

Indraprastha College for Women
Equal Opportunity Cell & Enabling Unit
Annual Report 2017-2018

Equal Opportunities Cell (EOC) and Enabling Unit (EU) of Indraprastha College for women strives to cater to the needs of Students with Disabilities enrolled in various courses both — Undergraduate and Postgraduate — programmes of the College. The primary aim of EU and EOC is to provide accessible means and create barrier-free environment for Students with Disabilities enrolled in the College. The work carried out by EU and EOC receives constant encouragement from the college administration. The college theme of the year 2014-2015, “Visibility of Disability: Issues of Access”, consciously crafted by the Principal, is in itself a testimony to the value attached to the creation of disabled friendly environment. It is worth mentioning that designating the college theme around disability and accessibility was the first-of-its kind initiative in the history of the institution. In pursuance of that theme with its concerted and sincere efforts Indraprastha College for Women was selected for the 6th National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People , Mphasis Universal Design Award 2015 under the category : Companies/Organizations.

Moving ahead with commitment to this vision of the College and with the theme of empowerment through digital and assistive technology for the year academic year 2017-18 , Ms. Jaya Mishra (Coordinator, Enabling Unit) and Dr. Shubhra Seth (Convenor , Equal Opportunity Cell), and other members in the EOC: Dr. B.R Alamelu, Mr. Vijay Gautam (the Librarian), Ms. Vimala Parihar, Dr.Udaya Yogi, Ms. Swaha Das and Dr. Mitu Rohatgi have all been working tirelessly towards taking forward and realizing this vision of the college.

Dedication:

We dedicate this annual report to the loving memory of disability rights activist Shri Javed Abidi and promise to continue pursuing his vision of enabling and empowering every differently abled individual.

Services and Facilities

EU and EOC of the college conducted the library orientation programme for the Semester I new entrants on August 10, 2017. Mr. Vijay Gautam (Librarian) and Ms. Archana Meena (Library Staff for the Enabling Unit) conducted the orientation programme for the Semester I students and listed all library facilities of Braille books, scanning of books, issuing of Braille sheets , book bank facility etc. The first semester students were then taken for an access tour of the College by the Convenor EOC with for orienting them with the accessibility features of the institution.

Like every year, a fifteen-day Mobility Training Programme was arranged for students with visual impairment in the beginning of the in August 2017. Mr. Anil Kumar, Mobility Instructor trained the students in free and comfortable mobility around the college.

Mr. Deepak Kumar and Mr. Balkar Singh were appointed as Computer Instructor on contractual basis — during the odd and even semesters in the academic year 2017-18 respectively to train, enable and enhance students with Visual Impairment in computer skills. The College every semester conducts an in house skill test for all VH students to gauge their levels of computer proficiency. The students have themselves appreciated the initiative as they are today much more confident in their computer skills. More students are gradually preparing themselves to take University Examination on computer without the help of any scribe. An effort much supported and encouraged by the College Principal and faculty alike.

Notebooks/Laptops given to all students with visual impairment are well equipped with Lex scanning/reading software, Hindi Optical Character Recognition (OCR Professional), a licensed version of Non-Visual Desktop Access (NVDA) and Braille Face. These softwares

are also installed in the notebooks/Laptops that came along with the Lex Air Camera, which are made available in the Enabling Unit/Library for use during the working hours.

Angel Pro Talking Digital Pocket Daisy Players of advanced version were distributed on a returnable basis to students with visual impairment to assist them in recording their classroom lectures and to help them have easy access to the study material available in audio and DAISY formats. In the academic year 2017-18 the college purchased a total of 50 (fifty only) Angel Pro Talking Digital Pocket Daisy Players for the benefit of students , which have latest features of longer duration of recording, better voice quality and additional features of date and time.

Braille Printer in the Enabling Unit was made fully functional, and students with visual impairment can now freely opt for the conversion of their printed study material into Braille Script. Also Braille books for students with visual impairment in B.A Programme Courses and Non-Credit English were purchased and made available in the library.

Braille atlas have been ordered and will be available for the use from the academic session beginning in July 2018.

Devnagiri — an Hindi OCR — has been procured and installed in the computers of the Enabling Unit especially for the benefit of those students with visual impairment who are pursuing various courses in Hindi medium.

The Enabling Unit , Coordinator and EOC, Convenor, besides being available on all week days in person in rotation, also conducted meetings for students with disabilities every fortnight in the Enabling Unit. The common email id created was widely used by students to communicate with faculty, computer instructor and peers enabling speedy information access and dissemination. The weekly meetings proved to be a great platform for information sharing, to hear grievances and to find out quick solutions. Students with disabilities were made aware of various scholarships, Government schemes run to support their studies and important college events.

