

## LIBRARY USERS

<b>L. No.</b>	<b>Title of the Lesson</b>	<b>Skills</b>	<b>Activity</b>
17A	Library Users	Communication, Interpersonal, Persuasion, Humility towards library users, Analytical thinking, Initiative and Independent Judgement, Marketing skills, ICT skills	Responding to Queries, Advising and Assisting library users, Shelve management, Courteous behaviour

### **Summary**

The term Library users includes various terms like clients, patrons, information users, information seekers, consumers, readers, etc. These terms can be used interchangeably, because all these apply to those requiring library resources and services.

User education, in simple language, means educating the library users, whether students, staff, or members of the community. It is about how to use the library, its resources and services. User education is thus an important aspect of every library's services, as it guides all categories of users to become better-informed and resources and services become more effective.

A library user study may be defined as any study related to library user, in any or all of its aspects. It refers to any systematic examination of the characteristics and behavior of users of library, library non-users, visitors and its services. User studies help to improve the conditions of every library.

In this lesson, you will study the methods and techniques of library user studies. You will also be exposed to types of user orientation and user education programmes. Such training programmes not only create awareness but also make users independent in finding and using information.

### **Principal Points**

- People who seek and use library information for their information needs are referred to as library users.
- User studies are conducted by the libraries to know the information requirements of the users and to find out the use of library resources and services. There are two methods of user studies, the direct and indirect method.
- User studies have helped to identify four types of information needs of the users, viz., current information need, exhaustive information need, everyday information need and catching-up information need.
- Indirect user studies methods are based on the analysis of library's own records, such as circulation, reference service records, etc., without the involvements of the users under study.
- Direct methods involve active participation of the users under study. Direct methods use Questionnaire, Interview, Diary or Observation as an instrument for conducting the user studies. Each of the direct methods has its advantages and limitations.
- Questionnaire method should be used when population to be covered is large, distantly located and resources are limited.
- Designing a questionnaire is an art. Questionnaire should be brief, attractive, ask unambiguous questions, interesting and easy to complete.
- User studies revealed that existing library resources and services are not fully utilized by the users and stressed the need for training the users.
- User training programmes provided by the libraries aim to help the users to use existing resources and services fully and make them independent in searching and using information.



### Build your Understanding

Why user education is important? It is due to several reasons:

- As wide range of resources available, users may be ignorant
- Present day libraries are fairly large, technology oriented and thus complex
- Users' reluctance to approach library staff
- Staff shortage due to economic constraints

What is Information Literacy? Information is available in various formats and users should be trained to use this information. Information literacy is thus defined as the ability to recognize the need for information, locate, evaluate and use it effectively.

### What's



1. If libraries want to improve the way they serve their users' needs, they must innovate their services, facilities and behavior towards their users.
2. Users are categorized as potential users, expected users, actual users and beneficiary users.
3. Meeting the needs of the library users is very essential. But how do the library professionals ensure that they are meeting the library and information needs of users and potential users of their library. It is usually by instinct and by experience.
4. Users of a library indirectly help to determine quality, importance and success of a library.
5. Library orientation involves the programme(s) that enable effective communication between users and library staff. These are to present the image of the library as a friendly organization where help is available. It makes users aware that the library staff is competent and always willing to help users in all respects.



Besides resources and library staff, a user is an important component of a library and information organisation. Here, 'Right Information to the right user in a right format at the right time' is regarded as highly essential.

The purpose of user studies is to improve the existing conditions of the library. This makes it possible for the library to identify users and their specific information requirements.

User education equips the users with the skills and awareness to become independent and efficient library users. It focuses on the specially tailored user education programmes by the libraries and they have a lot of impact on user's utilisation of the resources.

The use of information technology in user education has helped to teach users about use of the library more easily. By using audio and visual methods and materials, users can develop a better understanding of the aspects being taught about the library.

### **Extend your Horizon**

Visit any university library or a large public library. Meet some senior members of the staff in each library. Find out the categories of users using/visiting each library. Record your findings and name three user groups of each library. Identify and compare information needs of each user group.

### **Evaluate Yourself**

1. Elucidate the different types of information needs of library users.
2. Enumerate the direct methods of library user studies.
3. Which type of interview is more useful for carrying out library user studies ?
4. Highlight the role of a library in information literacy programmes of its parent institution.
5. What is user orientation ?