

DEVELOPING INFORMATIONAL PROFESSIONALS IN THE AGE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY: A STUDY

Memori Sagolsem

Vikas

Bobby

Abstract

An attempt has been made to study the IT awareness among the informational professionals and also highlights the obstacles faced by the libraries in the application of IT in the public libraries of Manipur. For this, a questionnaire and personal interview method was used to collect the adequate data. The study reveals that majority of the professionals were not aware of IT and thereby suggesting the need for a training programme for the in-service information professionals to help them keep abreast of the latest IT in order to face the new challenges in the field of information science.

Keywords: Informational professionals, Information Technology, Public Library

1. Introduction

Library and information Science professionals have to play a significant role in handling conventional and electronic resources simultaneously. They should accept the change and adapt to the new situation for the benefit of the profession as well as the users.

The main roles of the library & information centers are the selection, the storage the retrieval, and ultimately the dissemination of information to the users' community and would remain the same what they always have been. It is now necessary that the library & information science professionals ascertain the impact of e-resources and they will have to monitor and acquire skills to cope intelligently and objectively for effective and efficient functioning of library & information centers. The professionals need to lay the foundation to serve the users of tomorrow. They need to plug into the information superhighway and exploit the relevant technology to make knowledge available to users in a fast and reliable manner. The professionals need to move towards a borderless information environment and remove all boundaries and barriers to knowledge transfer and share. They are required to constantly update their own knowledge and skill base so as to work in today's rapidly changing information and knowledge systems [4].

2. Objectives of the study

The main objective is to study the awareness of IT among the informational professionals and the user community in the public libraries of Manipur. Other objectives are:

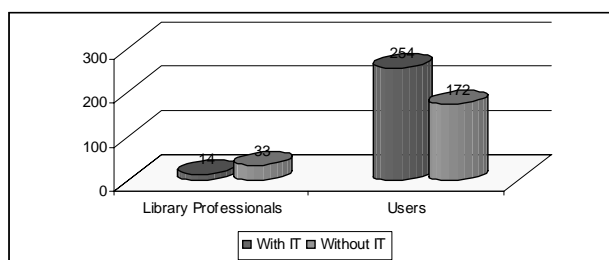
- To find out the capacity and potentials of IT for attaining success in library services;
- To evaluate the need for professional training of IT application;
- To study the frequency and the purposes of visiting the public libraries by the user communities in the state;
- To identify the limitation/problems which seem to discourage the use of library among the user community;
- To highlight the obstacles faced by the public libraries in the application of IT.
- To suggest improvement measures based on the inferences drawn from the study.

3. Methodology

For the study, questionnaire-based survey and interview method was used to collect the adequate data from the professionals as well as the users. A total of 50 questionnaires were distributed to the library professionals out of which only 47 were collected and the number of user surveyed is 426. The data thus collected was processed and analyzed and the results obtained were discussed in the light of the known facts to arrive at the findings and conclusion presented in the following sections.

4. Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Table - I
Strength of library professionals & user with IT knowledge



(Source: Research survey)

Table-I reflects that users having the knowledge of IT is much larger than the number of library professionals with IT knowledge. In this condition a library in the digital era endowed with all the technologies cannot function properly. It has to be kept in mind that the application of IT in the Public libraries raises the efficiency of information acquisition, processing, storage, retrieval and dissemination services. Thus, it is high time for the Library Authorities to arrange proper IT training programmes at the earliest possible time to meet the change in the information demand of the users.

Table-II
Age wise distribution of user

The data presented in table-II shows that the majority of the public library user are from the age group of 18-30 years comprising of more than half of the total population i.e., 248 (58.22%), 102 (23.94%) users from the age group of 31-40 years. The number of user in the age group of 41-50 years is very negligible i.e., 46 (10.79%) and only 30 (7.04%) of the total population is from the age group of 51- 60 years and above. It thus indicates that the younger age groups are more interested in enhancing their knowledge.

