CHANGING DIMENSIONS AND PERSPECTIVES OF LIBRARIANSHIP IN INDIA

Kamal Kumar Chaurasia[1]

INTRODUCTION

Libraries provide the real and virtual spaces in communities for the free and open exchange of ideas fundamental to democratic participation and civil society. As community forums, libraries present thoughtful, engaging, and enlightening programs about problems facing our democratic way of life--programs that have a vast potential to renew communities and encourage active citizenship. From librarians we can learn how to identify and evaluate information that is essential for making decisions that affect the way we live, work, learn, and govern ourselves. India's libraries are ideally suited to play a critical role in rejuvenating public spirit by providing not only information, but also the expanded opportunities for dialogue that the public needs to make decisions about common concerns.

In the information age, libraries and librarians are more essential than ever. They are essential to our economic well being, to global understanding, to the advancement of learning, to meeting the challenge of information overload, to closing the digital divide, and to ensuring public participation in the democratic process. Information technology has enabled a growing digital world, inextricably linked to our physical existence but revolutionary in terms of human creativity and thought. New technologies for mobile communication, massively distributed collaboration, and real-time information sharing are radically influencing human expressions, interactions and records. With the tremendous momentum generated in IT sector both in hardware and software segments, huge availability of manpower (large population of youth with IT skills), largest English-speaking knowledge workers, rich collection of traditional resources in libraries untapped resources, bundle of professional hands and brains, government backing of pro e-governance and deveopment of libraries partnership with industries are strong indicators of emerging knowledge era and the growth of Indian economy as a knowledge base economy.

Today in this situation our country can lead the world by equipped itself with knowledge and the knowledge about knowledge. it can develop itself as a global market hub having higher rate of literacy and GDP and thus slowly moving towards prosperity and richness. There is likely to be a continuing demand for powerful information organization, management, and dissemination tools to harness advanced information technology. In India, several ministries of the Government of India and Institutions, NGOs, private organizations, and others have initiated national and

---
[1] Librarian, Moti Lal Rastogi School of Management, Lucknow-8
Email: klib_522@yahoo.co.in Mobile-09839488276

regional level capacity building initiatives on digital and virtual libraries. Thus information organization and management have become ever more complex and crucial in the emerging IT intrinsic library environment. Librarians can play an imperative role in the transfer of knowledge and ideas by providing people with access to the information they need and want.

LIBRARIES OF TOMORROW

The future of the library will be shaped in part by the changing environments of the society, the library and information profession, education system, business and industry, and government. Within a complex educational culture, the library anticipates the changing expectations of users (citizens, policy makers, faculty, students, researchers and scholars), administrators, funding agencies, and an increasingly diverse array of partners (from the community, profession, and business). Technological advances will continue to provide new opportunities for libraries to create, manage and disseminate information, serve new and often distant users, and enhance teaching and learning. Technology also will challenge the library as it seeks to equitably and affordably provide and preserve access to information. The library of the future will continue to support learning by creating and fostering a learning environment. It will also function increasingly as a teaching institution, as an active participant in social, cultural and national development.

The library of the future will be challenged by the need to balance traditional collection and service models with resource needs for new initiatives. Primary users of the library in the future will continue to be students, faculty, policy and decision makers, administrators and staff of the library. However, characteristics of these groups are changing, as is the nature of their use of library services. Demographics show that users are increasingly diverse, often older, more independent and frequently part-time. Technology will continue to expand opportunities and provide new challenges for libraries to serve remote users, distant learners and faculty members too. Teachers and librarians will seek new approaches to learning, including just-in-time learning, life-long learning and distance learning.

The library is defined by the services provided by the librarian, not by the physical location of information and collections. The academic library seeks to take advantage of technology to provide improved or new services, to increase access to resources beyond those owned, to reach more users more effectively, to promote learning, and to enhance teaching throughout the higher education community. At the same time, libraries maintain and apply traditional values and principles of librarianship to ensure high standards of service. These values and principles include open access to information, respect for individuality and diversity, freedom from censorship, preservation of the human record, commitment to learning and to connecting people to information and

ideas, and the importance of excellence in service. The libraries are developing now as a powerful platform for e-learning applications in different segments of society.

