



Issues And Challenges Ahead Academic Libraries And Library Professionalst

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Abstract:

Academic libraries are very important for higher education because they support teaching, learning, and research. They provide books, journals, and also electronic resources to students, teachers, and researchers. In recent years, these libraries have been going through a period of big change. The growth of information and communication technology, the wide use of internet and digital resources, and the changing expectations of users have created many new opportunities but also many challenges.

One of the main problems is lack of funds. Most academic libraries in India do not get enough budget to buy costly e-journals, databases, or modern software. At the same time, they also have to maintain printed collections because many students still prefer textbooks in print. Another major challenge is shortage of trained library professionals. Many posts remain vacant in colleges and universities, and those who are working often need training to handle ICT tools, digital repositories, and e-resource management. In addition, library professionals are not always given equal recognition with teaching staff, which affects their motivation.

This paper discusses these important issues and challenges faced by academic libraries and library professionals. It also suggests some solutions such as increasing funding, adopting open-source software, promoting resource sharing, and arranging regular training programmes for staff. The study concludes that if libraries and professionals adopt new technology, improve services, and receive proper support from management and government, they can successfully overcome the present challenges and continue to play a central role in higher education.

Keywords: *Academic Libraries, Library Professionals, Challenges, Digital Transformation, Higher Education, Information Services.*

Introduction:

A library is often called the heart of an academic institution because it supports teaching, learning, and research. Students, teachers, and researchers depend on libraries for textbooks, journals, reference material, and other information sources. In earlier times, the main duty of an academic library was to collect, organise, and preserve printed books and periodicals. The librarian's role was mainly to maintain these collections and help

users to locate the required material. But in the modern age of digital technology, this role has changed completely.

Today, academic libraries are expected to provide both print and digital services. Apart from traditional books, users demand e-books, online journals, databases, and remote access facilities. They also expect fast, reliable, and 24×7 access through computers and mobile phones. In other words, the library has now transformed from being

only a storehouse of books to becoming a digital information centre and learning hub.

In India, these changes are happening more quickly after the **National Education Policy (NEP 2020)**, which emphasises online education, digital repositories, and open access resources. However, many challenges make this transition difficult. For example, according to a recent survey, there are huge numbers of academic libraries in India, but many of them face shortage of funds and cannot afford costly e-journals or databases. In Odisha, there are 398 librarian posts lying vacant in government institutions, while in Gujarat more than 5,600 schools and many colleges do not have librarians at all. These examples show the seriousness of the problem.

Therefore, it is important to study the issues and challenges faced by academic libraries and library professionals in India. This paper discusses these problems in detail and also suggests solutions, so that libraries can remain relevant and continue to play a central role in higher education and research.

Literature Review:

Many researchers in India and abroad have studied the changing role of academic libraries and the challenges faced by library professionals. The literature shows that libraries are moving away from their traditional role of simply storing books to becoming modern information centres that focus on user needs.

The foundation of library science in India was laid by **Dr. S. R. Ranganathan (1931)** through his famous Five Laws of Library Science. These laws still guide libraries today, but their meaning has to be reinterpreted in the digital age. For example, the law “Books are for use” now applies to e-books, online journals, and digital databases as well. **Singh and Kaur (2019)** studied Indian

academic libraries and found that lack of funds and outdated infrastructure are the biggest hurdles in adopting new technologies. **Patil (2020)** stressed that continuous professional development (CPD) is necessary for librarians to survive in the era of ICT. Librarians must learn about digital repositories, e-resource management, and data services. **Kumar (2021)** highlighted the shift from collection-centred libraries to service-centred ones, where the main focus is on improving user experience.

On the global front, reports of the **International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA, 2021)** show that libraries across the world are adopting digital platforms, open access publishing, and collaborative networks to reach more users. However, the success of such innovations depends on government support, proper policy, and skilled professionals.

From this review, it is clear that both Indian and global academic libraries face challenges such as funding, staff shortage, and skill gaps. At the same time, there are opportunities for growth if proper training, policies, and technologies are adopted.

Objectives:

The main objectives of this paper are:

1. To define the role and importance of academic libraries in higher education.
2. To identify the key issues and challenges faced by academic libraries and library professionals in India.
3. To explore possible solutions and strategies for overcoming these challenges.

Methodology:

The study is based on descriptive and analytical methods. Secondary data has been

collected from books, journals, conference proceedings, government reports, policy documents, and credible online sources. A conceptual analysis approach has been applied to synthesis the findings and derive conclusions.

Definition of Library and Academic Library:

- **Library:** According to Ranganathan (1931), a library is a growing organism that serves as a repository of knowledge and a centre of learning. Modern libraries are not only storehouses but also service-oriented institutions providing access to physical and digital information.
- **Academic Library:** An academic library is a library associated with a higher educational institution such as a college, university, or research centre. Its purpose is to support teaching, learning, and research by providing access to relevant resources and services.

Issues And Challenges In Academic Libraries And Library Professionals:

Academic libraries are the backbone of higher education, but in the present time they face many difficulties. These problems come from different directions financial, technological, human resource, policy-related, and even social. Along with libraries, library professionals are also facing challenges in their personal and professional growth. The following section discusses these issues in detail.

Issues and Challenges in Academic Libraries:

1. **Lack of Funds:** Most academic libraries in India do not receive adequate financial support. Library budgets are often very small compared to the needs of students and teachers. As a result, libraries cannot

purchase expensive e-journals, databases, or modern library software. Sometimes even basic requirements like furniture, computers, and internet connectivity are not fulfilled.

