

MANAGING CHANGE IN THE ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN THE CONTEXT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

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Change is inevitable. But to say in the race, you need to know/acquire the skills to master/manage the change. For a successful tomorrow, we have to think about the future today. Because of technological advances, the pace of change will accelerate astronomically. Regardless of age and technical expertise Library Information Science Professionals must tune themselves to the latest technologies. The technology available today can cause far more opportunities and change what you have experienced. In such a dynamic information technology field the Library Information Science Professionals should gear-up themselves to meet the new but interesting challenges. In this article we try to discuss the role of the funding bodies, parent organisation, libraries, library information science professionals and the user communities in the context of rapidly changing Information Technology.

0 INTRODUCTION

Information is a 'valuable' resource. For a better management of the vast repositories of information resources, Library & Information Science Professionals (LISP) have to be properly trained. The impact of technological changes make it mandatory for LISP to get trained differently. Better management of information can stimulate other productive environments. Technology is rapidly making external information easily available for the information seekers. Current technologies are providing with opportunities for users to preserve the knowledge for future as well as effectively share it. Better knowledge management will give chance to future knowledge management.

The LISPs must be aggressive so as to establish their profession at the very centre of the academic environment. According to Jorge Reina

Schement, Professor & Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research, College of Communication, Pennsylvania State University, "without a doubt, refashioning community will be librarians' toughest challenge but perhaps their greatest opportunity as well, since success will guarantee a place for libraries in the new society".

Technology

Funding Bodies

Parent Organisations

Libraries

Library Information Science Professionals

Users

1 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND LIBRARY & INFORMATION SCIENCE PROFESSIONALS

Libraries are knowledge banks. But as far as dissemination of information is concerned, it is not reaching the end users as effectively as it is supposed to. To maintain high standards of user services, academic libraries must continuously enhance their operations, services and understand how Information Technology (IT) fits into the academic environment. In today's environment the librarians should help their user communities by getting updated themselves with the latest technology. LIS should understand that mastery of IT is critical to strategic success and to maintain high standards. IT's importance extends beyond back office and operation, where it influences service and support. IT allows libraries to be responsive, flexible and innovative in the academic environment. The LIS should be taught about knowing how to manage information and IT functioning. The other important factors contributing to the sea change, is the increasing number of people who use and want to use Personal Computers (PCs). The computer literacy is ranging from illiteracy in many LIS to few experts. With the result most of the LIS do not still understand the issues that drive Information Science (IS) field such as need for good library application software etc. Most of the libraries still think application software as a liability. But the fact is that without application software nothing works. Mature libraries are which realise the service value of information and IT and assimilation of IT into the organisation and service.

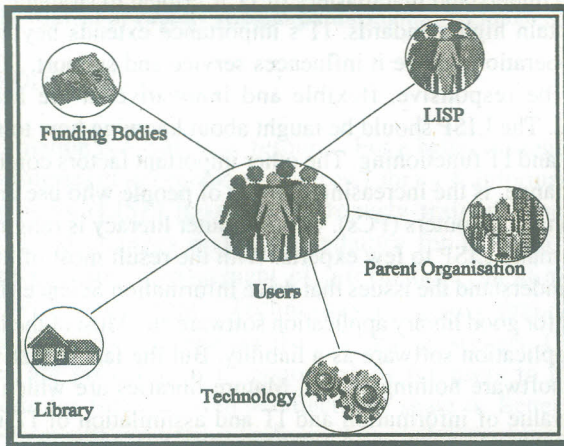
The concept of networking emerged more rapidly than anyone expected. In our country the e-mail may not be yet accessible to many people,

but compared to 1980s the usage has gone up. In fact in western countries the e-mail outnumbering the postal mail. The number of PC sales has also outnumbered the TV sales. In India the concept of owning a PC is catching up due to various reasons.

