

# Accessibility of Information Resources and Services in the Library for the Users with Disabilities: A Study

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**Abstract** - The library is recognized as the hub of academic learning. As a result of this cluster of ladders, library services for disabled people in underdeveloped nations are typically limited. Dr. Shakuntala Misra Rehabilitation National University, Lucknow, India, provided library materials and services for disabled people. In contrast, the common users and users with disabilities have required highly appropriate and suitable access to the library facilities. The study reveals the majority of the differently-abled users that access library resources and services with special needs especially in areas of technology enhancement. The precise study has shown the availability of library services designed specifically for students with disabilities, students often face challenges due to the unavailability of resources and not suitable formats, insufficient internet accessibility, and insufficient instruction about how to access the library. The core problems opine the reasonable fact that the disabled users were allocated getting support from an unskilled library professional to manage and operate the library services. The study suggests that the university appoint more skilled staff in the audio-Braille section of the library to support users with disabilities includes modern assistive technologies.

**Keywords:** Differently Abled Users, Library Services, Persons with Disabilities, Accessibility of Information, Dr. Shakuntala Misra University of Rehabilitation.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Freedom of expression is a fundamental right for all of us and we have equal opportunity to interact with and access the information and its utilisation for every way of life. Leading to physical facilities, engagement and behavioural obstacles, people with disabilities are prevented from fitting in and receiving mainstream educational services. Act of the Indian government People with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities and Full Participation, Protection of Rights) Act, 1995 ensures accessible education in a barrier-free environment for all children with disabilities up to the age of eighteen, and Section 48 of the Act provides funding for university-based research and development for innovative disabilities-causing factors. Additionally, Section 49 of the Act provides for higher education assistance to disabled children through the use of an open university in a distant learning mode. (*Disabilities Affairs*, 2021-02-02).

In the Global BVI, the worldwide population of physically or visually impaired exceeds 1.3 billion and 25 million in the U.S American Foundation for the blind 2018. (*WHO / World Health Organization*, 2020-09-25).

“Disabled Population in India as per census 2011 survey, out of the 1,210,854,977 population, (26814994) 26800 billion persons are disabled which is 2.21% of the total population. Among the disabled population, (15000000) 0.015 billion (56%) are males and (118000000) 0.0118 billion (44%) are females. In the total population, the male and female populations are 51% and 49% respectively”. (*Census of India: Disabled Population, 2021-01-27*). The majority (69%) of the disabled population resided in rural areas (18600000) 0.0186 billion disabled persons in rural areas and (8100000) 0.0081 billion in urban areas. In the case of the total population also, 69% are from rural areas while the remaining 31% resided in urban areas. (*Census of India: 2011, 2021-01-27*).

## II. HISTORICAL ALMANAC OF THE DR. SHAKUNTALA MISRA NATIONAL REHABILITATION UNIVERSITY, LUCKNOW

In the 18th century, Lucknow prospered as the Nawabs of Avadh's capital, Delhi's support of art and literature. During this period, culture and construction merged, resulting in a unique Lucknow culture. The Nawabs' peace and wealth aided Avadh's cultural rebirth. Lucknow is the administrative capital of Uttar Pradesh and the administrative headquarters of Lucknow District and Lucknow Division. The Dr. Shakuntala Misra National Rehabilitation University, Lucknow, was founded in 2008 by the state of Uttar Pradesh and brought together academia and social responsibility. In India, no other university offers accessible and outstanding higher education to students with disabilities while simultaneously addressing educational requirements in a smooth and compassionate academic environment. (*Dr Shakuntala Misra National Rehabilitation University, 2021-01-27*)

## III. UNIVERSITY FACILITIES FOR DIFFERENTLY ABLED USERS

In collaboration with the university administration and the Indian government's Disabilities Act, the institution has improved its resources for differently-abled students. Among institutions' top goals is to assist the society's differently-abled challenged individuals, for whom a horizontal reserved seat in all courses at the university has been set up. Some of the important assists are listed below.

1. Resource Learning Room for Mentally Retarded users
2. Resource Support Room Visually Impaired (VI)
3. Orientation & Mobility Unit
4. Sensory Stimulation Unit
5. Other facilities.

