Changing Role & Skills Of Library Professionals In The Digital Environment

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Abstract: 21st century is the age of digital era, with ever-growing informational advancements. Unlike traditional library professionals, the modern library professionals having versatile responsibilities varying with emerging technology & they must do work hard to understand ever changing need of users in this digital environment.

The main aim of this article is to understand the factors responsible for changing the role and responsibilities of library professionals. The paper also highlights the importance of new emerging roles & what type of skills are required to become library professionals, as techno-savvy.

KEYWORDS: Library Professionals, Librarianship, Digital Environment, Role.

INTRODUCTION:

Previously, library professionals were regarded as storekeepers of books in library. With the rapid emerging technological advances, the situation has altered and it has to become a primary foundation in transformation in the sphere of library and information services. Technological transformation refers to changes brought about by using information and communication technology (ICT) and its tools comprising various gadgets like computers, internet, e-mail, e-resources, RFID technology, the OPAC and web-OPAC system, Consortium, archives, institutional repositories & depositories, the database, as well as use of artificial intelligence, robots, software. All these tools are used in libraries and information centres to provide more efficient and effective services to end users. Progress in ICT has impacted largely library operations in today's fast-paced shifting information world. Users' informational needs and expectations from library professionals as well as librarians remain constantly changing due to abrupt society at a large scale. Library professionals must reorganize their responsibilities to satisfy the desires of a technologically smart user demanding current information instantaneously. With the advancement in technology, the use of the latest technological innovations is necessary for the judicially functioning of libraries and information research centres in digital environment.

As we all know, COVID-19 is spreading over the entire globe without regard for nations, communities, etc., In this context, all library professionals fight to supply timely information to all users, particularly those who are insulated within their own homes. In addition, to that they simultaneously responding to their demands. In reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic, all educational institutions have shut down their physical campuses, forcing students and teachers to switch to online classes or e-learning platforms. Various higher education centres like UGC, established online mode of learning and have started various courses in the light of digital environment. Consequently, libraries are now starting to gather possible e-resources available in open access or get subscriptions on a nominal fee to offer remote access. With this pandemic, academic institutions are experiencing unprecedented rapid changes, that necessitating the learning of various renewed adaptive skills.

AN ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS IN PAST & PRESENT ERA:

In digital era, library professionals are performing multi-dimensional roles in building & adopting electronic resources to store, manage, manipulate as well as retrieve information. So, that users can get more benefits by adopting changes in new technologies. With the advent of information technology paradigm of role and skills of library professionals are shifted from caretaker to information provider due to following reasons:

Sr. No.	Reason	At Past	At Present
a.	Role	Library professionals are caretaker of documents.	Library professionals are information professional or information provider, information manager, information facilitator, knowledge navigator etc.,
b.	Format	Documents are available in printed forms.	Documents are existing in different forms such as print as well as electronic forms.
c.	Collection	Library has its own collection.	Collection is prolonged outside to the four walls of the library.
d.	Patrons	Local.	Universal.
e.	Up to datedness/ recency	Less up to date documents are available.	More up to date documents are there.
f.	Access	Access limited sources of information within scheduled time-period of the library.	Access unlimited source of information round O' clock anywhere in the world.
g.	Service mode	Services are delivered within the library.	Services might be delivered at the door of users.
h.	Facility	Less facilities are provided.	Dynamic facilities are provided.
i.	Learning Style	It did not support multitude of learning style.	It supports multitude of learning style.
j.	Workload	Too much workload on the part of library staff.	Reduction in workload.

k.	Library networks	Concept of library network was not much prominent.	Concept of library network is more prominent with the establishment of networks.
l.	virtual learning	Society avoids Virtual learning or e-learning.	With pandemic society adopt various e-learning models.
m.	Technophobia	Technological fear is more.	Now a days, technological fear is less.
n.	Physical space	As Dr. S. R. Ranganathan said in his fifth law of library science "library is a growing organism." With the increase in time the number of documents in the library gets increased and space became decreased.	Large number of documents are stored in a small electronic chips or CD-ROM or we can say library documents are offered at the user's desktop

From these above preceding reasons, in digital environment, the library professionals must be stuffed to fulfil the requirements of the users. They should be up to date and well equipped with latest information technologies. Otherwise, technology will replace them with the tech-savvy one.

FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR CHANGING THE ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES OF LIS PROFESSIONALS:

Today, we are living in the era of information and research responsible for the nourishment of community. With the emergence of modern technologies has led to substantial transformation. "Library professionals have evolved from being viewed as storekeepers" of the library collection. Now they are information scientist, knowledge managers, information navigators etc., There are several responsible factors, as written below:

➢ Erratic needs of users.

➢ Information explosion.

➢ overwhelming information.

➢ The ICT revolution is there.

➢ Shrinking library budget.

➢ Establishment of library networks.

➢ Developing, creating, and maintaining library webpage.

➢ Rapid technological advancements.

➢ Privacy and security concerns in copyright.

➢ Introduction of information technology.

➢ Artificial intelligence powered & technology based services.

- ➢ Integrated Library Management System i.e. use of house-keeping software.

- ➢ Digitization & digital preservation.

- ➢ The busy schedule of users.

- ➢ Collection development of electronic resources.

- ➢ e-learning and MOOCs.

- ➢ Drastic change in educational environment.

- ➢ Inter-disciplinary research.

Besides above factors few uncontrolled & natural pandemics like COVID-19, library professionals are facing number of unpredictable issues like job security, socio-economic and technological problems due to lack of policies, copyright issue, lack of techno-savvy personnels. During pandemic scenario our library personnels re-evaluating & re-imaging existing library system and establishing effective smart library system. It also provides variety of e-resources as well as e-services etc.,

ESSENTIAL QUALITES FOR LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS IN THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT:

With the emergence of technology in library discipline, the role of library professionals is shifted from book keeper to information-savvy professionals. They are organizing, handling, and facilitating access to e-resources. So, as per the need of digital age, the library professionals must have few additional qualities, as shown below:

- a) Should have admirable communication skills.

- b) Should be good leader as well as planner.

- c) Should be professionally trained.

- d) Should have practical knowledge of ICT.

- e) Should be techno-savvy.

- f) Should be internally motivated.

- g) Should hold friendly approach.

- h) Should aware about emerging trends.

- i) Should analyse information critically.

- j) Should provide personalized assistance to users.

- k) Should provide technology-based services.

- l) Should provide 24*7 hrs reference service.

- m) Should be dedicated to provide quality service.

n) Should be alert and open-minded.

SKILLS REQUIRED FOR LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS:

Proficiency to learn adaptive skills is the great pillar for library professionals in this digital environment. Todays' users are more willing to get whole information immediately. With this trend, library professionals must require to learn new skills with passage of time otherwise, they lag to create learner friendly environment. So, every library professional should have few following skills to perform his/her duties efficiently:

a) **Communication Skill:** It is one of the most essential skills to establish rapport at all level of management.

b) **Professional skill:** It involves specialized proficiency in specific kind of activity. It is speciality of library staff in using tools.

c) **Technical skill:** Understanding in dealing with technical tools of library and information science.

d) **Managerial skill:** library professionals must have managerial skills to plane, direct, design, support and execute activities for smooth functioning of library work.

e) **Motivating Skill:** to motivate patrons & colleagues to go in right direction.

f) **Leadership Skill:** Encourage individuals to give your best.

g) **Presentation Skill:** Essential for dealings with library users, management, publishers, vendors & suppliers etc.,

h) **Inter-personal skill:** To build harmonious relation among library staff.

i) **Marketing Skill:** To promote library resources & services.

CONCLUSION:

In the concluding remarks, we can say that with the advent of information technology, the role of library professionals is to shifted from store keeper to knowledge manager. The digital environment has carried out a set of new skills that are now outspread beyond the walls of library. In the modern technological age, the role of library professionals must be shifted from store keeper to information navigators. It is the demand of educated society that library professionals must have multi-dimensional attitude in providing user-oriented services.

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