Today the change for any LIS is that how to manage knowledge, which is coming from all the available information sources. The success or failure of libraries mostly depends on the LIS who are in the middle of the hierarchy. They act as the bridges between the bosses and the subordinates. These are the people who lead the change and preparing them for the change is the key educational task. For LIS, now being a PC literate alone is not sufficient, but he or she is also expected to be aware of the underlying issues such as infrastructure, application software and technological developments, in using information as a resource.

2 THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY

The find of the century undoubtedly is the 'Internet'. Internet can be considered as an International Digital Public Library. A vast amount of information is available on Internet, which can be used by anybody who has an Internet connection. This is quite evident when we look at the Internet access statistics. It is mind boggling. Networks are the result of



Figure

people who want to have faster and easier communication. One of the results of network is the wonderful e-mail or electronic mailing system which is faster than the conventional mailing system. The later development is discussion groups. E-mail being used heavily on the Internet. Irrespective of the geographical distances the mails will reach destinations in few minutes. As the voice mails gaining popularity, even the typing will be reduced. Electronic communication is becoming popular because of accuracy, speed and transmission ability of transmitting voice, data and video over the networks.

All the communities need information to take decisions. All the networks help in free flow of information. Quality of academic output can only be improved by better management of information. Students will become much more active participants of the learning process. As parties of these dynamic technologies, all the communities must get updated with latest technologies. Most office workers spend half or more of their time on manual work. But technology has presented these workers an array of latest software technologies which gives them an opportunity for better office management.

The LISPs need to know about the technology and what it can offer to them in providing better services. The LISPs also must understand how IT is becoming a potential weapon and how it is changing their professionals demands. The application software and technology cannot bring any change on their own, but it can work as a powerful tool for the LISPs to provide better services. Today technology allows us sharing of information across platforms and continents.

The technology is giving a valuable opportunity for the librarians to create new avenues for the information seekers in the educational institutions. As partners of these dynamic technologies, LISPs should update themselves with latest technological skills. In this dynamic IT field the role of the user, staff and faculty is also changing in a positive way, paving way for further development of the library. Students will become much more active participants of the learning and education process. With the ease of use of technology many traditional library users are able to get over the barriers to change, resulting in enhanced collaborative efforts. In this process the librarians have an opportunity to increase their communication and improved services. You can leverage the technology by using new tools to do two or more jobs at the same time. This helps in multiplying the most valuable commodities of today: time and service.

3 FUNDING BODIES

Funding bodies like INFLIBNET, UGC play a vital role in shaping up the academic libraries for the future. The funding bodies apart from providing funds, have to help in training the library staff in the new technologies. Whatever the training is provided should be practiced at the respective libraries.

National policies on IT should give more impetus on working models rather than on theoretical models. Working model will provide a base for the development of advanced models. "Rewards, recognition & penalties" must be there for the performing and nonperforming institutions. Nonperforming institutions must be penalised. There should be monitoring bodies at the regional levels, because centralised monitoring may be very difficult. The monitoring committees at regional levels can help the academic libraries and the other academic libraries which are geographically closer. These regional centres performance can be monitored. Periodical meetings may be arranged for the review of the developments. This gives wider scope for the funding bodies to concentrate on developmental activities.

4 PARENT ORGANISATION

After the funding bodies, the parent bodies play a crucial role in the development of the libraries. The libraries reflect the development of the university. Through library the parent bodies can show to the outside world, what the organisation is and what it is going to be. The libraries in academic environment are the hub of the activities. Good library will create the best academic environment for all the academic communities. The reality is that most libraries operate under rather tight economic, social, political controls and are subject to many government regulations. It is difficult for a librarian to operate the library under intimidation and fear. No organisation is good or bad in itself. The people who run an organization determine its image. Generally the academic libraries in an academic environment are looked down upon by the parent organisations, since they are being treated as cost centres. This does not do well for the better academic results. A strong library can produce the best academic output. The information supplied by the academic libraries sometimes may produce wonderful discoveries and innovations. The information supplied by the libraries is very valuable. Hence, the parent organisation should give due importance to the library and its development to reflect better output.

