A Study on the Status of Medical Library User Instruction in Korea and Program Development

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Abstract

Recently, the behaviors of library users have changed due to the development of electronic resources and computer technologies. Accordingly, use of web-based electronic resources is becoming more popular compared to a visit to the library. Therefore, efficient and easy use of electronic resources has become essential and libraries support users by providing user instruction programs. This study investigated the status of user instruction of medical libraries in Korea, and developed user instruction programs. A few medical libraries perform user instruction programs regularly with various subjects. For the development of the program, users who received education in user instruction programming in medical libraries were surveyed and interviewed. Results showed that the satisfaction levels regarding program content, methodology, and place were high, but the satisfaction levels for course length were low. Users responded that the user instruction program was helpful for library use, database use, and general information usage. Many questions regarding library use were asked, and interest in other courses was high. Users also emphasized repetitive education, as well as details divided by levels. Beginning in 2008, Yonsei University Medical Library has updated its user instruction program based on the results. This paper introduces the case of such a library that has made changes on their user instruction programs.
Introduction

Technological advancements have improved both the quality and the quantity of electronic resources; similarly, behaviors of library users have changed. As a result, use of the electronic library resources through the online website is becoming more popular compared to a visit to the library. Due to such changes in library usages, libraries are making efforts to provide various resources and supporting systems. Libraries put a greater emphasis on user instruction.

User instruction has first started to develop in the 1970s when it became possible for one to access information outside the library. This is also the time when the education started to put more emphasis on self-learning methods rather than lecture-focused ones. In the 1990s, the information and methods of user instruction were discussed in different angles, and it eventually became one of the main library services.

In order to activate and increase satisfaction of user instruction, many trials are required in regard to its contents and methods. Through user instruction, one’s satisfaction level of library services can be increased as well.

This study investigated the status of medical library user instruction in Korea. Also, this paper studied users’ satisfaction level and instructional needs through surveys and interviews with the library users who were educated in the user instruction program.

Beginning in 2008, Yonsei University Medical Library has updated its user instruction program based on the results. This paper introduces the case of such a library that has made changes on their user instruction programs.

Status of Medical Library User Instruction in Korea

A thesis, 2005, discussed the research on the current status of the user instruction; the research was done on the 20 medical libraries with the highest number of document delivery services in Korea. It was found that only five
libraries were enforcing the user instruction program; also, their contents were too simple and the users’ satisfaction rates were too low. Thus, as an alternative, user instruction program that required one’s participations was recommended.

Another research was made on 168 libraries of the Korean Medical Library Association in February, 2008; the study examined the types of user instruction programs provided by the libraries. The results revealed that 21 library websites provided user instructional menu as the main or the submenu; 2 libraries did not have the menu on the website but practiced the user instructional program through notices made online; 5 libraries had various instructional courses provided and they regularly followed their methods every month; 8 libraries supplied instructional courses by groups.

This study was made in February, 2009. It investigated if user instruction was being followed or not. It also examined the types of manuals and video clips and whether they were provided just like the previous research done on this topic. The survey was made on 38 medical college libraries out of the 54 libraries in the Korean Medical Library Association. 32 libraries had their own websites; only 15 libraries provided user instructional menu, and 2 libraries followed the user information system through notices made online. 6 libraries regularly followed their methods every month. 9 libraries had three or more number of instructional courses.

The research made on the types of manuals revealed that 9 libraries had their own video clips made; 8 libraries provided manuals made from vendor sources. The libraries that made their own manuals mostly used programs such as Microsoft Office PowerPoint and Word. Most of the video clips were made from an outside source. To add, 8 libraries allowed access to the online information to their faculties only; it had to log-in on their websites in order to use the information provided.

As discussed, medical library user instructions in Korea were regularly followed by large libraries. However, most medical libraries did provide the full service yet. To add, many libraries used manuals that were made from vendor sources,
rather than the ones made on their own. Only a few libraries provided user instruction through video clips, and their contents included general information on library usages rather than explanation on the medical databases.