The college arranged free transportation for all the students with disabilities to travel back to their destinations during the winter month examinations.

In strict compliance with the directions of UGC, the College made a provision for the allotment of an extra 20 minute time per hour to all students who employed scribes to assist them in writing the exams. The new directives sent by University of Delhi for PwD students under the revised RPwD Act of 2016 were complied with and implemented.

Ms. Soni Tomar (B.A Hons. Political Science, III Year), was awarded the most meritorious physically challenged student for the academic year 2016-2017.

Resource Generation

The visually impaired students in the academic session 2017-18 created history and raised the benchmark with their brilliant academic performance. The college supported their endeavour and each student enrolled in the Under-Graduation programme with IP College in 2017-18 was covered under a scholarship scheme. The college received a scholarship of Four Lacs Twelve Thousand from Help the Blind Foundation based in Chennai. Also some students received double scholarship for their meritorious performance from All India Confederation of the Blind, Delhi unit and a donation of Fifty Thousand was given to Equal Opportunity Cell by the college alumna Ms. Renu Nawani. In total an approximate amount of Five Lacs Ninety Thousand was received in the academic year 2017-18 additionally supporting the differently abled students.

Human Resource Development:

Dr. BR. Alamelu, a faculty in the Department of English (and also formerly Convener, Enabling Unit in the College) taught a 6-credit course titled: 'Communication for Special Needs' for the students of BMMMC, Semester-VI. Ms. Ritu Panda — a qualified trainer in Sign Language — took classes on Indian Sign Language. It is a matter of pride that IP College is the first institute of higher education in the country to have offered a full course on disability in general and special communication needs in particular at the undergraduate level. The first batch of students enrolled for the course have had inspiring testimonies to offer at the end of the Semester. Along with a carefully designed, textual introduction and analysis of disability, the students had hands-on instruction in Braille, Indian Sign Language, white cane mobility and other accessible modes of communication deployed predominantly by persons with disabilities.

Activities: Highlights

The College during CBCS online admissions introduced by the University of Delhi for the academic year 2017-18 made online payment of 'token fees' for every PwD student admitted thereby completing their admission process under one roof in the Enabling Unit from June to August 2017.

Additionally the time-table and canteen menu was audio recorded by our student volunteers for all visually challenged new admissions on their smart phones or recorders. This recording of time table along with mobility training was widely appreciated by the students who felt empowered and welcomed in their college of choice.

An orientation programme for first year students was arranged in the Audio Visual Room on August 25, 2017. Two alumni speakers, Shipra (pursuing PhD) and Raksha (pursuing Law) who are currently pursuing higher studies in University of Delhi were invited to share the road map ahead in higher studies for the present batch. Students from first year shared their journey from schools all across India to IP College and the struggles and achievements therein.

The Student's Union 2017-18 in September 2017 warmly welcomed the two PwD students representing EOC in the larger spirit of inclusion and equitable representation of the student community. The Equal Opportunity Cell held lengthy discussion and meticulous planning for providing readers throughout the semester to all visually impaired students was done with the NSS team in the month of September. Similar meeting was held with all the specially abled students and the Sports Faculty for making necessary arrangements in the sports ground and it was decided to have self defence training workshop for students in the following months.

A one-day seminar cum workshop ' Reading without Seeing' was conducted by Prashant Ranjan Verma from National Association for the Blind and Saksham on October 11, 2017. This was an advanced chapter of the workshop as similar seminar cum workshop was held in the academic year 2015-16 as well. Showcased at the workshop were special applications on computers such as screen readers which speak out the text on the screen and magnification software which increase font and improve contrast for the benefit of low vision users. In addition, it was demonstrated how standard text can be scanned and read out with the help of OCR aided systems. The participants experienced total accessibility and empowerment through the demonstration of specialised software on their cell phones.

The concept of reading without seeing takes on an altogether new dimension through voice and touch with audio as well as tactile stimuli replacing sight. Participants were demonstrated portable devices be they book readers or day to day assistive tools such as talking weighing scales, colour recognisers, blood pressure monitors etc. providing an end to end approach focusing on the problem, the need and the solutions.

The visually challenged students visited on November 14, 2017 Anubhav Tactile Gallery in National Museum, a novel initiative and first of its kind museum in the country. The students were

accompanied by faculty and alumna (Ms.Renu Nawani), the students had the experience to touch and feel certain artefacts dating back to as early as the Harappan civilization. By touching the selected sculptures and paintings the students acquainted themselves with various cultures and visited the pages of history just as sighted people. The information in Braille tabs, the pre- recorded audio guide made available to each visitor in English and Hindi and the committed volunteers who answered each and every query of the students made the visit a classroom of holistic learning. After a visit to the gallery students participated in tactile art workshop called Divine Touch. This tangible experience was created with the help of design created to understand the various iconography, symbols and representation of divinities. The students thoroughly enjoyed the workshop.