5 THE ROLE OF LIBRARIES

According to Trish Foy, The Director of Coopers & Lybrand's Knowledge strategies group in New York, "As you deal with knowledge professionals and huge amount of information out there you have to know which information is important, get people to share it and find ways to make it easy and understandable to use".

51 THE ROLE OF TOP MANAGEMENT

Librarians role in changing with the technological changes. They must prepare themselves for different other non-traditional eventualities. Though many people are capable, they are not able to properly tune to the changing needs. They have to learn presentation skills and they may have to prepare to take various different responsibilities. For adopting any new technology, a person need to be technologist. You do not have to know the technology of the telephone to use it. You have to be aware of the existence of the new technologies and creatively apply them to what you would ideally want to. The new technologies have created far more opportunities and change than we have ever experienced and expected than our traditional work. One of the jobs of the today's librarian would be to help the users to know what information sources are available on the Internet and how to access these sources. Top management needs skill of high order to handle library operation.

- The top people in the hierarchy should become role models to the other staff through their personal usage of technology and their IT knowledge.
- They have to be properly educated to perform this role efficiently.
- The libraries must foresee how the key service strategies can be enabled by the IT.
- The staff must be educated about the latest technological trends and other alternative scenarios of technological opportunities for the library.
- The top management must identify the high potential personnel whose strengths and potential may otherwise go unnoticed.
- The top management also should identify the development and training needs of the employees.

- It is the top management's responsibility to identify the individual interests that can match with the organisational goals.
- The top management must investigate new technologies and match them up with the needs they have in the library.

6 ROLE OF LISP

According to Mary Smith Forman, Library Services Manager, United Services Automobile Association, "If we remain in 'we design and they will come and use' tradition of librarianship we will fail. Everything has to be user-defined, and librarians should build around that". The LISPs are better judges of the knowledge requirements of the users. The LISPs develop professional competencies relating to knowledge of information resources and how to access and use them, and should develop personal competencies that represent the skills, attitudes and values those help LISP to succeed. The Librarians must develop the ability in the staff to deal with the change.

6.1 WHAT TRAINING/EDUCATION CAN DO?

The LISP should be trained to explore new ways to use computing and networking technologies to enhance the library's services effectively and efficiently. Knowledge/information management skills give an opportunity LISPs to enhance their personal skills. For those LISPs who have broader aspirations must change and special efforts may be required to be put in.

- The training/education on information needs should provide for skills which can access, evaluate, manage, organise, filter and distribute to the end user in a way user can be happy.
- The training/education helps the LISP to blend internal and external information making it into an actionable knowledge for the end users.
- The education/training to LISP should add a significant level of depth to the existing skills and should give a feeling that they have learned a lot from the education/training.

The LISP has to learn other skills also to relate them to the user needs to built up a better rapport with them.

- he LISP should play a vital role in integrating the various technical and nontechnical skill at his disposal.

- It is necessary to modernize the curriculum and it should give emphasis on IT and its applications.
- It is highly desirable that library schools must adopt themselves to the changing environment. So that they can turn out products who are able to provide library services to meet the change posed by the changing environment.
- The Departments/Schools should be equipped with adequate machines and manpower to meet the changing scenario.
- They should be ready to use newer innovations, which will take place in future, otherwise IT professionals will overtake and become masters of LISPs.
- Present day Library Science schools must prepare students for the future. The Curriculum Programmes must be prepared keeping in view the present as well as future needs and also attract bright students and faculty.

7 USERS

Since library is a key service centre in an academic setup, the total information management and the other functions depend upon the users need. The automations makes it convenient for the users to locate the information sources at short time. The technology gives the users access to the up-to-date information. On a regular basis the users needs must be assessed. The reasons must be explored for the non-use of information sources.

- The user training and orientation increase the library's importance.
- Library should play a crucial role in improving users information literacy skills and searching proficiency.
- Searching proficiency of users can be improved through documentation or through on-line.
- LISPs need to build up relations with the unseen clientele because of networked environment.
- Complex solutions required on a network by the users.
- The informal way of teaching the students will be more helpful.
- Progress should be checked with the help of statistical methods and qualitative measures. This will help in assessing in the proper deployment of resources and proper usage of deployed resources.

