The Role of Academic Libraries in Facilitating Undergraduate and Post-Graduate Studies: A Case Study of the University of Peshawar, Pakistan

Amjid Khan
University of Peshawar
Pakistan
amjid.librn@gmail.com

Rubina Bhatti
The Islamia University of Bahawalpur
Pakistan
dr.rubytariq@gmail.com

Ghalib Khan
The Islamia University of Bahwalpur
Pakistan
ghalibkhan1@yahoo.com

Muhammad Ismail
University of Peshawar
Pakistan
ismailpeshawar@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: This study surveyed students' utilization of resources, services, and facilities of the Central Library of the University of Peshawar, Pakistan. The findings reveal that most of the respondents visited the library to study course books, consult reference materials, and to retrieve unpublished documents for information needs. The majority of the respondents indicated that the library provided effective services. They were satisfied with the lighting system, ventilation facilities, reading tables, and staff behavior with end users. However, lack of e-resources, inadequate collections, and insufficient physical facilities were identified as major issues in the effective use of library collections and services.

I. Introduction

The university library has a prominent role to play in supporting higher education to fulfill objectives of its parent institution. Students in higher education are to be provided with the facilities necessary for mastering the subject matter, techniques, skills, habits of thought, and methods of work in their chosen field. Classroom instructions alone will not provide all the opportunities needed for attaining all these complex educational objectives. It is here that libraries come to help students. The university library is a collection of sources, services and the building in which it is housed. It provides access to various resources in order to support teaching, learning and research activities (Vishala & Bhandi, 2009).

In academic institutions, both academicians and researchers mostly depend on library resources and facilities. No doubt that quick and easy access to such resources accelerates both academic and research activities more effectively. According to Krolak (2006), "Libraries assist in finding, using and interpreting appropriate information that opens up opportunities for lifelong learning, literacy enhancement, informed citizenship, recreation, creative imagination, individual research, critical thinking, and ultimately, empowerment in an increasingly complex world." This equitable access to information is essential to enable educated and informed citizens to participate in a democratic global community. A university is a community of scholars and students engaged in the task of seeking truth.

The university library supports course curriculum and assists researchers to extend their research work and create new knowledge successfully (Higham, 1980). Furthermore, Young and Belanger (1983) defined the university library as "a library, or system of libraries, established, supported and administered by a university to meet the information needs of its students, faculty and support its instructional research and service programs". These services are needed to enable an individual to develop full potentials and extend the horizons of perception, interests, and skills.

Khan and Bhatti (2012) noted that academic institutions could not achieve their two-fold mission of spreading knowledge and extending its research progress without first enriching and enhancing library resources and services. On the other hand, the university authority should have a cyclic and systematic evaluation policy in place in order to maintain and further improve the quality of library services to meet the information needs of users.

According to Hussain and Abalkhail (2013), evaluation of the quality of library services could be achieved by taking feedback from users. The role of a university library is to meet the research and information needs of its community. University libraries in the developed world provide their users with local and remote access to collections in various kinds of formats. This is not the case in the developing countries like Pakistan. The collections of university libraries in Pakistan are based mainly on books and then serial publications like newspapers, magazines, and journals (Ameen, 2005; Bhatti, 2008).

Central Library University of Peshawar

The University of Peshawar, established in 1950, is one of the oldest universities in Pakistan, located in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Northwest frontier Province. It is situated about 10 Kilometers Northwest from the city center on the main Grand Trunk road or the Durand Line, leading towards Torkham (Pakistan-Afghan Boarder). It ranks as the 5th best university of Pakistan by the Higher Education Commission (HEC). It has presently six faculties, three campuses, five constituent colleges, three constituent schools, 592 teaching faculty members, and over 14,000 resident students.

The Central Library of the University of Peshawar is the largest and richest library in the Province. The four-story library building, with an area of 16,000 sq. feet, is located near the Administration Block of the University of Peshawar.

The Central Library provides services and facilities to the staff and students. In addition to the usual stock, it houses a good Oriental Collection of valuable and rare books and manuscripts. The philanthropists of NWFP have donated a number of collections on local history and tribal customs and traditions.

Computers, Internet and e-mail facilities are available. The Library is being completely refurbished and soon its operations will be digitalised.

