

ACADEMIC LIBRARY SUPPORT FOR COMPETITIVE EXAMINATION PREPARATION: BEST PRACTICES OF VIKAS COLLEGE LIBRARY

U.U. Kulkarni

Vikas College of Arts, Science & Commerce
udaygkm@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

In the present era of globalization and knowledge economy, competitive examinations have become an essential pathway for students seeking higher education, employment, and professional growth. Academic libraries play a significant role in supporting students by providing information services related to various competitive examinations. The library of Vikas College Library has initiated learner-centric information services to guide students preparing for examinations such as UPSC, MPSC, NET/SET, Banking, SSC, Railway, and other entrance examinations. This paper theoretically discusses the importance, objectives, and impact of competitive examination information services provided by the college library. The study highlights the role of academic libraries in creating awareness, providing study materials, digital resources, and career guidance support for students.

Keywords: *Competitive Examinations, Information Service, Academic Library, Career Guidance, Library Services, Student Support*

Introduction

Library is the heart of educational organisations. In the ICT and competitive educational environment, libraries are no longer limited to book circulation and reading services. They have emerged as dynamic information centers that provide career-oriented and examination-based support services to students.

Competitive examinations such as UPSC, MPSC, SSC, Banking, NET/SET, CET, CAT, Railway Recruitment, and other entrance examinations require systematic preparation and access to updated information resources. Academic libraries can significantly contribute by organizing specialized information services and creating awareness among students regarding career opportunities.

Vikas College Library has undertaken various initiatives to support students appearing for competitive examinations by providing printed resources, digital services, newspaper clippings, current affairs materials, internet access, and guidance-related information.

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the significance of competitive examination information services in academic libraries.
2. To evaluate the role of Vikas College Library in supporting competitive exam aspirants.

3. To identify the specific services and resources provided for competitive examination preparation.
4. To examine the impact and benefits of these library services on student success.
5. To suggest measures for enhancing competitive examination support services in college libraries.

Importance of Competitive Examination Information Service

Competitive Examination Information Services play a significant role in supporting students who desire to appear for various competitive examinations such as UPSC, MPSC, Banking, Railway, SSC, CAT and various recruitment examinations. In the present scenario students require time bound, accurate, and comprehensive information resources to compete successfully. Academic libraries, especially college libraries, act as important knowledge centers by providing access to updated study materials, reference books, previous years' question papers, newspapers, magazines, e-resources, and online databases related to competitive examinations. These services help students remain informed about examination patterns, syllabi, current affairs, and career opportunities available in different sectors.

The Competitive Examination Information Service offered by the library also promotes

self-learning habits and independent study among students. By creating a dedicated study environment and making relevant resources easily accessible, libraries motivate students to engage in continuous learning and skill development. Such services are particularly beneficial for students from rural areas and economically weaker sections of society who may not be able to afford private coaching classes or costly study materials. The library therefore acts as an equal opportunity platform that supports inclusive education and academic empowerment.

Competitive examinations contribute to the development of analytical thinking, decision-making ability, confidence, and general awareness among students. Regular access to newspapers, employment news, journals, and current affairs resources improves students' understanding of social, political, economic, and technological developments. In this way, the library not only supports academic learning but also assists in career development and personality enhancement. Consequently, competitive examination information services have evolved into an essential extension activity for modern academic libraries, playing a pivotal role in guiding students toward successful careers and fostering a culture of lifelong learning.

National Knowledge Commission & Competitive Examinations:

The National Knowledge Commission underscored the need to modernize libraries and develop them as Knowledge Resource Centers that support education, self-learning, and career development. The Commission recommended the use of ICT, digital resources, internet facilities, and updated information services in libraries to help students access authentic study materials and current information. These recommendations support Competitive Examination Information Services by enabling students, especially those from rural and economically weaker sections, to prepare effectively for various competitive examinations through access to books, e-resources, newspapers, journals, and career-related information.

