Report on the Interaction by the Library and Information Science Students with Social Work Students on 'Gram Panchayat Library' Project

Report by:
Ms. Shree Nisha V.
2nd Year MLISc Student
Department of Studies in Library and Information Science
University of Mysore
Manasangagotri
Mysuru 570006

Introduction:

On 17th February 2023, an interaction was held between the master's degree students of the Department of Studies in Social Work, University of Mysore, and the senior MLISc students of the Department of Studies in Library and Information Science at Dr. S.R. Ranganathan Hall of the Department. The interaction aimed to discuss the status of usage of Gram Panchayat libraries as surveyed by the MSW students.

Discussion:

This section of the report details the exchange between the students of the Department of Studies in Social Work and the senior MLISc students of the Department of Studies in Library and Information Science. The interaction was organized to understand the usage of Gram Panchayat libraries, as surveyed by the MSW students. The aim of the project was to find out whether the people, students, and general public are aware of Gram Panchayat libraries and what changes or actions are required to improve the existing status.

The discussion began with Hemanth sharing his experience of visiting his high school library and his village library. He expressed his disappointment about the status of libraries because none were using libraries in comparison to his experience in the past. Further, he stated that the improvement in technology has negatively influenced people and opined that they don't visit the libraries even to read the newspaper. He also shared that in Karnataka, there are 5071 Gram Panchayat libraries, and a thorough study is required to investigate the use of these libraries by concerned readers. He suggested that one of the probable reasons for low usage is that the libraries lack organization of their collection as there are no professionals working there.

The MSW students then explained the stages of their project. A group of five students studied and surveyed the libraries from Mysuru district, Mysuru taluk. They visited 19 libraries across the taluk and faced many issues. The common problem identified among the school students is that the students are not aware of the existence of the library in their villages. Hence, the project fellows of the MSW department planned a gamification technique with the cooperation of the librarians to encourage the students to visit the libraries.

The gamification activity had three distinct parts for the students: registering in the library, visiting the library to understand the book collection, and finding the answers from the books to the questions set by the project team. This activity was carried out for one month, and throughout that month, the

students visited the library with enthusiasm. The obvious reason for conducting the activity was to increase the physical use of the library and encourage the students to read books. The activity also helped the students learn about the existence of the library and thus increased the usage of Gram Panchayat libraries.

Earlier, the libraries were an official part of District Central Library Authority. However, recently the management of the libraries has been given to the Gram Panchayat. The Covid-19 pandemic has negatively affected the growth of these libraries. The facilities and usage have eventually come down as per the surveyor's opinion. Post-Covid, a new program was launched by the name 'Oduva Belaku,' which means 'Reading Illumination.' An effort was also made to improve the facility at one of the libraries by providing access to information through computers. The speaker from the MSW department invited opinions and suggestions to improve the efficacy of the project.

During the discussion, several valuable suggestions were put forward by the students, which could help to improve the condition of libraries. Mr. Abhilash H.V. proposed that additional resources, qualified librarians, and the use of ICT applications could help address some of the problems faced by the libraries. He also suggested that librarians should conduct regular user orientations to market the resources and services available in the library.

Mr. Santosh A. agreed with his classmate's idea and added that the availability of library services should be made known to library users by using an aggressive marketing technique. This would ensure that the library is better utilized and more people are encouraged to make use of its resources.

Ms. Vijayalakshmi M.R. proposed that the school time table should include at least one class every day for library and reading. She also suggested that visiting the library should be made mandatory for all students and that the general public should be encouraged to visit the library. This could help create a culture of reading and learning in the community.

Mr. Mahesh B. pointed out that not all libraries are in a state of disrepair, and that some libraries are functioning effectively. He suggested that other libraries could learn from these examples and follow their lead to improve their services.

Ms. Harshitha M. highlighted the fact that changing the library system would require the support of the concerned authorities. She suggested that local people and higher authorities should be involved in the process of making changes to the system.

Other students also shared their ideas, and the event ended with a note of appreciation for the MSW students for their project and for sharing their ideas with LIS students. As a token of appreciation, books were given to them as a gift. The discussion provided valuable insights into ways in which libraries could be improved, and the suggestions made by the students could be used as a starting point for future improvements.

Conclusion: The event concluded with thanking the MSW students for their project and sharing their ideas with LIS students. As a token of appreciation, books were given to them as gifts. The interaction helped in understanding the status of usage of Gram Panchayat libraries and identifying the issues and possible solutions to improve the existing status. The report suggests that concerted efforts are required to increase the usage of Gram Panchayat libraries, and the involvement of the local communities andauthorities is necessary to achieve this goal.