FUTURE OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIES: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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ABSTRACT: - *Now a days in the case of Academic Libraries so many challenges and opportunities but we want to discuss and analysis on the basis of that matter. If we study on this subject we got so many ideas. This paper is based on the assumption that the future of academic libraries is in our own hands. It further emphasizes the need for change in academic libraries in the context of the emerging knowledge economy. It underlines the mandate of the National Knowledge Commission and gives the present scenario with regard to higher education and access to knowledge and information. It also highlights the impact of ICT on, and paradigm shift in academic libraries Appreciates library consortia, institutional repositories, and open access archives as strategic response to the paradoxical situation of growing digital documents and declining library budgets. Emphasizes that more important than the name of a library (traditional or digital), is the mandate and the context of the library. It also enlists the challenges and opportunities facing the academic libraries. The paper concludes that the future of academic libraries is in our own hands.*

KEYWORDS: Digital Technologies, Internet, Knowledge Paradigm, Paradigm Shift, Academic Scenario, Library Consortia, Open Access Archives, Institutional Repositories, National Knowledge Commission.

Introduction

Digital Technologies have transformed the future of academic libraries creating new challenges and opportunities. Internet and web technologies have brought unprecedented changes in the nature and functioning of library and information resources and services environment. Digital information resources are growing enormously as they have more potential to be easily accessible simultaneously by many users. The users' priorities in information seeking pattern are changed with changing information

landscape and technology. The users demand for information in digital form has increased tremendously in recent years. Academic Libraries are facing variety of critical challenges affecting their existence in modern dynamic digital environment. Libraries are evolving to multimedia information gateways or portals providing access to global information resources. Academic Libraries have become complex learning resource centres with multiple roles and variety of complex challenges.

The Important Challenges include:

1. Rapid technological innovations
2. Declining library budgets
3. Increasing cost of publications
4. Continuing emergence of new media formats.
5. Explosive growth and use of web resources
6. Powerful and user friendly high quality search engines
7. Accelerated Learning Scenario
8. Intensive use of digital resources
9. Increasing competition from Internet, Online book stores, search technology and commercial publishers of information
10. Changing users' information seeking behavior and habits
11. Exponential growth of open access scholarly resources on the web
12. Interactive virtual learning environment

Changing role of librarian in digital environment

In the Modern World, the role of librarian is adapting to changing technologies, information environment and customers expectations. Library professionals are increasingly responsible not only to provide traditional library information services but also to deliver online information services according to the actual user needs. Libraries are functioning under great pressure to become more efficient to deliver more effective services to the users. LIS professionals need to be confident and competent that they can prepare for new challenges, deal with emerging technologies, manage change effectively and claim new professional roles. A well-informed competent and creative LIS professional shall play multiple evolving roles in the 21st century. As the information industry has changed, the expectations of information users have soared and librarians have come to fear for their positions and profession. As we race into the future, librarians should begin to think about the position of the library in the new environment.

LIS professionals are functioning under great pressure to keep pace with the constantly changing technological environment. Librarians must serve as technologists with multitasking skills to assist learners in creating individualized information portfolios. Librarians must develop greater technological expertise, advanced research skills and team building competencies to play the new role of library technologist in digital

environment. Libraries must assert their evolving roles in more active ways in the context of increasingly competitive markets for information dissemination and retrieval. The librarian must be a multi-skilled Knowledge Navigator constantly interacting with users understanding the diverse needs of different user groups. Librarians have to play multiple evolving and expanding roles to face many new challenges in the dynamic digital environment. A librarian must be a professional expert, techno literate, web usability expert, knowledge manager, navigator, trainer, educator, marketer, service provider and many more.

Skills required for changing role of librarian

In the dynamic digital information environment, the role of LIS Professionals has changed from mere custodians of documents to the effective provider of customized, high quality, innovative information products and services using latest technology. LIS Professionals have to learn and equip with wide range and variety of skills, knowledge and competencies in order to play multiple future challenging roles of Librarian responsive to changing needs of user community.

1. Managerial & Leadership skills
2. Library & Information Services Skills
3. Information & Communication Technology Skills
4. Internet & Web Technology Skills
5. Communication Skills
6. Teaching and Presentation Skills
7. Commitment to excellent customer Service
8. Resource generation skills
9. Commitment to Life-Long Learning
10. Inter personal relations skills
11. Marketing and Promotion Skills
12. Project Management skills
13. Time Management skills
14. Knowledge of Copyright, IPR and Cyber laws
15. Knowledge Management skills
16. Creative and Innovative skills
17. Negotiation skills
18. Change management skills
19. Evaluation and Assessment skills

Strategies to manage the future of academic libraries

Rapid Technological innovations have reinvented the roles, responsibilities, and resources of academic libraries. They continue to evolve and remain at the heart of academic Institutions. Library's role in supporting research and education will require providing access to all kinds of learning resources in all formats to all the users. Academic libraries must adapt the following strategies to achieve necessary transformation and emerge as vital learning resource centres to keep pace with the changing needs of users in the digital environment.

