

REDEFINING THE ROLE OF LIS PROFESSIONALS WITH CHANGING DIMENSION OF LIBRARY & INFORMATION CENTRE

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Abstract *The application of ICT in Library and Information centre has changed the entire management system of LIC. The Work environment is becoming increasingly complex with constant change in the organizational, technological and information environment. Thus the nature of LIS professionals is also changing drastically depending on how professionals responds to challenges in the new environment. The present study highlights the impact of new emerging technologies on the performance of LIS professionals, changing concept of library and information centres . The study reveals the new roles of LIS professionals as content manager, consultant, facilitator, consortia manager, web designers, service provider, intermediary, site manager, collection and database developer. The competencies required for LIS professionals in new era has also been discussed. The study suggested some measure to cope up with the challenges for LIS professionals to upgrade competencies and knowledge constantly, learn about using new methods and techniques. Hence in order to cope up with the changing dimension of library and information centres, today's LIS professionals have to adopt new skills and strategies in order to survive and compete in the world of digital information.*

Keyword: *ICT, LIS Professionals, Competencies*

INTRODUCTION

The advent of computers and Information & communication technology is one of the major factors for changes in the way people find, communicate, locate, retrieve and use information. It also changed the appearance of libraries, earlier the libraries were considered as storehouse of knowledge but at present they are the centers of dissemination of information as well as knowledge. Now, the concept of digital environment has become more popular because it has power to catch a vast amount of information. Libraries and information centers have been using digital resources and services to satisfy their various kinds of users & also their needs. In today's high tech learning environment, the library as a learning resource is taking up increasingly more academic space and time in the life of a learner. In future, it will be even more so (Seetharama, 2006).

The digital environment has changed the functions and duties of LIS professionals, they are not only to extend assistance to users in searching information in a place called library but also to provide services and instruction regardless of place, time and format (Sivasubramaniam and Nikam, 2007). Now library professionals act as information provider, Net-based service provider, Web-designer, database developer, service provider collection developer, consortia manager, Information & Service Consultant, Content Manager and so on, widening their avenues.

IMPACT OF ICT/EMERGING TECHNOLOGY ON PERFORMANCE OF LIS PROFESSIONALS

The impact of emerging technology or ICT is enormous and global in its magnitude. The emerging technology in the environment of ICT has profoundly affected library services and operations, information resources, staff skills requirements and users' expectations as well as needs. The emerging technology in the environment of ICT has virtually unlimited potential for a variety of useful applications in libraries as it significantly contributes to improve quality, more efficient operations, increased productivity, better resource sharing and more effective services to the users (Seetharama, 2006).

CHANGING CONCEPT OF LIBRARIES/ LIBRARY AND INFORMATION CENTERS

Change is a common thread that runs through all businesses regardless of size, industry and age. Our world is changing fast and, so organizations must change quickly too. It depends on how far people within it understand the change process. Institutions that handle change will thrive , whereas that do not may struggle to survive. Change from an existing setup to a new environment has its own set of inherent problems and the problems become multifold when applied in a service institution as library. Libraries have

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been pioneers in adopting any new technology. The role of libraries has gradually changed from traditional storehouse of information to access providers, it is like Google on your fingertips. There has been a paradigm shift in the ways libraries used to be managed earlier. The adoption of ICT in library has drastically changed the way of functioning of library (Chakraborty, 2012). Therefore, different types of libraries have born in society, such as:

Traditional Library

The collection is mostly in print media and the libraries are confined within a physical boundary. The collection mainly related with books, periodicals etc in physical form and the information available locally only.

Hybrid Library

The libraries, which are working both in electronic or digital and print environment, are known as hybrid library. Basically hybrid libraries are mixes of printed books and journals as well as electronic materials such as downloadable audiobooks, e-journals, e-books etc (Rai, 2007).

Automated Library

The holding of this type of libraries are some as that of traditional libraries. The only difference is that the access point and house keeping operations are computerized. The graphic records are still print-on-paper publication (Sharma, 2005).

Digital Library

Digital library is not only digitization of physical resources, but also thoughtful organization of electronic collection for better access. Such organization provides coherence to a massive amount of shared knowledge base, while the method of access provides convenient information retrieval for a wide range of global user. Essentially a digital library deals with organization and access of a large information repository.

