

Library Services to Distance Learners with Special Reference to University of Jammu, J&K State: An Overview



Meghna Dhar

Assistant Professor,
P.G. Department of Library &
Information Science,
University of Jammu,
Jammu, J&K, India

Abstract

A library, considered as the heart of an institution, database of knowledge and temple of learning, is an integral part of high quality education which imparts vital services to all its users whether on campus or off-campus. It is a dynamic agency to assist its users in carrying out their pursuits in the advancement of knowledge by arranging the essential library material and other library facilities. It is a great source to the students and teachers to enrich their knowledge. Starting with a brief profile of University of Jammu, Jammu, J&K State, India, the focus of this paper is to provide an overview of existing library resources and services of Directorate of Distance Education Library, University of Jammu to its distant learners. It is followed by a brief historical background of Directorate of Distance Education (DDE) and various traditional and professional courses offered by the university. Further it gives a detailed description of quantity and quality of library collection, its working hours various facilities available at the library and various difficulties faced by library personnel pertaining to library activities. Some measures for improving existing resources and services have been suggested. The article concludes with a remark that the use of latest sophisticated technologies will help in the development of library services as an important student support services in distance education programme.

Keywords: Distance Learners, Distance Education, Library Resources and Services, Library Human Resources.

Introduction

Distance education has been acknowledged as the most feasible substitute to conventional education system to enhance accessibility, to achieve equality and to facilitate in continuing education to distant learners living in spatically scattered areas. Since the large segment of our population is still beyond the realm of formal education, distance education system has the onerous task of making higher education accessible to the people who could not be accommodated in the institutions of higher learning due to impoverished socio-economic backgrounds and other limitations. Distance education is an effective instrument to fight against illiteracy and also for meeting the ever increasing demand for the higher education. The first Vice-Chancellor of Indira-Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) India, has rightly pointed out that "Distance and Open education system appears to be the only approach which can meet the challenges and educational problems in the third world".^[1] Distance education basically involves self-study on the part of the students. For this purpose libraries are regarded as the most indispensable and economically perfect source for imparting knowledge to distant learners. A library is considered as the heart of any higher educational institution. In the changing educational environment in India, the role of libraries in distance education is very significant. It is well recognized as a tool and an integral part of higher education to achieve quality education. This is because the students and teachers are far away from each other and the instruction is imparted through some media. One of the aims of Distance Education is to stimulate the student to do self-study based on instructions they receive, there is no other place than the library where they can get all what they require. A number of Correspondence Institutes and Open Universities in India have been established to provide distance education for those who are interested in taking up professional courses or any other educational course of their interest.

University of Jammu: - A Brief Profile

The present state of Jammu & Kashmir lies in the extreme Northern part of India and looks like its crown. The state has been divided into two divisions Jammu & Kashmir, with Srinagar as its summer capital and Jammu as its winter capital. Jammu & Kashmir State has a rich cultural and literary heritage from times immemorial. The University of Jammu & Kashmir was established in the year 1948 to serve the entire state with its headquarters at Srinagar and sub office at Jammu. Since one university was considered to be inadequate to meet the growing needs of the entire state for higher education therefore the University of Jammu and Kashmir was bifurcated into two, the University of Jammu and the, University of Kashmir under an ordinance promulgated by Governor on September 5th, 1969. The University of Jammu & Kashmir ceased to exist from that date. The ordinance was subsequently replaced by "Kashmir and Jammu Universities Act, 1969, No. XXIV".^[2]

Located in the, City of Temples-Jammu, against the backdrop of sacred Trikuta hills, besides the River Tawi, the University of Jammu is one of the India's premier research and teaching institution accredited as 'A' grade University by National Assessment & Accreditation Council of India. At the time of its inception the University of Jammu had 11 teaching faculties but today it has grown to 35 departments offering Masters, M.Phil., Ph.D. and D.Lit. degrees in different disciplines besides L.L.B. and B.Lib.I.Sc. and some diploma courses. The courses like Master's degree programme in Business Administration, Tourism Management, Computer Application, Library and Information Science, Law, Environmental Sciences, Electronics, Bio-Technology, Sociology, Psychology, Physical Education and Strategic and Regional Studies etc. are available in the University. Teaching at undergraduate levels is imparted in affiliated colleges/institutions. There are B.Ed. colleges, Medical Colleges, Engineering and Technology Colleges, Ayurvedic Colleges, Institute of Music and Fine Arts, Oriental Institutions besides colleges of Arts, Commerce and Science subjects. Besides

formal teaching imparted in the departments, the University is using the alternative mode of Distance and Continuing Education to bring a greater number of people especially in remote and rural areas within the ambit of higher learning.^[3]

