

21st Century Libraries and Librarianship with Reference to Their Professional Skills

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Abstract: Librarianship is the art of organizing knowledge sources in various forms. Information technologies demolished the concept of distance and made the world a global village. The emerging trends in digital technologies and their applicability to information handling activities added new challenges to knowledge professionals in the way of providing qualitative services to its users. Last two decades many transformations have taken place in information technology. In the era of information explosion the print media dominated and films CDs and other sources appear in the libraries. Librarians have a long ancestry of adopting technology to enhance services. Librarians and library became an essential and respectable part of the society. Technology is also reforming how information is accessed and processed electronically. The users are able to visit various websites to access the information in anywhere in the world. The library professionals are to keep abreast to current information. Library professionals need to update their knowledge and skills. The present day librarianship demand new skills like **Management Skills, Communication skills, Soft Skills**, and various skills required to the librarians. The paper analyses the characteristics of contemporary knowledge society and identified the factors affecting next generation libraries and librarianship. Examined some of the significant issues in the present day Library and Information System (LIS) like its structure, collection strategy, preservation, access to information, technological issues and modes of communication, etc.

Key words: 21st century librarianship; knowledge society; future of libraries; professional skills; knowledge gatekeeper

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1. Introduction

There was a time when librarians primarily bought books and periodicals and it was easy to rely on book reviews and standard reference works as selection tools. As libraries began to purchase electronic, digital and audiovisual materials, selection decisions became more complex. Content and relationship to the collection were no longer the only major selection factors under consideration before purchase. An item that might be appropriate for its content and relationship to the collection might not be compatible for use with existing equipment. As the acquisition of such materials increased, librarians probably faced the issue of licensing content for the first time.

This article examines some of the ways in which electronic/digital resources have impacted traditional library

practices and how some of these practices have begun to change. From the evolving roles of the bibliographer, cataloger, and the reference librarian, to the impact of the new library consortia on the local mission, librarianship is rapidly transforming from a paper-based industry focused on ownership of physical items to a virtual industry where future roles may blur together.

Further in the changed scenario under the influence of ICT the duties of the librarian have been changed. The librarian is going to work as information broker, navigator, market negotiator and information technology expert for example the services the librarian going to offer in the future shall compel them new methods of classifying and cataloging internet resources search engine, which specialize the certain subject areas only and interlink each bit of information which has relevance to anything else in the universe of knowledge. Now librarian should possess the following skill in the changed scenario since the librarian is going to be a highly skilled professional, whose total commitment is to be as a processor and disseminator of information to the user.

2. Books Are for Use

Books are for use is the second law of Library Science and Information Science formulated by Prof. S. R. Ranganathan, the father of Library and Information Science in India. Since twelve decades his laws are of high quality and very much useful in the present digital environment of 21st century.

In the context of the future libraries and librarianship the knowledge can be regarded as the provision for the journey of life, without knowledge life is meaningless. In this world there is nothing more sacred or holy than the knowledge. And we cannot acquire this sacred knowledge without the help of books. Thus, to protect and preserve these books is our earnest duty.

Mahatma Gandhiji has quoted that Books are more valuable than gems because gems shine from outside but books illuminate the heart of a reader from inside. And that is true.

Anything which seems to be impossible can be made possible with the help of proper guiding book. Thus these books should be handled properly and carefully because we have accepted that the books are for use.

3. 21st Century Libraries

The emerging trends in digital technologies and their applicability to information handling activities added new challenges to library professionals in the way of providing qualitative services to its users. The paper analyses the characteristics of contemporary knowledge society and identified the factors affecting future libraries.

In the changing scenario, the library professionals have to be more interactive, collaborative and dynamic, so that information can be made available to all those who seek it regardless of physical boundaries, formats, and time constraints. The emerging trends in digital technologies and their applicability to information handling activities added new challenges to library professionals. They have to deal with a growing number of contexts for information like e-commerce, competition intelligence as well as the information needs of ordinary citizens. At the same time they, are expected to deal with the needs of the digital divide, the information poor and the illiterate. Between the rich and the poor, the haves and the have-nots, demanding business related needs and survival needs, wireless access and lack of basic electricity supplies; library professionals must see how well they can meet the requirements. They have to foresee their continuing role in contributing to the development of informed citizens, incorporating and utilizing new technologies that enhance their endeavors. At the same time they should strike a balance between the traditional role and the new roles.

