

Don't Tender Librarianship: Outsourcing of Library Staff Degrades the Profession



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Abstract:

Librarian is a position and Librarianship is a profession, it is not a material which will be called on tender. From outsourcing of library services to outsourcing of library staff, the concepts slowly misunderstood and misguided by some non-professional administrators. Library Associations and professional's welfare societies are not working properly as expectation. Some people have given face to the administration for tender call notice to supply of Librarians. Why Librarianship is on tender? Advantages, disadvantages of outsourcing along with the problems, solutions and recommendations has been described in this article.

1. Introduction:

Librarianship is a noble profession, behind a successful scholar or a successful professional i.e., scientist, professor, doctor, engineer, lawyer, teacher, administrator etc. role of a library and a Librarian must be there, but unfortunately some people forget to acknowledge the library and the librarian in their success stories. However, appreciation of a Librarian has not been in publicity in the society as it should be. Once an American weather presenter, author, television and radio personality, actor Willard Scott said that "Librarians have always been among the most thoughtful and helpful people. They are teachers without a classroom. No libraries, no progress. "As per the regulations of the University Grant Commission (UGC) regarding minimum qualification for the appointment of teachers and other academic staff, all about qualification, pay scale and promotion are equal of the librarians on par with other teachers. UGC also mentioned Librarian as other academic staff in its regulations. But almost universities, colleges across India have not follow this rule for the academic status of Librarians. For this reason, why some people view librarians as a clerical position till yet. Library and Librarians plays important role for build the future career of student and scholars, even after almost institutions in this country have been neglected towards these two. Although the Librarians are categorized under academic staff, a few states of this country recognized librarians as per teaching staff i.e., Librarian, Dy. Librarian, Assistant Librarian

are equivalent to Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor respectively in a university. Also in a college, Librarian, Senior Librarian, Librarian Selection Grade are equal with the position of Lecture, Senior Lecture, and Lecture Selection Grade respectively.

Outsourcing is not a new thing for in library field, outsourced of some non-professional works/tasks in library has been done for many years. But here the new thing is outsourcing of professionals and for tender call notice for supply of librarian as a product or thing. Hope calling bids for librarianship is a new thing for the LIS field which may be led to degrading the LIS professionals. Actually, the term 'Outsourcing' is a business model for the organizations which are not totally self-sufficient; they outsourced those functions for which they had no competency internally. Outsourcing of a business organization may be categorized as follows:

- Professional/Experts
- Information Technology
- Manufacturing
- Project
- Process
- Operational

Educational institutions are not business model in India. It has been categorized under social service and all educational/academic institutions are free from all taxes in this country. Why a business model has been entering into the learning society? Although libraries are providing free services but somewhere some special services/products need to be marketed through exchange of price for its fund towards the growth and development of the library (Mohapatra, 2017). But this is not a business model, because the earning fund from marketing of library services used for the development of library.

As library is the heart of an educational institution and educational institutions are for the betterment of the society, the libraries are the organizations for the social importance. Hence pushing libraries to a business model is fully unfair.

1.1. What is Outsourcing?

The term '*outsourcing*' is containing three terms 'outside', 'resource', 'using', which refers to going outside the organization to use the resources of others. Outsourcing is the strategic use of outside resources to perform certain tasks which are traditionally handled by internal staff using internal resources (Kumbhar & Hariprasad,

2016). In other word, ‘*Outsourcing*’ comes from the term *outside resourcing*, Outsourcing is defined as “a business practice where a company hires a third-party to perform its tasks, operations, jobs, or processes, rather than doing the work in-house” (Pahwa, 2022).

Outsourcing of Library services was introduced when Library of Congress sold printed catalog cards and many libraries purchased shelf-ready books. Later the following services of some libraries became outsourcing:

- Cataloguing
- Photocopying
- Indexing and abstracting services
- Collection development services
- Binding and book repair
- Library Automation
- Bulk data entry/ data migration
- Digitalization and preservation
- Manpower/Human Resource

1.2. Why Outsourcing?

Austrian-American management consultant, educator, and author has one quote, management still leans on today is, “Focus on what you do best, and outsource the rest”, which means companies should spend money and time only on what they are good at to create wealth for their business. He also said “Focus on your organization's values, mission, and vision, and consider *outsourcing* everything else.” Based on the strategy of a business model outsourcing has been adopted for reduce cost, time and risk.

When a library has not sufficient manpower as required or the library staff have not sufficient skill for such work, then the administrator of the library goes for outsourcing of different library services for a specific period. But when the outsourcing became a trend and neither the administrator wants to train its staff nor recruit sufficient staff as required, It caused lots of problems on the path of growth and development of the Libraries.

