



Knowledge and Skills Required by Academic Librarians in Digital Era

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Abstract

With the invention of Information Communication Technology, libraries now use various types of technologies to provide services to users. In this changing environment, needs of library users are changed. In order to play a powerful role in supporting teaching, learning and research, librarians need to develop special knowledge and skills for information services in the digital era. This study examines, on the basis of published literature, the skills required by librarians in the digital era.

Keywords: Digital library, Job skills, Competencies - librarians, ICT skills, Leadership skills, Digital era

Introduction

With the development of the Information Communication Technology (ICT), the nature of libraries has changed, and all services are provided to users with the help of technology in the digital world. Information far less in print form, now it is available electronically in different formats. To understand, collect, arrange, use and provide to library users, librarians need to adopt and develop their knowledge and skills in the field of digital era.

In the present technological era LIS professionals have to develop their IT skills with traditional knowledge as per the users' expectations and also for librarians to play leadership role in the library and guiding and help library staff.

"Information technology has removed the geographic barriers and has pushed the society towards information intensive and networked society, thus making the role of library professionals very crucial and important." (Sivasubramanian, 2005).

Purpose of Gaining Knowledge and Skills for Librarians in Digital Era

What are the skills needed by library professionals in today's technological world? Are traditional skills still necessary at time of selection of librarian? Information technology (IT) skills such as web development, project management, etc. are more necessary as compared to traditional skills.



Mathews and Pardue (2009) examined this by conducting a content analysis of randomly selected job ads from ALA's online JobList, after pilot study they selected ten ads from 620 ads. They found that in five ads only traditional skills are necessary and other five IT skills are required; during the final study they concluded that in today's technological world more than seventy percent library ads contain at least one IT skills and they also recommended in the changing technological field library have to give more focus on IT skills.

Pillai (2016) covered the skills required by the librarian in a teacher training colleges. In this type of college usually users were from trainee teacher to research level and their needs of information are high and more accurate as compared to academic users. For this type of users, librarians need some essential skills to provide information and deal with the users. Some skills were mentioned by author such as literacy instructor, web designer, blogger, faculty-librarian collaboration, open source software, research skills, negotiator, fund raiser, leadership role, etc.

Prabhu (2016) studied that there was no need of walls in the library because now a days users can access, get the information from internet in the digital form. With the development of digital technology in every field also change the role of the librarian, in this new digital age librarian needs appropriate skills and competencies to provide information in digital form and author explained that traditional skills and knowledge are still important but in today's technological age librarians have to adopt new technological skills and develop existing skills to deal with the different types of users needs of information in different types multimedia format.

Changing Needs of Users in Digital Era

ICTs have great impact in the today's fast changing information marketplace, the needs of users, researchers, etc. were changed, and they want more and accurate information. LIS professionals have to more focused, knowledgeable to deal with the changing needs of users in changing technology place, improved their skills and knowledge in the digital era. In this article some skills are mentioned by author including marketing, design thinking, informal continuing education, forming a network, etc (Deodhar, 2016). Parmar and Verma (2016) expressed that with the development of technology and internet the role of the traditional library is changed to the cyberspace i.e. in digital library. Due to technology the needs of users were changed and that cannot be fulfilled only with traditional library collections. Libraries have to provide users needs online, databases, on their desktop with the help of technology, internet, and computer. For this purpose librarians with existing traditional skills are also required to focus on the technological skills like using of computer, e-mail, web design skills, search on browser skills as web builder etc.

Difference between Traditional and Digital Library

Joshi and Kamat (2016) explained that there were differences between traditional library and digital library, in traditional libraries basically information is provided through access to the printed resources, communication with users face to face but now a days libraries are changing from traditional to digital. For this librarians have to develop themselves and more effectively develop information literacy among the users. Authors suggested various skills required like technology, basic knowledge of computer, interpersonal skills to develop librarian's knowledge. In this article there some challenges were also mentioned by the authors that is faced by the Indian librarians such as electricity, language, culture, non availability of



National Conference on "Enhancing the Role of the Library in Teaching and Learning"

technology in rural areas, funding, librarians hesitate nature to learn technology, etc. Manchare and Gaikwad (2016) discussed the skills required by the librarian in today's modern environment i.e. in technological environment. They found studied that with traditional library skills, LIS professionals also need to adopt technological skills to fulfill the users need in the 21st century. According to Bell and Shank,

"An academic librarian ...combines the traditional skill set of librarianship with professional and technologist's hardware/software skills and the instructional or educational designer's ability to apply technology appropriately in the teaching learning process."

Need to Learn and Adopt IT Skills by Librarians

From 20th century the need of computer literacy to internet literacy (network literacy) has rapidly increased, as reported by Ezeani (2011). In this paper author explained that because of a developing network technology, it was the responsibility of the librarians to know, understand, learn technological skills for how to access information in different ways on browser, how to effectively use internet for providing information, use of social media such as facebook, wikis, blog, as a reference service of the library and the author suggested these skills were very important to librarian in the 21st century network environment. According to the author, librarians need to know about internet and IT skills in their support for learning, managing, providing services by libraries in the digital environment. Author examined that new LIS professionals were more interested to learn and adopt new IT skills as compared to old traditional librarians, authors also found that in libraries there were specific group of trained staff for providing information in digital form, because others don't know about IT technology, how to use basic function of computer, internet, etc. Therefore they suggested that every library staff should take part in learning IT skills and it can be achieved by arranging in-house training for staff, learning about the computer, how to search on internet, attend conferences, workshop to learn library web tool, etc. (Mathew and Baby, 2012)

Leadership Skills Required by Librarian

In today's fast changing environment there are various a skills and qualities of leadership required by librarians to collect, manage and provide information in every field including library. Chauhan (2015) focused on different types of qualities, skills for future generation librarians, to build a relationship with staff, having good knowledge of technological skills to do library work digitally, improve the quality of services provided by library to users at the right time, self-motivated, and develop a new skill from the existing skills to work better. Keshava and Lokeshappa (2010) explained the required leadership skills for the future librarian such as IT skills, teaching skills, professional skills, etc. In the study, authors concluded that ongoing success of every organization depended on the leadership skill of the leader to conduct work with staff of the library smoothly, for this, leaders should have some skills such as IT skills, teaching skills, modeling behavior, strategic, professional skills, etc. Librarian must be ready for all the challenges of the digital technology environment in the library, to satisfy needs of users and motivate the staff to work better for providing services.

Conclusion

In the Information Communication Technology (ICT) environment, the library deals with users' changing demands of information, librarians have to focus more towards the



technological knowledge and skills. Librarians need to learn new IT skills and also need to develop their existing knowledge and skills. Also they have to understand the problems of library staff and solve that for maintaining good relationship with staff. Thus with the knowledge, IT skills, leadership skills LIS professional can perform better in the digital era.

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