

Information Management in Libraries and Its Impact on Sustainable Library and Information Services with Special Reference to University Libraries of Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Technological, Economical and Social changes have transformed the roles of libraries and information management in the recent past. These changes have a great impact on the existence and sustainability of the libraries. At the same time it provides many opportunities and venues to manage the library and information services sustainably. The library professionals have to consider seriously these changing context and the new roles of the library and update and improve the information management and data computing skills. Hence, library professionals will improve the capabilities in order to lead the libraries towards the changing strategies to face the challenges brought by the digital age. Libraries face enormous challenges in managing information and have to tackle the challenges by managing the libraries effectively for tomorrow and transformation of the libraries to a sustainable future. Information Management skills play an important role in managing libraries and information services effectively and ensuring that the services continues to, the present and anticipated needs of patrons sustainably.

The paper outlines how the university libraries of Sri Lanka take this challenges strategically by developing information management skills and sustainable library programmes and activities such as resource sharing/collaboration, create flexibility, reduce costs, social networking, distribution and marketing, strengthen ICT infrastructure to address the broader issues of a sustainable future for library resources and service provision to their patrons.

Keywords: *information management in libraries, sustainability of library and information services, university libraries of Sri Lanka.*

1.0 Introduction

We live in information age. Tremendous growth of the ICT, Internet and Mobile technologies contribute and impact immensely in libraries and their operations and services. The application of the search engines, Web 2.0 and social media create many venues to the patrons to navigate and access to vast amount of information and retrieve them conveniently outside the library environment. As such information seeking behavior of the patrons has been changed in the recent past.

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Expansion of collections and services are required to meet the challenge, brought by the modern technologies. But rising costs of library materials and flat or diminishing budget have impact on the library strategies. More funds are required to update the ICT infrastructure and modern technologies in the libraries in order to meet the ever changing information needs and seeking behavior of the patrons.

Patrons search and retrieve free and open source information through these venues. Open Access Digital Archives, Open Access Institutional repositories, Google Books and Google Scholar are some of such services.

At the same time, fee based products and services like online commercial databases and e-books are being increasingly subscribed by the libraries to provide access to scholarly research information to their patrons in order to keep the libraries in line with the users' information seeking behavior and to be a sustainable one.

Librarians have to think critically in taking Library & Information services to the door step of the users. Libraries take the services forward, ensuring that the services continues to, the present and anticipated needs of patrons sustainably.

This situation has been highly noted by Shalini URS as “Libraries are threatened by competition and changing lifestyles introduced by technologies and the new digital age. Amidst the gloom of the extinction of libraries there is a silver lining of opportunities. Our continued existence and relevance depends on metamorphosing libraries as places for information and social interaction. Depending on whether one is ready for change and transformations, it is an exciting time to be in a profession that is aligned to information. After all we are in the information age, libraries built on strong intellectual and organizational foundations of the past, are uniquely positioned to not only be relevant but rock!”

Librarians as information professionals should know how to work across parent institutions. They have to do strategic planning and implement various strategies to sustain their libraries. The staffs acquired up to date skills on information management taken into consideration of current change in information landscape in order to sustain the Library and Information Services. This article does not cover the economical/ financial, environmental/ ecological, social and equity kind of sustainability in libraries. But it explores the possibility of incorporating the skill of information management strategies like resource sharing/ collaboration, create flexibility, reduce costs, social networking, distribution and marketing strengthen ICT infrastructure to address the broader issues of a sustainable future for library resources and service provision in the Universities of Sri Lanka.

2.0 Background of the Study

Today's libraries consist of combination of digital and traditional library resources and deliver the print and digital information services to the patrons. These libraries are known as Hybrid libraries.

Information is a strategic resource and has become important in this knowledge society. Parent organizations invest a substantial amount of their library budget in purchasing recorded knowledge and library materials. This valuable information resources need to be managed effectively and efficiently in libraries so as to provide library & information services sustainably.