- Technology advances will bring in many users and along with them more demands.
- Major changes may need more help for the users.
- Information services should create more friendly environment for the users. Some of the library services to be devoted to the counseling and coping strategies.
- Multimedia presentations will have a telling impact on the users.
- LISPs has to thoroughly study the information needs and information behaviour of the users.

8 AN OVERVIEW OF EXPERIENCES AT INDIRA GANDHI MEMORIAL LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD

- 1989 In this library we started automation process. Initially many people were not interested. But as the internal (within library) networking came up, the process was speeded up.
- 1993 We started with connecting the Circulation and Acquisition sections on serial (RS 232) lines by providing two VT 220 terminals. This helped us to build the library database very quickly. The staff members who were working in those sections had a feel of the technology for the first time.
- 1994 The University Campus Network was established and the Library was on the University Campus network. This gave us tremendous boost. Then we provided a terminal for the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC). Because of the demand for more working points, immediately we had to think about the change. As the library was hooked on to the Campus LAN, the e-mail facility became operational. This facilitated library to communicate with many users about their requirements. This also facilitated resource sharing.
- 1995 We got special funding sanction from INFLIBNET, UGC, out of which we used a portion of the amount for the automation. We established Ethernet backbonebased network with the help of a hub and adopted other latest technologies. We provided all the sections and the stack working areas also with terminals and also provided six terminals at OPAC. We have virtually abandoned the manual catalogue. The Internet facility was made available to the Library. Through Internet searches, we started helping many

students in their concerned subject. Effectively we are able to help many users in resource searching and down loading. We have put our Web/Home page already on Internet. We have also access to some online journals over Internet.

The change never did give any trouble to us. We started to give personalised training to our staff as well as the other users in a very informal way. We found that personalised training is advantageous. It was difficult, but the informal way only could help the users to get to the change or the technology in a very easy way. If we train some users, the others through these trained users will easily learn. This made our training process more easy. At the beginning of every Academic Year, we conduct orientation classes for all the new students. We trained them in using computers to access the Library data base in addition to the regular orientation programme. Today the users are willing to change with the technology. Now all our sections are working on the computers. The change has changed them so much that they are demanding for latest technologies. In the case of Library staff also the training was of very informal nature. But within a short time all the staff members started using the computers. We can proudly say that we are the only people who have thoroughly exploited various packages for our needs. We believe in need-based training than training for the training sake. The informal training helped so much that our lower cadre staff also started helping the new users at the OPAC terminals. On the whole the response was unprecedented. Training on IT for LISPs should be on real time and in actual environment rather than in classrooms/laboratories.

91 CONCLUSION

Management of change has acquired more importance, as library continue to be squeezed by powerful economic, political and social forces. We can master a change only when we view it realistically and positively. On the other side a new information world is shaping up before our eyes. We cannot afford to be still in the traditional world. Martin Luther proclaimed, "When you rest you rust". It is crucial to welcome the new technologies that will turn opportunities into today's achievements. Success keeps us venturing into new technologies.

Success or failure of any system depends on the people who are working for this system. So, it is all the more important to create a congenial atmosphere where people can turn out there best. An ideal environment

would build up team work and also reduces stress. Properly managed change can bring in maximized personal performances, improved productivity and improved services. For convenience sake some of the inflexible policies and procedures need to be changed or dropped. Flexible rules can help the front-line people to deliver qualitative and quick services.

Today success can be attributed to the knowledge inside the heads of the human. Knowledge management is not a new concept altogether. It has been there in different forms. It is an unorganised sector. Today, since the need for better knowledge management is felt, the Library & Information Science Professionals should update themselves. The need of the hour for the academic libraries is to have, may not be an advanced system like in the western countries, a working and reliable information infrastructure. The vision of the future should be an environment that enables people and their information devices to connect and communicate with each other at all times. National policies on Information Technology should give more impetus on working models rather than the paper models. Today's Working models will provide a base for development of more advanced models tomorrow.

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