Table 1. Provide User Instruction Program and Manuals on the Website

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>User Instruction</th>
<th>Practice User Instruction</th>
<th>Provide Three or More Instruction Courses</th>
<th>Regularly Provide Instructional Programs</th>
<th>Provide Self-Produced Educational Video Clips</th>
<th>Provide Self-Produced Manuals</th>
<th>Provide Manuals Made from Vender Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>38 (Medical College Libraries)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis on User Satisfaction and Instruction Needs

In order to increase the satisfaction level of user instruction and also to activate it, a research was made on the types of user instruction that users actually want. It was done for two months from January to March, 2008 on Yonsei University Health System faculties who have received user instruction. The research asked them to fill out the surveys and also interviewed them. A total number of 137 surveys were received, and 17 people were asked for in-depth interviews according to their level of knowledge and fields of subjects. The survey included 15 questions about satisfaction levels on each fields of user instruction. It also asked whether one actually benefited from the user instruction or not. The results showed that the number of users who have attended the course more than once was greater than the ones who have
attended the course only once by 74(54.0 %) to 62(45.6%). When asked about the satisfaction level of instructional contents, methods, and place, more than 50% said they were satisfied. On the other hand, the satisfaction level of the class length was only 33.1% that it was lower compared to other categories.

Table 2. Satisfaction Levels on Each Fields of User Instruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Instructional Contents</th>
<th>Course Length</th>
<th>Instructional Methods</th>
<th>Instructional Place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very satisfied</td>
<td>25 (18.4%)</td>
<td>14 (10.3%)</td>
<td>29 (14.0%)</td>
<td>24 (17.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>73 (53.7%)</td>
<td>32 (22.8%)</td>
<td>60 (44.1%)</td>
<td>54 (39.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>23 (16.9%)</td>
<td>62 (45.6%)</td>
<td>44 (32.4%)</td>
<td>25 (22.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsatisfied</td>
<td>10 (10.3%)</td>
<td>26 (19.1%)</td>
<td>13 (9.6%)</td>
<td>31 (22.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very unsatisfied</td>
<td>1 (0.7%)</td>
<td>3 (2.2%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (1.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To add, 60% people have agreed that user instruction has helped them in categories such as library uses, medical Database uses, and information usage. Therefore, it can be concluded that user instruction is a useful service for the researchers and also that users themselves believe they have benefited from the service.

Table 3. Level of Helpful Usage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Library Uses</th>
<th>Medical Databases</th>
<th>Information Usage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very helpful</td>
<td>25 (18.4%)</td>
<td>29 (21.3%)</td>
<td>34 (24.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td>60 (44.1%)</td>
<td>50 (36.8%)</td>
<td>58 (42.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>29 (21.3%)</td>
<td>36 (26.5%)</td>
<td>21 (15.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unhelpful</td>
<td>17 (12.5%)</td>
<td>16 (11.8%)</td>
<td>20 (14.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very unhelpful</td>
<td>5 (3.7%)</td>
<td>5 (3.7%)</td>
<td>4 (2.9%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, 71 people (52.2%) have said that they would make inquiries to the library if they have questions regarding the user information after they attend courses. Also, 96 people (70.6%) have revealed that they would like to attend
another user instruction course. As a result, it can be summarized that people recognize libraries as the organization that provides useful information on their studies. Furthermore, the definite increase in the interests of the courses provided by the library could be seen. Therefore, libraries need to provide more number of classes and increase the frequency of the courses so that more users have the opportunities of instruction.

To collect users’ opinions in details, interviews were done in addition to surveys made. The interview questions were divided into three parts: understanding of information seeking behaviors, method of user instruction, and view points and recognition of the librarians. Each topic had sub-questions under it. Questions on the method of user instruction include: necessity of instruction, desirable instructional methods, effective user instructional methods, and the most needed part of the instruction.

The answers did not vary greatly. Some suggestions show that instruction with actual practices, various instructional contents, courses divide by levels, repetitive programs, and case studies are the most needed part of the instruction. Furthermore, interviewees mentioned that it was apparent that libraries are trying to provide better services for the users.