#### IV. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Students studying at the Dr. Shakuntala Misra Rehabilitation National University in Lucknow have access to a comprehensive library system that includes collections, resources, and services tailored to their needs. Although the university administration purchased a large number of resources each year, changes in the information environment, the use of information technology in the library, and the availability of electronic information sources have made appropriate information resources available when they are needed. To ensure that library materials meet the demands of its patrons, it is the librarian's responsibility to assess and evaluate them. According to the literature research findings, there has been a good dialogue on the demands and wants of differently-abled users. As a result, this study was conducted at the Dr. Shakuntala Misra Rehabilitation National University in Lucknow to assess the performance of differently-abled users in the library.

#### V. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To investigate the quality of information resources and services for differently abled users.
2. To examine the opinion of the users about the resources available in the university libraries undergoing review.
3. To study the available physical assets and assistive aids and technology available for differently abled users.
4. To identify the challenges that differently abled users face in accessing the resources of information access tools.

#### VI. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature review based on the theme of convenience and accessibility of library services and resources for differently abled users. As the research on the differently abled users and accessibility will be focus on the part of the content analysis, the following is brief overview of the literature. The literature review segregated internationally and nationally. The literature on disability and accessibility has been characterized strongly focused on technology (Linley, 2000).

Gul & Khowaja, (2020) illustrated the library resources and services to their disabled users, they suggested that there should be a need for skilled staff, fluent in sign language, interpretation, and braille literacy. These findings also revealed that the most users pleased with the facilities while they are less satisfied with the library's programs, equipment. Khan *et al.*, 2020 articulated the state of Kashmir in India, users with various disabilities. The

research carried out in 2018 with 21 users with disabilities studying at the University of Kashmir, India. The outcome shows that disabled people face various barriers while they have access to library resources, facing several difficulties such as lack of brailled, the lack of university funding, accommodation, financial assistance, seminars and infrastructure and the same level of training as their own.

Kwafoa & Imoro, (2020) strongly recommended that library management organize unique library alignment for visually disabled students. They suggested that the orientation would take the form of conferences or workshops. They aimed to educate participants on the services provided to disabled persons and library management needs to invest more in resource people training to handle their visually impaired units.

Bharti *et al.*, (2019) have discussed visually impaired library and information services. A scholarly kitchen where books are the main component on your dinner table, and you shall be full of flavor, according to the research. They believe that libraries are crucial for the development of educational institutions and society and that visually impaired people are an integral component of our society. Datta *et al.*, (2019) focused on differently-abled users' barriers and obstacles from two different countries, India and Australia. They showed in their research that India does not have any comprehensive policy for differently-abled people.

The study also revealed that very few people have engaged in the height education system. The policy implementation should be revised every five years and inculcate the result of the survey study. Ali & Khan, (2019) found that a large number of users are well acquainted with the use of book readers and magnifiers, but several users are not well acquainted and user-friendly Refreshable Braille Display and V4 Braille Printers, there is a great need for training to manage the technology and help.

Anis, (2017) conducted a study on users who are well versed in computer literacy and did not reap the advantages of ICT due to the lack of capital. The visually impaired users are aware of these advanced technologies and whether these benefits offered by assistive devices are adequately reaching them. The technologies also focused play a significant role in meeting the information and educational needs of visually impaired people.

Rayini, (2017) As previously stated, libraries and information centers play a vital role in delivering services to visually impaired users by serving as a link between users and the source resources they need. The library serves as the primary center of information for all users, regardless of their race, gender, or sexual orientation. Phukubje & Ngoepe, (2017) opined that the impairments could be short term, long lasting, or serialized. In order to achieve their research and perform someone else's research, users with

disabilities necessitate tools and service providers' inadequate quantity just like the general student population.

Seyama *et al.*, (2015) explored that people with disabilities that aspire to enter colleges are faced with additional barriers restricting complete and equal access to other positive educational programs. This hurdles exacerbated by a lack of the highest regulatory support for Nigerian academic freedom especially in comparison with nations in the international gateway.

