A STUDY ON THE REFERENCE SERVICE IN COLLEGE LIBRARIES – WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO COIMBATORE CITY

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ABSTRACT

Reference service is considered as the heart of library services. A good reference service depicts good collection. An initiative has been taken to evaluate the present trends in reference services of Coimbatore city College library. Information technologies have facilitated traditional reference process and made it more effective. The paper also highlights the genesis, meaning, function and theories of reference services. Two types of reference services distinguished in libraries are direct reference services and indirect reference services. Direct reference service is a face to face process in which reference librarian answers the user’s question directly. These services consist of information services and library instruction. In such services librarian individually helps the users to retrieve the information. Instruction is an inseparable part of direct reference services. Reference departments can provide it both in academic classrooms and in the library.

Keywords: Reference Service, Special Reference to Coimbatore City.
INTRODUCTION

The growth and change of contemporary civilized society is matched by the growing size and complexity of library resources and services. The libraries in the modern days help the people to have the updated information in their hands, to improve their knowledge in their respective fields and to widen their views on the particular subject or discipline. The services rendered by the libraries in the universities and colleges are very much helpful to the academicians, students, scholars and the faculties. The Kothari Commission has considered the library as “Intellectual Workshop” for the researchers. The object of the libraries in the colleges and universities in the modern days has changed in such a manner that the activities of the library shall be related to the daily needs and activities of an academic community, to the maximum possible extent. In this regard the college libraries are playing a crucial role in making the students as the good citizens of the country. All this wealth of knowledge, past and present is organized in the college and the university libraries have to be effectively and profitably used by the faculty, researchers and students. Though the reference service has been considered as the primary service of the library, the college libraries in the modern days render variety of services, apart from the reference service, to the teaching community, student community, researchers and all others who are in need of various information in various fields.

In order to cater the needs and wants of the academic community, in general, the following can be considered as the major services rendered by the libraries in the colleges and in the universities:

a. help the students to widen their knowledge by way of providing them with an opportunity to go through the large volume of collection of books:

b. open the door to the wide world of books that lie beyond the border of specialization of the students:

c. helpful for the academicians to keep abreast of the developments in their respective fields:

d. providing the library facilities and services that are necessary for the effective and success formal programme instructions and bring books Students and Scholars together under conditions, which encourage reading for pleasure, Self-discovery personal growth and the Sharpening of intellectual Curiosity.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Reference service has been considered as one of the major and prime services being rendered by the libraries. During the last few decades, reference services rendered by the libraries, especially the college and the University libraries, has increased tremendously. The term reference service, in general, may be defined as an active personal service providing active assistance and instructions to users in promoting the use of library resources answering user’s requests for new information, compiling Catalogues and bibliographies etc., on topics of research.
Keeping in view the importance of the reference service in research and other scholarly pursuits at college level, the study is taken for research with a view to assess the existence and extent of reference service in Libraries of selected colleges in Coimbatore city.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The present study titled as “A STUDY ON THE REFERENCE SERVICE IN COLLEGE LIBRARIES – WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO COIMBATORE CITY”, has been carried on by the researcher with a view to find out the functioning of the reference services in the selected college libraries in Coimbatore city and to find out the level of satisfaction derived by the selected sample respondents on the functioning of the Reference services in their college libraries and to find out the factors that influence the satisfaction derived by the respondents on the reference services provided by the College libraries.

OBJECTIVES

The present study has been undertaken by the researcher with the following objectives:

a. to give a brief review about the origin and growth of the Reference Services in the libraries

b. to give a brief outline about the various types of reference services rendered by the libraries

c. to find out the level of satisfaction derived by the selected sample respondents on the functioning of the Reference services in their college libraries

d. to find out the variation in the factors that influence the satisfaction derived by the respondents of Engineering and Arts and Science Colleges on the reference services provided by the College libraries and

e. to find out the problems existing in the reference services provided by the college libraries and to offer suggestions for their improvement and efficient functioning.

METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on the primary as well as the secondary data. The data relating to the satisfaction derived by the selected sample respondents and the factors that influencing the satisfaction derived by the sample respondents were collected through the structured questionnaire (Appendix). Out of eleven Engineering colleges functioning in Coimbatore city, three colleges were selected as sample colleges and out of ten Arts and Science Colleges functioning in the Coimbatore city, three colleges were selected as samples. The sample colleges were selected on the basis of simple random method by using the lot method. In the second stage, twenty students were selected as the sample respondents for the study. The sample respondents were selected by the researcher on the basis of convenience sampling method. The literature relating to the reference service were collected by the researcher from the various book materials, unpublished records and from the Internet. In order to find out the variation in the
factors that influence the satisfaction derived by the respondents of the two groups such as the respondents from the Engineering colleges and the Arts and Science College libraries, the researcher has employed Chi – square test.