The Central Library has been declared an official United Nations Library, which is one of the seven UN Depository Libraries. Publications and official United Nations text are placed in this section. The purpose is to make current information about the activities of the United Nations available to as many as possible within the country. (University of Peshawar, 2012)

Publications and official UN texts are placed in a separate section called the UN repository section. The library regionally coordinates and facilitates the scholars with the HEC digital library access program, ebrary USA, along with other facilities (University of Peshawar, 2012).

University of Peshawar Library is reported as the richest in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with a total collection of 162,570 volumes, which is 24% of the total collection of all public University libraries in the Province. The library has 700 manuscripts from the Middle Ages. There are 7 professionals, 5 paraprofessionals, 30 non-professionals, and 4 automation and digitization staff for the operations of the library activities (University of Peshawar, 2012).

II. Literature Review

Librarians see the library more in terms of the provision of and access to quality service than just a physical place. Technology and automation have also changed the way people perceive libraries. Fewer and fewer professors and students go to the library. They access the internet to collect information instead of using the library in the traditional way (Albanese & Oder, 2002; Herring, 2001). As a result, the role of libraries and librarians is also changing. Librarian themselves have been re-evaluating their role as reflected in many discussions and papers. They emphasize the provision of good library service as more important to the user than the mere physical library building. This perspective is evident in several studies conducted in Pakistani (Bhatti, 2009; Khan & Ahmed, 2013; Khan & Bhatti, 2012; Rehman, Shfique, & Mahmood, 2011; Shan & Shaheen, 2013). Bhatti (2008) identified that "Pakistani universities have to meet global academic standards and inculcate universal academic values; on the other hand, they have to respond to the peculiar demands and needs of their community".

Popoola (2008) surveyed on the faculty awareness and use of library information resources and services in Southwest Nigerian universities with a systematic random sampling technique. The study found a significant difference in faculty awareness of available library information resources and services. Some were unaware of the resources and services pertinent to their teaching and research activities. Some indicated that they rarely used the resources and that they did not know how to use them effectively. On the other hand, some were fully aware of the

library resources and occasionally used them, but they claimed that the libraries lacked current materials.

Arif and Mahmood (2010) examined the satisfaction level of users with the central library collection and services at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), Islamabad, Pakistan. A semi-structured questionnaire was used as a data collection tool from the subjects of the study. The result indicated that a majority (52%) of the respondents frequently visited the library, followed by 47% respondents who occasionally visited the library. The respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the present library collection, online databases, virtual reference services, interlibrary loan, photocopy facilities, and journals related to subjects. Nevertheless, they were satisfied with the location and the physical setup of the library. The study found that the majority of the respondents used library resources for teaching and research. About 54% of the respondents suggested that the library should provide information literacy programs. They also suggested that competent and qualified library staff should be appointed at senior positions in the central library.

Hiller (2002) studied the difference between the information needs of scientists, engineers, and other academics at the University of Washington. The data was collected through a semi-structured questionnaire. It was found that the primary use of library facilities by respondents was as a workplace rather than to find books or journals. The survey revealed that the respondents from the disciplines of science, engineering, and health sciences were more likely to use the library resources remotely rather than visiting the library and that they were satisfied with the overall performance of the library services.

Rasul and Singh (2010) examined postgraduate students' views on the role of university library services in facilitating their research with the resources. Data was collected randomly from four Malaysian public universities. The results showed that the majority (90%) of the respondents acknowledged the role of university libraries in facilitating research. Most (72%) of the respondents were satisfied with the current library services. Some respondents suggested that library opening hours need to be increased for effective use of library resources and services.

In Pakistan, Bukhari, Bukahri, Ranjha, Ahmad, and Naz (2010) conducted a study on library use by students of the Foundation University College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, Rawalpindi. The data was collected through a self-constructed questionnaire. Their findings showed that 47% of the respondents agreed with the statement that the "library had sufficient space for users", while 53% of the respondents were not agreed with this statement. 56% of the respondents agreed with library staff's attitude regarding borrowing books while 44% of the respondents did not. Moreover, 46% of the respondents indicated that librarians assisted them in searching for their required information. 81% of the respondents complained about the lack of computers with internet connectivity. The study concluded that the library staff should help students and facilitate them in consulting relevant materials. A proper learning and study environment in the library was suggested for effective use of library resources.

