

Capacity Building in University Library Services

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Abstract

This paper discusses about the capacity building in University Library services. It also discusses about the objectives, functions, services of the University Libraries. How the trend of services has changed from past to present and what are the adaptation to be made by the library professionals in imparting the services has also been highlighted in this paper. Some suggested roles for the library professional for capacity building in University Library Services has been given in this paper.

Keywords: Capacity Building, University Library, University Library Services, Professional Skills

1. Introduction

The popularity and use of any library depends upon bringing the right contact between the right reader and the right book at the right time. In other words popularity depends on the extent to which satisfactory of optimum library services are being provided to the readers or library clientele. The intensive services made available by some of the special libraries or documentation centers cannot be provided by the university libraries over a whole range of interest without great increase in the number of professionals. However, with the help of automation, university libraries are in a position to provide a variety of services over a wide range of areas, which were not possible previously (Krishan, 2000).

Library Professionals or Librarians in higher education make an important contribution to the academic community in which they practice. In libraries, their essential role is considered to be most important as it is concerned with the ongoing need for access to learning resources for teachers and faculty members as well as to the students and research schol-

ars. There is an urgent necessity to learn a great variety of professional skills to accomplish the role of professional librarian in the constantly changing and challenging web environment. Professional competences enable librarians or library professionals to respond effectively and efficiently to the constant development of new technologies.

2. Capacity Building

Capacity building is an ongoing process through which individuals, groups, organizations and societies enhance their ability to identify and meet development challenges. Capacity building involves man-machine interfaces in organizations to enhance operating efficiency, expertise and skills of personnel towards the achievement of organizational excellence.

◆ Capacity Building for library

Capacity building for Library is an investment in the future sustainability. When capacity building is successful, it strengthens a library's ability to fulfill its mission over time, and enhances the library's ability to have a positive impact on lives and communities.



3. The University Library

The term 'university library' is used here to represent a library which is an integral part of an institution of higher education, a university, in which teaching and research are conducted in multi disciplines. Report of the Radhakrishnan Commission on University Education (1948-1949) stated that: "The library is the heart of all University's work, directly so, as regards its research work, and indirectly as regards its educational work which derives its life from research work. Scientific research needs a library as well as its laboratories, while for humanistic research the library is both library and laboratory in one. Training in higher branches of learning and research is mainly a question of learning how to use the tools, and if the library tools are not there how can the student learn to use them?" (University Education Commission, 1949).

The prime necessity of a university is a good library with a balanced and adequate collection, which can satisfy the needs of the university faculties and help to promote advance study and research programme. A university is rated highly by its library. No university can develop effective work, in the academic sense, without a strong library as its centre. It is the central workshop of the university which provides the students, the teachers, the scholars and research workers with the tools required for the advancement as well as the acquisition of knowledge. The programme of a university library ranges from the needs of fresh students to those of the doctoral candidates and teachers.

◆ Objectives of University Library

A library plays a pivotal role in ensuring the success for higher degree of research. The important activities of university libraries include the Collec-

tion Development, Reference Service, Circulation, Document Delivery, User Education, and access to Electronic Resources etc. University libraries are expected to provide cost effective and reliable access to information using the state-of-the art information technology tools.

The basic objective of the University Library is to be as a dynamic instrument for explaining, the expanding horizons of knowledge. The library endeavors to make the genuine needs and demands of the users, from the senior academics engaged in advance research to the fresh entrant stimulate and encourage students to develop the lifelong habits of good reading, study and research and to be the centre of university for educational and scholarly pursuit.

According to Chakrabarti (1983), University imparts higher education and encourages research. University library is an organ of the University. The objectives of the university library are closely related with the objectives of the university itself. These objectives are:

- ❖ To seek and cultivate new knowledge and to interpret old ideas and knowledge in the light of new needs and discoveries;
- ❖ To provide the right kind of leadership in all walks of life, to identify gifted youth and help them develop their potentiality;
- ❖ To foster in the teachers and students the attitudes and values needed to develop the good life in individuals;
- ❖ Preparation for examinations which depends very much on textbook teaching;
- ❖ Organization of research projects;

- ❖ Extension lectures ;
- ❖ Publication of the results of creative writing and research;
- ❖ To conserve and propagate basic knowledge and ideas, as well as research and interpretation; and
- ❖ To serve as a valuable aid in the conservation and dissemination of knowledge and ideas as well as teaching.

◆ Functions of University Library

University libraries have the basic function, which is to aid the parent institutions in carrying out its objectives. University libraries should be designed to support the role which has been assumed by or assigned to the university. The library contributes to the realization of these objectives and supports the total programme by acquiring and making available the books, materials and services which are needed.

