Contemporary Practice in Library and Information Centers for The Academic Improvement of Colleges in Odisha

Abinash Dash   **B Chandrabati**

Abstract

Library and Information Science profession has undergone impressive and brisk change during the last three decades under the overpowering impact of ICT. The future of the library is governed by the new technological innovations in the area of storage, retrieval and dissemination of information and the future of the information profession is very much dependant on their adoption by the information professionals. The new role of the Library and Information Centre in the knowledge society is needed to be sloping consequently. It is our responsibility as information facilitators and managers not only to inculcate the society through the technologies i.e., available but also to recognize the problems that need to be solved. Every profession should have professional accountability and moral values to respond to the need of the hour of the community at the right time and in the right point of view. The changing role of information professionals thus, need continuing professional development, predominantly, in an academic set up like colleges and universities to take our students and teachers to the doorsteps of the 21st century.

Keywords: Academic Library, Information and Communication Technology, Information Professional, Innovative Practices, Technological Adaption

1. Introduction

The impact of ICT on library operation and practice does not make librarians obsolete; rather it is revitalizing and expanding the capabilities. It accelerates the major transactions of the library from the collection centred institution to the access and service-oriented institution.

In an academic setup, college and university libraries have to bring a new consensus among the teachers and taught as to how the library will fulfil its mission by planning it economically with changing the environment and the beyond. Library's growing need to spend money not only to purchase books but also to pay for hardware and software requirements, training programmes for the existing employees and appointing technically educated new skilled workers has to be thought of, because information technology has dramatically transformed the world of Library & Information Science by providing Librarian with a powerful tool for accomplishing its day to day functioning despite its problems stated below:

❖ Demand on the library to provide more efficient service continues to increase.

❖ The cost for library services and materials has been increasing geometrically while financial resources declined arithmetically.

❖ The advent of sophisticated information handling technologies have opened new avenues and presented alternative means for libraries to enhance the effectiveness of their services to a significant degree.

❖ The shift from the use of Interactive Multimedia Technology in the work station environment to the globally networked environment is posing difficulties.

❖ Digital information resources present managerial challenges in their delivery to users.

❖ Changes in storage media and formats affect the collection development policy.

❖ Lack of standardization of the data storage, compression and exchange formats for text, image, and video data creates problems for data conversion and transmission in the global network.

In spite of the problems and difficulties posed by the advent of new technologies, we have to avail their unlimited offer for bringing possible improvements over our present traditional services. The librarians and library & information science teachers should think for a moment and explore the means of generating, sorting and communicating information in a more efficient manner than the past. But, skill for passing such information is now with the technocrats. These persons without having a theoretical background and basic knowledge on library operations try to play even the role of the Librarian(Begum, 2003).

It is, therefore, imperative to awaken our professionals to make them aware of the visible threat to the profession and come forward to caste the traditional clothes and wear information attire

which may earn the responsibility and credibility of the profession in the academic circle. Otherwise, information performance without ICT skills will prove misfit to the library society.

Admittedly, the librarians of India and particularly of Odisha have not effectively responded to the clarion call of IT. Now, it is high time for the librarians of academic institutions to come forward for capital investment by acquiring advanced technological instruments which in long run may reap high yielding benefits, since the IT has come not to annihilate but to animate traditional technology prevalent in the academic libraries(Brophy, 1996).

But, can it be possible without taking into the confidence of the teachers and taught and particularly the policymakers in the Government? Thus innovative practices in LIC for the academic development of colleges in Odisha are a combined effort of the Govt. in Higher Education, Academic Community, and Library Community including the students. Thus, it is the need of the hour. Every component of the system has a definite role to play.

With this background, let me cast some light on innovative practices in LIS centres for the academic development of colleges in Odisha.

