
SKILL ENHANCEMENT: A NECESSITY

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Abstract

In recent years, technological advancement has made a drastic change in all the professions including Librarianship. Unless the library professionals enhance their skills and update themselves, they will not be able to meet the demands of the users. The required skills and knowledge will have to be acquired by the professionals and at the same time the users of different levels and of different backgrounds are to be trained by the professionals. The paper emphasizes how the professionals will acquire the skill and train the users particularly in the academic libraries.

Keywords: Professional Development, Librarianship

1. Introduction

In the recent past, there has been a drastic change in the concept of the library and librarianship. In the normal sense, library is an important social institution and a store house of knowledge and the librarians are professional guides. Today the library plays a role in shaping every walk of life. Without good libraries, the development of any society or state or country is not possible. It helps to mould the society in the right perspective.

In this age of information explosion, the library plays the most important role in the higher Education of which Library Professionals are the managers. With the event of information Technology and its intervention, the profession has been changing from traditional to hi-tech services. In order to cope with the changing scenario and train the users, Library Professionals are bound to enhance their skill and update themselves irrespective of their grades.

2. Librarianship as profession

The Oxford English Dictionary defines a profession as "a vocation in which a professed knowledge of some department of learning or science in its application to the affairs of other origin in the practice of an art founded upon it". The word Librarianship owes its origin to Gutenberg who invented printing and was selling information to research scholars. In India also libraries were found in universities like Nalanda, Taksashila, etc. In olden days, librarians were regarded as custodian and caretaker of the storehouse. Thus the main function of librarian was to gather books, store and preserve. As the time changes the concept of librarianship is changed. With the explosion of

knowledge and event of Information Technology, the role of library professionals is changing from custodian to information officer. In today's era, their role is to develop, deployment and management of information resources and services both in print and electronic media. They should be ready to provide information based solutions to the users and access to wide range of information. The present day professionals should deal both external and internal information resources for innovative learning. They should be able to provide such services which can be managed with modern technological advancement. The librarians should have knowledge of computer hardware and software and their application in his own workplace. They should have sufficient ideas of the different medias like micro films, diskettes, CD-Rom, DVDs, databases, internet resources over and above the printed books and journals.

3. Necessities for Enhancement of Professional Skill

The changes in the concept of librarianship in India started by the middle of nineteen eighties when individual libraries started data entries of their stock at individual efforts. Most of the Institutions could not manage funds to procure the required hardware and software and also there were very limited trained professionals. With the emergence of Information Technology and information explosion taking place Library Professionals need to enhance their skills about the new technology to meet the requirements of their users. The role of library is changing very fast from collection, storage and preservation to information storage, processing and retrieving using modern technology and disseminating it to the user. The librarian should have expertised skills so that he can utilize it and manage knowledge and disseminate it to the right user.

The librarians as information personnels should have sufficient knowledge of information resources and intricacies of information transfer. He should have knowledge to authenticate information resources and understand the need of the users. Therefore a librarian is supposed to be able to train the users which require enhancement of skills. Most important part of library management, is the use of modern technology.

4. INFLIBNET's Efforts for Enhancement of Skill

The advancement in Information Technology provided opportunity to the library and information centers. Initially the equipments used for upgrading the library services were photo copiers, micro filming machines, microfilm reader and reader printer. By 1993, INFLIBNET came into existence aid libraries both in the form of funds and man power training and prescribed to buy PC, dump terminals etc. To make a LAN in the library for data entry, we had to have a software like UNIX, serial ports, dump terminals and a server and also necessary software for data entry.

In order to enable to implement the programme the first Workshop on Management of Computerized Libraries for Senior Professionals was organized by INFLIBNET followed by, in February, 1994. by a training programme of library staff and computer personnel from different universities. Infact this can be regarded as the beginning of IT application in the library services in the formal way. The professionals did not have sufficient skills to implement the different projects initiated by INFLIBNET and as such INFLIBNET, as per its objective, had taken up a number of projects which were quite new to the professionals.

Some of the projects initiated by INFLIBNET to enhance the library profession are as follows-

- Efforts to automate the university libraries
- Creation of databases at the university's level and creation of union databases both for books and serial, theses and expert at the national level
- Arrangement to access to e-journals under UGC Infonet
- Development of software like ILMs and SOUL
- Funding the universities, deemed universities and colleges to acquire required hardware and software
- Arrangement to provide V-sat and internet facilities.

In order to bring up the individual libraries at the national standards, the library professionals had to undertake lots of efforts to update their skill. Unless we develop our skill so as to handle the new projects effectively, we cannot do justice and at the same time we cannot train the readers to increase their skill. Under the circumstance the available facilities are under use which is a national wastage. Thus INFLIBNET has organized a number of man power training programmes of the library professionals and also organized a number of workshop and seminars from time to time. Some of them are-

- Workshop on management of computerized libraries for senior professionals
- More than 20 training programmes of 4 weeks duration for operational staff
- Workshop of 1 week
- INFLIBNET regional training programme on library automation
- Training programme on use of E-resources
- National seminar on the use of E-resources at different places
- Training programme on library automation in English
- Training programme on CDS/ISIS, .ILMS, SOUL, etc
- Workshop on digital library using D-Space
- CALIBER, a yearly event
- PLANNER, yearly event

These are the efforts of INFLIBNET to enhance skills of the library professionals and it becomes the responsibility of the professionals to acquaint the users with the different technologies used in the library.

5. Other Venues for Enhancement of Skills

The other ways to increase the professional skill among the librarian are to attend the regular courses imparted by the library schools based on the syllabus in library automation, computer based courses and management training programmes. The library professionals should prepare themselves to compete in this electronic information age. Professional schools should conduct special programmes for the working professionals to keep pace with the ever changing technology; reading of IT related journal will increase their knowledge of the available gadgets they will be handling. Interaction with the vendors who are dealing with hardware, software, e-books, e-journals, etc will be of immense use to the working professionals. The other avenues to enhance skill are participation in the professional deliberations like seminar, workshop, and short term training for a particular purpose. Organizations like DRTC, ISI, NISCAIR and many other government and non-government organizations are organizing seminars, workshops and short term courses to update the skill of the professionals.

6. Conclusions

Initially the professionals may experience some problems in implementing new technologies. The professionals should handle the situation with their skills and should immediately overcome the problem. Therefore the professionals should earn new skills and add to the existing knowledge. The professionals should have sufficient knowledge and skills of whatever new equipments are added to the library which is possible only by interacting with the vendor. To become an information personnel, librarians have to involve themselves in the various technological activities. Otherwise there is every chance that other subjects may play a major share. This is also the responsibility of the professionals to enhance skills in the users. In case the users do not have sufficient knowledge of the technology applied for a particular purpose of library's service, they cannot get or under use the service. By way of example it may be stated that a large number of users cannot fully utilize the facility of UGC-e-journal consortium. Still we have to train and enhance the skill of library users.

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