

## **BOOK CENTERED TO USER CENTERED LIBRARIANSHIP**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The development of Information and Communication Technologies and its application in Library and Information Science centers has changed the nature of collections; the needs of users; the library environment and the roles of LIS professionals. The old concept of Book-centered librarianship is changed to the User-centered librarianship. The ICT technologies have paved path to new roles to LIS professionals. The LIS professionals as Creators, Communicators, Leaders, Mentors, and Life-long learners are monitoring the trends in technology continuously to provide global information instantaneously to end-users through ICTs.

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## **Introduction**

The composition of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) include computers-hardware and software, satellite, wireless technology, Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) and the Internet. These different components of ICT work together and combine to form ‘network world’ and reaches every corner of the globe. ICT technologies enable society to create, collect, consolidate, communicate, manage and process information in multimedia and various digital formats.

The Internet, particularly, the World Wide Web (WWW) or Web is a global data communications system. Internet is a vast collection of resources--people, information, and multimedia. Web as a new media of information delivery shifted Libraries from strategy of ‘holdings’ state to an ‘access’ strategy.

As new technologies come along, Library and Information (LIS) professionals experiment and try to find ways to employ the new tools in their Libraries. The essence of being a library liaison has been defined as ‘connects users with their information needs, whatever the format and whatever the technology’ (Whatley, 2009).

## **Changing Roles of LIS Professionals**

The web environment, advancement in technology, options of sources and formats of information, and flow of information has great impact on the Role of Libraries and the Role of Library and Information Professionals. The developments of the collection tools, techniques and approaches have increasingly entered the field of Library and Information centres globally. Thus the Library and Information Science professionals are forced to change the way they are functioning in providing the information needs of their users. These new roles require different personalities for librarians as well as different skills and knowledge. The focus is on power to draw together different forms of communication, smoothly integrating them within a digital environment and providing access to the stored information using computer systems via telecommunications which are fast, friendly and interactive.

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The globalization of information and communication technologies (ICT) has posed various challenges before the LIS professionals in the nature of collections, the information environment and the radical change in the expectations and needs of the users.

The LIS professionals in libraries will become agents of accessibility and integration, linking users to a range of digital information available through licensing agreements or other means to user community. LIS professionals have been working to re-tool library services in order to make them more useful for patrons to find, organize, and interact with information in a way that has infinite potential for user customization. These new types of services are a shift from "isolated information silos" to "interlinked computing platforms."

Smith (2006) proposes nine important factors which are key elements to achieve a successful and sustained change by any LIS professional. They are; Ensure readiness for change, Plan for change, Lead change, Manage change, Support change, Deal with resistance to change, Communicate effectively, Follow through, evaluate, learn, and Attend to the human factor.

Thus, the roles of LIS professionals in an information society are as:

### **LIS professionals as Subject Expert**

The core of librarianship lies in high professional ethics. Various studies revealed that the principal area of Library and Information Science discipline knowledge is required in order to perform the main professional work successfully. Tasks like collection development, database development and database management systems, user needs, creating Metadata, digital archiving and preservation, and content management systems require the knowledge of the Library and Information Science. The LIS professional roles involve knowing how to create linking data that makes data available in digital form. They need to know how to do content management, retrieving, sharing and preserving digital information to serve the user with easy accessibility.

### **LIS professionals as Global Information Providers**

As the demand for global information systems continued to grow, LIS professional is expected to link up and join together into networked, seamless entities. The ICT applications have provided a convenient and economical way of doing this. Therefore, LIS professionals must have International perspective in tracking and handling information overload.

### **LIS professionals as Resource managers**

LIS professionals currently provide assistance with research, acquiring books and other information, and with understanding cataloging and database systems. The librarian as a facilitator is a growing and needed role. No one person will be capable of becoming an expert in all the areas required to obtain desired information for complicated and rich research projects.

### **LIS professionals as Creators**

The LIS professional often acts as an adviser who recommends both the best sources of information and ways in which to access information. By facilitating access to nascent information in finding it, analyzing, synthesizing and packaging, the LIS professionals would move to the beginning of the information production cycle, playing a more substantial role in the information creation process.

### **LIS professionals as Preservations**

Another traditional function of libraries has been to provide the safety of its collections. Libraries are becoming centers used to preserve digital (and other data) and ensure storage mechanisms are updated and content is not lost. LIS professionals need to continually look at new storage technologies and develop strategic plans for archiving digital material and migrating to new storage systems.

### **LIS professionals as Navigational Guides**

It will become more and more important for librarians to also become search engine specialists to help their patrons identify the correct search engine and then use it in sophisticated ways that enable the extraction of complex and reliable information from the increasing digital universe that is emerging.

### **LIS professionals as Communicators**

Communication is quite important to work efficiently in the digital era, as oral, written or presentation skills are needed to maintain contact between the library staff themselves and users. New technologies, network systems, and social networks are changing both the way people access information and the way this information is disseminated and communicated. Librarians must communicate the mission, goals and objectives of the resource centre to the entire user community.

