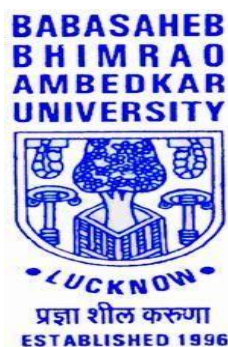


**AN ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES AND FACILITIES RENDERED BY
CENTRAL UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES FOR DIVYANGJAN IN NORTHERN
INDIA: A STUDY**

Abstract of Thesis

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION

Libraries in India are working towards becoming more inclusive institutions for divyangjan. Recognizing the right to education and access to information for all individuals, libraries are making efforts to create accessible physical spaces and train their staff to meet the needs of divyangjan. The three key elements of a library - collection, professionals, and patrons - are equally important in providing barrier-free surroundings.

As more individuals with disabilities enroll in higher education, libraries must offer services that cater to their needs, such as alternative formats, assistive technologies, and staff training. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities supports these endeavors, aiming to ensure the full and equal exercise of all human rights and dignity for all individuals with disabilities.

According to the Accessibility Guidelines and Standards for Higher Education Institutions and Universities, 2022, divyang users must be offered library services that serve their needs, such as well-structured library buildings that ensure accessibility without hurdles, reading material in alternative formats, assistive technologies, and training existing staff to support divyang patrons in libraries.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As now, more divyang users are enrolling in higher education institutions, their information requirements should be considered. The primary goal of libraries is to provide services that are accessible to all including divyang users and create opportunities for growth. Assistive technology, accessible infrastructure, collection, and services are required in order to create a hassle-free environment in any library. Some academic libraries have taken initiative to make library buildings and their services accessible to all. Therefore, this study intends to assess the services and facilities provided at central university libraries for divyang users.

The problem of the present study entitled “**An Assessment of Services and Facilities Rendered by Central University Libraries for Divyangjan in Northern India: A Study**”

The study also gives insight into divyang users’ accessibility and their awareness of available services and amenities. The findings of the study will be valuable to the university libraries and administrators, associations, and other groups fascinated with facilitating divyangjan.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study was decided to take place after identification of research gap. The objectives of the study are as following-

1. To study the infrastructural development by the Central University Libraries for the divyangjan.
2. To know about the guidelines followed by the libraries of Central University for divyangjan.
3. To examine the equipment, software, and, assistive technology used to provide library services for divyangjan at Central University.
4. To study the types of collections available in the libraries for divyangjan.
5. To identify the special services rendered by the libraries for divyangjan.
6. To assess the awareness of divyangjan towards the services and facilities provided by the libraries for them.
7. To know the level of satisfaction among library users (Divyangjan).
8. To investigate the difficulties faced by divyangjan while accessing the libraries.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

The current investigation was carried out with the purpose of focusing on the hypotheses listed below:

1. Divyangjan are well aware about the services and facilities rendered by the Central University Libraries for them.
2. Divyangjan are satisfied with the library services and facilities rendered by Central University Libraries for them.
3. Libraries are using sufficient equipment, software, and assistive technology to provide service for divyang users.
4. Central University Libraries do not follow any guidelines for developing and creating divyang-friendly infrastructure.

SCOPE AND LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The scope of the proposed study is restricted to the libraries of central universities located in Northern India which fall in (1) Delhi (2) Haryana (3) Himachal Pradesh (4) Jammu (5) Kashmir (6) Punjab (7) Uttarakhand (8) Uttar Pradesh (9) Rajasthan.

The name of the central universities as follows:

Table 1.2 List of Central Universities

Sr. No.	Name of Central university	Name of Central Library	State & U.T.
1	Aligarh Muslim University	Maulana Azad Library	Uttar Pradesh
2	University of Allahabad	Central Library	Uttar Pradesh
3	Banaras Hindu University	Sayaji Rao Gaekwad Library: Central Library	Uttar Pradesh
4	Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University	Gautam Buddha Central Library	Uttar Pradesh
5	Rani Lakshmi Bai Central Agricultural University	Central Library	Uttar Pradesh
6	Hemwati Nandan Bahuguna Garhwal University	Central Library	Uttarakhand

