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LIBRARIES AND THE LIBRARIANS IN THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

MD AJIMUDDIN SK

Abstract:

The transformation of the traditional libraries into e-resources base digital libraries represented new opportunities and the new ways to the library professionals to provide the satisfactory users need. The role of the libraries and the librarians has changed in the e-environment and the library professionals became multitasked personality. This paper also describes the multipurpose role of the librarians in the digital age.

KEYWORDS-

Libraries, Librarians, Digital Age, E-Environment.

1.INTRODUCTION

Library is the destination of the world. The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) revolutionary changed our world as well as our life. The total human society is surrounded by the ICT; no one can step out without technology. As usual the development of ICT very much affected the field of Library and Information Science. It presents an interesting dilemma for libraries and librarians and the library has changed its traditional physical infrastructure and taken a digital format which is termed as Digital Library. In this age of information explosion thousands of documents are published which is difficult to acquire all the documents for a single library because of space problem, staff problem and most importantly the fund problems. In the present digital age all resources are available in digital forms through web. Presently the World Wide Web contains an ever-growing and changing pool of about 320 million web pages. There is no any guidelines any one can published, upload and access in the web from somewhere. With the application of this digital technologies and World Wide Web the walls of library are thus pulled down and became the destination of the global user.

2.WHAT IS DIGITAL AGE

The Digital Age is commonly known as the Computer Age or Information Age. The term digital age refers to the generation where everyone came in contact with digital information and became fully dependent on digital technology to generate or to get the information very quickly. In the digital age individuals gained the ability to transfer information freely, and to have instant access to information that would have been difficult or impossible to find previously. The digital age has impacted the workforce of the human generation. It provides a lot of facilities to perform task more easily, effectively and faster.

3.LIBRARIES IN THE DIGITAL AGE:

In the digital age with the advancement and the application of ICT the libraries are very much

affected. The traditional library scenario has been completely changed and the libraries become as the information centre which depends on the digital information and access to the library is very easy through the internet without stepping into the library physically. The libraries in the digital age is not only digitized form of the physical resources but also very thoughtful, easily and effective organization of digital collection for better access. This types of organization provides large amount of shared information to the wide range of global user.

Electronic Library: An electronic library is a heterogeneous system where all or a big part of its everyday operations is carried out with the use of computer(s) e.i cataloguing, circulation, registration of users, management of the document orders, the acquisition of new material, the serials and collection management etc and the information is available in hard copy, on magnetic tape and discs, CD-ROMs and videodiscs, and also from online sources.

Digital library: Digital library is a library consisting of digital materials and services and accessible via computers. The digital collection may be stored locally, or accessed remotely via computer networks. Simply the Digital library is a set of E-resources and associated technical capabilities for the creating, searching and utilizing the digital information.

Hybrid Library: Hybrid library refers to the coexistence of mixes of traditional print material such as books and magazines, as well as electronic based or the digital material such as e- journals, e-books, audio books etc. Hybrid library is the new flavor in most public and academic libraries.

Virtual Library: A virtual library is a digital space or a collection of full text e-books, e-journals and databases from various publishers and sources. It also can refer to a space where the books can be read. These spaces can include computers, mobile devices and the Internet. Some virtual libraries can be accessed for free, and others require subscriptions. It provides the links to items (documents, software, images, databases etc) on the network through which the users can find information that exists elsewhere on the network.

4. LIBRARIANS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Traditional library professionals were engaged to acquiring, organizing, preserving the printed documents besides helping the readers but from the last decades with the advancement of information and communication technology the walls of library are thus pulled down and the "Electronic Library", "Digital Library", "Hybrid Library" and "Virtual Library" in Cyber Space came into being and the librarian becoming "The Cyber Librarian" or "Cybrarian". The new environment opens a lot of opportunities and options to the library professionals. They are able to provide quicker, more complete, and more sophisticated service to the users by using modern tools like Computers, Internet, Artificial Intelligence, Neural Networks, user-friendly search strategies etc. In addition, increasing arrays of computing and telecommunication technologies are emerging to create new options and opportunities for the development of information capture, storage, retrieval and delivery. The interconnection of world through the use of Internet and Web has changed the fundamental roles, paradigms and culture of libraries and librarians once for all.

