

## Library Facilities and Services for Physically Challenged Category in Academic Libraries in Mysore District: A Study

### Mr. Bhyrappa M.

Research Scholar  
DOS in Library and Information Science  
University of Mysore, Mysore, Karnataka  
Email: bhyrappa.m@gmail.com

### Dr. P. Sarasvathy

Deputy Librarian (Research Guide)  
Mysore University Library  
University of Mysore  
Manasagangotri, Mysore-570 006  
Email: padmasaras71@gmail.com

**Abstract** - The present study depicts the library facilities and services rendered to physically challenged category by academic libraries at Mysore district. By accessing information needs of users, identifying various channels of information used by users to make use for academic purpose, the study analyses the perception of uses about the library services and also examines the services provided by academic libraries to user ends. The study finds that the questionnaire method was used along with observation and interview schedule for data collection from the respondents. The researcher distributed 280 questionnaires for the respondents. Among 200 filled-questionnaires were received back with 71.42 percent response rate. The study result found that the majority of the respondents belong to Male category (66.50%). The highest number of the respondents 109 (54%) belongs to age group of 25 years and above. The highest number of respondents 150 (75%) has obtained Diploma as academic qualification. The majority of the respondents 175 (87.50%) visit the library for the academic purposes. The 'Text book' is a major type of resources used by the respondents which represent mean score 3.52. The majority of respondents (mean=3.15) mainly depends on 'Book borrowing facility' provided in the libraries. The 'Reference service' and 'Reading facility' are next most used services representing Mean value 2.56 each. The various Software like Jaws and Dasburg etc. are most preferred and fundamental assistive technology used by the majority of the respondents (mean = 2.34). The sign language for the hearing impaired students is one of the prime services which represent mean value 1.82 followed by 'Braille translation' (mean = 1.79) and 'Help from staff or co-operation' (mean=1.73).

**Keywords:** Library Facilities; Library services; Physically Challenged Students; Hearing Impaired Students; Visually Challenged Students; Assistive Technologies.

## **Introduction:**

Exploitation of information resources is very much essential for physically challenged community and society as a whole. Libraries and Information Centers play a vital role in facilitating access to these resources and in providing information services to users or society. There are communities lagging behind physically challenged because of lack of proximity to knowledge and information resources relevant to them. The services and facilities provided for the physically challenged users in libraries are completely diverse as compared to the physically able users. Angadi & Koganuramath (2009) investigated the diverse ICT facilities and services made available at M.K. Tata Memorial Learning Resource Centre. The centre comprises of more than 20 workstations with latest configurations along with 10 HP scanners. It provides access to Internet, Dspace Archive, Braille printer, instructional learning materials and ICT based information services. Special software like JAWS, Kurzweil, Magic Magnification, Zoom-Ex Instant Reader, Win Braille, OBR, Spell Well, Talking Teaching Type Pro have been procured in the centre. Special equipments like Prisma for low vision, SARA for instant text reading are also available in the centre. As reviews of literature reveals there are some studies conducted on information needs of physically challenged class and services provided by the libraries. However, no intensive and systematic study has been made to evaluate the rendering library facilities and services and information needs have physically challenged category.

## **Literature Review:**

There are many studies conducted on library facility and services for physically able students as compared to physically challenged category of user. The services and facilities provided for the physically challenged users are completely diverse. Therefore there are very few studies have done on the area. Babalola & Yacob (2011) conducted a study on assessed library and information provision to the visually impaired by academic libraries across the country. The study revealed that none of the libraries surveyed were not available the Braille book, talking books, talking newspaper and assistive technologies. The only materials that were available were a few audio books. The study suggested some practical solutions to improving library and information services to the visually handicapped in Nigeria. Ramasesh & Manjula (2013) examined the use of various assistive technologies by the visually challenged users of the Mysore University Library. The study found that all the visually challenged faculty members rely upon assistive technologies to access information recourses in the library. A large percentage of visually challenged students are not fully versed in using the assistive technologies. They need training to a considerable extent for the effective use of technologies. A more users are familiar with the use of book readers and magnification equipment and use is also to the higher extent. Through Jaw Talking Software is an important tool for communication, many users representing all the categories is not completely familiar with the use. The use of Braille Printers is to a limited extent. The respondents feel that the staff of LRC lack skill in effectively handling technologies and extend support to the users.