The Kothari Education Commission (1964-66) in its report clearly defines the functions of university libraries in order to realize the objectives of university education, as follows:

- “(a) provide resources necessary for research in fields of special interest to university;
- (b) aid the university teacher in keeping abreast of developments in his field;
- (c) provide library facilities and services secondary for success of all programmes of instruction;
- (d) open the door to the wide field of books that lie beyond the borders of one’s own field of specialization; and

- (e) to bring books, students and scholars together under conditions which encourage reading for pleasure, self-discovery, personal growth and sharpening of intellectual curiosity.” (Education Commission, 1966).

Line (1968) opined, “The function of the university library is to bring together information or knowledge on the one hand and human beings on the other.”

◆ University Library Services

The services to be provided by a university library are given below:

- ❖ Lending service
- ❖ Library orientation and bibliographic instruction
- ❖ Provision of general and specific information
- ❖ Assistance in location (searching) of documents or use of library catalogue or understanding of reference books etc.
- ❖ Reference and referral services
- ❖ Document delivery services
- ❖ Literature search services
- ❖ Readers’s advisory service; Selective dissemination of information (SDI), Current awareness services (CAS)
- ❖ Compilation of bibliographies, preparation of indexing and abstracting services
- ❖ List of additions
- ❖ Reservation of documents
- ❖ Inter-library loan

- ❖ Holding of library exhibitions including display of new additions to the library
- ❖ Maintenance of clippings, vertical files containing pamphlets like prospectus, reports etc.
- ❖ Reprographic and printing services
- ❖ Translation service

Moreover there are some other technical services in the university libraries. These services are also known as work behind the screen. In other words, technical services are the preparation for providing better reader services, which include

- ❖ acquisition of materials
- ❖ classification
- ❖ cataloguing
- ❖ binding
- ❖ weeding out of reading materials, etc.

Thus a university library extends the academic research supports at all levels and at all stages of research.

4. Capacity Building in the Traditional University Library Services

Some of the traditional systems are characterized by manual systems of information organization, utilizing predominantly pre-co-ordinate indexing systems with resultant author or dictionary catalogue as the main storage and retrieval devices. Unfortunately, this is the predominant method in most of the libraries in our institutions of higher education today (Amkpa and Obaje, 2012).

Some of the traditional roles of librarians and information professional are highlighted by Martin (1996) as :

- ❖ **Liaison with Users** : The subject librarian is often formally associated with particular school or department
- ❖ **Enquiry Work** : Often include timetable stints on enquiry desks
- ❖ **Selection of Materials and Management of Materials Budget**: Traditionally the subject librarian selects books taking into account recommendation from users.
- ❖ **Cataloguing and Classification** : The latter in particular is commonly done by subject staff in some libraries
- ❖ **Managing Collection**: Including looking after collections, in some cases 'subject area' or 'subject floor', binding administration, conspectus activity, relegation of material, etc.
- ❖ **User Education**: Particularly library induction to new students.
- ❖ **Production of Guide and Publicity** : including subject guides, etc.

The foundation of librarianship which includes skills in cataloguing, classification and user education that are relevant in an electronic age as they are print based and will continue to provide a solid base of roles and skills.

5. Changes in Library Services

The advancement of science and technology has made a tremendous improvement and changes in library services worldwide. The increasing role of technologies in libraries has a significant role on the changing role of librarians. Similarly, academic librarianship is supposed to have changed more over the last few decades than in its entire previous his-

tory, and it is suggested that the academic librarians in India have to redefine their roles, and indeed to refine their understanding of what they were trying to do in this era.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has enormously increased the capabilities of library services, creating options for networking to provide access to vast stores of electronic information, for more sophisticated library housekeeping systems, and for greater bibliographic access through services. However, technology can also create further pressures and drains on a library's resources simultaneous for delivering a vastly advanced service. Problems of obsolescence and compatibility of hardware and software can be costly, and the demands for training, both of staff and library users are great.

A significant challenge posed by Information Technology (IT) for both library and information staff and users is the sheer volume of information available electronically, leading to a sense of "information overload" for users (Deekle and de Klerk, 1992). A further problem is the greater levels of bibliographic access, which puts pressure on library holdings and inter-library loans, raises students' expectations, thus highlighting the library's shortcomings, and creates "a greater awareness among students of the services and facilities which libraries can, in principle, provide" (Feather, 1993). Thus library users become more demanding and dissatisfied with the level of service that they receive.

