Technological Skill and Competency of College Librarians in Rural Kamrup District (Northern Part), Assam

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Abstract

The changing trend of Information Communication Technology (ICT) development has created an environment of skill development and competency among the college library professionals. This paper highlights the need and importance of ICT skill development among the college library professionals. The main objective of this paper is to identify the knowledge and awareness of ICT skill development and competency among the surveyed library professionals. The data for the study are collected from both primary and secondary sources and analysed accordingly. From the study it is found that, all the surveyed library professionals give importance in Continuing Education Programme (CEP) for ICT skill and competency development. Moreover, almost all of them are facing the common problem i.e. lack of trained man power.

 Keywords: Skill Development, CEP, Man Power

1.   Introduction

We live in an information society where the development of information technology and telecommunication networks helps in increasing knowledge. This new environment requires new skill in searching, processing and using information.

The emerging environment is a mix of personal, technological and management competencies and attitudes which can make the differences between basic intuition of survival and progressive successes. The dynamic environment of the library and information sector stresses the need for academic library professionals to remain flexible and adaptable to change. To meet this need, they have to ensure that their knowledge, competencies and skills meet the needs of the community which they

have served. Skill is a practical ability and a facility in carrying out an action, whereas, competency is often defined as the underlying attribute and mental ability that governs how an individual interact with the world. Competency enables individuals to contribute positively to their organization and the library profession. Skill can be seen in an action in the way someone carries out a task, competencies are hidden inside the person but influences how he uses his skills (Clarkson, 2001).

Basically the Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals need to have two main types of competency - i. Professional competency and ii. Personal competency. Professional competency deals with professional knowledge of information resources, access technology, management and research. On the other hand, personal competency includes value and ethic, leadership, flexibility, communication, self-motivation, creativity, interpersonal skill and self-appraisal.

With this rationality in mind, the present study has been undertaken to study the technological skill and competency of college librarians in rural Kamrup district (northern part) of Assam.

2. Objectives of Study

The study has been carried out taking into consideration of two main objectives. These are:

i. to understand the knowledge , skill and competency of the library professional on ICT application,

ii. to find out the role of continuing education programme for development of ICT skill and competency among the library professional.

3. Materials and Methods

The study is carried out based on the data collected from various secondary sources as well as primary sources through personal interviews with the help of survey questionnaire. Secondary data have been collected from various journals, books, proceedings and other relevant publications. A brief overview of the present scenario of skill development in the college libraries of rural Kamrup district (northern part), Assam has been analysed in this paper. The information provided by the librarians of the surveyed colleges have been processed and analysed accordingly. Data so far collected have been represented by using tables to befit the analysis.

4. Scope of Study

There are many colleges in the study area; some are provincialised and some are non-provincialised. Only the provincialised colleges are covered in this study. According to Directorate of Higher Education (DHE), Government of Assam, there are twenty colleges in rural Kamrup district including newly provincialised colleges.. In this paper only the north bank colleges have been considered for the purpose of this study. Again, out of ten provincialised colleges in the north bank of the district, data have been collected from six colleges (60%) to find out the outcome of the study.

5. Discussion and Analysis

5.1 Basic Information of the College Libraries

From the basic information of the college libraries under the study area it has been observed that there are two numbers of colleges which were established during 1960's and three numbers in 1970's and another one number in 1980's with the library professionals having MILSc degrees. In the surveyed college libraries, three library professional have M.Phil degree, whereas only one librarian has Ph.D. degree.

5.2 Human Resource of the Libraries

All the colleges of the study area are performing their functions only with one library professional without any semi-professional staff. Suren Das College, S.B.M.S. College and Pub Kamrup College have three numbers of non-professional staff each. Moreover, Rangia College, one of the well-known colleges in lower Assam running their services only one number of staff. Puthimari College has two numbers of non-professionals which is suffering acute shortage of manpower. The present staff strength of the surveyed colleges is too weak to perform their library functions efficiently and effectively.

5.3 Encouragement from College Authority for Career Advancement

All the library professionals are responsible for their college authority for their services. College authority plays an important role for library professionals, career growth and development.