What of Innovative Practices

Innovation is discovering new ways of creating value. It serves as the lifeblood for the organization, whose survival and growth depends on developing new technology, products, and services(Begum, 2003). A successful organization is a creative organization because creativity is the single most important contribution; employees can contribute to its survival. Innovation is of benefit only, if it creates value. In the non-profit organization's

innovation often relates to practice and services rather than products. Creative new services and processes that make a difference to customers are where the prospects for innovation lie. Innovative services can have the power to keep existing customers and attract new customers.

A practice qualifies to be best practice if it resulted in a high-value impact on any aspect of educational activity in an institution. "A best practice may be innovative and be a philosophy, policy, strategy program, process or practice that solves a problem or create new opportunities and positively impact on organization"(Sahoo, 2016).

Innovative Practice in College Library

How do libraries as non-profit organizations create innovation, when they do not have the profit margin to watch or when they do not wish to compete in the same fashion as many corporate sector enterprises do? For innovation to occur, the library must keep tapping the creative potential of its staff, vendors, and customers. Though looking very much related, creativity and innovations are distinct from one another. Creativity is the act of generating new ideas and new perspectives. Innovations, on the other hand, occur, when creativity is applied and a product or service results. Creativity (including creative thinking skill), then, is certainly critical to the practice of innovation. Thus creativity is a means and innovation is an end. In short, innovation brings change, brings new ideas and model, newness, in addition to the existing stock of knowledge through best practices. The best practice is the best way to perform a process, a function, or an activity that leads to superior performances. Successfully identifying and applying best practices can reduce cost and improve quality(Brophy, 1996). Best practices are thus, the means by which a leading organization in any field has achieved top performance, and they serve as a goal for the other organizations serving for excellence.

In today's high-tech learning environment, the LIC as a learning resource centre is taking up increasingly more academic space and time in the life of a learner. Thus, it is time to identify a set of best practices that can lead LICs to improve their processes and activities, optimize resource utilization and deliver high quality, and value-added services to their users. In the context of Library & Information Center in colleges of Odisha, we may conclude that an innovative practice is a practice which paves the way of enhancing an existing function of a library and helps in effective implementation or use of processes. Use of technology in designing and delivering the information products and services in a library yields good results. Automation of all in-house operations in academic libraries, use of bar-coding, user identity and web OPAC facilities is the practice in the totality of library services. Effective implementation of user education/awareness programs like information literacy with new techniques and tools will also be a best practice. Developing digital repositories with subject content, open sources initiative, and institutional information and customizing it to internal requirements with remote access is one of the adapted best practices in academic libraries.

Characteristics of Library Practice

Peter Brophy's view on good library explains how researchers and patrons view 'goodness' in the library. A library in order to survive should acquire resources which are useful to users in present as well as in the future too. The question of goodness

is not only related to the efficiency and effectiveness of the process but also adaptability and responsiveness of the library to its environment (Brophy, 1996). Peter Brophy compares libraries with the automobile industry for the purpose of quality management whereas S.Siraj Nissa Begum says differently. She is of the opinion that 'while in a manufacturing concern, the customer is remote, whereas in service organization like an academic library producers and consumers meet face to face. Thus the complexity of managing service organizations is typically compounded by the existence of multiple interfaces. Peter Brophy uses performance, feature, conformance, reliability, durability, currency, serviceability, aesthetics, perceived quality and accessibility as the indicators for measuring a library-quality (Brophy, 1996).

Therefore, the library aims to provide an innovative service implementation; it must have a catalogue, though logical, with space, and sufficient knowledgeable staff to assist with the transmission of the online catalogue of personalized notices. For new purchases, there is a library cafe, a library that meets AACR and MARC service standards, the correct answer to any modern library web site queries. Technology is strong, even as consumers grow, how does the library receive the latest books and magazines, the daily newspaper, when libraries open CD-ROMs, updating error files, staffing complaints, and design requests Library building including completion. Web site design, library staff useful and collaborative OPACs work well for the blind, as well as for the deaf and deaf. The above description, if taken into consideration, is one of the attributes of the Creative Library practice.

