



## Information literacy programmes for academic libraries: An Indian perspective

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### Abstract

Information literacy has emerged as a fundamental competency in higher education, enabling learners to identify, evaluate, and use information effectively. In the Indian academic context, rapid expansion of digital resources, online databases, and open-access platforms has intensified the need for structured information literacy programmes in academic libraries. This paper examines the concept, development, and implementation of information literacy programmes in Indian academic libraries. It reviews relevant literature by Indian scholars, discusses instructional models, identifies challenges faced by Indian institutions, and proposes strategies for strengthening information literacy initiatives. The study highlights the critical role of academic libraries and librarians in fostering research skills, critical thinking, and ethical information use among students.

**Keywords:** Information literacy, academic libraries, Indian libraries, user education, library instruction, digital literacy, higher education, lis education

### Introduction

Academic libraries in India have undergone significant transformation in recent decades. From traditional print-based collections, libraries have shifted toward hybrid and fully digital environments, providing access to e-journals, e-books, institutional repositories, and open educational resources. While access to information has expanded, students often lack the necessary skills to search, evaluate, and use information effectively. This gap highlights the growing importance of information literacy programmes in academic libraries.

Information literacy is widely recognized as a cornerstone of quality education and lifelong learning. In India, the University Grants Commission (UGC), National Education Policy (NEP 2020) [10], and various accreditation bodies emphasize skill-based learning, critical thinking, and research competency. Academic libraries, therefore, play a strategic role in supporting institutional goals through systematic information literacy instruction.

This paper explores information literacy programmes in Indian academic libraries, focusing on their conceptual foundations, instructional approaches, challenges, and future prospects.

### Concept of Information Literacy

The concept of information literacy extends beyond basic library orientation or user education. According to the American Library Association (1989), an information-literate person is one who can recognize the need for information and has the ability to locate, evaluate, and use it effectively. Indian scholars such as Venkata Rao (2001) and Kumar (2014) [7, 8] emphasize that information literacy is essential for academic excellence, research productivity, and informed citizenship.

In the Indian academic environment, information literacy includes:

- Understanding library resources and services
- Developing effective search strategies
- Evaluating print and electronic sources critically
- Using information ethically and legally
- Applying information to academic and research problems

### Review of Literature (Indian Studies)

Several Indian LIS scholars have contributed significantly to the study of information literacy.

Ramesh Babu, J. (2004) [1] examined the role of academic libraries in promoting information literacy skills among university students and emphasized the need for curriculum-integrated instruction.

Thanuskodi (2011) [2] highlighted the importance of information literacy for postgraduate students and researchers, especially in the use of electronic resources. Mahapatra and Ramesh (2016) [3] discussed information literacy as a tool for enhancing research quality in Indian universities.

Kaur and Verma (2009) [4] studied user education programmes in Indian academic libraries and recommended structured instructional frameworks.

Patil and Pradhan (2014) [5] analyzed digital literacy and information literacy in the context of Indian higher education institutions.

The literature reveals that while awareness of information literacy is increasing, implementation remains uneven across institutions.

### Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study are:

1. To examine the concept and scope of information literacy programmes in Indian academic libraries
2. To analyze existing instructional models used in Indian institutions
3. To identify challenges in implementing information literacy programmes
4. To suggest strategies for strengthening information literacy initiatives

### Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive and analytical approach based on:

- Review of published literature by Indian LIS scholars
- Analysis of academic library practices in Indian universities
- Examination of policy documents and professional guidelines

Secondary data sources such as journals, conference proceedings, books, and institutional reports were used for analysis.

## Information Literacy Programmes in Indian Academic Libraries

### 1. Programmes Library Orientation

Most Indian academic libraries begin information literacy instruction through orientation programmes for newly admitted students. These sessions introduce library resources, OPAC usage, and basic search techniques.

### 2. Course-Integrated Instruction

Some universities integrate information literacy sessions into undergraduate and postgraduate curricula. Librarians collaborate with faculty members to deliver subject-specific instruction focusing on scholarly databases, citation styles, and plagiarism awareness.

### 3. Workshops and Training Programmes

Academic libraries regularly organize workshops on:

- Use of e-resources (INFLIBNET, e-ShodhSindhu, NDL)
- Reference management tools
- Research methodology and citation practices

### 4. Online and Digital Literacy Initiatives

With the growth of e-learning platforms, libraries are increasingly using:

- Online tutorials
- Webinars
- Learning management systems

These initiatives have gained momentum after the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Role of Academic Librarians

Indian academic librarians play a multifaceted role in information literacy programmes:

- Instructional facilitators
- Research support professionals
- Digital literacy trainers
- Academic collaborators

According to Rao and Babu (2005) <sup>[6]</sup>, librarians must continuously upgrade their pedagogical and technological skills to meet evolving user needs.

## Challenges in the Indian Context

Despite growing recognition, Indian academic libraries face several challenges:

### 1. Lack of Institutional Support

Information literacy programmes are often not formally embedded in curricula, limiting their reach and effectiveness.

### 2. Inadequate Infrastructure

Limited access to computers, internet bandwidth, and training facilities affects programme delivery in many institutions.

### 3. Skill Gaps among Users

Students from diverse educational backgrounds often have varying levels of digital and information skills.

## 4. Professional Training Needs

Continuous professional development opportunities for librarians are limited in some regions.

## Impact of Information Literacy Programmes

Studies conducted in Indian universities indicate that effective information literacy programmes:

- Improve students' research skills
- Enhance critical thinking and analytical ability
- Reduce plagiarism and unethical information use
- Increase utilization of library resources

Information-literate students demonstrate better academic performance and research confidence.

## Recommendations

To strengthen information literacy programmes in Indian academic libraries, the following measures are recommended:

1. Integration of information literacy into academic curricula
2. Strong collaboration between librarians and faculty
3. Use of blended learning models
4. Continuous training for librarians
5. Institutional recognition of librarians as academic partners

## Conclusion

Information literacy programmes are vital for academic success and research excellence in Indian higher education institutions. Academic libraries must adopt structured, sustainable, and learner-centered approaches to information literacy instruction. By addressing existing challenges and leveraging digital technologies, Indian academic libraries can play a transformative role in developing information-literate citizens.

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