1.3. What is Tender and Tendering?

The term tender refers to an invitation to bid for supply of products/goods or works/services. Tendering is the process by which an organization who is in need of goods/services invites

other parties to submit a proposal or bid to provide these goods/services. But if the human resources or manpower should not be called on bid? The tender/bid may be for the service, not for the persons involved in those services.

Nowadays, it is seen that some institutions advertised for tender as “quotation call notice for supply of Librarian” which seems that Librarian is a product/ goods or a service. Librarian is a position and Librarianship is a profession which never be called on bid/ tender. In the content of appointing Librarian and library staff through outsourcing is another thing to discuss, but tender notice for Librarian not only disrespect to the Librarian community, but also disclose the behavior of the administrators towards the Library and Information professionals.

2. Outsourcing of Librarian and Library Staff:

As the Libraries have adopted outsourcing of some library services, the human resources or manpower of some libraries became outsourcing. Outsourcing of manpower for non-professional works in library has been going on from many years (Okogwu,2013), but outsourcing of professional has become a trend these days which trying to degrade a profession. Generally, the non-core areas such as sanitation, security, household, maintenance, pantry services etc. are outsourced by the companies, rather than these if required of experts or professionals which are not available internally those may be called as consultancy not outsourcing. Hence as Librarian and Library Staff are always professionals, they should not ever be engaged through outsourcing.

2.1. Identify Services for Consultancy or Outsourcing:

As per the “Guidelines for engagement of consultants and outsourcing of services” by the finance department, Government of Odisha (FIN-CODE-RULE-1/2018, No.37323 /F, dated 30/11/2018), the following differences for identifications of works/services required to be performed by consultant or outsourcing:

- A. “Engagement of consultants may be restored to in situations requiring services for which requisite expertise and manpower is not available within the organization”.
- B. “Outsourcing of other services (non-consultancy services) are defined as services that can’t be classified as consultancy services. It may include routine jobs of small offices like cleaning and sweeping of premises, watch & ward, horticultural work,

housekeeping services, security services, catering and cook services etc. which requires deployment of outside agencies”.

Not only in Odisha but also there may be different rules and regulations in different states and countries for outsourcing of different services. But as seen in the above rules of Government of Odisha, if required library staff or librarian for a library, the Librarianship may be categorized under consultancy but never under outsourcing.

2.2. Outsourcing and Consultancy of Librarianship in India

Generally, the outsourcing term was not tagged when library works, services, activities were done by outside staff, but nowadays outsourcing has become trend and a common term in library (Rana & Mondal, 2020). From outsourcing of library services to library manpower has been spread like a flue of misunderstanding the concept by some non-professional administrators. ‘Broadcast Engineering Consultants India Limited (BECIL)’ an ISO 9001:2015, ISO 27001:2013 and ISO/IEC 20000:2012 certified, Mini Ratna, Central Public Sector Enterprise of Government of India was established on 24th March 1995. Early the BECIL provides project consulting services and turnkey solutions covering the full range of Radio and Television Broadcasting Engineering services only; now days the organization also provides human resource-related activities such as training and provision of manpower. Many educational institutions are client of this organization where it provides manpower for different services along with manpower for library services or librarianship/library staff. These days many outsourcing agencies are there for supplying manpower to libraries of different educational and research Institutions.

Many Universities and colleges have been adopted outsourcing of librarianship. Even some premier educational and research institutions of India i.e., AIIMS, IIT, NIET, IISER, NISER etc. are engaging library staff through outsourcing service providers. Once this trend starts, others follow the same and day to day outsourcing of library professionals spread across the country, which not only degrading the profession but also demotivate the new generation for enter into the LIS profession. Through the outsourcing librarianship, there were no employee and employer relation between the librarian and the library, hence the job satisfaction of the librarians and library staff are not better than their expectation which may lead to neglect the library services.

Although many academic institutions adopted librarianship as outsourcing, some institutions have not followed the misconception, they engaged librarians and library staff as consultant

instead of outsourcing. In this process, the image, respect of Librarians and library professionals never rolling down as happen in outsourcing of librarianship. There are many differences between the two processes of engaging outsiders to work of a library i.e., outsourcing and consultancy.