In continuation to the April 26, 2017 workshop on Android Technology and Testing of Android Application (Lecture Hall) held for our visually challenged students by Dr. Archana Singhal and Ms. Ritu Singhal from the department of Computer Science , IP College. On November 2, 2017 Floation of Android Application (Lecture Hall)for Visually Impaired Students of IP College was conducted. Visually challenged students were informed about the various functions which could be performed by the android application “Lecture Hall” such as searching the relevant course, subject and papers and listening to the audio lectures online as well as offline by downloading. They can listen to the recordings in their desired media player as well. The feedback option allows them to reach out to us and write to us about their experiences and problems. This Application can be used by registered students only. All the students have Wi-Fi facility in their phones in the college campus. The application “Lecture Hall” was installed in the mobiles phones of all the Android users. A hands on session for the usage of the application was conducted.

'Samarthyā' – an Annual Cultural Fest of Equal Opportunity Cell and Enabling Unit of our College — was held on February 15, 2018. It began with the Principal's introductory remarks followed by an

inspiring lecture delivered by Shri Santosh Kumar Rungta, Advocate, Supreme Court and disability rights activist. He spoke on the recent debate around, "RPwD Act 2016: Struggles and Achievements therein". Following the lecture by guest speaker two student's paper presentation were held first by Ananya Yerneni and Riya Sharma (Dept. of Psychology) on 'Crossroads of Disability and Culture: Exploring Mythological Narratives of Disability'. And second by Simran Pandey (Dept. of Computer Science) on 'Disambiguation Keyboard for the Blind'.

Debating competition received wide participation from several colleges, folk song competition and self composed poetry on myriad social issues were presented. More than 170 PwD students of various colleges affiliated to University of Delhi actively participated in 'Samarthya-2018' and appreciated the event organization. For the first time in University of Delhi the entire annual event was recorded and converted into a radio programme by Radio Udaan and at the valedictory for Samarthya RJ Naresh held a open house quiz for the audience.

All round the year students have been encouraged to participate in various cultural and sporting events conducted by other colleges of University of Delhi and several of them stood as winners in various categories. From creative writing, to self composed poetry, singing, radio show anchoring and short play our students have humbled us by their immense talent and creativity. This year some of our students have done us immensely proud in sports competitions at national, state and University level.

In March 28, 2018 an important day long workshop of career awareness and job opportunities was organized in collaboration with Score Foundation. The students benefitted immensely through the interactive session and valuable insights given by Mr. George Abraham and other panellists.

The College observed World Autism Awareness day on 2nd April 2018, wherein the faculty and students wore blue on an awareness message sent across to the college community by the Principal.

The year concluded on a high note of activity. All visually impaired students participated in Self - Defence Training Programme for first two weeks in the month of April 2018 conducted by Delhi Police. Head Constable Ms. Bharati and her team from Special Police Unit for Women and Children, Malaviya Nagar, Delhi most dedicatedly and patiently taught each and every student different techniques. Our sports teacher Dr. Seema Singh needs a special mention here for coordinating and arranging the workshop for the students.

The coordinators of Equal Opportunity Cell and Enabling Unit wish to place on record their sincere appreciation for the committee members and other co-opted members for their cooperation throughout the year in translating our goals into concrete actions.

None of the events briefly highlighted above would have been possible without the kind assistance, wise guidance and the firm support of our Principal and the college administrative staff. The Equal Opportunity Cell and the Enabling Unit owe special thanks to the office of the Principal and other administrative staff particularly the accounts section for their constant help.

Recommendations

- An attempt should be made to create an inclusive academic forum to meet and discuss disability issues, create awareness about disability through the screening of films, documentaries, etc.
- An attempt should be made to label the classrooms and other important places with Braille Signboards.
- It is suggested that a Sound Indicator be installed in the College main gate, so that the students with visual impairment can easily recognise the location of the College and make an easy entry.

- An attempt should be made to organize a two-day National Conference to academically deliberate the issues of disability, with a particular focus on women with disabilities.
- The publication of Magazine carrying exclusively the creative writings/views of students with disabilities should be considered. This can be planned as an inter-college publication and circulated widely in accessible formats.

Ms. Jaya Mishra

Dr. Shubhra Seth

Coordinator, Enabling Unit

Convenor, Equal Opportunity Cell