Leong & Higgins (2010) conducted a study on the Public library services for wheelchair-bound young people in Singapore. The study discovered that their information needs and reading habits were no different from those of any young person. Current library promotions were inadequate in

stimulating or sustaining their awareness and interest. Transportation was the main obstacle in getting to libraries. The problems faced in using libraries were mainly related to architectural and physical access to library facilities and services. The handicapped students are deprived of services and facilities in academic libraries. Special services to handicapped students are almost non-existent. Thus, it is essential to rethink and reconsider academic libraries in every aspect, from designing buildings to developing information resources, and to structuring information services Bigdeli (2009). The hearing impaired students of Government VHSS for Deaf at Thiruvananthapuram have become complex and problematic due to the insufficiency of adequate information sources and services and there are quite a number of challenges faced by the hearing impaired students in accessing information from the libraries. It has been found that, even though assistive technologies are playing a vital role in the educational aspects of differently-abled students, it is not playing a role in the progress in library services for differently-abled. Most of the students are not aware of the assistive technologies available to assist them in accessing information (Soman & Sudhier, 2015).

## **Objectives of the Study:**

The present study is being taken keeping in view of the following objectives:

1. To assess the information needs of users belonging to physically challenged categories.
2. To identify the various channels of information for the physically challenged category users to make use in information seeking.
3. To examine the extent of use of services and facilities provided by the academic libraries to the said category of users.
4. To identify the extent of use of assistive technologies by the physically challenged category users.
5. To analyze the perceptions of the physically challenged category users about the library services rendered.

## **Methodology:**

The present study employed the survey research method to examine the library facilities and services provided for the physically challenged category (PCC) in academic libraries in Mysore district. The questionnaire was designed for the data collection. In addition the researcher conducted interview with select libraries and users to determine the validity of the data obtained. The geographical scope of the study limits to the Mysore district of Karnataka state. The researcher covers the library users of the physically challenged categories only, i.e. physically, visually and hearing impaired studying in various academic institutions. The researcher distributed 280 questionnaires for the respondents. Among them 200 filled-questionnaires were received back with 71.42% response rate.

## **Data Analysis and Interpretation:**

The data collected from the respondents with regard to various library resources, services and facilities has been analyzed and presented under the following heads.

## 1. Gender Wise Distribution

**Table 1: Gender Wise Distribution**

| S/N | Gender       | No of Respondents | Percentage       |
|-----|--------------|-------------------|------------------|
| 1   | Male         | 133               | 66.50(%)         |
| 2   | Female       | 67                | 33.50(%)         |
|     | <b>Total</b> | <b>200</b>        | <b>100.00(%)</b> |

The Table 1 reveals the gender wise distribution of the respondents. It may be seen from the table that out of 200 respondents, the majority of the respondents 133 (66.50%) are Male followed by Female representing 67 (33.50%).

## 2. Age Group Wise Distribution

**Table 2: Age Group Wise Distribution**

| S/N | Age Group      | No of Respondents | Percentage       |
|-----|----------------|-------------------|------------------|
| 1   | 17 to 20 years | 23                | 11.50(%)         |
| 2   | 21 to 22 years | 17                | 08.50(%)         |
| 3   | 23 to 25 years | 51                | 25.50(%)         |
| 4   | Above 25 years | 109               | 54.50(%)         |
|     | <b>Total</b>   | <b>200</b>        | <b>100.00(%)</b> |

The Table 2 depicts that age wise distribution of the respondents. It may be seen from the table that in the total 200 respondents, the majority of the respondents 109 (54%) belongs to age group of 25 years and above. The second highest number of the respondents 51 (25.50%) comes under the age group of 23 to 25 years followed by 17 to 20 years (11.50%) and 21 – 25 years (8.50%). It may also be seen from the table that more than 50% of the respondents belongs age of 25 years and above.

## 3. Caste Category Wise Distribution

**Table – 3: Caste Category Wise Distribution**

| S/N | Caste Category             | No of Respondents | Percentage       |
|-----|----------------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| 1   | Scheduled Category (SC)    | 155               | 77.50(%)         |
| 2   | Scheduled Tribe (ST)       | 26                | 13.00(%)         |
| 3   | Other Backward Class (OBC) | 14                | 07.0(%)          |
| 4   | General                    | 5                 | 2.50(%)          |
|     | <b>Total</b>               | <b>200</b>        | <b>100.00(%)</b> |

The Caste category wise distribution of the respondents is presented in the Table 3. It may be seen from the table that the majority of the respondents 155 (77.50%) belongs to Scheduled Caste (SC). The second majority of the respondents 26 (13%) are Scheduled Tribe (ST) followed by OBC (7%) and General category (2.50%). It may also be seen from the table that the more than 90% of the total respondents belongs to backward class SC and ST community.

