

# IMPROVEMENT OF TECHNOLOGICAL SKILLS OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES.

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## ABSTRACT

*The academic libraries, technological skills, need for planning, existing and new recruits of libraries, need of improvement and objectives are discussed. The methodologies including continuing education, sources of training, deputation to academic programmes have been suggested. The planning envisages, financial resources, emerging services, evaluation of training/services and total quality concept/management are a few of the aspects discussed.*

## WHAT IS ACADEMIC LIBRARY

The library which is engaged in supporting formal education right from + 10 onwards to postgraduation and research studies is termed as ACADEMIC LIBRARY. There seems to be under developed academic libraries till 12th standards whereas from 12 onwards, there is uniform growth of such libraries depending upon the streams. The science and technical streams are comparatively intensively developed than arts, humanities and commerce and this holds true for their libraries. The UGC never discriminates between different streams but somehow this type of unwieldy growth among the libraries is prominent. The academic library concept has encompassed, nowadays, the institutes of open universities, distant learning, correspondence courses. The UGC emphasises on continuing education as a result of fast changing information world through INFLIBNET programme. This has forced to redefine the ACADEMIC LIBRARY as "A library not only engaged in informal education but also inculcate the healthy habits of collecting and accessing the information wherever and whatever form it exists be made available to user at any cost.

## TECHNOLOGICAL SKILLS

In the advent of emerging technologies in the information field, one has to acquire and practice various skills needed to handle the technology. Every skill is specific to every technology being made use of. Basically, it is computing skills which needed to be upgraded or acquired wherever necessary. Sometimes, the skills are hardware or software dependent and that is why one has to constantly view, learn and master the skill in this fast changing technological world.

The technology grows amazingly fast and does not allow any type of lethargy or negligence. Elementary levels of skills are very easy to adopt at any stage of life e.g. knowledge of different jargons of computer terms and working such as KEYBOARDS, RAM, ROM, DOS, UNIX/XENIX, MACHINE LANGUAGE, HIGH LEVEL LANGUAGES, CTDs, SERIAL PORTS, CENTRONIC PORTS, PRINTERS ETC. have to be mastered for ever. Banking on this elementary knowledge, one can develop further his advanced skills like CD-ROM searching, ON-LINE searching, hooking up on different NETWORKS, sharing computer peripherals/resources can be acquired and developed. The skills as told earlier, can be H/W or S/W oriented and differs from environments working on. In software skills the various executable commands, directing the processed data into the file, searching commands, data retrieval and getting it printed are some of the skills needed to be mastered.

## NEED FOR PLANNING

We plan every activity to measure the performance level as per the fixed GOALS. The goals are INTANGIBLE whereas objectives are TANGIBLE. We can measure and quantify the objectives but the goals are hard to quantify and evaluate. To plan a systems approach is required and delineating various activities through flow charts, working modules, feasibility study, implementation, evaluation, feedbacks and improvements and its further incorporation into the plans are very essential aspects. We require planning to assess and know the success or failure of any activity. The planning is an unending process. At least to know that we have failed in the project, we require plan. The planning also entails thorough thinking, visualising the external

and internal factors affecting the process of planning, etc. To phase out the interlinked activities and to prioritise the same, we plan. No plan can be successfully implemented in one go and as the same is backed by financial resources which is not available in one stretch. To systematise and methodically carry out the activity we need plan.

### **HUMAN RESOURCES (EXISTING AND NEW RECRUITS)**

Eventhough we talk about automation or mechanical era, human resources are indispensible as they are mandatory to run any system. The strength may be different but nobody can do away with it. When we consider human resources our first object is existing staff. Every institute has to take into account this aspect and try to extract the most from them. The improvement planning should first revolve around the existing staff. Lot of thinking goes into how to train the existing staff. In that again we have to think in long term utility for training. The staff who are retiring in near future say 2-3 years after the training is planned should not be trained as the same would be still required to carry out the traditional services.

