

Application of innovative services in Public Libraries: a conceptual prospect

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Abstract

Public libraries play a crucial role for societal progress. The advancement of the new technologies made a great impact on information and library use. In technological era, expectations and demands of users are highly increasing. Public libraries are surviving to connect the users group precisely. Now public Libraries need to rethink about its services which can attract users more effectively. This paper focuses on innovative services which can be applied in public libraries. Innovative services are continuous process and changing aspect in library operation. Access to computers & internet, use of e-resources, IT training, extension programs, family health, marketing of library activities, e-governance etc are the major factors which may enhance a platform for better library services.

Keywords: Innovative services, Family health, IT training, Library operation, Public Library

1. Introduction

Public Libraries (PLs) are the social institutions. They also have number of social, political and economical factors like other popular social institutions in modern period. Public libraries generally are the local gateways of knowledge. Acquiring, processing, organizing and disseminating of knowledge are the key functions of public libraries. It provides educational, social and recreational activities which amuse its' users. As we know our society is multi lingual, so a public library in our society is the right place to get exact and closely related information. Advancement of science and technologies affect the libraries services. Services, provided by the public libraries are prominently traditional, now libraries need to apply some innovative ideas to get more attention from the users. The significance of the paper is to highlight the areas where public libraries can apply new approaches to accelerate their services more efficiently.

2. Review of Related Literature

Greenaway (1997) argues that libraries need to work proficiently and with innovativeness in the way services are provided to make the best possible use of resources: human, material, technical and financial. **Jantz (2012)** pointed the managerial prospects, the authority and the norms of the profession appear to generate a framework with certain boundaries, some of which may impact the ability to innovate. **Chunli & Jinmin (2011)** estimated that the explosions of information and beside its attractiveness of the Information Communication Technology, librarians are facing new challenges to look for new ways to meet the user's demands and expectations. The authors try to highlight that libraries can serve innovative services through ICT. **Sahu & et. al. (2010)** in their study stated that the idea of being able to use

Internet social software via an internet platform is a relatively new idea when considering the history of the computer and its networking capabilities. Malathy & Kantha (2013) drew an outline of the application and use of mobile telecommunications systems, web technologies and geographic systems to provide ubiquitous, user-friendly, personalized and dynamic up to date information services to library users.

3. A brief overview of development of PLs in India

In India there are two portions of development of Public Libraries. One is before independence or can be said as ancient period, another is after independence. From Rampur Raza Library to Thanjavur Maharaja Serfoji's Saraswati Mahal Library and Harekrushna Mahtab State Library, Bhubaneswar was established. In the beginning of public library development, a proposal to register libraries initiated by Bombay Presidency and some books were published from Funds for the Encouragement of Literature in 1808. In the mid 19th Century, public libraries were established in Kolkata, Mumbai and Tamil Nadu. Public library movement in India was started in the early 20th century. The Calcutta library was named Imperial Library in 1902 and later renamed as National Library in 1948. Besides that, Baroda movement was a great period when central, rural libraries were established for societal development. A.A.A. Fyze brought a Report of the Library Development Committee and it was a milestone of the development of the public libraries. Finally the first ever Public Library act was enacted in Tamil Nadu in 1948 and then central, district and other regional libraries were established and developmental activities were functioned under Public Library Acts of nineteen states in India till now. S.R. Ranganathan played a pivotal role for the library legislation and Model Public Libraries Act was prepared by him. Model Public Libraries Bill of the Planning Commission, Model Public Libraries Bill of Indian Library Association, NAPLIS and RRRLF are one of the most key factors affecting part for public library development.

4. Public Library Services and Users

As we generally know Responsive and Anticipatory are the two key services in libraries. Responsive service is request based library service which includes lending service, reservation of documents, reference service, photocopy service and referral service. Informal-formal education to users, promotional, motivational activities, children service, senior citizens service and community information service are generally anticipated by public libraries.

Public Libraries are independent organization which has to signify and serve the entire community with impartiality of access to all. Public libraries commonly maintain their user registration according to their age, race, sex, religion, nationality and social status. The user categories include children, old children, teenagers, adults and senior citizens etc. are the broader categories of users. UNESCO firstly introduced a report on 'Public Library Manifesto' which deals with a meticulous attention to promote public libraries globally in 1949 and later it was revised in 1972 and 1994 respectively. The UNESCO has given an important statement of the fundamental principles of the public library services.

5. Why Innovative Library Services?

Revolutionary changes are taking place in Libraries. The advancement of ICTs is making core impact in library services. Transferring, storing, editing, manipulating, disseminating of information became quite easier for all. Libraries are no exception; they are also trying to adopt the new challenges. Many people say public libraries are dying; they won't exist in coming years. Because the expansion of digital media, the rise

of e-resources and massive budget cuts are one of the main reasons which may end the libraries. Traditionally, Public libraries provide free access to resources. But the whole thing is changing day by day; users are becoming more '*Techmaniacs*'. They love to use their own smart phones, tablets, laptops and other media to seek information. But only libraries can direct the best way to get information at right time efficiently. Innovation and strategic planning for rectifying the library service is not an easy process. Libraries can adapt and can handle the people's changing needs, requirements and understand that innovation is important to the future of public libraries. Only innovations can accelerate the all the services of the public libraries in digital era.