Standards and Norms Developed at National and International Level

Having discussed the conceptualization of innovative practices in libraries and information centers and their ingredients, and characteristics, it would be quite appropriate to examine the norms and standards that have been prescribed at national and international level for ensuring innovative library practices.

International Federation of Library Association and Institutions (IFLA) has developed best practices and guidelines for various types of libraries as well as for specific services (http://www.ifla.org), Australian Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs has brought out "Best practice Hand Book for Australian University Libraries". American Library Association (ALA) and its various organs like ACRL have also brought out best practices for various types of libraries and their services. The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), which advocates for the best practices benchmarking approach in higher education in India, also strives for quality and excellence in library and information centres in improving the academic environment(Evans, 1995).

Apart from these guidelines, recommendations of various committees, starting from Ranganathan Committee (1957), Kothari Commission (1964), Mehotra Committee (1953), Yaspal Committee on National Library Networks (1988) and National Knowledge Commission (2007) have also contributed significantly and substantially towards standardization of library practices. A road-map for the revitalization of the academic libraries to serve as gateways to knowledge has been drawn by the Knowledge Commission by issuing a model library

charter. College libraries in Odisha will be immensely benefited from these guidelines, while they plan for innovative practice thorough modernization of the existing libraries. The norms and ideals prescribed in these documents speak about collection development, services, staff pattern, networking, user education, application of ICT in the Library & Information Centre.

Methodology

An observation method is used for data compilation in this paper, Case Study Method in-depth investigation of a person or small group techniques used by which gather knowledge of the research phenomenon through making observations of the phenomena, as and when it occurs. There exist various observation practices, and your role as an observer may vary according to the research approach.

Guidelines on Quality Indicators

It has been rightly observed that in the recent past, significant developments have been reported in library and information services. The libraries are shouldering newer responsibilities in higher education. Libraries largely support learning, teaching and research process in institutions. So far, mostly, the classroom has, by and large, been the primary source of learning, with library accorded a supplementary status. In the time ahead, one can foresee a role reversal, and indeed, in the increasing learner-centric educational effort, one may already witness to the library, becoming the primary learning resource in many instances, with conventional classroom teaching playing mainly a facilitating role.

It is in this backdrop, that the NAAC has developed guidelines on the basis of understanding of the global developments in the activities and services of libraries. The parameters are defined by considering certain factors such as the age of the institutions, courses offered by them and so on. The institutions are grouped into two broad categories: one, the university level institutions (including universities, Deemed-to-be universities, autonomous colleges, and postgraduate colleges) and the other, the colleges (affiliated / constituent college). The guidelines for best practices are given under the following four broad areas:

1. Management and Administration of Library and Information Services.

2. Collection and services provided to users.

3. The extent of the use of services.

4. Use of Technology.

NAAC has developed the following set of best practices for Affiliated / Constituent Colleges:

1. Computerization of Library with standard digital software.

2. Inclusion of sufficient information about the library in the college prospects.

3. Compiling student/teacher attendances statistics and locating the same on the notice board.

4. Displaying newspaper clipping on the notice board periodically.

5. Career / employment information / services

6. Internet Facilities to different user groups.

7. Information Literacy programs

8. Suggestion box and timely response.

9. Displaying new arrivals and circulating a list of those to the academic department.

10. Conducting a book exhibition on different occasions.

11. Organizing Book talks.

12. Instituting Annual best user award for students.

13. Organizing competition annually, and

14. Conducting user surveys periodically.

For Universities, Deemed Universities, Autonomous Colleges & P.G. Colleges separate guidelines are recommended keeping in view the P.G. Teaching, Research, and ICT application. These are available on the NAAC website. However, the innovative and best library practice for such an institution should be as follows.

Libraries:

❖ Should reflect the value, mission, and goal of the institution.

❖ Should accommodate myriad of new information and learning technology and the way information is accessed and used.

❖ Should be centralized located, where new and emerging technologies can be combined with traditional resources.

❖ Should embody new pedagogies including collaborative and interactive learning.

❖ Should offer user-focused, service-rich environment supporting the cotemporary social and educational pattern of learning and teaching.

