

**LIBRARY SERVICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION:  
ISSUES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS  
Kiran C.B.<sup>1</sup> & Ramakrishna<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Librarian, Department of Library and Information Science, St. Francis College, Koramangala, Bangalore.

<sup>2</sup>Chief Librarian, Department of Library and Information Science, St. Francis College, Koramangala, Bangalore.

**DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18775722>**

**ABSTRACT:**

Academic libraries play a crucial role in supporting higher education by providing access to information resources, facilitating research activities, and enhancing teaching and learning processes. In recent years, library services in higher education institutions have undergone significant transformation due to rapid advancements in information and communication technologies, changing user expectations, and the growth of digital information resources. Despite these developments, academic libraries continue to face numerous challenges related to finance, infrastructure, technology, skilled manpower, and user engagement.

The present study aims to examine the existing library services in higher education institutions, identify the major issues affecting effective service delivery, and explore future directions for the development of academic library services. A survey-based research methodology was adopted, and data were collected from library professionals working in higher education institutions using a structured questionnaire. The findings of the study reveal that while academic libraries are increasingly adopting digital and user-centric services, several challenges hinder their optimal performance. The study suggests strategic planning, continuous professional development, technological integration, and institutional support as key measures to strengthen library services in higher education. The paper concludes by emphasizing the need for innovative and sustainable library services to meet the evolving information needs of academic communities.

**KEYWORDS:**

Academic Libraries, Higher Education, Library Services,  
Information Technology, Future Directions.

.....

**Introduction**

Higher education institutions are centers of knowledge creation, dissemination, and application. Libraries attached to these institutions function as the intellectual backbone, supporting academic programs, research activities, and lifelong learning. Library services in higher education are designed to meet the diverse information needs of students, faculty members, researchers, and administrators. Over time, the role of academic libraries has expanded beyond the traditional functions of book lending and reference services to include digital resource management, research support, information literacy instruction, and scholarly communication services.

The rapid growth of information and communication technologies has significantly influenced the nature and scope of library services. Automation, digitization, electronic resources, institutional repositories, and remote access services have become integral components of modern academic libraries. Users now expect quick, seamless, and round-the-clock access to information resources, which has compelled libraries to redesign their service models.

However, the transformation of library services in higher education is not without challenges. Issues such as inadequate funding, lack of trained personnel, technological obsolescence, infrastructure limitations, and varying levels of user awareness continue to affect service quality. In this context, it is essential to critically examine existing library services, identify key issues, and explore future directions that can help academic libraries remain relevant and effective in the changing educational landscape.

The present study focuses on analysing library services in higher education institutions, highlighting the major issues faced by academic libraries, and proposing future-oriented strategies for improvement.

### **Concept of Library Services in Higher Education**

Library services in higher education refer to the range of activities and facilities provided by academic libraries to support teaching, learning, research, and extension activities of educational institutions. These services are designed to ensure effective access to information resources in both print and digital formats and to assist users in locating, evaluating, and utilizing information efficiently.

Traditionally, library services included circulation, reference service, cataloguing, classification, and current awareness services. With the integration of technology, modern academic libraries now offer value-added services such as online public access catalogues (OPAC), electronic resource access, digital reference services, information literacy programs, plagiarism detection support, and research data management services. The effectiveness of library services largely depends on factors such as availability of resources, technological infrastructure, skilled manpower, and institutional support.

Academic library services are user-centric in nature and continuously evolve to address changing academic requirements. In higher education institutions, libraries act as facilitators of knowledge and play a significant role in enhancing academic excellence.

### **Evolution of Library Services in Higher Education**

The evolution of library services in higher education reflects broader changes in educational practices, information formats, and technological advancements. In the early stages, academic libraries were primarily storehouses of printed books and journals, and their services were limited to lending and basic reference assistance.

Access to information was confined to physical library spaces, and users depended heavily on librarians for locating resources.

With the introduction of mechanisation in libraries during the mid-twentieth century, services such as cataloguing and circulation began to adopt standardized tools and practices. The use of card catalogues, classification schemes, and bibliographic control systems marked a significant improvement in organizing and accessing library materials. However, these services were still manual and time-intensive.

The advent of computers and information technology brought a major transformation in library services. Automation of housekeeping operations enabled academic libraries to improve efficiency, accuracy, and speed in service delivery. Integrated library management systems facilitated automated acquisition, cataloguing, circulation, and serials control. Online Public Access Catalogues (OPACs) replaced traditional card catalogues, allowing users to search library collections independently.

