

Human Resource Development in Hybrid Libraries

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This paper explores the human resources and development implications in hybrid libraries. Due to technological changes in libraries which is a result of the proliferation of electronic resources, there has been a shift in workloads and workflow, requiring staff with different skills and educational backgrounds. Training of staff at all levels in information technology is the key to manage change, alleviate anxiety in the workplace and assure quality service in the libraries. Staff development is one of the most worthwhile investments for any organisation.

1 Introduction

The influx of technologies into the libraries in the last decade has caused a tremendous impact on the library professionals and the services rendered by them. Some of the most effective technologies in the last decade have been video conferencing, document imaging (digitising of paper documents into electronic documents), push technology (information sent to the user through a web browser, E-mail or even voice-mail or a pager), scanners, video and digital cameras, touch screens, and even basic devices like key boards and mouse which have become more complex. This has caused libraries to undergo drastic changes in the way they function and serve their clients. More and more electronic and information technology based information will enter the libraries and their use will grow increasingly year after year.

Traditional libraries were serving their clients with tangible print and archival sources of information. Then came the emergence of automated cataloguing like MARC, OPAC; automated indexing techniques, CAS, SDI and other documentation methods using computers (automated libraries). Even though, at this stage libraries were using information technology to build their services, it was the print and microform media that they were dealing with. With the emergence of

CD-ROM and DVD technology and the Internet technology, electronic resources entered the arena through the use of digital technologies (hybrid libraries). Gradually only electronic resources may be available to fulfil all the needs of the clientele (digital/electronic libraries) (1).

Traditional Libraries → Automated Libraries → Hybrid Libraries → Digital/Electronic Libraries

It is probably the hybrid library, which will survive for the longest period because the print media will remain an integral part of any library collection for a very long time.

2 Hybrid Library

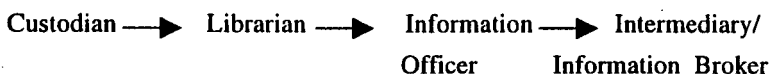
A hybrid library is generally considered to be the transitional phase from traditional print library to digital library. Yet, library professionals are firmly convinced that hybrid libraries are here to stay because print material will continue to be used in varying degrees.

A hybrid library is a combination of electronic and print products; all united by a common electronic catalogue with consistent cataloguing and search mechanism. Hence, a hybrid library integrates both the traditional libraries' functions as well as digital libraries. Unlike fully digital libraries, a hybrid library augments the functions of a traditional library rather than replacing it (2-3).

A hybrid library has to be fashioned in such a way so as to provide access to both, traditional as well as electronic resources. The access has to be integrated so that search pathways lead the user to a combination of relevant electronic and traditional resources. This has resulted in adding extra responsibilities on the so-called "hybrid librarian" of today.

3 Hybrid Librarian

Along with the changes in the nature of libraries, the role of the library professional has also changed from one of a custodian of materials housed in the library, to a librarian with added responsibility of providing information from sources in the library, to an information officer who provides information from internal as well as external sources, to an intermediary or information broker who provides information both actively and proactively from a wide spectrum of sources, analyses the information and re-packages it to suit the needs of the client.



The emergence of a complex information environment, electronic communications, the inextricable linking of computers and information and varied services has brought drastic changes in traditional librarianship (4). The hybrid librarian has to deal with two types of information - the printed information, which has gone through the rigorous process of editing, peer review and publishing, and electronic sources which have not been through this quality assurance process. Besides the hybrid librarian has to confront problems ranging from acquisition to access restrictions, authentication, copyright, preservation, software and user interfaces. Along with operating traditional libraries, new services need to be invented, available technological solutions have to be implemented and applied in daily operations and comprehensive programmes for in-house training and continuous education have to be established (5).

A hybrid librarian also needs the skills of a good manager such as decision making, leadership, planning and entrepreneurship, which are essential for exploiting the limited resources to the fullest. It is also necessary to put knowledge to work for the benefit of the organisation. Hence librarians may be more aptly known as "hybrid managers"(6).

Possessing the best of information technology equipment is not sufficient to render quality services, but it is also essential that the library professionals have the requisite information technology skills to be able to control their own systems, and to be able to search cost-effectively and knowledgeably for information in external and internal systems. A whole new set of qualifications has to be available in the library to provide efficient and effective services to the clientele in this environment. No single person can possess all requisite skills and qualifications to handle these jobs. Hence staffing and manpower development are crucial in a hybrid library (7-8).

