

# BEST PRACTICES IN LIBRARIES: A STUDY OF ARTS AND SCIENCE COLLEGES AFFILIATED TO THIRUVALLUVAR UNIVERSITY

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper is a survey of best practices and services followed in the Arts and Science colleges affiliated to Thiruvalluvar University, Tamil Nadu. Through observations and interview method data was elicited from ten colleges. The main objective of the study is 1) to explore the various best practices followed in the college libraries 2) examine the availability of electronic resources 3) availability of publications and facilities 4) various library programs 5) financial sources 6) services extended to external users. The findings show that Islamiah College, Vaniyambadi secured the highest score in electronic resources and services. INFLIBNET and Internet facility are present in all the colleges. Only three college libraries are conducting all library programs. Competition programs are conducted by all colleges. Only two colleges are providing service to external users. Suggestions to improve the infrastructure and college library services provided.*

**Keywords :** *Best Practices, Innovations, Innovative Practices, Benchmarking, Accreditation, Quality Enhancement, Academic libraries, College Libraries, Library Services, NAAC, Thiruvalluvar University, Tamil Nadu.*

## 1. Introduction

Library and Information centres are facing multifarious challenges due to globalization, information revolution and liberalization in higher education. It leads to privatization and created cut throat competition. Library and Information centres are striving hard for scoring more points in NAAC achievement. National Assessment and Accreditation Council established by the University Grants Commission is entrusted to measure the standard of higher educational institutions in the country. They have developed quality indicators for assessing the college libraries and as per their direction Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) has been set up in the autonomous academic

institutions. For the same reason, institutions are competing to score the highest grades (A+ (or) A++) from NAAC. Parents and the public are also aware of these facts and are admitting their wards to those institutions which are maintaining quality. Better outcome of the institution depends upon its infrastructure facilities and best services provided by it. This is possible through better library services with better infrastructure with due return of investment. Thus quality based on standards and best practices are essential.

Benchmarking is the process of identifying the highest standards of excellence of products, services or process, and making improvements necessary to reach those standard commonly called as 'best practices'.

Best practices are a set of guidelines, ethics, ideas, or technique that represent the most prudent course of action, superior to any alternative because it produces results that are superior to those achieved by other means. It is a standard way of professional procedures prescribed being correct, efficient and effective.

Thiruvalluvar University is a public state university located in Vellore, Tamil Nadu. It was established by the Government of Tamil Nadu. The university was named after the Tamil poet and sage Thiruvalluvar. The university affiliate Arts and Science colleges under the area comprising the districts of Vellore, Tiruvannamalai, Viluppuram, Cuddalore and Tirupattur (<https://en.wikipedia.org/>). A total of 124 colleges are affiliated to this university comprising of self financing, government, oriental title and constituent colleges.

## 2. Review of Literature

A number of authors have written papers on best practices in various types of libraries. A few recent selected studies on best practices mostly on academic libraries are reviewed here.

The most recent empirical study by Potnis et al. (2021) fills the gap by identifying the challenges and solutions for managing innovations in public libraries in USA. Another recent study from USA is by Peacock and Vecchione (2020), which discusses the best practices, procedures and policies followed in the academic libraries of Northwest United States. The paper written by Ratkanthiwar (2020) is based on the various best practices being implemented in a rural college library functioning in the backward region of Vidarbha. Best practices in college libraries has been studied by Velmurugan (2020).

The paper by Jharotia (2019) focuses on suggestions for best practices in academic libraries regarding the preparation for NAAC grade. Best practices in Arts & Science college libraries of Dindigul district, Tamil Nadu was

studied by Karuppsamy et al. (2019). The paper by Mantha (2019) looks upon the best library practices to be followed in the academic libraries.

A collaborative study done by Rathna and Divyananda (2018) discusses on the adoption of technology in bringing best practices and services in autonomous engineering colleges in Karnataka. The article by Patil (2018) describes the best practices adopted in Navjeevan Law College Library, Nashik. In the paper by Naik et al. (2017), the authors portrayed some of the best practices followed in the SDM Institute of Technology, Ujire, Karnataka.

Sarma and Sarmah (2016) describes in their paper the status of best practices followed in the college libraries affiliated to Dibrugarh University in Assam. Kamble (2016) highlights the adoption and impact of best practices in accredited institutional libraries in Aurangabad, Maharashtra. The paper by Wadnerkar (2014) explains the best practices to be followed by library professionals to improve their skills and provide effective services to the users, thus all the resources in the library can be effectively utilized. Verzosa (2012) presented a paper on best practices in library services in Philippines.

## 3. Methodology

There are 87 affiliated colleges under Thiruvalluvar University. Among this 10 colleges were randomly selected for data collection. Observation and interview method were used for data collection. Some of the information has been collected from the websites of the colleges. Microsoft Excel was used for analysis.

## 4. Objectives of the Study

Objectives of the study are:

- To explore the various types of best practices adopted by the selected college libraries affiliated to Thiruvalluvar University.

- To examine the availability of electronic resources and services.
- To find out the availability of publications and facilities
- To identify the various library programs and awards
- To investigate the various financial sources in the selected colleges.
- To know the different services extended to external users.

