Library user education under the circumstance of network[*]

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Abstract: Based on the concept of user education, this paper discusses the necessity of user education in library under the circumstance of network, describes the contents and forms of user education and puts forward the problems that should be paid attention to during education.

Key words: library; user education; information literacy instruction

User education is an educational activity of the library and information organization, which is carried out intentionally and systematically to increase users' information awareness and retrieval skills (ZHANG Qi-yu, 2000). It can enable them to make full use of the library and information resources. For library, the main task of user education is to guide library users to maximize the use of library resources, including collection resources and human resources, as well as training their proficiency in the use of library resources. Strengthening user education is an important duty of the librarians. With the rapid development of information technology, applications in the library become more and more common, such as computer technology, network technology and multimedia technology. The big change has happened in constitution of library information resources, information retrieval, approaches to the provision of services, as well as information dissemination methods. Therefore, library user education is also facing higher education requirements.

1. Significance of user education in library

Library is an important part of social education system. User education becomes an effective way for library to exert social educational functions, make self-advocacy, and improve the utilization of literature. Only by conducting user education can readers master the library technologies, information resources and literature retrieval skills, so as to improve users' ability to access information. Conducting user education, we can deal well with the relationship between collection and utilization of information resources, strengthen the close tie between users and library, absorb more members of the society to make use of library, thus ensuring the best use of library resources. At the same time, user education can help popularize library knowledge, enhance users' awareness and cause general attention and support for library from the society, then promote the use of library, improve library's social status and develop its multiple functions, so as to promote the development of library cause.

2. Contents of library user education

2.1 The basis-oriented education

Widespread application of automation in libraries has benefits for both library personnel and library users. Those who are able to use the automated systems that provide access to online pubic access catalogs, CD-ROM

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products, and on-line databases have access to a significantly larger number of information sources. One of the central problems inherent with automated systems, however, is reduced access to information for those who are unable to use the technology. In an information-rich environment, those unable or unwilling to use library technology become increasingly information poor. The purpose of this content is to enable users to understand the basic overview of the library and master library's basic common sense and skills, with an initial capacity of intelligence, specifically including: the introduction of nature, functions and internal system of organization of the library; brief introduction about library and its services; basic knowledge of literature classification and the uses of the system of library catalog; the rules and regulations about borrowing books and their using methods (ZHAN De-you, 2004).

2.2 Information literacy education

Information literacy is a kind of competence to use information, study information technology, and mold information solutions to problems (Davied V. Loertsue, 1999). In the information society, information literacy is not only the basis for self survival, but also the basic qualities and conditions for starting businesses and lifelong learning under the background of the adoption in information society and rapid development of high-tech industry. Information literacy education mainly includes education about information awareness and information capacity. Among them, information awareness education aims to educate users' sensitivity of information and conscious awareness of capture, analysis and absorption of information, including information needs awareness, access to information awareness, information limitation awareness, information in advance awareness, information innovation awareness and others. Information capacity refers to the ability of people to access information, process information, absorb information and create new information. The greater information capacity a user owns, the higher efficiency of access and use of information he has. Therefore, training the ability of users' information capacity is an important aspect of user education (WANG Xiao-li, 2009).

2.3 Information technology education

With the development of information society, computer technology and foreign language proficiency have become important tools and means in information retrieval and exchange. Multimedia technology, CD-ROM technology, database technology and network technology provide great conveniences for our information storage, extraction, development and exploration, as well as increasing users' dependence on technology. In the information society where computers and network technology are widely applied, the crowd who cannot get full access to the information might be reduced to vulnerable groups in a relative sense, thus technological progress helps form a new vulnerable group. It is essential to conduct users' information technology education. For library, it should allow users to master the use of network functions and methods; learn how to use Chinese and foreign language bibliographic database in collection and inquiry system of thematic literature database; learn the use of electronic document collections, as well as subject guilds.

3. Patterns of library user education

The modern library has become a dynamic integration of information and technology. The amount of information and the various means to access it have added new dimensions to the understanding of the library patron. The growth of the amount of information on the web has affected information seekers' use of the web. As Internet resources become more integral to users' lives and work, the information environment is becoming more complex. The aim of library user education is to strengthen library users' awareness to understand the layout of

the library facilities, to help them maximize the use of the library. Therefore, the contents of library user education under the information society should educate users' information awareness and capacity through various forms as well as the use of oriented library.