Tripathi & Shukla, (2014) recommended the concept of support technologies in academic libraries for self-reliant users pursuing their academic and research paths with visually impaired problems. They focused on the helpful and advanced technology used in developed and developing countries. Pillai, (2012) focused the copyright work for disabled people. The government of India must be attentive about the amendment in the copyright law print disabled in India was unable to access the published copyrighted works. The organization dealing with the visually impaired can provide accessible materials to visually impaired persons without seeking copyright permission from the owners.

## VII. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The population of the study consisted of differently abled users applied the quantitative method using the open-ended questionnaire for the data collection tool. Data collected via questionnaires were supplement with observations made using an IFLA checklist. The IFLA checklist used to

evaluate building, operation, content, and service functionality. IFLA citation add.

The questionnaire used a random sampling technique to distribute among 184 users out of 230 total intakes. A total number of 110 filled questionnaire return back from the users, hence, a total number of 110 (59.78) percentage response rate received. The majority of the respondents who participated in the survey were undergraduates, unmarried and age range between 20 to 35 users only.

## VIII. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

This study is an initial effort in the process of identification and analysis of service provisions of Dr. Shakuntala Misra Rehabilitation National University for the differently abled users for their study and users. The research sought to identify the library resources and services offered to users with disabilities. The respondents asked to list the resources they gave in the library. The librarian has verified the available library resources and services. The researchers tried to collect their responses against the questionnaire and furthermore met with the librarian to ensure the responses of the respondents.

## IX. USERS' RESPONSE

A proficient user must pay particular attention to the library service and resources so that he can explore his/her willingness to the maximum.

TABLE I TOTAL NUMBER OF SAMPLES AND GENDER-WISE TYPES OF DISABILITIES

Sl. No.	Types of Disabilities	Male (n=57)	Female (n=53)	Total	Percentage
1	Physically Impaired	12	11	23	20.09 %
2	Multiple disability	11	13	24	21.81 %
3	Blind	7	6	13	11.81 %
4	Partially Sighted	15	12	27	24.54 %
5	Mobility Impaired	12	11	23	20.90 %
	Total	57	53	110	90.15 %

The data from Table I shows that a total number of 57 male users (51.81%) and 53 (48.18%) female users have participated in the survey. The male-female ratio reveals the significance rate of differently abled students. The partially sighted respondent rate is high i.e. 22.54 % as compared to other types of differently abled users. The percentages of users with blindness were less 11.81% and other disabilities like physically impaired, mobility impaired, and multiple disabilities each has equal to 20-21 % percent. The research also indicates that a significant number of users with disabilities are studying at university. The explanation behind this is to describe the spectrum of disabled users.

Dr. Shakuntala Misra University of Rehabilitation has many different-skilled students and they need to emphasize on

availability of educational resources and library services. There are also limitations between the users and collaboration to the library because disabled users including visually impaired, grapple with challenges in their attempt to access library facilities and information resources in their academic pursuit. The university makes an initiative to reduce them with the encouragement of the use of library assets with the help of ICT infrastructure.

### A. Library Services

The data from below table suggest that there is a difference in the distribution of library services for disabled users. The outcome also suggests that a user's use of library access to the service and facilities is highly significant.

TABLE II USING LIBRARY SERVICES FOR USERS WITH DISABILITIES

Sl. No.	Frequency of the Users (n=110)	Number	Mean	Percentage
1	Daily	70	26	63.63
2	Twice in day	30	14	27.27
3	Library weekly	10	34	9.9
	Total	110	66	100

The respondent's response examined to identify the frequency of library visits. Table II depicts that the users' response to the library visit, the different responses we have received. 70 (63.63) percentage users have visited the library daily, 30 (27.27) percentage users visit the library twice a day, and 10 (9.09) percentage users visit the library weekly. The duration of the library visits shows that users use library resources more efficiently and very regularly.

Users who had to access the library, like those with different disabilities and learners with physical and blindness

problems, suggested the library must provide them with the facilities in their spaces. The other area of concern mentioned by the participants was that users with different disabilities, particularly these items kept in disabled users in the library must easily access all the required readings material. Therefore, It is evident that users with different disabilities (like visual impairment) to obtain high access to library resources are easily accessible to them. However, real-time reading using Perkins braille's technology hardly be performed without distressing other participants of the library unless there are specific available seats.