It depends not only on rich and scholarly materials in the libraries but also on how materials are arranged in the library and how users access and retrieve them. Thus the library services will be oriented towards user focused. It is therefore important to understand the user population and their present and anticipated needs in order to delight them by meeting their needs.

Library patrons must be well informed of the products and services of the library and how the library is eager to meet the expectation of the patrons and their needs and demands. Then only, we may be able to keep the patrons satisfied.

The Library staffs have to be competent in modern technological and information management skills in terms of ever changing information seeking behavior and information landscape to meet the anticipated and changing needs of the library patrons in order to serve over a long period of time.

Strategies of Sustainability in general focus on effective management of limited library resources. Therefore, librarians will have to recognize the modern trend and technologies, put our effort and energy to think critically in order to develop and change our library services in keeping sustainable library & information services to the patrons of net generation.

There is a big demand for information management experts for the workload ahead even in this Digital Information Era. Libraries face enormous challenges in managing information and have to tackle the challenges by managing the libraries effectively for tomorrow and transformation of the libraries to a sustainable future. Information Management skills play an important role in managing libraries for a sustainable future. Integration approach of information management with other managerial and ICT skills helps libraries for making library sustainable.

3.0 Sustainability of Library and Information Services

Many International library professionals Bodies such as the International Federation of Library Associations' (IFLA) Special Interest Group on Environmental Sustainability, the American Library Association's Task Force on the Environment, and the Australian Library and Information Association's (ALI A) Sustainable Libraries Group have taken much interest on "Sustainable Libraries in the recent past. The ALIA's Sustainable Libraries Group defines its scope to be "three key areas: environmental, social and financial. To be sustainable is to meet the needs of today's society in a way that doesn't harm the ability of future generations to meet their needs. The Sustainable Libraries Group will focus on the key areas of sustainability as applicable to the operation of libraries" (ALI A, 2012).

The American Library Association's (ALA) Task Force on the Environment identifies three key dynamics in its framework for a responsible approach to the future: economy, ecology and equity (ALA, 2012).

Ephraim, P.E. (2003) has defined sustainability in academic libraries as "Sustainability consists of all aspects of institutional and statutory information requirements which will benefit students at the moment and generations after this. He mainly focuses on the sustainable use of academic library resources and services.

Jankowska & Marcum (2010) describe issues of sustainability both of and in libraries. They identify several categories of topics for discussion: sustainability of scholarship and collections; green library operations and practices; green library buildings; and measuring and improving

Brophy Pheter (2007) defines "Sustainability is the ability of a service to be supported over the long term. He simply explain further in his book titled "The Library in the Twenty First Century" "Will it be possible for the project firstly to be maintained as a service and secondly to 'grow' with the needs of the users? The first point emphasized that, although extra effort may be required to set up the service, it will then need to operate with minimal overheads and minimal support as one of a portfolio of services offered by the library. Services must be able to cope with all possible forms of 'stress' – handling failures gracefully (so that the whole system does not crash each time an error occurs), operating in a wide variety of environments and with a source of ready maintenance advice when problems occur. The second recognizes that the environment and the supporting technologies will develop and change over time, so that the new service needs to be maintained and to grow alongside it.

It is therefore necessary to identify these challenges in delivering library and information services and librarians need to find strategies and adopts them in order to overcome the challenges to facilitate the sustainability of services to its patrons.

4.0 Information Management in Libraries

Rowley (1998) proposes four different levels of information management: information retrieval, information systems, information contexts, and information environments. Effective information management needs to address issues at all of these levels.

Choo (1998) defines "information management as a cycle of processes that support the organization's learning activities: identifying information needs, acquiring information, organizing and storing information, developing information products and services, distributing information, and using information"

Radon, R (1996) pinpoints the importance of Information Management in Libraries even in the modern ICT environment as "the new technologies of the Internet and beyond will require more expertise in information management".

