Changing Roles of LIS Professionals in Present Era

Tridib Tripathi*, Partha Sarathi Mandal**

ABSTRACT

This paper points out what is librarianship, what does a library and information professional do, the vision of LIS professionals, new challenges in the changing environment, causes of challenges and the ways to face the growing challenges. Some new roles and responsibilities of LIS professionals are also discussed here.

Key words: Challenges in the Changing environment; Information professionals; Librarianship; Library professionals; Vision of LIS Professionals in India

INTRODUCTION

Information is power. It is everywhere. It is growing very fast on the Internet. In this context librarian turns into information professional. The primary objective of information professionals is to organize and to provide access to information. In this context new LIS education should help to provide trained manpower, to manage different types of libraries, information and documentation centres. These are undergone changes in terms of needs, functions, types and range of services. The introduction of computers is a challenge to all librarians and information professionals. To meet these new challenges, librarian may have to function like collection developer, content manager, consortia manager, facilitator, web-site builder or publisher, interface designer, consultant, marketer, negotiator, team leader, Public relational officer, information Broker, information Analysts, Interpreter,

communicator, content provider and more like a teacher. Like a teacher, he can also train users to search and retrieve information.

What is librarianship

It is a challenging and dynamic career, which is concerned with information and the management. It includes the collection, organization and distribution of all kinds of materials and in different formats for education, information, cultural development and recreation. It is also the provision of specific information services to different communities and/or specialist groups. It offers an exciting diversity of career opportunities ranging from the applications of sophisticated computers and telecommunications to using traditional methods of research and the gathering of information to advance the social and economic development of society.

What does a library and information professional do

Within the library and information services, major functions are:

- Identification or Selection of information sources relevant to the needs of the user community.

Author's Affilation: *Reader, The Dept. of Library and Information Science, The University of Burdwan. **M.Phil Student, The Dept. of Library and Information science, The University of Burdwan. Golapbag. Burdwan–713104, W.B.

Reprint's request: Tridib Tripathi, Reader, The Dept. of Library and Information Science, The University of Burdwan.

- Collection of information sources relevant to the needs of the user community.

- Organization and management of the information sources and facilities so that the collections are accessible to the users.

- Distribution of information to the users

Vision of LIS Professionals in India

The LIS professional in India, in the digitized environment, should have the following vision:

- To introduce IT and ICT applications and other important components such as appropriate operating systems(e.g. Linux),LAN services,RDBMS,data transfer,FTP,Telnet and house keeping software etc.

- To arrange regular orientation programmes for all LIS professionals

- To arrange networking of various libraries

- To use the open standards

- Prcticising e-education programmed and developing Virtual Learning Tools (VLT).

- Strengthening of research components to accept the new challenges: etc.

Cause of new challenges

The environment is changing very rapidly due to economic, social, demographic, political, educational and technological changes. The society becomes more paperless to information base or electronic base. Hence the profession of librarianship seems now to be approaching a crisis point. Other causes of new challenges are -

- Information explosion

- Increasing use of ITs and ICTs

- Competition from other organizations tools and services.

- Emphasizing on information as a commodity, and its competitive importance.

Challenges in the Changing environment

- Internship

- Training opportunity

- Sustainability

- Economy of the use of information

- Copyright infringements

- Para prorofessionalism etc.

How to meet the Challenges

The role of librarians has changed in this changing environment. The librarian & information professionals are required to acquire such knowledge & skills as the library is now one of the highly IT influenced service profession. To meet the challenges, we require arranging the following things:

Resource sharing & Networking

The term 'resource' applies to any thing, person or action to which one turns for time of need. The modern concept of resource encompasses various activities like co-operative, acqusitioning, cataloguing, classification & development of professional's workers and the dissemination of information. It helps us in achieving maximum result with minimum input.Keisler says, "The social efforts of computer networks may be far greater and more important than you imagine," and modern technology will enable libraries to cooperate and create networks with speed and ease. Some of the important data networks are India's National Informatics Center's NICNET, INDONET and ERNET etc .The library networks are DELNET and INFLIBNET etc.

Software

The last few years have seen some important and useful initiatives in the development of library automation software. Some special libraries, notably at BHEL, SAIL, ICRISAT, NISCARE, DESIDOC—the Defense Scientific

Information and Documentation Centre, the Indian Institute of Technology, IIT Kanpur, have successfully developed software for library automation. Book and serial acquisitions, computer assisted cataloging, union listing, and current awareness services are some of the applications developed. LIBSYS and TULIPS among the better-known commercial packages that have been developed for both DOS and UNIX and are therefore available not only on microcomputers but also on minicomputers and mainframes and in LAN environments.

Developed knowledge and Skills

Librarian and information professional involved in information gathering, storage, retrieval and dissemination. For this Librarian needs to understand –

- Knowledge resources (books, journals, i.e. resources, Internet)
- Technological facilities and resources (computer, online catalogues, websites, LANs file servers etc.)
- Financial resources (Budget) Human resources (Skills for manpower training)

IT demands a range of skills from library and information science (LIS) professionals like excellent communication skills, managerial skills, operational skills and technological skills etc. Operational skill demands-

- Operating systems - Windows, UNIX, LINUX.
- World processing, Graphics, Spreadsheet & Presentations.
- Database Management Systems including the skills in Bibliographic Database Management Systems.
- General purpose programming, Networking
- Web page Development and Content Management
- Information Retrieval software for online, CD-ROM and Internet.

- Library software packages, acquaintances with Digital Library Tools.

Librarians will need to join the training programs, which can be in the form of workshops, conferences, seminars, symposia, etc

Association

Associations are seen as ways of getting and sharing information. It is through association activities that librarians can enlarge their network of contacts ensuring that they get the most current and practical information. Through associations, librarians can also contribute to the profession's body of learning by publishing in association journals, newsletters, and monographs and by presenting programs at conferences and continuing education courses. For those looking for upward career movement; associations provide the opportunity to develop leadership skills by serving as leaders in committees, interest groups, divisions, and executive councils

New roles & responsibilities of LIS professionals

In the present technological /Internet era, the professionals have to change themselves as the information professionals. Now the information specialists have to work as an e-information resourcer who is expected to map strategies that lead to produce, manage, maintain and service the information. Information professionals have to work as:

Librarian

As librarians or library managers, they act as collection developer, technical processors and so on. As system network managers, they have to develop & design appropriate system.

Information Manager

To meet the information need of the users, they should know how to manage and deliver appropriate information services.

Information adviser/instructor

As information advisors/instructors, they should know how to access relevant sources of information (literacy).

Content Manager

As content managers, information professionals create, manage and publish on-line content without the need of any programming or technical skills. Content manager should posses the following qualities 1.professional ethics 2.resourc building 3.knowledge organization 4.technolgical knowledge 5.knowledge accumulation: education & life long learning 6.knowledge dissemination service 7.knowledge inquiry research 8.institution management. etc.

Information Manager

As information managers, they should know how to manage and deliver appropriate information services etc.

CONCLUSION

A librarian must be talented and trained, skillful & flexible. An ideal librarian is one, who is competitive, assertive, cooperative, willing to compromise, intellectually committed, equipped with technical and managerial competencies, enthusiastic to the need of new technologies at the same time. Technology alone cannot help bring about the required changes so we need to change our attitudes, practices, and policies. To meet the new challenges we need theoretical realization and practical implementation.

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