Professional Development Programmes and Skill Development of Librarians

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Abstract

The paper gives an overview of studies in professional development of the library staff which is important as new changes is taking place in libraries due to technological innovations. This makes it necessary for the library staff to perceive professional development to adapt to the new changes. The studies particularly highlight need and importance of professional development programmes, various means of attaining such programmes as well. It also gives the insights about professional development programmes and its effects on skills of the librarians.

Keywords– Professional Development, Staff Training, Professional Training, LIS Profession, Skill Development, Continuing Professional Development

Introduction

Library professionals play an important role in development of the library. The libraries and services offered by them are changing according to modern technology. Cooke (2012) described that librarianship is ever expanding and changing, due to exploding internet and media technologies. With diverse patron groups and increasingly complex information needs, library professionals need to be as savvy as the clients they serve, and the most productive and effective way for librarians to keep up with these changes is to seek out professional development opportunities. According to Pan and Hovde (2010) Professional development (PD) is a lifetime learning process, which is both universal and individualized. It is a universal requirement of all librarians in order to keep up with the rapid changes in the library field and maintain professionalism; thus improving their ability to provide services to their clients.

The purpose of this paper is to address the changing landscape of the library profession, including the changing nature of library and information science education, and to explain the importance and necessity of continuing professional development for librarians, the newest manifestation of which is online professional development through Web 2.0 tools and social media technologies.

Need and Importance of Professional Development Programmes

Ramaiah and Moorthy (2002) reported the need and impact of continuing education

programmes (CEP) for library and information science (LIS) professionals in India, particularly for college librarians. A two-phase study of ARL librarians (Powell, 1988) found that while library school programmes and on-the-job training accounted for the bulk of professional knowledge, participants indicated that they would prefer more access to staff development and continuing education programmes.

Munoz and Whyte (n.d.) mentioned in their paper that growing electronic collections, distributed learning and research environment and the changing behaviour of users requires librarians to have up-to-date professional development programmes.

Corcoran and McGuiness (2014) in their study presented the results of a qualitative study of the continuing professional development activities of academic librarians in Ireland and the role played by professional organizations. This research presented an Irish perspective, but also explored issues which are globally applicable within the profession.

According to Chan and Auster (2003) librarians are motivated to maintain their professional competence but they should be encouraged to participate in updating activities. The findings were based on studies conducted on professional development practices of reference librarians in Ontario. Their study recommended that libraries develop and implement policies that support formal and informal training.
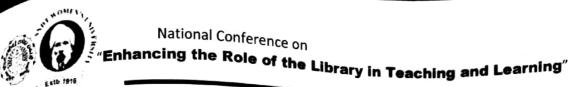
Adams (2009) described the professional development of the staff of Auckland library in New Zealand. It was observed that training programmeswere organized for the better development of the future. Whereas a study by Bury (2010) aimed to gather and analyse data in order to provide an overview of key trends and developments in the current Continuing Professional Development (CPD) landscape for Irish library professionals.

Sagolsem, Purnima Devi and Vikas (2007) reported a survey conducted among the library professional staff working in public libraries and NGO libraries of Manipur. They stressed the importance of continuing education programmes to upgrade professional competencies and suggested that the government should provide more grants for library development in the state.

Cassner and Adams (2006) surveyed distance librarians in academic libraries to determine their professional development needs. Respondents were asked to indicate which professional development activities they are currently participating in and those they are likely to engage in within the next five years. The findings from the authors' survey revealed the types of knowledge and skills required by practitioners in the next five years. Respondents mentioned that core activities that will be most important in the next five years re instructional design, Web page design, and marketing/public relations. An interesting article reviewed the benefits of attending academic conferences and discusses five strategies for selecting an appropriate subject conference in any discipline (Tomaszewski& MacDonald, 2009).

Tchangalova and Lam (2013) studied the perspective on the continuing education needs for science and technology librarians in the 21st century. They found that online tutorials and webinars, as well as face-to-face workshops at conferences, are the best preferred approaches for professional development.

Skill Development by Attending Professional Development Programmes

Henderson (2006) studied to determine the effectiveness of the library's staff development

training programmes. He assessed the participants' perceptions of the worth of the training workshops and their subsequent effect on their job performance. Adanu (2007) in a study of university libraries in Ghana opined that the work environment of professional librarians encouraged professional development leading to job advancement and updated skills. He also pointed out that continuing professional development (CPD) was a shared responsibility of the library and the individual.

Idiegbeyan-Ose, Ohaegbulam andOsayande (2015) revealed that librarians derived many benefits from conference or workshop attendance, such as it enables them to remain up-to-date, acquire new skills, network with colleagues, develop article writing and presentation skills, and so on. The challenges that librarians encountered included high cost of conference registration fees, lack of sponsorship, and unawareness.

Malik (2016) reported that after participating in a professional development program about adult learning theory, librarians in their study reported that, they indicated gaining a greater awareness of student development, enabling them to more successfully tailor their interactions. Davis and Lundstrom (2011) discussed in their paper the challenges of promoting staff development and provided details about USU (Utah State University) library's approach to meeting these challenges and creating and promoting activities that help staff maintain and enhance the relationships and skills required for today's library.

Montiel-Overalla and Hernández (2012) studied elementary school teachers and librarians where professional-development intervention workshops were conducted to improve teacher and school librarian collaboration to integrate library and subject content. Findings indicated that professional development workshops can significantly change teachers' perceptions about collaborating with school librarians. Of particular interest are changed perceptions in the intervention group regarding high-end collaborative endeavors involving integrated jointly planned and taught lessons.

The case study of Training cataloguing professionals at the University of the West Indies, St Augustine: part 2 by Hosein and Bowen-Chang (2011) examined the effectiveness of cataloguing training of professionals at the St Augustine Campus Libraries of the University of the West Indies, during the period 2005-2010, with emphasis on the cataloguing of special formats and the overall importance of continuing education.The findings clearly demonstrated the effectiveness of cataloguing training and support the cataloguers in their thrust to improve and upgrade their professional skills, and thereby facilitate the transfer of knowledge and practices to entry-level cataloguers.

Conclusion

Professional development is required at all levels by the staff to improve skills and gain knowledge.For that many programmes should arranged such as workshops, seminars, class/ lectures, demonstrations, video presentations and online instruction. Such types of programmes should be conducted every year for staff in the library as well outside libraries and by institutions/agencies. For example, National Institute of Science Communication and Information Resources (NISCAIR) conducts short term courses in the field of Library and Information Science and other areas. Their entire year's program schedule is prepared and uploaded on their website every year in advance. There are plenty of blogs/websites/forum/mailing lists that display information regarding programmes. Even host

institution creates alerts through announcement kind of websites such as conferencealert.com. It becomes easy for professionals to identify in advance and complete the procedure to attend such training programmes. According to University Grants Commission new guidelines library professional or any teacher now can participate in multidisciplinary training programmes. It gives the opportunity to librarians to broaden their knowledge or skills by attending such type of programmes. For example academic staff college of Mumbai University conducts training programmeson e content development which can be attended by any teachers regardless of their area of specialization. Overall aim of all professional development programmes is to develop skilled manpower to further enhancement of subject, to build new generations; in a way development of a great nation with the view of economic, academic and social sustainable growth.

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