4. Educational Qualification

Table 4: Educational Qualification

| S/N | Education Qualification | No of Respondents | Percentage       |
|-----|-------------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| 1   | BA                      | 37                | 18.50(%)         |
| 2   | B. Com                  | 2                 | 01.00(%)         |
| 3   | B. Sc                   | 1                 | 0.5 00(%)        |
| 4   | BBM                     | 10                | 05.00(%)         |
| 5   | Diploma                 | 150               | 75.00(%)         |
|     | <b>Total</b>            | <b>200</b>        | <b>100.00(%)</b> |

Educational qualification obtained by the respondents is shown in the Table 4. It may be seen from the table that the highest number of respondents 150 (75%) has obtained the Diploma only. The remaining 25% of the total respondents has gained the undergraduate degree. The 37 (18.50%) of respondents has gained BA degree followed by BBM 10 (5%) and B.COM 2 (5%). The bachelor degree in science has been completed by only one student. It may be clearly seen from the table that in under graduation degree Arts faculty is mainly preferred by the respondents as compare to Science faculty.

5. Purpose of Visit

Table 5: Purpose of Visit

| S/N | Purpose of Visit                                | Frequency |
|-----|---|-----------|
| 1   | Academic purpose (examination with preparation) | F 175     |
|     |   | % 87.50   |
| 2   | To enhance knowledge                            | F 98      |
|     |   | % 49.00   |
| 3   | To develop social network                       | F 67      |
|     |   | % 33.50   |
| 4   | To read self-help books to gain confidence      | F 62      |
|     |   | % 31.00   |
| 5   | To improve creative capacity                    | F 48      |
|     |   | % 24.00   |
| 6   | To get awareness                                | F 44      |
|     |   | % 22.00   |

The purpose of visit to library is shown in the Table 5. It may be seen from the table that the majority of the respondents 175 (87.50%) visit the library for the academic purposes that means mainly for exam preparation. The next prepared purposes are ‘to enhance knowledge’ and to ‘develop social network’ which represent 98(49%) and 67(33.50%) respectively followed by ‘to read self-help books to gain confidence’ 62 (31%), ‘to improve creative capacity’ 48 (24%) and ‘to get awareness 44 (22%).

## 6. Type of Resource Used

**Table - 6: Type of Resource Used**

| S/N | Type of Resource                                      |   | Frequency |        |              |            |                 | Mean |
|-----|---|---|-----------|--------|--------------|------------|-----------------|------|
|     |   |   | Never     | Rarely | Occasionally | Frequently | Most Frequently |      |
| 1   | Text books  | F | 32        | 8      | 19           | 106        | 35              | 3.52 |
|     |   | % | 16.00     | 4.00   | 9.50         | 53.00      | 17.50           |      |
| 2   | Newspapers / Magazines                                | F | 29        | 3      | 59           | 69         | 40              | 3.44 |
|     |   | % | 14.50     | 1.50   | 29.50        | 34.50      | 20.00           |      |
| 3   | Question bank / Old question papers                   | F | 67        | 3      | 50           | 25         | 55              | 2.99 |
|     |   | % | 33.50     | 1.50   | 25.00        | 12.50      | 27.50           |      |
| 4   | Reference books (Ex: Dictionaries and Encyclopaedias) | F | 90        | 3      | 67           | 23         | 17              | 2.37 |
|     |   | % | 45.00     | 1.50   | 33.50        | 11.50      | 8.50            |      |
| 5   | Journals  | F | 129       | 42     | 12           | 14         | 3               | 1.60 |
|     |   | % | 64.50     | 21.00  | 6.00         | 7.00       | 1.50            |      |

The Table 6 indicates that the type of resources used by the respondents to fulfill their academic needs. It may be seen from the table that the majority of respondents (mean = 3.52) prefer the text book as major type of resources followed by newspaper and magazines (mean=3.44). Question bank and Old question papers are next preferred type of resources which represent the mean score 2.99, followed by Reference books (mean=2.37) and Journal is least used resource which represent mean score 1.60.

