Library Services in Medical and Paramedical Colleges in Assam: An Analytical Study

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1. Introduction

Heath (2000) has stated that, "libraries today are service agents sharing much in common with other service providers throughout the profit and nonprofits service sector of society." The quality of library is difficult to judge because the libraries are organisations whose assets and services are both tangible and intangible. The tangible assets constitute physical documents, facilities like reading room, furniture, and human resources. The intangible assets comprise the invaluable personalised services rendered by the library staff. Although most college libraries share a core set of services, each library defines the limits of its service areas and its relative priorities among them differently. Rarely does these organisations operate equally well in all areas, because library services are multidimensional, so multiple measures help to construct a three dimensional picture. Generally used measures for the library and Information Services are:

1. Overall user success, including success at various library activities, overall satisfaction, and ease of use.
2. Materials availability and use.
3. Facilities and equipment availability and use.
4. Library and Information Service.

The libraries of medical and paramedical colleges and Institutes form the primary information support system for achieving the objectives, the parent organisations have placed before them. However, these libraries are facing the usual constraints like inadequate funds, untrained and inadequate manpower, high cost of resources, lack of integrated network at regional and national level, etc. A wide difference persists between information support needed for research and educational programmes and the existing library services. Libraries of some paramedical colleges still are struggling.

2. Objectives of the Study

The study has been conducted with the following objectives:

1. To assess the existing state of affairs of the libraries in respect of its services, facilities and general satisfaction of the students regarding library services in selected medical & paramedical college libraries of Assam.

2. To apply the indicators of effectiveness to assess the performance of medical and paramedical college libraries.

3. To understand the problems faced by libraries in extending technology based library and information services to users.

4. To suggest ways and means to improve the existing library services to achieve user satisfaction.

3. Scope of the Study

Till now, there are twenty two government and private medical and paramedical colleges in Assam. The only Ayurvedic College of NE-India is situated in Jalukbari, Assam. For the present study, the following medical and paramedical colleges have been selected; Table-1 that is given below highlights the year of establishment of the Medical and Paramedical Colleges and their libraries.

Sl No.	Name of Medical/Paramedical College	Establishment Year	Name of the Medical/ Paramedical Library	Year of Establishment
1	Army Institute of Nursing, Guwahati	2006	Army Institute of Nursing Library	2006
2	Arya Nursing College, Guwahati	2007	Arya Nursing College Library	2007
3	Assam Homeopathic Medical College, Nagaon	1968	Central Library, Assam Homeopathic Medical College	1968
4	Assam Medical College, Dibrugarh	1947	Assam Medical College Library	1947
5	College of Physiotherapy and Medical Sciences (CPMS), Guwahati	2007	CPMS Library	2007
6	Down Town College of Allied Health Science	2009	Harinarayan Dutta Baruah Central Library	2005
7	Down Town College of Nursing	2007	Harinarayan Dutta Baruah Central Library	2005
8	Dr. J.K. Saikia Homeopathic medical college, Jorhat	1975	Central Library,Dr. J.K. Saikia Homeopathic medical college	1975
9	Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed Medical College, Barpeta	2010	Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed Medical College Library	2010
10	Govt. Ayurvedic College, Guwahati	1948	Central Library,Govt Ayurvedic College	1948
11	Guwahati Medical College, Guwahati	1960	Guwahati Medical College-Central Library	1961
12	Institute of Pharmacy, Dibrugarh	1960	Pharmacy Institute Library	1961
13	Institute of Pharmacy, Guwahati	1986	Pharmacy Institute Library	1986
14	Institute of Pharmacy, Silchar	1987	Pharmacy Institute Library	1987
15	Jorhat Medical College, Jorhat	2009	Jorhat Medical College Library	2009

16	North-Eastern Indira Gandhi Regional Institute of Health and Medical Sciences , Shillong	1987	North-Eastern Indira Gandhi Regional Institute of Health and Medical Sciences, Shillong	1987
17	Regional College of Nursing, Guwahati	1977	Library , Regional Nursing College	1977
18	Regional Dental college,Guwahati	1982	Regional Dental college library	1982
19	Regional Institute of Medical Science, Imphal	1972	Regional Institute of Medical Science Library	1972
20	Silchar Medical College, Silchar	1968	Central Library, Silchar Medical College, Silchar	1969
21	Swahid Jadav Nath Govt. Homeopathic Medical College Hospital, Guwahati	1975	Central Library, Swahid Jadav Nath Govt . Homeopathic Medical College Hospital	1975 1975
22	The Assam Hills Medical College and Research Institute, Diphu	2011	The Assam Hills Medical College and Research Institute Library	Under proceSS

Table1: The year of establishment of the Medical and Paramedical Colleges and their libraries

4. Methodology

For the purpose of the study, two separate questionnaires were designed and circulated to 397 students, research scholars and medical and paramedical professionals, and 19 library personnel in person. All the respondents were given the same questionnaire irrespective of their status. Some of the respondents willingly filled up the questionnaire but some of them showed great reluctance. For this study data from 310 students from the Medical and a few selected Paramedical Colleges of Assam could be obtained.