3.1 Knowledge Society

In the 21st century, a new society is coming into existence where knowledge is the primary factor of production compared to capital and labour. Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, former President of India in his talks to students mentioned that Efficient utilization of existing knowledge can create comprehensive wealth for the nation and also improve the quality of life including better education, health care, infrastructure and other societal needs. The ability to create and maintain a knowledge society infrastructure, develop the knowledge workers, and enhance their productivity through the creation, growth, and exploitation of new knowledge, will be the key factors in deciding the prosperity of this knowledge society.

3.2 Factors Affecting 12st Century Libraries

The speed of present day microprocessors, decreasing size of storage media and moving towards nano storage, global access to Internet, increasing speed of search engines in searching and retrieving information, efficient computing devices have influenced the quality and quantity of data which can be accessed from anywhere at any time.

3.3 Emerging Technologies for the Libraries

Web 2.0 includes the second generation web based services such as collaborative publishing sites (Facebook, Bebo, MySpace and Friendster etc), wikis, blogs, social bookmarking sites (del.icio.us, furl, digg etc), and photo sharing sites (flickr, photobucket, etc.). It appears that Web 2.0 phenomenon is not going to stop here but will grow in popularity at a faster pace. Its impact can be felt in all frontiers of knowledge and professions. The library profession is no exception to this. In the words of Breeding (2007), who emphasizes the need of embedding these contemporary technologies to enrich library services, “Web 2.0 has become a trendy marketing concept. If you want to cast your product or idea as cool, just call it a Web 2.0 technology, regardless of how deeply it embodies the full range of ideals. I see Web 2.0 as helpful to the extent that it helps librarians let go of very outdated views of the Web and move forward in the adoption of newer technologies and services”.

3.4 Best Practices Adopted by Libraries to Attract Users Using Web 2.0 Tools

3.4.1 Blogs

Many academic libraries are using blogs to attract the users to the library. Blogs are nothing but personal diaries which contains the entries in a reverse chronological order. With blogs libraries can disseminate various types of information to their users.

3.4.2 Social Networking

The entire higher educational system is in a transitional stage, and academic libraries are involved with this evolutionary step (Mathews, 2007). Landis (2010) suggests that libraries can get out of the dark ages of the pre-Internet era by using social networking sites. Every library has a group of users who never visits the library; also they serve to a group of users who occasionally pops in and who is not a regular user. The job of librarian is to convert the non-library users to be regular users of the library and in present context the social networking sites can prove to be very useful in converting the non-library users into regular users.

3.4.3 Podcast and Vodcast

Podcasting is a “software and hardware combination that permits automatic downloading of audio files (most commonly in MP3 format) for listening at the user’s convenience”. With increasing bandwidth, the availability of easy-to-use video-editing tools, and the introduction of the video iPod, many Podcasters are now offering video Podcasts, also known as vodcasts. A vodcast combines audio and video to create an entire episode. It takes podcasting one step farther (as television did for radio) and adds the visual element to an otherwise auditory only experience.

3.5 Growth of Electronic Resources

Although information in electronic format was created with the advent of the computer in the 1950s, it was not until the early 1960s that the first database suitable for searching was developed. MEDLARS were the first on-demand computer based information retrieval service, and it was developed primarily for the medical profession. Many of the first CD-ROM products offered to libraries were versions of larger online databases and were supplied on a subscription basis with ownership of the data remaining with the publisher/producer.

3.6 The Internet

A communication network called Advanced Research Projects Agency network (ARPANet) was created in the **1960s** and **1970s** by the Department of Defense to support military research and linked some military, research, and academic computer centers. Recognizing the value of connecting computer centers for all kinds of research, the university community created its own internetwork in **1981** which was soon called the Internet. Gradually other networks developed, including NSFNet which connected the six NSF supercomputer centers in the United States.

3.7 Digital Reference Library Service Today

During a conference in 2006 on the difference between print and electronic libraries, the directors of two very large university libraries expressed dissatisfaction with the prevailing provision of library service to undergraduates and, especially, reference service (Lee, 2007). One concern was that professional librarians would staff the reference desk from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., but students often preferred to do their assignments in their dorm rooms using their laptops from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. Not many reference collections are open from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. and not many students would want to go to visit one at that time even if it were. The professional literature of reference service explores the feasibility of making reference librarians available with 24/7 call center technology, which doubtless has a useful role but which would still require librarians to work from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m., constitutes only one component of reference library service, and does not seem likely to scale. What is wrong with this picture? What could be done about it? The problem is, of course, much larger. For students being taught by distance education and, indeed, for most users of most libraries most of the time a visit to a reference library is more or less inconvenient.