Hence information management plays an important role in this context in order to manage information resources and services in the library. Information Management skills definitely help the library professionals in facing these revolution and challenges.

Library professionals are the most valuable information asset in Libraries. Library patrons expect from LIS professionals to help in accessing and retrieving the relevant information at the correct time and managing information. They involve in managing Information and information management work in libraries. These professionals who carry out the information management responsibilities require specific knowledge, skills and attributes related to managing information, library services, archiving, data management, content management, information access and retrieval in the context of Digital Information product and services.

5.0 Skills for managing Digital Information

The Library professionals who work in the hybrid libraries are required to have knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to create, store, analyze, organize, retrieve, and disseminate print and digital information.

The new digital information environment requires librarians to acquire new skills like web 2.0 technologies, internet, ICT and information management skill to manage a vast amount of digital information and sustain the Digital information and services over a long period of time

Library professionals of this information age must realize the importance of the new knowledge skills and update them for making the library sustainable and managing the flood of information effectively. Importance of this concept was highly revealed by Bhaskar, P. & Martens, R.(2008) in his article as "The new librarian combines a collaborative attitude, social awareness, creativity and cultural knowledge with management skills, knowledge of digital developments and the ability to enter into alliances. The librarian of the future is able to innovate the discipline based on content. Not single-handedly, but together with colleagues, other libraries and social partners. This requires talent as well as a large measure of professionalism and expertise".

Ezema, Ifeanyi J. Ugwuanyi, C.F and Ugwu, Cyprian I (2014) Identified interpersonal, leadership & management and information technology skills are the main skills required by librarians for the emerging digital library environment. The study also found that the librarians' skills in interpersonal, leadership and management are higher than in information technology.

Chowdhury (2013) suggests the following measure in-order to be a successful and sustainable digital information services to the libraries;

- . accommodate new and emerging user information behavior;
- . improve digital and information literacy;
- . improve web accessibility to accommodate all kinds of users, especially those that have special needs; and
- . accommodate new and emerging social networking and the social informatics models in specific areas such as digital education, digital health, digital culture, and so on.

6.0 Sustainability of Library Services in Sri Lanka

Researcher identified some attribute and criteria found in the literature regarding information management skills and sustainable library programmes and activities to assess Sri Lankan University libraries in line with such attributes like resource sharing/ collaboration, create flexibility, reduce costs, social networking, distribution and marketing, strengthen ICT infrastructure to address the broader issues of a sustainable future for library resources and service provision in the Universities of Sri Lanka.

6.1 Ancient Library History of Sri Lanka

Jayasuriya, Sumana (2011) records that Sri Lanka records a rich intellectual and literary tradition built around Mahavihara, Abhayagiriya and Jethavana vihara, the seats of Buddhist learning during the Anuradhapura period from 250 BC to 1017 AD. Feature of the Buddhist temples was their libraries of books on oriental studies and Buddhism which attracted many scholars from Asian countries; India, Burma, and China. However, Buddhism along with the educational activities suffered a setback with the foreign domination from the beginning of the 16th century.

6.2 Development of Libraries & Information Centres

People of Sri Lanka approach libraries and information and IT centres for information. There are University Libraries, academic libraries, research libraries, College and School Libraries that serve the needs of their users of parent organization.

Majority of libraries is the kind of public libraries over a thousand located all over the country and comes under the purview of local government administrations. The National Library and Documentation Services Board is the mother library in Sri Lanka which has a mandate for the development of libraries.

While Government of Sri Lanka develop the traditional Library, Archives and information services over the period of time, Information Centres, Knowledge Centres and Resource Centres are also being developed in all over the country in order to meet the ever changing information needs of the people of Sri Lanka in line with the advanced technological development.

The Information and Communication Technology Agency (ICTA) of Sri Lanka is the fully government apex body involved in ICT policy and direction for the nation. ICTA is the implementing organization of the e-Sri Lanka Initiative project. ICTA, as an implementing agency for E-Sri Lanka project established Information Centres and such as Nenasala (knowledge) centres and E-Libraries in the country to meet the information and communication needs of people of rural areas in all part of the country.

