



Role of academic libraries in higher education: A review of literature

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Abstract

Academic libraries play an important role in the functioning of higher education institutions. They support teaching, learning, and research activities of students and teachers. Over the years, the role of academic libraries has changed due to the growth of information technology and digital resources. This review paper aims to study the role of academic libraries in higher education based on previously published literature. The study is based on secondary sources such as books, journals, research articles, and online resources. The collected literature has been reviewed and discussed under different themes to understand the contribution of academic libraries in higher education. The study also identifies some research gaps and suggests areas for future research. The paper concludes that academic libraries are essential for improving the quality of higher education and need continuous development to meet the changing needs of users.

Keywords: Academic Libraries, Higher Education, Library Services, Digital Libraries, Review of Literature

Introduction

Higher education is considered an important factor for the overall development of individuals and society. Colleges and universities aim to provide quality education, promote research, and prepare students for professional life. In this process, academic libraries play a supportive and significant role. Libraries provide access to books, journals, and other information resources required by students, teachers, and researchers.

Traditionally, academic libraries were mainly concerned with print collections and basic services such as circulation and reference services. However, with the introduction of computers, the internet, and digital resources, the role of academic libraries has changed. Today, libraries provide access to e-books, e-journals, online databases, and digital repositories. Librarians also guide users in searching and using information effectively.

In recent years, higher education institutions have placed more emphasis on quality teaching, research output, and accreditation processes such as NAAC. Academic libraries support these activities by providing updated resources, research support services, and proper documentation. Therefore, it is important to understand how academic libraries contribute to higher education.

Many researchers have studied different aspects of academic libraries, but the literature is spread across various sources. A review of literature helps in bringing together existing studies and understanding the overall role of academic libraries. Hence, the present paper reviews earlier studies to examine the role of academic libraries in higher education.

Review of Literature

Concept and Functions of Academic Libraries

Ranganathan (2006) [6] explained that academic libraries are central to educational institutions and are meant to support teaching, learning, and research activities. According to him, libraries function as organized centres of knowledge that serve students and teachers alike.

Kumar (2014) [2] described the basic functions of academic libraries as acquisition, organization, preservation, and

dissemination of information resources. He emphasized that libraries are essential for academic growth and intellectual development.

Singh and Kaur (2018) [8] stated that academic libraries play a key role in providing reliable and updated information to users. They highlighted that libraries act as learning spaces where users can access both print and electronic resources.

Mishra (2017) [4] pointed out that academic libraries have expanded their functions with the inclusion of digital resources and ICT-based services.

Patel (2021) [5] also noted that academic libraries contribute to institutional development by supporting academic programmes and quality initiatives.

Role of Academic Libraries in Teaching and Learning

Kumar and Singh (2015) [3] conducted a study on the use of library resources by students and found that regular use of library services improves academic performance. They emphasized that libraries support classroom teaching by providing textbooks, reference materials, and supplementary reading resources.

Virkus (2013) [10] highlighted the importance of information literacy programmes conducted by academic libraries to help students develop critical thinking and information evaluation skills.

Sharma (2019) [7] stated that academic libraries support teaching and learning through user education programmes and orientation sessions.

According to Singh and Kaur (2018) [8], collaboration between teachers and librarians enhances the effectiveness of teaching-learning processes.

Mishra (2017) [4] also emphasized that access to digital resources through academic libraries supports self-learning and lifelong learning among students.

Role of Academic Libraries in Research Support

Sharma (2019) [7] discussed that academic libraries provide essential support to research activities by offering access to scholarly journals, databases, and research tools. He highlighted services such as reference assistance, citation support, and plagiarism awareness programmes.

Patel (2021) ^[5] pointed out that libraries play an important role in managing institutional repositories, which help in preserving and sharing research output.

Ranganathan (2006) ^[6] emphasized that research cannot progress without adequate library support. Kumar (2014) ^[2] stated that libraries assist researchers by providing current and relevant information resources.

Singh and Kaur (2018) ^[8] also noted that academic libraries help researchers in improving the quality and visibility of their research through access to e-resources and open access platforms.

Digital Transformation of Academic Libraries

Mishra (2017) ^[4] explained that the introduction of ICT has brought significant changes in academic library services. He discussed the development of digital libraries, automation of library operations, and online catalogues.

Kumar (2014) ^[2] stated that digital resources have increased the accessibility and usability of library services.

Virkus (2013) ^[10] highlighted that digital libraries support e-learning and distance education programmes.

Sharma (2019) ^[7] observed that remote access to e-resources has become an important service of academic libraries.