3.8 Open Source Software for Libraries

3.8.1 Digital Repositories

DSpace is a turnkey institutional repository application.

Greenstone is a suite of software for building and distributing digital library collections. It provides a new way of organizing information and publishing it on the Internet or on CD-ROM. Greenstone is produced by the New Zealand Digital Library Project at the University of Waikato, and developed and distributed in cooperation with UNESCO and the Human Info NGO. It is open-source, multilingual software, issued under the terms of the GNU General Public License.

Word Press is web software you can use to create a beautiful website or blog. We like to say that Word Press is both free and priceless at the same time. The core software is built by hundreds of community volunteers, and when you're ready for more there are thousands of plug-in and themes available to transform your site into almost anything you can imagine.

3.9 Change in Relation between Libraries and Users Due to Web 2.0

3.9.1 Web 2.0

The term web 2.0 was first used in January 1999 by Darcy DiNucci, a consultant on electronic information

design in her article, “Fragmented Future”, but the term was made more popular by Time O’Reilly the founder of the company, then followed up discussion with a famous paper, “*What is Web 2.0: Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of Software*”, outlining in detail what the company thought they meant by the term. Web 2.0 offers a means by which data and services previously locked into individual web pages for reading by humans can be liberated and then reused, in ways sometimes referred to as “mashing up” or “mixing”. Importantly, it also introduces the notion of a “platform”, meaning that others can build applications on pre-existing foundations and thus benefit from economic scale without reinvention.

4. 21st Century Librarianship

Librarianship is defined in the Macquarie Dictionary “as profession concerned with organizing collection of books and related materials in libraries and making those resources available to readers and others”.

Librarianship is the art of organizing knowledge sources in various forms. Information technologies demolished the concept of distance and made the world a global village. Last two decades many transformations have taken place in information technology. In the era of information explosion the print media dominated and films, CDs and other sources appear in the libraries. Technology is also reforming how information is accessed and processed electronically. The users are able to visit various websites to access the information in anywhere in the world.

The library professionals to keep abreast to current information. Library professionals need to update their knowledge and skills. The present day profession demand new skills. Information technology has changed the work of librarians, creating new work and eliminating old work. Librarianship faced great changes from time to time. Librarians have a long ancestry of adopting technology to enhance services. From the book keepers to librarians are now in a dynamic environment in which technology, resources, information needs and user expectations rapidly changes. Librarians and library became an essential and respectable part of the society.

4.1 Librarians as Information Managers

Librarians as information managers are facing following four (4) challenges:

- increase in clientele, their variety, their demands, and their expectations.
- increase in the initial or capital cost of information and information technology.
- complexity in ways of identifying clients and their requirement and servicing them.
- Drying up of the public sponsorship and subsidy and the need to find alternate sources of revenue.

5. Professional Skills

In addressing the 25th Online Information Meeting in London in December 2001, Richard Harrington the Chief Executive Officer of the Thomson Corporation noted that no profession had changed as much as that of an information profession in the last five years with the development of the range of Internet-based technologies.

There is a need to acquire professional skills that helps the librarians to deal effectively with their clientele, some of them are enumerated below in brief.

Communication Skills: The librarian should be able to achieve both verbal and written communication skills.

Management Skills: Besides the traditional management skills, the librarian must achieve the special management skill as per the ICT.

Marketing Skills: The librarian must be able to promote his products and services hence, marketing skills which is essential for marketing of library services.

Adaptation Skills: Librarian should be ready to adopt new techniques and technologies on current trends.

Update of Knowledge: Librarian should update their knowledge to provide better services to the users.

Soft Skills: Soft Skills are basically social skills. It is also known as people skill or interpersonal skills. Soft skills experts will help you develop your soft skills yourself. How to speak English, how to learn a language faster, how to develop soft

Leadership skill and Team work: Library management especially the big Library is team work. Hence it is required to have leadership skills to manage and guiding the team time to time.

Communication skill: Command on regional language and also especially English one will improve the communication. Good communication skill among the staff and the users and with the top management also requires understanding people.