LIMITATIONS

The following were considered as the limitations by the researcher in the execution of the study:

1. The sample size for the study was restricted only to six college libraries in Coimbatore city i.e., three Engineering and three Arts and Science Colleges:

2. The reference services provided by the sample libraries were only considered for the study and the other areas relating to the sample libraries were not considered for the study.

3. The sample size for the study has been restricted to only one hundred and twenty respondents in total from the selected six sample colleges.

4. This report offers suggestions only in the areas relating to the improvement of the reference services and not the whole functioning of the library.

REFERENCE SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE COLLEGE LIBRARIES

There are sixty sample respondents from the Engineering Colleges. Out of these sixty respondents, forty-one (68.33%) sample respondents are satisfied with the reference services provided by the College library and nineteen (31.67%) sample respondents are not satisfied with the reference services provided by the College library.

Sixty respondents are from Arts and Science Colleges and out of this sixty respondents, thirty-nine (65%) respondents are satisfied with the reference services provided by the College library and twenty one (35%) sample respondents are not satisfied with the reference services provided by the College library. The satisfaction of the respondents towards the reference services of the library is given in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of College</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Not Satisfied</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engineering College</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Science Colleges</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table – 1 reveals that out of one hundred and twenty respondents, eighty respondents (66.67%) are satisfied with the reference services in their college and forty respondents (33.33%) are not satisfied with the reference services provided by their college. The association between the satisfaction derived by the sample respondents on the reference services provided by the college libraries and the type of college in which they are studying was further analysed with the help of Chi – square test. The Chi – square table is given below.

Table – 2
Satisfaction derived by the sample respondents on the reference services provided by the college libraries and Type of College - Chi – square Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cell</th>
<th>O</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>O - E</th>
<th>(O – E)²</th>
<th>(O – E)² /E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R1C1</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2C1</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R1C2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2C2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Calculated Chi – square Value = 0.150
Table value at 5% level = 3.84
Degrees of Freedom = 1
Significance = NOT SIGNIFICANT

Table 2 reveals that the calculated chi – square value (0.150) is less than the table chi – square value (3.84) at 5% level of significance. Hence the hypothesis, that there is no significant difference in the satisfaction derived by the respondents of the Engineering and Arts and Science College libraries on the reference services rendered by the college libraries, can be accepted.

REFERENCE FACILITIES AVAILABLE IN THE COLLEGE LIBRARIES

There are sixty respondents from the Engineering Colleges. Out of these sixty respondents, fifty three (88.3%) respondents are satisfied with the reference facilities available in the College library and seven (11.7%) respondents are not satisfied with the reference facilities available in the College library.

Sixty respondents are from Arts and Science Colleges and out of this sixty respondents, forty two (70%) respondents are satisfied with the reference facilities available in the College library and eighteen (30%) sample respondents are not satisfied with the reference facilities available in the College library. The satisfaction of the respondents towards the reference facilities available in the library is given in the following table
Table – 3

Satisfaction of the respondents towards the reference facilities available in the college libraries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of College</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Not Satisfied</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engineering College</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Science Colleges</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 reveals that out of one hundred and twenty respondents, ninety five respondents (79%) are satisfied with the reference facilities available in their college libraries and twenty five respondents (21%) are not satisfied with the reference facilities available in the college libraries. The association between the satisfaction of the sample respondents on the reference facilities available in the college libraries and the type of college in which they are studying was further analysed with the help of Chi – square test. The Chi – square table is given below.

Table – 4

Satisfaction derived by the sample respondents on the reference facilities available in the college libraries and Type of College - Chi – square Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cell</th>
<th>O</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>O - E</th>
<th>(O – E)^2</th>
<th>(O – E)^2/E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R1C1</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>30.25</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2C1</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>-5.5</td>
<td>30.25</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R1C2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>-5.5</td>
<td>30.25</td>
<td>2.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2C2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>30.25</td>
<td>2.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Calculated Chi – square Value = 6.12
Table value at 5% level = 3.84
Degrees of Freedom = 1
Significance = SIGNIFICANT

Table 4 reveals that the calculated chi – square value (6.12) is higher than the table chi – square value (3.84 at 5% level of significance. Hence the hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the satisfaction derived by the respondents of the Engineering and Arts and Science College libraries on the reference facilities available in the college libraries, can be rejected.
REFERENCE BOOKS IN THE COLLEGE LIBRARIES

There are sixty respondents from the Engineering Colleges. Out of this sixty respondents, forty seven (78.3%) respondents are satisfied with the availability of the reference books in the college libraries and thirteen (21.7%) respondents are not satisfied with the availability of the reference books in the college libraries.

