

Library Services and Literacy for Visually Disable Users

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Abstract:

More and more libraries are now providing special facilities for people who have visually impaired. Libraries and their staff give important information to people who are interested in learning and growing in a culture that values knowledge. Libraries and librarians must make information available to everyone, no matter their gender, age, race, perspective, or disability. However, there are still some people who do not have enough information, and services that are easy to use and treat everyone fairly are still expected. People with physical disabilities are part of this special group, but there are still difficulties in making sure they can access information just like everyone else. The purpose of the research paper is to explore the challenges faced by disabled users in utilizing library services and skilled to identify potential solutions and improvements that can be made to enhance accessibility and inclusivity within libraries. By addressing these challenges, libraries can better serve their disabled patrons and ensure equal access to information and resources for all individuals.

Keywords: Library Services, Library Literacy, Visually Disabled Persons, Information Literacy

Introduction:

Information literacy is the ability to find, evaluate, and use information effectively and ethically. It is an essential skill for lifelong learning and participation in the digital society. However, information literacy is not equally accessible to all users, especially those who have disabilities that affect their access to information sources and technologies. Disabled users face various barriers and challenges in acquiring and applying information literacy skills, such as lack of accessibility, usability, and inclusivity in information systems and services. Therefore, it is important to address the information needs and preferences of disabled users and provide them with appropriate support and guidance to enhance their information literacy competencies.

The provision of library facilities for visually and physically disabled individuals has been a growing practice, driven by their creativity and technological advancements. Libraries and personnel provide essential knowledge to those interested in the developing knowledge culture. Libraries & library professionals have a moral duty to make information accessible to everyone, regardless of their gender, age, color, viewpoint, or handicap.

However, some individuals still lack knowledge, and accessible, fair services are still the standard. The physically challenged are part of this privileged

community, but challenges remain in ensuring equal access to information.

The term "disability" means having a long-term condition that affects a person's physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory abilities, and prevents them from fully participating in society like everyone else because of barriers. In India, it is now unlawful to subject disabled individuals to unfair treatment, as stipulated by the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016. They are provided with a guarantee to access education, secure jobs, and experience inclusion in society.

A plan was implemented by the Indian government in 2006 to cater to the requirements of people with disabilities. The National Policy recognizes the significance of individuals with disabilities and aims to establish an inclusive environment where they enjoy equal opportunities, protected rights, and unrestricted participation in society.

Library Literacy for Visually Impaired Users:

How to help people who can't see well use the library and assist the library workers in providing services-

- There are innovative AI technologies available, that can enhance the accessibility and utilization of library. These technologies possess the capability to comprehend and react to our spoken words, convert written text into audible speech,

identify images, and comprehend human language.

- Develop user-friendly and reliable library automation systems catered to visually impaired individuals and library staff. Also, offer training and assistance for using these systems. We have skilful staff members proficient in sign language, interpretation, and reading braille.
- People who are visually impaired can rely on the support of fulfilling their informational needs. Make sure that everyone has a fair chance to use information and be able to do things on their own. Also, we should protect people's privacy and treat them with respect.
- Construct library systems that adequately address the needs of individuals who struggle with Various systems such as small libraries, mobile libraries, or libraries incorporating computers and technology could be implemented.

Importance of Library Skills for Disabled User:

Library Skills are important for disable users because:

- **Accessibility initiatives in libraries for disabled users -**

Accessibility initiatives in libraries for disabled users include implementing assistive technologies such as screen readers and magnifiers, providing accessible formats of materials such as braille or large print, and offering adaptive equipment like ergonomic keyboards or adjustable tables. Additionally, libraries may offer specialized training programs or workshops to enhance the library literacy skills of disabled users, ensuring they have equal access to information and resources. These initiatives aim to create an inclusive environment where disabled users can navigate the library independently and effectively utilize its services.

- **Implementation of assistive technologies and tools -**

such as screen readers or magnification software, can further enhance the accessibility of libraries for disabled users. These technologies enable individuals with visual impairments to access and interact with digital resources, making the library experience more inclusive and empowering for them. Additionally, libraries can collaborate with disability organizations or experts to continuously improve their accessibility features and ensure that they are

meeting the diverse needs of their disabled users.

- **Training library staff to provide assistance to disabled users -**

Training library staff to provide assistance to disabled users is crucial in creating a welcoming and supportive environment. Staff members can be trained on how to use assistive technologies, communicate effectively with disabled individuals, and understand the specific needs and challenges they may face. This training can help staff members confidently assist disabled users in navigating the library, locating resources, and accessing information in a way that suits their abilities.

Furthermore, ongoing training and professional development opportunities can ensure that library staff stay up-to-date with the latest accessibility practices and technologies. By regularly attending workshops and conferences, staff members can enhance their knowledge and skills in assisting disabled individuals.

This will enable them to provide a more inclusive and accessible library environment for all patrons. Additionally, creating an open and welcoming atmosphere where disabled individuals feel comfortable expressing their needs and concerns is crucial. Staff should always be attentive, patient, and willing to offer assistance whenever necessary.

- **Collaborations with disability organizations to improve accessibility, Promoting inclusive library services for disabled users-**

Users can also involve offering specialized programs and resources tailored to their needs. This can include providing assistive technology, such as screen readers or braille materials, and organizing events that cater specifically to disabled individuals. By actively promoting these services, libraries can ensure that all patrons feel valued and included in the library community.

- **Offering accessible formats such as braille, large print, or audio books-**

It is another important aspect of inclusive library services for disabled users. These formats allow individuals with visual impairments or print disabilities to access and enjoy the library's collection. Additionally, providing accessible seating, ramps, and elevators can enhance physical accessibility within the library space, further promoting inclusivity for disabled patrons.