## 5. Analysis of Data

### 5.1. Electronic Resources and Services

Results given in table 1 shows that Islamiah College, Vaniambadi scored the highest point (10). Next in order comes three colleges viz. Auxilian College, D.K.M. College for Women and Sacred Heart College (9 points each). Shanmuga Industries Arts and Science College scored six points. Rest of the colleges have below 5 only.

**Table 1**  
**Electronic Resources and Services in Libraries**

Sl. No.	Name of the Institutions	DSpace Repository software	NPTEL Videos	SWAYAM e-learning Centre	NDLI Membership	INFLIBNET	DELNET	Scanning Facility	Reprography	Internet Facility	Printers Facility	SCORE
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
1	Auxillium College (Autonomous)	NA	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	9
2	C. Abdul Hakeem College	NA	A	NA	NA	A	A	NA	A	A	NA	5
3	D.K.M.College for women	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	NA	9
4	Government Thirumagal Mill's College	NA	NA	NA	NA	A	NA	NA	NA	A	NA	2
5	Islamiah College (Autonomous)	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	10
6	K.M.G.College of Arts and Science	NA	A	NA	NA	A	NA	NA	NA	A	NA	3
7	Muthurangam Government Arts College	NA	NA	NA	NA	A	NA	NA	NA	A	NA	2
8	Sacred Heart College	NA	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	9
9	St.Joseph College of Arts & Science	NA	NA	NA	A	A	NA	NA	A	A	NA	4
10	Shanmuga Industries Arts & Science College	NA	A	NA	A	A	NA	NA	A	A	A	6
	<b>Overall Score</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	

When concerned with the various types of electronic resources and services, INFLIBNET and Internet facility are present in all the college libraries. Reprography facilities and NPTEL video are available in seven college libraries. Six of them have NDLI membership and DELNET facility in 5 colleges. Therefore apart from INFLIBNET and Internet facilities, the other services are to be provided in all other college libraries.

## 5.2. Publications and Facilities

It can be seen from the analysis (table 2) that all the facilities are present in Islamiah College. Next in order is the Sacred Heart College (4 facilities). Rest of the college libraries are below this level.

**Table 2**  
**Publications and Facilities**

Sl. No.	Name of the Institutions	Online Question Bank	Separate Cupboard for Faculty Publications	Rare Books Collection	Publications			
					Library Handbook	Book	Journal	Proceedings
1	Auxillium College (Autonomous)	A	A	A	NA	NA	NA	NA
2	C. Abdul Hakeem College(Autonomous)	NA	A	A	NA	NA	NA	NA
3	D.K.M. College for women(Autonomous)	A	A	A	NA	NA	NA	A
4	Government Thirumagal Mill's College	NA	A	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
5	Islamiah College(Autonomous)	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
6	K.M.G.College of Arts and Science	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	A
7	Muthurangam Government Arts College	NA	NA	A	NA	NA	NA	A
8	Sacred Heart College(Autonomous)	A	A	A	NA	NA	NA	A
9	St. Joseph College of Arts & Science (Autonomous)	NA	A	A	NA	NA	NA	NA
10	Shanmuga Industries Arts and Science College	A	A	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
	<b>Overall Score</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>

A= Available, NA= Not Available

It is found that separate cupboard for faculty and rare book collection are present in majority of the college libraries. It is observed that library hand book for the users, book and journal publications are not available except Islamiah College. Only half of the colleges are providing the online question bank service.

### 5.3. Library Programs and Awards

From the analysis given in table 3, it is found that only three college libraries are conducting all the programs. They are D.K.M. College for Women, Islamiah College and Sacred Heart College (5 points). Next in order is Auxilium College (4 points). Next three colleges scored 3 points each.

Table 3

Library Programs and Awards

Sl. No.	Name of the Institutions	Conference/ Seminar Workshop	Competition Programmes	Best Library user Award	Orientation Programmes	Research Methodology Programmes for Research Scholars	SCORE
1	Auxillium College (Autonomous)	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	4
2	C.Abdul Hakeem College (Autonomous)	Y	Y	N	Y	N	3
3	D.K.M.College for women (Autonomous)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	5
4	Government Thirumagal Mill's College	N	Y	N	Y	N	2
5	Islamiah College (Autonomous)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	5
6	K.M.G.College of Arts and Science	N	Y	N	Y	N	2
7	Muthurangam Government Arts College	Y	Y	N	Y	N	3
8	Sacred Heart College (Autonomous)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	5
9	St. Joseph College of Arts & Science (Autonomous)	Y	Y	N	N	N	2
10	Shanmuga Industries Arts and Science College	Y	Y	Y	N	N	3
	<b>Overall Score</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	

Y= Yes, N= No

On further observation it can be seen that competition programs are being conducted by all the college libraries under study (10 points). Orientation programs are conducted by 8 college libraries except Government Thirumagal College and KMG College of Arts and Science.

Best Library User Award and Research Methodology programs are being conducted by four college libraries only. They are D.K.M. College for Women, Islamiah College, Sacred Heart College and Shanmuga Industries Arts and Science College. In fact such useful

programs should be conducted by all the college libraries.