## 7. Extent of Use of Library Services and Facilities

**Table 7: Extent of Use of Library Services and Facilities**

| S/N | Facilities and Services                            |   | Frequency |        |              |            |                 | Mean |
|-----|--|---|-----------|--------|--------------|------------|-----------------|------|
|     |  |   | Never     | Rarely | Occasionally | Frequently | Most Frequently |      |
| 1   | Book borrowing facility (circulation)              | F | 62        | 9      | 9            | 77         | 43              | 3.15 |
|     |  | % | 31.00     | 4.50   | 4.50         | 38.50      | 21.50           |      |
| 2   | Reference services                                 | F | 94        | 4      | 16           | 68         | 18              | 2.56 |
|     |  | % | 47.00     | 2.00   | 8.00         | 34.00      | 9.00            |      |
| 3   | Reading room facility                              | F | 96        | 7      | 8            | 67         | 22              | 2.56 |
|     |  | % | 48.00     | 3.50   | 4.00         | 33.50      | 11.00           |      |
| 4   | Internet browsing facility                         | F | 94        | 15     | 8            | 53         | 30              | 2.55 |
|     |  | % | 47.00     | 7.50   | 4.00         | 26.50      | 15.00           |      |
| 5   | Guidance for competitive examination               | F | 113       | 15     | 14           | 51         | 7               | 2.12 |
|     |  | % | 56.50     | 7.50   | 7.00         | 25.50      | 3.50            |      |
| 6   | Reprography[Xerox] facility                        | F | 129       | 4      | 11           | 49         | 7               | 2.01 |
|     |  | % | 64.50     | 2.00   | 5.50         | 24.50      | 3.50            |      |
| 7   | Extension services (Library orientation programme) | F | 132       | 6      | 13           | 33         | 16              | 1.98 |
|     |  | % | 66.00     | 3.00   | 6.50         | 16.50      | 8.00            |      |
| 8   | Newspapers clipping                                | F | 144       | 6      | 17           | 21         | 12              | 1.76 |

|           |   |          |       |      |      |       |      |             |
|-----------|---|----------|-------|------|------|-------|------|-------------|
|           | services  | %        | 72.00 | 3.00 | 8.50 | 10.50 | 6.00 |             |
| <b>9</b>  | Book loan facility for social disadvantage      | <b>F</b> | 162   | 10   | 3    | 14    | 11   | <b>1.51</b> |
|           |   | <b>%</b> | 81.00 | 5.00 | 1.50 | 7.00  | 5.50 |             |
| <b>10</b> | E-resources accessing facility (N-LIST)         | <b>F</b> | 169   | 5    | 4    | 7     | 15   | <b>1.47</b> |
|           |   | <b>%</b> | 84.50 | 2.50 | 2.00 | 3.50  | 7.50 |             |
| <b>11</b> | Referral services(Answer for specific question) | <b>F</b> | 183   | 2    | 8    | 6     | 1    | <b>1.20</b> |
|           |   | <b>%</b> | 91.50 | 1.00 | 4.00 | 3.00  | 0.50 |             |

The Table 7 examines what the extent of use of library services and facilities by the respondents. It may be seen from the table that the majority of respondents (mean=3.15) mainly depends on ‘Book borrowing facility’ provided in the libraries. The ‘Reference service’ and ‘Reading facility’ are next most used services representing Mean value 2.56 each. ‘Internet browsing’ is a third preferred services which represent mean value 2.55 followed by ‘Guidance for competitive examination (mean=2.12), ‘Reprography’ (mean=2.01), ‘Extension services’ (mean=1.98), ‘Newspapers clipping’ (mean=1.76) ‘Book loan facility’ (mean=1.51). ‘E-resources accession facility- N-List’ and ‘Referral services’ are very least used services which represent mean value 1.47 and 1.20 respectively.

## 8. Extent of Use of Assistive Technologies

**Table - 8: Extent of Use of Assistive Technologies**

| S/N      | Assistive technologies  |          | Frequency  |     |          |      | Mean        |
|----------|-------------------------|----------|------------|-----|----------|------|-------------|
|          |                         |          | Not at all | Low | Moderate | high |             |
| <b>1</b> | <b>Software</b>         | <b>F</b> | 68         | 7   | 114      | 11   | <b>2.34</b> |
|          |                         | <b>%</b> | 34         | 3.5 | 57       | 5.5  |             |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Reading Machines</b> | <b>F</b> | 125        | 30  | 40       | 5    | <b>1.63</b> |
|          |                         | <b>%</b> | 62.5       | 15  | 20       | 2.5  |             |
| <b>3</b> | <b>DAISY</b>            | <b>F</b> | 187        | 3   | 5        | 5    | <b>1.44</b> |
|          |                         | <b>%</b> | 93.5       | 1.5 | 2.5      | 2.5  |             |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Keyboard</b>         | <b>F</b> | 177        | 6   | 7        | 10   | <b>1.25</b> |
|          |                         | <b>%</b> | 88.5       | 3   | 3.5      | 5    |             |

The Table 8 indicates degree of use of assistive technologies by the respondents which are provided in the library. It may be seen from the table that the various Software (like Jaws and Dasburg etc) are most preferred and fundamental assistive technology used by the highest number of the respondents which represent mean value 2.34. ‘Reading Machines is second mainly used assistive technology which represent mean value 1.63 followed by DAISY (mean =1.44) and Keyboard (1.25) are the least used assistive technology.

