QUALITY ENHANCEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS THROUGH BEST PRACTICES IN LIBRARY: A CASE OF SIMS

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ABSTRACT

The library has a key role in supporting the academic activities of higher education institutions by establishing, maintaining and promoting the Information services within easy accessibility and greater efficiency. Srinivas Institute of Management Studies (SIMS) being a higher educational institution, is fostering the quality of education through modern infrastructure and best services keeping in view the quality as yardstick. In this regard, it has taken many steps to improve the qualities of information provided to its students as well as teachers for enhancing knowledge, skills and supports research activities which is a major part of higher education. This paper provides the best practices followed in Library and quality enhancement services and exposes the current challenges faced by the library and how it overcomes it by using the best practices. There are 30 best practices adopted for providing best service to its users. A best practice may be innovative and be philosophy, policy, strategy, program, process or practice that solve a problem or create new opportunities and positively impact the whole Institution. Collection and library environment are indispensable assets of the library. Almost all the services and outputs of a library are associated with these two aspects. The effectiveness services through automation and subscription of on-line journals and databases are also mentioned. Finally two best practices are elaborated by considering their aim, contextual features, implementation and uniqueness, and evidence of success, and which have contributed to the achievement of the Institutional objectives and/or contributed to the Quality improvement of the core activities of the library.

Keywords: Higher education, quality enhancement, best practices in library, library e-resources

Introduction:

The effectiveness of a library lies in the way it puts forth its services to the community of students and teachers. The Present Information and communication technologies (ICT) have made a tremendous impact on the functions of the academic libraries. The developments and changes in the ICT have changed the user's expectations from the academic libraries in different ways. The ways to build a library collection and offer services to the end users vary from the recent to past exercises. Thus to effectively meet the demands of the end users, the academic libraries need to identify and adopt good and best practices. In the present day scenario the fast-paced educational innovations become necessary for continuous review and improvement of the overall functions of the library and information centers. At times there is hesitation on the part of some institutions to share their best practices data. In the present age of information explosion the libraries and information resource centre play not just an important learning-support function, but the library itself has been emerging as a site of learning, sometimes more important than even the class -room.

(i) Definition of Best Practices :

ODLIS (Online Dictionary of Library and Information Science) defined term 'best practices' as follows: "In the application of theory to real-life situations, procedures that, when properly, applied consistently yield superior results and are therefore used as reference points in evaluation of the effectiveness of alternative methods of accomplishing the same task [Kulkarni S. A. (2009), Tikekar, A.C. (2009), and]. Best practices are identified by examining empirical evidence of success."

(ii) About SIMS Library :

Srinivas Institute of Management Studies (SIMS) library was established in 1999. Library holdings in terms of books, journals and other learning materials and technology-aided learning mechanisms which enable students to acquire information, knowledge and skills required for their study programmes. SIMS library is not only provides stimulus to reading by procuring materials for study and research, by introducing open access system, by providing long hours of open, by organizing the library resources in systematic way, but also feeds the intellect of the student, encourage the researches of the faculty and thus serve the teaching and research needs of the faculty. The college library and information resource centre acts as a vehicle for disseminating information and the related computer technologies through the best practices for utilization by its community of users and also for the exchange of information among its users.

(iii) Library Rules & Regulations :

(1) All the students will be enrolled as members of the library. While entering the library, all members are requested to leave their belongings in the property counter. They can be collected back while leaving the library. The Librarian/College Management shall not responsible for the loss of their belongings at the counter. Each and every student users of the (2) Library must enter their name and time of entering and leaving the Library, in a Register.

(3) Only the members of the library are permitted to use the Library facilities. Three borrower's tickets and one reference ticket will be issued to each student. Only one book will be issued against each borrower's ticket. Not more than three books may be issued to any student. A maximum if three books can be referred against the reference ticket only inside the library.

(4) Books may be kept for a period not extending 15 days from the date of issue. Extension of the period or renewal of books may be obtained if the same books can be referred against the reference ticket only inside the library.

(5) Books may be kept for a period not extending 15days from the date of issue. Extension of the period or renewal of books may be obtained if the same book has not been demanded by any other student.

(6) Borrowed books must be renewed on or before due date. A fine of Rs.2/- per day will be imposed for the first five days. From the sixth day, Rs.10/- per day will be charged as fine. In case of loss of borrower's ticket, duplicate ticket will be issued on payment of Rs.50/-per ticket.

