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Beyond Orientation: A Practical Assessment Framework for Information-Literacy Programmes in University Libraries

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Abstract— This paper synthesises librarian- and user-survey summaries reported in a thesis comparing five central and five state university libraries in North India. The source reports uneven formal assessment of information-literacy learning: 40% of state libraries and 60% of central libraries reportedly assessed users after instruction. User summaries also indicate perceived changes in information-seeking behaviour and substantial demand for electronic-resource training. Based on these patterns, the article proposes a multi-stage assessment framework linking institutional inputs, instructional design, learner performance, and service improvement. The framework is a proposal derived from historical evidence; it has not been empirically validated.

Keywords: information-literacy assessment; academic libraries; learning outcomes; evaluation framework; user education; India

1. Introduction

Information-literacy programmes are often described through the activities libraries deliver—orientation sessions, database demonstrations, guides, or workshops. Yet activity counts alone do not show whether learners can independently find, evaluate, and ethically use information. Assessment can help libraries identify learning gaps, improve teaching, and communicate educational value.

The thesis examined library instruction, five broad information-literacy standards, staff training, user perceptions, and programme effectiveness in selected central and state university libraries. Its findings provide a basis for identifying an assessment gap and proposing a framework that is more systematic than a single post-session satisfaction question.

2. Literature Review

The ACRL Framework (2016) conceptualises information literacy through interconnected frames, including authority, information creation, strategic exploration, and scholarship as conversation. These concepts support assessment through authentic tasks rather than simple recall alone. Erlinger (2018) reviews assessment approaches in undergraduate instruction and underscores the need to connect instruction to measurable learning outcomes.

Pinto et al. (2024), reviewing research indexed in Scopus and Web of Science, describe assessment as a key element in improving literacy programmes and demonstrating their impact. They also call attention to newer demands such as data literacy, open science, and generative AI. Indian comparative studies of university-library services similarly indicate that availability and awareness of services can differ between institutional contexts (Jindal et al., 2020; Jindal et al., 2021; Singh & Mahajan, 2021). This paper translates those broad insights into a practical institutional cycle suitable for local adaptation.

3. Source-derived diagnosis

The thesis reports that 60% of state university libraries did not formally assess users' understanding after library instruction, whereas 60% of central university libraries reportedly did so.

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It also reports that 80% of state libraries and 100% of central libraries addressed five broad information-literacy standards. The comparative narrative states that users in state libraries perceived changes in information-seeking behaviour to some extent, while central-library users reported change to a greater extent. These results indicate a potential gap between programme delivery and outcome verification.

Source-reported indicator	State university libraries	Central university libraries
Coverage of five broad IL standards	80%	100%
Formal assessment after instruction	40% yes; 60% no	60% yes
Separate e-resource section	40%	100%
Staff training in prior five years	Uneven; one library reported no staff trained	Uneven; one library reported no staff trained

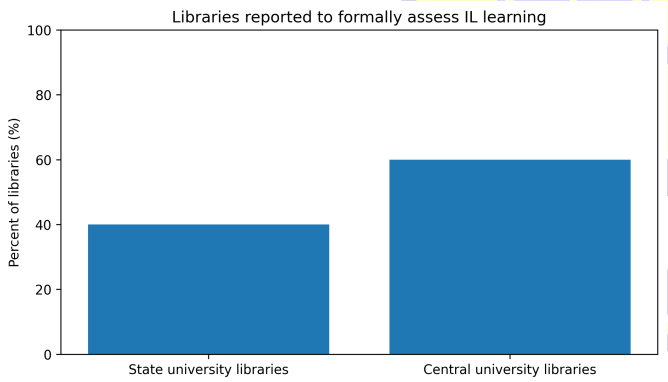


Figure 1. Reported formal assessment after information-literacy instruction. Percentages are taken from the thesis narrative and require verification against original tables.

4. Proposed assessment framework

The proposed framework follows a continuous improvement cycle: diagnose needs, define outcomes, design instruction, measure performance, interpret evidence, and revise services. It is intended for adaptation, not as a validated instrument.