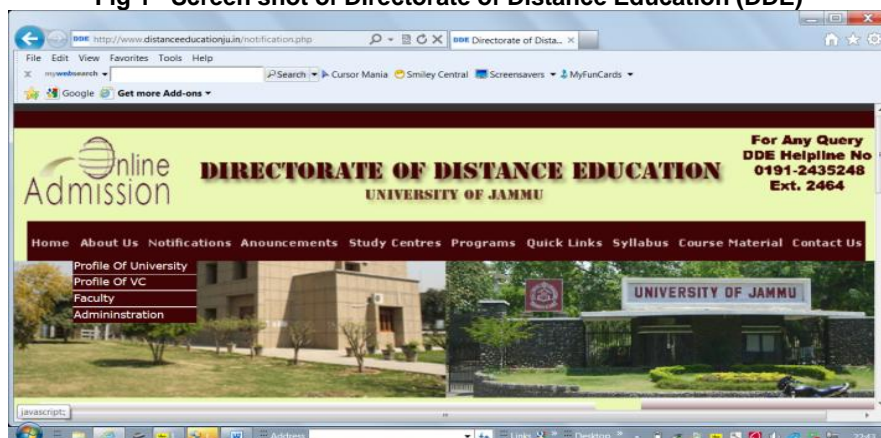
Directorate of Distance Education (DDE)

Motivated by the desire to provide education at the doorsteps of the learners, University of Jammu established the Directorate of Distance Education (formerly known as Institute of Correspondence Education) on 3rd of March 1976.^[4] Its aims are diversifying and providing educational opportunities far beyond the close confines of a classroom and making them available to all those who aspire and endeavour for education. It is an innovative system, which is academically sound and economically viable and as such, has proved to be a blessing for those who have no access to education. The students who belong to remote rural and inaccessible hilly areas of the state have been specially benefited by distance mode of education. However, DDE also caters to the needs of the students of urban areas who cannot pursue education through regular stream.

In recent times there had been stupendous increase in the educational needs of the country. Jammu and Kashmir State has not remained exception to this phenomenon. Despite being affected by virulent terrorism over the period of last one and half decades, there has been a progressive increase in the demand for higher education in the state. Because of inherent factors and constraints, conventional education institutions were / are unable to cope up with the augmented demand for higher education. The DDE has partly helped to cope up with this demand in the Jammu region.

DDE is offering a number of postgraduate and undergraduate courses. Besides traditional courses it is also imparting professional courses such M.Ed., B.Ed. and PGDBM. In 2005, it has launched Post Graduate course in Fisheries. This is a job oriented course and first of its kind through distance mode of education in the country. Presently more than 15,000 students are enrolled DDE for various courses.

Fig 1 Screen shot of Directorate of Distance Education (DDE)



(Source: <http://www.distanceeducationju.in>)
Programmes Offered by DDE

S.No	Name of Degree Offered	Date of Establishment	Degree Major	Duration
1.	B.A. -Part-1, Part - II and Part III	1976	Arts	3 years.
2.	B.Com.- Part-1,Part-II and Part III	1976	Commerce	3 years.
3.	B.Ed.,	1977	Education	2 years.
4.	M.Com.	1985	Commerce	2 years.
5.	PGDBM (Diploma Course)	1989	Business Management	1 year.
6.	M.Ed.	1997	Education	1 year.
7.	M.A. Dogri	2010	Dogri (Language)	2 years.
8.	M.A. Urdu	2002	Urdu (Language)	2 years.
9.	M.A.Hindi	2002	Hindi (Language)	2 years.
10.	M.A.English	2003	English (Languages)	2 years
11.	M.A. Sociology	2004	Sociology	2 years.
12.	M.A Economics	2004	Economics	2 years.
13.	L.L.B	2004	Law	3 years.
14.	M.Sc. Fisheries	2004	Fishery Science	3 years
15.	Certificate Course in Urdu through Hindi	-	Urdu for Communication	6 months
16.	Certificate Course in English	-	English for Communication	6 months

[Note: - B.A, B.Com, B.Ed. and L.L.B. are Bachelor's Degree Courses; M.A., M.Ed., M.Com. and M.Sc. are Master's Degree Courses.]