(7) A student to whom a book has been issued is held responsible for it and for any mark therein. He is expected to examine the book when the received it and report immediately to the library staff. Any damage that may be detected like mutilation & disfiguring of pages of books by ink or pencil or any other manner is strictly prohibited and in such cases, borrowers are bound to pay the fines levied by the librarians.

(iv) Extended Library Opening Hours :

SIMS Library opens on Sundays and Holidays. Library opens on all 365 days to provide uninterrupted reading facilities to the users in a conductive atmosphere. Those who can't visit the library during the day-time can make use of the Library in the evening hours. This process is carried out by providing the following.

 The library functions between 8.30 AM to 7.00 PM on all working days and 9.00 AM to 5.00 PM on all Sundays and holidays.

(v) Collection and Services Provided to Users :

The library provides varied, authoritative and up-to-date resources that support its mission and fulfill the needs of its users. Resources may be provided in a variety of formats, including print or hard copy, online, electronic text or images, and other media. A college library has the quantity of resources as prescribed by government, UGC, AICTE and other governing bodies. The college library has following collection on 21.06.2014.

Table 1 : Stock of reference materials in Library

Sl.No	Types of Materials	No of Materials
1	Books	16478
2	Book Bank Scheme Books	4356
3	Bound Volume	272
4	CDs & DVDs	250
5	Maps	-
6	Print Periodicals	48
7	News Papers	11
8	E-Journals	1990
9	E-Books	560
10	NPTEL Video Lectures	110

The Best Practices are classified under the following broad areas:

(a) Management and administration of a library :

In-service programmes

Observation of other Library practice

Staff promotional policy

Maintenance of service area

Special Deposit scheme

Resource Generation through internet services

Student participation programme.

(b) Collection and Services :

Collection development in deferent formats

Compact storage of less used collection

Library book exhibition

Extend Library opening hours

Extended hours of service

(c) Extent of use of services :

User education

Initiation to fresher

Preparatory course for student project

User orientation

Information aids

Library use statistics

Library best user award

User feedback practice through different formats

Suggestion box and timely response

(d) Use technology in libraries :

On-line information retrieval- internet access

Free browsing unit- internet access

Broadband internet centre

Library homepage for information dissemination

A strong and dynamic library website

User feedback through library home page

Access to e-resources

Campus-wide LAN facility

Electronic surveillance system CCTV.

Best Practices Adopted in SIMS Library:

Listed below are some of the best practices followed by SIMS that can enhance the academic information environment and usability [Mokashi, R.M. (2009) and Shail Shrivastav, (2015)] :

1. Library Automation with Standard Digital Software :

Library automation, stated in single term, is the application of computers and utilization of computer based product and services in the performance of different library operations and functions in provision of various services and production of output products. Automation is technology of automatic working in which the handling method, the process and design of professional material are integrated. Library automation may be defined as the application of automatic and semiautomatic data processing machines (Computers) to perform traditional library housekeeping activities such as acquisition, circulation, cataloguing and reference and serials control.

2. Book Display Programme :

To organize exhibitions and book display programme on important dates and important occasion on eminent personalities. This helps and provides an opportunity for users to know the various types of information resources available on a particular aspect in the library.

3. Orientation Programme :

One of the best practices is to create awareness among the students about the library resources, the library services, good reading habits, creative programmes and activities for maximum utilization of the library. In other words enlighten the fress students at the beginning of each academic year about the important of the library, thereby exposing the students to various sections of the library, the library resources and the various library services.

4. Information Literacy Programmes :

The academic libraries should organize various programmes including orientation, lectures on related issues, and topics, workshops, seminars, which focuses the issues useful to the users as

well as to the staff. The libraries may organize programmes in information handling in the present digital era, knowledge networking, role of librarians in the electronic era, subject searching, time management, public relations, knowledge based systems, this helps to keep abreast the staff and the users about the latest developments and trends in library principles and practices, thereby bringing gap between the staff and the users. Library has been conducting orientation programme to the new students every academic year. Library as drawn formal orientation classes in the library. Students attend the programme according to the time table drawn by the library. Students are explained about the resources, facilities, services the library provides them. They are taken round the library apart from training them in searching the library database, E-journals, e-mail. And internet browsing etc. Students find it useful to know about the resources available in their discipline. They know specific locations of different types of materials and the privileges the library provides them [Trophy and Peter (2001)].