9. Barrier-Free Library Services Provided for Physically Challenged Students

Table - 9: Barrier-Free Library Services Provided for Physically Challenged Students

| S/N | Barrier-Free Library Services          |   | Frequency |                  |                      |                   | Mean |
|-----|--|---|-----------|------------------|----------------------|-------------------|------|
|     |  |   | Never     | To Little Extent | To a Moderate Extent | To a Great Extent |      |
| 1   | Sign language for the hearing impaired | F | 137       | 4                | 17                   | 42                | 1.82 |
|     |  | % | 68.50     | 2.00             | 8.50                 | 21.00             |      |
| 2   | Braille translation                    | F | 143       | 2                | 9                    | 46                | 1.79 |
|     |  | % | 71.50     | 1.00             | 4.50                 | 23.00             |      |
| 3   | Help from staff/co-operation           | F | 145       | 2                | 16                   | 37                | 1.73 |
|     |  | % | 72.50     | 1.00             | 8.00                 | 18.50             |      |
| 4   | Telephone requests                     | F | 172       | 2                | 9                    | 17                | 1.36 |
|     |  | % | 86.00     | 1.00             | 4.50                 | 8.50              |      |
| 5   | Reformatting to another medium         | F | 185       | 4                | 1                    | 10                | 1.18 |
|     |  | % | 92.50     | 2.00             | 0.50                 | 5.00              |      |
| 6   | Delivery service                       | F | 188       | 2                | 4                    | 6                 | 1.14 |
|     |  | % | 94.00     | 1.00             | 2.00                 | 3.00              |      |
| 7   | Retrieval of materials from the stack  | F | 190       | 1                | 2                    | 5                 | 1.13 |
|     |  | % | 95.00     | 0.50             | 1.00                 | 2.50              |      |
| 8   | Specialized orientation tours          | F | 195       | 3                | 1                    | 1                 | 1.04 |
|     |  | % | 97.50     | 1.50             | 0.50                 | 0.50              |      |

The barrier-free library services provided to the physically challenged students is much different as compare to physically able students. The Table 9 indicates what extent library services are provided for the physically challenged students. It may seen from the table that the provision of the sign language for the hearing impaired students in the library is one of the prime service which represent mean value 1.82. ‘Braille translation’ and ‘Help from staff or co-operation’ are next preferred services it represent mean value 1.79 and 1.73 respectively followed by ‘Telephone requests’ (mean=1.36), ‘Reformatting to another medium’ (mean =1.18), ‘Delivery service’ (mean = 1.14). The least preferred services are ‘Retrieval of materials from the stack’ (mean = 1.13) and ‘Specialized orientation tours’ (mean = 1.04).

Findings of the Study:

Major Findings of the Study are:

1. The majority of the respondents belong to Male category (66.50%).
2. The highest number of the respondents 109 (54%) belongs to age group of 25 years and above.
3. The majority of the respondents 155 (77.50%) belongs to Scheduled Caste (SC) followed by Scheduled Tribe (ST) respondents 26 (13%).
4. The highest number of respondents 150 (75%) has obtained the qualification as Diploma only.



5. The majority of the respondents 175 (87.50%) visit the library for the academic purposes which means mainly for exam preparation.
6. The majority of respondents (mean = 3.52) prefer the text book are as major type of resources.
7. The majority of respondents (mean=3.15) mainly depends on 'Book borrowing facility' provided in the libraries. The 'Reference service' and 'Reading facility' are next most used services representing Mean value 2.56 each.
8. The various Software (like Jaws and Dasburg etc) are most preferred and fundamental assistive technology used by the highest number of the respondents which represent mean value 2.34.
9. The provision of the sign language for the hearing impaired students in the library is one of the prime services which represent mean value 1.82. 'Braille translation' and 'Help from staff or co-operation' are next preferred services it represent mean value 1.79 and 1.73 respectively.

## **Suggestions and Conclusion:**

The services and facilities provided for the physically challenged users in the libraries are completely diverse as compared to the physically able users. The study reveals that the library provides diverse barrier-free services and facilities to this community of the user for fulfill their needs information by facilitating well equipped assistive technology. The library authority has to take regular and often initiative to provide user education in regard with the use of updated modern IT gadgets of assistive technology and at the same time users also should have to gain knowledge regarding updated assistive technologies for accessing the accurate information without facing any difficulties in the age of information explosion.

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