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Librarianship in ICT Environment

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Abstract

The advances in technology have brought immense changes in the field of library and information science in the form of changed services. The user expectations from the LIS professionals are also increasing due to the wide availability of information sources. There is a danger that the traditional librarians will be left behind if they do not adapt to the changing environment. The modern library renders various services with the help of ICT. The modern librarian is expected to build new digital libraries, institutional repositories to serve the immediate and ever increasing user needs. The present paper will try to understand the role of librarian in this dynamic and changing ICT environment. It will focus on the challenges which the librarians have to face along with few recent technologies which can enhance the library services.

Keywords: ICT, library services, recent technologies.

1.1 Introduction:

Library professionals are playing an increasing role in dealing with information available in various formats be it print or electronic. Due to information explosion and increasing use of ICT the librarians are expected to render services by creating various formats of Web pages. To promote their services to the users the librarians are also using automated library management software's. The librarians must possess special skills to create, store, analyze, organize, retrieve and disseminate multimedia digital information (text, images and sounds) in digital libraries. Library and information professionals have a key role to play in this era. They have to help the users to find the required information and also provide them with the tools to assess and use the resources to satisfy their information needs. The librarian in the ICT technological era should be capable of working in the hybrid environment of print and electronic media. The librarians must be able to provide the best mix of information resources in the suitable formats and required by the users. In the present era of information explosion and crunching budgets the right information given to the user at the right time will benefit the institution by saving the time of highly paid employees and minimising the losses due to poor business decisions.

1.2 Information Communication and technology:

In the present era there are several technologies used for various library housekeeping operations, digital and electronic media, networks and other internet technologies which can be utilized to render effective library services (Dayal, 2012). The librarians are considered as E-librarian, Cybrarian, Web Librarian, E-learning Information service officer, Information manager etc.

1.3 Use of ICT in libraries:

The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has transformed library services globally. Most of the current information is available in electronic formats. ICT has also contributed immensely to the performance of librarians while

performing their duties such as cataloguing, reference services, circulation, serials control etc. Internet has been used extensively as a resource as well as a tool to deliver the Library and Information Services. With the use of ICT the libraries can be reached out globally and services can be accessed 24/7 in a very cost effective manner. ICT has enabled users to avail many services without any human intervention, the role of the role of LIS professional is changing from an intermediary to a facilitator and enabler (Chauhan, 2004).

1.4 Current trends in libraries:

The current trends reflected from various literature reviewed will have a direct impact in shaping the library and information professionals. Few trends given by Hashim and Mokhtar (2012) can be briefly summarized as under:

➢ There is a need to develop a vision for the emerging and constantly changing ICT society.
➢ The library functions and services should be enhanced in the knowledge-based society.
➢ Information is seen as a basic commodity.
➢ Information is linked directly to decision-making, competitive advantage, innovations and research and development.
➢ Integrated and widespread use of IT technologies and applications.
➢ Mushrooming growth of electronic resources
➢ Role of digital/ virtual/electronic library.
➢ Librarians need to have the knowledge and equip themselves with new management and technological skills.

In addition to the various professional skills required to meet the challenges mentioned above, the librarians and information professionals of the future must be equipped with a wide range of personal and transferable skills in order to manage the changing working environment. The information professionals must change and adapt to the new electronic information environment, they must learn about new technologies and be aware of the related strengths and weaknesses. Librarians should not feel threatened by computers and technical developments but should move forward with the new technology.

1.5 Challenges faced by libraries:

The new era has brought a number of challenges which has given rise to the need for orientation programs, reengineering of libraries and transformation of resources from print to digital media. These new challenges have brought transformation in the information environment, functions and roles played by the library and information professionals. The challenges faced by the modern librarians can be summarized as under:

➢ Information explosion.
➢ Information and Communication Technology (ICT).
➢ Growth and use of web resources.
➢ Use of digital resources.
➢ User's expectations.
➢ Virtual learning environment.
➢ Development of digital, virtual and hybrid libraries.
➢ Online bookshops and information services.

1.6 Classification of library services based on use of Information Technology:

Modern technology is being used in the libraries and it offers value based services to the users. Few of these services (Vijayakumar and Vijayan, 2011) have been summarized as under:

➢ Computers: The computer-based technologies have become prime forces which are shaping the products and services offered by the libraries. The success of IT enabled services in the library is based on the efficiency of the equipment provided in the library.