❖ Should offer an ambience that is extremely conducive for stimulation and creating new knowledge, whereas the internet has tended to isolate people, the library as a physical space has done just the opposite.

❖ Should enable to acquire lifelong information gathering skills, so that they can acquire access, evaluate and use the information where ever they need even after completion of their formal education.

❖ Should rapidly change flexible enough to adapt to the changing scenario in terms of collection size, user requirements, technology application, organization structure, and periodic up-gradation.

❖ Should make library space (both physical and virtual) more interactive, collaborative and driven by community needs.

Barriers to the adaptation of Best Practices

American productivity and quality center records three main barriers to the adaptation of a best practice:

❖ A lack of knowledge about current best practices.

❖ A lack of motivation to make changes involved in their adaptation and,

❖ A lack of knowledge and skill required to do so.

❖ Strategy for Application of Best Practices

Prof. V.S. Prasad of the NAAC is of view that the successful application of the best practices can be achieved by adopting the Five-Stage strategy as stated below:

1. Identification of best practices.

2. Implementation of best practices.

3. Institutionalization of best practices.

4. Internalization of best practices.

5. Dissemination of best practices.

The identification of best practices depends on institutional mission and goals, nature of users, global context and local relevance, competencies of staff, infrastructure and governance requirement.

The implementations of best practices are really the challenges. The implementation strategy shall include planning, resource mobilization, capacity building, monitoring and evaluation. The implementation aspect focuses more on performances than on procedures.

Institutionalization is the process of making the best practices an integral part of the institution. It has been observed that many best practices are institution specific and individual, where one happens to be the leader or head of the institution. This approach runs the risk of disruption if and when the individual is changed. If, however, such a practice is formalized as an essential requirement, it will continue to be pursued without hindrance.

Internalization refers to making things a part of one's nature by conscious learning and assimilation. It further means making excellence an integral part of one's habit and nature. Such internalization may also be looked upon as making permanent the principle and essence of the best practices as part of the characteristic performance of an institution. The aggregate of such practices what we may loosely call the 'ethos' or tradition or culture of the institution. Internalization is an attitude formation

conducive to sustaining quality in whatever we do(Sahoo, 2016).

It is not enough for the institution to adapt best practices; it is equally important for them to disseminate them for wide application in the system. Due to lack of feasibility and adaptability of the best practices, many institutions do not follow. It is a fact that the best practices are borrowed and we must learn and benefit from each other's experience(Brophy, 1996). Due to communication gap within the institution expected outcome of the practice get affected. Effective use of recording and revaluing to develop conviction in the system is essential.

College Library and Information Centres in Odisha: Present Scenario

In my present paper, I tried to deal with an overall idea what we mean by innovative practices in an academic library, quoting from various library authorities, which may help us to apply those in the day to day occurring of the Library & Information Centres of the colleges(Das & Choudhury, 2014). Prior to this, let me present before you the real picture and status of Library & Information Centres of the colleges of Odisha. My recent visit to the web sites of the Deptt. Of Higher Education & BPUT in the state reveals that presently there are 15 universities including the technical university.

The detailed categories of colleges both general and technical along with their accrediting body have been presented in the table given below:

Table: Showing Different Types of Colleges of Odisha

General Colleges

Sl. No.	Category	Total No	Accrediting Body
1	Universities	15	NAAC / NBA / BCI
2	Degree Colleges	615	NAAC
3	Junior Colleges	1208	NAAC
4	Sanskrit Colleges	165	NAAC
5	Autonomous	26	NAAC
6	Law Colleges	30	BCI
7	B.Ed Colleges	14	NCTE
Total		2073	

Technical Colleges

Sl. No.	Category	Total No	Accrediting Body
1	Engineering Colleges	100	NBA
2	B.Pharma	16	PCI
3	Medical Colleges	6	MCI
4	Dental Colleges	5	DCI
5	Nursing Colleges	11	NCI
6	Ayurvedic Medical College	6	
7	Homoeopathic Medical College	5	
8	Physiotherapy	6	RCI
9	MBA Colleges	61	NBA
10	MCA Colleges	45	NBA
Total		261	