Among the surveyed colleges, 67% authorities provide the facility of research work for their career growth and development. All the surveyed college library authority provides the facility to attend the seminar, training programme and involvement in different in-house committees. Only 33% college library authorities provide the facility to go abroad and to go on deputation in other organization in India for their career growth and development.

5.4 Continuing Education Programmes

The surveyed college libraries of rural Kamrup district (northern part) library professionals have acquired a good number of continuing education programmes for their ICT skill and competency development by attending seminar, refresher course, workshop, in house-training programme, etc.

Table-1 reveals that S.B.M.S. College librarian has attended the highest number of conference and workshop. Suren Das College librarian has attended the highest number of refresher course and Puthimari College librarian has attended the highest number of in-house training programme. From the study it is clear that the library professionals are fully conscious about their skill development through different CEP.

According to the library professionals they deeply understand the importance of lifelong learning for all levels of library work and try to actively pursue personal and professional growth through continuing education.

All the surveyed college library professionals agree with the importance of CEP to acquire new skill and improve library services. A significant percentage i.e. 83% of college librarians of study area carry their informal learning to update knowledge and to get trained in the latest technology. Half of college

Table-1: Number of Attendance in CEP in Service Period

Name of College	Conference attendance	Workshop attendance	Refresher courses	In-House training -programme
1. Damdama College	1	2	2	-
2. Suren Das College	8	1	5	1
3. S.B.M.S. College	12	5	1	4
4. Rangia College	8	4	1	1
5. Pub Kamrup College	8	3	1	-
6. Puthimari College	2	2	4	6

Source: Primary Survey, 2016

librarians of the surveyed colleges have done this for promotion in their profession. Only 33% of library professionals acquire CEP to train junior staff as well as improve relation with fellow professional. It is observed from the study that 67% of college library professionals support the help of CEP to a great extent for their professional skill development. Only 17% of library professional comments that it is help full to some extent for skill and competency development of library professionals.

5.5 Source of Information for ICT Skill Development

The library professionals can gather their knowledge and technological skill both from printed as well as non-printed materials. In this study it is observed that the college librarians of surveyed colleges used the printed as well as non-printed documents for their knowledge development.

It is observed that 83% of college library professionals prefer journals for their information need. The entire surveyed college librarians have a preference on internet sources for educational and information need. Text book and conference paper source is used by 67% of college librarians to gather the knowledge for their skill development.

The new era librarian is a technology application leader. Due to the rapid technological developments, the libraries are integrating new method of information resources to get IT skills. Table-2 explores the knowledge of different electronic information resources acquired by the surveyed librarians.

About 67% of library professionals have knowledge about library website, library networks and online journals. On the other hand, 50% of college librarians prefer the search engine, E-books, online database and institutional repositories to get the information on skill development in ICT. Only 33% of library professionals have familiar with Web OPAC's and E-mail List serve. Audio-visual media is one of the important elements of CEP. It is also helpful in distance learning mode. By watching different programmes on TV library professional can

Table-2: Knowledge of Electronic Information Resource

Name of College	Search engine	Library website	Web OPAC's	E-Books	Library networks	Online journals	Online databases	E-Mail List serve	Inst. Rep.
1. Damdama College	-	√	-	-	√	-	√	-	√
2. Suren Das College	√	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3. S.B.M.S. College	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
4. Rangia College	-	√	-	√	-	√	-	-	-
5. Pub Kamrup College	√	√	-	-	√	√	-	√	√
6. Puthimari College	-	-	√	√	√	√	√	-	-

Source: Primary Survey, 2016

aware about recent development in technology in their respective field.

It is also observed that 67% of college librarians have watched the UGC programme on TV for their professional knowledge development. Only two college library professionals i.e. Damdama College and S.B.M.S. College watches the IGNOU programme on TV.

5.6 Awareness/Skill of ICT and Competency Management

Knowledge of technology is much essential today for the library and information professionals as the knowledge of classification or cataloguing. In the technology driven knowledge society, college librarians and their team have a very important role to play as they have to satisfy the critical multi-dimensional information needs of their users (Singh, 2009). At present, most of the college authorities have been looking for library professionals having specializations in web technologies to take care of library websites and web services. It needs skill basically on HTML, XML, Java Script, Windows package and other desktop publishing programmes.

