

## PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE THOUGHT AND ITS EVOLUTION AND THE CHANGING ROLE OF FUTURE LIBRARY AND INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS

W.A. Weerasooriya\*

The thought of librarianship has been exposed on how the library science, documentation and information science were evolved. Theoretical framework of information science has proved that the profession of librarianship and information science would remain alive and serve the community only, through a system of fulfilling the needs of the society in the present day changing environments.

**KEYWORDS/DESCRIPTORS** : Librarianship; Information theory; Documentation; Knowledge industry; Information professionals; changing role

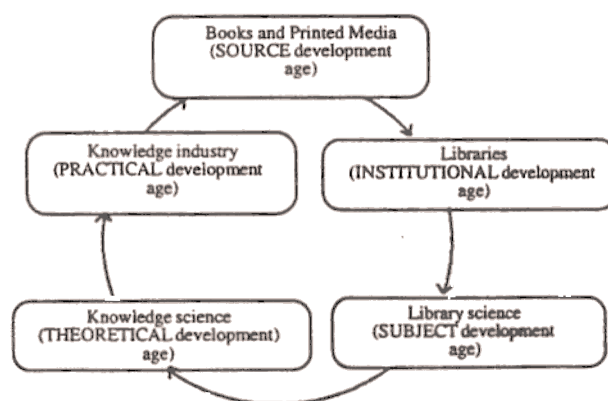
### 1 HISTORICAL PERIOD

The development of the human society is based on the efficiency of the information exchange process among its members. This process involves collection, organisation and the dissemination of information. The process of recording information and disseminating it, through written and printed media gave birth to the concept of the *library* which developed gradually from Library Science to Information Science.

At the initial stage of its growth, libraries were solely dependent on the traditional resources such as written and printed words. But later, it was supplemented by a variety of media, including the products of printing, photography, communication and digital technologies, etc. This is the first era of librarianship which could

be introduced as the period of knowledge science. The use and application of the knowledge science, paved the way to commence a particular industry called knowledge industry.

The following table illustrates this factor well

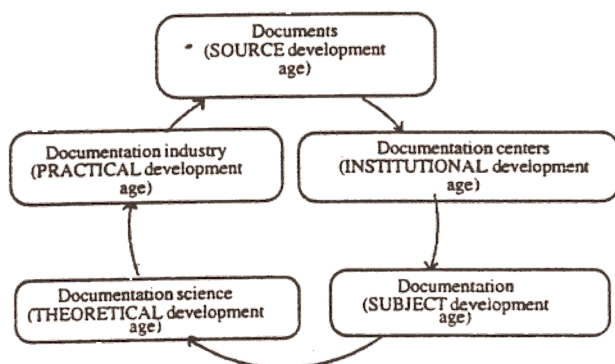


Knowledge science and knowledge industry

\* Senior Assistant Librarian, Central Library, University of Colombo 3, Colombo, Sri Lanka. Email: waw@liby.ac.lk

## 2 MEDIEVAL PERIOD

In addition to books and monographs, serial publications such as periodicals, journals, research journals, reports, proceedings, continuous publications, e.g., multi-volumed publications, etc., came to the scene for diffusion of knowledge. Research and research methodology was used as a scientific discipline in this period. Improvement of scientific findings were fundamentals for the production of periodical literature. As a result the growth production of secondary sources increased. The new child born, could be sought as the evolving of the subject of documentation. Primary sources and secondary sources [1] could be denoted as the father and mother of this newly born child, i.e., documentation. Later, documentation was developed in to two facets, called active and passive documentation [2]. Following table illustrates thies concept.

