

Perception change of Librarianship in Digital Era

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Abstract

The transformation of traditional library collections to digital or virtual collections introduces the Librarian with new opportunities. The Information and Communication technology is crescively replacing the old methods of storage and retrieval of Information collections. The paper presents the changing role of Librarians and Library Professionals in the digital environment.

A 'Librarian' profession has long been seen as one that required to arranging books but in the current era which is considered to be a digital era, Library Professionals have accepted and adapted to the changing times, thus elucidate the earlier notation.

The perception of the traditional Librarian is being rescinded, as librarians utilize technology to support researchers. The Internet, Web Environment, Multimedia, Hypermedia oriented architecture has revolutionized the way of information access and has opened up new possibilities in areas such as Digital Libraries, Virtual libraries and other sophisticated tools gives the librarian a new dynamic role to play and serve the new information based society in better ways.

Through Internet and Web not only the World is becoming interconnected also Internet has changed the fundamental roles, standards and organizational culture of libraries . The digital information management systems have changed the way the librarian receives, process, stores and delivers information to users.

The article throws some light on the role of Librarian in Internet and Digital era.

Keywords: Digital Library, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Electronic Media, Internet, Multimedia, Globalization, Mobile OPAC, QR codes, The Cloud.

Introduction

In the last decade we have seen tremendous social, economic, educational and institutional change in all areas including libraries. In 21st century libraries supports the development of all sectors in research academics and other core areas. The information atmosphere around the world is

growing at a tremendous speed due to the emergence of web based Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and its applications in social relevance, accountability, diversity and globalization of networks and Internet.

The revolution of ICT brings with it several efforts that question the role of Librarians and libraries itself. The Information revolution and comprehensive thinking that everything is available on the web have created new challenges to the library professional ethics. Library Professionals requires to change their role from traditional Librarian to Information Scientist by learning and applying new skills to manage and provide quality hybrid Information service to patrons by understanding the evolving technologies.

Today almost everyone gives preference to electronic forms, as mostly information is increasingly being produced in digital formats. To manage the digital information resources Librarians facilitate access of information over the networks at the global level.

The impact of web based e-learning providing new opportunities and challenges to the Librarians. Library Professionals need to and trying to build upon this foundation and adopt new technologies to build future services in libraries.

Role of Library Professionals in changing environment

In ancient times Libraries were considered only as depository of books and other documents and the Librarian thought as the keeper of these documents. During earlier days Information was used to be stored on papyrus, clay tablets, palm leaves. The ways in which Information was previously maintained, stored and delivered have been changed with the rapid and tremendous developments in Information Technology. Today electronic media such as DVD's ,CD's Videotapes, Microfilms etc. are replacing the physical forms of library documents. Even Books and Journals are gradually transformed to e- Books and e-Journals. These advance developments have greatly reincarnated the traditional libraries from a simple, static depository of documents to the organizations which can now fulfill all types of information requirement of the patrons quickly and efficiently and sometimes in a single click.

Librarians cannot neglect the changing face of Libraries .The advanced transformation demands librarians to shift

from the traditional library system to the digital and virtual libraries.

The standards and ideality of library rapidly shifted from print services to digital services since last two decades. This digital phenomenon of librarians developed a new concept of the library as “Library without walls”.

This is the era of Internet. The digital era has brought about many changes to the libraries as well as in the role of library professionals. Currently almost information is increasingly being produced in digital formats. To manage the digital information resources and services in Libraries, there is a need of ICT skilled library and information professionals as, “Digital Librarian: ICT has transformed the role of not only academic libraries but also the library professionals in the changing environment.

The areas where the changing role of the librarian can be specifically identified include:

- Changes from the traditional to digital environment.
- More emphasis on the liaison with users.
- Advocacy of the collections.
- Adopting of the new and the changing roles.
- Dealing with the user enquiries in the new digital era.
- Working with the technical staff.
- Selection and management of e-resources.
- Training required to enhance information skills.
- Organizing the information Landscape.
- Implementation of the educational technology and the learning environment.
- Working with the project teams.
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To deliver need based high quality information services to the user community, LIS Professionals need to seriously think about improving their efficiency and competencies. Following are some of important aspects of new technologies-

- ICT Trends
- Metadata Standards
- Web Technology
- Search Technology
- Digital Information Resources
- Subject Gateways
- Information Portals
- E-Learning

- Online Information Services

Dr. S.R. Ranganathan – The father of Library and Information Science in India stated that, “Librarianship is a noble profession. A librarian derives his joy by seeing the dawn of joy in the face of readers, helped by him to find the right book at the right time”. To accomplish this goal, in the present digital era, it is essential that LIS Professionals are well trained and have required knowledge and skills in this respect.

Sources of Professional Competencies Development

Library Professionals have a wide range of channels to develop their professional competencies and manage changing technologies in an effective manner.

- Acquiring formal qualifications.
- Pursuing Doctoral Research.
- Distance and e- learning courses.
- Reading professional literature.
- Tours and visits to well managed, special libraries.
- Attending workplace programs, Professional meetings, Induction programs, Staff training and development courses.
- Presenting papers in conferences and seminars.
- Writing papers in periodicals & books.
- Participation in specialist groups.
- Personal interactions with expert fellow.
- Web Resources.
- Undertaking research & development projects.

Future of LIS Professionals

“Libraries are one of the few places that one can enter without the expectation of consuming and paying for something”

-Darcy Brixey

The future of libraries depends how significantly the transformation of library services happens without disturbing the present set- up. The LIS professional need to become more user friendly to meet the demand of their patrons.

Digital and virtual resources will continue to play a predominant role in the future libraries as indicated by the upward development graph of the digital technology. Print media will continue its presence in the library collection. Future libraries & networks would be the provision of customized services to the patrons at their preferred places.

In future, Libraries will have to upgrade and develop the technology as the queries of the patrons become more complex. Content management skill will be the expertise of LIS professionals. Quality content creation and quality service becomes the benchmark for the future libraries by offering relevant content to users.

Conclusion

Libraries are an integral part of the knowledge society. Change is the law of nature, Library profession is no exception in this regard. Tremendous changes brought by the knowledge age demand a revision of the LIS profession nature. We have witnessed so many changes occurring within the LIS environment, as well as we are dealing with so many challenges to meet the user expectations. It is even more challenging to compete with the recent trends of ICT with advanced countries.

Today Libraries moves from custodians of books to service oriented information providers. Digital Library era has already started and the LIS professionals have to express their identity by acquiring the required and upgraded knowledge and skills by providing the right information to the right user at the right time.

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Today, Librarians manages the ICT based infrastructure that includes computers ,servers, mobile devices (smart phones,tablets,notebooks etc.) networks (Intranet,Wi-Fi,3G/4G, the cloud) mobile applications (web apps, QR codes, mobile OPAC), digital communications (Blogs, Instant messaging, Twitter, e-mail etc. ,Resource sharing to provide 24/7 digital information services to the users at the global level. Additionally, libraries play a key role in institutional research data management and provide research support services. The survival of libraries in this digital age is possible only with the multidimensional roles being played by the Librarian.

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