Services Rendered by Vikas College Library

Competitive Examination Book Collection:

To effectively cater to the diverse career need of the students, the library maintains comprehensive collection of specialized competitive examination resources. This collection features over 1,200+ volumes tailored to a wide spectrum of national and state-level recruitment and entrance examinations, including:

- Civil & Administrative Services: Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) and Maharashtra Public Service Commission (MPSC).
- Banking & Corporate Sector: Banking Examinations (IBPS, SBI), Staff Selection Commission (SSC), and Railway Recruitment Boards (RRB).
- Academic & Professional Entrances: National Eligibility Test / State Eligibility Test (NET/SET) and MBA Entrance Examinations like MH-CET & CAT etc.
- Uniformed Services: Police Recruitment examinations.
- Quantitative techniques, logical reasoning, verbal aptitude, and subject-specific core disciplines.

Newspaper and Current Awareness Service (CAS)

The College Library rendered Current Awareness Service (CAS) to support students preparing for various competitive examinations. Daily newspapers, employment news, magazines, and current affairs journals are made available in the library reading section for regular study and reference. Important notifications, recruitment advertisements, examination schedules, and career-related information are displayed on the library notice board to create awareness among students. The library regularly subscribes to quality periodicals and competitive examination resources such as Employment News, Yojana, Kurukshetra, Lokrajya, Competition Success Review, Pratiyogita Darpan, and Frontline.

In addition, the library subscribes to 11 Marathi, 1 Hindi, and 6 English daily newspapers to provide multilingual access to current information and news analysis. Among these, The Hindu newspaper is highly useful for competitive examination preparation as it

enhances general awareness, analytical understanding, and English language proficiency of students. This service encourages regular reading habits, improves current affairs knowledge, and helps students remain updated with national and international developments relevant to competitive examinations.

Digital Information Services

The College Library provides various Digital Information Services to support students in competitive examination preparation and online learning. The library offers access to e-books, online competitive examination portals, previous years' question papers, government recruitment websites, and career guidance resources. Internet and Wi-Fi facilities are also available in the library to help students' access digital learning materials and online examination content efficiently.

The library is a member of N-LIST, which enables users to access scholarly e-resources, e-journals, and e-books for academic and competitive examination purposes. The library webpage separately lists important websites related to various competitive examinations, recruitment notifications, and career opportunities. Various useful online resources, including study materials, current affairs links, and examination guidance sources, are also made available through the library webpage for easy access by students. These digital services promote self-learning, information literacy, and effective use of online educational resources among students.

Reading Room Facility

The library provides a peaceful and student-friendly reading environment for students preparing for examinations and competitive examinations. The reading room has a seating capacity of 120 students and is designed to support uninterrupted study and effective utilization of library resources.

The library remains open from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. to facilitate extended study hours for students. During examination periods, additional reading hours are provided to meet students' academic needs. The reading room facility is also available on Sundays and public holidays, ensuring continuous access to study space and learning resources for students.

Career Guidance and Awareness

The library actively collaborates with faculty members and the Career Guidance Cell to organize various academic and career-oriented programmes for students. These initiatives help students become aware of competitive examinations, available learning resources, and effective study practices.

The following activities are regularly conducted:

- **Career Guidance Lectures:**
The Librarian conducts guidance lectures in classrooms to create awareness about various competitive examinations, examination patterns, and the resources available in the library for preparation.
- **Orientation Programmes:**
Every year, orientation programmes are organized for newly admitted students to familiarize them with library facilities, services, resources, and methods of accessing print and digital resources effectively.
- **Competitive Examination Awareness Sessions:**
Experts and resource persons from outside institutions are invited to guide students about various competitive examinations, career opportunities, examination strategies, and preparation techniques.
- **Workshops on Study Techniques and Time Management:**
Workshops are organized to help students develop effective study habits, improve concentration, and manage time efficiently during examination preparation.

Display and Notification Service

The library regularly disseminates important academic and career-related information to students through various communication channels. Notifications regarding competitive examinations, scholarship opportunities, admission notices, and government recruitment advertisements are made easily accessible to students.

The information is communicated through the following mediums:

Notice Boards

Important examination notifications, scholarship announcements, admission notices, and recruitment advertisements are

prominently displayed on the library notice boards.

