



Qualities of Library Professionals in ICT Environment

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Qualities; Library Professionals; ICT environment; Academic Libraries; Qualities of Library Professionals.

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ABSTRACT *Contemporary libraries are under serious threat due to the increasing pressure of achieving higher level of performance in this Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) environment. Academic libraries are facing many challenges posed by the contemporary environment, most of which are the result of ICT and Digital Revolution. This paper discusses the impact of Digital environment on library professionals. It discusses the need for acquiring core competencies and new skills to manage the modern day academic libraries. It further discusses different sets of skills required for Library Professionals to manage the contemporary change brought up by technology accelerated environment. This paper also emphasizes that the acquisition of good qualities for library professionals has become essential to survive in this ICT environment.*

Introduction

The basic goal of library and information profession has always been to provide access to information to those who need it. The activities realizing this goal have evolved and transformed over the years. This includes - Available technology, and need of an evolving information society. Information activities have been guided by the developments in the field of storages, presentation and archiving of knowledge, collection development and organization of knowledge, information explosion and computers in information retrieval. Librarian and information professional involved in information gathering, storage, retrieval and dissemination on one hand and on the other hand the computer specialists who supports the library and informational professionals in this endeavor. For successful implementation of ICT, it is essential that LIS professionals are well trained and possess requisite knowledge and skills in this respect.

Objective of the Present Study

- To represent the Library resources in ICT Environment.
- To described the library services in an ICT Environment
- To find how the impact of the digital environment on library professionals.
- To analyze and explore the qualities of library professionals in ICT Environment.

Importance of the Present Study

- The study will help to grasp the role of Library Professionals.
- This will help to the Library Professionals contribution to the development of policies and procedures to support efficient operations of technical services.

Library Resources in ICT Environment

The resources provided by the digital libraries can be classified into in-house resources and external resources.

In-house resources are those resources that are stored in the web server locally and made accessible through the network. E-books, course notes, and application notes etc. are examples of the in-house resources.

The external resources are those materials that are not stored in the web server. External resources include online journals, online databases, online e-books etc. External resources are provided by different publishers - ASME, ACM, IEEE, Oxford University Press Journal (OUP) and many more are there. The publisher provides access to their full text materials by two

methods:

- Username and password
- Internet Protocol (IP) address based Access Control Method

Library Services in an ICT Environment

- Automated Library System;
- Services for e-onsite resources: CD-ROM, E-Journals on subscription, e-books;
- Internet Services;
- Information Services: SDI, Repackage of Information;
- Resource sharing activities: Interlibrary loan, document delivery.

Libraries have evolved from paper based institutions to electronic libraries with digital collections and access to digital collection outside their libraries.

Impact of the Digital Environment on Library Professionals

In an electronic library these functions and services are done and provided using ICT. The role of Librarians has been greatly affected by ICT. The traditional roles remain but the tools have change. Librarians now use computers and the internet to create, collect, consolidate, communicate and preserve information.



Changing Role of Library Professional in ICT Environment

The ready availability of information on the Internet, and its widespread use, really presents Librarians with an opportunity, not a threat. Technology Savvy users realize they need help, which Librarians can provide. Librarians now face difficulties and complicity challenges due to new trends in information access.

In the present technological/Internet era the professionals have to change themselves as the information profession is being changed. Now information specialists have to work as e-information resources in which various professional groups are expected to map a strategy that leads to produce, manage, maintain and service the information. Information professional has to work as:

Librarian- In addition to being library manager, they also act

as collection development, technical processors and so on, taking care of information quality.

Information Manager- To meet information need of the user they should know how to manage and deliver appropriate information services.

Information adviser/instructor- Ensure that user/staff know how to access relevant sources of information (literacy).

System & Networking- For delivery of information to their users in an appropriate manner develop and design appropriate systems.

Qualities of Library Professionals in ICT Environment

Awareness: It is important to be aware of current trends and be flexible in dealing with user new demands. Library Professionals need new knowledge specifically about information needs and information – seeking behavior as well as subject knowledge, since information-seeking behavior is dependent on the existing knowledge base of the searcher. In an electronic or digital environment, Library Professionals can be referred to as information specialists.