Changes of functions of Library from past to present can be represented by the following table:

Table 1: Changes of Functions of Library from Past to Present

Function	Past	Present
Integrated Library System	Provided MARC, patron, and circulation records	Web-based: meta-data; resource links; cross database searching
Information available	The print collection; Inter-Library Loan for anything else; CD Abstracts & Indexes	Print collection plus online data-bases; Document Delivery; extensive E-resources
Access to information	Walk-in to OPAC, PC's, stacks	Remote, wireless
Study space	Quiet areas	Group study areas
Information Instruction	Bibliographic Instruction, by instructor request	Information Literacy; hands-on "learning"
Information printouts	Dot matrix printer	Laser printer
Organizational	Bureaucratic; functional; hierarchical	Services oriented; Teams
Orientation	Local Regional,	consortia
Computer access	OPAC;	Online access to DBs Information Commons
Financial	Parent dependent	Participate in fundraising
Consortia	Test and buy databases	Negotiate special DB's

(Source : Midda, Kahn, Khan, & Mukherjee, 2009)

6. Capacity Building in the ICT and Digital Environment based University Library Services

New roles emerge for library professionals as a result of introduction of ICT to library and information services. It has been emphasized that library and information service provision has witnessed a paradigm shift, from purely, traditional, and physical manipulation of information resources to technological manipulation as well as electronic provision of library and information service. This is because of the discovery and application of ICT to library operation. They affirmed these new roles of library professionals as creation of web pages, development of digital contents, collaborators, information brokers, educators, policy makers and business managers (Ugboma and Edewor, 2008).

In the same way, Abbas (1997) summarized the roles of librarians in an electronic age as gateway to future and past, knowledge manager or worker, organizers of networked resources, advocates for information policy development, community partners, sifters of information resources, collaborators with technology resource provider, technicians and individual information consultants.

The digital environment means that every copy is a technological equal of the original. Absent printed output, content may exist without form. Paper becomes an interface, a volatile, disposable medium for viewing information on demand or a storage medium. It no longer serves a primary function as a communications medium. That attribute is performed by the computer's monitor screen.

The emerging roles of library professionals in a digital environment has been identified by Anderson (Amkpa and Obaje, 2012) which include :

- ❖ Selecting electronic resources and evaluating their quality;
- ❖ Developing expeditious and effective locator tools to make the complex web of resources more readily accessible to users;
- ❖ Bring value added components and indexing to the numerous resources, which will continue to proliferate since anyone can now, in effect, publish on the web;
- ❖ Delivering information services where librarians are not merely the passive catalyst who direct inquires to relevant sources, but also to provide the information to users who actually seek-analyzed, evaluated, synthesized and transferred in its most useful form;
- ❖ Teaching novices how to find resources, libraries can also teach specialists how to locate relevant resources outside their own disciplines and even within their own field;
- ❖ Teaching critical evaluation skills, which includes assessing the authenticity and quality of what is found and determine whether an identified document is worth downloading; and
- ❖ Functioning as a bridge between system designers and users, by having sufficient credibility with programmes and by understanding users' needs, librarians can serve as the users' advocate with the system designer while also interpreting to the user what may or may not be technically feasible.

7. Professional Skills for Library Professionals for Capacity Building in the present context

Professional skills can be thought of as flexible knowledge and skills that allow the library profes-

sional to function in a variety of environments and to produce a variety of value-added, customized information services that cannot be easily duplicated by others. The primary reasons for the need of professional skills are given below:

- ❖ Continuing professional development is an essential part of the modern library information professional's successful career planning & prospects;
- ❖ The library and information science (LIS) professionals with better personal, professional and technological skills have great opportunities and bright future in the modern libraries;
- ❖ Application of new ICT into the libraries immediately requires improvement of different kinds of skills and knowledge in library information science professionals; and
- ❖ Continuous staff training on emerging technologies is essential to learn, improve and develop various kinds of professional skills, knowledge and competencies.

Some of the unique competencies of the library and information science professionals are as such:

◆ Technical Skills

In the age of 21st century LIS Professional must be aware of emerging technologies. It has become increasingly important that library professionals keep up with technology and have certain basic skills. In the current scenario library professionals must have the knowledge of HTML, networking, scripting languages, the ability to deal with the back-end of the OPAC, the ability to translate library services into the online medium, the ability to troubleshoot basic computer and printer problems, or just a good healthy knowledge of emerging technologies.

◆ Time Management Skills

Time management refers to a range of skills, tools, and techniques used to manage time when accomplishing specific tasks, projects and goals. This set encompasses a wide scope of activities, and these include planning, allocating, setting goals, delegation, analysis of time spent, monitoring, organizing, scheduling, and prioritizing. As the fourth law of library science says, "save the time of users". So, it has become more important that library professionals must develop the time management skills. Because to provide better or effective services to the user, time is also a factor.