Newspaper Clipping Service

The library also maintains a Newspaper Clipping Service to support students preparing for competitive examinations and academic activities. Important editorials from *The Hindu*, significant news reports, government policies, socio-economic developments, budget highlights, and statistical information published in newspapers are systematically collected, classified, and preserved for reference purposes. These newspaper clippings help students improve analytical understanding, current affairs knowledge, essay writing skills, and general awareness required for various competitive examinations. The clipping files are regularly updated and made available in the library for easy access and long-term reference use.

Role of Librarian in Competitive Examination Support

- Guiding students in selecting proper study materials
- Assisting in information retrieval
- Creating bibliographies and resource lists
- Conducting orientation programmes
- Motivating students toward career opportunities

Challenges

Despite several initiatives, some challenges remain:

- Lack of sufficient funds for updated resources
- Limited space for separate competitive examination sections
- Rapid changes in examination patterns
- Need for more digital subscriptions
- Limited awareness among students about available services

Suggestions

The following measures may strengthen competitive examination support services in academic libraries:

- a. Establish a dedicated Competitive Examination Cell within the library.
- b. Increase subscriptions to online learning platforms and digital databases.
- c. Organize regular coaching, counseling, and guidance programmes.
- d. Develop a digital repository of previous years' question papers.
- e. Provide remote access facilities for e-resources.
- f. Conduct frequent user orientation and information literacy programmes.
- g. Collaborate with external agencies and career guidance experts.
- h. Introduce mobile-based library information services for students.

Conclusion

Academic libraries play a crucial role in student development beyond classroom teaching. In the present competitive educational environment, libraries must function as learner-centric knowledge centers that support career development, self-learning, and academic empowerment.

The initiatives undertaken by the Vikas College Library demonstrate how academic libraries can effectively contribute to competitive examination preparation through specialized collections, current awareness services, digital resources, reading facilities, and career guidance programmes.

Strengthening Competitive Examination Information Services will not only enhance students' academic performance and career prospects but will also contribute to inclusive educational development and social empowerment. Academic libraries therefore have a significant responsibility in shaping informed, skilled, and career-ready citizens.

References

1. Ranganathan, S.R. (1961). Reference service (2nd ed.). Sarada Ranganathan Endowment for Library Science.
2. Ranganathan, S.R. (1931). The five laws of library science. Madras Library Association.
3. Ranganathan, S. R. (1935). Library administration. Madras Library Association.
4. Kumar, K. (1992). Reference service (4th ed.). Vikas Publishing House.

5. Kumar, K. (1987). Library administration and management (2nd ed.). Vikas Publishing House.
6. Girja Kumar, & Kumar, K. (1983). Philosophy of user education. Vikas Publishing House.
7. Sharma, R. N. (1986). Indian academic libraries and Dr. S. R. Ranganathan. Sterling Publishers.
8. Satija, M. P. (1992). S. R. Ranganathan and the method of science. Aditya Prakashan.
9. Gupta, O. P. (1992). Development of university libraries in India after independence. Concept Publishing Company.
10. Kumar, P. S. G. (2003). Foundation of library and information science (2nd ed.). B.R. Publishing Corporation.
11. Kumar, P. S. G. (2004). Information and communication. B.R. Publishing Corporation.
12. Singh, S. (1986). Reference service in academic libraries. Ess Ess Publications.
13. Singh, S. (Ed.). (1997). Handbook of reference and information services: Some new dimensions. Crest Publishing House.
14. Dhawan, S. M. (Ed.). (2004). Library and information studies in cyber age: Essays in honour of Professor J. L. Sardana. Authors Press.
15. Ramaiah, L. S., Reddy, M. S., & Kumar, H. (Eds.). (2007). E-libraries: Problems and perspectives. Allied Publishers.
16. Kumar, P. S. G. (1999). Knowledge management in electronic environment. B.R. Publishing Corporation.
17. Satija, M. P. (1996). Manual of practical colon classification. Ess Ess Publications.
18. Ranganathan, S. R. (1963). Documentation and its facets. Asia Publishing House.