Facilities / Infrastructure

The Directorate of Distance Education provides Guidance and Counseling to the students. It has an adequate infrastructure in form of halls and rooms for Personal Contact Programmes and Counseling Sessions. The Directorate has a well-stocked library with a rich collection of books and a well-equipped computer laboratory with Internet and Wi-Fi facility.

Currently the DDE has study centers one each in muffasil Govt. Degree Colleges in Kathua, Poonch, Rajouri, Bhaderwah, Kishtwar and Doda districts of Jammu region. By these Centers, the DDE has truly brought the facility of higher education to the doorsteps of the distant learners of the remote rural, backward and inaccessible hilly areas of Jammu region.

In order to augment the delivery of the courses being offered by DDE, the latest and updated Self Learning Material is provided to the distance learners by hand and through post. In some courses the Self Learning Material (SLM) has also been put on the website.

Directorate of Distance Education Library

A well-equipped and well organized library is the foundation of modern educational infrastructure for the successful implementation of distance education programme. Today, library has achieved a prominent place in the field of education It is a real source of knowledge and it is realized that no system of distance education, howsoever well planned and well organized it is, will succeed in the absence of adequate library resources and services. The quality of education is determined by the quality of library's resources and services available in that library.

To provide the comprehensive selection of authoritative books covering all fields of knowledge and to make the content easily accessible to the distant learners, the Directorate of Distance Education

has established a full fledge library in 1976 and acts as an essential part of student support services. In the year 2000, since the Directorate of Distance Education has been shifted to newly constructed building, the library was also shifted to the new building which comprised of a large stack room in the ground floor and first floor. Presently a portion of stack room is used as a reading area. The library is also having acquisition room, property counter and a large reading room facility. However the reading room is yet to be opened. The DDE provides library facilities to the registered students.

Working Hours

The library remains open throughout the year from 9.30 a.m. to 5.00 pm on all working days. While on Saturdays, Sundays, and State holidays it remains open from 9.30 am to 2.00pm.

Resources and Services

DDE library is one the resourceful library as far as literature is concerned. Open access system is practiced in library. The library has maintained a very good collection of books, reference books, dissertations and back volumes of newspapers and journals. The library has a rich collection of 36,000 documents (up to June 24, 2012) which includes 36,000 books and reference books, and 200 dissertations. In addition, it subscribes 10 journals and 10 newspapers. The total library budget for the year 2011-2012 is Rs. 3,00,000/- (non-plan). The collection mainly comprises of books on almost all the subjects being studied at Directorate of Distance Education and also includes good number of reference sources

Growth of Collection

There has been considerable increase in the number of documents in DDE library since 37 years of its inspection .DDE Library had started with a small beginning of 326 collections in 1976 and at present the total collection has grown up to 36000.

Table 1:- Growth of Collection:-

S.No.	Year	Growth of Collection	S.No.	Year	Growth of Collection
1	1976	326	20	1995	13601
2	1977	1979	21	1996	13967
3	1978	2682	22	1997	14293
4	1979	3310	23	1998	16088
5	1980	4352	24	1999	16738
6	1981	6322	25	2000	18260
7	1982	6898	26	2001	20001
8	1983	7414	27	2002	23166
09	1984	7776	28	2003	24816
10	1985	8232	29	2004	27120
11	1986	8587	30	2005	28820
12	1987	8960	31	2006	32229
13	1988	9517	32	2007	32322
14	1989	9847	33	2008	32359
15	1990	10276	34	2009	33019
16	1991	10768	35	2010	35000
17	1992	11281	36	2011	35400
18	1993	11913	37	2012	36000
19	1994	12845			

(Source: Original Record collected from Accession Register of DDE Library, University of Jammu, Jammu)

DDE library subscribes following Journals / Magazines and Newspaper published in different languages which are as follows: -

Table 2: List of Journals & Magazines Subscribed.