6. Innovative Services and Application

Public libraries provide various services including extension services e.g. career guidance, orientation programmes, meet author programmes, discussion forum and different celebrations on important days etc. In this paper, it has been drawn how public libraries can implement their services in a new way.

6.1 Computer and Internet Access

We are living in 21st Century and without computers we cannot run our daily life. Library usage can be increased by providing access to computers to users. Public libraries in India are having the computers for developmental purposes like automation, but computers should also be used by the users prominently. By that, users may get interest to visit and use the library resources more. On the other hand, internet became so handy; libraries must provide free wi-fi service. Users may have their own laptops, they used to come with it in the library, PLs can provide plug-in service that they can use. Many big libraries provide computer hubs, if small or unit public libraries provide at least two or more computers with internet connections then it will be more effective. PLs can provide research support by open access journals (e.g. DOAJ, Taylor & Francis online and Public Library of Sc. etc.), e-book (e.g. World Public Library, Digital Library India and Directory of Open access books etc.), E-database (e.g. E-print network, University world news and Infomine) etc.

6.2 Media Information Literacy (MIL) and Technology Training

The term Information Literacy is known to all. The way we learn, the way seek the exact information, the way we find our best information are one of the elements of information literacy. But the new technologies made a drastic change in our information seeking behaviour. People across the world are witnessing a dramatic increase in access to information and communication. While some people are starved for information, others are flooded with print, broadcast and digital content. Media and Information Literacy provides answers to the questions that we all ask ourselves at some point (by UNESCO). MIL deals with Library Literacy, Digital Literacy, Social Network Literacy, Computer Literacy, News Literacy, and Advertising Literacy. To provide such services, there is always a need of special aid to the library with IT skilled library professionals. Skilled professionals can train users about these activities by which they can be benefited.

6.3. e-Learning Platform

It is known to all that Public Libraries are the heart of informal education and lifelong learning center. Now-a-days, e-education or e-learning is becoming more prominent part in educational sectors. The Digital India Programme initiates e-learning platforms for youths. Public libraries also can take part by providing computer aided services with proper ICTs to the users. In India, MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) initiate such platforms and SWAYAM (<https://swayam.gov.in/>) and NPTEL (<http://nptel.ac.in/>) are the one

of the most popular trends in MOOCs. It has the learning paths like certificate, diploma, undergraduate and post graduate. Now a question can be raised that how a public library can initiate? Now, a laptop and desktop can be seen in every house but number of peoples who cannot afford to have laptops or tabs in our society, mainly students. Public libraries can provide this service with computer lab and can train users who are interested in e-learning. These doings can make impact to get attention of the users.

6.4 Digital Reference Service (DRS)

Digital reference service is becoming popular among the users group. It is a kind of reference service which is implied electronically in real time and can be rendered by chat, videoconferencing, e-mail or instant messaging. PLs can acquire question-answer process through websites, blogs and links etc. Without implementing new techs for reference service, PLs may not grab the interest of users. To avoid such constraints, PLs can follow the footsteps of OCLC which initiates the cooperative reference service. If PLs start doing such efforts which can affect the reference service more conspicuously.

6.5 Application of Mobile Technologies

Library is growing organisms with its collection, users, and physical aspects, obviously with new and advanced technologies. Dynamic nature of technology has major impact on library services. The concept Library 2.0 and 3.0 is needed to implement in the PLs with mobile technologies. E-resource with mobile interfaces, alerting service through SMS, virtual tour of library, web OPAC can be performed through mobile app of library. New titles preview, showing image gallery and suggestions from users can be performed by mobile technologies. Public Libraries can reach users by implementing remote access.

6.6 Data Corner: Govt. Departments and Non Govt. Departments

Data corner in PLs would engage various Government departments. User can get information at a glance whenever they want. Generally, PLs need to keep all data about its all the adjacent Govt. departments like Agriculture, Education, Judicial, Human resource management, Social welfare, Tourism, Communication and Transportation etc. Information about these can attract users, if PLs do, then users do not have to seek here and there, it will reduce and save the time of the users.

On the other hand, PLs can play as the information corners for the non government organizations by keeping the whole data and update information of registered societies, public and private trusts, non profit companies and organizations, co-operative societies, trade unions, religious bodies respectively. PLs are the local gateways which deal global and local information and that might help the people for their daily life.

6.7 Different Sections and Services

Earlier, in this paper it was mentioned that PLs have various categories of user.