5. Demonstrations and Exhibitions :

The libraries should organize demonstrations and exhibitions to create awareness about their collection and services. This can be done inside the library separately through displaying the special collection and literary works of specific authors or group of author thereby creating awareness about the particular author of literary works among its users, thus attracting even the people from different sections of the society like parents, management members, relatives of the staff members etc.

6. Information Brochures to Users :

Information brochures and pamphlets are also one of the important sources for creating awareness about the facilities, services, and the collections of the library the users can be provided the information brochures at the time of their enrollments as registered members. The information brochures may be on reprography or Xerox facilities, latest publications, and latest additions to the library. CD/DVD list book bank facilities, library rules and regulations, electronic resources, and online information services list.

7. Web Based Services :

The libraries can provide various web based services through its strong library website updated with services such as virtual tour, virtual references desk, ask the librarian, full text article, help desk, lectures notes, electronic announcement, e-books, digital suggestion box, project reports, frequently asked questions, dissertations, face book etc.
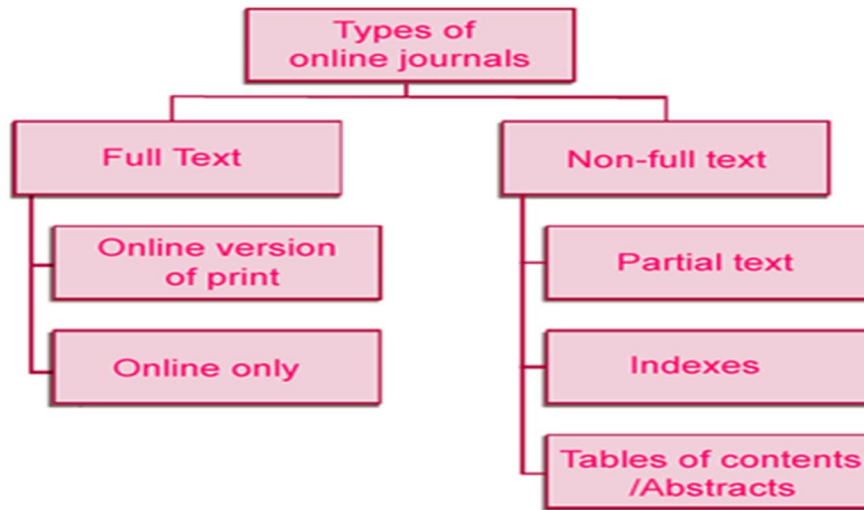
Figure 1 : Types of online Journals available in SIMS library.

8. Suggestions Box and Timely Response :

User feedback is collected on all aspects of library services formally through suggestion box, feedback forms and library services evaluation forms. Helps in collection development. Changes and improvement in facilities and services. Library is a service centre to support to the teaching, learning and research needs of the users. Apart from providing regular and routine services, it is necessary to provide new and improved services. A feedback box near the entry point of the library. The Reader Services Section to open this box regularly to take decisions at their level or at a staff meeting based on the issues. Regularly scheduled meetings of Department Heads to discuss the issues.

9. Internet Facilities to User Groups :

One of the most important roles the libraries play in students, researchers and faculty is providing access to information. Access to current and comprehensive information is important to improve teaching and learning activities. Large numbers of resource are available in the web and students need to be provided with the required facility to access the same. A browsing unit with Five computers with internet connectivity is created for free use by the students during working hours. Librarian and senior faculty members are guiding them in searching the relevant topics and also taking printouts. Students are well informed about the e-resources and they are permitted to use the facility only for academic purpose. Students are benefited by getting current information.

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10. Compiling Student/Teacher Attendance Statistics and Locating the Same on the Notice Board :

Students / Teacher usage statistics is captured through registers maintained at Library. Register is kept at the entrance to capture data on footfalls in the library on day to day bases. The data captured analyzed periodically.

11. Displaying Newspaper clippings on the Notice board periodically :

Important and relevant information on various subjects including career & Development announcement published in dailies will be displayed on library notice board regularly for the use of students and faculty.

12. Career/Employment Information Services :

The library has to maintain basic collection of career information sources in print as well on the Web. Further the collections have to be updated daily with the help of current affairs sources like news papers and magazines. The librarian has to create and maintain ready reference files with career information for easy dissemination.