4.1 Competencies, Skills and Knowledge, required for LIS Professionals: To provide the successful users services in the digital environment the library professionals should acquire the following Competencies, knowledge and skills.

Essential Competencies: To be a successful LIS professional in the digital environment the following Competencies are required:

- Capability of acceptance of the changing environment.
- Ability to troubleshoot new technologies
- Ability to learn new technologies easily
- Ability to update personal knowledge base with the help of latest development of ICT.
- Knowledge about the resources.
- Understanding customer needs -Skills
- Ability to provide the quality service.
- Adoptive, flexible and resistant.

Resourceful
 Communication skills.
 Presentation skills
 Create awareness among the users, make them accept the changes
 An information management strategist, etc.

TECHNICAL SKILL/ KNOWLEDGE:

Handling of Windows, UNIX, LINUX Operating systems.
 Practice on Web page/Website Development and Content Management systems.
 Depth knowledge on Library software packages including Digital Library Tools.
 Working Skill/ Knowledge on Word processing, Graphics, Spread sheet & Presentations.
 Skill on Database Management Systems including Bibliographic Database Management Systems.
 General purpose programming, Networking
 Acquaintances with Information Retrieval software for online, CD-ROM and Internet.
 Knowledge / Information Management Skills
 Information Literacy Skills
 Project Management Skills
 Time Management Skills
 Decision-Making Skills
 Controlling Skills

4.2 Changing Role of Library Professional in Digital Age: With the transformation of traditional library environment into digital environment, the role of the library professionals also changed and they acts as a versatile personality. The roles of the librarians in the digital environment are as follows:

Consortia manager: In the age of information explosion no library can collect all the required documents or information because of their Financial crunch and Impossibility of self-sufficiency. In this situation a new philosophies and technologies for collection development and reduce the costs of Information is came to exist, a group of organizations who come together to fulfill their combined objective that usefully requires co-operation and the sharing of resources, which is called Library consortia. In the consortium operations the librarian or the library and information science (LIS) professionals play managerial role for coordinating and overseeing consortium operations, including strategic planning, systems development and project management. They facilitate communication among the participating libraries to share their resources and acts as the consortium's representative with vendors for contracted products and services.

Leadership Role: Leadership is "organizing a group of people to achieve a common goal". In the context of digital environment the primary role of the library professionals is to provide the leadership to design, development and ethical management of knowledge-based information systems to satisfy the users need. In the present situation the virtual libraries provide to access an incredible range of information resources which is created and managed by various institutions and organizations for e-learning and teaching professional. So the Library and Informational professionals should acquire the management skills to play leadership role in the digital environment, to organizing, managing and disseminating e-literacy to the clients or the users.

Role of librarians as Proactive Information Professional: In the digital world millions of information are available and easily accessible, but to find out the appropriate information is very difficult. In this situation the librarians play a vital role as Proactive Information Professional. They act as a passive intermediary for guiding the users to appropriate information resources and they are also responsible for analyzing and repackaging of information, content information management systems and develop digital repository management systems.

Role of Librarians as Web Masters or the Web Site Builder: With the development and the application of ICT the traditional scenario of the library has been changed, which makes very difficult problems and the library professionals always face the some challenges to handle the virtual learning environment. To face the challenges of the virtual learning environment in educational institutions, librarians are becoming Web masters. They create their own websites and share their knowledge and resources as well as library services to the users. They collect resources, analysis and spread by using electronic pathfinders and front-end

search tools. They use links to websites on specific topics to retrieve related and relevant information to satisfy the users need.

Role of librarians as Cyber Space Manager: The term cyberspace stands for the global network where millions of information is available. But the users always face some challenges to find their required information. In this situation the librarians play a managerial role in the cyber space, as the cyber Librarian or "Cybrarian" they make the cyberspace easily accessible to the library clients.

