



ELECTRONIC LIBRARIANSHIP: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Smt. Urmila Rajendra Kadam

Librarian, Kamala College, Kolhapur

Corresponding Author - Smt. Urmila Rajendra Kadam

Email- kadamurmila76@gmail.com

DOI - 10.5281/zenodo.7180044

Abstract:

In previous days libraries are recognized as storehouse of the books and librarians are the custodian of these books and reading materials but now 21st century is started to be a knowledge century, in which knowledge plays primary role in the society and economic development of the country. A new era of internet and availability of e- resources has brought revolution in the way where we create, store, access, share and use information.

Keywords: *Library, Information Science, Librarianship, Challenges and Opportunities.*

Introduction:

Traditional libraries store different types of print formats such as books, journals, thesis, magazines and newspapers etc. Users of the library visit physically and libraries used to prepare various tools and guides to locate these resources. Now a days due to growth of information and Communication Technology and its application in Publication industries, various types of electronic resources where developed in almost all fields of knowledge. Further with the growth of research and publications in various micro and inter related subjects, the amount of e- resources have increased tremendously. The main advantages of e-resources are such as speedy and easy in searching, no storage space requirements like print resources, have promoted libraries to accommodate this e resources in their collection. Library users are more inclined towards these resources which results into that libraries procure more and more e-resources to satisfy their uses requirements.

Today's libraries are providing electronic access to a wide variety of resources including indexes, full text articles, complete journals and internet or web e- resources. Thus libraries have been

moving towards an electronic environment with sufficient computers for providing electronic information.

Traditional Librarians:

The traditional role of the librarians in the print era is to collect, develop and acquisition of the reading materials like books, journals. To reserve reading material to cop up with the users demand. To organize and provide access to information physically and via visits and catalogue. To advise library users, to locate and advise quick and easy access to information. To archive and conserve information properly to provide information skills training. These are the traditional functions of the librarians.

Changing role of Librarians:

As per the changing nature of libraries the role of librarians may be classified into the following ways.

a) Information Technology Expert:

The library and information professionals will perform the role of IT expert as they will guide the users for using the computers for retrieval of information. They will get acquainted to the technical no how about the hardware and software

requirements due to the explosion of use of online resources the librarians need to be IT expert because they have frequently deal with electronic devices and communication technology.

b) Information Analyst:

Today in the world of internet and Web Technology the share amount of information is available and intellectual processing of retrieved information has become core job of good information scientist. In the world of internet librarians need to critically authenticate the information source. Evaluation of internet resources and provide consolidated information to the users is the main work of information analysts.

c) Information Broker:

Inside the picture the information professionals will be the information brokers as they are mediator between knowledge and user. They will customize the information products and service according to its clientele.

d) Content Provider:

Today the librarians are expected to produce asked information in logically arranged and in packet format.

e) Consultant:

Librarians expand their area of influence to include the classroom when today collaborate with classroom teachers to meet the information needs of the students. Moving behind the warehouse concept of traditional libraries, librarian strike out into classrooms or departments to consult with classroom teachers, suggesting resources locating and acquiring materials and instructing students and teachers in optical information seeking methods. “As the users” become more “self director learners” the librarians acts as a resource person of the users.

Electronic Librarians:

With the changes in library environment, the concepts of electronic librarianship have been introduced in libraries. In academic libraries more technically oriented professionals are being motivated to join the library science profession. The term electronic librarianship has become hallmark in the electronic age and many new imaginative job titles as information manager, electronic library manager, network services librarian, electronics services librarian, reference multimedia librarian, information scientists etc appear in library employment advertisement but question arises why this new concept is becoming so popular? Weather the concept and designation of electronic librarianship truly enables the library science professionals to perform their duties satisfactory? What are the opportunities of electronic librarianship and what are the challenges and opportunities of electronic librarianship

Challenges of electronic librarianship-

The term electronic librarianship have created more challenges for library professionals.

Selection of e-resources:

- Due to tremendous increase in number of e-resources the selection of resources is very challenging and complicated task day by day.

➤ Unfair Marketing Policy of E-resources Publishers:

The common phenomenon of e-resources publishers and vendors to market their product in bundle with various pricing model by which they compel libraries to subscribe number of useless e-resources along with some useful resources. It create problems for librarians to satisfy the needs of the users, all though libraries subscribe to a large number of resources.

➤ Poor Role of Library Consortia:

Large number of library consortia like AICTE, NDEST, UGC Info Net IIM, NList, and DELNET has been formed to look into the matter related

to e resources but the question arises how far these concern are capable to handle the issues related to e resources.

➤ **Regular increase in the price of e resources:**

Ever increasing price of print journals has promoted libraries to opt for E resources. It also creates problems for every librarian to accommodate more and more sources.

➤ **Poor Infrastructure Facilities of Libraries to Access E- resources:**

Majority of the libraries run with poor infrastructure facilities. Number of configuration, number of computers and other devices required for access of e-resources are very less in number. This type of situations creates more problems to the librarians in meeting the users demands and services.

➤ **Lack of Authority in Decision Making Process:**

In case of academic libraries the chairperson or head of the Library Committee, a non library science professional dictates the librarians. Very limited autonomy. Also in most academic libraries recommendations for procurement of library resources including e-resources are made by the head of various departments. In very often it leads to biased and unwanted recommendations for e- resources.

Opportunities for Librarians:

It is fact that changes always bring opportunities and hence changes in libraries have also created certain opportunities for librarians. Some of the opportunities of electronic librarianship are here.

➤ **Scope to Acquire New Skill and Knowledge:**

The challenges of electronic libraries made a new generation of librarians more technosavy and resourceful having adequate knowledge on e- resources management. Various aspects of electronic library like library automation, e -resources management, creation of digital library, IR, use of

open source software, website creation, blog set tagging, which is beneficial for new young and senior librarians. So the new form of librarianship has provided an opportunity to the professionals for managing the ICT based on technology and user oriented e resources services.

➤ **Role in Educating Users:**

The electronic librarianship has changed the role of library professionals from custodian of documents to teachers. In this new role librarian plays role of teacher, advisor in educating users on electronic library and services. They provide instructions about various e-resources.

➤ **Financial Resourcefulness:**

Library networking for e-resource sharing, inter librarylending, provision of walk in users in libraries, Publication activities of libraries, marketing of library services have facilitated librarians to be financial sound day by day in spite of shrinking library budget.

➤ **Wider Scope for Research and Publications:**

Changes in type of library resources and services motivated library professionals towards Research and Publication activities. More and more research on various aspects of library are being done which has ultimately increase the number of Ph.D. holders and which has ultimately increase the image of library professionals to carry out study and research activities.

Conclusion:

Academic libraries place and extraordinary role in educating and empowering citizens. They help the community to become more knowledgeable, aware and imaginative. The working librarians need to think about the availability and accessibility of multiple electronic formats in order to deliver the best information to all users in least possible time. In the period of electronic librarianship library

professionals need to give continue attention and leadership in information policy development. Due to changes in acquisition policies of the libraries, particular with respect to the acquisition of e resources copyright, intellectual property right, digital right management etc are the new versions of acquisitions changed the to licensing. Instead of existing terms and conditions for the supply of documents by the vendor the present role of library professionals may change to negotiate a license agreement with vendors or Publishers. In the Digital information era it is essential for librarians to acquire adequate theoretical and practical knowledge and skills on IR resources and other ICT based services. So that they can cop up comfortably in the age of electronic librarianship.

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