13. Displaying New arrivals and Circulating a List of those to Academic Departments :

SIMS library displays newly arrived books in a showcase. These are changed every week/fortnight. Books related to specific themes are displayed on different occasion. Library is displaying new library documents consisting books, journals, Magazines, CD/DVDs, etc.

14. Book Exhibition on different Occasion :

Parents and caregivers are welcome to visit the Fair at any time; this year, we have planned the Fair so that it coincides with an evening PTO meeting. Students will have an opportunity to visit the Fair during the school day when parent volunteers and library staff will be on hand to assist them. Each student will receive a free raffle ticket for a gift basket. In addition, families may consider buying one or more books for their child's classroom, which teachers really appreciate.

15. Organizing Book Talks/Book Seminars :

A book talk in the broadest terms is what is spoken with the intent to convince someone to read a book. The purpose of a book talk is to motivate listeners in order to foster good reading, writing and speaking skills by encouraging self-directed learning through reading. Book talks are traditionally conducted in a classroom setting for students. However, book talks can be performed outside a College setting and with a variety of age groups as well. It is not a book review or a book report or a book analysis. The book talker gives the audience a glimpse of the setting, the characters, and/or the major conflict without providing the resolution or denouement.

Book talks make listeners care enough about the content of the book to want to read it. A long book talk is usually about five to seven minutes.

16. Instituting Annual Best User Award for Students :

Best Library Reader awards were instituted from the academic year 2007-'08 to the students who read books and utilizes other library resources at a maximum in the most effective manner. The awards are distributed in the Annual Day function every year.

17. Organizing Competitions Annually :

Libraries offer support for the continuous education of children, young people and adults, and for the spending of leisure time. Although libraries are facing competition from new media, and the use of their services is not compulsory, they are visited by more and more people, and there is an increase in the use of their book collections. Libraries stimulate the development of reading and help deepen education at all levels without discrimination. Every year, the Association of Library and Information Professionals of the Czech Republic prepares several projects with the aim of promoting reading and the use of libraries.

18. Conducting User Surveys Periodically :

Here in the Libraries, we are always trying to improve our game. To help us serve our students and faculty better, we conduct periodic surveys to understand how you view our services, spaces, and materials, and how satisfied you are with your overall library experience. From now until December 2, we will be conducting a brief user survey, which you can find linked prominently on our library homepage. Please take a moment and tell us how we're doing. The survey takes only 4-5 minutes to complete. All responses are completely anonymous. The more feedback we get, the better equipped we will be to improve our existing services and develop new ones to meet emerging needs.

19. Display of list of Books, Project reports & CD/DVD Available in the Library in College Library Website :

The beneficiaries make use of the facility to the fullest core in the form of subscription/against demand.

20. Downloading facility for previous University Examination Question Papers from College Library Website :

The student gets opportunity to prepare the examination by making use of these oft repeated questions and also would enhance the confidence level on the eve of examination.

21. Downloading Facility for Teaching Plan & Study Materials from College Library Website :

This facilitates students to plan their studies in advance and synchronize the learning material with that of the faculty who take up the lessons systematically.

22. Separate library for each Departments :

The various departments irrespective of their distinction in the programs, find this facility practical as the style adopted is to segregate the books, study materials and reading matters distinctively suiting the needs of each department.

23. Displaying the addresses of online free Resources in the Library and College Library Website :

Faculties who aspire to research and publish papers in the public domain have the biggest advantage. Students are also shown a road map in the preparation and completion of projects.

24. Usage of bar Coding facility to Identify & Capture information about a Book :

This enables the library personnel to execute their work with precision and efficiency. This also provides more accountability and helps in the enlistment.

25. Book Bank Facility :

This model has been in vogue for quite a long time. The students make use of this facility for day to day preparation of lessons. The books which are earmarked under various titles are issued to the beneficiaries from time to time., which can be kept as study tools for a stipulated period. Besides regular library facilities, every semester the library issues sets of textbooks to students for a whole semester. They can issue at most Five books from book-bank Facility. The text books are mainly emphasized for this section.

26. NPTEL Video Lectures on DVD's for reference by Students & Faculty :

Faculties and students have greater accessibility on video lecturing by experts through the DVD mode. NPTEL does a useful service for the aspiring students and faculties to easen their learning process.