Furthermore, a study conducted by Khan (2004) on the use of resources and services of the central library of University of Peshawar by the students and faculty members indicated that the majority of the respondents were aware of the library services such as reference, circulation,

reprographic, newspaper clipping, and internet services. On the other hand, 34% of teachers and 23% of students were not aware about the Current Awareness Services (CAS). The library resources were mostly utilized by researchers (82.8%) as compared to teaching staff (36%). Similarly, 78.5% of the researchers, 76.5% of the students, and 26% of the teachers were satisfied with the circulation services. 18.5% of the researchers, 4% of the teachers and 2% of the students showed their satisfaction with internet facilities. 96% of the teachers, 72.8% of the researchers and 63% of the students were not satisfied with interlibrary loan services. In addition, 86% of the teachers, 65% of the students and 54.2% of the researchers were dissatisfied with the organization of library materials. In order to promote the usage of library resources and services more effectively, a majority of respondents recommended for information literacy programs as well as the acquisition of up-to-date resources.

A study conducted by Bhatti and Hanif (2013) revealed that most of the social sciences faculty members at Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan preferred to use textbooks and internet as the major sources of information. Most of them preferred print format rather than digital. The majority of the respondents were not satisfied with the subscription of journals related to their field of interest. They also showed their dissatisfaction with library's overall. However, it is encouraging to note that a majority of the respondents were satisfied with the service attitude of the library staff.

In addition, Bhatti, Batool, and Malik (2013) conducted a study on the use of library by the Library and Information Science students at the Islamia University of Bahawalpur. The data was collected with a semi-structured questionnaire. Their study reported that by average, students visited the library once a week. They used library resources and services mainly for reading books, doing class assignments, and preparing for exams. Most of the respondents indicated that they did not use catalogue cards, OPAC or librarians assistance for information retrieval. In addition, most of the students were satisfied with circulation, reference services, and physical facilities. Issues identified by most respondents were power fluctuation, lack of computers, slow internet speed, and unstable internet connections.

Khan and Bhatti (2012) conducted a study on the department libraries of the University of Peshawar. Their study found that most of the departmental library services were below standards. Major issues were identified as lack of budget, inadequate information technology infrastructure, inadequate administrative parameters, and poor physical facilities.

III. Problem Statement

Due to the fact that there is scant research on Pakistani university libraries, there is a need to conduct such studies on a periodical basis to assess users' satisfaction with university library resources, services, and infrastructure.

IV. Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study are to:

- ➢ Explore the frequency and purpose of users visiting the Central Library at the University of Peshawar, Pakistan

- ➢ Determine users' satisfaction levels with library resources and services

- ➢ Assess users' perceptions of the library staff's manner

- ➢ Analyze the provision of physical facilities in the library for the effective use of its resources and services

- ➢ Identify the problems faced by users related to library resources and services

V. Research Methodology

The survey research method was used. A close-ended questionnaire was developed to collect the data needed in order to achieve the objectives of the study. To assess its validity and reliability, the questionnaire was reviewed by several professors of Statistics and Library and Information Science. Their suggestions were incorporated accordingly. SPSS-19 was used to calculate Cronbach's (alpha) coefficients for the scales, which were found to be .93. The population of the study includes all undergraduate (Bachelor-level) and post-graduate (Master's and M. Phil/MS level) students, studying in the Faculty of Management and Information Sciences, and the Faculty of Numerical and Physical Sciences of the University of Peshawar, Pakistan.

The total population of the study constituted 975 students, out of whom a sample of 100 students was drawn. In view of time constraint and a large population (975 students) of the study, the sample size was calculated with the Raosoft Software (http://www.raosoft.com/) in order to select a standard size of the sample. Moreover, tables of Krejcie and Morgan (1970) were also used for the sample selection. It was interesting to note that all the sources gave almost the same sample size as determined by the Raosoft calculator. The random sampling technique was used by distributing an equal number of questionnaire copies among the subjects of the study. Out of a sample of 100 students, 91 responded to the survey instrument with a response rate of 91%. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS-19) software was used for quantitative data analysis.

