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EDUCATION

Utilizing The Library

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A modern college and university library is really a complex institution having great quantities of books, magazines, newspapers, documents and other types of reading materials to meet the needs of its student and teacher community.

To get the most out of its large collection one must know how to get it! One cannot count on luck to get the things he wants. He must know how a library is organised. To speak the truth, a library is nonexistent in our primary schools and the situation in secondary schools is not at all encouraging. Having come from schools, where there are practically no libraries, our students reasonably need an effective orientation on entry into the college and university with a view to becoming independent and efficient users of library resources, to familiarize with the methods and techniques of locating information, to be able to understand the purposes and uses of catalogue cards, to have a general knowledge about reference tools and the possible use that can be made of each tool, to stimulate a desire in them to know how to make further explorations and uses of resources.

A library groups all the materials in its collection according to some useful specified plans. The library catalogue, reference aids and resources etc. are so complex and extensive that it is simply impossible specially for freshers to use them profitably. Most of our college and university students and research workers do not know how to consult library catalogue, the tools to be consulted for a particular information, the possible sources for certain piece of information and how to go on garnering record materials to compile bibliographies and to give citation to a research paper. Research plays an increasingly

Students coming to colleges and universities have little or no idea of how to use the library service. But in higher education and research, using library is essential. Hence it is desirable that new entrants to these centres of higher education are instructed on how to effectively utilize the library.

Important part in college and university life and the library has a vital role in the research for new knowledge. Research may be made from various stand points by the researcher. He may want to know all the available published sources of information along with the line of his research and the libraries can make two major contributions by supplying primary and secondary source materials. It is imperative that the researcher should not miss any idea which he should have or waste any time in getting what is wanted and it is a must for a researcher to know how to use the resources of libraries most efficiently, and quickly because all research involves effective use of the books and other documentary materials in libraries. Libraries arrange their materials on some general principles and provide similar sources of research. They have a system of classification, catalogue and certain bibliographic and reference materials. A library has a catalogue usually on cards which is the index to the contents of the library. It is arranged alphabetically like a dictionary by author, by title, by subject and will provide the following information: Has the library a book by a particular author? Is there a book in the library with a certain title? What titles are available by a particular author? Which books does the library have on a given subject?

The purpose of library classification is to arrange books in a helpful sequence on the shelf

yes so that a reader seeking information on a particular aspect is able to locate quickly all the books on that subject without loss of any time and without undue strain on the memory of the staff. It prevents confusion and waste of time. It enables one to see where the collection of the library is developed and where it is weak.

The vital question is how to find out the desired thing. The universal answer is to know the techniques for using books and libraries. Hence orientation and instruction in the use of library resources is both desirable and necessary and it should not be ignored.

We hope responsible educationists, college and university authorities and library professionals will agree that the first year students should have their training and instruction in the proper utilization of materials logged in the libraries. If we actually realise the real concept of library and want to achieve the objectives of college and university education, effective orientation in the use of books and libraries should be organised for first year students desirably as a part of academic course.

I would like to suggest here that library instruction should be made a compulsory subject for first year college students, no matter what field of study the student belongs to. The course of study should cover library rules, cataloguing and classification system, use of card catalogue, reference aids, preparation of bibliographies etc.

If we want to introduce it, we hope we will not face any problem. Our libraries specially the university libraries are excellently organised and nicely equipped with highly qualified staff and the situation in colleges specially the Government ones is not at all hopeless. Most of them have got their trained librarians. We can utilize the services of their respective professionals.

All university authorities should start this orientation programme for entrants, lasting at least for 8 weeks from the beginning of each academic session with a provision for instruction for one period a week. The lecture should be followed by discussion and problem assignments. At the end of the programme students should be examined. This programme will surely improve the efficiency in the use of books and libraries and will make the students self-reliant and certainly enable them to help themselves more effectively.

A printed guide book on the use of the library should also be prepared and distributed to each first year student. It should contain arrangement of book stack, bibliography and reference section, reading room, library rules and regulations and a brief direction for the use of various books, catalogue cards etc.

Finally, I would like to mention here that the instruction and orientation in the use of books and libraries is not a new idea. Almost cent per cent British and American university libraries have been providing instruction in their services, and giving instruction concerning the use of library resources is imperative specially for institution of higher learning and research.

The matter should receive a thorough and careful consideration of education planners, college and university authorities