27. Special Collection of Books for Competitive Exams :

This facility enables the students who have immediately passed out and those who wait for the result and still to the one who would give their final exams to prepare for competitive exams. A

good lot of awareness is inevitable to guide the students know about the outcome of these examinations.

28. Editing, Printing & Supply of Course Study materials for Students :

This is a noble practice where the vacuum left in the teaching constraints is addressed effectively. Faculties endeavor to prepare syllabus based and exam pattern centric ideal notes for the students for hassle free learning and preparation of examination. The notes are supplemented by questions at the end of each chapter for the students to answer in the form of assignments which are duly evaluated by the respective faculties.

29. Reservation of books/Intimation of availability of Books through E-mail & SMS respectively :

Through this practice the library wing of Srinivas Institute of Management Studies, capitalize the spurt in the mobile and computer technology. The library staff are alerted and spring into action to avail the books chosen through SMS message or E-mail. This method saves a lot of time and the contingency of the book availability of the student also is very well looked into.

30. Providing soft copy of some textbooks & Study materials for students based on copy write conditions :

In addition to the full fledged study materials made available to the students through the library the students are also provided soft copy of some text books or abridged versions of study materials for a hands on reference. Students generally heave a sigh of relief at the possession of these notes as they can ensure last minute preparation. The students other than that of SIMS cannot have access to these special notes as they would be prepared on pdf format restricting any one to change, amend or reproduce the text.

Elaboration of Two Best Practices:

(1) Library Automation with Standard Digital Software :

A Process of great Change has been talking place today in Libraries due to the impact of information technology and application of computers in Library work. We hear a lot of about library automation in libraries and library automation is nothing but application of machines viz. computers to the routine library housekeeping operations such as acquisition, serial control cataloging and circulation. The word "automation" has been derived from Greek word "automose" means something which has power of spontaneous motion or self-movement. Automation is technology of automatic working in which the handling method, the process and design of professional material are integrated. This is the effort to achieve an automatic and self-regulating chain processes. Library automation, stated in single term, is the application of

computers and utilization of computer based product and services in the performance of different library operations and functions in provision of various services and production of output products. Automation is technology of automatic working in which the handling method, the process and design of professional material are integrated.

Library automation may be defined as the application of automatic and semiautomatic data processing machines (Computers) to perform traditional library housekeeping activities such as acquisition, circulation, cataloguing and reference and serials control. According to Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science, "automation is the technology concerned with the design and development of process and system that minimize the necessity of human intervention in operation".

Objectives of Library Automation :

1. To maintain bibliographical records of all the materials, in computerized form.

2. To provide bibliographical details through a single enumerative access point of holdings of a library.

3. To reduce the repetition in the technical processes of housekeeping operations.

4. To provide access to information at a faster rate.

5. To share the resources through library networking.

6. To implement new IT processes to provide high quality information.

Advantages of Library Automation:

Many activities of a library are in nature; a few are repetitive. Automation of these activities helps in managing the library's resources in a better way at the same time saving time, money and manpower. For example, once the bibliographic details like author, title, edition, publisher, price, ISBN number etc are entered at the time of ordering, the same data can be used for accessioning, cataloguing (OPAC) and circulation. Automation also facilitates generation of a number of reports for better decision making in the effective management of the library.

Steps in Library Automation :

Since automation of a library is an important and essential step, it should be properly [planned and implemented. Hence, while considering library automation a series of steps have to be undertaken as follows:

1. **Feasibility study of the System**: the aim of feasibility study is to determine if this achievable, if the benefits outweigh the disadvantages and to examine alternative solutions. It is designed to answer these questions :

   - Is the proposed system realistic?

   - Is it necessary?

   - What other options are available?

   - Is it affordable?

2. **Hardware:** When automating the library, the hardware to be procured also be given a thought. Today, different types of hardware are available in the market and due to new kinds of hardware available in the market; the earlier ones are getting outdated soon. Also while procuring hardware, it should be seen whether the software which will be implemented will be compatible with the hardware procured.

3. **Software:** the term software refers to a set of computer programmes, procedures, and associated documents (flow charts, manuals, etc.) that describe the programme and how they are to be used. To be practice, software is a collection of programmes to enhance the working capabilities of the hardware.