TABLE III THE PURPOSE OF USING LIBRARY SERVICES

Sl. No.	Purpose of Using the Library Resources and Services	Frequency of the Users (n=110)	Mean	Percentage
1	Preparation of the classes	20	16.6667	16.66
2	For research and development work	35	1.6667	29.16
3	To complete assignment	29	7.6667	24.16
4	For the preparation of the examination	26	10.6667	21.66
	Total	110	73.333	100

The researcher asked about the purpose of using library resources and services in this university from respondent. Table III indicates that 20 (16.66) percentage users with disabilities use the library for the preparation of the classes. 35 (29.16) percentage of the users with differently disabled usage the library to enhance their information/knowledge of research and development. 26 (24.16) percentage users with disabilities used the library to complete their assignment that has given by faculty members and 26 (21.66) percentage users with disabilities used it for the preparation of examination purposes. Therefore, almost every user in this university visits the library either, daily, weekly, or at least once a month. Differently abled users are very serious about the usage of library services and resources.

### B. Accessibility of Library Services

With access to library services, 70 (58.33) percentage of the survey users suggest that they had not always found the resources they required from the library, compared with 40 (32.00) percentage who believed that they often found the library resources they needed from the library. One of the reasons users who are struggling to get access mentioned was that very few library services were accessible in the correct format for disabled people. Speaking textbooks, large-print reading, Braille books, subtitled video / DVD books, immersive picture books, and easy-to-read books are the unique formats they would like to see with all prescribed

textbooks. Some other issues that the participants posed were that textbooks on the bookshelf were difficult to access, particularly for the wheelchair-bound as well as those with achondroplasia. It is also tougher for the deaf, shortsighted, and albino concerning the tiny shelf indications and so they now have to seek support. Users suggested that an aide is not always available; particularly retrieving books but also need more skilled and compatible library staff to assist in this regards. The other responses suggested that 40 (33.33) percentage are adequately capable of using library facilities without any support but 60 (50.00) percentage of users often needed a librarian's intervention. Those who needed a librarian's aid were often users who are blind, short sighted, and amputees. Other 20 (16.00) percentage of survey respondents confirmed that they often needed support although they did not require assistance on other occasions.

Overall, the analysis demonstrates that the library's accessibility is intense, but efficient tools equipment is not in the wealthy configuration and not readily available. The users required special equipment that made for them and information available with ease format. The role of information communication technology becomes the key to access them. Thus, they can find the valuable material of the equipment readily available. The university should commit to supporting them.

## X. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION

There should be an orientation program with feedback. Disabled people require special equipment and assets to know the library's services and resources are accessible. In every section, one expert should be in the library. The academic library goals include a special needs library service program. The data show that kids with impairments are not obtaining expected library services. Knowledge and experience accessibility has increased in this digital era, yet poor internet accessibility and training have increased user indulgence. The evolution of ICT is required to upgrade the library system.

The usage of assistive technology equipment is limited for differently-abled users in daily tasks while studying. The institution should consider creating a website with a Braille system for visually challenged visitors. The advancement of technology can help differently-abled persons learn. Buying books should be Braille on time. Books must be transcribed for disabled users. The library's resources and services must be simple to use and accessible. They should hire trend-competent library employees and train them to meet customer demands. They must also be user-friendly and understand how to negotiate with disabled people. Academic librarians and professionals must be aware of the demands and information-seeking habits of disabled users.

## XI. CONCLUSION

Specific library services and resources are not available to disabled users. This study found that differently-abled individuals confront several barriers when using university libraries - lack of sufficient equipment to support library services and resources. The users have varying limitations and require different levels of assistance. Diversely abled people are influential and driven. The university library ensures that resources are accessible to meet users' needs. This research recommended that each disability's needs and academic progress be measured. The institution should include disabled user representatives in the technology selection, collection creation, and learning planning processes. So Dr. Shakuntala Misra national university must work with other state universities and institutes that assist disabled people. We must guarantee accessible library services and resources for all.

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