Patel (2021) ^[5] also mentioned that digital transformation has helped libraries to meet the changing needs of users in higher education institutions.

Role of Academic Libraries in Quality Assurance

Patel (2021) ^[5] discussed the role of academic libraries in NAAC accreditation and quality assurance processes. He emphasized that libraries contribute to quality indicators related to teaching, learning, and research.

UGC (2020) ^[9] highlighted that academic libraries are important for maintaining academic standards and institutional quality.

Sharma (2019) ^[7] stated that proper documentation and reporting of library activities help institutions during accreditation.

Kumar and Singh (2015) ^[3] noted that innovative library services enhance the overall quality of higher education institutions.

Singh and Kaur (2018) ^[8] also emphasized that quality library services positively influence institutional performance.

Research Gaps- The review of literature shows the following research gaps:

- Limited studies on academic libraries in rural and semi-urban areas.
- Few studies on the impact of digital library services after COVID-19.
- Lack of research on training and skill development of library professionals.
- Limited user-based studies on satisfaction with library services.

Objectives of the Study- The objectives of the present study are:

1. To understand the concept and basic functions of academic libraries.
2. To review studies related to the role of academic libraries in teaching and learning.
3. To examine the role of academic libraries in supporting research activities.

Methodology

This review paper is based on secondary sources of information. Relevant literature was collected from books, research journals, conference papers, and online sources. Databases such as Google Scholar, INFLIBNET, and Shodhganga were used to search for related studies. Keywords such as "academic libraries", "higher education", and "library services" were used for searching the literature. The collected studies were carefully read and selected based on their relevance to the topic. Around 30–35 research papers and articles published during the last 10–15 years were reviewed. The selected literature was analyzed and discussed under different themes.

Results and Discussion

The present review paper analyzed existing literature on the role of academic libraries in higher education. The review of studies clearly shows that academic libraries play a significant and supportive role in achieving the goals of higher education institutions. The results of the review are discussed based on the major themes identified in the literature.

The review of literature reveals that academic libraries are considered an essential component of higher education institutions. Most authors agree that libraries support academic activities by providing access to books, journals, and other learning resources. Studies indicate that a well-developed library collection contributes positively to students' academic performance and overall learning experience. The findings also show that libraries act as knowledge centers where students and teachers can access reliable and updated information.

With regard to teaching and learning, the reviewed studies highlight that academic libraries support classroom instruction by providing curriculum-based resources and reference materials. User education and information literacy programmes conducted by libraries help students in developing skills related to information searching and use. The discussion shows that students who regularly use library services perform better academically and develop independent learning habits.

The review also indicates that academic libraries play an important role in supporting research activities. Access to scholarly journals, databases, and e-resources helps researchers in conducting quality research. Services such as citation support, plagiarism awareness, and institutional repositories enhance research productivity and visibility. The findings suggest that libraries are increasingly involved in research support activities in higher education institutions.

The results further show that digital technology has greatly influenced academic library services. The use of ICT, digital libraries, and automation has improved access to information and enhanced service delivery. E-resources and remote access facilities allow users to access information beyond library working hours. The discussion highlights that digital transformation has made academic libraries more user-friendly and efficient.

In terms of quality assurance, the reviewed studies indicate that academic libraries contribute significantly to accreditation and quality processes such as NAAC. Libraries support quality indicators related to teaching–learning resources, research, and institutional

documentation. The discussion shows that effective library services improve the overall quality profile of higher education institutions.

Overall, the results of the review indicate that academic libraries have expanded their role from traditional book-based services to modern information and research support

centers. However, the discussion also highlights the need for continuous improvement in library infrastructure, digital resources, and professional skills of librarians to meet the changing needs of higher education.

5. Literature Review Table

Author	Year	Area of Study	Type of Study	Major Findings
Ranganathan	2006	Academic Libraries	Conceptual	Libraries support education and research
Kumar & Singh	2015	Teaching and Learning	Survey	Library use improves learning outcomes
Mishra	2017	Digital Libraries	Review	ICT has improved library services
Sharma	2019	Research Support	Case Study	Libraries help in research activities
Patel	2021	Library and NAAC	Review	Libraries support quality assurance

Conclusion

The review of literature shows that academic libraries play a significant role in higher education institutions. They support teaching, learning, research, and quality assurance activities. The role of libraries has expanded with the introduction of digital resources and technology. To meet the changing needs of users, academic libraries must continuously improve their services and resources. Future studies should focus on practical and user-oriented aspects of academic libraries.

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