It is one of the most important components which should be taken notice of while automation. Today, a number of application software are available in the market manufactured by different companies of India and abroad with distinct feature and hence while selecting software.

   - Who has developed the software? Whether institution or company or an individual?

In such case, the preference should be given for an institution and second preference should be given for software developed by a company, software developed by an individual should be as far sa possible avoided because there will be no continuity in the software.

   - How many times the software has been revised since its first launch?

   - How many parameters are available for each module?

   - Whether the software has user friendly and menu driven to facilitate access?

   - Whether training and guidance will be provided after installation?

   - If it will be available to operate on major operating systems and in multi-user environment.

- Whether it is web interface able and supports data security through password?

- Cost of the software has also to be taken into account and compared with different software available in the market. This is important because if particular software provides good facilities but if the cost is very high, and software provides the similar facilities with slightly less cost then the later will be preferred. Therefore, comparative study of the cost factor of different software should be done before installation.

There are different types of software manufactured by different companies and institutions, each of which has distinct features. Table 2 provides a list of different library software's packages used for automation and the name of their manufacturing companies.

Table 2 : Name of the software and manufacturer.

SL.NO	NAME OF THE SOFTWARE	MANUFACTURER	PLACE
1	CDS/ISIS	UNESCO	Paris
2	DELSIS	Libsys corporation	New Delhi
3	GRNTHALAYA	NISCAIR	New Delhi
4	LIBSYS	Libsys corporation	New Delhi
5	NEWGENLIB	Kesavan Institute of Knowledge Management	Hyderabad
6	SANJAY	DESIDOC	New Delhi
7	SOUL	INFLIBNET	Ahmedabad
8	WILISYS	Wipro India	Bangalore

Budget : When Planning for Library automation and networking sufficient funds has to be provided by the institution or the funding agencies for purchasing of hardware, software, furniture etc. It should be noted that if sufficient funds are not available for purchasing the entire software, then the library should automate only those areas, which are of utmost importance and then later on go for overall automation modules. Housekeeping operations of a library includes all operations such as Acquisition, cataloguing, circulation and serial control.

Acquisition: Acquisition is one of the important functions of any library. The goal of the library which is to satisfy the users will depend on the acquisition system of the library. Acquisition also results in effective and efficient collection development of the library and hence acquisition of reading materials is an important job and is also highly labour intensive. Therefore automation in this area is very much required.

Cataloguing : The library catalogue is considered as a mirror of the library because it reflects the collection of the library i.e., whether the library possesses good, bad or satisfactory collection. It is considered to be the base for most of the library activities such as acquisition, reference, interlibrary loan etc. If automation of the catalogue is done, then it will be very much beneficial to the users and the staff wherein they can get the desired information with no time. Similarly if the catalogue is made available in a network environment through LAN, then users can have simultaneous access to the same database. OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue) is one of the Existing aspects of library automation. OPAC is a catalogue, which is available for searching online. Such OPAC may be searched from terminal within the library or at a terminal elsewhere in the organization remotely via national or international telecommunication networks. Today majority of the software which are used for automation in libraries provide a separate module of OPAC. With the latest developments in integrated systems the OPAC is connected to the circulation system so that the used can come to know whether the document he/she is looking for is currently available in the library or on loan.

(2)Internet Facilities to User Groups :

One of the most important roles the libraries play in students, researchers and faculty is providing access to information. Access to current and comprehensive information is important to improve teaching and learning activities. Large numbers of resource are available in the web and students need to be provided with the required facility to access the same. A browsing unit with Five computers with internet connectivity is created for free use by the students during working hours. Librarian and senior faculty members are guiding them in searching the relevant topics and also taking printouts. Students are well informed about the e-resources and they are permitted to use the facility only for academic purpose. Students are benefited by getting current information.

Conclusion:

Best practices in simple term known as the practice which paves the way for enhancing the existing function and help in effective implementation or use of process. When the library staff work in coordination and with a team spirit under the dynamic leadership of the librarian with the involvement of the best practices they are sure to benefit the user community and thereby contribute to the overall performance in achieving the goals and objectives of the institution. In accordance with NAAC standards, libraries should establish, promote, maintain, and evaluate a range of quality services that support the colleges, mission and goals. Best practices of SIMS Library are very useful in providing support to the students, staff and research scholars.

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