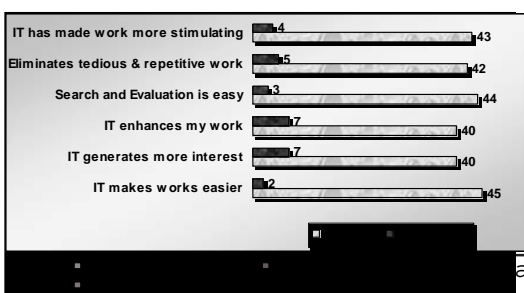
Table-III
Frequency of visit to the library

Table-III depicts the views of the user who responded to the statements relating to their frequency of visits to the public library. It is known from the table that majority of the users (216, 50.7%) visits the library 4-6 times a month followed by 140 (32.86%) users visiting the library 1-3 times a month. A very few number of users visits the library rarely. The analysis highlights that a good number of users visits the library more than 4 (Four) times a month and the library authorities should take up better steps to increase the frequency of their visits.

Table-IV
Purpose of visiting the library

Table-IV reveals the different purposes of visit the library and using the information sources available by the users. It shows that more than 49 % of the users visit the public library to enhance self knowledge followed by 27 % visiting the library for career/job related information. 23% of the users visit the library to read newspaper while only 11.5% of the users visit the library for reading periodicals/magazines. The other purpose of visiting the library includes for leisure reading (10.33%) , issue/return of books (5.63%) , and only 2.81% of the user visiting the library for referring the reference materials.

Table-V
User Awareness of IT



Awareness	No. of Respondents	
	Yes	No
Computer	276 (64.78%)	150 (35.21%)
Internet	258 (60.56%)	168 (39.44%)
Digital Resources	196 (46 %)	230 (53.99)

The above table shows the users' awareness about the use of IT. More than 60% of the total respondents were aware of computer handling and access to internet i.e., 64.78% and 60.56% respectively. However about 54% of the users were unaware of digital resources.

Table-VI
Attitudes of the Professionals towards IT

The response given in Table - V shows the Library Professionals' awareness of the emerging IT environment. The table indicates that the staffs were aware of IT and were in favor of application of IT in the libraries.

Table - VII
Opinion of IT Application

Category	Opinion		
	Very much necessary	Necessary	Not Necessary
Library Professional	43 (91.5%)	-	4 (8.51%)
Users	235 (55.16 %)	182 (42.72%)	9 (2.11%)

(Source: Research survey)

The above table shows that 91.59 % of the staff accepted the implementation of IT in the libraries while 55.16% of the users very much necessary and 42.47% saying necessary. But 8.5 % of the professional respondents only 2.11% of the user respondents and replied not necessary. They were the non-professionals as well as the users with no knowledge of IT who prefer using the existing Manual methods.

Table - VIII
Obstacles in using the library

The above table shows that 44% of the total number of user responded that it is the availability of less number of sources in the library and 14% saying that it is the location that is hindering the effective use of the library followed by 23% saying they are not satisfied with the furniture & equipments provided in the libraries. 13% not satisfied with the way the books are being arranged in the libraries for not being able to find the required document on time. However, majority of the users are quite satisfied with the staff's cooperation being rendered to them but few number of users (6%) are not fully satisfied.

5. Problems in the Application of Information Technology

Below are listed some of the problems related to the application of IT in the Public Libraries of Manipur:

- Lack of qualified professionals to operate library automation in the libraries;
- Library professionals lack knowledge and training in IT application;
- Inadequate library funds;
- High cost of IT infrastructure;
- Very limited number of library professionals;
- Inadequate number of computers in the libraries.

6. Discussions & Suggestions

The present study reveals that there is an urgent need to increase the number of library/informational professionals in the public libraries of Manipur. What is more depressing is that the number of professionals without the knowledge of IT outnumbers the professionals with IT knowledge. The study has also seriously considered the lack of infrastructures in the public libraries of Manipur.

Users in the age group of 18-30 years are the most frequent visitors of the library. Today, in the age of Information technology, the users of the younger generation has the knowledge of IT, have the ability to access internet, and are more interested in searching their required information on-line than searching manually. It is observed that majority of the users are from the urban areas which is due to lack of awareness among the rural people, high rate of illiteracy and economically backwardness in those rural areas. It may lead to slow awareness and the slow developments of the new emerging IT facilities in the state.