Sr. No.	Name of Central university	Name of Central Library	State & U.T.
7	Jamia Millia Islamia	Dr. Zakir Husain Central Library	New Delhi
8	Jawaharlal Nehru University	Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Central Library	New Delhi
9	South Asian University	Prof. G.K. Chadha Library	New Delhi
10	University of Delhi	Central Library	New Delhi
11	Central University of Haryana	Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya Central Library	Haryana
12	Central University of Himachal Pradesh	Acharya Raghuv eer Central Library	Himachal Pradesh
13	Central University of Jammu	Central Library	Jammu & Kashmir
14	Central University of Kashmir	Central Library	Jammu & Kashmir
15	Central University of Punjab	Central Library	Punjab
16	Central University of Rajasthan, Rajasthan	Central Library	Rajasthan

Above mentioned name of Central Universities is based on the UGC list, 2020, of central universities. Only 10 out of the 16 Central Universities were taken into account for this study because South Asian University, New Delhi responded that it is not a Central University and rest four university libraries viz., RLBCAU, HNGBU, CUJ, CUR have been in the process to develop the facilities and services for divyang users and also responded that there was no divyang users. The Central University of Himachal Pradesh denied to provide the required data.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The survey method was adopted in the present study, which is a commonly used strategy in descriptive Social Science research. The researcher used a questionnaire/schedule, telephonic interview, observation, and document reviews in the present study for collecting data. Questionnaire/ Schedule was also distributed via WhatsApp and email using a Google form link. The questionnaire was based on the

library accessibility checklist established and published by IFLA in 2005, and it addressed all issues pertaining to the services and facilities of the libraries under investigation. The major issue in this study that the researcher had faced was to find the divyang users of the central library for the research. Only few libraries have statistics about the divyang users. Other than the libraries, data was collected from the specialized unit or cell designed for divyangjan at the university, controller of examination section, SC/ST Cell of the universities, as well as snowball sampling was also used to collect data from the user of the central library.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The organization of the present study includes five chapters, subsequently followed by sections comprising the bibliography, and appendices.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter outlines the statement of the problem, and objectives, also highlighting the significance and scope of the study. The chapter also include a brief overview of the research methodology and the organization of subsequent chapters.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

This chapter presents a comprehensive review of relevant literature and research studies related to the research topic. It provides a comprehensive analysis of relevant theories, concepts, and methodologies. It also identifies research gaps and establishes the theoretical framework for the study.

Chapter 3: Central Universities of Northern India: A Profile

This chapter provides a brief overview of the Central University of Northern India and their Central Library.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Interpretation

In this chapter, the focus is on analyzing and interpreting the data collected for the research study. This involves summarizing and presenting the key characteristics of the collected data through the use of tables, charts, and graphs.

Chapter 5: Findings, Conclusion and Suggestions

This chapter presents the key findings derived from the data analysis and interpretation. The chapter moves on to draw conclusion based on the research findings. Finally, the chapter concludes by offering practical recommendations or suggestions based on the research findings and suggestions for future research was proposed.

The thesis concludes with a list of bibliographic references and appendices.

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The following are the specific findings that have been derived from the study based on the analysis and interpretation:

Findings Based on Librarian's Questionnaire

- All central university libraries have policies regarding divyang users except for JNU, CUP, and CUK libraries.
- Special committees for the procurement of materials for divyang users in central university libraries can only be found in AMU, DU, and CUH; whereas the other central university libraries do not have any special committees for this purpose. The JMI library has not provided with any response to this question.
- Except CUK, the majority of central university libraries (9) adhere to guidelines for the creation of infrastructure that is welcoming to divyang users.
- Guidelines and space standards for barrier free built environment for disabled and elderly persons by CPWD is followed by majority of the central university libraries.
- The majority of central university libraries do not include provisions for assistive devices and resources in their library budget. The libraries of AMU, DU, and CUH allocate a portion of their budget towards the provision of assistive devices and resources.

