ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Library Science

ROLE OF LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS AND LIBRARIES IN ICT ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of technology, information digitization, availability of e-resources and varied informational needs of users has changed the scenario of libraries in this digital era. Now a day's library services have extended beyond the four walls of library building. The recent trend in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has tremendous impact on library operations, resources, services and on library professionals. ICT has become a driving force for change in library and library services. Information and communication technology has changed the complex house-keeping operation of libraries and it facilitated communication through networks for collection, storage and dissemination of information.

1. 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. The information and communication technology (ICT) has globalized the collection and services of the libraries. Today's challenge is to understand the latest advancement in technology like, use of open source software, developing institutional repositories, cloud based services. Father of Library Science Dr.S.R.Ranganathan's Fifth law says "Library is a growing organization". Growth always occurs with change. Earlier libraries were giving importance for getting the physical ownership of documents. Now a day's libraries are paying bulk of their budget to have access to the information needed by its users. In fact the concept is shifted from 'Ownership to accessibility'.

2. Impact of ICT on libraries:

The impact of ICT is quite perceptible right from the beginning as the libraries started adopting ICT in the form of library automation. Library automation fulfills the demand of libraries by providing library services effectively, efficiently, rapidly and economically. There are several possible benefits that may access to a library as the result of using ICT. The ICT environment demands changes the way we think, we work and organize, to train the manpower to take up new challenges like,

- Shift from print to electronic resources
- Acquisition and owing the resources from anywhere and at any time
- Providing access to the users on their personal desktop
- Seamless access to global resources
- Resource sharing due to shrinking budget
- Consortia approach (e-journal approach)
- Maintaining online real time library transactions with 24/7 access facilities to the resources.

3. Impact of ICT on Library collection

3.1 Collection to connectivity

Earlier libraries emphasized for the development of collection of books, periodicals and made efforts to make all the documents physically available in the library needed for the users. however nowadays libraries make every effort to satisfy the information needs of the user by providing connectivity through computer without giving any importance if the documents are available in the library physically or not.

3.2 Ownership to accessibility

Earlier libraries were paying to vendors/publishers for getting the physic al ownership of the documents but these days libraries are paying a bulk of its budget to have access to the information needed by its users.

3.3 Real to virtual

In a traditional library there is need of space, buildings with four walls, reading space with furniture and many more physical items and readers were needed to visit the library personally to have the requisite material whereas in a networked environment the library can provide required information without forcing the user to visit the library personally.

4. ICT enabled conventional library services

4.1 Online public access catalogue (OPAC)

OPAC provides access to the catalogue through a computer terminal. It allows searching the entire catalogue conventionally and quickly. Nor more filing cards. improved access to the collection OPAC also provides key word index. OPAC offers accessibility from a remote computer using local area network (LAN).

4.2 Information services

Some of the important development in ICT, which brought changes in information Services are changes in format and delivery of information products.

4.3 Reference service

Synchronous tools like e-mails, subject gateways, FAQS and interactive tools like chat rooms and virtual reference desk and ask me are replacing the conventional means of phone, post or in person reference enquiries. Now interactive tools allow a reference interviews online.

4.4 Bibliographic service

Availability of databases in electronic form or online offers convenient, efficient and cost effective information retrieval. Electronic database also provide unique search features such as searching on multiple criteria.

4.5 Current awareness service (CAS)

CAS has been an important means for keeping the users abreast in their areas of interest. Libraries now compile CAS bulletin using predefined search strategy and running on the database on online periodically and getting a desired output.

4.6 Document delivery service

ICT has made the document delivery service very simple and reliable. From searching the holding for ordering and delivery, they have been benefited by the use of ICT. Many library networking systems such as INFLIBNET and DELNET maintain union catalogue of their member's journalist holding.

4.7 Inter library loan and union catalogue

Earlier resource sharing through inter library was necessary for libraries. Now th4e advent of ICT made resource sharing simple and easy.

5. ICT based new library services

5.1 Internet service

Internet is not only a medium of communication but also the world's largest repository of information, large segments of user groups may still be deprived of personal access to internet facilities .Libraries therefore should provide free or controlled access to Internet facility.

