

Role of Libraries in Institutional Ranking and Accreditation

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Abstract

Libraries play an important role in improving the overall quality of educational institutions. A strong library helps not only students and teachers but also supports research, learning and academic growth. In modern times, libraries also contribute directly to an institution's ranking and accreditation. This paper explains how libraries help in the ranking and accreditation process and why institutions must focus on building better library services.

Keywords: Library services, Institutional ranking, Accreditation, Academic quality, Research support

1. Introduction:

Today, educational institutions are judged by their quality of teaching, research, facilities and student support. Rankings and accreditation bodies, like NAAC (National Assessment and Accreditation Council) and others, measure these factors carefully. Libraries are a key part of this evaluation. A well-organized, updated and active library shows that the institution supports learning and research seriously. This paper discusses how libraries influence institutional rankings and why they are a central part of accreditation processes.

2. Importance of Libraries in Education:

Libraries are the heart of any school or college. They are not just rooms full of books they are places where learning grows. A good library gives students, teachers and researchers the tools they need to succeed. Libraries provide access to many useful things such as textbooks, storybooks, magazines, newspapers, journals, online databases and digital resources. For example, a student preparing for an exam can find helpful guidebooks or previous question papers in the library. A teacher planning a lesson can read books on new teaching methods. A researcher can use academic journals and online databases to find the latest information in their subject.

Libraries also support independent learning. Some students may want to learn new things outside the classroom. The library gives them the space and materials to explore topics like science, history or literature on their own. For example, a student interested in space can read books about planets and astronauts even if it's not part of the school syllabus. A good library helps build reading habits and critical thinking. When students read regularly, they learn to think better, ask questions and understand the world in new ways. For instance, reading fiction improves imagination and empathy, while reading

news articles helps students stay informed about current events. Libraries also teach lifelong learning. This means that learning doesn't stop after school or college. People of all ages can use libraries to learn new skills, get job-related knowledge or just enjoy reading as a hobby. In short, a strong library supports the entire learning process. Without it, students and teachers would have limited access to information and education would become narrow and weak.

3. Role of Libraries in Institutional Ranking:

Libraries play an important role in how a college or university is ranked by national and international agencies. Ranking systems like NIRF (National Institutional Ranking Framework) in India look at different aspects of an institution's performance and the quality of the library is one of them. A well-managed and modern library shows that the institution is serious about supporting learning and research.

- **Collection Strength:**

A library with a large and updated collection of books, journals and digital materials shows that the institution is strong in academics. For example, a college that has the latest books in science, literature, technology and arts proves that it is ready to support modern education.

- **Research Support:**

Libraries help teachers and students with quality research work. They provide access to online journals, research databases like JSTOR or IEEE and reference tools. These resources help faculty members write and publish papers in good journals, which increases the institution's research score in rankings.

- **Usage Statistics:**

If the library is used regularly by many students and staff, it shows that it is useful and effective. Usage data such as the number of books borrowed, the number of users visiting the library, or hours spent in reading rooms are considered. High usage tells ranking bodies that the library is an active learning hub.

- **Digital Resources:**

Modern libraries provide access to e-books, e-journals, online videos and remote logins. This shows that the institution is using new technologies to make learning easier and flexible. For example, students can read an e-book from home through the library portal, which improves accessibility.

- **Library Services:**

Good library services increase the value of the institution. Services such as help desks, interlibrary loans, dedicated study rooms, photocopying and internet access support users in many ways. Libraries may also conduct user orientation and training programs to teach students how to use digital resources and search tools.

- **Qualified Staff:**

Skilled and friendly librarians help users find the right information quickly. They guide students in using databases, writing references, or checking for plagiarism. This support improves the quality of learning and research, which benefits the institution's performance in rankings.

All these points collection, usage, digital access, services and staff—are taken seriously by ranking agencies. A library that performs well in these areas helps its institution stand out and score higher in national and global rankings.

4. Role of Libraries in Accreditation:

When colleges and universities go through the accreditation process, agencies like NAAC (National Assessment and Accreditation Council) carefully evaluate different parts of the institution, including the library. A well-maintained and active library can improve the institution's overall grade. Below are some key ways libraries are involved in accreditation:

- **Infrastructure and Facilities:**

Accreditation teams look at the library's physical space and facilities. This includes things like clean and spacious reading areas, computers with internet, Wi-Fi access and special support for differently-abled users, such as ramps, magnifiers, or talking books. For example, a library with separate reading zones, computer sections and facilities for visually challenged users will get a better score.

- **Learning Resources:**

The library must have a good mix of printed books, magazines, newspapers and electronic materials like e-books and online journals. Easy access to these resources is important. For example, if students can find their textbooks easily and also access academic content online through platforms like INFLIBNET or NLIST, it shows that the library supports learning in both traditional and digital formats.