Role of E-Resource Managers: The traditional role of the librarians are to manage the library resources or the library materials (Hardcopy) , but in the new environment they are responsible for managing the web-based resources or the E-Resources. The library users including the students, teachers, research scholars etc. are not aware and they also don't know what materials are available in the web or in electronic format. The librarians maintain the copyright issue and manage all the available e-resources for the satisfaction of the users.

Librarian as Researcher: In the research process librarians work as an important part. Because of their high skill in the research process and the depth knowledge they participate in the research team as a critical analyst. By providing re-packaging information (Finding, Analyzing, synthesizing and packaging) to the researcher the librarians play a vital role in the information creation process.

Librarian as Facilitator: Now a day's the use of electronic documents increase rapidly instead of print or hardcopy documents, anyone can use or access E-documents or information by using Internet or World Wide Web (WWW). In this changing environment the librarians should acquire the necessary skills of using Internet or WWW and operate the associate software to locate and retrieve the exact information in the cyber-space, so that they can guide and train the users to effectively use or to get their needed information. In this way they acts as a facilitator and they facilitate to access, identification, gathering, and spread of information and fulfill the users demand.

Guardian of information superhighway (ISH): The Information Superhighway is a global information and communications network that includes the Internet and other networks and switching systems such as telephone networks, cable television networks, and satellite communication networks. The Infrastructure that provides bandwidth-on- demand and information-on-demand services are called information superhighway. It provides two types of information services such as public (free) services and commercial services. The librarians act as the guardians in the Information Superhighway Infrastructure to use it and to provide the guidelines to get advantages form it to the clients.

Librarians As Search Intermediary: An intermediary is a third party that offers intermediation services between two trading parties that acts as a conduit for goods or services offered by a supplier to a consumer. In the digital age librarian or the information specialist acts as the Intermediary between the users and the online system to get the available e- resources on the web. The librarians or an information specialist are trained and practiced to those search technique, so they can search more efficient and more effectively and can save the equivalent amount of time of three, or four, or even five end-users and they help to get the required resources to the users.

Librarians as End-User-Trainer: librarians act as a End-User Trainer. They provide essential training to the users to assist database selection, establish telecommunication connections, effective use of Internet, electronic primary journals, abstracts and indexing databases and databanks, CD-ROM publications and document delivery services etc.

Librarian as Interface Designer: In the field of computer science, computing interface refers to the communication between computer and user by means of peripheral devices. So the interface designing in the field if library is very much important and increasingly relevant through which the users can access and use their essential digital information. With the experience of effectively utilizing the electronic media or resources, continuously using Internet and World Wide Web the librarians play as master role in the designing interface to provide technology based information services, access to web documents, share their knowledge to satisfy the users need.

As Knowledge Manager/ Professional: Knowledge management (KM) is a process for making the right knowledge available to the right people or place. In the KM there are three groups of experts or contributors

users, knowledge professionals and technology experts. The librarians should acquire a variety of skill (technical skills, human skills & conceptual skills) experience and talent to become a Knowledge Managers or professionals. In the present scenario the librarians as a part of KM system consciously and comprehensively gathers, organizes, analyzes and disseminates the knowledge to become effective Knowledge Manager.

Librarian as Sifter of Information Resources: The term sifter or siftware is related to computer science, which refers to the "software programs to extract unknown, valid, and actionable patterns, associations, changes, anomalies, and rules from large databases". This process is also known as "Data Mining". Simply Web is a store house of vast or limitless information or resources where a skilled librarian can play a vital role as a sifter, who helps the user to get their exact or required information. In the cyberspace the librarians or the cybrarians are the key players for filtering, searching the information to satisfy the users.

5. CONCLUSION:

Libraries and the Librarians or the Library and Information Science Professionals are always responsible to provide the right information to the right place in the right time. To fulfill this goal of the libraries and the librarians the ICT play a crucial role. The new coming ICT creates new options and opportunities to the librarians to satisfy the users need. With the development of ICT the librarians can easily gather, store, analyze and disseminate the information to the users and they became multipurpose service provider LIS professionals.

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