5.2 Subject gateways

A subject gateway is a facility that allows easier access to network based resources in a given subject area. One of the most useful ways to get quality resources in a particular subject area. Gateways cover a wide range of subjects.

5.3 Subject portals
Portals are an amalgamation of services to the users where the amalgamation is achieved through seamless integration of existing services by using binding agents such as customization and authentication services and search protocol, loan protocols and e-commerce.

5.4 Ask-a-librarian:
Ask-a-librarian service is a internet based question and answer service that connects users with the person who possess specialized subject knowledge and skill in conducting precision service. Most Ask-a-librarian services have a web based question submission form or an e-mail address or both.

5.5 Bulletin boards:
It is an electronic communication forum that hosts posted messages and articles connected to a common theme or subject. It allows users to call in to either leave or retrieve messages. The messages may be directed to all users of the bulletin board or only to particular user.

6. Impact of ICT on library professional:
With the advent of ICT products and services the library professional's role has expanded and challenges increased. These challenges relate to capacity building, collection development knowledge organization, digital presentation, online searching, content management and promoting the use of libraries and networks. Library professionals have to promote the concept and practice of information literacy.

Challenges associated with the application of ICT in libraries
- Inadequate funding
- Automation in infancy level
- Technical knowhow
- Lack of search skill

New role of library professionals:
Challenges give rise to various opportunities. The optimum utilization of these opportunities leads the institution to a new world of knowledge. Andersen[1] has propounded some of the following new roles and opportunities for knowledge professionals.

- Becoming source of organized information.
- Becoming a guide of information seekers.
- Becoming facilitator of information sharing.
- Becoming a teacher of information library.

These opportunities pave the way for creation of new roles for librarians. Some of the new roles of library professionals are as follows:

1. Marketers:
The role of providing information played by libraries in the past has changed to that of providing access and marketing of information. Now a day the information is considered as an economic resource, a marketable commodity and social wealth. This requires selection of information, offering of access services as well as new types of information services to remote users.

2. Educators and advisors:
Educating the users to identity information needs and prioritizing highly relevant information from a pool of information according to user's preference. There is a need to offer advice on issues concerning copy right and intellectual property, information standards for information organization, information management and knowledge management.

3. Collaborators:
Librarians are being challenged to become effective collaborators

of information exchange by using the connectivity and networking prowess of today's technology.

4. Negotiators:
There is a need for library professional to negotiate for better infrastructures for the information who are poor in terms of having access to generally accessible global information infrastructures, so that the information needs of the poor may be catered to and librarians may be able to act as negotiator.

5. Content managers:
Librarians have to play a dynamic role in providing easy access to computer held digital information including abstracts, indexes, full-text databases, video in digital formats by organizing, disseminating digital information from the computer-held digital content to provide universal access and retrieval of the same to catalogue and classify digital documents.

6. Information management consultants:
Librarians can help network users to provide access to the subset of networked information sources relevant to each user's work.

Apart from the new role of library professional, they must possess the following skills to meet the new challenges offered by the advancement of information and communication technologies.

1. Leadership Skills:
Library management especially the big library is team exercise. Librarians have to move beyond mere supervision of library. It is required to have leadership skills to manage and guiding the team time to time as every subordinate is important for carrying out their work efficiently for smooth running of library.

2. Interpersonal Skills:
Librarians must have a good interpersonal skill to deal with all level of people like management, users, colleagues, in library, vendors etc. It is important to build good rapport with all departments.

3. Listening Skill:
Library professional must have good listening skill as they have to interact with different types of users all the time. So that they can identify exact requirement of the users.

4. Communication Skill:
Command over the languages especially on English and also regional one will improve the communication and it will be easy to serve the users.

5. Technical Skills:
Library professional should well versed with the infrastructure, networks, web designing and all aspects related to computer both hardware and software which helps in easy handling of resources.

6. Presentation Skills:
The presentation skills are required in library committee meeting and even in daily work which represents the library management overall for users.

Conclusion:
ICT present many opportunities for the libraries and is constantly evolving new ways to reach the new generation of information users. Changes are happening in all the directions. Collections are changing, users are changing. Further days will be good if we adapt, embrace and implement the innovations to optimize the library services and user satisfaction.

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