Sixty respondents are from Arts and Science Colleges and out of this sixty respondents, fifty one (85%) respondents are satisfied with the availability of the reference books in the college libraries and nine (15%) respondents are not satisfied with the availability of the reference books in the college libraries. The satisfaction of the respondents towards the availability of the reference books in the college libraries is given in the following table.

Table –5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of College</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Not Satisfied</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engineering College</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Science Colleges</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 reveals that out of one hundred and twenty respondents, ninety eight respondents (81.7%) are satisfied with the availability of the reference books in the college libraries and twenty two respondents (18.3%) are not satisfied with the availability of the reference books in the college libraries. The association between the satisfaction of the sample respondents on the availability of the reference books in the college libraries and the type of college in which they are studying was further analysed with the help of Chi – square test. The Chi – square table is given below.

Table – 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cell</th>
<th>O</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>O - E</th>
<th>(O – E)^2</th>
<th>(O – E)^2 / E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R1C1</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2C1</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R1C2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2C2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Calculated Chi – square Value   = 0.88  
Table value at 5% level = 3.84  
Degrees of Freedom                   = 1  
Significance                             = NOT SIGNIFICANT  

Table 6 reveals that the calculated chi – square value (0.88) is less than the table chi – square value (7.88) at 5% level of significance. Hence the hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the satisfaction derived by the respondents of the Engineering and Arts and Science College libraries on the availability of the reference books in the college libraries can be accepted.

SATISFACTION OF THE RESPONDENTS ON THE VARIOUS FACTORS

1. The respondents from the Engineering colleges (68.30%) are getting higher satisfaction than the respondents from the Arts and Science Colleges (65%) on the reference services provided by the College libraries.
2. The respondents from the Engineering colleges (88.30%) are getting higher satisfaction than the respondents from the Arts and Science Colleges (70%) on the reference facilities available in the College libraries.
3. The respondents from the Arts and Science Colleges (85%) are getting higher satisfaction than the respondents from the Engineering colleges (78.30%) on the availability of adequate number of reference books in the College libraries.
4. The respondents from the Engineering colleges (70%) are getting higher satisfaction than the respondents from the Arts and Science Colleges (65%) on the availability of the non–book materials in the College libraries.
5. The respondents from the Engineering colleges (90%) are getting higher satisfaction than the respondents from the Arts and Science Colleges (80%) on the facilities available in the College libraries.
6. The respondents from the Arts and Science Colleges (85%) are getting higher satisfaction than the respondents from the Engineering colleges (78%) on collection of the total volume of books in the in the College libraries.
7. The respondents from the Engineering colleges (95%) are getting higher satisfaction than the respondents from the Arts and Science Colleges (80%) on the working hours of the College libraries.
8. The respondents from the Arts and Science Colleges (90%) are getting higher satisfaction than the respondents from the Engineering colleges (65%) on the assistance provided by the librarian in the College libraries.

9. The respondents from the Engineering colleges (88.3%) are getting higher satisfaction than the respondents from the Arts and Science Colleges (81.60%) on the condition of the reference books that are available of the College libraries.

10. The respondents from the Arts and Science Colleges (70%) are getting higher satisfaction than the respondents from the Engineering colleges (51.60%) on the availability of adequate number of reference journals and periodicals in the College libraries.

11. The respondents from the Engineering colleges (93.3%) are getting higher satisfaction than the respondents from the Arts and Science Colleges (86.60%) on “Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC)” facility available in the College libraries.

12. The respondents from the Engineering colleges (96.60%) are getting higher satisfaction than the respondents from the Arts and Science Colleges (86.60%) on the Internet service offered by the College libraries.

CONCLUSION

Good education makes the students as the good citizens of the country. The college libraries in this regard not only offer the opportunities to the students to go through the text books alone but also the providing various other books in the form of reference books and non book reference materials. By providing the right type of reference services to the students, researchers and the faculties at the right time the college libraries are playing an important role in improving the knowledge of every one. If the college libraries are adopting the suggestions which have been offered in this report, it would be very much helpful for them to improve their services in the area of reference and to the users of the college library.

REFERENCES


