

Full Length Research

Reference Facility and Service in Visvesvaraya Technological University in India and University of Wollongong in Dubai: A Study

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Reference facilities and services are considered as the heart of the library services. It is a service, facilitated by a reference librarian, which meets the information needs of users with desired information. Library reference services like many other library services, have also changed with the impact of emerging technologies and are now in line with changing social needs. This study aimed to analyze the effectiveness of reference services in university libraries at the Visvesvaraya Technological University in India and University of Wollongong in Dubai. The study employed the quantitative research method to achieve its objectives. The quantitative data was collected from librarians of two selected university libraries which offered reference services through the questionnaire. This paper highlights the Computerized Reference Services, Methods Used in the Reference Service, Encouraged the Online Reference Services Provided to users, Availability of Online reference services and References Services provided during lock-down in the University Libraries.

Keyword: Reference Service, Libraries, University libraries, Visvesvaraya Technological University, India, University of Wollongong, Dubai

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INTRODUCTION

Information and reference facilities and services, like the library itself, are always evolving as a major component of library services. The primary focus of library services has always been referencing and information. They assist library users in finding appropriate information resources to satisfy their requirements through personalized assistance. The purpose of this study is to outline the library's reference facility and services paradigm.

Reference and information services have always been the main component of library services. They provide personalized assistance to library users in accessing suitable information resources to meet their needs. This paper attempts to describe the paradigm of reference and information services in the library environment.

The library's reference section, headed by the reference librarian, is an important section that houses and takes care of important information resources that cannot be given to users on loan. Reference services were traditionally offered by a reference librarian at the reference desk within the library building during face-to-face meetings between the user and the librarian. The selection of suitable and sufficient reference material and its arrangement and maintenance were the major responsibility of the reference librarian.

REVIEW

Akor and Alhassan (2015), is study revealed that reference services provided in the libraries include answering reference queries, provision of referral services and provision of digital reference services. Based on the above findings, the following recommendations are presented, provision of adequate reference materials, regular re-training of reference librarians and provision of current awareness services for the library users. Dhar (2010), is study observed that Reference services are personal assistance given by libraries to users who are in pursuit of information. Its services rendered to its users include reader education, meeting users ' requests for specific information and assistance, and the management of the use and loan of library materials and equipment's. Ozkaramanli (2005), investigated the reference services in ten academic libraries in Ohio and Pennsylvania. Nearly 40 librarians were questioned in order to explore various issues relating to the service. This study provided practical evaluation criteria for providing successful chat reference services in three categories i.e., marketing, librarians' performance and chat software. Smith (2010), is study revealed the development of information and communication technologies has had a great impact on both the reference sources and the reference work. Web resources and databases have supplemented print reference sources available in reference sections of libraries.

OBJECTIVE

- To study the present status of Maintain Web OPAC and Online Reference Service in University Libraries.
- To find out about the Computerized Reference Services offered in the University Libraries.
- Identify the Methods Used in the Provision of Reference Service in University Libraries.
- Comparative analysis of the Online Reference Services in University Libraries.
- To find out the Availability of Online reference services in University Libraries.
- To study the reference Services provided during lock-down in the University Libraries.

METHODOLOGY

The investigator will adopt a survey method. The primary sources for literature search will be Library and Information Science Abstract (LISA). The investigator adopted a survey method. Data for the study were collected through a questionnaire. Questionnaires were used as a research tool for data collection. The structured questionnaire covers several aspects of reference services. The designed questionnaires were distributed to university librarian. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and percentage tabulation. The study was conducted during December 2021. The results are presented below.

Analysis and Discussion

Age and Experience wise Distribution

Table 1
Age and Experience wise Distribution of Respondents

Sl. No		VTU	UOWD
01	Age	48	39
02	Experience	11	7

The table 01 show that the age and experience wise distribution of the respondent. 48 years age of VTU Librarian 39 years of UOWD Librarian. 11 years' experience of VTU librarian and 07 years' experience to UOWD librarian.

Average Number of users

Table 2
Average Number of users in University Libraries

Sl.No	Total number of users on average	VTU	UOWD
01	Students	2000	3200
02	Staff	350	210
03	Researchers	150	11
04	Corporate	20	00

There were 2000 students using the VTU library while 3200 students using the UOWD library. 350 staff using the VTU library while 210 staff using the UOWD library. 150 researchers using the VTU library while only 11 researchers using the UOWD library. 20 corporates using the VTU library.

Maintain Web OPAC and Online Reference Service

Table 3

Maintain Web OPAC and Online Reference Service in University Libraries

Sl.No		VTU	UOWD
01	Library maintain Web OPAC	Yes	Yes
02	Online reference Service	Yes	Yes

Both VTU and UOWD library had maintained Web OPAC and Online reference Services.