S.No.	Journals / Magazines	Language
1.	AajKal	Urdu
2	The Business India	English
3	Digest	English
4	Readers Digest	English
5	Out Look	English
6	India Today	English
7	University News	English
8	Yojna	Hindi
9	Economic and Political Weekly	English
10	Epilogue	English

Table 3: List of Newspapers Subscribed.

S.No.	Newspapers	Language
1.	Employment News (Weekly)	English
2	Economic Times	English
3	The Daily Excelsior	English
4	The Hindu	English
5	Hindustan Times	English
6	Hind Samachar	Urdu
7	Kashmir Times	English
8	Amar Ujala	Hindi
9	The Times of India	English
10	Tribune	English

Besides this, DDE publishes its own journal entitled "Journal of Distance Education". A copy of it is maintained by the library.

Membership

Presently membership of DDE library is 1800 (550 students, 500 employees of the University and 30 DDE faculty). The members of library are increasing day by day as the registration of readers is a continuous process.

Library Staff

The DDE library works under the leadership of two Assistant Librarians. A library advisory committee has been set up which includes, Vice - Chancellor, Director of Distance Education as its members to lay down library policy and to assist the librarian in his work. Presently library has 6 staff members. It consists of one Senior Assistant Librarian, 2 Semi-Professional Assistants and 3 Library Bearers. The existing staff is very helpful, cooperative and sincere to the performance of work and duties assigned to them. The staff makes all possible efforts to furnish relevant information requirements of various users.

Services and Users

The ultimate purpose of a library is to render service as effectively and efficiently as possible. The main services rendered by the DDE library are:

1. Circulation Service,
2. Reference Service,
3. Reprographic service;
4. Current Awareness Services,
5. SDI Services,
6. Literature Search Services,
7. Orientation of Fresher's,
8. Periodicals.
9. E-resources
 - a. UGC-Infonet Digital Library Consortium (www.inflibnet.ac.in/econ/iccc.php)
 - b. National Open and Distance Learners Libraries and Information Centre Network NODLINET (www.ignou.ac.in)
10. OPAC

Library orientation is done at the beginning of each session to the new entrants in the library. The library is being used by a number of users for consulting books, reference books, dissertations and periodicals. It has been estimated that 60 to 70 users visit the library daily. Generally students and teachers issue books relating to their prescribed syllabus for

home reading. A hour or two hours are spend by the library users for reading reference books and periodicals in the library premises as they are not issued for home reading. Average numbers of books issued daily by DDE library are about 100 books. Books are lent only to those students for home reading, who deposit payment of Rs 575/- only as a library security which is latter on refunded. Students can borrow two books at a time for a period of 10 days. If the book is not returned in time then fine for overdue books is charged which is Re 1/- for first ten days, Rs 2/- for next 20 days, and Rs 5/- for beyond 20 days, Books lost, defaced or injured in any way has to be replaced by the borrower. In order to put library collection to greater use, the library is well organized and properly maintained. Regular shelving, shelf rectification, cleaning, repair and binding of publications are important activities carried out for proper up- keep of library collection.

Various Impediments in DDE Library

Employers constitute the most valuable resource of a library. The effectiveness of any library service depends to a large extent on the manner in which the staff is organized and work is allocated for the smooth performance of their duties. Since the year 1976, no classification and cataloguing work has been carried out, therefore all the books received on different subjects have been arranged subject wise. This is because, the books which are received by the library were not transferred to the Technical Section of Central Library of University of Jammu were these would have been classified. The number of books which are pending for classification and cataloguing work are 35000 and the number of books is increasing day by day. The present library staff in DDE library is not adequate to meet the growing information requirements of users. The current staff is unable to tackle with large number of users as a number of activities such as book selection, accessioning, accounting, lending of books to readers issuance of identity - cards, no- objection certificates registration of readers, reference service, orientation of fresher's etc. is to be carried out simultaneously by only three persons. Although the library staff is trained and aware of computerized library activities but due to overburden of work, the library is yet to be automated.

Future Plans

Recent advances in information technology have influenced the trend in higher education to shift from an instruction centered to a learner centered model. The new trends and opportunities in distance and open learning reaffirm this shift .Therefore for this purpose DDE has some future plans which are as :-

1. To automate all library records and for this purpose the library has recently purchased Softlink Software.
2. To convert all library records into machine readable form. For this purpose Project Assistants are appointed recently who are carrying out all the pending work including data-capturing, classification, cataloguing and numbering of books
3. Extension of stack room area to accommodate more number of books.