The library of today and tomorrow is a dynamic, service-oriented organization, supporting a diverse clientele with a wide range of sophisticated information, learning, and teaching needs. Many exciting opportunities exist for librarians to develop and apply new approaches to service, to advance the use of technology in support of learning, and to address critical needs in archiving and preserving access to information. Librarians will continue to allocate more resources towards technology as dependency on technology grows in the library, so will the need for flexibility to ensure that the library can easily move from technology to technology, physically as well as intellectually. Libraries will continue to have a crucial role in not only providing technology for users but also in creating new information systems for managing, disseminating, and preserving information regardless of format.

KNOWLEDGE COMMISSION REPORT ON LIBRARY SECTOR

The Knowledge commission report calls for overhaul of library sector recommending a major overhaul of the information service and library sector in the country including the inclusion of libraries in the Concurrent list of the Constitution, a National Library Fund of Rs. 1,000 crore to upgrade all existing libraries, a permanent national commission on libraries and a national level survey to assess the requirements and reading habits. The National Knowledge Commission has submitted its report to the government on how to redefine the information services sector. The report, currently with the PMO, will be forwarded to the Planning Commission shortly. The NKC has been set up by the PM with the mandate to transform the country into a knowledge society.

Underlining the need of including libraries in the concurrent list, the NKC report says that it would facilitate co-coordinated development of libraries across different sectors. It also suggests that a specified percentage of Central and state education budgets must be earmarked for libraries.   On the service front, the NKC insists that all libraries must have the following facilities — "motivated, courteous and adequate staff, easy access and user friendly retrieval system, effective signage and computers with internet access and photocopiers". It asks the government to issue a library charter to all libraries to take appropriate steps to ensure that libraries meet the objectives set by the commission which includes dissemination of knowledge as widely as possible, serving as a major vehicle to facilitate creation of knowledge, facilitating optimal use of knowledge by all sectors, and easy access to knowledge relevant to their needs.

It also recommends a national committee for the identification, documentation and preservation of private collections available in the country. It also suggests that every state should establish a registry and archives of knowledge based digital resources, which should be made

accessible to all. The committee has also suggested research and development activities in identifying user needs for different groups, organization of community information and development of appropriate standards, standardization of Indian names and vocabulary control over Indian subjects developed in terms of multi-lingual thesauri, development of open sources software and development of digital libraries both in English and Indian languages. Regarding the public library collections, the NKC suggests that the size and nature of the collection should reflect the population and local requirements and that at least 10 per cent of the book collection should be less than five years old. It also says that libraries should be open on all days, except on national holidays. The NKC adds that library services should initiate imaginative services apart from offering routine library services including lectures and discussion centering on books, cultural programmes, support to students' homework and project and IT training at different levels.

WHAT the NKC report PRESCRIBES

- ✓ Inclusion of libraries in the Concurrent list of the Constitution
- ✓ National Library Fund of Rs. 1,000 core to upgrade all existing libraries
- ✓ A permanent national commission on libraries
- ✓ National level survey to assess the requirements and reading habits
- ✓ Specified percentage of Central and state education budgets must be earmarked for libraries.
- ✓ Government to issue a library charter to all libraries to take appropriate steps to ensure that libraries meet the objectives
- ✓ A national committee for the identification, documentation and preservation of private collections available in the country
- ✓ Every state to establish a registry and archives of knowledge based digital resources
- ✓ Development of open sources software and development of digital libraries both in English and Indian languages
- ✓ Libraries should be open on all days, except on national holidays

CHANGING ROLE OF LIBRARIANS

In the light of recommendations made by the NKC to government, the role of librarian needs to be redefined by the nature of services and duties performed. The major roles of librarians may be classified in the following way:

Information Technology Expert

The library and information professionals will perform the role of IT expert, as they will guide the users for using the computers for retrieval of information. They will themselves get acquainted to the technical know-how, the hardware and software requirements etc. Today the main emphasis is on electronic and online sources and the librarians need to be

IT expert, as they have to frequently deal with the computers, information and communication technologies, and with other peripheral electronic devices such as different types of scanners, application software and programs.