Stage	Core question	Suggested evidence	Example indicator
1. Diagnose	What can users already do, and where do they struggle?	Short baseline task; interviews; service analytics	Baseline task completion rate
2. Define outcomes	What should a learner be able to demonstrate?	Learning outcomes aligned to programme and subject	Outcomes mapped to each workshop
3. Design instruction	What learning activities develop the target skill?	Lesson plan, search demonstration, guided practice	Percentage of sessions including hands-on practice
4. Assess performance	Can users complete a realistic information task?	Pre/post task, rubric, search log, citation exercise	Change in rubric score
5. Interpret evidence	Which groups or skills need further support?	Disaggregated results; feedback; access data	Skill gaps by user group
6. Improve and report	What will the library change based on results?	Action log; annual programme report	Percentage of actions completed

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5. A sample assessment rubric

Competency	Beginning (1)	Developing (2)	Proficient (3)
Search planning	Uses broad or unrelated terms	Uses some relevant terms with limited refinement	Combines concepts and refines strategy appropriately
Source evaluation	Accepts results without checking	Checks one or two credibility cues	Evaluates authority, relevance, evidence, date, and purpose
Access and use	Cannot locate or retrieve needed content	Finds content with assistance	Independently accesses and selects suitable content
Ethical use	Citation incomplete or absent	Cites with recurring errors	Cites consistently and recognises attribution requirements
Reflection	Cannot explain choices	Explains some choices	Justifies strategy and identifies next steps

Suggested scoring: use the rubric to assess a short authentic task before and after instruction. Report the distribution of scores and change in performance, not just a mean satisfaction rating. The rubric is illustrative and should be piloted, reviewed for content validity, and adapted to discipline-specific needs before use.

6. Implementation plan

Timeline	Activity	Responsible role	Output
Month 1	Map existing instruction and define outcomes	Library instruction coordinator and faculty partners	Outcome map
Month 2	Pilot task and rubric with a small group	Subject librarian/teaching team	Revised instrument
Months 3–4	Deliver sessions and collect pre/post evidence	Library staff	Anonymised assessment dataset
Month 5	Analyse results by skill and user group	Assessment lead	Short results report
Month 6	Revise sessions and share findings with departments	Library committee	Action plan and annual cycle

7. Discussion

The source thesis suggests that formal assessment is not universal, even where libraries report offering instruction. A repeatable cycle can help move programmes from activity reporting toward learning evidence. It also reduces the risk of treating self-reported confidence as demonstrated skill. Assessment should be proportionate, transparent, privacy-conscious, and used to improve learning rather than to rank individual students.

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A useful framework must also account for access conditions. If users cannot reliably access computers, internet, or licensed resources, low performance may reflect infrastructure barriers rather than a lack of skill. The assessment cycle should therefore track service conditions alongside learning outcomes. This combined view is consistent with the thesis's attention to ICT facilities, e-resource support, staff development, and user training.

8. Limitations and future research

The proposed framework is based on historical summary findings from a small group of selected libraries. The study year is not specified, the raw dataset and full central-library chapter were not supplied, and the source does not document a validated assessment instrument. The proposed rubric and implementation plan are recommendations, not results from a field trial. Future research should pilot the framework across diverse institutions, report reliability and validity evidence, and examine whether improved instruction produces measurable changes in information-search performance.

9. Conclusion

The main contribution of this article is a practical, evidence-oriented assessment cycle for university-library information-literacy programmes. The thesis's reported gap in formal assessment provides a rationale for moving beyond orientation counts and perceived change. By combining authentic tasks, transparent rubrics, user feedback, and documented improvement, libraries can better demonstrate and strengthen their educational contribution.

Declarations

Funding: Not stated in the source material. Conflict of interest: To be confirmed by the authors. Ethics: The source files do not document ethics approval or exemption; add the applicable statement after checking institutional records. Data availability: The framework draws on aggregate findings in the thesis files supplied by the authors; raw data were not supplied. Author contributions: Mange Ram—conceptualisation, framework development, writing and correspondence; Dr Rajbir Singh—source study, interpretation and manuscript review (please confirm roles).

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