The table indicates that there are 2073 general colleges and 261 Technical and professional colleges which are under the direct or indirect control of 15 universities. Now the title of the present seminar on which we are here to deliberate is "Innovative Practices in Library & Information Science Center for the Academic Development of colleges in Odisha"(Sahu, Swain, & Rout, 2012). This includes both general and technical colleges. However, the role of Library & Information Science centers of technical and professional colleges will differ from the general colleges on the basis of their mission, goal, and objectives of the institution. So the standards, norms, and specifications of innovative practices to be provided will be guided by a different set of guidelines to be prescribed by different authorities in their respective domain. In order to provide innovative practices for LIC of the colleges for academic development, it is necessary to study the history and present state of development of the existing centres on which the future development can be formulated and predicted(Satpathy & Maharana, 2012).

Observation

My observation on the working condition of the existing Library & Information Centers of the colleges indicates that most of the centers do not have any innovative practice worth the name while providing services to the users for the reasons stated below:

1. The Govt. while recognizing the opening of the colleges is not keen on prescribing the organizational structure of the library. Library standards are also not developed and prescribed for the LICs.

2. Job analysis, Job description, Job specification, Personnel Specification and Staff Pattern of the library have not yet been fixed either by the Govt. or by the University. While granting affiliation to different colleges, the universities hardly take note of these aspects. Whatever staff pattern has been fixed is outdated and not based on any rationale.

3. Universities have also not developed as yet any standards, norms, and specification of the college library in respect of book collection, staff, finance, and services to be provided to the users as has been done in sister universities in India.

4. Most of the colleges don't possess a separate library building baring a few.

5. Least priority is given to the library in the education budget. Student does not assert for better practice in the library from the college authorities except during college election as a part of their agenda for library development, which does not fetch any result after the election is over.

6. Library fees collected from the students in the general colleges are very much inadequate in comparison to the services offered to users to introduce any new practice.

7. ICT driven library services need huge infrastructure involving heavy expenses, which cannot be borne alone by the college authorities from their own sources for introducing innovative practices.

8. Most of the sanctioned post for college libraries are not filled up in time, due to bureaucratic intervention.

9. Most of the existing Library personnel don't have ICT skills to handle hardware and software requirement in libraries.

10. Library staff is not properly paid incommensurate with their qualifications, experience & responsibility as prescribed by UGC. This results from a lack of motivation for shouldering higher responsibilities. When all neighbouring states have extended UGC scale to their librarians our State Govt. does not do so and why?

11. Lack of direct participation by the teachers in developing library services may be another reason for the non-adaption of innovative practice.

12. Lack of willingness of the Library staff to adapt to the changing environment required due to the emergence of ICT.

13. The mindset of the academic community, as well as Library authority towards library and library staff, must change.

14. User education and user study programs are totally absent.

15. Lack of entrepreneurship qualities in library staff is another reason for the poor state of practice.

16. Lack of leadership and competency in college librarian keeps him away from the academic community.

17. Non-use of Network Technology prevents resource sharing.

18. Lack of adaptability to change in structure and dimension of the information industry is another cause of the poor state of affairs in college libraries.

19. Bureaucratic hurdles for retrospective conversion of library records through outsourcing make computerization delayed.

20. There is a bad practice of appointing laboratory assistant as Librarian and also the staffs of the college library is being deployed for other clerical works in the college at the cost of the library service to the users.

21. Library schools do not provide the facilities for continuing education as a part of their regular program.

Finding and Suggestion

A college library and information center is not a building stacked with books but a repository and source of information and idea, a place for learning and inquiry for the generation of thought and creation of new knowledge. Most of the academicians in the college library think that library service means issuing and returning of books and referring the documents. This notion should be changed forthwith. Therefore, such an institution cannot be built up overnight. It needs sustainable planning and strategy.