Information Analyst

Today in the world of Internet and web technologies, the sheer amount of information is available and intellectual processing of retrieved information has become the core job of a good information scientist. Again, in the world of Internet it will prove as a good weapon for survival. Librarians need today to critically examine the originality and authenticity of the information source. Evaluation of Internet resources is of utmost importance for the librarians so as to provide the consolidated and adequate information to the end user that should be free from syntactic and semantic impurity.

Information Broker

Tomorrow the information professionals will be the information brokers as they are the mediator between the knowledge and the user. They will have to customize the information products and services according to its clientele. Analysis and synthesis of information then packaging and repackaging of information will be the area where the professional involvement will be required. Therefore the emphasis is gradually shifting towards the functions of an information broker for the library and information science professionals.

Content Provider

Today the librarians are expected to produce asked information in logically arranged and packaged format. The emphasis is now on how much the supplied information is precise and relevant. Nowadays the information generated need to be gathered either from printed source or electronic sources and be provided to the developer of information who will use it for creating a website on Internet to access the information globally. The information professional will have to collect and disseminate it to organization where it well be immediately known to end-user. Therefore the librarians need to be equipped with the techniques used in content generation, analysis, packaging, and dissemination.

Access to information

Today the Librarians look more to online and other electronic sources to meet the information needs of users. Access to information, whether by CDROM, Internet, online database, video, telefacsimile, microform or traditional print, is overtaking ownership of information as an evaluation benchmark. Acquisitions and selection criteria take on entirely new meaning when considering access to online services. New paradigms of selection and evaluation evolve with new technologies and their application to the libraries and resource center. Worldwide computer

networks make sharing resources easier than ever before. The librarian must teach to discriminating users of information about ethical use of the materials retrieved for different purpose. Copyright and Plagiarism become significant issues when digital copies may be seamlessly integrated into research work. The librarian is often the only person in a building with any training in these legal issues. Librarians play an important role in the development of access policies and acceptable use agreements delineating how and when materials retrieved may be legally and properly used. Designing documentation and record-keeping systems to assist patrons in legal compliance is an important service and one that will become essential as copyright and license enforcement increase.

Consultant

Librarians expand their areas of influence to include the classroom when they collaborate with classroom teachers to meet the information needs of students. Moving beyond the "warehouse concept" of traditional libraries, librarians strike out into classrooms/departments to consult with classroom teachers. Suggesting resources, locating and acquiring needed materials, recommending strategies, facilitating use of technologies, and instructing students and teachers in optimal information-seeking methods replace the traditional librarian tasks of material circulation. Librarians assist teachers and students to search out their information needs, critically evaluate the materials they locate, and use technological means to synthesize their findings into new knowledge. As the users became more self-directed learners, the librarian acts as a resource person in the users' quest for supporting information and the development of appropriate presentation strategies. Consulting duties added to an already mushrooming schedule gives the librarian more than enough work to fill the entire day.

Customer Care

Library is a trinity of books, users and the staff. Ranganathan's five basic laws of library and information science always advocated the full attention and top priority to the user while coming to the library and the supply of right information in a right form to the right user at the right time. Customer care has its importance in the new marketing feature of the information centers. Customer care changes the previous ethics of the librarianship. It tells us that librarian is not doing any favour to the customers (users) but he or she is doing a favour to use of their in-house and external information resources by giving the opportunity to serve them. Now the user satisfaction should be given top priority and their anticipation in library policies and decisions is indispensable. Implications of total quality management in various library activities and services are of utmost importance to librarians for satisfying the users.

