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Keep pace with the trends

Colleges should keep their libraries updated.

In the midst of tedious classes and examinations, college students often have a difficult time choosing the best way to spend their free time. With Internet-enabled phones and social networks vying for students' attention, they find an easy refuge online. This, coupled with widespread digitisation of books, has left some wondering if libraries have become obsolete. On the contrary, there has never been a time when a library, especially a college library is more important in the life of a student. A visit to the college library can either aid the students' coursework, or prove to be a great respite from it. They can unwind while browsing shelves stocked with Oscar Wilde and Jane Austen, or find books that challenge their prejudices.

A library is no longer merely a place that stores books but also performs an array of other functions. Anna University's Central Library is visited by 1,000 students everyday. Dr. Krishnamoorthy, a librarian, says that undergraduate students use the library mostly to refer to textbooks, while the postgraduate students come in for projects and research. Anna University has embraced digitisation by signing an MoU with the UGC, which gives the library access to UGC-Infonet Digital Library Consortium. The library is also a member of INDEST-AICTE Consortium. UGC-Infonet and INDEST allow students access to a large database of online journals and research papers. The library offers over 32,000 e-journals and 32,400 back volumes. A large number of students choose to stay on campus to avail themselves of the rich resources offered by the library.

The Arts

A library of an academic institution depends on the courses that the college offers. While the Central Library mostly offers books on science and engineering, arts colleges have to cover a wider range of subjects. Arts college libraries are usually more eclectic than others. **Stella Maris College, for example, has two libraries, one for undergraduates and another for postgraduate students. Both libraries boast a large collection of novels of various genres and reference books on subjects, including philosophy, international affairs and religion. Stella Maris College has subscribed to online research databases such as EBSCO and QUESTIA, which are open to students and faculty. Students here have the unique privilege of using the resources of the library even after they graduate.** Shri Sankarilal Sundaribai Shasun Jain College for Women also has two libraries — one for the humanities and another for the sciences. But the process of digitisation has been slow. Librarian Mathanki Devi says that although they subscribed to the online resources portal INFLIBNET last year, students do not have access to the database yet.

Every college library caters to both the immediate scholarly needs of students and tries to keep them updated on current affairs. The latter becomes more prominent in a media college. Indian Institute of Media and Communication (IIMC), Delhi, subscribes to over 100 periodicals and 40 leading newspapers. The library maintains a large collection of books covering areas as niche as advertising, public relations, journalism and communication research, and as broad as economics and politics.

Medicine

Another very dynamic area of studies is medicine. It is constantly evolving as new findings and discoveries are made everyday. With a budget of nearly Rs. 4 crores assigned to the library, Zacharia, Librarian, Sri Ramachandra University, says that the library is the backbone of the university and that it is currently in a transition period. The library is massive and covers countless specialisations such as surgery, pathology, ophthalmology. A staff member from the University says that a medical student must spend at least five to six hours everyday studying outside class. Therefore, both physical and digital journals are available to students. A total of 487 print journals are stocked, out of which 115 are of Indian origin. There are two internet rooms, an archives room, and a personal reading room where students can bring in their own books. When compared to other fields, the library plays a more crucial role in the education and growth of both the students and faculty in a medical college.

The future

It has become necessary for colleges across the country to change with the times and keep pace with the current trends. It is the responsibility of every college to ensure that the library plays the role of a guide and a teacher.

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