

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS FOR EFFECTIVE LIBRARY MANAGEMENT

Dr. Muttayya Koganuramath *
Mallikarjun Angadi **

Abstract

This paper intends to reveal various facets of interpersonal skills and also the importance of public relations skills, including librarian's own skills, that helps the users to cultivate interpersonal skills as a positive reference service. Surveys of professional librarians show a high need for the skills for professional competencies, management, networking and teamwork. The perceived need for skills in these areas may reflect the increasing interdependence of library workers and reliance on teamwork. In addition to this, the core communication skills recognised for effectiveness in a library setting include, professional knowledge, non-verbal communication, negotiating, competence in presenting and explaining information, and basic listening skills.

Introduction

The world of information is undergoing rapid change. We are facing a novel epoch of change, an information age at a great turning point in the history of civilisation. The day has arrived when it is most important to learn to access, analyse, apply, and evaluate such information. As the traditional custodians of information, librarians need to be aware of the implications of these changes and develop technological & managerial skills which will enable them to make effective use of information and to meet their organisations' changing information needs. Many librarians lack confidence in face of increasingly information technology. It is vital that they be kept in touch with modern developments and maintain a proactive approach to their work in an ever-changing information world. Today we lead our lives in a world where information and knowledge are a momentous force in shaping society, and require more sophisticated skills.

* University Librarian, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Deonar, Mumbai - 400 088

** Information Scientist, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Deonar, Mumbai - 400 088

Public Relations V/s Interpersonal Skills

According to Angoff "the aim of PR in Library and information centers, is to communicate essence of the library to the appropriate audience, to whom it has so much to offer and to fix the idea in their minds that the library is source of incalculable value". Certainly there is a need for a concrete campaign of Public Relations in librarianship. It is time to publicise ourselves, our professionalism, the skills we have to offer, our libraries and the products and services we offer. How do we do this, ..it is here, where your interpersonal as well as communication skills that can play as key role for a successful Library PR. If we apply our skills to the library and promote it as a business, no matter what sort of library we are in, then definitely we will be on our way to establishing successful public relations.

Personal Skills

There is growing recognition that the need for interpersonal skills applies to internal peer and management relations as well as to user-contact activities. Librarians need good communication skills, record-keeping skills, teaching skills, information research skills and the ability to evaluate material and to be organised. Librarians also need computer skills and they should be know how to preserve the documents from damage. Management skills may also be useful, as librarians are involved in team management.

Librarians need to be:

- * friendly
- * Maintain enthusiasm
- * pleasing personality
- * helpful and patient when dealing with users
- * able to remain calm and polite under stress
- * accurate, quick and efficient
- * able to work on their own
- * self-motivated
- * able to ask for help if it is needed.

Professional Skills

Sound work habits:

The librarian is a technology application leader who works with other members of the information management team to design and evaluate systems for information access that meet user needs. Where required, the librarian provides instruction and support so that end users can make optimal use of the information resources available to them. He should be capable of working in the hybrid world of print and electronic media and providing the best mix of information resources in the most appropriate formats for the environment.

Professional knowledge:

Professional knowledge here relates to the librarian's knowledge in the areas of information resources, information access, technology, management and research and the ability to use these areas of knowledge as a basis for providing library and information services.

Good listener:

Two ears one mouth - we were given two ears but only one mouth. This is because God knew that listening was twice as hard as talking. People need to practice and acquire skills to be good listeners. Information is an intangible substance that must be sent by the speaker and received by an active listener.

Information Technology for Information storage and use:

Due to technology revolution, there is a rapid change in the publishing media also like E-journals, CD-ROMs, On-line database, Electronic Books etc., i.e everything is available in digital form that can be stored and utilised effectively and efficiently. One should make best use of available technology to meet the changing needs of the users. There must be a provision for a support service for electronic information service users. Librarians needs to keeps up-to-date with new electronic information products and modes of information delivery.

Provides leadership:

Learns about and cultivates the qualities of a good leader and knows when to exercise leadership. Share leadership with others or allow others to take the leadership role. Exercises leadership within the library and as a member of other teams or units within the organisation. Acknowledges the contribution of all members of the team.

Teamwork:

An ability to establish working relations with others, defining, sharing and delegating responsibilities within a group and encouraging people to work effectively in groups
Ability to cooperate with others and make a variety of contributions (eg ideas, organisation) in a joint venture

Negotiating:

The ability to reach agreement on a matter, which is satisfactory to all parties, for instance academic librarians may need to negotiate with peers on inter-library loans, or with administrators on budget concerns. Successful negotiators are active listeners, who acknowledge what the other person says. The ideal negotiated agreement is one in which a win-win situation prevails for all parties.

Networking:

It is apparent that no library can provide all of the materials needed by its users. It is absolutely necessary to share resources and pursue a wide variety of information exchange opportunities with other institutions. New breakthroughs in networking, improvements in electronic transmission of data make resource sharing a viable alternative. The library professionals must possess the ability to make effective contact with relevant people in order to share information, resources and experiences

Conclusion

The objective of the librarian will continue to be to bring in together human beings and recorded knowledge as fruitful relationship as is humanly possible. However, it is important to recognise that the advent of electronic libraries will not solve all problems. We still know too little about the psychology and sociology of human cognition and communication. It is unlikely that the electronic library will automatically solve the problems of access, as anyone who uses the Internet will know only too well. Similarly electronic information does not automatically equate with effective retrieval - indexes where they exist are still created by humans.

However, it is also important that library users play a part in ensuring that libraries deliver the service that is needed. Librarians welcome the opportunity to find out what readers want and to better understand how to deliver relevant and timely services. It is only by working together and building on each others' knowledge and experience that we can improve the services.

References

1. Kaul, H.K. Library and Information professionals in the 21st Century. University News, 36(19) 1998, pp.11-13
2. Marshall, J., Fisher, B., Moulton, L., & Piccoli, R. (May 1996). Competencies for special librarians of the 21st century. Special Libraries Association.
<http://www.sla.org/professional/competency.html>.
3. Knapp, Mark L., & Vangelisti, Anita L. (1996). Interpersonal communication and human relationships. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.
4. Levy, Philippa, & Usherwood, Bob. (1992). People skills: Interpersonal skills training for library and information work. London: British Library Board.
5. Levy, P. Interpersonal Skills Training (Library Training Guides). London: Library Association, 1993, pp.1-60.

6. Levy, P. and Usherwood, B. People Skills: interpersonal skills training for library and information work. (Library and Information Research Report 88). London: British Library, 1992, pp.1-180.
7. Angoff (Allen), Ed. Public Relations for libraries, London: greenwood, 1973, p.vii
8. Alison Jago, "Approaching 2000: new challenges for the information professional" in New roles, new skills, new people. Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 1995, p.50.
9. Jo Haythornthwaite, "Skills for today and tomorrow" in New roles, new skills, new people. Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 1995, p.42.