The survey data reveals the awareness for use of different technologies of skill development by library professionals. About 83% of college librarians have good skill about computer networking, use of mobile phone, laser printer and barcode scanner. Whereas, 50% of college librarians have good knowledge about CD/DVD writing and memory stick. 67% of college librarians have good awareness about LCD/Multi Media Project and wireless internet. 33% of college librarians have good skill in handling digital camera, webcam, MP4 player, image scanner and e-Book reader. Not a single college librarian has good knowledge about RFID technology. Thus most of the librarians of the surveyed colleges have good skill and they are fully aware about the latest technologies.

Table-3: Level of Awareness/Skill for different Applications/Services

Name of College	Operating system (Windows)	Operating System (Linux)	Manage Electronic Resources	Web page Design	Creat metadata/ tag
1. Damdama College	Good	Poor	Good	Poor	Poor
2. Suren Das College	Good	Don't use	Poor	Don't know	Don't use
3. S.B.M.S. College	Good	Don't use	Good	Good	Poor
4. Rangia College	Good	Good	-	-	-
5. Pub Kamrup College	Good	Don't use	Good	Good	Don't use
6. Puthimari College	Good	-	-	-	-

Name of College	Creat HTML/ XML Document	Installation and Customization of Software	System administration & maintenance	Programming language	Development of institutional repository
1. Damdama College	Don't use	Don't use	Don't use	Don't use	Good
2. Suren Das College	Don't use	Poor	Poor	Don't know	Don't use
3. S.B.M.S. College	Good	Good	Good	Poor	Good
4. Rangia College	-	-	-	-	Good
5. Pub Kamrup College	Don't use	Don't use	Good	Don't use	Don't use
6. Puthimari College	-	-	-	-	-

Source: Primary Survey, 2016

Again, Table-3 tries to reflect the level awareness in the various applications or services of different IT programmes. All the surveyed college library professionals have good skill in window operating system. Only one college librarian is aware about Linux, create HTML/XML document, installation and customization of software and system administration and maintenance. About 50% of library professional can manage electronic resources and develop the institutional repository in good way. The entire library professional have poor knowledge in metadata creation and programming language.

Table 4: Use of Web Tools/Services

Name of College	Blogging	Audio/ Video sharing/web casting	Email/ instant messaging/chat	Discussion groups	Listservs
1. Damdama College	Rarely	Rarely	Frequently	Frequently	Never
2. Suren Das College	Never	Rarely	Frequently	Rarely	Never
3. S.B.M.S. College	Frequently	Rarely	Frequently	Rarely	Rarely
4. Rangia College	Rarely	-	Frequently	Rarely	-
5. Pub Kamrup College	Rarely	Rarely	Frequently	Frequently	-
6. Puthimari College	-	-	Frequently	-	-
Name of college	RSS feeds	Wikis	Social book marking/ aggregating	Social networking systems	Content management
1. Damdama College	Never	Rarely	Frequently	Frequently	Never
2. Suren Das College	Never	Frequently	Never	Frequently	Never
3. S.B.M.S. College	Rarely	Frequently	Frequently	Frequently	Rarely
4. Rangia College	-	-	-	Frequently	Rarely
5. Pub Kamrup College	Frequently	Rarely	Rarely	Frequently	Never
6. Puthimari College	-	-	-	-	-

Source: Primary Survey, 2016

Table-4 makes an attempt to explain the use of web tools by the library professionals of the surveyed colleges. Email/instant messaging/chat services and social networking services are used frequently by all the surveyed college library professionals. Blogging tool is used only by 33% library professional frequently, 50% of library professional uses it rarely and 33% of library professional never use it. Audio/Video sharing/Web casting services is used by 67% of library professionals rarely. Only 33% of library professionals involve themselves in discussion group. Content management system is rarely used only by 33% of college library professionals.

The following table reflects the skill and knowledge in different library software packages by the library professionals of surveyed colleges.

It is seen that all the library professionals of the surveyed colleges have good knowledge about SOUL software package. Table-5 shows that 67% of college librarians have knowledge about CDS/ISIS and KOHA. LIBSYS software package is known to only 33% of college library professionals.