According to Wiederhold "A digital library is popularly viewed as an electronic version of a library where storage is in digital form, allowing direct communication to obtain material and copying it from a master version (Wiederhold, 1995).

"Digital Library is a combined technology and information resources to allow remote access, breaking down the physical barrier between resources (Marchionin & Maurer, 1995).

Winensky viewed that 'the digital library will be a collection of distributed information services, producers will make it available, and consumers will find it through the automated agents (Winensky, 1995).

Virtual Library

The access point as well as the graphic records are in electronic/digital form when these electronic/digital libraries are connected via various networks, particularly the INTERNET, this is called virtual library. A "library without walls" in which the collections do not exist on paper, microform, or other tangible form at a physical location but are electronically accessible in digital format via computer networks. Such libraries exist only on a very limited scale, but in most traditional print-based libraries in the United States, catalogs and periodical indexes are available online, and some periodicals and reference works may be available in electronic full-text. Some libraries and library systems call themselves "virtual" because they offer online services (Castelli, 2006).

Library 2.0

Library 2.0 is a loosely defined model for a modernized form of library service that reflects a transition within the library world in the way that services are delivered to users. The focus is on user-centered change and participation in the creation of content and community. The concept of Library 2.0 borrows from that of Business 2.0 and Web 2.0 and follows some of the same underlying philosophies. It is a concept that personified new generation of library services to meet the present day user's need and expectations. This collaborative effort require librarians to develop a more intensive routine of soliciting customer response and regularly evaluating and updating services (Casey & Savastimuk, 2006).

THE ROLE OF LIS PROFESSIONALS IN DIGITAL ERA

Now a days, most of the Libraries and Information centers have been using emerging technologies and the ICT based operations, resources and services to satisfy various needs of the users. Hence library and information professionals are increasingly responsible not only to provide traditional library and information services but also to deliver online information services according to the actual needs of users. As the role of LIS professionals is changing to face the new challenges day by day, they must be keen to stay at the fore front of innovation in the library world to search the answer of an important question i.e. what is demanded in the LIS professionals of the next generation, which totally depends

upon who is asking the question, a general public, human resource executive or corporate or company's executive etc.

Drastic changes brought by ICT are really providing multiple roles and responsibilities to LIS professionals, now they are not only collector and preserver of information resources but also help the users in accessing and interpreting information resources (Gupta, 2007).

Thus LIS professionals are supposed to play versatile role in different areas of library and information centres to meet the needs and expectations in context to digital era. LIS professionals should be confident and competent so that they can accept the challenges, deal with new technologies and manage the change efficiently and effectively the new entrusted professional role. Basically the innovation and development of ICT and its application has create drastic changes in entire library management system.

The following points highlight the present scenarios of LIS professionals in context to changing environment:

As a Content Manager

As we know that a content manager manages resources for a particular course or department website and now a days library and documentation centers have increasingly used the technologies of intranets, extranets and portals for specialized techniques of content management and development. Hence LIS professionals can also act as content manager because they decide what is necessary for their users as well as institution.

As a Consultant

The library and information professionals often acts as an guide, director and adviser who recommend both the best sources of information and ways in which to access information to the users.

As a Facilitator

In the age of new emerging technologies, LIS professionals are trying to acquire knowledge of different systems and software etc to manage the sea of information. So that they could be act as a facilitator with the effective, efficient and right information to the right user at easy and comfort way.

As a Consortia Manager

Due to rapid growth of knowledge, information explosion, use of ICT, changing behaviour of users and the last but not

least, lacking of funds, the concept of consortia has come up. A LIS professional can also act as consortia manager.

As a Website Designers

LIS professionals can act as a website designer. They create library website and provide current information on various subjects domain and display it on the library website and a good number of users are the benefice of such services.

As a Service Provider

The LIS professionals are supposed to be a information resource specialist, hence they provide solutions rather than volumes of literature. The LIS professionals provide SDI and CAS Services to users in most effective and efficient manners.

As a Collection Developer

The adaptation of ICT in libraries, today's LIS professionals play the role of collection developer as collection is shifting from print media to electronic media. Their proficiency, competencies and knowledge towards changing environment involve very complex activities of library for storage and maintenance of digital information.