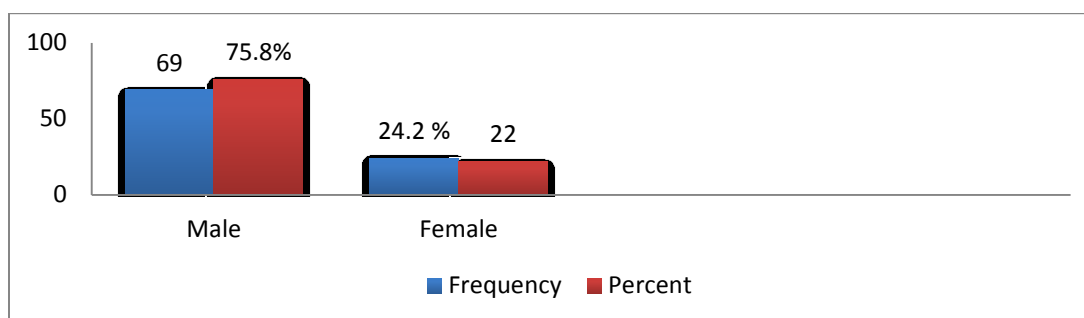## VI. Findings

1. Distribution of the Respondents by Gender

Figure1. Respondents by Gender

Figure 1 shows that out of the 91 respondents, 69 (75.8%) were male while 22 (24.2%) were female students.

2. Distribution of the Respondents by Faculty

Table 1. Distribution of the Respondents by Faculty (n=91)

S.no.	Faculty	Frequency	Percent
1.	Management and Information Science	47	(51.6%)
2.	Numerical and Physical Science	44	(48.4%)
	Total	91	(100.0%)

Table 1 shows that 47 (51.6%) respondents were from the Faculty of Management and Information Sciences while 44 (48.4%) from the Faculty of Numerical and Physical Sciences.

3. Frequency of Visits to the Central Library

Table 2. Respondents' Frequency of Library Visit (n=91)

S.no.	Visit to Library	Frequency
1.	Daily	7 (7.7%)
2.	Twice a week	9 (9.9%)
3.	Once a week	15 (16.5%)
4.	Once a month	42 (46.2%)
5.	Never	18 (19.8%)
	Total	91 (100.0%)

Table 2 shows the frequency of the respondents' visits to the library. 42 (46.2%) of the respondents visited the library once a month, 18 (19.8%) never visited the library, 15 (16.5%) visited once a week, 9 (9.9%) visited twice a week, while only 7 (7.7%) of the respondents visited the library on a daily basis.

4. Purposes of Library Visit

<p style="text-align:center">*Table 3.* Purposes of Library Visit (n=91)</p>

S.no.	Statements	Frequency
1.	To study course books	44 (23.5%)
2.	For reprographic services	2 (1.1%)
3.	To borrow books	17 (9.1%)
4.	To use reference books/information	29 (15.5%)
5.	To use online databases	16 (8.6%)
6.	To use Internet/E-Resources	16 (8.6%)
7.	To retrieve specific information/unpublished material	25 (13.4%)
8.	To study in a quiet place	25 (13.4%)
9.	To consult thesis/dissertation	11 (5.9%)
10.	To use government publications	2 (1.1%)

<p style="text-align:center">**Note:** *Multiple responses were permitted*</p>

Table 3 shows that the respondents visit the library for various purposes, including: to study course books (n=44, 23.5%), to use reference books/information (n=29, 15.5%), to retrieve specific information/unpublished material for research (n=25, 13.4%), and to study in a quiet place (n=25, 13.4%) respectively. Moreover, some of the respondents come to the library to borrow books (n=17, 9.1%) or use internet/e-resources (n=16, 8.6%) and online databases (n=16, 8.6%). On the other hand, only 11 (5.9%) of the respondents reported that they visited the library to check on theses/dissertations and 2 (1.1%) to use reprographic services and another 2 (1.1%) to use government publications.

5. Satisfaction Levels with Central Library Staff

<p style="text-align:center">*Table 4.* Satisfaction Levels with Library Staff (n=91)</p>

S.no.	Statements	Mean
1.	Library staff treat me fairly	3.59
2.	Library staff are professional in their services	3.56
3.	Library staff is friendly	3.55
4.	Library staff provide quality services	3.03
6.	Library staff is difficult to approach	2.88
7.	Library staff take interest in my information needs	2.83
8.	Library staff give my quick response	2.44

<p style="text-align:center">**Scaled:** *5= Very satisfied, 4=Satisfied, 3=Neutral, 2=Un-Satisfied, 1= Very Un-Satisfied*</p>

Table 4 shows that most of the respondents were satisfied with staff's fair treatment (mean=3.59), services quality (mean=3.56), and friendly manner (mean=3.55). However, some of the respondents were neutral on such statement as "library staff provides quality services" (mean=3.03), "library staff is difficult to approach" (mean=2.88), and "library staff take interest in my information needs" (mean=2.83). The respondents were unsatisfied (mean=2.44) about timely response from library staff to their queries. These findings are similar to the findings of

Khan (2004), Bukhari, Bukahri, Ranjha, Ahmad, and Naz (2010), Hiller (2002), and Rasul and Singh (2010) who also reported similar results.

