

Status of Digital Novice Academic Librarians' Continuing Professional Development: A Case of University of the Punjab

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This paper aims at exploring the ways, through which the academic librarians engage themselves in continuing professional development (CPD) activities. It also identifies the sources that academic librarians feel helpful for their CPD. These librarians neither had any ICT training before nor educated during their Master in Library and Information Science (MLIS) for the use of the latest technology, and are considered as digital novice. Librarians are required to keep them up to date to survive in this competitive information marketplace. They need to get familiarized with the latest technology and its applications for the libraries to minimize the gap between the information and its users. CPD allows receding from the traditional approach and muddling through the new digital arena. To get the vivid picture in the current scenario qualitative approach was used. Interviews were used as data collection technique. The population of this study was these digital immigrants librarian who got their MLIS degree before year 2001 and never had any formal ICT training before joining the profession and working in the University of the Punjab. Non probability purposive sampling technique was used to choose the sample of 12 respondents. The subsequent analysis will help librarian judge the present status of their CPD activities and to determine the ways to improve self-directed or organizational learning. It will be of assistance to the library schools, library management, library association and the policy makers to improve the existing training programs or to design the new programs to fulfill the requirements.

Keywords: Continuing professional development, academic librarian, digital immigrants, university of the Punjab-libraries

Every profession of the world is changing with the passage of time neither the practices nor the tools and techniques used remain constant. So, to keep a profession up to date the professional must maintain and upgrade their knowledge according to the changing need of the hour. Continuing professional development is a way to enhance the skills, knowledge and experience both, formally and informally. As the one proceed through the career path to remain competent and achieve the true potential. The journey starts with the basic degree required to initiate or opt for a profession and continues throughout the life of the professionals along with the growing changes both in macro and microenvironment of

an individual. CPD is a way to fill the gaps between the basic educational requirements of the profession and the needs of the skills and knowledge for being an efficient professional (Majid, 2004).

Information technology has its implications on every walk of life and so is the case with information profession. New forms of information, diversified needs of users and the growing alternatives to get the information are the major challenges faced by the information professional. Information professionals are required to learn the new technologies and the associated skills to cope with these developments. Particularly, those professionals who did not get any training regarding the new technology during their professional degree they are required to overcome this deficiency using the various available options. These include the personal quest, on job training, reading the professional literature, social networking, list serve, various courses offered by library schools, professional organizations, seminars and workshops organized.

Literature Review

There is copious literature regarding the continuing professional development of the librarians/ information professionals a small number is being discussed here for the purpose of the literature review.

Information profession is changing rapidly with the emergence of latest technology and the changing information needs of the users. It has become a pre-requisite for the information professionals/ librarians to keep their knowledge and skills up to date by learning new skills and enhancing the existing ones (Broady-Preston, 2009) . Librarians assume two types of skills, one of them are basic skills which they acquire during their professional education while some skills are specialized which they require to retain themselves in their profession (Brine & Feather, 2002). They are supposed to have upgraded knowledge of their field in every respect to keep pace with changing needs of the profession. It is need of the hour for them to get engaged in CPD activities the aftermath of which is more incentives for them like visibility in their respective organization and promotion. Librarians are expected to have ICT, information literacy, management and presentation skills. To acquire those skills they are required to look for all possibilities in the areas like management, technology and marketing along with degree in another discipline or to pursue for higher degrees in their own discipline. Library professionals are required to avail every opportunity, whether pursue in-person or through the web based on line courses. Attending workshops lectures, involving in research work

as they are sometime expected to work in faculty status especially in academic environment (Flatley & Weber, 2004).

Information profession's exponential changes demand those professionals who can easily adapt themselves to changing demands of the profession. New technologies keep on adding to the profession which ultimately results in changing practices and functions of libraries. The resources of the libraries have changed from the printed to electronic and so is the way to manage these resources and the associated services. In this era of rapid change to help the professionals to keep their knowledge up to date associations like American Library Association (ALA) and Online Computer Library Centre (OCLC) are providing several opportunities for CPD in the form of conferences, seminars, online courses (Ashcroft & Watts, 2005). Digitization of the resources and the digital libraries have grasp the attention of professionals and created many challenges and issues for them. In the domain of digitization websites, associations and organization such as Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP), TFPL, ASLIB, Canadian Heritage Information Network, Digital Library Foundation, Electronic Resource Preservation and Access Network (ERPANET), Nestor etc. are playing active role to help the information professional in the quest of CPD (Bawden, Vilar, & Zabukovec, 2005). Along with these professional indulge in CPD activities in informal ways of discussion and learning from the peers, reading across the professional literature, through the list serves (Long & Applegate, 2008). Social networking plays an important role in CPD where professional get engaged to others and develop their own personal learning network (Cooke, 2012).