5. Review of Literature

The exponential growth of both the user community, as well as of medical information gave rise to the need for assessment of the services provided by libraries and also the degree of use of these services by the medical library community. For the present study, a systematic review of the literature was conducted to identify related research and the development of the concept of service quality as well as trends in the assessment of library users' expectations.

A survey on National   Medical Library (India) conducted by R. P. Dixit during 1979-80, revealed the inadequacies of information sources and services in health science libraries. In 1980, a survey of libraries of the medical colleges, medical research institution, and various departments of medical and allied sciences of the universities was made by Satpathy and Mukhopadhyaya. This survey revealed that due to the paucity of funds, insufficient library hours, inadequate staff number, and collection, the users of these libraries were not able to get many essential facilities. Similar deficiencies were highlighted by another study undertaken by R. S. R. Varalakshmi (1993), in the medical college libraries of Andhra Pradesh. Adarsh Bala and B. M. Gupta(2010) attempted to study the perceptions, knowledge and awareness among the health professionals

working in Govt. Hospitals of Chandigarh regarding the use of mobile communication technologies and devices for dissemination of various library and information services and showed the positive attitude of the medical respondents towards the provision of services on mobile devices.
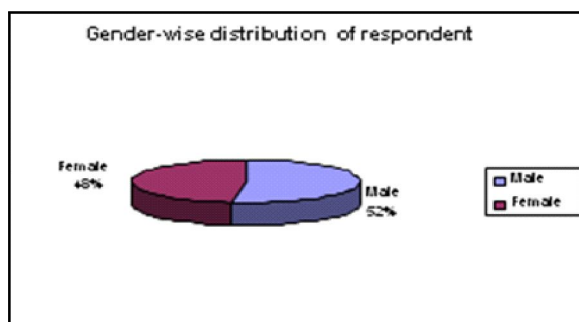
6. Analysis and Interpretation of Data

6.1 Gender Wise Distribution of Data

In order to avoid any gender bias, efforts are made to collect data from almost equally distributed samples. It may be noted from Table-2 that the data are collected from 162(52.25%) boys and 148 (47.75%) girls' students.

Table2: Gender-Wise Distribution

Sl. No.	Gender	Numbers of Users	Percentage
1	Male	162	52.25%
2	Female	148	47.75%
	Total	310	100.00%

Graph-1

6.2 Course –wise distribution of data

Table-3 below provides the data regarding distribution of students with regard to their course of study.

Table 3: Course wise distribution of students

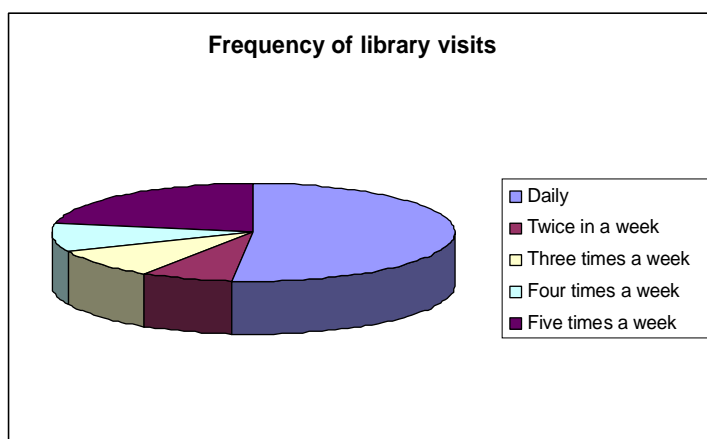| Sl. No.	Course	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	B.Sc. Nursing	102	32.90%
2	BAMS	53	17.09%
3	Dental	1	0.30%
4	Homeopathic	53	17.09%
5	M.B.B.S/M.D.	100	32.32%
6	Pharmacy	1	0.30%
	Total	310	100.00%

6.3 Frequency of Library Visits

The frequency of library visit by the users is usually influenced by the factors such as collection, organisation, and maintenance of the library resources along with the library resources, facilities and the library services. The frequency of library visit and its utilisation by the respondents are presented in table-4

Table4: Frequency distribution of visits by users

Sl. No.	Library Visit	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	Daily	160	51.81%
2	Twice in a week	23	7.41%
3	Three times a week	30	9.68%
4	Four times a week	29	9.36%
5	Five times a week	68	21.75%
	Total	310	100.00%

As can be observed from the above table about half of the students' population claim to visit the library everyday. It appears that the respondents have claimed that they visit the library on daily basis. Where as 23(7.41%) of students visit twice a week and 30(9.68%) visit the library three times a week, 29(9.36%) of them visited Four times a week, 68(21.75%) visited the library five times a week. The cumulative total of the rows 2, 3 and 4 in the above table gives an indication that a significant number of students (26.45%) rarely use the library. Some measures need to be taken immediately to improve upon this situation.

