Electronic Information Resources and E-Teaching in Medical Colleges of Andhra Pradesh: A Study

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Abstract
Medical Libraries were the source of information for gaining knowledge and conducting research. There were many factors responsible for dampening of desire in Medical Research in India. Non-availability, expensive, delayed procurement of journals are some of the reasons. The communication gap between librarians and medical fraternity is another important factor. Our study includes 32 Medical Colleges affiliated to Dr. NTR University of Health Sciences. The study period is from January 2008 to June 2009. The needs of students and faculty of Medical Colleges affiliated to Dr. NTR University of Health Sciences, are analyzed by interacting with librarians, end users and policy makers during our visits as individual and as team. Interesting issues are observed which are shared in this presentation.

Keywords: E-library, Conventional Library, Medical fraternity.

Libraries are reservoirs of knowledge forever. However, in the olden days, only elite were allowed to read the books which were stored under lock and key. Later the conventional libraries came and gradually they became Public Libraries. They were run in large and ancient buildings, holding numerous books and journals arranged in the racks reaching the roofs. In many a place catching dust and cobwebs. Gradually these traditional libraries are going to be replaced by clean cubicles with computers and readers sitting in front of them and watching the world through windows. But, by now the e-libraries have started as extension of conventional library. This is the time of transition from conventional library to e-library. Transition is always tough. However when the going gets tough, the tough ones will get going.

The observations made during various types of visit to the Modern Medical colleges as an individual, as a team are summarized and presented in this paper.

As a Professor of Pathology during conferences, examinations, Medical education training programs the author visited 20/32 Medical colleges. The observations made during above interactions are presented in this paper.

The users in the Medical profession can be categorized as readers, learners and researchers. Readers just read every thing and any thing to know all about progress in the Medical field in the world. Learners read thoroughly about a specific problem like dissertation. Researchers study in depth about a specific issue; they dig in to the past thoroughly with the present situation and also want to know the possible predictions. Many start their professions with lots of enthusiasm and dreams of research. The dreams vanish half way through for most of them but...
a few will continue with determination because of their strong quest for research and they publish their work. How to help all the dreamers to fulfill their dream of research and provide them the information at the earliest in an economic way is our aim as custodians of knowledge. There is no dearth for intellectuals in our country but when it comes to publications we are lagging much behind our counterparts in the world. The reason for less publication is because primarily, a Doctor’s priority is patient care. The Doctor Patient ratio is so high, especially in the urban areas and mostly with specialised Doctors that, they cannot spare much of their time on publications. There is no easy access to the latest journals and added to this the present scenario of Doctor patient relationship is being strained due to consumer activity. Educated population is challenging the Medical authority and treats the Doctor and Patient relationship as another provider-consumer-relationship rather than as sacred trust. (Haug and Levin, 1983). There is a steady decline of faith in Medical profession as a result of contractual and confliction in relationship resulting in increase in filing of Medical negligence cases in various forums. The Medical professionals on the other hand are satisfied with whatever training they are receiving and happy with the information available in the text books. This is making difficult for them to face challenges with the patient community who are not only educated but also try to get all the relevant information regarding their health problem. This challenge can be faced only if the Medical professionals are aware, accept and correct their deficiency. That is possible if we could provide them the latest information in the fastest route and also make the Medical professionals utilize it in the best possible way.

The solution for this is, e-teaching and e-learning for the Medical teaching faculty and the librarians. Tomorrow’s power in this world is not going to be gold or riches but knowledge. Libraries have to play a pivotal role in this revolution. Knowledge in the form of writings on papyrus, skin, clay available only to limited members of society in the olden days have changed into public libraries and now to e-libraries with subscription facility may later change into open content knowledge in the future. The movement of “Creating open content” initiated by David Wiley is catching up which will help in knowledge sharing globally. As librarians either we should provide them what they require or perish.

Observations
1. The new generation of end users are already familiar with the public domains, you tube, file sharing site, skype using, face book or twitter, i-pods, and e-pods etc.
2. Most of the colleges are lacking necessary infrastructure to maintain e-resources.
3. The available e-learning facilities are not being utilized by the users to the optimum levels.
4. E-teaching has not picked up the momentum.

Suggestions
1. Following the footsteps of technology is good provided planning of technology and like telemedicine, telepathology, teletherapy and if the same is made available to all utilization will be more.
2. Importance of archives cannot be ignored as it is essential for any kind of research.
3. The librarian should be included in Academic councils so that he will be aware of the needs of the teaching fraternity in the Medical colleges to promote the e-learning through libraries.
4. It is essential that all the e-libraries must have a computer expert in the staff pattern.
5. To organized periodical workshops/hands on trainings to the library staff.
6. To organize orientation programs to the Medical students as well as to the faculty to make aware of the information explosion not only in the Medical field but in all the related fields.
7. Policy makers are to be tapped for financial and other resources for establishing the e-libraries to cater to the needs of clientele.

This will make our job easy. We will reach greater heights if we could bring the brainy brains closer to the globalization by using the e-technology.

References
1. David Wiley – david.wiley@byu.edu
2. Haug and Levin.