4 Staffing

The range of qualifications and skills needed by a hybrid library is diverse. There is a need to keep pace with a constantly changing information environment, new forms and methods of information delivery, as well as evolving and changing subject areas. Staff with relevant skills and qualifications, and experience need to be inducted at all levels of services.

The staff in a hybrid library could broadly be categorised as follows, though these may not be mutually exclusive according to the responsibilities and functions:

Table 1 Categories of Staff in a Hybrid Library

Category	Responsibilities
Library Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — identify and gather information on behalf of the organisation — concerned with bringing information into the organisation from outside — build collection in anticipation for future use — identify the nature of future use and demands
Information Service Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — concerned with information generated within and outside the organisation — collect information in response to a need — concerned with assembling information, evaluating it, analysing and synthesising and re-packaging the information so that it is easily usable by the clients
Information Specialists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — interface between the organisation, information system and management of the organisation — design information systems (hardware and software) — maintain and look after the security of the systems

It is not always possible, and it may not even be necessary that every staff member of the hybrid library possesses every identifiable professional skill, so long as the team as a whole can mobilise and effectively apply the full range of skills and knowledge to make professional judgements and assure excellent services to the users.

5 Training of Library Professionals

Some of the skills and knowledge required to work efficiently and comfortably in this new and dynamic information environment are acquired in the library science schools themselves if the relevant courses in information technology are included in the curriculum (9-11). But, because of the ever-changing technologies there is a constant need for library professionals at all levels to upgrade their skills to face the challenges in their workplace.

Information professionals and library professionals can no longer work in isolation. These two professionals need to work hand-in-hand to set up effective training programmes for the staff as well the users. The library manager should coordinate with the information specialists to chart out courses and schedules for such training programmes.

There are different methods of training, which can be adopted by an organisation:

1. **Sending people for relevant courses and seminars:** Library science schools and professional associations or societies hold training courses and seminars, which help the attendees not only to be trained in the relevant course, but also meet other professionals and exchange ideas. This sort of interaction between professionals is useful in any profession.
2. **On the job learning:** This type of training can be carried out at the workplace itself. In order to make the training effective, the programme must be structured and monitored by competent staff.
3. **Reading relevant literature:** Library professionals should regularly read literature not only in their field but also allied fields, especially on information technology.
4. **Distance education:** Even before the emergence of information technology into this area, many universities were offering courses through distance education. Now, Internet technology has made this kind of education more effective and convenient. Learning could be computer-based, through multimedia package or conventional print material.
5. **Assigning special projects:** Meaningful projects can be encouraging and will instil enthusiasm in the staff.
6. **Work shadowing:** It involves observing the job being done.

In-house training has the advantage of staff not being absent from

duty and being available when needed. Also, it allows flexibility of time and convenience without many disturbances to routines in the library.

Library staff should be trained in the use of technology relevant to their work because training needs will vary according to their jobs and working environment:

- Library professionals and supporting staff (administrative staff) should be trained to install software, and tackle simple technical problems so that no time is wasted waiting for the appropriate information professional to attend to it.
- They should also be familiar with some of the operating systems such as MS DOS, Windows and some document and spreadsheet tools like MS Word, Excel, PowerPoint, etc.
- E-mail technology has opened new vistas in communication. Using this technology will improve and accelerate the communication process.
- The information service providers should be trained to retrieve information from databases, each of which may have different user interfaces, build search strategies, refine searches, and download results in the required formats.
- Library professionals are considered the best choice for content development (12-13). They therefore need to be trained in data organisation, structuring and presentation of contents.
- With the advent of Internet, library professionals are faced with the herculean task of filtering information from an unstructured or semi-structured heterogeneous mass of information. To perform this task it is essential for them to understand the needs of the clientele.

The library manager who understands the goals of the organisation should guide these professionals to search for the relevant information actively and proactively.

- Library professionals should have at least the basic knowledge of security technologies, viz. firewalls, authentication, access control, computer virus countermeasures, security audits, etc.

6 Conclusion

If it is to be believed that a hybrid library is not a transitional phase to a digital or virtual library, or that all libraries one day or the

other will turn virtual, there is every reason for library professionals to be concerned about upgrading their skills and knowledge to provide efficient, cost-effective and quality services to the clientele. Library professionals along with information professionals will continue to play a very important role in this dynamic information society and it would be wise on the part of any institution to invest in training of staff across all levels in information technology in order to keep up with the pace of change.

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