1. As a first step to formulating and create a mechanism for institutions that will serve the stack holders, the Govt. as a policymaker should set up a 'Working Group on Libraries', consisting of experts from different streams to initiate object review of how current service and standards are inadequate and to recommend changes Odisha needs. An honest review of how libraries are now functioning has to highlight the needs of changes in the mindsets of those who own, manage and operate.

2. A state-wide census of academic libraries should be prepared through a survey. Collection of census data on libraries would provide data for planning. Govt should come forward to provide administrative support and finance to complete such a survey within a stipulated time and should act promptly on the recommendations.

3. The proposed working group should revamp LIS education, training and research facilities assessing manpower requirement of the state. A state institute of library and information science education should be established with strong ICT base infrastructure after evaluating research status in the field for advanced training in continuing education and research.

4. Reassessment of staffing of existing LIC in the context of change, keeping in mind job description, qualifications, designations, pay scale, career advancement and service conditions to attract talents to this domain is the need of the hour.

5. A state library fund for the academic library should be created taking a specific percentage of education budgets as recommended by different committees and commissions. At the initial stage, a corpus fund of Rs.200 crores should be generated by the Govt. to start with the program in addition to the annual budget.

6. ICT application in all LIC is promoted through a network to enable equitable and universal access knowledge resources by the academic community. As a first step, all the library operations should be computerized by an application of standard local software from the

economic point of view like Smart Library system as most of the college libraries are not in a position to purchase costly commercial Library software available in the market. By adopting such standard local software, the library can remove most of the troubleshooting in their day to day application for which proper advice and modification can be available from the local software developer modified at a lower cost and in time.

7. Encourage public-private participation in the development of LIC by inviting philanthropic organizations, industrial and corporate houses in the state to invest liberally, as the Govt. may not be only the source for finance to be tapped in the age of liberalization.

8. Donation and maintenance of private collection in the local area LIC be promoted and encouraged.

9. Phase wise planning in respect of acquiring hard and software electronic gadgets should be taken up at the initial stage. In the second stage, innovative practices to be implemented should also be identified and accordingly, the organization structure is revamped.

10. The appointment of additional staff having management skills, technological skills, communication skills, research, and statistical skills should be thought of.

11. Every LIC should provide basic services like lending service, reading facilities, reference services and internet services free of cost and accordingly basic and core staff should be appointed as the minimum requirement. For extended hours of service, additional staff should be given. Some of the services offered by the library be made available against payment of fee like ILL, Photocopying, EDD, etc.

12. Institutional repositories of research articles, reports, institutional publications, and electronic thesis and dissertation services should be introduced in autonomous and P.G. teaching colleges.

13. Websites, Portals and subject gateways should be made available in autonomous and P.G. teaching college libraries.

14. Innovative and best library services recommended by the NAAC should be made mandatory for each college's LICs.

15. Library consortia among the academic LICs are encouraged and facilitated and if necessary special funds are created for this purpose.

16. The university while granting affiliation should prescribe some minimum basic services and norms to be followed in libraries in respect of the size of the collection, services, staff requirements and providing the uniform pattern of organization structure.

Conclusion

A library and information centre is earnestly realized by the educational administrators, policymakers and academic community. It is said that the status of a profession cannot be demanded but it has to be commended. The command for status comes by the proof of ability, involvement, and commitment to the profession which are lacking in the library community. It is high time for the academic librarians of Odisha to rise to the occasion. Since the introduction of innovative practice is a collaborative

effort, combined with the skill of technocrats, information scientists and academicians, their active involvement in the process is highly appreciated. I once again extend my heartfelt thanks to all the persons assembled here who have given me an opportunity to place some of my humble views for consideration.

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About Authors

Mr Abinash Dash, Librarian, IHM, Bhubaneswar
Email: librarian.ihmbbsr@gmail.com

B Chandrabati, Student, IGNOU,Bhubaneswar
Email: chandudash1983@gmail.com