Graph 2: Frequency of library visits

6.4 Purpose of Visit the Library

Respondents were asked to indicate their main purpose of visit on the day of the data collection. Data shows different purposes for which the users visited the library, as presented below.

Table 5: Purpose of visit

Sl No.	Purpose of visiting library	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	Study in the Library	115	37.09%
2	Borrowing books	110	35.48%
3	Read Newspaper	30	9.69%
4	Consult reference sources	20	6.45%
5	Preparing research projects /articles	20	6.45%
6	Read periodical articles	15	4.84%
	Total	310	100.00

Large percentage of users visited the library either for study (37.09%) or for borrowing books (35.48%).This trend of course conforms to the normal expectations. Usage of reference materials may have to be increased by some means in the Paramedical college libraries as my study shows that only 6.45% of the users visited the library for consulting reference books. Taking into account the displayed use, the librarians and other stakeholders have to give importance for improving the usage of reference collection.

6.5 Success of Library Visit

Effectiveness can be measured by the success rate of the users in finding the information. Respondent were asked about their success on that day of their visit. They were asked the question "What do you do in the library today?" The table given below represents the different kinds of activities done by the users along with their success rate.

Table- 6: Success rate

Sl No	Activity	Not Successful		Successful		Responded	
1	Studied	68	23.05%	227	76.95%	295	95.22%
2	Saw New books	121	43.37%	158	56.63%	279	90%
3	Asked Reference questions	124	44.13%	157	55.87%	281	90.64%
4	Barrowed /Returned Books	114	42.86%	143	53.75%	266	85.80%
5	Looked for books /periodicals	97	34.28%	186	65.72%	283	91.25
6	Others	107	40.99%	154	59%	261	84.19%

It may be noted that comparatively a large number of students 227(76.95%) are able to study successfully. This shows that there is a pleasant atmosphere in the libraries for studying. However, the unsuccessful percentage (23.05%) is also significantly higher than usual expectation. One of the major reasons is lack of sitting facility for studying within the library. This might call for more spacious buildings for the libraries/ reading activity. 'Looking for books/periodicals' forms the next successful activity with 65.72% score. This also probably indicates that most of the libraries are fairly well organised. Again the unsuccessful rate is high for this activity. This may be because of the fact that some users are not aware about the mechanism of library organisation. It was found that the unsuccessful attempt was due to misplacement of books also. In

all other activities the unsuccessful rate is significantly higher and immediate attention is needs to be taken to combat the situation.
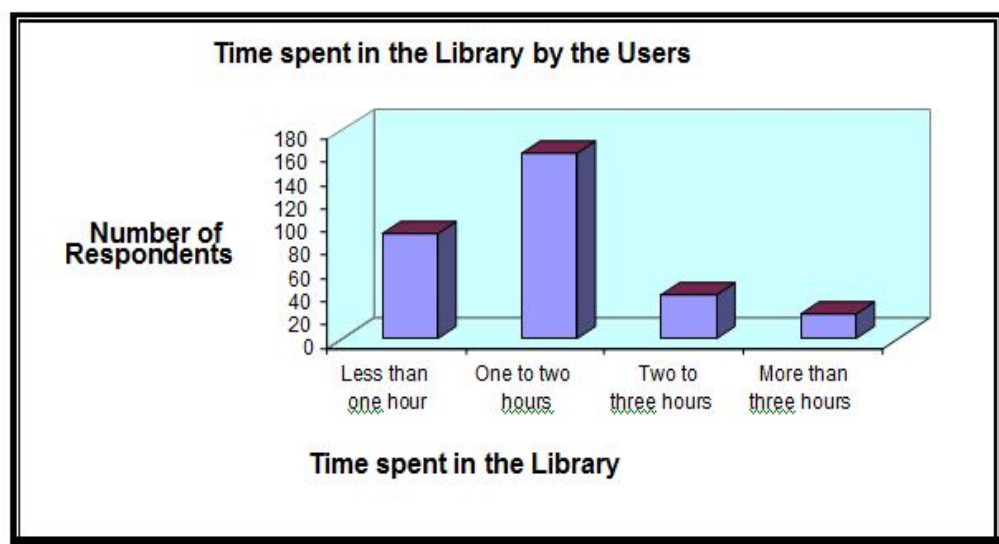
6.6 Time Spent in the Library

Library being housed with wealth of knowledge, any amount of time can be spent for a worthy cause. Sincere and serious students normally spend more time in Libraries. Where as others hardly spend time to meet their information requirements. Users are asked to indicate the average time spent by them on their each visit. The responses received are analysed from the data presented in table 7.