Propagation of the library services and resources to users is very essential. All the resources and information available in any library is oriented to best utilization by its clientele. Therefore, propagation through all channels of communication plays a key role in effective use of resources.

### **LIS professionals as Financial Managers**

LIS professional must propose meaningful budgeting. Any library, if wants to be successful and competitive, need to put together their strategic plans to attain its objectives. Most of the libraries get very little funds from their parent institutions and the government for support of these facilities. Funds for acquisition of new ICT facilities and services can only be found by strategic planning redirecting the meager funds obtained.

Frequent maintenance of ICT facilities is crucial to sustainability of any ICT services. Low bandwidth is a problem common. ICT facilities rely on electricity for their functioning. Frequent

power cut is a persistent problem. This affects management and utilization of ICT facilities and services.

### **LIS professionals as Time Managers**

Libraries became more sensitive to the timely retrieval and dispensing of information. LIS professionals must be fast in accessing to relevant information and the speed to spread it. They must be aware of the form and medium through which it has to be provided to the users. Ranganathan's fourth law of Library Science 'Save the time of the Reader' must assume new means and ideas of instantaneous library service which is possible only with modern ICTs.

### **LIS professionals as Legal Advisors**

The changing digital environment encourages with its abundance of information and the ease, to copy, transfer, and duplicate the information, LIS professionals must act as Legal Advisors, ensuring intellectual material to be protected by the correct copyright and Cyber laws.

### **LIS professionals as Leaders**

A driving force in their decision making about what tools to use will always be their patrons and whether the tools can help them do a better job of delivering services. Teamwork is one of the key skills required for LIS professionals.

### **LIS professionals as Personnel Managers**

In this digital era, the representative of a new generation of LIS professionals should be a person who is able to act as facilitator or mentor to help the user to find the information needed and to evaluate it. The personal skills which are required for a new generation of LIS professionals include being flexible, reflective, able to deal with a range of users, detective-like, adaptable, responsive to others' needs, enthusiastic and self-motivated. To provide information that suits

user demands, information literacy, communication, critical thinking, and teamwork are the most required generic skills.

### **LIS professionals must be Tech Savvy**

It is the responsibility of each and every LIS professional to know how to use technology, to help implement it, and to identify ways it can be used in the future. LIS professional must be tech savvy in monitoring the trends in technology.

### **LIS professionals as Mentors**

Library users need both computer and information literacy (IL) skills to effectively use the rapidly growing and changing information resources. However, many library users think that knowing keyboard and mouse operations enables them to effectively utilize electronic information resources. Therefore, organizing and conducting information literacy training sessions for different user groups is essential.

### **LIS professionals as Life-long learners**

Library and Information Professional's motivation for continued learning involves a mixture of social responsibility, desire for advancement, professional pride, a concern for future libraries, the need to keep abreast of new knowledge and technology, as well as an interest in supplementing professional training (ALA,1980). Efficiency of a library depends to a large extent on the competence of its staff. LIS professionals will have to follow and develop emerging digital technologies and information formats. Hence it is important to assess the library professionals' needs for continuing education and professional development in a changing electronic environment of any library.

## **Participatory Librarianship**

The new Web 2.0 technologies allow everyone to be a creator and a potential publisher of content. LIS professionals can provide commentary or news on a particular subject and allowing easier updating with new information (Blogs); giving users the possibility of developing ideas in collaboration with others, who can add pages of content for themselves (Wiki); Creating lists of bookmarks or favorites, for central storage on a remote server, and sharing them with other users (Social Bookmarking systems); Tagging documents, choosing and adding uncontrolled keywords to identify the documents more efficiently from the users' own point of view and enabling communities of users who share the same interests to build their own online social networks for personal communication and combining data from different sources into a single integrated tool. Web 2.0 allows reference services in an online media. It offers face-to-face reference; librarians and patrons will see and hear each other, and will share screens and files. Feedback from users is possible through web 2.0 tools enabling to improve the library services.

## **Conclusion**

Embracing the emerging ICT technologies, the 21<sup>st</sup> century LIS professional is a blended librarian seeking to build new collaborations with users, creators and other information and instructional technology professionals, both in physical spaces of the library and virtual environments to match users and the information. Steven Bell and John Shank (2004) defined "blended librarian," as ... `an academic librarian who combines the traditional skill set of librarianship with the information technologist's hardware/ software skills, and the instructional or educational designer's ability to apply technology appropriately in the teaching-learning process.'

The effectiveness of LIS professional lies in skills of Intelligent integration, ability to access content, knowledge of ICT technologies and systems, with improved communication, collaboration and personalized interaction among users, staff and other fellow professionals, having an openness to shift to new technologies and ready to adopt rapid, easy modification. In

carrying out the multifaceted role of embedded librarianship in the digital era, ICT applications play crucial role.

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