Listening skill: The Library professionals must have good listening skills as he or she has to interact with different types of users all the time.

Interpersonal Skill: Library professionals have to deal with all type of users, colleagues in library vender, and all levels of people like management requires interpersonal skill when you work in large organization.

Writing Skill: The Librarians have requires good writing skills. Sometime asked to submit or help in writing research proposal, business proposal, and project report. Today there are many libraries professional who are contributing to various publications.

Project Management skill: In corporate sector many times library professionals are part of some project team and assigned specialized jobs such as digital institutional repository, or knowledge management.

Computer and Information Technology Skill: A good understanding at the computer operations, the hardware software aspects of the computer leading to the user at this technology to manipulate create, store and retrieve information to express though and communication with others is necessary to be an efficient information professional today. The automation digital environment requires trained human resources with new soft skills, teachings and knowledge to change to with the technological advancement.

Management Skills: Libraries are ideal place in institution by develop the management skill, professionals must create a strategic plan and improve their organization. (1) Preparing and managing budgets. (2) Directing the daily activities of the library. (3) Organizing information sources. (4) Managing staff, information sources and databases.

Communication skills: Excellent communication and interpersonal skills have always been important. Communication skills such as written, verbal and listing. Library staff is most valuable resources, so they should respect people and ideas and encouraged to point out problem.

Information Literacy skills: Information Literacy is the ability to identify what information is needed, understand how the information is organized. Information literacy is the ability to recognize the extent and nature of an information need, then to locate, evaluate, and effectively use the needed information (Plattsburgh State Information and Computer Literacy Task Force, 2001).



Computer Literacy: is defined as the knowledge and ability to use computers and related technology efficiently, with a range of skills covering levels from elementary use to programming and advanced problem solving. Computer literacy can also refer to the comfort level someone has with using computer programs and other applications that are associated with computers. Another valuable component of computer literacy knows how computers work and operate.

Media Literacy: In general “media” refers to various means of communication. For example, television, radio and the newspaper are different types of media. The term can also be used as a collective noun for the press or news reporting agencies. In the computer world “media” is also used as a collective noun, but refers to different types of data storage options.

Information Skills: To acquire more and more effective information you should have basic knowledge of “Information Skills”. Information skills are those needed to define the information task, locate sources and select data, process and present information and evaluate the task. The need of information skills may be essential due to the following reasons:

- Rapid increase in the stream of information due to information revolutions.
- Advent of information and communication technologies.
- Vast variety of information sources.
- Changing shape of libraries.
- Wide dispersal of information.
- Increase in number of users and
- Research on complex and interdisciplinary topics.

Specific skills concerned with understanding and using information include:

- Asking questions
- Selecting and evaluating information
- Combining information from different sources
- Presenting relevant information
- Selecting most relevant form of presentation

6. Conclusion

Libraries are social institution where the recorded human knowledge is stored for dissemination and usages by individuals in the society. Libraries are essential for the educational process at all levels and institutions that strengthen democracy by providing different kinds of information so that citizens can make an informed decision.

Further, this digital age demands information professionals who are comfortable and creative with technology. In India, libraries can be viewed as places of opportunity as they can provide the world of information to the rich and the poor alike. Such a vital and significant institution to the society needs library professionals who are skilled in information handling activities.

Today we see the thing right access to right information at right time gets importance in changing situation. For that the effective use of ICT is very important to look how to link the use of ICT in library and information and traditional library trade. Therefore, it is a challenge for library professional. The ICT truly benefit the library to achieve the goals and objectives of the libraries.

Web 2.0 are offering number of tools for promoting library and its services, if used properly and strategically it can attract users to the libraries. Libraries of the west are making optimum utilization of the web 2.0 tools now time has come for the Indian libraries to explore all possible utilities of web 2.0 tools in attracting the users back to the libraries. Although there are some examples from India using web 2.0 tools but are very few. In fact this movement is harnessing the era of social networking, open source, knowledge management, online publishing like wiki and moving into library 3.0 arena. In future, libraries will reinvent themselves by perfecting the path that they have now begun. They will become more of a fusion of physical and virtual realms. The precise role of the librarians and the libraries will depend on the organization structure and knowledge needs.

In the 21st century everyone may go through many occupational changes. Librarian's position is change. To prepare for future librarianship, there are new professional we all can learn to improve our products, activities and services. New professional skills are essential for future librarians to create and manage library collection and services

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