- The majority of libraries conduct awareness programmes to inform divyang users about the special services and facilities available to them, with the exception of the CUK library. The analysis revealed that orientation programmes were the most prevalent means of delivering awareness to divyang users.
- The study reveals that all investigated libraries were offering human assistance to divyang users, with electronic resources being the second most commonly provided resource, followed by accessible library websites and webpages.
- It was found that accessibility to the library building was higher in respect to ‘Parking areas, pathways, entrances & exit to the building are wheelchair-accessible and also accessible for crutch users’ followed by ‘aisles are kept wide and clear for wheelchair and crutch users. While least available feature is ‘adjustable chairs and desks’ which was offered by only DU, BBAU, CUP libraries.
- Web based library services, accessible catalogue (including OPAC) and reader assistants to the divyang students are the top three services offered by the central university libraries. Whereas loan system for devices and peripherals and applications and links for the nationwide network of talking book and braille libraries are provided by only 3 libraries.
- When the aggregate services or total number of responses were considered, DU and JMI library provides maximum number of services followed by BHU and JNU library.
- It was found from the study that libraries were offering assistive hardware and Voice recorder/CD player, scanner/reader, Audio books, Simple / Electric Wheel Chairs, braille Printer/ Embosser and Cursor-control devices were the highly offered assistive hardware to divyang users.
- It was found from the study that libraries were offering assistive software and JAWS, On-Screen Keyboard, Screen Enlargement Software, Kurzweil, Kurzweil 3000, and Voice Recognition Software were the highly offered assistive software to divyang users.

- The majority of the central university libraries have the assistive hardware and software for the visually impaired and locomotor impaired users respectively when compared with others.
- Out of all the central university libraries of the study only central library of CUK and AU was neither offering the hardware nor software for divyang users.
- Majority of the libraries are facing barriers in providing library services and facilities to the divyang users due to ‘Higher cost of Assistive and Adaptive Technology’ and Shortage of trained and skilled staff.

Findings based on User’s Questionnaire

- The primary reasons for visiting the library includes borrowing books, preparing for exams or tests, and completing projects/ thesis/ assignments requirements. The utilisation of CD/DVD materials in the library is low, as indicated by the small proportion of participants (86) accessing them.
- Majority of the divyang users (59%) were well aware about the services and facilities provided at central university libraries.
- Major number of respondents were well aware about photocopying service, circulation service, facilities like adequate Sign symbols, Reading Space, lights, fittings and furniture and assistive technology (Hardware & Software) whereas, least number of respondents were aware about the document delivery service.
- It was found from the study that in terms of physical accessibility majority of the divyang users were agree with the availability of non-slippery floor, unobstructed, well- marked and well lighted access paths to the entrance, followed by adequate parking spaces are easy reach to the library and close to the library entrance, not too steep ramp and railings are provided at both sides of ramp and pictogram signs are provided for services and amenities such as toilets, elevators, stairways, etc. A small number of participants were agreed with the availability of proper evacuation space in case of emergency,

accessible self-service circulation stations and shelf and stack identifiers provided in large print and braille formats.

- Highly available resources were Internet and LAN & Wi-Fi connectivity facilities, followed by certain number of computer workstations, after that catalogues in accessible format followed by mobility aids and human assistance were available to access books respectively, according to the user responses. Whereas least number of respondents were agreed that supplementary reading materials, alternative Formats (Braille, large Print, audio & video books), special input devices such as trackballs, joysticks, switches, touch pads, and augmented keyboards were available for use.
- Highly available assistive hardware in the libraries were Simple/ Electric Wheel Chairs, followed by Voice Recorder, after that special fitted lift to move the person inside the library, lift for wheelchairs users to all the floors, Scanner/ Reader, Braille Printer/Embosser and Speech Synthesizer respectively, according to the divyang users.
- In terms of availability of software, divyang users responded that JAWS was the most available, followed by Dragon Dictate (which converts speech to text), on-screen keyboard, Kurzweil, and voice recognition software respectively.
- Well organized issue-return services, Reference and Circulation services offered by phone, TTY / TTD and e-mail, accessible catalogue (including OPAC) to all, reader and research assistance to the divyang students, Web based library service were top five services available for the divyang users. Whereas in terms of availability loan system for laptops and peripherals, applications for the nationwide network of Talking Book and Braille Libraries and sign language interpretation services very low response were received by the divyang users.
- Unavailability of academic based text books/ materials, etc. in alternative/electronic formats, lack of adequate infrastructure, and lack of dedicated library services for divyang students were cited as the top three barriers faced by divyang users.

