

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) TO REVAMP LIBRARIES THROUGH HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (HRM) : PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

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Abstract:

The article explains the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) applications to revamp libraries by addressing the persistent issue of a lack of skilled manpower in libraries. Libraries worldwide have encountered many challenges in meeting the diverse needs of patrons due to limited human resources. Through an analysis of the problems faced by libraries due to unavailability of skilled manpower and the potential solutions offered by ICT, this paper explores the benefits and implications of integrating ICT into library operations which can offer solutions either to utilize existing manpower effectively and to set up and revamp libraries to carry out its functions with available manpower. It also highlights the importance of striking a balance between automation and human intervention to ensure an optimal library experience. By leveraging ICT effectively, libraries can revamp their services, streamline processes, and bridge the gap created by manpower limitations.

Keywords: *Information and Communication Technology, Human Resource Management, revamping the libraries, library services, manpower, library processes, library automation.*

1. Introduction:

In today's digital age, libraries play a crucial role in providing access to information and knowledge resources. "Information Communication Technology (ICTs) is a boon to Education Industry in 21st century; at present Educational Institutions functions on ICT's for its various advantages." **Kumar & Chandrappa (2020)**. However, many libraries face the challenge of insufficient manpower to effectively

manage and maintain their collections, offer quality services, and meet the diverse needs of library users. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has emerged as a powerful solution to address this lack of manpower and enhance library operations. By leveraging ICT tools and systems, libraries can streamline processes, automate tasks, and improve overall efficiency of libraries and Information centres.

The present study explores the problems caused by the lack of manpower in libraries and delve into the potential solutions offered by ICT. The benefits of incorporating ICT into library operations and examining specific technologies that can alleviate manpower shortages can further help to revamp the libraries to offer qualitative services.

The integration of ICT in libraries presents a transformative opportunity to overcome the challenges posed by limited human resources. By embracing technology, libraries can optimize their operations, improve user experiences, and ensure the availability of quality services for their patrons.

2. The Role of Manpower in Libraries

2.1. Traditional Library Services

2.2. Challenges Faced by Libraries

2.3. Impact of Manpower Shortage

2.1 Traditional Library Services:

“Traditional libraries have used the same service model for many decades. This paradigm is distinguished by its concentration on material collections such as books, journals, periodicals, manuscripts, and research papers.” **Adetaya& others (2021)**. Human Resource Management in libraries to utilize available manpower plays a crucial role in traditional as well as modern library services. Library staff, including librarians, library assistants, and technicians, are responsible for various tasks such as the selection and acquisition of a variety of reading material, cataloguing of books, managing and developing library collections, assisting patrons with their information needs, conducting research, and maintaining library facilities. They also provide guidance and support to library users, helping them navigate the library's resources, find relevant information, and utilize technology effectively.

Librarians, in particular, are trained professionals who possess expertise in organizing information and promoting literacy. They curate collections, develop programs and services, collaborate with educators, and offer research assistance. Librarians are essential for creating an environment that fosters learning, discovery, and intellectual growth.

2.2 Challenges Faced by Libraries:

Libraries face numerous challenges in the modern era. Some of the key challenges include:

2.2.1 Technological advancements: Libraries need to adapt to rapidly evolving technologies and digital platforms. They must provide access to online resources, e-books, databases, and other digital materials, requiring staff to be proficient in digital tools and technology management.

2.2.2 Information overload: With the abundance of information available online, librarians face the challenge of curating and organizing relevant resources for their users. They must evaluate and select high-quality information while developing their data repository and information collection.

2.2.3 Changing user expectations: Library users expect quick and convenient access to information. They demand online services, 24*7 availability, and personalized assistance. Meeting these expectations requires library staff to adopt new service models and provide training to users.

2.2.4 Budget constraints: Libraries often face financial limitations, which impact their ability to hire an adequate number of staff and invest in necessary resources. This can lead to a strain on existing manpower and affect the quality and range of services provided.