Digital library software is also known as institutional repository software package. It is an online locus for collection and preserving in digital form the intellectual output of an institution, particularly a research institution (Barman, 2012). Table-9 highlighted the awareness of digital library software by the library professionals of surveyed colleges.

The college library professionals who are familiar with Greenstone digital library software cover only 50%. Again, 83% of college librarians have knowledge about the D-space digital library software.

Application of ICT in the college libraries leads to drastic change in the library profession. Library professionals are now more conscious in respect of their professional as well as personnel competencies.

All the surveyed college librarians are agreed with the application of ICT in their libraries can help quick access to current data, improve quality in library services, increase job satisfaction, improve in

Table-5: Knowledge of Library Software and Digital Library Software

Name of College	Library Software	Digital Library Software
1. Damdama College	LIBSYS, SOUL, CDS/ISIS, WINSIS, KOHA	Green Stone, Dspace
2. Suren Das College	SOUL, CDS/ISIS	Dspace
3. S.B.M.S. College	SOUL, CDS/ISIS, KOHA	Green Stone, Dspace
4. Rangia College	SOUL, KOHA	Green Stone, Dspace
5. Pub Kamrup College	SOUL	-
6. Puthimari College	LIBSYS, SOUL, CDS/ISIS, KOHA	Dspace

Source: Primary Survey, 2016

communication, status of library and makes integration within the library system. According to 83% of librarians, the application of ICT reduces work load into library functioning; 33% of college library professionals agreed that ICT disturbed routine work of library whereas 50% of college librarians disagreed that it affects regular budget provision.

There are various obstacles in the application of ICT in the college libraries faced by the library professional. The most common obstacle is the lack of trained manpower i.e. lack of professional skill

A good percentage (83%) of college librarians has the problem of inadequate training of library staff. Again, 67% of college library professionals agreed that they have to face the problem of lack of infrastructure, lack of interest of library staff and no support from administration to get training for their ICT skill development. Only 33% of library professionals faced the problem of lack of support from authority, lack of coordination and no initiative from professional association.

About 83% of college library professionals support to going for higher studies for updating their knowledge, whereas, 67% of college librarians suggested undertaking individual research work and 33% of college librarian advised for reading literary work for their skill development.

6. Suggestion

The library professionals have forwarded some suggestions for updating knowledge and skill of library professionals. All the surveyed college librarians suggested on the regular attendance of conference, workshop, in-house training programme, discussion with colleague, attending association's

meeting, reading relevant literature, and searching internet learning from web resources for their development of ICT skill and competency.

Moreover, the following suggestions should also follow for ICT skill and competency development:

❖ College authority should provide adequate facilities for library professional for their career growth and development, especially in the field of research and training programme.

❖ There should provision to attend the continuing education programme in service period after a parallel interval. This makes the professional up-to date and refresh in their subject field.

❖ Continuously arranged the different seminar, training programme, short-term courses in application of Information and communication Technology (ICT).

❖ Try to develop the communication skill, leadership skill, information handling skills, decision making skills among the library professional by conducting the different training programme.

❖ Various professional associations, both at the local level and at the national level organize workshops and refresher courses from time to time for ICT skill development.

❖ Sufficient member of library staff should be recruited in the library so that the whole staff can perform their function without any hindrance.

❖ Not only the professional but also the non-professional staff should try to be trained for ICT skill.

❖ One of the important aspects of human resource development is learning from others. This can be achieved by visiting other libraries. This will help to broaden outlook, compare system and procedure and learn to provide better services a networked environment.

7. Conclusion

Library is a 'growing organism'. Libraries have influenced by the rapid advances of information technology. Application of ICT has made possible for the libraries to expand their sphere of activities. The librarians of new era added more values for their services and can make libraries truly useful and user friendly. Different ICT skills and competencies are essential for today's libraries to manage properly the library resources as well as services. Library is a connecting bridge of past, present and future. By remembering this importance, library professionals always try to keep themselves adjustable with changing ICT environment. A librarian must be aware and skilled in each and every part of Information and Communication Technology.

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