➢ Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC): The OPAC is an online database of materials possessed by a library. Users search this online library catalogue to locate the required information resources held be the particular library.

➢ Scanner: This is a device that optically scans images, text and converts it to a digital image.

➢ Barcode: A barcode reader is an electronic device used for reading printed barcodes. It consists of a light source, a lens and a light sensor translating optical impulses operated by electricity. The barcodes are printed on books and scanned by this reader. The barcodes can be used in rendering services such as circulation, stock verification etc.

➢ Radio frequency identification (RFID): This technology utilizes radio waves for identifying individual items automatically. A unique serial number is identified for a product and related information on a microchip is attached to an antenna. RFID technology is similar to barcode.

➢ Chat services: Online chat refers to the communication which takes place over the Internet. It offers an instant transmission of text-based messages from sender to receiver. This minimizes the delay of sending messages when the person is not physically present. Eg. Google talk, whatsup.

1.7 Latest upcoming technological initiatives for the library:

In today's modern world the internet and mobile technologies are offering libraries a new world of opportunities to attract the users. The most popular social media websites and apps combined with the availability of affordable cloud-based services are providing a wide range of services to the users (Kroski, E. 2013). The evolution and adoption of mobile devices are enabling librarians to share and build communities, store and analyze large collections of data, create digital collections and access information resources. The services offered to users are varied in nature. New digital collections are stored in the cloud and mobile applications are developed around them. The developed countries are using these technologies in their libraries while initiatives are also been taken by the developing countries.

➢ **Use of mobile technologies**:

Whatsup service can be started by the library as an effort to activate communication with the different users who use different modern communication means, to meet their immediate information needs and desires. This service enables the users to communicate with the Library wherever they are and whenever they want to make use of the Library services. The users can also establish a direct contact with the information specialist for asking any question and get an answer to it that helps them in performing scientific researches or doing the special woks related to area of interest. It also enables the Library to define its services and subscriptions in databases and periodicals. Mobile sites and app generators offer everyone the

opportunity to create a mobile view of their library data. Eg. <u>Winksite</u> is a tool that can create a mobile site using an RSS feed from a WordPress or Drupal content management system. The site is free and allows five mobile sites for each user account. Dashboard views and form wizards guide the users through the setup of the library site. The dashboard features many options for creating different mobile page views and customization. The library logo can be added along with adjustments in the header colour to resemble the desktop library website or upload a background image.

> **Instagram**:

Featuring a powerful suite of location-aware technologies, Instagram has more than 80 million registered users who have shared nearly 4 billion photos. Users can shoot, manipulate and share photos using their smartphones, associating them with location information through mobile application. The libraries can expand social media campaigns and create a visual narrative for events, displays, collections or projects.

> **Google voice:**

Google Voice gives the user a single phone number that saves his voicemail online, transcribes the voicemail to text and allows the user to send free text messages. The Google Voice can be used from computer, tablet or smart phone to respond to reference questions of users. The recipient's phone number must be entered (which must be able to receive text messages) then the message must be typed and click "send." You can use the service to reply by text message to a voicemail, call or text. Users can respond to the text from their phone and library can respond from their Google Voice account and browser. Only one librarian can be logged in to the Google Voice account at a time.

> *Facebook in Libraries:*

Facebook can be used in the libraries for creating personal accounts for librarians; publicity of events or activities like librarian's day, book exhibitions etc. and also for joining and creating groups. When a Facebook account is opened a virtual "office" is created wherein the users can contact the library. The librarian can create a space for users' suggestions; offer a more personalized service for their users. Many libraries in the developed countries have maintained library catalogue search applications on their own for use in Facebook. Users can add this application to their account and with a click of a mouse, search their preferred book through a Facebook interface. This application is being used by Wake Forest University, Notre Dame and Broward County Public Library Systems etc. The facility of instant messaging can also be utilized through facebook. Eg. Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth library has opened its facebook account as tmvlibrary.

1.8 Conclusion:

Due to the growth of ICT technologies and increasing demand from the users the libraries have to look for many different ways to join the digital world. Social networking is one way to create a virtual space and extend the physical walls of libraries. The multimedia collections which have developed demand extra care to ensure their integrity and preservation. There is a need to consider the issues of digital preservation and maintain the standards and render services with best practices to the users. The growth in information communication technologies will help to remove barriers of distance and time. The importance of this technology is that it provides fast