#### 5.4. Library Financial Sources

It can be seen (table 4) that all the financial sources are received by four colleges. They are Auxilian College, C.Abdul Hakeem College, D.K.M. College for Women and Sacred Heart College. Islamiah College receive funds except Alumni fund. Three of the colleges receive two financial resources only. It is further found that DST-FST are being provided only to autonomous institutions and all the other institutions are getting management fund except government colleges.

**Table 4**  
**Library Financial Sources**

Sl. No.	Name of the Institutions	Special Fees	UGC Grants	Autonomous Grants	DST- FIST Grants	Management Allotment	Alumni fund
1	Auxillium College (Autonomous)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
2	C.Abdul Hakeem College(Autonomous)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
3	D.K.M.College for women (Autonomous)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
4	Government Thirumagal Mill's College	Y	Y	N	N	N	N
5	Islamiah College(Autonomous)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
6	K.M.G.College of Arts and Science	N	N	N	N	Y	Y
7	Muthurangam Government Arts College	Y	Y	N	N	N	N
8	Sacred Heart College(Autonomous)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
9	St.Joseph College of Arts & Science (Autonomous)	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
10	Shanmuga Industries Arts and Science College	N	N	N	N	Y	Y
	<b>Overall Score</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>

Y= Yes, N=No

### 5.5. Extension of Library Services to External Users

Islamiah College Library and Sacred Heart College Library have extended their library services to all the groups mentioned

in table 5, whereas two college libraries viz. Government Thirumagal Mill's College and Muthurangam Government Arts College are not providing library services to other college students, other than their own college.

**Table 5**  
**Extension of Library Services to External Users**

S1. No.	Name of the Institutions	Alumnus of the College	Other College Faculty	Other College student	Government Officials	Students from Schools	Overall Score
1	Auxillium College (Autonomous)	Y	N	N	Y	Y	3
2	C.Abdul Hakeem College (Autonomous)	Y	N	N	Y	Y	3
3	D.K.M.College for women (Autonomous)	Y	N	Y	N	Y	3
4	Government Thirumagal Mill's College	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	4
5	Islamiah College (Autonomous)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	5
6	K.M.G.College of Arts and Science	Y	N	N	N	Y	2
7	Muthurangam Government Arts College	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	4
8	Sacred Heart College(Autonomous)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	5
9	St.Joseph College of Arts & Science (Autonomous)	Y	N	N	Y	y	3
10	Shanmuga Industries Arts and Science College	Y	N	N	N	y	2
	<b>Overall Score</b>	8	4	3	7	10	

Y= Yes, N=No

### 6. Findings

- Islamiah College, Vaniambadi secured the highest score and is providing all type Electronic resources and services.
- INFLIBNET and Internet facility are present in all the college libraries studied.
- All the facilities and publications are being provided by Islamiah college.

4. Separate cupboard for faculty and rare book collection are present in majority of libraries.
5. Only three college libraries are conducting all the library programs and awards. They are D.K.M.College for Women, Islamiah College and Sacred Heart College.
6. Competition programs are being conducted by all the colleges and orientation programs by eight college libraries.
7. All the financial sources are received by four colleges viz. Auxilian College, C.Abdul Hakeem College, D.K.M. College for Women and Sacred Heart College.
8. Islamiah College Library and Sacred Heart College library extended their library services to external users.

## 7. Suggestions

Based on this study the following suggestions are made.

- a) It is found that many college libraries have not digitized their collections. Therefore those institutions may install digital library software as well as institutional repository softwares viz. DSpace, Joomla and Drupal.
- b) SWAYAM e-learning centre may be created in colleges.
- c) The colleges should enroll institutional membership in National Digital Library of India (NDLI).
- d) It is found from the study that 80% of the college libraries does not have printing facility in their

digital libraries. Therefore this facility should be provided.

- e) Reprography facility should be provided in Government as well as self-financing colleges.
- f) Competition programs should be conducted in the colleges which will create user involvement and user interaction in college libraries.
- g) Best library user award should be instituted which will encourage the usage of the college library.
- h) Publications of the college faculty should be collected and stored in the college libraries.
- i) Library user guide or hand book should be prepared and distributed.
- j) Only half of the colleges have online question bank facility. Therefore the rest of the college libraries should offer this facility.

## 8. Conclusion

Providing quality library services in colleges is undisputable, because all these services have intrinsic merit. Quality library services are determined by the best practices followed in the college libraries. Best practices followed in college libraries will definitely maximize the utilization of library and information services. These services should be provided not only to the internal users, but also should be extended to the external readers also. If some external readers who want to avail the college library facilities, he/she may be allowed to utilize its resources since library is a social institution. Further best practices will fetch high score from the accreditation bodies. It is high time that college libraries should re-orient to high



quality library and information services with the help of technology and deliver their information products and services.

In this study, only a handful of college libraries were studied and a generalization is not possible. A complete study involving all the colleges affiliated to Thiruvalluvar University will give a clear picture of the best practices adopted in the various types of colleges, viz. government, private, self-financing and other type of colleges. Such studies on colleges affiliated to other universities in Tamil Nadu should also be undertaken.

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