2.2.1. Different between Outsourcing and Consultant of manpower in Library

“Outsourcing provides specific services and actually doing the work, while Consulting provides complex services and advising on how to do something. Outsourcing is about working as a response without involve in decision or process while Consulting is about influencing the decisions and processes” ([Georgescu, 2022](#))

Outsourcing	Consultant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An agency or vender organization plays as a mediator between the worker (library staff/librarian) and the working organization (library). • There are no direct employee and employer relation between the librarian and the library. • All financial benefits of the employee including salary provided by the original employer goes through the agency employer. • The employee (library staff) has no power for participate in decision making or initiate a work/service except given assignments. • Fear of degrading professional image, the manpower agencies providing services like housekeeping, cleaning, security etc. also provides manpower for library i.e., Librarian, Asst. Librarian and other library staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A person (librarian/library staff) can direct engage with the workplace organization (library) • The Librarian/library staff and the organization of the library are direct relation of employee and employer. • The Librarian/ Library staff can get all financial benefits direct from the organization where he/she working • The person (Library staff) can be involved with decision making, planning and process of new initiatives. • No fear of degrading image, it increases self-respect as the position and responsibility of consultant is almost similar to an adviser

2.3. Strengths and Weaknesses for Outsourcing of Librarianship:

Every situation has two direction like strength and weakness, in other words, advantage and disadvantage. If go through these both sides of outsourcing of library staff, must have found more disadvantages than advantages. The following points may be helped to evaluate either outsourcing librarianship is good for the profession or not.

2.3.1. Advantages of Outsourcing Librarianship:

- **Advantage of Overall Cost:** saves time for effort on training and minimize the requirement and operational costs.
- **Reduce Manpower Cost:** The manpower cost is very lower through outsourcing than employs manpower with salary and other benefits.
- **Facility of High-quality Services from Experts:** Generally, these types of tasks are given to skilled persons in a particular field which provides a better level of service and fewer chances for errors or misjudgment.

2.3.2. Disadvantages of Outsourcing Librarianship:

- **Lack of User Focus:** An Outsourcing agency provides services to multiple organizations at a time. Sometimes agencies may neglect to focus on a particular organization's tasks, as a result the reputation of the organization may suffer thereafter.
- **Risk to Confidentiality and Security purpose:** The internal sensitive news of the organization has chances to leaked to the third party, so there may be security issues. The leak of confidential information may result in losses to the organization and be advantage to other competitor organizations.
- **Unsatisfying Services:** The common problem with outsourcing is unsatisfying services, because almost persons engaging through outsourcing are not satisfy with their jobs and provide dissatisfaction services for their engaging organization.
- **Ethical Issues:** Does not employ the deserve candidates against the vacant posts increases unemployment and satisfaction of the trained professionals. The major ethical issue is employment opportunities. At the end of the service the workplace

organization never want to issue an experience certificate to the employee as there are no direct employee employer relation between them.

- **Employee's Salary Issue:** All financial benefits of the employee provided by the original employer goes through the agency employer. Although service charges of the outsourcing agency are separate from the employee salary and paid by the original employer, somewhere it has been seen that the agency reduce the employee's original salary for its personal commission. Another issue in salary is that the employee through outsourcing, gets their salary late every month as the process goes through the agency.

Along with the above, there are some other disadvantages include misunderstanding, communication gaps, poor quality and delayed services, etc.

2.4. Some Recommendations for Solution of Outsourcing Librarianship:

The big issue of these days is outsourcing of librarianship/ library professionals. Sometimes some people thought librarianship as a product or good and advertising tender call notice for supply of librarian. Some recommendations for solution of the issue as follows:

- Recruit professional Librarian/ Library staff against the vacant post and reduce unemployment.
- Train the existing Librarians/Library staff with the updated technologies through Librarian Development Programme (LDP), workshop, refresher course, etc.
- Revise the curriculum of LIS course as really required in the libraries practically.
- Maintain professionalism in the workplace and keep self-respect as a professional Librarian/ Library staff among other employees of the organization/institution.
- Library Associations should raise voice for the respect of library profession and librarianship.
- Librarianship never be called on bid/tender, hence the educators, philosophers, writers, journalists should pen down against the issue when any institution try to tendering librarianship
- Some works/services of library which are not available insourcing may be achieved through resource sharing and professional networking rather than outsourcing of library services.

- After all, if there are insufficient of experts for any library service, manpower it may be called through consultant instead of outsourcing.

3. Conclusion

Day to day, the outsourcing trend spreading from one institution to another like a flu. Really it can be mentioned as a virus for degrading the image of many trained and skilled professionals. Where the qualified librarian aspirants are hopping for jobs in different libraries and the vacant posts of libraries have not been filled up from long days, the administrator adopted the shortcut to engage library staff through outsourcing. Outsourcing of librarianship/ library staff is a big issue for the whole LIS community i.e., librarian, library professionals, LIS students, LIS faculty etc. However, the scope of employment of librarians are poor day to day, the interest of the new and upcoming generations seems to be decreased for entering LIS course or LIS profession. Outsourcing trend should be closed forever, especially in Library and Library and Information Science field. Finally, it can be said, the tendering of librarianship or tender call notice for librarian is a shameful issue for the requiring institution as well as for the professional society. Hope, all administrators of these institutions should not repeat it again in future.

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