As an intermediary

An Intermediary is defined by Peter Ingwersen (Ingwersen, 1992). as "A person or mechanism placed physically between IR (Information Retrieval) systems and actual user with the purpose to transform interactively requests for information to query formulations that suit the retrieval components of one or several IR systems, to model and support the actual user as to his information need and underlying goals and to provide information of potential value to that user from IR systems". So we can also call a librarian as an intermediary because a librarian is a person who functions between the end-user and an retrieval system to assist in relevant information retrieval.

As a Site Manager

LIS professionals can act as site manager. They decide for the sites which are to be sited on the internet.

As a Database Developer

LIS professionals can act as database developer. They can create library database with international standards format

for easy retrieval of information and also for providing comprehensive or exhaustive access to literature in information available in databases on online networks.

COMPETENCIES REQUIRED FOR THE LIS PROFESSIONALS IN NEW ERA

The various activities of LIS professionals and social acceptances of the profession depends upon the skills, attitudes, behaviours, proficiency and competencies of the professionals. Due to the changes in the working environment of the libraries, the LIS professionals are facing challenges day by day (Halder, 2009). Their work environment is becoming increasingly complex with constant change in the organizational, technological and information environment. They have to constantly justify themselves and their services and demonstrate their value to the parent organization. The competencies needed by LIS professionals in new era can be divided into (Fisher, 2004; Fourie, 2004):

(a) Personal Competencies

- Excellence Service Commitment
- Seek out challenges and opportunities
- Maintaining mutual respect and trust
- Communication Skill
- Flexibility
- Adaptability
- Self-Confidence
- Creativity
- Innovation and Leadership
- Analytical Skill
- Decision Making
- Life long learning
- Time and Stress Management
- Local and global thinking
- Planning and organizational skills
- Finance management
- Team Building
- User need analysis
- Behaviour Analysis
- Resource Management etc

(b) Professional Competencies

- Expert knowledge of the content of information resources.
- Innovative, convenient, accessible and cost effective information services to clientele.
- Provide instruction and help to users
- Assessment of information needs

- Adaptation of appropriate new generation technologies (ICT)
- Development of specialized information services and product
- Taking feedback from clientele and continually improves information services
- Information literacy
- Technical professional skills
- Knowledge management
- Traditional skills etc

According to National Knowledge Commission, India skills required fulfilling the changing role of libraries are (National Knowledge Commission Recommendations on Libraries, 2006):

- a. Library and Information handling skill
- b. Service orientation
- c. ICT Knowledge Skills
- d. Communication and Training Skills
- e. Marketing and Presentation Skills
- f. Understanding of cultural diversity
- g. Knowledge Mapping Skills

SUGGESTION

The volatile and pervasive nature of technological changes present LIS Professionals with unprecedented challenges. The LIS Professionals need to respond to the changes and acquire skills in locating, organizing, manipulating, filtering and presenting information. The LIS Professionals need to constantly upgrade competencies and knowledge, learned about using new technology and employ new techniques.

The professional organizations and institutions should organize seminar, conferences, short term training programme, refresher courses on new technologies to develop professional competencies.

The LIS School should re-orient the course content which must be suitable to present LIS professions need.

There should be appropriate Financial Management to cope up with the present infrastructural need.

The National Knowledge commission, India has suggested the following points for LIS professionals:

- a. Set up a national commission on libraries
- b. Preparation of National census of Libraries
- c. Revamping LIS Curriculum, training and research avenues
- d. Assessment of libraries staffing
- e. Creation of central library fund

- f. Modernization of management in libraries
- g. Greater community participation encouragement in library management
- h. ICT application
- i. Promote Public Private Partnership in LIS development

CONCLUSION

Today's high-tech & digital environment has changed the role and responsibilities of LIS professionals because it has brought remarkable changes in the storage and retrieval of information. With the development of information and communication based operations and services, it is important on the part of LIS professionals to acquire ICT skills in order to sum-up with today's high-tech environment in library and information centers because the digitization involves in every activity of library/library and information centers to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of it.

At the end, we can conclude that the next generation LIS professionals will survive only in case, when they can able to provide the complex amount of information services to the users and accept the challenges with positive spirit.

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