

Exploitation of IT, Academic Libraries and Human Resources Development

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Abstract

IT involves computers, electronic medias, satellite, telecommunications and storage devices. It has made a deep impact on the academic libraries. The emphasis of these libraries is shifting from collection to access. Academic libraries in India still face several challenges due to the emergency of IT. The author lists all these challenges and deals in detail about one of the foremost challenges i.e. manpower development in the context of IT. The provision of raising facilities on IT in the library schools, inclusion in curriculum, short-term training facilities by other organizations, refresher courses, participation in workshops, seminars, conferences, conventions etc. are discussed. For their own survival and for the survival of the profession, the librarians have to play their role effectively in future, otherwise they will be replaced by a new group of professionals.

Introduction

Information Technology is a generic term used to all activities connected with computer based processing, storage and transfer of information. It involves computers, electronic medias, satellite, telecommunications, and storage devices.

According to ALA Glossary, "information technology is the application of computer and other technology to the acquisition, organisation, storage, retrieval and dissemination of information".

The information technology can be grouped into three major areas i.e.

- i) Computer Technology,
- ii) Communication Technology, and
- iii) Reprographic, micrographic and printing Technology.

The most spectacular development of information technology has accrued with advances in and applications of computer and telecommunication technology in library and information centres.

Present scenario in academic libraries

The new technology has made a deep impact on the academic libraries. Now a days the emphasis in libraries is shifting from collection to access. Providing access to information is the principal goal and activity. Today academic libraries are in transition from manual to electronic system. The computer has greatly effected libraries and promises to increase that effect.

The card catalogue has been replaced by the online catalogue in academic libraries. The fully integrated online system has improved the operation of acquisition, cataloguing, periodical and circulation departments. The full text electronics database have brought a revolution in the library world for researcher and scholars.

Academic libraries in India still face several challenges of information technologies for library automation, these are :

1. Manpower requirement / development,
2. Infrastructure for information technology,
3. Telecommunication facilities,
4. Limited budget and increasing cost of the IT equipments,
5. Creation of database with certain standards,
6. Adequate knowledge of computer skills, and
7. Awareness among library personnel.

Manpower development in the context of IT

Libraries are the essential and critical link between faculty and students. Therefore, if we neglect the possible and feasible application work, we would soon indanger the usefulness, the reputation and the recognition of libraries and information centres. We must keep in mind that one must keep pace with the changes in the profession to fulfil the needs of users, otherwise librarians will lose their support and their role as the principal providers of information services.

For the purpose we have to educate our administration and library personnel for the changing era. The training of library personnel in IT application is of vital importance for the effective library services and networking of libraries.

There is urgent need of human resources development in academic libraries in India to play a new challenging role in information technology era. The library and information science personnel have to acquire, cultivate knowledge and skills for communication.

For the development of efficient manpower following activities must be organised from time to time :

1. Practical hands on training to library personnel,
2. Continuing Education Programme,
3. Educational tour (library cooperation)
4. Attending workshop, conferences, seminars,
5. Exchange of faculty, and
6. Co-curriculum activities.

In India NISSAT, INSDOC, DRTC, NIC, UGC and many other government institutions have been supporting the training of library professionals. After having training due to lack of hardware and software facilities in their libraries, they are unable to utilise their learned skills fully. The schools of library and information science in the country are also ill-equipped in terms of teaching personnel, communication facilities, involvement of IT applications in syllabi. The faculty may be able to teach the concept but are unable to provide practical experience in library automation, due to lack of well equipped computer laboratories. There is need to reorganise the teaching techniques of the library and information schools in the country.

Continuing Education Programme (CEP) for information professionals could be organised through refresher courses, seminars, conferences and workshops, short term training courses, private readings, Current Awareness Services (CAS), meeting of professional bodies and special interest and users groups. The UGC through its refresher courses to university and college librarians should emphasis more on IT component and its practice.

The professionals attending these courses should be provided with computer laboratories to be trained in library automation, CD-ROM databases, creation of database, networking, online catalogue etc. This type of training gives scope to acquire new management skills and improve the performance of information workforce.

In this context INFLIBNET conducts a number of training courses regularly for working level professional as well as to the executives of libraries. During last three years INFLIBNET has organised 12 training courses of 3-4 weeks duration for library executives. Participants are exposed to the latest information technologies in well equipped computer laboratories. Emphasis is given to hands on experience.

Conclusion

The whole world is passing through IT revolution and the technology is getting more and more refined as the time passes by. If we librarians, do not join the race, we will not be able to provide necessary and sufficient information to users. As the information has to reach its user, the users will strive hard to get it; and unless the librarians perform the duties, they will be replaced by a new group of professionals.

References

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