Junior teachers'. Others were categorized according to their designation [assistant professors, associate professors and professors]. The distribution of study subjects is shown in table 1. Junior teachers attended library more frequently when compared to senior teachers. Frequency of library visits decreased with the increase in the seniority of the teachers [Table 1]. One of the reasons could be that most of the teachers without higher qualifications [junior teachers] were preparing for higher studies hence likely to have spent more time in central library in preparation for various entrance examinations. Time spent in the library during each visit was two hours or less by most of the teachers [Table 2]. As can be expected, preparing for class room teaching was the purpose of visit among more than 50% of junior faculty whereas most of senior teachers visited the library both for preparation of lectures and research [Table 3]. Teachers were also asked their opinion about various facilities in the library. Frequencies of satisfactory responses are shown in Table 4. Almost all the queries were given a 'satisfactory' response. It is interesting to note that all the teachers frequented libraries in the departments [which is present in all the departments in addition to central library of the institution] regularly. Probably libraries in the department where standard text books are made available, satisfy the teaching needs of the faculty. They need to attend central library only for some of the reference books, journals and to refer books belonging to other departments. Availability of internet facilities throughout the campus and the fact that all senior faculty are provided with personal laptops, probably decreases the need to attend central library frequently.

Conclusion

Present study was under taken to study the utilization of library services by the teachers in a medical college in South-India. Seventy six teachers belonging to nonclinical departments responded. Though the institution has a one of the best libraries in India, frequency of visits to library by the senior teaching staff was low. Availability of text books required for day to day teaching, in the departments, access to internet throughout the campus, could be some of the reasons why teachers do not visit central library of the institution regularly. However this reason was specifically not looked for in the present study. A detailed study is required to look into the reasons for not visiting the central library frequently by teachers. There was satisfaction among faculty regarding various aspects of facilities available and working style of library. There were some suggestions about increasing the number of journals and copies of important books of reference.

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