

ABSTRACT

A law library is considered as laboratory for law students and workshop for practicing lawyers. It is specialised in nature and integral part of courts, judicial academies, law firms, government agencies and law schools. There are different sizes of law libraries depending upon the parent organisation and clientele being served. Law librarians play their role in day to day activities of library administration, collection development, application of ICT, legal information literacy and other specialised services to the patrons. The present study is about the practices of academic librarians in national law universities focusing on collection development, ICT based services, e-resources and modernisation of law libraries and legal information literacy. The study also covers the role of law librarians to create, disseminate and provide access to the open access information resources.

Researcher has used structured questionnaire as a major tool for data collection from librarians of 18 law universities spread throughout India. Out of 18, 15 librarians (83.33%) participated in the survey. The questionnaire was designed by the researcher to collect relevant data focusing around the following points:

- (a) General Information
- (b) Library Collection and Organisation
- (c) Application of ICT in Library
- (d) Activities for Collection Development
- (e) Library Services provided by the Librarians
- (f) Activities to Support Open Access Movement
- (g) Activities to prevent Plagiarism in research
- (h) Activities to Support Legal Information Literacy
- (i) Perception and Opinion about Law Librarianship.

Additionally, researcher made efforts to visit few libraries of law universities in India for observing their organisation and collection alongwith users. He also visited websites to collect updated information.

The present study has been presented in nine chapters. Chapter-1 includes general introduction to the study, definitions, explanation of the problem, objectives, hypotheses, scope and limitations, significance of the study, brief outline to conduct the research work and structure of the thesis. Chapter-2 deals with the review of

literature related to the topic directly or indirectly to understand what is already done and what needs to be done and connects the previous body of literature with the current work.

Chapter-3 covers historical background of legal education in modern India and overview of present academic institutions and the controlling bodies for the legal education. It also includes a brief review of national law universities and their libraries. Chapter-4 provides a comprehensive overview of the different types of law libraries and their functions to satisfy their respective users. Chapter-5 deals with the details of primary and secondary authorities of law and finding tools from India and few selected resources of other countries in print and electronic format.

In the changing scenario, what steps librarians take to integrate the principles of librarianship into legal education? What are the challenges they are facing, what skills and capabilities are required to contribute to the quality legal education? Chapter-6 presents a discussion on the role of academic librarians in legal education and Chapter-7 deals with the description of the transformation taking place in law libraries due to ICT applications particularly with reference to web 2.0 tools and open access movement.

Chapter-8 illustrates the profile of research work in details with the help of tables, charts and graphs to lead findings on the research problem and a critical discussion, interpretation of the results drawn from the study and presents the generalisation of the results with explanations and possible implications of the findings. Chapter-9 consists of findings, suggestions to tackle the problems raised from the research findings, conclusive remarks including areas for further study.

On the basis of this study it is concluded that all the surveyed libraries have adequate collection of books and bound volumes of law journals and reports for their respective users. In addition to print material important online legal information resources are also being subscribed. It is interesting to know that Manupatra and HeinOnline databases are being subscribed by each library. The study also affirms the finding of Clinch (2010) that database services of Westlaw, Lexis and HeinOnline, which are most popular in the UK, are also popular in academic law libraries in India as well. As for as library services are concern majority of the libraries is providing

general as well as specialised services to the users. There are different types of special provisions for the Moot Court Teams in various libraries.

The basic requirements of all the law universities are almost same but there is a lack of comprehensive guidelines or a model for the development of an excellent library. Overall the librarians are involved in the development of libraries and supporting legal education in National Law Universities with varying availability of resources. Collection development and its organisation in libraries, application of ICT for providing better library services, use of various methods to support legal education particularly information literacy, overall management of library including ICT infrastructure and e-resources are the focus areas of law librarians in NLU libraries.

“Law Librarians have an intrinsic role in the legal research process” (Hutchinson, 2014). This study also confirms that the role of librarianship in legal education and research is more important than their counterparts in other disciplines. The role of law librarians in NLUs is being played out but depending upon the situation and availability of infrastructure and resources. There is a need to recognise the importance of library and its resources formally in every law university.

Of course the role of law librarians is quite different and significant from other librarians. In present scenario to acquire all the competencies required for a good academic law librarian is a challenge and at the same time it seems that less number of qualified staff in academic law libraries is also a big hurdle for implementation of legal information literacy among the law students in India.

The role of librarian will continue to be changed with the advancement of ICT and its application for teaching and learning but the sole purpose of the librarianship “is surely to make information available to those who need it, when it is needed, in the form in which it is needed.” (Foskett, 1997). To follow the basic philosophy of librarianship, a law librarian needs specialised knowledge and skills to provide services to the legal fraternity in a better way.