Computerized Reference Services

Table 4

Computerized Reference Services offered in the University Libraries

Sl.No	Computerized Reference services	VTU	UOWD
01	Downloading info from the internet	Yes	Yes
02	Printed table of contents for journals, magazines, CDs service	Yes	No
03	Printed table of contents of e-journals service	Yes	No
04	List of relevant websites	Yes	No
05	List of digital library website	Yes	Yes
06	Links to the other library portals	Yes	Yes

The table shows the computerized reference services available and services provided by the University libraries to the users, both universities provide downloading info from the internet, List of digital library websites, Links to the other library portals facilities and services provided by the users However, VTU provides the Printed table of contents for journals, magazines, CDs service, Printed table of contents for e-journals services and a List of relevant websites facilities and services for the uses. UOWD did not offer Printed table of contents for journals, magazines, CDs service, Printed table of contents for journals, List of relevant websites

Methods Used in the Provision of Reference Service

Table 5

Methods Used in Provision Reference Service

Sl.No	Methods used in reference services	VTU	UOWD
01	Reference desk is highly visible and centrally located	To a large extent	To a moderate extent
02	Having Virtual reference desk	Not at All	To some extent
03	OPAC placed near reference desk	To a large extent	To a large extent
04	Professional reference librarian with good comm. Skills	Not at All	To a large extent
05	Fee based online service	Not at All	Not at All
06	Up-to-date reference sources made available in the reference section	To a large extent	To a large extent
07	Printed guides like pathfinders, study guides and subject bibliography service	To a large extent	To a large extent
08	Extensive bibliographic instructions	To a little extent	To a large extent
09	Reference questions answered successfully maintained in separate register	To a large extent	To a large extent
10	Suggestion box is provided	To a large extent	To a moderate extent

Table 5 continuation

11	User feedback forms are provided	To a moderate extent	To a large extent
12	One to one session	To a moderate extent	To a large extent
13	Information literacy session in classes	To a large extent	To a large extent
14	Workshops	To a large extent	To a large extent
15	Online chat	Not at all	To a little extent
16	Email	To a large extent	To a large extent
17	Phone	To a little extent	To a large extent

Methods used in delivering reference services, VTU reference desk is highly visible and centrally located to a large extent, while UOWD library is used to a moderate extent. VTU used to have Having virtual reference desk Not at All while UOWD library was used To some extent. Both university libraries used OPAC placed near reference desks to a large extent. The UOWD library employed a professional reference librarian with excellent communication skills to large extent, While VTU library to a significant extent skills are Not at all.

Both university library did not use Fee based online service Not at all. Both university library used Up-to-date reference sources made available in the reference section and Printed guides like pathfinders, study guides and subject bibliography service to a large extent. VTU library used Extensive bibliographic instructions to a little extent while UOWD library used to a large extent. Both university library used Reference questions answered successfully maintained in separate register to a large extent. VTU library used Suggestion box is provided a large extent, while UOWD library used to a moderate extent, VTU library used User feedback forms are provided To a moderate extent while UOWD library used To a large extent, VTU library used One to one session To a moderate extent while UOWD library used To a large extent, both university library used Information literacy session in classes and Workshops To a large extent, VTU library used Online chat to Not at all while UOWD library used To a little extent, both university library used E-mail and Phone To a large extent.

Refresher Training

Table 06

Arrange a Refresher Training Intervention/Course in University Library

		VTU	UOWD
01	Arrange a refresher training intervention/ course	Yes	Yes

Above the table show the both university library using arrange a refresher training intervention/course of follow up training.

Online Reference Services

Table 07

Opinion towards the Availability of Online Reference Services

SI.No	Availability of Online Reference Services	VTU	UOWD
01	Library Website	Yes	Yes
02	From the Librarian	Yes	Yes
03	Library orientation	Yes	Yes
04	Email reference service	Yes	Yes
05	SMS reference	Yes	Yes
06	From a friend	Yes	No
07	From your instructor	Yes	Yes
08	Online Tutorials	Yes	Yes
09	Instant Messaging	No	Yes
10	Facebook	No	No
11	Library Guides	No	Yes
12	Library bulletin/newsletter	No	Yes

On preferred availability of online reference services with the user, both universities used Library Website, From the Librarian, Library orientation, Email reference service, SMS, from your instructors, Online Tutorials, however, UOWD library did not have From a friend. VTU did not use the Instant Messaging, Facebook, Library Guide and Library bulletin/newsletter whereas UOWD used Instant Messaging, Facebook, Library Guide and Library bulletin/newsletter services, both university library did not use to Facebook.