6. Information Needs

The respondents were asked to show the extent to which the library meets their information needs.

Table 5. Information Needs (n=91)

S.no.	Extent	Frequency
1.	Up to 25%	45 (49.45%)
2.	Up to 50%	25 (27.47%)
3.	Up to 75%	20 (21.9%)
4.	Up to 100%	2 (2.1%)
	Total	91 (100%)

Table 5 shows that 45 (49.45%) of the respondents reported that the library fulfilled their information needs up-to 25%, while 25 (27.47%) indicated for up-to 50%, 20 (21.9%) for up-to 75%, and 2 (2.1%) for up-to 100 percent.

7. Effectiveness of Library Services

The respondents' opinions regarding the effectiveness of library services were also measured.
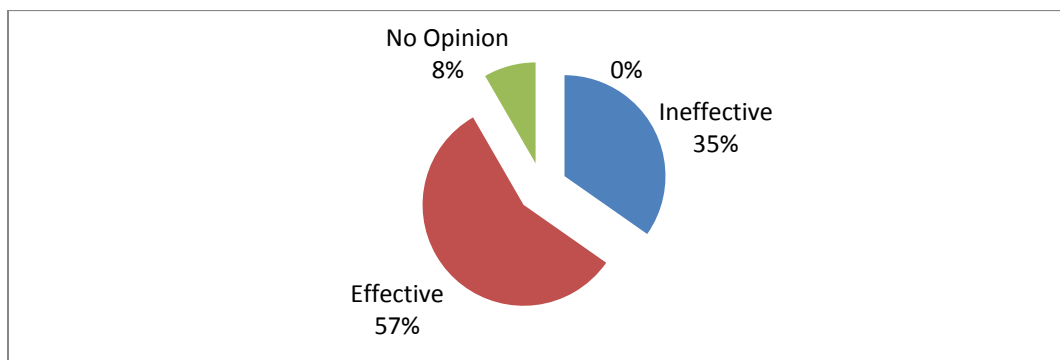
Figure 2. Effectiveness of Library Services

Figure 2 shows that 41 respondents (57%) expressed that the library services were "effective" while 25 (35%) indicated that the library services were "ineffective". Besides, 6 (8%) did not respond to the question.

8. Satisfaction with Physical Facilities of the Central Library

Table 6. Satisfaction with Library Physical Facilities (n=91)

S.no.	Satisfaction	Mean
1.	Lighting facilities	4.12
2.	Ventilation system	3.90

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3.	Reading tables/chairs	3.87
4.	Space for reading	3.86
5.	Computer facilities	3.56
6.	Research Corner	2.36
7.	Air conditioning/cooling system	2.33
8.	Display of new arrivals	2.26
9.	Conference/seminar room	2.25
10.	Audio-visual facilities	2.08

Scale: *5=Very Satisfied, 4=Satisfied, 3=No opinion, 2=Dissatisfied, 1=Very dissatisfied*

Table 6 shows that the respondents were satisfied with library physical facilities such as; lighting system (mean=4.12), ventilation facilities (mean=3.90), reading tables (mean=3.87), space for reading (mean=3.86), and computer facilities (mean=3.56). However, the respondents were dissatisfied with research corner facility (mean=2.36), air conditions system (mean=2.33), display of new arrivals (mean=2.26), conference room (mean=2.25), and audio-visual facilities (mean=2.08) of the library. These findings corroborate the findings of Arif and Mahmood (2010).

9. Problems Faced by the Respondents

It was found that the respondents faced several problems while using library resources and services. Lack of electronic resources in the library was a major problem encountered by the respondents (n=76, 83.51%), followed by inadequate collection (n=70, 76.92%) and insufficient physical facilities (n=69, 75.82%).