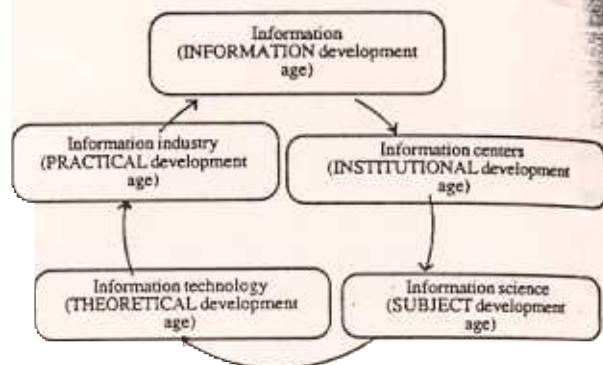


Documentation Science

## 3 MODERN PERIOD

Literature pertaining to various subjects and their growth and development, the growth and the development of the industry, technology and the universal knowledge, as a whole provided the background for information explosion. Under these circumstances information science was derived through the process of collecting, organizing and disseminating, the right

information at the right time to the right user (see the following table).



Information Science

Therefore, the thought of librarianship has been changed, from the concept of a book to the concept of text or contents of the book. The documentation thought is from the document representation to the concept of the document description and whereas the information science thought is from the sources of information to the concept of information, etc. This trend of change can be introduced as the principle of chain of change which is eternal and universal and it is better if the library and information professionals can follow this principle.

## 4 THORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR INFORMATION SCIENCE

### 4.1 Theory of Multi-brains

Theory of multi-brains could be explained within the framework of two disciplines, i.e., library science and documentation. These two subjects were manipulating the role of collecting, organizing and disseminating the knowledge containers, such as books, monographs, serial publications and other non-printed sources. These sources are tangible and



## 7 INFORMATION GAP

The information gap can be defined as *the gap between the information and the user. It is the space or barrier between the information needed to a given user. The space or barrier could be distance, ignorance, timelessness or any hinder that segregates the user from the information which she or he needed.*

The principal reasons for the existence of this kind of information gap among the public are mentioned below:

- (i) Ignorance about the information
- (ii) Economic problems
- (iii) Social problems, e.g., ecological or cultural
- (iv) Educational problems
- (v) Technological problems
- (vi) Physical and mental disabilities
- (vii) Distance problem
- (viii) Non-attention of relevant authorities
- (ix) Censorship and authoritative control
- (x) Timelessness of public
- (xi) Underestimation of the value of information
- (xii) Disaster problems

Therefore it is a great responsibility, for the present day library and information professionals to take possible steps in eliminating the information gap which prevailed among the general masses, specially in the developing countries.

## 8 INFORMATION LITERACY

The role of present day librarians in this context is to make aware the truth or correct information. In case of any problem or disease, there

is a solution and a treatment for it. It is the correct information which brings the solution for the problem where the necessary information is available. How that information can be reached; how far does the information solve the problem in hand; in addition to the given information, whether there is much suitable information; how that information can be accessed; how the information can be collected, organized, processed, stored, disseminated among user population, etc., are some of the aspects which belong to the area of information literacy. The American Library Association defines information literacy as *the ability to find, evaluate and use information effectively in personal and professional lives.* [6]

Information literacy according to Long is *teaching people about how to be more capable of finding their answers* [7]. Certain schools of thoughts express that informacy is a synonymous term for information literacy. They say that informacy is an aptitude, or the ability of knowing what kind of information, the layman needs, where that information is available, how could it be obtained; the possession of knowledge about subjects, books, libraries and library sources, documentation and information sources, services, systems, and centers, networks, data bases, data banks and how to use them, etc. In addition to that, the education and training of general public, in information skills, with the help of library and information science aspects, also belong to the area of information literacy. The term, information awareness, also can be pointed out as a similar usable term for the information literacy. Therefore, making people more information literate is also a major responsibility of the present day library and information professionals.

## 9 GLOBAL VISION FOR A CHANGE IN CHANGING PROFESSIONALISM

Every substance is changing. the library and information spheres also should be changed according to the dynamism and the needs of the



society which is also sublimed to changing. Library and information professions should be changed as to the changes which take place in the professions like engineering, medicine, architecture, law, and counseling etc. This idea is dealt with the library and information professionals also.