Managerial Role

Library is a system of different sub systems. Libraries need a team effort to perform different user oriented services and functions. Every one has to share the complementary work, mistakes committed by one lead to poor performance by other. The information explosion has created far more information than one library could possibly contain. The librarian is responsible for locating, acquiring, disseminating and tracking information resources of many types. This job might include database searching, interlibrary loans, monitoring Internet newsgroups, or maintenance of a computerized library information system. All these tasks involve managerial expertise equivalent to that required of corporate information center managers.

The librarian manages the budget and evaluates and selects new materials for purchase or access. As tasks grow in the library, the need for support staff increases. As information center manager, the librarian will supervise and evaluate the performance of technical and clerical assistants. Training of these assistants will take a significant amount of time and expertise. Since budget may be slim, some of these paraprofessionals may need to assist with duties once exclusive to professionals. Under the supervision of a librarian, paraprofessionals may become highly proficient in database searching, computer catalog maintenance, and other tasks. Student assistants and parent volunteers may also compose the cadre of workers. Different management skills are necessary to manage these two groups.

Communicator

Librarians are always good in communications as being an information storehouse, they always act as a medium between the receiver (user) and the Message (information) in a communication channel.

Information ⟶ Librarians ⟶ user

Communication is considered as a mother of information. Some one has said, "Whenever there is communication there is information". They information professionals have to be good communicators; they should be instructive and precise while giving information. They should ask more and more questions when receiving the queries to give accurate and pinpointed service. Personal assumption should be got cleared.

Teacher forever

The librarians being expert information managers will always be effective as a teacher, a mentor, and a guide for the different types of users. Appropriate electronic resources into the patterns of information location and application are tasks particularly suited to the training and skills of the librarian. Teachers constitute a significant portion of the librarian's instructional time. As the campus expert in information location and management, the librarian is in the best position to be on the forefront of information technology and to train others in its use. Staff

development activities serve to showcase the library and the librarian as the "person in the know" to whom one may turn for suggestions and advice. When faculty members look to the librarian as the information expert, students learn to rely on that person for guidance in information matters, as well.

CONCLUSION

The library profession is at a pivotal point. This decade is a vital one for all groups and individuals related in one way or another to the information service sector. The changes are radical and transformational and libraries do not have the luxury of time. Even as the society marches into a digital age, libraries and information centres have assumed greater responsibilities for meeting the diverse needs of its user community. The new technologies have largely aided in designing value-added library services. The integration of electronic information and information sources draws attention to the changing role of the librarian in an era in which the position is less of a warehouse manager and more of a reference consultant to different types of users while still retaining the instructional focus that has always been a part of the position. Library technology reaches beyond the library walls via computer networks to put information resources into the hands of end users at the point of need. With networks linking all areas of the modern educational and technological institutions, the best place to access information may no longer be within the walls of the traditional library.

REFERENCES

1. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2006-07 Edition, Librarians, on the Internet at http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos068.htm (visited *February 22, 2007*).
2. Fourie, Denise K. and David R. Dowell. Libraries in the Information Age (Greenwood Village, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 2002). http://cwis.kub.nl/~dbi/users/jprinsen/english
3. Indian Express (http://www.indianexpress.com/story/19620.html#)
4. Nancy Kranich (President, American Library Association). LIBRARIES: Ensuring the Public's Right to Know in the Information Age. Presentation at the South Caucasus Regional Library Association Conference, Georgia. May 6, 2001
5. Prinsen, Jola G.B. A Challenging Future Awaits Libraries Able to Change in D-Lib Magazine, Volume 7 Number 11, November 2001
6. PSG Kumar, Foundation of Library & Information Science (Paper VI of UGC curriculum), Delhi: B R Publishing House, 2003.
7. Satyanarayana, N. R. A Manual of Library Automation and Networking. Royal Book Co.: Lucknow, 2003
8. The role of Libraries for A2K Panel (http://research.yale.edu/isp/a2k/wiki/index.php/The_Role_of_Libraries_for_A2K_Panel)