➤ **Organizing specialized programs and events for disabled users –**

It is another way to promote inclusivity in libraries. These programs can cater to specific interests or needs of disabled individuals, providing them with opportunities for socialization, learning, and engagement. Additionally, offering assistive technologies such as screen readers or magnifiers can further enhance the accessibility of library resources for disabled users.

➤ **Challenges faced by disabled users in utilizing library services-** Challenges faced by disabled users in utilizing library services include physical barriers, such as narrow doorways or inaccessible shelving, that can limit their ability to navigate the library independently. Additionally, a lack of awareness and understanding among library staff about the specific needs and accommodations required by disabled individuals can create barriers to accessing information and resources.

Library Services & Resources for Disabled Users:

- **Braille** – This is a system of touch reading and writing for blind persons in which raised dots represent the letters of the alphabet. It also contains equivalents for punctuation marks and provides symbols to show letter groupings.
- **JAWS-** Job Access with Speech, is the world's most popular screen reader, developed for computer users whose vision loss prevents them from seeing screen content or navigating with a mouse.
- **Sugamya Pustakalaya-** aimed at preventing literary starvation for those with visual impairment, has been set up by the National Institute for the Empowerment of Persons with Visual Impairments, the Daisy Forum of India, and the TCS. Users have the option to borrow about 6,53,234 texts from libraries across India in a wide range of languages and they are able to cooperate with organisations such as book share or obtainable publications on a global scale. The reader can store and retrieve eBooks from a web-based text collection in the Digital category he or she wishes.

To accommodate patrons who are blind or deaf, information centres and library systems

across the globe are offering specialised information resources. These consist of:

- * **Braille books:** which is a form of literacy method in which words have been replaced via pointed dots that may be touched to be understood. users with hearing loss as well as a defect in vision might benefit from Braille literature.
- * **Audiobooks:** These are audiobooks that may be downloaded via the web or transcribed on CD-ROM, DVD, or cassette. for the most part, visually challenged people choose to read audiobooks.
- * **Audio media outlets:** which are Audible versions of stories about the news from daily publications. articles of huge size that are intended to be used by those who are partly blind.

In order to improve accessibility to knowledge among the blind, library systems have begun to utilise information and communication technology advancements. ICTs, also known as flexible or aiding devices, are widely accessible today to enable the dissemination of knowledge in digital repositories, including web pages, allowing blind recipients the same opportunities offered to the seen. Such latest innovations encompass:

- * **Display magnifier:** A programme that enlarges words or visuals on a desktop or laptop display by a factor of more than 16.
- * **Display reader:** A piece of software that speaks aloud what is written in a document to the person who uses it.
- * **Voice recognition software:** enables speech-based submission to flow information directly into a computing device.

Challenges of Library Literacy Skills among Disabled Users:

Library literacy skills are the skills needed to use library resources and services effectively. Some of the challenges of library literacy skills among disabled users are:

- * **ICT literacy:** The capacity to acquire, analyse, and share data using electronic methods and resources is known as information and communication technology (ICT) literacy. In addition to low investment,

amenities, learning, education, and concern, disabled patrons may have difficulty developing ICT literacy skills.

- * **Awareness:** Patrons with disabilities may not be knowledgeable about the facilities and amenities in the libraries that are accessible and appropriate for what they want and require. They could also encounter difficulties getting data concerning the programmes, regulations, and procedures of the library.
- * **Satisfaction:** The availability, effectiveness, and variety of the library's offerings and amenities could not be satisfactory to people with disabilities. They can run into issues like old equipment, a shortage of surface area, unfriendly employees, and ineffective governance regulations.
- * **Communication barriers:** Effective communication is crucial when it comes to providing assistance to individuals with disabilities. The lack of knowledge in sign language or other communication methods for individuals with hearing or speaking difficulties could present a barrier in effectively communicating with the library staff.
- * **Financial constraints:** Due to limited financial resources, libraries may struggle to purchase specialized equipment or accessible materials for individuals with disabilities, making it challenging for them to offer comprehensive support to these users.
- * **Lack of training:** Library staff may not receive adequate training in assisting users with disabilities or in using adaptive technologies, resulting in an inability to effectively support disabled patrons.

RESULTS:

Libraries may offer specialised training programmes or workshops to enhance the library literacy skills of disabled users, ensuring they have equal access to information and resources. These initiatives aim to create an inclusive environment where disabled users can navigate the library independently and effectively utilise its services. Such as screen readers or magnification software, can further enhance the accessibility of libraries for disabled users. Technologies enable individuals with visual impairments to access and interact with digital resources, making the library experience more inclusive and empowering for them. Staff members can be trained on how to use assistive technologies, communicate effectively with disabled individuals,

and understand the specific needs and challenges they may face. Training can help staff members confidently assist disabled users in navigating the library, locating resources, and accessing information in a way that suits their abilities. By regularly attending workshops and conferences, staff members can enhance their knowledge and skills in assisting disabled individuals.

This will enable them to provide a more inclusive and accessible library environment for all patrons. Users can benefit from specialised programmes and resources tailored to their needs.

CONCLUSION:

This can include providing assistive technology, such as screen readers or braille materials, and organising events that cater to disabled individuals. By actively promoting these services, libraries can ensure that all patrons feel valued and included in the library community. Offering assistive technologies such as screen readers or magnifiers can further enhance the accessibility of library resources for disabled users. Addressing these challenges requires a proactive and inclusive approach from libraries, including investing in accessibility, staff training, and resources for disabled users. Collaborating with disability advocacy organizations and seeking feedback from disabled users themselves can also help libraries improve their services and create more inclusive spaces for all patrons.

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