- **Support for Research and Innovation:**

Libraries that help teachers and students with research get higher marks. Services such as plagiarism checking software (e.g., Turnitin or Urkund), training on how to find reliable information and help with writing references or citations are all valuable. Some libraries even hold workshops on research methods or academic writing, which is a strong point during assessment.

- **User Satisfaction:**

Accreditation bodies often conduct surveys or feedback collection to find out if users are happy with the library services. If most students and faculty say that the library is helpful, friendly and well-resourced, it adds value to the institution's overall score.

- **Library Policies and Best Practices:**

Having clear, written policies shows that the library is well-managed. For example, policies on how to buy new books, how to remove old or unused materials and how to share resources with other libraries are considered as best practices. Well-documented procedures and regular updates to the collection reflect good planning and responsibility.

A library that is organized, well-equipped and user-focused can greatly increase the chances of a college receiving a high accreditation grade. It not only reflects the academic strength of the institution but also shows a commitment to continuous improvement.

5. Challenges Faced by Libraries:

Even though libraries are very important for education, they face many difficulties that can affect how well they serve students, teachers and researchers. Understanding these challenges can help institutions take better action to improve their libraries.

- **Budget Constraints:**

Many libraries have limited budgets, which means they don't have enough money to buy new books, journals, or access expensive online databases. For example, a college library may not be able to afford the latest medical or engineering journals due to high subscription costs. Without proper funding, the library cannot grow or stay updated.

- **Keeping Up with Technology:**

Technology changes quickly. Libraries need to update their computers, software, digital platforms and security systems regularly. This is often difficult due to lack of funds or skilled staff. For instance, a library using outdated software may not support remote access or digital lending, which reduces its usefulness in today's digital age.

- **Low User Awareness:**

Many students and teachers do not know all the services and resources available in the library. For example, some users may not know they can access e-journals, borrow laptops, or attend research training workshops. If users don't know what is available, they won't use the library to its full potential.

- **Staff Shortages:**

Some libraries do not have enough trained librarians or support staff. This leads to poor service quality, delays in processing books and fewer user support activities. For example, without enough librarians, it becomes difficult to organize workshops, provide research assistance, or keep the library open for long hours.

To overcome these challenges, institutions must invest more in their libraries. This includes giving better funding, hiring qualified staff, conducting user awareness programs and regularly upgrading library systems and technologies.

6. Strategies to Improve Library Role in Ranking and Accreditation:

Libraries can play a stronger role in helping colleges and universities achieve better ranking and accreditation scores. By improving their resources, services and user experience, libraries can become true centers of academic excellence. Below are some simple but effective strategies:

- **Regularly Updating the Collection:**

Libraries should keep their collections fresh by adding the latest books, journals and digital materials. For example, if new editions of textbooks or current academic journals are added regularly, students and researchers will find the library more useful and relevant.

- **Offering Training Programs:**

Many users do not know how to use the full range of library services. By organizing workshops, orientation sessions, or short training programs, libraries can teach students and faculty how to find e-resources, search academic databases, or cite references properly. For example, a session on “How to Use INFLIBNET” can make users more confident and independent.

- **Expanding Digital Services:**

Modern libraries must offer online access to books, journals and other learning materials. Remote login facilities allow students and teachers to access resources from their homes. This is especially useful for distance learners or during holidays. Digital libraries and mobile apps also make the library more accessible.

- **Improving Library Infrastructure:**

A library should be a comfortable and well-equipped space for study. This means clean and quiet reading rooms, high-speed internet, charging points and digital tools like computers or projectors. Technology-enabled spaces encourage students to use the library more often for both learning and collaboration.

- **Collecting Feedback from Users:**

Libraries can use surveys, suggestion boxes, or online forms to understand what users need and where services can be improved. Regular feedback helps in planning better services and also shows accreditation teams that the library values user satisfaction.

- **Supporting Research Activities:**

Libraries should become active partners in the institution’s research efforts. They can do this by offering:

Research assistance (helping find sources),

Plagiarism checking tools (like Turnitin),

Citation help (teaching how to properly reference work) and Access to research databases.

This support improves the quality of research output, which directly helps in both rankings and accreditation. In short, when libraries focus on being user-friendly, up-to-date and digitally smart, they become strong assets in academic success and institutional recognition.

7. Conclusion:

Libraries are much more than book storage spaces; they are centres of learning, research and innovation. A strong library greatly improves the academic reputation of an institution and directly helps in better rankings and successful accreditation. Therefore, institutions must view libraries as a major part of their academic development plans. Investing in modern, user-friendly and resource-rich libraries is a smart step toward achieving excellence in education.

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