- It was found from the study that divyang users were satisfied with the photocopying Service, followed by parking spaces, elevators, ramp, Floor and pathways, Circulation Service, assistance of Library Staff. Whereas the divyang users were least satisfied with document delivery service and reference service.

CONCLUSION

As a central hub for gathering and preserving knowledge, the library is an essential asset for any society. While most readers can take full advantage of the library's resources because they can read easily, divyang students often struggle and have to rely on assistive devices and software as well as an accessible physical environment in order to do so. Taking into account the requirements of the divyang users, the purpose of this study was to determine the services, assistive hardware, and software that are conveniently available to divyang users at the central university libraries. It was also intended to assess the level of satisfaction of divyang users with the library services, resources, and assistive technology, as well as to identify barriers to accessing the library services. The result shows that majority of the libraries have following the guideline to create and develop the divyang friendly infrastructure of the libraries. It can be concluded on the basis of the study that majority of the central libraries have the physical access in the form of parking areas, pathways, accessible entrances & exit, accessible restrooms, pictogram signs for services and amenities, elevators, stairways, ramp and railings etc. have been provided. It was found from the analysis that most of the libraries having very less number of the assistive hardware and software. In central university libraries, there was more availability of services and facilities catering to visually and locomotor impaired users compared to other disability groups. It was also found that CUK and AU library haven't the assistive devices neither resources in alternative format. The analysis also indicates that for libraries major hurdle in providing facilities and services was due to higher cost of assistive and adaptive technology followed by shortage of trained and skilled staff and insufficient fund allocation. Majority of the divyang users were satisfied with the available library resources, facilities and services except document delivery service ad reference service. Divyang users experience challenges as a result of a lack of suitable infrastructure, lack of

specialised library services for them, and lack of alternative or electronic version of academic-based text books, materials, and other resources. Central libraries in India have taken steps towards creating an inclusive and supportive environment for divyang students. Through their accessibility initiatives, specialized collections, assistive support, and collaborative efforts, they are trying to ensure that every individual has an equal opportunity to access knowledge, fostering a more equitable and empowered society.

SUGGESTIONS

In light of the findings of the current survey, the research and the researcher have come up with the suggestion that can be found in the following:

- In order to make libraries more accessible for divyang users and to encourage more divyang users to use library services, it is necessary to conduct thorough planning and implementation of inclusive policies and procedures.
- It is recommended that libraries establish a specialised committee to oversee the acquisition of reading materials and assistive devices, as well as the development of services created to meet the needs of divyang users. It is essential for librarians to incorporate divyang users and groups advocating for their needs in the planning and development process.
- The university libraries should ensure that special orientation or awareness sessions are organized for divyang users to aid them to search for information from the various platforms of the university libraries and for the use of assistive hardware and software.
- In order to meet the demands of divyang users, it is necessary to employ specially trained people.
- The dissemination of policies and procedures catering to the needs of disabled library users shall be advertise in the Library Bulletin board, website, through emails and library publications.

- The stipulated quantity of subject related books, journals, and many other types of reading material ought to be made available in the alternate format as well as the facilities of recording of the books on demand also should provide.
- It is recommended that the allocation of the fund be directed towards the acquisition of contemporary assistive devices, with the aim of catering to the needs of divyang library users.
- To avoid the barrier of costly software libraries should provide services through open- source software like NVDA, Audacity, Optikey, GazetheWeb etc.
- Library should provide reading area for divyang users on ground floor near the entrance. Adjustable chairs and tables designed for wheelchairs and aids are recommended for use in libraries to accommodate students with physical disabilities.
- Library should have directional signs in large prints and also in braille format. Tactile paths should be provided near and inside the library building for visually impaired users, provision of sign language services for hearing and speech impaired users.
- It is recommended that instructional manuals pertaining to the utilisation of assistive technology be made available in alternative formats.
- It is recommended that the training of library staff members in catering to students with special needs should include in-service training through workshops, seminars, or short courses.

SUGGESTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

During the study, the investigator felt that there are many possible topics that can be carried out for the further research-

- A separate research study can be conducted for each individual group of disabilities to offer the best library services.
- A further study can be done in all the Central University libraries in India.
- Separate and exhaustive study can be carried out on the perspectives of Library Personnel on Disability and Accessibility in India.
- Research can be conducted on exploring the needs and requirements of divyang users in Educational Institutions.