Benge's view in this respect should be given much preference. He says that *the professional idea is a cluster of ideals, attitudes which well illustrates how traditional values are being partially adapted to new circumstances.* [8]

According to Buddhism and the present day science, a factor, the change occurring in every substance is a universally accepted truth. It is obvious that profession of librarianship has to be changed within this context. this factor has been proved by Butler. According to him, *a professional library worker must possess a scientific, generalized knowledge which will enable him to discover the complex library needs of a mixed community. His primary concern is with the social effect of the institution. The technical library worker must have been vocationally trained to control the apparatus of the library for an effective realization of its prescribed purposes. The clerical library worker needs...* [9] Some school of thoughts believe that the future librarians, task is the survival of fittest role within the anticipated wallless library. The survival of the fittest role could be explained as the task of provision of information to public, specially in the developing countries. Therefore future librarians and their profession will and remain alive only if they run out to serve even within their residence, on road, way side or any other place not limiting to the library premises. Lancaster endorsing this factor says, *the future of the librarian lies outside the library, closer to the community. to be served. Modern communication technology makes the de-institutionalized librarians an increasingly feasible proposition.* [10]

## 10 ROUND THE CLOCK LIBRARIANSHIP (ROCLOLIB)

In this context, the present day doctor cures for mental and physical ailment of human beings, while a lawyer cures for a legal ailment. An engineer cures for the technical ailments. Library professional cures for informational ailments. Like doctors, librarian should also on work round the clock basis = (ROCLOLIB) Devaraj [11] explaining this says,

Informativeness of the librarians out of the libraries, office;

Practice of residential librarianship after office hours;

Eagerness to help clients making emergency calls by cutting short one's resting time (sleep);

Emergence of private library homes by enterprising librarians in the model nursing homes;

Emergence of emergency wards/counters in big public private and research libraries for prioritizing among the library/information services;

Emergence of librarian as information resource consultant;

Emergence of librarian as freelance information practitioners of libraries.

Therefore, the concept of ROCLOLIB is also very much applicable for the present day library and information professionals.

## 11 CONCLUSION

Therefore the theory and philosophy of librarianship is a state which is to be changed according to the present day changing environments and its economic, social, political, technological and cultural spheres. Present day professionals have to change their way of behavior, attitudes, ethos, duties, roles, objectives, and performances, etc. in a more divergent

manner suiting to the changing needs and situation of the existing society.

## 12 REFERENCES

- BEST (John W) and KAHN (James V). Research in education. Englewood cliffs: Prentice, Hall., 1989, p65.
2. LOOSJES (Th P) On documentation of scientific literature. London: Butterworth, 1973, p4.
  3. BOULDING (K E) "General System Theo: the skeleton of science." *Management science*. Vol. 2; April 1956; p197-208.
  - HORTON (F W). "Information resources management in public administration: a decade of progress." Vol. 37 (1); 1985; p9-17.
  - 5 GASSOL de Horowitz (Rosario). Librarianship: a thud world perspective. New York: Greenwood, 1988; p12.
  6. LOWRENCE (J M). " Information literacy : a bogus bandwagon" *Library Journal*. Vol. 116 (8); 1991; p40.
  7. LONG (Kim). The American forester 1990 running from 1989 : Grand Rapid Press, 1986, A6.
  - 8 HENCE (Ronald c). Libraries and cultural change. London: clive Bingley. 1970; p204.
  9. BUTTLER (Pierce). An introduction to library science. chicago: University of chicago, 1973. p111.
  10. LANCASTER (F W). Towards paperless information systems. New York, Academic Press, 1978, p153-59
  - ✓1 DEVARAJ (R S) and KALYANE (V L). "Round the clock librarianship" In. New vistas in library and information science Ed by AA-N- RAJU and et. al. New Delhi: Vikas, 1995, p144.