Government Information Centre, specialized information centres like Vidatha Resource Centres and the Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres are being developed in the country to meet the information needs of people of rural areas.

Information Centres of non-governmental organizations also provide the information needs to various segments of the population.

6.3 Cooperative activities

The sharing of resources among the libraries is one of the important strategies in realizing the goal of sustainability by managing our limited resources to provide maximum benefits to the entire population of users. One of such recent activities is the cooperation among the University libraries in Sri Lanka.

6.3.1 National Digital Library Consortium

Standing Committee on Libraries and Information Science (SCOLIS) which is the steering body for the LIS sector at the University Grants Commission, Sri Lanka has taken a constructive role in sustaining and enhancing the quality Services among the university libraries by the establishment of National Digital Library.

Wijetunge Pradeepa (2012) in her report examines the ever decreasing budgets, escalating journal prices, ever-decreasing rupee value and the necessity to allocate funds to develop much-needed infrastructure facilities, do not warrant a continuous subscription to journals by individual universities. It was revealed, that nearly Rs. Million 90 is spent by all universities to subscribe to about 550-600 printed journals without any satisfactory measures of sharing them across the universities.

University Grants Commission of Sri Lanka funded Rs. 120 Mn and subscribe to 6 Online Databases such as EMERLAD, SAGE, WILEY, OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, TAYLOR & FRANCIS and ELSEVIER for the year 2014 .These resources could be accessed through the university intranet. SCOLIS has already taken decision to continue the subscription of these resources for the year 2015 and procure E – Books to sustain the Digital Information Services over a long period of time.

6.3.2 Inter Library Lending and Document Delivery

All University Librarians based on the decision of the SCOLIS has come to an agreement and formulated a standard policy titled “ILL Code for Sri Lankan University Libraries” in 2009 to facilitate Libraries within the Sri Lankan University Library Network to share library resources effectively and efficiently in order to meet needs of targeted library users, as a strategy of sustainability in terms of utilizing and managing the fund effectively.

6.4 Institutional Repositories

All Sri Lankan Universities have established institutional repository and services for intellectual access. This digitizing and digital service is an important effort and key to sustainability of Library and Information services in the country.

University Libraries of Sri Lanka encourage academics to place their publications into repositories, enhancing the availability and wide visibility in order to improve the research culture.

The development of institutional repository services in Sri Lanka has been enhanced by the National Digitization programme of the National Science Foundation in Sri Lanka. The National Science Library of the National Science Foundation (NSF) is taking a leading role in implementing this project. The NSF provides fund for digitizing the rare and scholarly collection of the Universities and Research Institutions and supports creating and developing the Institutional Repositories. NSF also provides training to the staff of such institutions.

National Library and Documentation Centre created digital repositories on Sri Lankan folklore Collection in order to preserve and disseminate the cultural heritage of Sri Lanka.

6.4 Sri Lanka Journal Online (SLJOL)

SLJOL is the online full text database of Sri Lankan Journals covering the full range of academic disciplines. It was initiated in August 2008 with the support of the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publication. The objective of SLJOL is to give greater visibility to the participating journals, and to the research they convey. Users will have the opportunity to access all the Sri Lankan full text articles of the journals in single interface.

6.5 Fee based services

Introducing fee based services in Libraries for their sustainability is critical in Sri Lanka. However organization like Sri Lanka Standard Institute and Industrial Technological Institute provide special information services to its patrons and charge a fee.

However libraries in Sri Lanka charge a fee to the patrons to provide some services such as Internet Access, Photocopying Services to cover the cost. Further libraries charge for enrolling new membership and fine the users for overdue books.

6.6 Marketing and Promoting Services

“Accommodating new and emerging social networking and the social informatics” is one of the attribute recommended by Chowdhury (2013) to facilitate a successful sustainable digital information services.