Studies conducted world over in the area of CPD highlight certain factors which affect positively or negatively to the CPD activities of the professionals. These factors include awareness, personal motivation, organizational support, incentives or rewards (Blakiston, 2011; Gosino-Boodoo & Nish, 2009).

Chaudhary (2001) conducted a study to assess the present status of CPD of the librarians in Pakistan regarding the changing information environment and the needs of the library users. Other studies were conducted in this part of the globe to judge the competencies regarding the needs of academic and special libraries and were judged against the needs of the job market (Mahmood, 2003; Ullah & Anwar, 2008; Warraich, 2008). Mahmood and Shafique (2012) in their study evaluated the use of courses offered by library school at University of the Punjab and to what extent they help fulfill the needs of professionals. Ullah, Ameen, and Bakhtiar (2011) in their study gave an appraisal of the training need of the librarians in the field of medicine.

Review of the literature in Pakistan reveals the treatment of CPD of information professionals from different perspective but there is a lack of study dealing with the specified group of professional. So a study to gauge the digital literacy training of the librarians who were not trained during their Master's degree about the technology and its implications on the library work is much required.

Research Questions

1. What is the perception of librarians about their CPD activities that enhance their digital literacy?
2. What are the librarians' preferred ways (formal and informal) to foster the digital literacy skills?
3. What are the suggested ways to improve the technology training among librarians?

Delimitations

CPD activities are key factor for the survival of any information professional/ librarian. These activities include both formal and informal ways of learning. These activities are highly affected by the political, social, economic and cultural factors of the parent organization. The present study is delimited to data collected from the employees of the University of the Punjab. So the results of the analysis cannot be generalized.

The study is also delimited to specific group of people who qualified in Library and Information Science prior to year 2001. This group did not get formal technology training during their Masters' degree. The study focuses the perception, practices, expectations and suggestions of a specific group and hence the inferences cannot be generalized.

Research Design

To fulfil the purpose of this study qualitative approach was applied. Qualitative approach helps understand the participants' perspective more comprehensively. Being a cyclic process and more flexible technique the qualitative approach helps amend any step at any stage.

The study was aimed at addressing the perception, actual practices and the suggestions of a specific group of librarians regarding their CPD specifically in the area of information technology. The population of the study was those librarians who got their Masters' degree in Library and Information Science prior to year 2001. The reason of this selection was the fact that there was no formal training of digital technology in Library and Information Schools before year 2001.

A list of the librarians who did their Masters in LIS before the year 2001 and are presently working at the University of the Punjab was made with the help of a friend working as a librarian at the University of the Punjab. To achieve the objectives of the study 12 respondents were selected. The minimum criterion for selection of respondents was master's degree in Library and Information Science. The selection of small sample size helps understand the participants' point of view in detail through the emerging questions as compared to the quantitative approach where they have to answer the fixed questions.

A semi structured interview guide was prepared after conducting a literature review and discussion with the peers. The interview technique was used to get the in-depth idea of the respondents' views about CPD i.e. their perception, their actual practices, preferences and their future expectations along with their suggestions regarding the CPD of librarians. The interviews were recorded with the help of voice recorder available in smart phone. The names and the placements of the respondents are not revealed to ensure their confidentiality.

The collected data was analyzed using the content analysis technique. Content analysis is a technique which helps analyze the textual, verbal or communication data. It helps identify the aim, focus and the content of the communication. With the help of this technique collected data is transformed into symbols, themes, patterns and concepts (Busha & Harter, 1980). These symbols are quantified to get the intended purpose of the study. As the collected data of this study was based on communication so, the researchers used content analysis to analyze the data

Findings and interpretation

The interview data unveiled the positive attitude of the respondents about the CPD and the associated activities. The conversation revealed that the respondents are and remained engaged to the CPD activities through various available options. Out of the twelve respondents one had a PhD degree, one was doing the PhD in Library and Information Science, three were pursuing for MPhil degree out of which one was doing MPhil in Library and Information Science while the rest were doing it in different disciplines. One of the respondents had master's degree in two other disciplines. Respondent's age ranged from 35 to 45.

Perception about CPD activities to enhance digital literacy

The respondent's view showed that getting engaged in the CPD activities is very much required to survive in the profession. They opined that options are available for CPD and in this age of technology there is no issue of communicating the programs and venues to the professionals. Only one respondent complaint that he never got timely information about the training courses which was the only reasons he failed to join most of the courses although willing to. The answers showed that the personal motivation is the major factor which helps one to engage in CPD activities. If one is motivated enough to learn the new developments nothing can hinder it-even the geographical restrictions and the personal issue do not matter. The respondents were satisfied with the support from University of the Punjab regarding their CPD activities except the two who were of the view that although University is very supportive but it has issues when comes to the immediate bosses whose personality traits limit the professional growth of the individual subordinates.