Table7: Time spent in the library

Sl No	Time Spent in the Library	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	Less than one hour	91	29.24%
2	One to two hours	160	51.11%
3	Two to three hours	38	12.96%
4	More than three hours	21	6.69%
5	Total	310	100.00%

As expected only 6.69% students spend their time about three hours a day. As can be seen from the related literature, this trend is because of the fact that our education is not library oriented. Students are satisfied with the class notes given by the teachers. However, some medical students said that they do not have sufficient time to visit libraries for longer hours as they have tight academic schedule.

Graph-3

Extent of use of Library Services

To fulfil the needs of the students Medical and Paramedical Libraries provide various services such as reference services, photocopy services, etc.

Table -8: Extent of use of Library Services

Sr No	Library Services	Highly Useful No. of Resp.	%	Moderately useful No. of Resp.	%	Partially useful No. of Resp.	%	Not at all useful No. of Resp.	%
1	Current Awareness Services	117	37.74	46	14.84	56	18.06	10	3.2
2	Notification of newly published research	66	21.29	61	19.67	86	27.74	97	31.29
3	Periodical Services	167	53.87	74	23.87	51	16.45	18	5.80
4	Reference services	131	42.25	113	36.45	40	12.90	26	8.38
5	Photocopying	105	33.87	76	24.52	79	25.48	50	16.12
6	Text Book Services	206	66.45	52	16.77	40	12.90	12	3.87
7	Mobile Technology Library Service	40	12.90	54	17.42	97	31.29	119	38.39

Table -8 depicts the various services that are offered in the libraries in the study. Text book service is the highly sought after service in medical and paramedical college libraries (66.45%). Some services are totally unknown to the users such as mobile technology services, inter-library loan, repackaging and condensation service, abstracting & indexing service, standards information, patent information, etc. The teaching faculty and librarian have to work together to encourage students to use periodicals and internet for self-learning in colleges.

7. Satisfaction of Information Provided

The importance of existence of libraries is to satisfy the information needs of its user. It has to move with the time and equip with modern technological gadgets to satisfy the needs of the users.

Table -9 : Satisfaction of Information provided

Sl No.	Satisfaction with the information provided in the Library	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	Partially satisfied	116	37.41%
2	Mostly satisfied	84	27.09%
3	Completely Satisfied	80	25.83%
4	Not at all Satisfied	30	9.57%
5	Total	310	100.00%

Twenty-five percent of the students are completely satisfied with the information provided in the library. It can be observed from the study that 37.41% of them have partially satisfied with the information provided

in the library. On the other hand some users are dissatisfied also. Medical/ Paramedical college libraries in Assam must take some steps and have to plan for better service.

Suggestion to Improve the Library Services

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Table-10: Suggestion to improve the library services

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Sl No.	Suggestion to improve Library Services	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	To computerize Library (including internet service)	97	31.29
2	To increase the number of books/journals	84	27.09
3	To develop infrastructure facilities	65	21%
4	Library should be kept open for 24 hours	31	10%
5	Notification of newly published research	33	10.62%
6	Total	310	100.00%

Table 10 shows the suggestions made by the students to improve library services. It is now an established fact that computers can really enhance the speed and the efficiency of services. This is evident from the fact that 31.29% of the respondents have asked for the computerisation of libraries. One of the most important services usually found is circulation of books, as most of the students depend on this facility, they (27.09%) have asked for the increase in the number of books loaned out. Infrastructure facilities is a common problem, that college libraries come across often, as most of the paramedical college libraries placed in a very small room or some time classrooms converted into the library. This has to be stopped forthwith, hence 21% of students have asked for improvement of infrastructure facilities. Browsing room can be used to enhance the information literacy skills of the medical/paramedical college students.

8. Conclusion

It is very evident from the discussion that college libraries are lagging behind particularly in providing specific information to the users. Services provided by them are poor and access to the latest periodicals and other use ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) are unthinkable due to paucity of adequate finances. Infrastructure facilities in the libraries are not good. One of the libraries is manned by only a graduate and almost half of them have no computer available in the library. It has been found from the study that a good number of students spend not more than one to two hours a day in libraries. This situation has to be improved and libraries should make efforts to attract them. The suggestions made by the students are valid and this is the right time to take those suggestions seriously.

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