2.3 Impact of Manpower Shortage:

A shortage of manpower in libraries can have several negative impacts:

2.3.1. Reduced service quality: When libraries are understaffed, it becomes challenging to maintain the same level of service quality. There may be delays in processing new materials, shelving books, and responding to user inquiries. This can lead to frustration among library users and a decline in their overall experience.

2.3.2. Limited outreach and programming: Library staff plays a crucial role in organizing events, workshops, and educational programs. A manpower shortage can limit the scope and frequency of such activities, affecting the library's ability to engage with the community and promote literacy and lifelong learning.

2.3.3. Inadequate collection development: Without sufficient manpower, libraries may struggle to acquire, process, and catalogue new materials efficiently. This can result in dormant collections, misplacement or missed items, and difficulty in locating specific resources resulting in long response time.

2.3.4. Increased workload and burnout: When there is a shortage of staff, the existing employees may have to take on additional responsibilities and work for

longer hours. This can lead to increased stress, burnout, and decreased job satisfaction among library personnel.

The lack of manpower in libraries can be a significant challenge, but Information and Communication Technology (ICT) can play a vital role in addressing this issue. Let's explore the problems caused by the lack of manpower and some potential solutions that ICT can offer:

3. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Libraries

3.1 Overview of ICT in Libraries

3.2 Automation and Digitalization

3.3 Virtual Libraries and Online Resources

3.1 Overview of ICT in Libraries:

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has revolutionized the way libraries operate and deliver services. ICT refers to the integration of computers, software, networks, and digital technologies in library processes. It encompasses various technologies such as library management systems, digital repositories, online catalogues, and virtual reference services etc. ICT enables libraries to efficiently manage their collections, improve access to information, and enhance user experiences.

3.2 Automation and Digitization:

Automation and digitalization are key components of ICT integration in libraries. Automation involves the use of technology to streamline routine tasks and processes. This includes automated acquisition and processing, cataloguing, circulation, serials control, inventory management, self-checkout systems as well as generation of various reports. Digitization, on the other hand, involves converting physical resources into digital formats, creating digital collections, and providing access to e-books, online databases, and other digital resources. Automation and digitalization saves time, reduce errors, and expand the availability of resources to library users at remote places.

3.3 Virtual Libraries and Online Resources:

ICT enables the development of virtual libraries and the provision of online resources. Virtual libraries are digital platforms that offer access to digital collections, e-books, scholarly articles, and multimedia materials. They provide users with the ability to search, browse, and access information remotely, without being physically present in the library. Online resources include e-books, e-databases, e-journals, and educational platforms that can be accessed through library portals or

subscriptions. Virtual libraries and online resources enhance information accessibility and support remote learning and research.

4. Problems Arising from Lack of Manpower

4.1 Reduced Availability and Accessibility

4.2 Inadequate Customer Service

4.3 Inefficiencies in Library Operations

4.1 Reduced Availability and Accessibility:

The lack of manpower in libraries can result in reduced availability and accessibility of services and resources. Limited staff may lead to shorter opening hours, reduced assistance at reference desks, and longer response time for services such as borrowing and returning materials. Additionally, the inability to efficiently manage collections and shelves may lead to misplaced or unavailable items, hindering users' access to specific resources. These issues can frustrate library users and discourage them from utilizing library services.

4.2 Inadequate Customer Service:

Insufficient manpower can lead to inadequate customer service in libraries. With fewer staff members available, it becomes challenging to provide personalized assistance, answer queries, and guide users effectively. Users may experience delays in receiving support or struggle to find the information they need. Inadequate customer service can negatively impact user satisfaction and hinder the library's ability to meet the diverse needs of its patrons.

4.3 Inefficiencies in Library Operations:

The lack of manpower can result in inefficiencies in library operations. Manual processes such as cataloguing, inventory management, and circulation become time-consuming and prone to errors without adequate staffing. Inefficient operations can lead to delays in processing new acquisitions, difficulties in tracking and locating materials, and challenges in maintaining accurate records. These inefficiencies impede the smooth functioning of the library and hinder staff from focusing on more strategic tasks.