Encouraged the Online Reference Services

Table 08
Encouraged the Online Reference Services Provided to Users

Sl.No	Encouraged the start of library online reference services	VTU	UOWD
01	Students were asking for library reference services	Yes	Yes
02	Library adviser committee suggested	Yes	Yes
03	Research supervisor suggested	Yes	Yes
04	A fellow student suggested the library service	Yes	Yes

The table show that the encouraged to start of library online reference services provided to users, both university library encouraged the Students were asking for library reference services, Library adviser committee suggested, Research supervisor suggested and A fellow student suggested the library service VTU library and UOWD Library has motivated.

Library's Collection Accessibility During COVID-19

Table 09
Library's Collection Accessibility During COVID-19

		VTU	UOWD
01	Library's collection was accessible during COVID-19	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
02	The library alters its programs and services in response to COVID-19 to improve library accessibility	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
03	Did the library provide a real time virtual reference desk to users	Agree	Strongly Agree

On Library's collection accessibility during COVID-19 and the library altered its programs and services in response to COVID-19 to improve library accessibility, both VTU and UOWD strongly agreed, VTU library did the library provides a real time virtual reference desk for users, while the UOWD library provided real time virtual reference desk to users was strongly agree.

References Services provided during lock-down

Table 10
References Services provided during lock-down in the University Libraries

38	References Services provided during lockdown	VTU	UOWD
01	Access to database	Yes	Yes
02	Access to e-journals	Yes	Yes
03	Access to E-books	Yes	Yes
04	Online library training	Yes	Yes
05	Document Delivery/Inter library loans	Yes	Yes
06	Off-campus Digital resources	Yes	Yes
07	Reference services	Yes	Yes
08	Researcher support	Yes	Yes
09	Library social media platform	Yes	No
10	Content on Google	Yes	No
11	Library chat service	No	Yes

Above the table show that the library references services were provided during lockdown, both university library provided the Access to database, Access to e-journals, Access to e-books, Online library training, Document Delivery/Inter library loans, Off-campus Digital resources, Reference services, and Researcher support to provide the lockdown time, VTU library provided the Library social media platform and Content on Google whereas UOWD library did not provide, VTU library did not provide the library chat service Where as UOWD did provide the Library chat service in lockdown time.

Methods Used for Collecting Users Feedback about Activities and Programs

Table 11

Methods Adopted to Collect the Users Feedback about Activities and Programs

Sl.No	Users Feedback	VTU	UOWD
01	Ask users directly	Yes	Yes
02	Use checklist to collect option	Yes	No
03	Use observation and experiment analysis	Yes	Yes
04	Analyzing visitors register	Yes	No
05	Conducting reference query analysis	Yes	Yes

On Methods used to collect users' feedback about activities and programs offered in library, both university library used Ask users directly, VTU library used the Use checklist to collect options, UOWD did not use checklist to collect option method. Use observation and experiment analysis, was used by both Universities. Analyzing visitors register was used in VTU and was not used in in UOWD and Conducting reference query analysis was used in both Universities library.

CONCLUSION

The importance of effective library reference services in the success of any university library. The place of efficient library reference services cannot be over emphasized in the success of any university library. The objective of this paper was to discuss some recent changes and trends in library reference facility and services. It is clear that library reference services have dramatically changed and new trends have emerged along with changing social needs. Reference services become one of the key areas in libraries where modern Information communication technologies has become one of the most important aspects of libraries.

The computerized reference services to both universities proved the downloading info from the internet, List of digital library websites, Links to the other library portals facilities and services provided by the users, however, VTU provided the Printed table of contents for journals, magazines, CDs service, Printed table of contents of e-journals service and List of relevant websites facilities and services to the uses. Methods used in delivering reference services, VTU used Reference desk is highly visible and centrally located to a large extent while the UOWD library is used to a moderate extent. Both university library used OPAC placed near the references to a large extent. Both university library used Up-to-date reference sources made available in the reference section and Printed guides like pathfinders, study guides and subject bibliography service To a large extent. Both university library used Reference questions answered successfully maintained in separate register To a large extent. Both university library used Information literacy session in classes and Workshops To a large extent, both university library used Fee based online service to Not at all. VTU library used Professional reference librarian with good comm. Skills to Not at All and UOWD used To a large extent. VTU used Having Virtual reference desk to Not at All and UOWD to some extended.

Online reference services with the user, both universities used Library Website, From the Librarian, Library orientation, Email reference service, SMS reference, online tutorials, however, VTU used from a friend, from your instructor and online tutorials whereas UOWD library did not use, UOWD library used the Instant messaging, Library guides and Library bulletin/newsletter. whereas VTU did not use, both university library did not use to Facebook. The observed that both university libraries satisfaction was reference services.

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