3.1 Strengthening oriented education, paying attention to practical training

The main way of oriented education is leading a guided tour to the users. The library staff introduced different departments of library and led them to visit. So, the daily regulations, characteristic services, reference tools, catalog of library are introduced to the users. Through practical training is another effective way in user education. Consultants provide targeted counsels by various forms to the users in their work, encouraging the users to master the basic knowledge about the use of literature information. In addition, compilations and guides can be made to provide guidance materials and answers to certain questions.

3.2 Holding training course, topical lecture and seminar

Various forms of user training are important methods of training users. Through the organization of training courses, satisfactory results can be obtained in a short period of time. This approach is particularly applicable to users in universal education. In addition, inviting experienced experts and professors, holding a variety of seminars which users participated to exchange experiences and solve certain problems, so as to improve the users' ability to access to and use of critical information. Next, the library should gratify the information needs of users to the largest extent by way of providing them with mobile libraries, literature searching services and telephone consulting services, and develop their information awareness and information capacity with the aid of tours, seminars, lectures, classes, training courses and other forms of user training. In the meantime, the libraries can make use of modern information technologies for online learning and distance education, as well as for education services.

3.3 Setting up literature retrieval course in colleges and universities

Information seeking is a complex information and communication activity requiring access to diverse sources of information to deal with personal, social, and work-related problems. The proliferation of personal computer, the growth of the Internet, and the accompanying development of information and communication services provide users with access to many new services and potential new channels of information access. Generally setting up *Document Retrieval and Utilization* course in schools has become a major route for library user education (TANG Jin-hua, 2006). Information retrieval course is the backbone of the education curriculum in library and information science education, and also should become a required course for school students. Opening information retrieval course allows users to grasp a variety of search theories, methods, strategies and technologies, providing the basic knowledge of the use of library. Current information retrieval courses should be based on user-centered teaching and learning activities, fully encourage students' potential and learning initiative, make use of advanced teaching techniques, improve education means and develop teaching courseware or learning platform which fit the characteristics of user learning and retrieval course.

3.4 Web-based information literacy education

Nowadays many libraries have established their own web page, which generally include the main overview of the library, services introduction, web navigation and user training. Through these, the users can have a more complete and systematic understanding about library. At the same time, they can make full use of collection resources through it and enjoy the various services. Online information literacy education is web-based information literacy education, which makes full use of computer and network technologies. It is in terms of traditional library users and becomes a trend of library user education. To develop the depth and expansion of

library user education and make library close to readers, introducing the e-mail, BBS forum, videoconference and even online chat to library user education will be effective methods. At the same time, the use of sophisticated digital video technology counseling program can also help improve the skills of user information and retrieval of complex issues.

4. Issues that should be paid attention to during education

Firstly, conducting it in planed way. User education is a long-term work with stability; it must be done planed and step-by-step. We must make plans according to the users' basic structures, needs and situations of information work. In the information age, it is the essence of information literacy education to enhance uses' information awareness and information capacity, so as to enable them to form a daily habit of obtaining information.

Secondly, combining the groups and the individuals. Training on groups can save time and financial resources. On the other hand, this work can also be organized and planned, but at the same time, we can not ignore the role of individual counseling.

Thirdly, contacting closely with practice. User education is not only an education based on books and theories, it is also necessary to integrate into the actual work actively. Literature retrieval course is a highly practical curriculum; only in practice can it perform a better result. The libraries must strive to get multi-supports, strengthen self-construction, and carry out educational activities of various forms and with different contents to improve their information literacy.

Fourthly, grasping the characteristics of different users, that is, the arrangements for user training should be targeted. For example, different users have different information needs, they have different levels of computers, as well as some other characteristics, the training should accord with users' careers, responsibilities, and operational levels as far as possible. Information education should be purposely.

At last, taking into account the potential users, that is, user training should have the popularity to ensure both real users and potential users to have opportunities to participate in information training.

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