Keeping in view the opinions of the library professionals and the users, and from the analysis of the data, the follow suggestions are offered:-

- More number of library professionals with the knowledge of Information Technology should be recruited.
- Comprehensive professional training programme with emphasis on IT should be introduced to serve the changing society based on IT of the 21st century.
- User education and training programme is essential to put library resources & services to efficient and effective.
- Library professionals should themselves join hands to come forward to improve the standard of the library services with the help of emerging IT applications [3].

7. Conclusion

The great libraries of the future are not those with great collections but those with great staff, knowledge must be discovered before it is used (Lowry, 1991). Citation? The library professionals has to be proficient conceiving and designing appropriate information products, training modules and luring the readers to the library in order to enhance the readership. He has to truly act as a facilitator and a total quality conscious person, keeping in view the user needs to continuously better the best practices. Hence, continuous training is required for the professionals to serve the user better and maximum support and necessary training has to be provided for the user/clientele for effective use of the library [5].

While conducting the survey, it is strongly felt that the public libraries in the state have to adopt the tools of Information Technology in order to provide up-to-date information to the user community. Majority of the information professionals are not aware of the Information technology due to lack of infrastructure facilities in the public libraries of Manipur. Moreover, these professionals lack motivation and zeal to learn the new IT developments. It is strongly suggested that the library authorities should organize a training programme meant for the in-service professionals to keep themselves abreast of the latest IT in order to face the new challenges in the field of information science.

References

- [1] Das, Dhrubajit . "Information needs and information seeking behaviour of PG students of Gauhati University: a case study" . *In Journals of Library and Information Science*. Volume 1, Aug 2004, p. 51-59, 2004.
- [2] Devendro Singh, H. "Scenario of public library system in Manipur" . *In Khomdon Singh and Tiken, M.C. Ed. Development of Public Library Service and Movement in the North-Eastern States*. Imphal: Manipur Library Association, p 105-113, 2002.
- [3] Dr. Th. Purnima and Chongtham Vikas. "Information needs in higher education: A study of college faculties in Manipur" . *IIA Bulletin*. XLI (2), April-June, p. 16-19, 2005.
- [4] Rama Devi, T. "Training and support to user/staff for optimum use of library resources: A case of centre on rural documentation (CORD)" . *In Proceedings of 3rd Convention PLANNER*. Assam University, Silchar. 10-11 Nov. INFLIBNET Centre, Ahmadabad, p. 412-416, 2005.
- [5] Rathod, Meera. "Librarianship to E-Librarianship" . *In proceedings of 51st All India Conference*, 16-18 Dec, Kurukshetra. Delhi: Indian Library Association, 2005.

ABOUT AUTHORS

Ms. Memori Sagolsem is Currently undergoing research under the guidance of Dr. Th. Purnima Devi, Reader/Head, Dept. of Library & Information science, Manipur University. She received her B.Lib.I.Sc. Degree from Panjab University, Chandigarh and M.Lib.I.Sc. from Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra and also holds the PGCA Degree from National Institute of Computer Technology, Bangalore.

E-mail : memori_sagolsem@yahoo.co.in

Mr. Ch. Vikas is presently working as Sr. Library Asst. at College of Home Science, Tura, Meghalaya. He has completed his M.Lib.I.Sc. from Annamalai University, Tamil Nadu. He is pursuing his Ph.D. in Manipur University, Canchipur from the Dept. of Lib. & Info. Sc. under the guidance of Dr. Th. Purnima Devi.

E-mail: tattu86@yahoo.co.in

Mr. Bobby Phuritsabam is presently working as a Lecturer in the Dept. of Library & Information Science, Manipur University, Canchipur. He is a M. Sc. Physics (Electronics). He got his M.Lib.I.Sc. Degree from University of Delhi and is currently pursuing M.Phil under the guidance of Dr. (Mrs) P.K. Walia, University of Delhi.

E-mail: bobbyphster@gmail.com