The digital era further expanded the scope of library services in higher education. The availability of electronic journals, e-books, online databases, and open-access resources has significantly changed information-seeking behaviour. Libraries now provide remote access to digital resources, virtual reference services, and institutional repositories. The evolution of library services continues as academic libraries adapt to emerging technologies and changing user expectations.

### **Types of Library Services in Higher Education Institutions**

Library services in higher education institutions are diverse and designed to address the academic and research needs of users. These services can be broadly classified into traditional services, digital services, and value-added services.

- **Traditional Library Services**

Traditional library services form the foundation of academic

libraries. These include circulation services, reference services, cataloguing and classification, serial control, and current awareness services. Despite technological advancements, these services remain essential, particularly in institutions where print resources continue to play a significant role.

- **Digital Library Services**

Digital library services have become an integral part of higher education libraries. These services include access to electronic journals, e-books, online databases, digital repositories, and institutional archives. Libraries also provide remote access facilities, enabling users to access resources from off-campus locations. Digital reference services, such as email and chat-based assistance, further enhance user support.

- **User Education and Information Literacy Services**

Information literacy programs are crucial services offered by academic libraries. These programs aim to equip users with the skills required to identify, evaluate, and use information effectively. Library orientation programs, database training sessions, and workshops on research tools help students and faculty improve their academic and research competencies.

- **Research Support Services**

Higher education libraries increasingly offer research-oriented services, including plagiarism detection support, citation management assistance, research impact analysis, and scholarly publishing guidance. These services support faculty members and research scholars throughout the research lifecycle.

### **Role of Academic Libraries in Teaching, Learning, and Research**

Academic libraries play a multifaceted role in supporting teaching, learning, and research activities in higher education institutions. Libraries provide access to a wide range of learning

resources that complement classroom instruction and promote independent learning among students.

In teaching and learning, libraries support curriculum development by ensuring the availability of relevant textbooks, reference materials, and digital resources. Librarians collaborate with faculty members to design course-specific resources and reading lists. Learning spaces within libraries also facilitate collaborative learning and academic interaction.

In research, academic libraries act as knowledge hubs by providing access to scholarly resources, research databases, and institutional repositories. Libraries assist researchers in literature review, data management, and dissemination of research outputs. By offering research support services, libraries enhance the quality and visibility of institutional research.

### **Review of Literature**

A comprehensive review of literature is essential to understand previous research related to library services in higher education. Numerous studies have examined the role, effectiveness, and challenges of academic library services in different contexts.

Several researchers have highlighted that academic libraries significantly contribute to student learning outcomes and research productivity. Studies emphasize that access to electronic resources and digital services has improved information accessibility and user satisfaction. Research also indicates that information literacy programs conducted by libraries positively impact students' academic performance.

However, literature also identifies persistent challenges faced by academic libraries. Financial constraints, lack of trained staff, technological obsolescence, and low user awareness are frequently cited issues. Some studies suggest that institutional support and continuous professional development are critical for improving library services. The review of literature reveals a need for empirical

studies that focus on both issues and future directions, which the present study seeks to address.

### **Need and Significance of the Study**

The changing landscape of higher education has significantly influenced the nature and delivery of library services. With the rapid growth of digital information, online learning platforms, and research-intensive academic environments, the role of academic libraries has expanded beyond traditional boundaries. Despite this transformation, many higher education institutions continue to face challenges in providing effective and user-oriented library services. This creates a strong need to systematically examine the current status of library services in higher education institutions.

The present study is significant as it focuses on identifying the issues that hinder the effective delivery of library services and explores future directions for improvement. Understanding these issues is essential for administrators, policymakers, and library professionals to make informed decisions regarding resource allocation, service development, and capacity building. The study also contributes to the existing body of literature by providing empirical evidence based on survey data collected from library professionals.

Moreover, the findings of this study can serve as a guide for academic libraries aiming to enhance service quality, user satisfaction, and institutional impact. By addressing both current issues and future possibilities, the study highlights the strategic importance of library services in achieving academic excellence in higher education.

### **Scope of the Study**

The scope of the present study is confined to library services offered by higher education institutions. It covers both traditional and digital library services provided to students, faculty members, and researchers. The study focuses on issues related to infrastructure,

finance, technology, human resources, and user engagement that affect the quality and effectiveness of library services.