- Traditionally, it comes with 'Children Section' which is common part, but it can be utilized more interestingly with informal experiences like, storytelling, play, media competences and language stimulation for both monolingual and bilingual children by drama, workshops and computer games, interactions etc. Older children require more free spaces and PLs can support them by core knowledge and they can explore themselves more easily.
- Young users always seek for cosiness and they undoubtedly want more flexibility in reading room service with access to e-resources. The fact is youths always prefer online resource because they are becoming digital natives day by day. For this particular reason, Digital Hub would be a great idea for the youths where they can feel free to access both print and non print materials.

- Senior citizens are one of the broad groups in libraries who borrow books and read news paper basically. They are not aware about new technologies. PLs can play as learning hub where senior citizens can learn how to use computers, emailing, texting messages in instant messenger apps and downloading files from net etc. So, if there is any particular IT training room for seniors, then it can do something special to the aged persons and they will be able to access both books and computers.

6.8 Health and Wellbeing Information Services

Public Libraries can promote health information services. Information about hospitals, nursing homes, available doctors in the cities and villages, diagnostic centres, blood bank, health statistics, Govt. orders on health purposes, medical camps, mental health, health & Samiti, USG clinics, fair price of medicines and drug license etc. can be availed by public libraries. PLs can perform health literacy programmes by organising health campaigning, like HIV, cancer, blood donation, health test and awareness on different epidemics etc. Linking with Govt. health portal with library website (if library has website) would play a key role for the users. As Health and Family Welfare Department promotes family health programmes, health education, awareness on child health and mental health programmes, Public Libraries can participate in these activities which may outlook the entire community in our society.

6.9 e-Governance Service

Public libraries can provide e-governance services to the users. ICT in libraries can be a huge asset that can make effective proportions. Access to governmental information to file for benefits and citizens can make use of resources for official purposes. Under The National e-Governance Plan, State Data Centre, Common Service Centre, e-Pramaan (<https://epramaan.gov.in/>), G-I cloud (<http://meity.gov.in/content/gi-cloud-meghraj>), e-Taal (<http://etaal.gov.in/etaal/auth/login.aspx>), are the initiatives which direct the way where citizens can get their information and libraries are the unsung platforms which can play the major role by providing such services to make an easy way for the citizens.

6.10 Publicity and Promotional Activities

Public Libraries can take initiatives to create publicity/promotion for their services through social media, video lectures, alerting services, Kiosk, innovative display, forthcoming activities etc.

- Now-a-days, Website became a common thing in every organization. It is very important for every PLs whether it is District, Town or Rural libraries. Though it has number of prerequisites but still possible through networking.
- Libraries can create online database of the valid users with e-mail id which can be used for alerting services like overdue dates, new arrivals, organizational activities and current awareness service etc. But this thing can be applied for the youth and adult users who are familiar with internet and technologies.
- Senior citizens are not familiar with internet basics, SMS service can be used as alerting service through free SMS service websites; Way2SMS, GoSMS, Free SMS to India and Bulk SMS etc. are the example of free messaging.
- For child users, LCD/LED monitors would work as promotional tools which will inform children about the library activities and functions and this service can attract children.
- The e-WOM is a digital marketing & promotional tool. It is a buzz type e-marketing where people can interact and share their knowledge. Public libraries can make use of it for creating awareness among the users.

- In the modern era, social media is the key weapon to promote any activities. Facebook page, twitter accounts, blogs, Youtube accounts, Instagram and Whatsapp group are the functional tools for social interaction. If PLs promote their activities through these social media, then users will be more effective and interactive.
- The number of users in public libraries can be increased by various educational, researches, skill development and motivational video lectures etc. through Youtube or Facebook.

6.11 Payment Service

Public Libraries can organize a user e-Payment zone by creating an account for transaction. Users can make payments for electricity, telephone, tax bills and competitive examination fee etc. On the other hand, general charges on overdue, membership fees, printing, photocopy and duplicate library card etc. can be transacted electronically by users and this service might attract users.

7. Users study

User study is one of the best tools to find the reading habits and information seeking behavior of the users and perspective users. Libraries are there to serve as informal centre for education and other community information. It is very important for libraries to know users' requirements. To analyze such aspects, public libraries need survey. Usually structured questionnaires are the best ways to survey, but they also can do it by Google forms.

8. Conclusion

Libraries are always keen to support creative and innovative activities. In modern era, Public libraries should be more innovative to handle the complexities of services. In this paper, it has been stated where the public libraries should evolve their services with good work condition, positive mental condition of the library professionals and infrastructure with low cost. There are number of pre-requisites like adoption of new technologies, well skilled professionals, proper IT infrastructure and funds for implementing innovations in library. The obligation of the authority of public library, staff and users is very crucial for the development of the library. It can be said if public libraries apply those services which are written in this paper might be more effective to attract the user group.

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