Addressing these problems requires innovative solutions, and the integration of ICT in libraries which offers a promising way to overcome the limitations imposed by the lack of manpower. By leveraging technology, libraries can optimize their operations, improve user experiences, and ensure the availability and accessibility of information and services for their patrons.

5. Problems caused by the lack of manpower in libraries:

5.1. Inadequate assistance: With limited staff, libraries may struggle to provide adequate assistance to library users, resulting in longer waiting times and decreased user satisfaction.

5.2. Reduced collection management: Insufficient manpower can lead to difficulties in cataloging, organizing, and maintaining library collections, which may result in disarray and decreased accessibility.

5.3. Limited outreach and programming: Libraries may struggle to offer outreach activities, educational programs, and community engagement initiatives due to a lack of personnel.

5.4. Inefficient administrative tasks: Without enough staff, administrative tasks such as circulation management, book ordering, and interlibrary loans may become burdensome and time-consuming.

6. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to revamp libraries through Human Resource Management (HRM): Solutions

6.1. Self-checkout and automated circulation systems: Implementing self-checkout kiosks and automated circulation systems can reduce the need for staff assistance during routine book borrowing and returning processes, allowing librarians to focus on other tasks.

6.2. Digital cataloging and classification systems: Adopting digital cataloging tools and classification systems can streamline the process of organizing and maintaining library collections, requiring less physical effort from staff.

6.3. Virtual reference services: Utilizing ICT, libraries can offer virtual reference services, such as online chat or email assistance, enabling users to receive help remotely, reducing the need for additional on-site staff.

Through revamping libraries, we can implement virtual reference services to provide patrons with personalized support and guidance, even when physical staffing is limited.

6.4. Online resources and e-books: Expanding the collection of digital resources, including e-books, e-journals, and databases, can alleviate the strain on physical collection management, making it easier for users to access materials without relying solely on library staff.

Through revamping the Libraries, it is possible to expand digital catalogs and online databases, providing users with access to a wide range of electronic resources and e-books, reducing the need for physical resources and enabling remote access.

6.5. Library management software: Implementing integrated library management software can automate administrative tasks like book ordering, interlibrary loans, and overdue notifications, reducing the time and effort required from staff. Libraries should invest in self-service technologies, such as automated check-out systems and self-return stations, to reduce the need for manpower in routine tasks. Adopting integrated library management systems can enhance the efficiency of operations, including cataloging, circulation, and inventory management, thereby reducing the burden on library staff.

6.6. Online learning platforms and webinars: Libraries can leverage ICT to provide online learning platforms, webinars, and virtual programming, extending their reach and engaging with the community without the need for additional in-person staffing.

Library staff should be provided with training and professional development opportunities to adapt to changing technologies and effectively utilize ICT tools and resources.

6.7. Investment in Staff Training through Continuous Evaluation and Improvement: Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing is need of the day. Through revamping, Libraries should actively participate in professional networks, conferences, and collaborations to share best practices and learn from successful ICT implementations in other libraries.

By implementing these aspects, libraries can leverage ICT to mitigate the challenges posed by a lack of manpower, enhance user experiences, optimize resource utilization, and ensure the continued relevance and value of libraries in the digital age.

7. Conclusion:

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to revamp libraries through Human Resource Management (HRM) is a solution towards the lack of manpower in libraries. It plays a crucial role in providing traditional library services and catering to the needs of library patrons and to face challenges due to limited human resources.

It can overcome the problems arising due to lack of manpower in libraries which leads to reduced availability and accessibility of services, inadequate customer service, and inefficiencies in library operations. Information and Communication Technology enabled solutions include self-service technologies, library management systems, digital catalogs, online databases, and virtual reference services. It further improves efficiency and productivity, enhanced user experience, expanded access to information, and opportunities for staff reskilling and adaptation. A balance

between automation and human intervention in libraries through revamping can streamline processes, personalized user assistance, and ethical considerations.

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