#### **EXISTING STAFF**

The objective of improving technological skills of all existing staff is the final GOAL. But again in one go, we can not train them. Hence the policy should be identify the staff who are in contact with clientele more and train them first. The staff who are not directly connected with the users be given 2nd priority. After identifying the first lot, say 10 people, study their background, work environment and training requirement. They need not be told every thing or intricacies of the system but for efficient handling they should perform well and should not have any problem. A few of them can be deputed outside for academic studies and upgrade their skills. Most of the institutes offer continuing education training for library staff say INFLIBNET, NISSAT, INSDOC DRTC.

#### **NEW RECRUITS**

When the library has decided to switch on to new environment or working always think of obtaining a well qualified, trained and skilled hand to handle the system in the library. As and when the situation of new recruitment comes, one should have above minimum requirement in mind. This pays you in long run and we need not have to spend additionally on training for him/her. New recruit is an option which must be exploited fully for the placement of suitable person in newly identified environment. There are very few such instances

but those should not be allowed to get slipped away. Superannuation, promotion, retirement and placement of the vacant posts are continuous processes.

### **NEED FOR IMPROVEMENT AND OBJECTIVES**

The technology is developing at supersonic speed. Every technology in information management requires different knowledge and skills. Basically, Computing skills and knowledge are must without that no staff can acquire the technology. Traditionally, the staff have expertise in working but when it comes to adaptation of technology then upgradation of skills are of prime significance. The computers have swarmed every field of knowledge and information and library science is no exception. Hence there is an absolute need to improve the skills specifically computer handling skills are mandatory. Every other skill is just an upgradation or extension of computing skills. For example, to know "How E-MAIL technology works"; one needs to know the function of MODEM which is an additional instrument of telecommunication technology. Once the knowledge of MODEM is obtained then automatically telecommunication skills are acquired.

#### **OBJECTIVES**

To plan any activity, we need to fix some objectives to verify at the end of plan period how many of them have been concretely fulfilled. For improvement of technological skills of human resources, let us try to fix a few of them :

1. To adopt new technology in information field and to upgrade technological skills of existing staff.
2. To serve users with better services to fullest satisfaction.
3. To assure quality in service.
4. To infuse competitive attitude among the staff for better service.
5. To serve the user in anticipation of his requirement,.
6. To change the library staff's attitudes in respect of changing world.

#### **METHODOLOGIES TO BE ADOPTED**

To bring improvement in technological skills of the staff, there are certain methodologies which need to be adopted. These will involve financial implications and strategic planning. Directly or indirectly, one has to choose the best option or

methodology for developing or acquiring the technological skills.

## **CONTINUING EDUCATION CONCEPT**

The avenues for continuing education to library staff at all levels be opened so that instead of getting stucked up in the service, they can upgrade their knowledge and acquire new skills wherever possible thus refurbishment can be incorporated in them. The existing library staff should be deputed to training as a part of continuing education. This involves administrative time and expenditure per staff for which the management should be ready to bear. In any field, concepts keep on changing and do not remain same for years together. To know the changing concept, one has to attend SEMINARS, SYMPOSIUMS, SHORT TERM COURSES, SUMMER/WINTER INSTITUTE, WORKSHOPS, INNOVATIVE IDEAS, CASE-STUDIES etc. and get changed their vision and outlook. The continuing education entails changes in the functioning which should be incorporated as and when necessary and suitably.

## **IN-HOUSE SOURCES OF TRAINING**

A few universities, technical colleges, science colleges possess computer faculty. This faculty can be very useful in getting trained the existing library staff for computing skills. A programme/training course can be chalked out in consultation with computer science faculty or Centre, draw some resource persons from them and conduct a formal short term course say for 15 days or 2 weeks for library staff. This is a very good exercise for developing technological skills in-house. They can be told on DOS, UNIX platform peripherals, initial commands, cabling, keyboards and other jargons of computing environment. Once the foundation of basic computing skills is laid then the library staff will do miracles. This also involves money but less as compared to other options to be discussed later. Hence this should be tapped first and then others. It may cost Rs. 5,000 for 2 weeks but will have long term benefits.