Geographically, the study is limited to selected higher education institutions. The perspectives of library professionals working in these institutions form the primary data source for the study. While the findings may not be generalized to all academic libraries, they provide valuable insights into common challenges and emerging trends in library services.

### **Objectives of the Study**

**The specific objectives of the study are as follows:**

- To examine the existing library services in higher education institutions
- To assess the level of user satisfaction with library services
- To identify major issues affecting library service delivery
- To analyse the impact of technology on library services
- To explore future directions for the development of library services
- To suggest measures for improving library services in higher education

### **Research Questions**

1. The study seeks to answer the following research questions:
2. What types of library services are currently provided in higher education institutions?
3. What are the major issues faced by academic libraries in delivering effective services?
4. How has technology influenced library services in higher education?
5. What is the level of satisfaction among users regarding library

services?

6. What future directions can enhance the effectiveness of library services?

## **Research Methodology**

### **Research Design**

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design to examine library services in higher education institutions. This approach was chosen to collect quantitative and qualitative data from library professionals regarding existing services, issues, and future directions.

### **Population of the Study**

The population of the study consists of library professionals working in higher education institutions, including universities and colleges. These professionals are directly involved in planning, managing, and delivering library services.

### **Sample and Sampling Technique**

A purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents for the study. Library professionals who have practical experience with both traditional and digital library services were included in the sample. This ensured that the collected data were relevant and reliable.

### **Tool for Data Collection**

A structured questionnaire was used as the primary tool for data collection. The questionnaire was designed to gather information on:

### **Types of library services provided**

- Availability of digital resources
- Issues faced in service delivery
- User satisfaction levels

- Perceptions regarding future directions

The questionnaire consisted of both close-ended and Likert-scale questions to capture detailed responses.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

The questionnaire was distributed to library professionals through direct and electronic means. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, and confidentiality of responses was assured. Adequate time was provided for respondents to complete the questionnaire, ensuring accuracy and completeness of data.

### **Data Analysis Techniques**

The collected data were analyzed using simple statistical tools such as percentages, frequency distribution, and mean scores. The results were interpreted descriptively to provide a clear understanding of the issues and trends related to library services in higher education.

### **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

The analysis of data collected through the questionnaire provides valuable insights into the current status of library services in higher education institutions. The responses received from library professionals were systematically analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques. The findings are presented thematically for clarity and better understanding.

### **Status of Library Services**

The survey results indicate that a majority of higher education libraries offer a combination of traditional and digital services. Circulation, reference services, and access to printed resources continue to be core services. At the same time, most libraries have adopted electronic resources such as e-journals, e-books, and online databases to meet the growing demand for digital information.

Respondents reported that library services have expanded

significantly in recent years due to technological integration. However, the level of service development varies among institutions depending on financial support, infrastructure, and administrative priorities.

### **Availability of Digital Resources**

The analysis reveals that access to digital resources is considered one of the most important services in higher education libraries. A large number of respondents indicated that their libraries subscribe to national and international e-resource consortia. Remote access facilities are also increasingly provided to support off-campus users.

Despite these developments, some libraries face difficulties in maintaining subscriptions due to rising costs. Limited internet bandwidth and outdated hardware were also identified as constraints affecting the effective use of digital resources.

### **User Satisfaction with Library Services**

User satisfaction is a key indicator of the effectiveness of library services. According to the survey responses, most users are moderately to highly satisfied with basic library services. However, satisfaction levels vary for advanced services such as digital reference, research support, and information literacy programs.

The findings suggest that user awareness plays a significant role in satisfaction. Libraries that actively promote their services and conduct user education programs tend to report higher satisfaction levels.

### **Major Issues in Library Services in Higher Education**

The survey identified several critical issues that affect the delivery of library services in higher education institutions. These issues are discussed under the following categories.

#### **Financial Issues**

Inadequate funding is one of the most significant challenges faced by academic libraries. Limited financial resources affect the acquisition of print and electronic materials, subscription to databases, and maintenance of infrastructure. Budget constraints also limit the ability of libraries to adopt new technologies and expand services.

### **Technological Issues**

Rapid technological changes pose challenges for academic libraries. Many libraries struggle with outdated systems, lack of technical support, and insufficient training. Integration of new technologies requires continuous investment and expertise, which may not always be available.