To make the sustainability of Library services, we should promote our services constantly. Our patrons need to be made aware of the library products and services available and able to access to them. Libraries have to think critically in taking such services to the door step of the patrons. Libraries need to take the services forward to ensure that the services continue to present and anticipated needs of their patrons.

Marketing is an important part of LIS sector. Marketing of the product and services in the Libraries is not the new concept. Libraries do their marketing through the programme like Current Awareness Services and SDI services to reach out their patrons and make them aware of their product & services.

Social media is now the most cost effective and popular method to reach out a vast group of people at the shortest period of time in comparison to other available marketing channels. The web 2.0 application of the information technology facilitates many commercial companies to market their product and to reach their market segment. Sri Lankan Academic Libraries are not lagging behind in using Social media as a marketing tool in promoting the library and Information services in order to enhance the quality and sustain delivery to library patrons

6.7 Social Network

Social Media has a great impact on the social and cultural life of the people. Libraries in Sri Lanka create, generate the information and exchange and disseminate that information among their social group who are joined in that internet-based social media applications.

Face book, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, and Google plus are popular Social media being interacted with the day to day social life of the people. People use their content and online information among their social group.

6.8 Information Literacy

“Improving digital and information literacy” is one of the attribute suggested by Chowdhury (2013) to facilitate a successful sustainable digital information services.

SCOLIS has taken an initiative in preparing the Common curriculum for the undergraduate degree and Staff Development programme. The goal of this course is to provide newly enrolled undergraduates and faculty members with the knowledge and skill necessary in order to enhance access to the library resources and services and make them effective life-long learners.

A few workshops have been conducted for training of trainers on Information Literacy with the support of INASP/ PERI programme.

All libraries have taken satisfactory steps to initiate information literacy programmes in their Universities.

6.9 Information Management Studies

Information Management skills are required for library professionals to succeed in the modern library which have changed drastically. Library Schools in Sri Lanka such as National Institute of Library & Information services, University of Colombo, University of Kelaniya and Sri Lanka Library Association introduced Course of studies in Information Management at Master, Diploma and Certificate level, considering the need of such professional and prepare them to meet the challenges.

7.0 Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendation

The Librarians nowadays manage vast amount of digital information. Managing information in the libraries has become complex. Therefore Librarians are required to acquire and enhance the knowledge, professional and technical skills to manage the digital information effectively.

The Libraries must get over from the concept of collection-centered services and move and focus on user-centered services by creating good relationships with patrons and adopt information management skills in order to provide sustainable Library and Information Services to contribute academic mission of the parent organization.

The Library professionals must update information management skills and manage the information and sustain the library services over a period of time to realize this important goal of the institution.

The cost associated with the library services has been increased exponentially. The patrons are more comfortable in finding information through the application of modern technology from their home or workplace.

Most critical part of any library is to satisfy the information needs of the users. Patrons have many opportunities in this information age. They want authorized, reliable, correct and up to date information without any delay. Patrons will go away from the library and find other sources and opportunities, if the libraries do not change their mind set and satisfy the patrons. Our services have to be evaluated to find out what our patrons think about our services. Libraries have to change our direction towards this trend for sustainability of our services and libraries.

The expectations and needs of the Net generation need to be studied in order to provide such services to sustain our libraries. But librarians have to face many challenges when developing new such services for net generations of library patrons. Library staffs have to be trained or Libraries have to recruit competent new staff to tackle such situation. Cloud computing, data computing and information management skills are the main skills, they are expected to inculcate in the day-to- day operation of library services

Sri Lankan University Libraries have already taken measure in transforming to Digital Information and services to meet the needs of the net generation and their ever changing behavior of seeking information in order to survive and sustain the Library services

Though Information management courses are taught in Sri Lankan Universities and library schools, it is essential to introduce information management programme at the grass root level. Hence, Library and Information professionals in the country need to be trained further with relevant information management skills through higher education and training in order to provide sustainable library & information services.

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