Are Librarians Satisfied in ICT Era?

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Abstract

No doubt, day by day, information and communication technologies are gaining importance in library and information centers. These are assisting libraries in providing efficient and current information services. Various means, particularly the Internet is narrowing the information gap. Electronic access to technology journals has become important and valuable tool for researchers, students and the faculty members. Thus, we have numerous applications of ICT in libraries, but this is also causing some problems too.

This paper aims to describe – what is ICT, ICT based services and to conclude whether librarians are satisfied in ICT era or not?

Keywords: E-learning; ICT; Information services; In-house library operation.

Introduction

Library is an institution that provides quality information services which aims are not for profit. Here, the quality of the service is influenced by many things, including size and quality of collections, special services provided, quality and expertise of library staff, information retrieval, financial support, and user community that served by the library. However, these factors sometimes cannot be fixed optimally by the library but Rachman (2011) mentions - the librarians must be proactive to facilitate users in utilizing information resources that available in the library to cover this weakness.[1]

Earlier, the librarians were conscientiously counted outputs including circulating library materials, reference and information questions, and inter-library loans although the data collected, in retrospect, was unreliable and, most likely, inconsistent, due to varying loan periods, local practices regarding how to count informational and directional versus reference questions and variances in how libraries classified interlibrary loans as opposed to circulation transactions. Journal review-projects were transparently aimed at cancelling titles and were subject to manipulation. Therefore, it was not possible to provide quality services particularly by the small and college libraries.

But situations have been changed because of introduction of ICTs. It is seen that ICT is changing the work of libraries and information centers. Now, the digital contents can be afforded by the librarians with ability to understand networked services usage in a way that was not previously possible in the traditional print library environment. So, now libraries – small or college both are in position to provide quality services to their readers.

What is ICT?

ICT is an acronym that stands for Information Communications Technology. Information and communications technology or information and communication technology (ICT), is often used as an extended synonym for information technology (IT) that itself is a combination of telecommunications, micro-

graphics and reprographics etc.[2,3] ICT is an umbrella term that includes all technologies for the manipulation and communication of information. "ICT" term is used to describe the use of computer-based technology and the Internet to make information and communication services available to a wide range of users.[4]

But there is not a universally accepted definition of ICT, because the concepts, methods and applications involved in ICT are constantly evolving on an almost daily basis. It is difficult to keep up with the changes - they happen so fast. Precisely, ICT is concerned with the storage, retrieval, manipulation, transmission or receipt of digital data. Importantly, it is also concerned with the way these different uses can work with each other. And there is no doubt about the fact that significant changes have taken place in libraries in the developed world due to the application of information communication technology.

Ostrow (1998) rightly mentions that the advent of the Internet, digitization, and the ability to access library and research materials from remote locations created dramatic changes by the end of the twentieth century.[5] Ramzan (2004) further enriches that expert systems, wireless networks, virtual collections, interactive Web interfaces, virtual reference services, and personal Web portals have brought changes since the start of the new millennium. There have been fast and significant changes in librarianship, where digital and electronic libraries complement, and in some cases replace, the traditional libraries.[6]

Benefits of ICTs for Libraries

Information & Communication Technology is very useful for libraries in creating databases of their own and meeting them available to users through networks. It also enables libraries to provide effective and efficient services. Most of the library operations like book acquisition, circulation, office management, information services, etc. are inter-related, inter-dependent

and mutually supportive for overall administration of library. So, the impacts of new technologies are felt by libraries in every aspect. Computing technology, communication technology and mass storage technology are some of the areas of continuous development that reshape the way that libraries access, retrieve, store, manipulate and disseminate information to users.

ICT in libraries can be used in two ways – (1) in-house library operations, where various housekeeping activities of the library are managed which are reducing the repetitive processes involved in acquisition, cataloguing and circulation of resources, and time of the users and staff through the OPACs etc; and (2) for providing information services, like CAS, SDI, and e-learning etc. For in-house library operation, various integrated library management software are available that are being successfully used in majority of the libraries. While for providing ICT based information services, both offline and online e-resources are helpful. Offline resources may include non-print collections comprising of CD-ROM/DVD databases, electronic books, but online resources mainly include – books, journals and bibliographic databases etc.