Developing Digital Library Services

Libraries must high-quality digital information services to the users. Libraries must

redesign their roles and develop new ways of offering services to fulfill the overall mission of library. Libraries must focus more on the user's needs and their services and less on the traditional activities. Libraries do not have control over publicly available information. Today, library users have many alternatives for information access. The Google search engine is the first choice of many for information needs. Google scholar, a free search engine has become popular for scholarly content. Major newspapers publish on line with up – to – the minute coverage. Commercial publishers have begun to offer information services direct to the consumer bypassing the library. Many open Access Resources containing scholarly content are available free on the web. The survival and success of academic libraries depends on the development of new services responsive to the needs of their users. In order to evolve relevant and new services, we must understand, embrace and adapt to modern times. Academic Libraries must thoroughly understand the needs and desires of their users and strive to provide innovative and improved user services to meet those needs. (Texadata, 2006)

Promote access to open Access Resources

Advances in new technologies especially the internet, web and e-publishing enabled opening up free access to various information resources. Free availability of scholarly information and knowledge plays a vital role for the research and development of all sectors of the society. Open access is providing free online access scholarly research literature and other publications without any restrictions. Open access provides great opportunities for researches to improve the quality of research and scholarship. Open access can be provided through many sources such as open access books, Journals, repositories, tutorials and open course ware. Today, huge amount of open access resources are available across the globe. Libraries need to discover and identify the relevant global resources and provide gateway access to their local users.

Future role of academic librarians/libraries

- Grow partnerships with instructional faculty and direct support of curricular goals.
- Continue development of assessment that is tied directly to course learning outcomes.
- Librarians will take a more active role in programs aimed at improving retention, persistence, and student success
- Libraries will continue to morph into collaborative learning centers with mixed-use space.
- Librarians will continue to adapt to the changing landscape of higher education.

Facing Challenges, Finding Opportunities

"Librarians have been the real heroes of the digital revolution in higher education. They are the ones who have seen the farthest, done the most, accepted the hardest challenges, and demonstrated most clearly the benefits of digital information. In the process, they have turned their own field upside down and have revolutionized their professional training. It is testimony to their success that we take their achievement – and their information-management systems for granted."

Challenges and Opportunities

With the ascent of digital documents and digital libraries, library and information professionals' role has expanded and challenges have increased manyfold. These challenges relate to collection management, knowledge organization, digital preservation, online searching, content management, knowledge management, and promoting the use of libraries and networks. LIPs are required to work as leaders, managers, and facilitators. The ICT and the Internet has thrown open the doors to the LIPs to many opportunities. Now 24x7 access to information is available round the clock and the traditional constraints of space and time stand collapsed. LIPs have the opportunity to provide global reach to the indigenous knowledge. Similarly, we can get access to world's knowledge and information through the Internet provided we have the will, skill, and the appropriate attitude. These opportunities and challenges can be handled effectively by competent library personnel.

Conclusion

The paper is based on the assumption that the mandate of the academic library is intact, only its role has expanded and format has changed. With the impact of ICTs, we are having digital libraries, as well as library and information networks. Academic libraries need to respond to the growing and diversifying information needs of the end-users. Academic libraries must become a local gateway to world's knowledge and information. The biggest and critical issue is how to manage change in the academic libraries so that we do not suffer the destiny of dinosaurs. The future is uncertain but bright. We will have to create a relative balance of printed publications and digital documents. Our future library must be a hybrid library which must be user-centerd and expert-assisted.

In future, academic libraries will remain indispensable for knowledge seekers in complex digital information universe. Academic libraries should change readily in response to the changes in technological innovations, information resources and the users' demands. Developing digital information resources, services and comfortable learning environments that are responsive to needs of users can be achieved by making conscious effort to address problems and transform the current situation in libraries. They need to redefine their policies, practices,

activities, resources and roles to keep pace with changing end-users expectations. To respond easily to the frequency and large scale rapid changes, academic libraries need to be more dynamic and flexible and need to have highly skilled competent librarians. Librarians must become change agents and assume a pro-active role in making effective use of all the technologies and their capabilities in digital environment.

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