

Short Article

Changing Role of Library Professionals and Need of Skill Development in Digital Environment

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A B S T R A C T

The earlier meaning of traditional library from document preservation to knowledge management has been changed due to rapid progress in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), primarily the internet and the web has made important change in the field of information. ICT has impacted library service, preservation and conservation of learning resources and more emphasis on digitalization of learning resources.

Present libraries are playing role as information centre where maximum learning resources are available in digital format and online to users. The librarians are facing new challenging because of unprecedented explosion of information and its availability in different form. The cope with these problems, the modern librarianship needs to be changed their attitude and practice from custodian of document to information provider, information analyst, information creator etc. There has been a paradigm shift in the way of traditional libraries from manage as traditional store house to access providers. The present digital environment has brought a lot of changes in library and information services and role and responsibilities of the library professionals to satisfy their users' information need.

Keywords: Library Professionals, Information Provider, Role of Library Professionals, Information Analyst

Introduction

The Library history has passed through different phases and witness of different changes like traditional library, automated library, digital library and virtual library. The library professional has also pass through different changes. Library professionals started their journey from clay tablet & palm leaves and today reaching towards digital contents of online reading materials. These changes in different era of development with the time span, are make a lot of effect on librarians and information professionals in respect of their job opportunities, self-image, motivation, management skill and survival. The beginning of ICT revolution in twentieth century which resulted a drastically changes in library collections from print media to digital. The Librarians felt

need to find a solution to timely relocation. The digital information environment requires new skills in seeking, processing and using information. The role of librarians and library professionals in this new environment has been strongly influenced by these changes. Now, the traditional library and librarianship is undergoing significant changes due to the digital revolution through ICT application and information technology affected all aspect of role of library professionals in providing information provision in a library.

Traditional, libraries have collection of books, manuscripts, journals and other sources of information. The collection of the libraries is mostly in print media, manuscripts etc. The documents are deteriorating at a rapid rate; the collected information is not arranged in proper standard method

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at particular place. Information does not reach the user of the libraries on time. It is difficult to a library user to get books and other information sources in the libraries without personal influence and contacts. There are certain restrictions imposed in the traditional libraries as view of keeping standard and costly reading materials safe from the library users etc. Sometimes the important information is published after some years. By the time it is published, the information becomes obsolete and then abandoned. Since it is not properly indexed or listed, the researcher is forced to go through long and tedious process to ascertain whether any material of his/her interest is available or not. Here the collections are not well organized and some reports are deteriorating at a rapid rate. Preserving of materials in their original form is difficult due to lack of ICT implementation. The traditional libraries are confined itself within a physical boundary and reading materials are kept only for local users.

Skill is an ability and capacity acquired through deliberate systematic and sustained effort to smoothly and adaptively carryout complex activities or job function involving ideas (cognitive skills), things (technical skill) and /or people (interpersonal skills).

Library in the Present Digital Age

Information and Communication Technology has revolutionized the concept of libraries. Information Communication Technology (ICT) through computers are being used for day to day housekeeping activities of the libraries, to read and download of texts of articles, reports and other materials. Thus, it saves the time of the library professional and end user and makes the library service smooth and effective. After the advancement of different types of technologies, the libraries have been transformed from traditional to knowledge centre and the role and

responsibilities of library professionals has been converted as information officer, as global information provider, as resources manager etc.

In the new paradigm, the basic functions of libraries such as collection, organization, preservation and dissemination of information, user's demand and their information seeking behaviour are also changing in this digital environment.

Lancaster (1997) correctly states that in order to justify its existence in the electronic world, "the library must continue to perform one of the most important functions it now performs in the print on paper world- to organize the universe of resources in such a way that those most likely to be of value to the user community are made more accessible to this community, physically and intellectually.

Traditional Role of Library Professionals and Skills

The traditional role of a librarian and library professionals were mediator between information resources and library users. After invent of information and communication technology, the role of librarians and library professionals have been transformed from tradition librarian to information provider in which specially information handling skills, training and facilitating skills, abilities to analyse and evaluate resources and match needs with concern for the users. These skills cover cataloguing, classification, indexing, enquiry work and user educational functions which if managed by librarians will help to make the Internet an easier place to navigate. The role of librarians and information professionals as both user educator and intermediary is prevalent in this environment. The foundations of librarianship, which include skills such as cataloguing and user education are as explained above, as relevant in an electronic age as they are in a print based one and will continue to provide a solid base of skills.

Changes in the Role of the Library	
Traditional Library	Digital Age Library
Library has its own collection	Library without wall
Information resources in one medium	Information resources in multi media
Procurement of information resources by individual library	Procurement of information resources through cooperative manner.
Insourcing of all activities	Out sources of all activities
Library services in good time	Library services in just in time
Local reach of library resources	Global reach of library resources through network and internet.
User's want print resources	User's want print, non-print, online resources
Users visit to library	Library come to users
Local users	Users from any place

Creth(1996) stated about value of library professionals as “values that are the foundation of the library profession should remain the same into the next century values of service, quality, universal access and co-operation.

New Role of Library Professionals and Skill in Digital Age

Today, library and information science profession is facing the biggest challenges in preparing of techno friendly professionals those can use information and communication technology effectively. The library professional will be required to serve as an information service consultant with specific information technology skills. As technology has saturated all levels of library’s operations and services, the library professionals have to anticipate the changing expectations of users and be flexible in adapting and adopting new skills and levels of awareness. While being trained in ICT skills, what every library professional chooses to ignore is the management aspect of a library. In addition to the technical and professional skills, commitment to user centred services and skills for effective oral and written communication; they must have other skills, including business and management, teaching, leadership, etc.