The demotivation factor which were mentioned by the respondents were social status of librarians, non-demanding cliental and moral support from the immediate bosses.

Preferred ways to foster the digital literacy

The questions regarding the preferred ways to foster digital literacy brought out the facts that the entire respondent heavily relied to their person to get them themselves digitally literate to keep pace with the demands of changing time. The respondents joined Pakistan Library Association Computer Training Centre (PLA-CTC) immediately after their master's degree which was the only source of information technology

training for library professionals at that time. They attended different short course offered by British Council to familiarize themselves with the technology and its applications to their professional discourse.

Out of the 12 respondents, 10 expressed that they relied heavily on the course conducted by the Punjab University library and the training organized by the Department of Library and Information Science University of the Punjab. Third major source remained the conferences and workshops organized by the professional bodies specially Pakistan Library Association and Pakistan Library Automation Group.

Out of the total 12 respondents 3 engaged themselves in credit courses offered by the Library schools. These three respondents read the professional literature as a requirement to get MPhil and PhD degrees while the rest never engaged in this activity.

Not a single respondent has ever joined an online course, web cast, video conferences etc. for the purpose. Two of the respondents said they are not even aware of these sources. The entire respondents except one, pronounced the social networking useless in their professional development and learning. The respondents stated that the professional groups are an effective means of communicating the professionals about the programs and activities organized for the purpose of digital literacy training. Table 1 provides the ranking of the available options used by the respondents for enhancing their digital literacy.

Table 1
Ranking of preferred ways for digital literacy

| Ways opted for digital literacy | Freq. |
|---|-------|
| Personal Quest | 12 |
| Punjab University Library | 10 |
| Department of Library and Information Science | 9 |
| Conferences, workshops organized by professional bodies | 9 |
| Colleagues | 9 |
| Reading professional literature | 3 |
| Credit course | 3 |
| Short Courses | 3 |

Suggested areas of CPD they are likely to learn in the future

The respondents showed great interest in the few areas which they wanted to learn in the future. These areas include digital library, information retrieval, library data bases, integrated library software, data base design, EDDC, digital cataloguing, digital reference services, website design and markup languages. Three of the respondents said that they were not interested in information technology areas like user interface design, Meta data, Imaging/ Scanning, Semantic web, data base design, Markup languages because they were of the view that these areas were of no concern to librarians. They wanted to learn IT applications on traditional library areas like classification, cataloguing and reference services.

Table 2 shows the areas in which the respondents want to learn in future according to the level of preferences from highest through lowest.

Table 2

Areas of future interest arranged according to the level of preferences

| Areas of interest | Freq. |
|--|-------|
| Digital Library | 9 |
| Information retrieval | 7 |
| Library data bases | 7 |
| Data base design | 4 |
| EDDC | 3 |
| Digital cataloguing | 1 |
| Digital reference | 1 |
| Online acquisition of books and journals | 1 |

Suggestions regarding the future training courses

The respondents gave some suggestions regarding the future digital literacy training of the information professionals. The nine respondents said that Pakistan Library association and library schools are mainly responsible for the training of the library professionals. They suggested that Punjab University library should organize course for the librarians working in the University as it used to do in the past. The respondent also suggested that there should be evening and weekend courses organized by the library schools with and the resource person should be library professionals and IT professionals. One of the respondents suggested that whatever courses are designed for the future, the library schools should be the centre of it and it should be done with the collaboration of professional bodies and various organizations. It was suggested that PLA-CTC should be revived. Pakistan Library Association should perform better in this regard. One of the respondent suggested that there should be a council to register the professional at the moment they get qualified like Pakistan Engineering Council etc. so that every professional should be informed about the activities being organized.

Conclusion

The study unveils the facts that the working librarians have a positive attitude towards their CPD and doing efforts to fill the gap of technology training. These professionals consider the self-motivation as the major factor of getting involved in CPD. Their perception is that they are fully aware of ways and the available sources of CPD but still they are not familiar how to get the advantages of online courses. These librarians want the technology application to the traditional areas of librarianship and reject the advance courses as user interface design, semantic web etc. Pakistan library association, library schools and the University of the Punjab are required to put more efforts towards the training of librarians.

Recommendations

1. Pakistan library association is required to play an active role in the CPD activities of the LIS professionals.
2. Pakistan Library Association Computer Training centre (PLA-CTC) should be revived and regular course should be offered.
3. Department of library and Information Science University of the Punjab is needed to design short course, evening and weekend programmes for the working librarians
4. Punjab University Library should work for organization of the courses for the professional development of the librarians working at the University.
5. Professional bodies should put an effort towards the development of library councils at provincial levels.

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