## **OUTSIDE AGENCIES FOR TRAINING**

It has been observed that there are lot of computing institutes, like typing institutes, sprouted in metros and other urban conglomerates. They offer very useful training course at all levels - Elementary, indepth and advanced. Most of the elementary level training offer basic and fundamental computing skills of course with Course fees. Wherever it is not possible to arrange the training in house then this option may be exercised for KEY PERSONS with

sound background and aptitudes. This option is bit costly but can be availed if nothing else is feasible and only for limited persons say 2 or 3. For this training appropriateness should be viewed vis-a-vis library requirement. When any library staff is trained by this option, he/she should educate the other in library who can not be deputed outside for obvious reasons. The expense involved and administrative absence must be got sanctioned from the higher management authorities.

## **DEPUTATION TO ACADEMIC COURSES**

To view continuing education, training from different agencies etc. in totality, a few of the enterprising library staff must always be deputed to persue the higher studies in information science faculty which has also incorporated the training component in their courses. Irrespective of the cadre, the staff be deputed for BLISC or MLISC which offers total fresh outlook in the attitudes. They may be permitted to join the correspondence courses being run by Open Universities in India. Any sort of appropriate technology training, higher studies in information science and continuing education programmes to library staff be accepted with open mind.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

To get the existing library staff trained, a long range financial support is required. If it is planned to get trained library staff within next 2-3 years, a non recurring expenses of Rs.3 Lacs would be required either to get trained IN-HOUSE or from OUT-SIDE AGENCIES or through different SHORT TERM COURSES. The deputation allowance in the form of TA/DA + Registration fees, etc. are some of the heads. The administrative absence from the duties of a few library staff should also be thought in terms of money. The special sanction for this is required from the management. Sometimes, a computing skills are viewed as better skilled jobs, so a computer handling allowance around 50-75 Rupees/month/staff should be considered as financial liabilities which may also be got sanctioned from higher ups.

## **EMERGING SERVICES IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES**

Once the academic libraries start using computer in their working, the library can commence lot of new services based on a single time data entry into the system. The use of CD-ROM technology and setting up E-MAIL facilities in the libraries can offer more innovative services to users in addition to the following ones :

## PROACTIVE SERVICES :

- \* CAS
- \* SDI
- \* CURRENT CONTENT SERVICES
- \* REPORT ALERT
- \* MIS
- \* AUTOMATED LIBRARY SERVICES
- \* UNION CATALOGUE SEARCHING
- \* FULL TEXT/IMAGES
- \* DATABASES SERVICES.

## EVALUATION OF TRAINING AND SERVICE COMPONENTS

When organisation plans and spends on the existing staff of library to improve their technological skills, it would naturally like to evaluate the training they have acquired and the services they provide. It is obvious that the services based on the new technologies saves time since it hardly involves any writing work. This saving of time should be utilised either for extended hours of services or new areas of services. This will naturally offer the feedback through system how much a person has worked. The software developed, nowadays, records the time, hours of work and nature of work of any individual thus gives a precise measure of evaluation of his/her work. Most of the softwares in library and information field offer a vital managerial information to plan and innovate the services based on newly acquired technological skills. The generation of various types of reports by the system gives a better picture of evaluation mechanism.

## TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT CONCEPT

Nowadays, people are more quality conscious than

## REACTIVE SERVICES

- \* OPAC SERVICES
- \* DECISION MAKING SERVICES
- \* REMOTE LOGINS TO OTHER SYSTEMS
- \* ON-LINE ACCESS TO
- \* INTERNATIONAL DATABASES.
- \* DOCUMENT DELIVERY SERVICES.
- \* AUTOMATED LIBRARY SERVICES.
- \* REFERRAL SERVICES.
- \* MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SERVICE.

olden days. It has been imbibed on their minds that any bargain on quality front is bound to cost them heavily in terms of money. The whole chain suffers from any single poor quality component. When the quality is in demand, people even do not mind to pay more than getting lost due to poor quality. In library, to mention total quality is very much pertinent. The physical facilities should be of high quality, collection has to be of certified standards otherwise the service you generate would be of very sub-standard and the clientele may not turn up even where it is not mandatory to visit library. The only way we can attract the academicians from their falling interest is QUALITY. Please offer top grade qualitative service, as far as possible through collecting graded products else it will be a MACHLI BAZAR.

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