4. The newly constructed reading room shall be opened for readers in near future.

Suggestions

Distance Libraries should find new and innovative methods to provide better services to their clients .Some measures for improving quality of existing resources, services and their utilization have been suggested as under:-

1. Adequate number of specially qualified staff professional and non-professional staff should be appointed to serve the users in a most efficient manner. They should be well –informed about all the developments i.e. the number of new courses to be started, new study centers added, books, audio-visual video cassettes and equipment . This information should be regularly updated and sent to the network libraries. Automation of library operations and computer networks can smoothen the functioning of the whole process.
2. Library services can be improved if an immediate attention is given to computerized services such as Internet facility to the user's community to enrich their knowledge.
3. Subscription of subject periodicals is not adequate and more subject periodicals should be subscribed.
4. Facilitate and encourage users in acquiring ICT skills. It is suggested that when computerized library services are started in the DDE library information literacy programmes should be introduced in order to create awareness among users by delivering lectures on topics such as Internet, Web, digital libraries-journals, how to make use of computerized literature searches etc.
5. It is also suggested that adequate number of CD's and DVD's in different subject areas should be subscribed.
6. Extension activities can be organized for stimulating the reading interest and publicizing the functions and services of the library. It is quite difficult for distant learners especially from far-flung areas to visit library from time to time, so for that purpose the library should start mobile library service which shall prove an essential service in the rural, remote, hilly and backward areas.
7. The library orientation lectures should be offered either in the main library or at discussion classes .Each student enrolled in DDE programme should be supplemented with a complete guide to the library. The list of books and periodicals which are available in the library on various subjects should be provided to the students depending upon their course requirements.
8. The library staff should present library skills, lectures which should be broadcast on the radio so that the users who belong to far flung areas can listen to these programmes .The schedule of broadcasts hold be supplied to the distant learners at the time of their admission.
9. In order to make library resources and services more effective and efficient the University authorities and the UGC should provide liberal grants to the DDE Library.

10. Public libraries can also play a vital role by providing some space to university for establishment of library corners for distance learners, where the books and other IT- based services for distant learners could be kept especially in remote areas thereby providing an access to information.

Conclusion

From the above it can be concluded that libraries play an important role in teaching and learning process. The library can no longer be regarded as a collection of printed materials, but it has to be instructional resource Centre, handling a wide range of print and non-print resources and guiding independent inquiry. One of the encouraging features of DDE, University of Jammu library is that the library has a good and well managed collection to cater the needs of every user. The existing library staff is very helpful, co-operative and sincere, providing all basic information facilities needed by the users, but it may be mentioned that the use of latest sophisticated technologies will certainly help in the development of library services as an important student support services in distance education programme.

References

1. Isaac, K.A and Devarajan.G, Ed.(1979). *Libraries in Distance Education. Seminar papers. New Delhi, EssEss.*
2. Jammu University: University Profile .(2009).URL:http://www.jammuniversity.in/uni_profile.asp [Accessed on Dec. 14, 2011].
3. Jammu University: Introduction. (2009). URL: http://www.jammuniversity.in/uni_intro.asp Accessed on Dec. 11, 2011].
4. Jammu University: Distance Education. (2009). URL:<http://www.distanceeducationju.in>. [Accessed on Dec. 14, 2011]
5. University of Jammu. (2003). *Universities Handbook of India. Association of Indian Universities, New Delhi: University Press, 29th Ed.:523.*
6. *Journal of Distance Education.* (2001). Seminar papers. University of Jammu: Directorate of Distance Education: Institute of Correspondence Education.8 (1):15-20.
7. *Journal of Distance Education.* (1992) .Seminar papers. University of Jammu. Institute of Correspondence Education.4 (4)
8. Hannabuss, C.S. (1981) *The Impact of Independent and Open Learning on UK Libraries since 1970.Aspects of Educational Technology. Ed. By Percival and H. Ellington, London,Kogan Page, 15: 49-55*
9. Watson, Elizabeth F. (1992).*Library Services to Distance Learners: a report. Vancouver: The Commonwealth of Learning.*
10. Data Collected from Original Records of DDE Library, University of Jammu, Jammu