◆ Presentation Skills

Library professionals must have highly effective presentation skills. Whenever they want to implement a new technology or service for Library users firstly they must create a proposal for management, they must show that what would be the consequence of this new technology, which tools are to be used to train staff, etc. They must show the role of that new technology in currently being used libraries. They had to develop and practice reader's advisory skills to promote reading habit among all levels of users. Through their presentation skills they can increase awareness of the role of libraries and library professionals in promoting information literacy.

◆ Communication Skills

Communication has a great importance in providing better services to users. Library professionals communicate the value of library services to decision makers, staff and users. When they provide information to the user they must communicate clearly and respectfully. They should always have the active listening skills with users and colleagues in their workplace. Their communication skills should not only be effective with users, but must

have the ability to negotiate effectively with publishers, customers, management & vendors too.

◆ **Customer Service**

Now a day's library professionals must be customer oriented. They can demonstrate a sincere commitment to customer service. They must try to observe customer or users needs and try to provide their desired information on time. Through proper design and continuous improvement in user oriented information products and their competencies, they can provide the users better customer services. They have to show confidence and competences to the users to deliver perfect customer services.

◆ **Evaluation and Assessment Skills**

Library professionals need to understand how changes, in library services will affect all stakeholders. Sometimes they focus on the needs of one group and ignore the fact that the changes that will benefit one group will not benefit another. With any change, librarians or professionals should create a list of all of different stakeholders and actually discuss how it will affect each of them. Here "stakeholders" means not only the users of the library but also the staff, and administrators. If staff or administrators do not support a project that has been implemented in library, the possibility of success is poor.

For that a continuous analysis, investigation and assessment is needed to understand the needs of users and sake holders. Then accordingly they can design and deliver specialized value added information products and services. Time to time they can evaluate the outcome of the use of library and information resources and services for which they can conduct research to find solutions to the identified information management problems.

◆ **Managerial Skills**

The managerial skills include technical skills which deal with things, human skills concerned with people and conceptual skills with ideas.

Technical skills involve process or technique, knowledge and proficiency in a certain specialized field. Human Skills involve the ability to interact effectively with people. Conceptual Skills involve the formulation of ideas, conceptualization about abstract and complex situations levels.

◆ **Knowledge of Policies, Procedures, Issues and Standards**

Library professionals should maintain the current awareness of professional issues impacting libraries and should be kept aware themselves about the knowledge of library policies, procedures and service standards etc.

◆ **Knowledge of Information Sources and Services**

The library professionals should possess the following qualities or skills for providing better information sources and services to the users of the library:

- i) To develop specialized subject knowledge about the purpose of the organization;
- ii) To identify materials appropriate to customers' requirements and their abilities;
- iii) Expert knowledge in the content of information resources and ability to critically evaluate and filter them; and
- iv) To develop and deliver convenient, easily accessible and cost effective information services to the users.

◆ **Commitment to Life-Long Learning**

The library professionals should also have the following characters for up gradation of their own pro-

fessional quality, so that they can cope up with the changing trends:

- i) Take responsibility for the development of one's own professional career;
- ii) Remain knowledgeable in current events and technologies;
- iii) Pursue learning opportunities, personally or through formal training;
- iv) Flexible in adapting to new situations, systems, tools, and environment; and
- v) Anticipates, accepts, adapts and manages change effectively.

◆ Other Skills

Some other skills are listed below which should be possessed by the library professionals in present context. These are:

- i) Marketing and promotion of library services
- ii) Project management skills
- iii) Digital rights management
- iv) Knowledge management skills

8. Some Suggested Roles for Library Professionals for Capacity Building in University Library Services in the Present Context

Following are some of the roles that a library professional can adopt to serve the user as well as the library in the present context:

- ❖ To provide intellectual access to information in any format;
- ❖ To evaluate available sources of information ;
- ❖ To organize and structure information;
- ❖ To ensure the preservation of information;

- ❖ To provide specialized staff to offer instruction and assistance in interpreting resources and access to resources; and

- ❖ To provide initiation and orientation through user education.

9. Conclusion

A well organized and properly administered university library serves as an invaluable aid in the conservation of knowledge and ideas. The university library, therefore, performs a variety of functions, by way helping students with textbooks, reference books, and periodicals, by providing a large number of bibliographical tools and up-to-date literature on every subject for teachers and researchers, as well as by maintaining an efficient reference and information service. For these activities Library professionals are the professionals trained in the acquisition, organization, retrieval, and dissemination of information. Now a day the varied and complicated services of a modern University library need to be organized and controlled by a person of competence and expertise, who has a sound knowledge of the tools and techniques of library profession. If the library professionals adopt themselves with all modern tools, techniques and skills then the practice of librarianship in the present IT-based library environment will not be very different from that in the traditional print-based library. The library professionals' role will continue to include selection of suitable resources, providing access to such resources, offering instruction and assistance to users in interpreting resources, and preserving both the medium and the information contained therein.

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