**Instruction Program Case Study**

The user instruction program at Yonsei University Medical Library has improved its program based on the results of the surveys and interviews made. The library has complemented the program, which first began in March, 2008; the details are as followed:

1) **Plan monthly schedule:**

By notifying the users about the planned monthly schedule ahead of the time, the library has improved the rate of usages of the user information system. Also, the library offered popular subjects every month that more opportunities were offered. One could look at the course schedule, which is in the form of a calendar, and register for it online.
2) Select target students and prepare the contents of courses by their level:

The library selected its target students according to their level of knowledge in the subject. In other words, it was first found whether a user has any information on the subject or is already familiar with it; then, contents of the class were organized according to the users' level. For the popular subjects, such as PubMed and EndNote, both the implement basis and application level classes were offered.

3) Instruct various courses:

The library offered various courses. Despite the fact that the library subscribes many databases, users are only familiar with a few. The research revealed that many users did not know what kind of data was offered nor how to use the databases. Thus, it is necessary for the library to introduce their database systems and provide instructions in details. Through instruction, users will be able to use useful databases, and the expensive subscription of the databases will not be a waste.

4) Provide classes with practices:

The library offered courses with actual practices. In order to do this, a computer room and instructor's assistants are needed. Since some libraries have computer rooms, so-called “information commons,” one could use this place; if not, renting an institutional place would be another option.

5) Provide classes in various time periods:

The library offered courses in different time periods. Most users of the medical library are doctors and hospital staffs. If many classes are offered at different time, then the number of participants would increase. It is also required to provide repetitive classes during lunch hour or after work. Educational workshop in the form of boot camp would be also possible.

6) Offer easy registration process:

The library made the registration process easier. It provided detailed information online. It also offered class schedule in the form of calendars so that users could easily pick their classes. Furthermore, one could check their registration process on “My Library.” Cancellation was also allowed to eliminate
the ones who sign up and do not show up to classes. To increase the participation rates, the librarians sent e-mails the day before and the text messages on the day of the class.

7) Provide snack coupons:
Since the class is usually offered during the lunch time, many people missed their lunches. In order to avoid this, the library provided snack coupons. Yonsei University Medical Library first tried this method in 2006 and the increase in the number of participants could be seen. In the first semester when the snacks were provided, an average of 43.6 people attended each class; however, in the second semester, snacks were not provided due to the budget issues. Only 16.2 users attended the class. Thus, the library must consider the user’s situation by getting enough budgets.

The Yonsei University Medical Library is carrying out the user instruction program by following such methods listed above. The detailed status is followed:

Table 4. The Status of User Instruction in Yonsei University Medical Library

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Courses</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regular Instruction</td>
<td>Customized Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table shows not only the increase in the number of participants in user Instruction programs but also the increase in “customized Instruction” It is a type of group class; if a user asks for a specific guideline of contents, place, and time, then the library provides such course for his group. “Customized instruction” first began in September, 2004, and 389 users have participated in 19 sessions in just 2 months. In 2007, the requests of customized instruction rapidly increased that both types of the user instruction programs were offered at a similar rate.
2008, the number of regular instruction increased significantly because of its variability and regularity of the courses.

**Conclusion**

This paper examined types of user Instruction practiced by medical libraries in Korea as well as the satisfaction level and instructional needs of users who have used the user Instruction program in order to activate the system and provide higher satisfaction. Based on the results, Yonsei University Medical Library has developed a user instructional program and practiced it in 2008. As a result, the user Instruction became one of the main library services; the number of users who use such system has increased as well due to the increasing number of people who were interested. In order to increase the satisfaction level of user system and also to activate it, one must ask for a user's interests in the library through sustainable relationships by asking for feedbacks after the instruction them on user information. This process will help one to understand that libraries are strongly-needed organizations in the society. Furthermore, the users who educated instruction can advertise the library. Also, the social view points of the librarians could be positively changed as well.

To conclude, the case of user instruction introduced could be used as a reference or as a guide for improving the library materials and increasing the user satisfaction.