Furthermore, the findings show that most respondents faced problems related to the library catalogue/OPAC (n=68, 74.72%), collection arrangement (n=66, 72.52%), computer facilities (n=59, 64.83%), services (n=55, 60.43%), and inadequate library open hours (n=52, 57.14%).
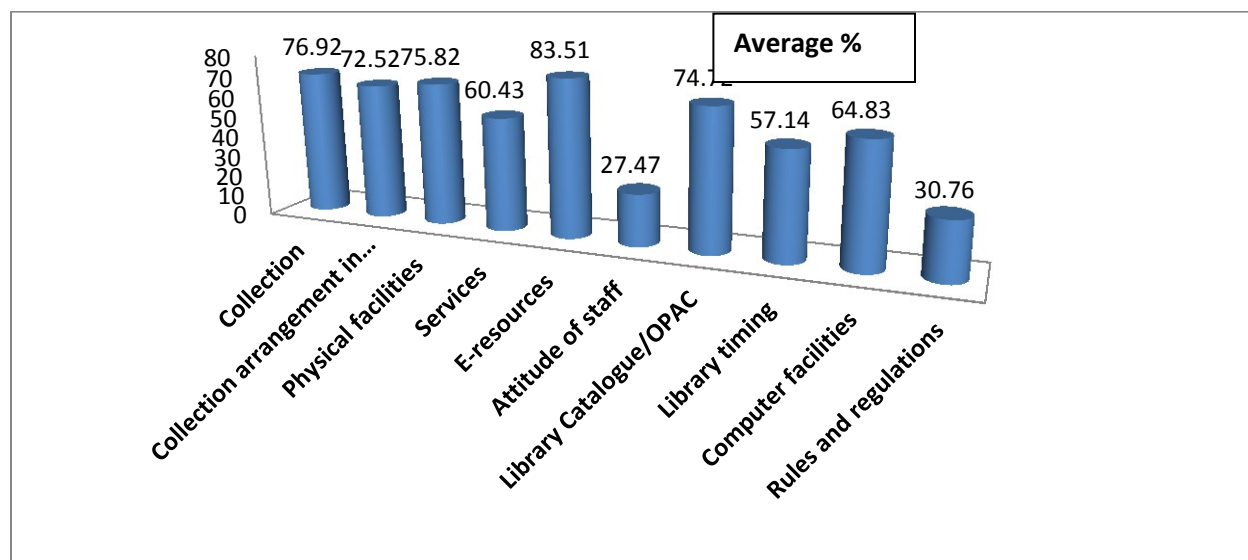

Figure 3. Problems faced by users

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In addition, some (n=28, 30.76%) of the respondents faced the problem of punitive rules and regulations, followed by non-cooperative staff attitude (n=25, 27.47%) (Figure 3).

This study confirms the findings of Khan and Bhatti (2012).

VII. Conclusion

The findings of the present study show that the Central Library of the University of Peshawar, Pakistan is playing an important role in the promotion of education and research. The library resources and services have been appreciated by the users. At the same time, it was also pointed out that the library was unable to provide full-fledged facilities and a good reading and learning environment.

The majority of students usually visit the library to consult course books and reference materials while only a small percentage visit to borrow books. The use of electronic resources and non-book materials is very low. The library should purchase general as well as course books to maximize the usage of library resources and services. The university administration should provide more facilities to the library for the use of electronic resources.

The training for library staff on the latest information technology should be conducted to increase the use of the internet and electronic resources and to offer online and e-databases services more efficiently and effectively.

In this electronic age, the biggest challenge facing the library profession is staying relevant to its users. This environment of teaching, learning and research is changing rapidly. Therefore, university libraries need to maintain their position as a key partner in the diffusion of knowledge and promotion of research by understanding, anticipating, and emphasizing the challenges in their respective areas. On the other hand, this challenge creates opportunities for libraries to improve the quality of services to support academic and research activities more effectively.

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Authors:
Amjid Khan, Librarian, Department of Pharmacy University of Peshawar and Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Library & Information Sciences, The Islamia University of Bahwalpur, Pakistan. Email: amjid.librn@gmail.com

Dr. Rubina Bhatti, Associate Professor, Department of Library & Information Science, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan. Email: dr.rubytariq@gmail.com

Ghalib Khan, Librarian, The Law College, University of Peshawar & PhD Scholar (Department of Library & Information Sciences), The Islamia University of Bahwalpur, Pakistan. Email: ghalibkhan1@yahoo.com

Muhammad Ismail, Assistant Professor, Department of Library & Information Sciences, University of Peshawar, Pakistan. Email: ismailpeshawar@gmail.com

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