Research Paper   **Library Science**

Library Professionals: the Changing Role in Academic Libraries

* Gajera Daxa L ** Dr. Niharika udani

* Reaserch Scholar,Singhaniya University, Rajasthan

** Research Guide, Singhaniya University, Rajasthan

Introduction:
Children today are growing up in a world that has changed significantly over the past ten years. They are comfortable around technology that they have known all their lives. The changes going on today create an opportunity and a necessity for a transformation in the education system and in the way children are taught. Children must be prepared for a future of continued rapid change.

Children are not the only ones who must be prepared for change. There have been great educational changes over the past ten years. "There is one role in education that has been forced to keep up with changes brought about by the information age, computers and the changes in society" (Baumbach, 1995, p. 248). That role is the one of the library professionals, whose job is becoming more important. There are many issues facing library professionals today. In the past ten years, libraries have transformed from places where students go find books, into information centers of schools. New technologies bring many opportunities and challenges to academic libraries and library professionals.

The purpose of this paper is to make administrators, teachers, library professionals and board members aware of the important and changing role of these professionals in the academic libraries. Their mission to provide access to materials in all formats remains the same, but there has been a virtual explosion of materials and resources in the past few years. Not only must they be proficient with the wide range of information available but they also must be able to work with teachers to instill information literacy skills and to promote life-long learning in students.

Changes Facing Library Professionals:
This is an era of change brought about by the introduction of informational technologies. "library professionals have come along way from the time when they were considered caretakers of the book collection. Now they are information providers, consultants, curriculum activists, instructional designers, instructional leaders, production specialists and most important, teachers" (Kreiser and Horton, 1992, p. 313). Some agents of change are closely interrelated such as economic, employment, technological, and instructional trends. Economic trends impact employment. Employment trends in turn impact technology. Employment and technology trends likewise, have a serious impact on education and instruction. The economic trends that have brought changes to the role of the library professionals include reduced budgets at a time of increased costs for both resources and personnel.

There are many technological trends that impact the job of the library professionals. The automation of the library, the use of CD-ROM's and the Internet have dramatically changed the role of the library professionals, making their job more demanding.

The use of technology has placed increased demand on library professionals' time to teach information technology, to learn new technologies, to troubleshoot, and to learn which Internet resources can assist students and teachers. Technology has brought many changes to education in the past ten years and technological literacy is listed as one of the goals of the Common Essential Leanings, which is a component of the Core Curriculum. The goals of technological literacy are the following:

- To develop a contemporary view of technology
- To develop understanding that technology both shapes and is shaped by society
- To develop students' appreciation of the value and limitations of technology within society
- To provide opportunities for students' active involvement in decision-making related to technological developments (Sask. Ed., 1992).
- To contribute to development of "strong sense" critical and creative thinkers
- To develop an understanding of how knowledge is created, evaluated, refined and changed within subject areas To promote both intuitive, imaginative thought and the ability to evaluate ideas, processes, experiences and objects in meaningful contexts
- To enable students to think for themselves, to recognize the limits of individual reflection and the need to contribute to and build upon mutual understandings (Sask. Ed., 1992). To support the development of a positive disposition to life long-learning
- To develop students' abilities to meet their own learning needs
- To develop students' abilities to access knowledge (Sask. Ed., 1992).

Sources for Professional Competencies Development:
LIS Professionals have a wide range of channels and ways to develop their professional competencies and manage changing technologies effectively. The important methods/ways for improving professional competences are:

- Acquiring formal qualifications
- Pursuing doctoral research
- Distance and E-learning courses
- Reading professional literature
- Tours and visits to well managed libraries
- Affiliation to professional bodies
- Attending professionals meetings.

Conferences & Seminars
• Presenting papers in conferences and seminars
• Writing papers in periodicals and books
• Participation in specialist groups
• Personal interactions with expert fellow

Professionals
• Attending workplace programs
• Attending Induction Programs
• Attending staff training and development courses
• Undertaking research and development projects.
• Web resources

Future of Library Professionals
Information Technology is rapidly changing the whole world, creating new challenges and opportunities. Library professionals have to face many complex challenges, make use of the technological opportunities and respond to all these changes positively. LIS professionals with latest technological competencies are in great demand. They have great opportunities and bright career prospects as long as they improve their professional and technological competencies and grab them. Otherwise, it becomes even difficult to survive in the modern libraries. Those professionals that anticipate and embrace change constructively, creatively and intelligently will be the ones, who are most likely to survive, prosper, develop and succeed rather than decline and suffer in the future. LIS professionals need vision for modern professional skills and technological competencies in order to have bright future in the 21st Century.

CHALLENGES FACED WITH E-RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
The adoption of e-resources has made great advantage over the library services. In fact, most of the users are satisfied with such facilities since hey can easily retrieve their required information within a short period of time. However, libraries face a number of challenges as they seek to continue offering the high level of services that users have come to expect. Some of the challenges facing with e-resource management are discuss below. Preservation- Though the e-resources are enabling information to be created, manipulated, disseminated and located with increasing ease, preserving access to this information posses a great challenge. Unless, preservation of digital information is actively taken, the information will become inaccessible due to changing technology platform and media instability.

Lack of professional skills- Due to lack of management and technical skills, the library professionals is not able to handle the e-resources. The professional staffs are required to constantly

update their own knowledge and skill base so as to work in today's rapidly changing digital environment. I Inadequate library fund- Most of the libraries have inadequate fund for acquiring e-resources and so the users do not get their needy information at the right time. Libraries are at a disadvantage when acting alone in this environment and there is need for cooperative purchasing through library consortia.

Technical infrastructure- In a digital information service system, infrastructure such as software, hardware, internet facilities and other physical equipments are required to provide easier, faster and comprehensive access to information. Therefore, libraries in the digital age need to enhance and upgrade current technical architecture to accommodate e-resources.

Lack of cooperation of staff members- The support and cooperation of staff members, programmers and technical staff are very essential to provide effective service in a digital environment. As such, the library staff should not only be technically competent but should also user-friendly-approach.

Conclusion
LIS professionals face complex challenges posed by rapid revolutionary advances in ICT. Libraries have to redesign their positions to meet evolving needs. Librarians need to implement new practices and new technologies, manage change, and improve performance and competencies to face future challenges of knowledge society. They need to develop professional competencies to adapt changing technologies in order to deliver timely, value added quality content and world-class services to the users from their desktop.

Library information professionals have to recognize the expanding nature of the technological changes and professional challenges that they face in the modern world and realize to improve the range of professional competencies required to adapt and mange the changing technology successfully. The Challenges represented by these competencies must be seized and acted upon today in order to ensure that librarians have better future in the twenty first century. LIS professionals must strive, struggle and improve new skills and knowledge about new technologies that will be needed to provide responsive Library Information Services to the users in the twenty first century.

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