2. **Technological Upgradation:** Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is changing at a very fast pace. Libraries must frequently update their hardware, software, and digital platforms. Setting up institutional repositories, subscribing to online resources, and managing digital libraries require continuous investment, which many institutions cannot afford.
3. **Balancing Print and Digital Resources:** A major challenge for academic libraries is maintaining both print and electronic collections. Students often prefer textbooks in print, while researchers demand online journals and e-databases. Managing both types of resources increases costs and workload.
4. **User Expectations:** Today's users want quick, seamless, and 24×7 access to information. They also prefer mobile-based and remote access facilities. If libraries fail to meet these expectations, students and teachers start relying more on open internet sources like Google, which reduces the importance of libraries.
5. **Infrastructure Limitations:** Many academic libraries in India are housed in old buildings with limited space. Traditionally, libraries were designed for storing books, but now they must provide group discussion rooms, ICT labs, and collaborative learning spaces. Due to space and funding problems, libraries cannot modernise their infrastructure.
6. **Policy and Governance Issues:** In many institutions, there are no proper policies for copyright, open access, or resource sharing. This creates confusion in

managing digital content. At the same time, frequent changes in education policies, such as the implementation of NEP 2020, demand quick adaptation by libraries, but without additional support, this becomes very difficult.

7. **Copyright and Licensing:** Subscription to e-resources often comes with strict licensing conditions. Libraries must negotiate carefully, and even then, access is limited to certain users or periods. This reduces the value of resources and creates legal challenges.
8. **Plagiarism and Academic Integrity:** With easy access to digital resources, plagiarism has become a common issue in academic institutions. Libraries are expected to provide plagiarism detection tools and conduct training sessions for students and researchers. This adds to their workload.
9. **Information Overload:** The internet provides a vast amount of information, but much of it is unreliable. Users often get confused, and librarians must guide them in identifying authentic resources. Managing information literacy programmes is another challenge.
10. **Cybersecurity Issues:** Digital platforms expose libraries to risks like hacking, data theft, and misuse of user accounts. Ensuring safe and secure access to e-resources is a growing concern.
11. **Language Barriers and Local Content:** Most e-resources are in English. Students from rural areas or those with regional language backgrounds struggle to use them. There is also a shortage of academic material in Indian languages, which reduces inclusivity.
12. **Digital Divide:** Not all students have laptops, smartphones, or good internet connectivity. Libraries are expected to

bridge this gap, but they lack adequate infrastructure to provide equal access.

13. **Research Data Management:** Modern universities are generating large amounts of research data. Libraries are increasingly expected to support storage, organisation, and preservation of such data, but they lack the expertise and facilities for this specialised work.
14. **Environmental Sustainability:** Libraries are now expected to adopt eco-friendly practices, such as energy-efficient buildings, reduction of print resources, and digital alternatives. Balancing sustainability with service demands is another emerging issue.

Issues and Challenges for Library Professionals:

1. **Skill Gap:** Many library professionals have not received formal training in ICT, data management, or digital platforms. Without continuous professional development, it becomes difficult to handle new technologies and services.
2. **Changing Roles:** The role of librarians is shifting from being custodians of books to becoming knowledge managers, information navigators, and digital literacy trainers. This transition requires new mindsets and skills, which not all professionals find easy.
3. **Shortage of Staff:** Thousands of librarian posts remain vacant across India. For example, in Odisha there are nearly **398 librarian posts lying vacant**, and in Gujarat, more than **5,600 schools and many colleges do not have librarians**. Such shortages create extra workload for the few existing staff.
4. **Job Insecurity:** In many institutions, library staff are appointed on a contractual or part-time basis. Permanent jobs are

decreasing, leading to job insecurity and low motivation.

5. **Lack of Recognition:** Librarians are often not given equal academic status with teaching faculty. They are rarely included in decision-making committees, which affects their professional identity and morale.
6. **Workload and Stress:** With limited staff and resources, librarians must manage both traditional services (cataloguing, circulation) and modern services (e-resources, digital libraries). This dual responsibility increases stress and reduces efficiency.
7. **Mental Health and Motivation:** Lack of recognition, job insecurity, and heavy workload negatively impact the mental health of professionals. Many feel demotivated, which in turn affects the quality of library services.

Solutions For Issues And Challenges In Academic Libraries And Library Professionals:

Academic libraries can face their challenges effectively with proper planning and support. First, **adequate funding** should be provided by governments and institutions to strengthen both print and digital collections. Libraries can save costs by adopting **open-source software** like Koha or DSpace and by promoting **open access resources**.

Second, libraries must practice **resource sharing** through consortia such as INFLIBNET and DELNET, which give wider access at lower cost. At the same time, **training and skill development** programmes should be organized regularly so that professionals can update themselves with ICT skills and digital tools.

Third, **policy support and recognition** of library professionals is

essential. They should be included in academic planning and decision-making. Finally, **improved infrastructure** with ICT labs, discussion spaces, and awareness programmes on information literacy will make libraries more user-friendly.

With these steps, academic libraries can meet modern challenges and continue to play a vital role in higher education.

Conclusion:

Academic libraries and library professionals are facing a time of change. Libraries are no longer limited to lending books; they are expected to provide digital resources, online services, and research support. This shift has created new responsibilities along with serious challenges such as shortage of funds, lack of modern infrastructure, fast changes in technology, and unfilled librarian posts. Library professionals also struggle with low recognition, job insecurity, and the need to constantly update their skills.

Still, these challenges can be seen as opportunities. With proper funding, training, and the use of open-source tools, libraries can improve their services at lower costs. Resource sharing through networks like INFLIBNET and DELNET can make access to information more affordable. Regular skill development programmes can prepare librarians for digital-era roles.

If institutions, government, and professionals work together, academic libraries can overcome present difficulties and grow stronger. They can continue to be the backbone of higher education by ensuring that every learner and researcher has timely and equal access to reliable information.

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