The library professionals of the future must be equipped with a wide range of personal and transferable skills in order to manage the changing digital environment in which he or she works. The management and interpersonal skills will make librarians more effective managers of networked resources and services in this digital environment.

Hastings (1996) says “it is more important that digital librarians possess particular personal qualities rather than specific technical expertise. This is not to say that the way to avoid the electronic age is for library professionals to stick their heads in the sand. The information professional must change and adapt to the new electronic information environment, they must learn about new technologies and be aware of the strengths and weakness of them. Librarians should not feel threatened by computer and technical developments but should move forward with the new technology and take a pivotal role within organizations. Information professionals within libraries are playing an increasing role in dealing with information in electronic formats by creating web page to promote their services to external customers and choosing automated library management systems. Skills in information organization are more necessary in this age of information explosion in digital era.

Creth (1996) suggests that librarians achieve this by “actively seeking out users in a variety of setting” and by making “full use of information and multimedia technology” by offering instruction in a variety of formats (including web based instruction and online tutorials). In digital era librarians

and information professionals should be able to manage the Digital Information System as this encompass the overall competencies necessary to create, store, analyse, organize, retrieve and disseminate digital information in digital libraries or any type of information.

Challenges Faced by Library Professionals in Digital Age

Jestin and Parameswari (2002) explored the challenges for library professionals in the new millennium on digital environment. The reported that library professionals in India were subjected to various challenges. The introduction of ICT and new digital technology was a major challenge to librarians. It was concluded that librarians should be ready to participate in the process of generating and distributing information and knowledge for quality of life and education for all. Librarians must understand the revolutions that will occur in the information and communication fields.

Today the librarians have to manage knowledge and trained themselves to fit into the information age acting as knowledge manager. In this context, the following challenges faced by the librarians:

- Library as a knowledge management centre
- Library as access providers
- Sharing the existing information
- Transferring the information
- Filtering the information



Figure 1.Challenges faced by Librarian in Present Digital Age

Professional and Technical Skills Required in Library Professionals

Tennant (1999) enumerated some skill requirement of digital librarians viz imaging technologies, optical character recognition, knowledge of mark-up languages (HTML for web pages and SGML/XML for text), cataloguing and metadata, indexing and database technologies, user

interface design, programming web technologies. The digital literacy, which includes many elements like creativity, functional skills, e-safety, effective communication, the ability of find and select information, collaboration, cultural and social understanding, critical thinking are important aspect in librarians to meet digital challenges in ICT era.

According to Chiware(2007) "Training librarians for the digital age in African University Libraries" enumerated further that trainee must learn about open source software such as Dspace, Greenstone and the concept of creative of commons which include expertise in down loading, installation, management and updating the software, knowledge of web server management, web publishing, web access and information retrieval, database management, networking, storage technologies etc.

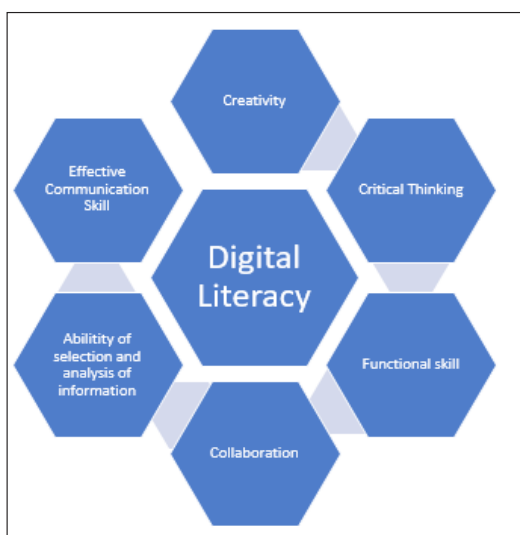


Figure 2. Important elements of Digital Literacy

New Roles and Responsibilities of Library Professionals in Digital Age

In the present digital age, advancement in information and communication technology, form of information, different option of resources and way to flow of information has impact on the role of librarians. The development of information collection tools, techniques and approaches are become global. Therefore, the librarians and LIS professionals are faced to change the way they are functioning in information need of their users. The change role requires different personalities of librarians as well as different skills and knowledge. The globalization of learning resources through ICT has posed various challenges before the librarians in the nature of collection, the information environment and the radical change in the expectation and needs of the users.

According to Bharathi (2012), the following role of a librarian should be performed in present digital age:

- Information Creator
- Information Preservator

- Resources Manager
- Global Information Provider
- Subject Expert, Data Analytics
- Navigator Guide
- Good Communicator
- Financial Manager
- Time Manager
- Legal Advisor
- Personnel manager
- As Leader
- Techno Savvy
- As Mentor

Conclusion

In the age of information and communication technology, academic librarians and his team has a very prime role to play as they have to satisfy the critical multidimensional information needs of their clients. They have to use appropriate technological tools in which the users are comfortable in order to sustain customer driven market. There is a need to equip them with core competencies and emerging skills required for the service delivery in digital environment. These skills should not be having knowledge of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) application but also related to understand how these can be utilized with proper blending of traditional library skill for providing information with a single click to fulfil the fourth law of Dr. S.R. Ranganathan, i.e. "Save the time of the user". However today, the changing perception of users and the technological advancements have forced the academic libraries to introduce new services based on user interest. Thus, it has become imperative to have generic skills in addition to acquisition of traditional and ICT competence, which must be regularly updated so as to meet the need of changing service delivery mechanism. Therefore, adequate knowledge of IT and its application in libraries with a positive attitude can make the real difference between the real and desired situation. Managing and working, both in a modern academic library has become a highly specialized job, which requires proactive attitude towards change and continuous reinvention of the competence among professionals. Traditional linear work processes and top-down controls are no longer sufficient, but are gradually being replaced with alternate organizational designs and new management techniques such as management by objectives (MBO).

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