As a Guide: the modern day librarian must not only be proficient in the wide range of information technologies available today but they must also be able to work with teachers to adopt information literacy in their students. Information literacy is the key to life-long learning. The Librarians must teach the students how to analyse information critically and use it wisely. They must work closely with students to design, implement and revise research skills. Library professionals should teach information discrimination through personalized research assistance, guidance and instruction.

Information Access Provider and Negotiator: Information professionals assume the responsibility of providing access to information in whatsoever form it is packaged i.e., audio, video, microform, numeric, computer programmes or multimedia in this new environment. They will no longer be restricted to a “a single entity where everything is stored”. But rather will be able to offer a range of services and collections linked together or more accessible through electronic networks. In such an environment “access to information does not always imply ownership, merely that the library has negotiated the means by which the patrons gain access to resources and information”.

Organizer of Information: In the web based environment, information is rapidly growing, highly distributed with varying quality and dynamic in nature. Librarians, who have acquired a good deal of efficiency and skill in the collection, organization and retrieval of information can play an effective role in adapting these to the new environment and even to go beyond these skills and develop new ways to organize and structure information. For librarians to effectively organize and structure information available on the Internet, they required more than basic IT skills.

User friendly Approach: The focus of a service oriented organization is to fulfill the needs of its user; this approach helps in achieving and providing satisfaction to its users. It can be done by holding need based user orientations and seminars in the library for its members.

Enhancing the Quality of Services: The quality of services must meet the users' expectations. There should be a simplified system of checkout of materials. Quick and prompt OPAC system, proper shelf guides and accurate shelving can help the users to reach to their desired material.

Enhancing the Quality of Resources: Today, it is required to digitize the existing library collections, acquiring the latest IT based resources, latest equipments and managing and preserving it.

Teamwork: Each and every member of the library professional should be dedicated towards giving quality services to its users. Since all library operations and services are linked together, all library departments should work as a team and not as an individual unit. There should be a clear vision and open minded management.

Getting Feedback: Periodic feedback surveys from library users are essential in improving the quality of services. It helps in taking care of complaints and receiving suggestions.

Publicity of New Services: The new and alteration of services should be timely notified to the user. For this there should be speedy circulation of brochures and information kits. And also send the information through group E-mails.

Physical Layout: The layout of the library should be continuously improved taking into account the proper display of availability of E-Resources, reading material, sitting arrangement, infrastructure, ambience etc.

Attitude: The quality service of the library highly depends upon the human aspects skills of Total Quality Librarian who should be well versed with all the operations of the library, possessing good communication skills and a positive attitude.

Proper Training to the Staff: The library staff needs to be trained, including skill training, on the job guidance and re-training. New staff should be given a thorough orientation. They must update their skills and expertise through participation in different workshops, conferences etc.

Top Management Support: Quality service in the library is only feasible if there is commitment and support of the top management at all stages of quality implementation.

Leadership: Leadership is a quality to lead a team of workers. This is one of the most important qualities in the managerial capabilities. As is always said the strength of a chain is in the point of its weakest link, the librarian as a team-leader has always the role of motivator in such a way that all his team members become capable to work (at least) adequately as per the requirements of the job in hand.

Interdepartmental Coordination: There should be a policy that ensures a centralized reporting amongst the various interdepartmental library advisory groups. It facilitates proper coordination and sharing of information.

From custodian to facilitator: Librarianship has traversed a long journey and we have to weed out some of our older concepts while adopting quite a few new ones to suit our changing needs. The role of library leaders are now to nurture a breed of techno savvy, skilled manpower equipped to serve a new brand of techno-savvy users. Users of digital era know a lot of things beforehand. So the library team has to go a step forward and to be aware of the quality resources available in the digital (as well as print) scenario.

Conclusions

ICT has greatly affected libraries, librarians and information seekers. The behavior of users depends greatly on the existing knowledge base of the searcher. This is also true of librarians who assist users in their search. Librarians should be ready to participate in the process of generating and distributing information and knowledge for quality of life and education for all. In short, library professions must unite to withstand the revolutions that will occur in the information and communication fields. Technology alone cannot help bring about the required changes. Attitudes, practices, and policies need to change if libraries are to truly benefit themselves and their community of users by the application of new technologies.

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