### **Human Resource Issues**

The shortage of skilled library professionals is another major concern. Many libraries lack adequately trained staff to manage digital resources and advanced library services. Limited opportunities for professional development further exacerbate this issue.

### **Infrastructure Issues**

Physical and technological infrastructure plays a crucial role in service delivery. Inadequate library space, insufficient computer terminals, poor internet connectivity, and lack of modern equipment negatively impact user experience and service efficiency.

### **User-Related Issues**

Low user awareness and limited information literacy skills among users pose challenges for libraries. Some users are unaware of available services or lack the skills to effectively use digital resources. This results in underutilization of library services.

### **Findings of the Study**

**Based on the analysis, the following key findings emerged:**

- Higher education libraries provide a mix of traditional and

digital services

- Digital resources have become central to academic library services
- Financial constraints significantly affect service development
- Lack of skilled manpower limits the effective use of technology
- User awareness and information literacy influence service utilization

### **Discussion of Results**

The findings of the study highlight the dynamic nature of library services in higher education. While libraries are increasingly adopting digital tools and user-centric approaches, persistent issues continue to affect service quality. The results align with previous studies that emphasize the importance of financial support, technological infrastructure, and professional training.

The discussion underscores the need for a balanced approach that combines traditional strengths with innovative practices. Addressing the identified issues will enable academic libraries to enhance their role in supporting institutional goals.

### **Future Directions of Library Services in Higher Education**

The future of library services in higher education is closely linked to technological advancements, evolving user expectations, and institutional priorities. Academic libraries are expected to move beyond traditional service models and adopt innovative, flexible, and user-centered approaches.

One of the key future directions is the integration of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, data analytics, and cloud-based systems. These technologies can enhance information retrieval, personalize user services, and improve decision-making in library management. Smart library systems can automate routine tasks and allow librarians to focus on higher-level academic and

research support services.

Another important direction is the strengthening of digital and remote services. With the growth of online and blended learning, libraries must ensure seamless access to digital resources anytime and anywhere. Expanding institutional repositories, promoting open-access resources, and supporting research data management will become essential functions of academic libraries.

User education and information literacy will continue to play a critical role in the future. Libraries must design innovative training programs to enhance digital literacy, critical thinking, and ethical use of information. Collaborative initiatives between librarians and faculty members can further strengthen teaching and learning outcomes.

### **Suggestions and Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions are proposed to improve library services in higher education institutions:

- Adequate and sustainable funding should be provided to academic libraries
- Continuous professional development programs should be organized for library staff
- Libraries should adopt user-centric and technology-driven service models
- Infrastructure and technological facilities should be upgraded regularly
- Information literacy programs should be integrated into academic curricula
- Libraries should actively promote their services to increase user awareness

## **Implications for Library and Information Science Professionals**

The findings of this study have significant implications for library and information science professionals. Librarians are required to develop new competencies in digital technologies, research support, and user engagement. The changing role of librarians demands continuous learning and adaptability.

Library professionals must also act as information facilitators, educators, and research partners. By embracing innovative practices and strategic planning, librarians can enhance their professional relevance and contribute meaningfully to institutional success.

## **Limitations of the Study**

Despite its contributions, the study has certain limitations. The sample size was limited to selected higher education institutions, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. The study relied on self-reported data, which may be influenced by personal perceptions of respondents. Future studies may adopt mixed research methods and larger samples to gain deeper insights.

## **Conclusion**

Library services in higher education institutions are undergoing continuous transformation in response to technological advancements and changing academic needs. The present study highlights the importance of effective library services in supporting teaching, learning, and research activities. While academic libraries have made significant progress in adopting digital services, various issues related to finance, technology, infrastructure, and human resources continue to pose challenges.

The study emphasizes that addressing these issues requires strategic planning, institutional support, and professional commitment. By embracing innovation and focusing on user needs, academic libraries can enhance their role as knowledge centers and remain relevant in the evolving higher education environment. The future of library services lies in adaptability, collaboration, and

sustainable development.

### **References:**

1. Breeding, M. (2017). Library technology and the future of academic libraries.
2. Kumar, P. S. G. (2016). Information and communication technology in libraries.
3. Rowley, J. (2014). The changing role of academic libraries.
4. Singh, S., & Sharma, R. (2019). Digital transformation of library services.
5. Rubin, R. E. (2017). Foundations of library and information science.
6. Tenopir, C., & King, D. W. (2020). Scholarly communication and academic libraries.