Besides, e-learning – a term used for computer-enhanced learning, is also being provided by the libraries in online mode. It includes the delivery of content via Internet, Intranet/Extranet (LAN/WAN), audio- and videotape, satellite broadcast, interactive TV, and CD-ROM etc. E-learning is often extended to include the use of mobile technologies such as PDAs and MP3 players. Besides, the use of web-based teaching materials (hypermedia in general), multimedia, websites, discussion boards, collaborative software, e-mail, blogs, wikis, text-chat, computer-aided assessment, educational animation, simulations, games, learning management software, electronic voting systems, etc. are also used in e-learning, with possibly a combination of different methods.[7]

Pujar and Kamat (2009) observe that the winds of e-learning are forcing the libraries and

LIS community to lead towards the Library 2.0 movement. So, there is a need of common exploration by academicians, e-learning experts, and library professionals in order to achieve the goal of Library 2.0. Together they can come out with innovative technological platforms such as a common search service, linking of portals to databases, webcasting of information, customization of e-journal article search for the e-learners etc.[8]

Thus, we see ICT has lead to reorganization, change in work patterns, demand for new skills, job retraining and reclassification of positions. But it is seen that at one hand, ICT is providing lot of opportunities to librarians in providing instant and accurate services to their readers, while on the other hand librarians are somewhat reluctant in adopting this technology.

Effect of ICTs on Librarian's Satisfaction

Librarian's satisfaction can be said as an affective or cognitive state of mind which they experience as a result of use and subsequent evaluation of library services. Consequently, the quality of library performance is affected from the degree of satisfaction experienced by the librarians.

Eguavoen (2011) has observed that attitudes, chiefly positive attitudes are assumed to be fundamental in the acceptance, implementation and success of new technologies.[9] It is seen that the staff need positive attitudes to ICT, but the research in this area is varied in its conclusion. Social psychologists Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) submits that an individual's behaviour is determined by one's intention to perform the behaviour, and that this intention is influenced jointly by an individual's attitude and subjective norm. While Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) suggested attitude influences behavioural intention to use, and subsequent actual use. TAM also includes the constructs of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. He further adds that perceived usefulness is the extent to which a person believes that using a system will enhance their performance, whilst perceived ease of use is the extent to which a person believes that use of the system will be free from efforts. These two constructs have an important impact on a person's attitude toward using the system but, unlike the TRA, Davis (1989) found that attitude did not completely mediate between beliefs and intentions.[10] This suggests that an individual could hold negative attitudes to a system, but would still use it because it has high-perceived usefulness.[11]

Same theory is applicable in library and information centres, where, the success and implementation of information communication technology (ICT) in the library depends largely on the attitudes of library staff to its usage. The instances are seen for the attitudes towards computers as an appropriate focus for organizations attempting to increase the number of hours that their employees use their computers (Winter *et al*, 1998). Ramzan (2004) mentions, technological changes are posing a particular challenge to librarians in developing countries.[6] Librarians in developed countries moved quickly to learn and adopt new information technologies, but it is not so quickly taken in developing countries. Thus, there is seen a hesitation among the librarians in adopting ICTs in their libraries. Therefore, they are seen dis-satisfied with the introduction of ICTs.

Conclusion

It can be said that the Library and information professional communities are being affected by a range of ICT developments and so find their roles changing worldwide. The librarians with diverse talents and training, and who are flexible, will be able to meet the challenges of future library scene.

The fear of some library personnel in the developing world toward ICT is also widening the digital divide, but training brings about knowledge in the use of ICT which ultimately lead to a positive attitude toward the tools.

However, they need to be able to identify and balance the factor that would make ICT-services a success in their libraries. Hence, looking on the present situation of information explosion and competency, Thanuskodi (2013) rightly observed that it is on the part of the library staff to create more awareness about the electronic resources [services] availability among the users and provide them a friendly environment so that they can make a better use of the facility.[12]

Therefore, we should not be feared and be satisfied that ICT usage will facilitate the appropriate use of library services and resources because there will be free flow of information.

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