

ACADEMIC LIBRARIES OF 21ST CENTURY: CHALLENGES FOR LIBRARIAN

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Abstract:

Owing to advancement of information and communication technologies (ICTs), academic libraries have radically transformed today and consequently academic librarians have new roles to fulfill the incessantly -changing needs of library customers and remain relevant in 21st century. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the major impetus of change, key paradigm shifts, new roles and challenges for academic librarians. This paper tangibly reflects paradigm shift emerging from technological developments required for effective and efficient services by the academic libraries of 21st Century. This paper also discusses skills and competencies for modern academic librarians to enable them to meet these challenges and finally, a way forward is recommended.

Keywords : *Information and Communication Technology, Academic Libraries, E-resources, OPAC, Web 2.0.*

Introduction

Libraries are service organizations where individuals, organizations and societies are provided unhindered access to substantial quantities of information. Libraries are collection of books and other information resources gathered for the purpose of reading, study and reference. Academic libraries exist to support its academic community; hence their development is always tied with the development of the institution. Education system and academic institutions have been dramatically changed because of ICTs revolution. Academic libraries cannot be isolated from this change. They have to change accordingly. The concept of book oriented librarianship has long been taken over by users centred librarianship academic libraries are established in support of the mission of their parent institutions to generate knowledge and people equipped with knowledge in order to serve the society and advance the well being of mankind. The main function of the academic libraries is to support the mission, vision and objectives of the parent organizations. Academic libraries are therefore to support the three main institutional activities teaching, learning and research of their academic community staff, students and researchers.

Traditional Versus 21st Century Academic Libraries:

ICT and digital revolution radically changed the academic libraries in the 21st century. The major changes have impact on selection, acquisition, cataloguing archiving, reference desk etc. The difference between traditional academic library and 21st century academic libraries are :

Sl. No.	Traditional Academic Libraries	21st Century Academic Libraries
1	Selection and acquisition of library information materials (books and journals) was from the publisher catalogues	Selection is based on users’ demands and dealing with issues such as, journals licensing and publishers’ big deal offers for open access journals.
2	Main collection included books and journals	Today there are institutional repositories, online databases, multi-media information resources
3	Librarians worked as collection specialists	Librarians work as faculty liaison

4	Management of information systems was limited to a four-walled physical library	In modern age, there are digital libraries, digital repositories and cloud information management system
5	Information model was scarcity and limited access of information	There is information explosion in both quantity and formats of information
6	Manual interlibrary loan system	Electronic interlibrary loan
7	High dependence on print resources	High dependence on e-resources and digital resources
8	Availability of services only in library opening hours	Most services are available 24/7
9	Use of card catalogues to retrieve information	Use of Online Public Access Catalogue(OPAC) to retrieve information
10	A traditional reference desk service	24/7 online and virtual reference services
11	Library users had easily identified information needs	Library users have diverse information needs

12	Use of library budget mostly to buy books	To buy e-resources including hardware and software resources
13	Librarian mediated searching	Web-based searching
14	Print journals	e-journal and open access journals
15	Preservation of mainly books, serials and grey literature	Digital documents
16	Traditional library users, who had no other choice but to come to libraries	Diverse library users and assorted options to access information

Changes in Academic Libraries:

Academic libraries are changing dramatically by adopting new means of technology in all activities of print to e-environment like printed library card catalogues have been replaced by computerized OPAC system with a variety of web-based graphical user interface(GUI) functions, availability of numerous e-databases, e-journals, information resources, services for users. To face the new information explosion, academic libraries will have to meet even more challenges and opportunities to serve students, faculty, staff, scholars and other users, all with many expectations and many more demands triggered by the growth of emerging and cutting edge technologies in academic learning environments. Libraries are also

changing in terms of their collection, facilities and services owing to constant changing scenario of information on account of Information and Communication Technology applications and information seeking behavior of clientele. Libraries are no longer considered as store house of knowledge rather they now act as Learning Resource Centre. Information and communication technology (ICT) has made a deep impact on all types of libraries. Today we are talking about digital and virtual libraries. At the same time we are very much worried about the future of libraries in general and academic libraries in particular. But we would like to emphasize that the future of academic libraries is dependent both on external and internal changes. The ICT is providing the library and information professionals with both opportunities and challenges. The major reasons for change the academic libraries are:

Advancement of ICT:

ICT is the fundamental drive behind all changes. It has affected all walks of life whether education, culture, teaching, learning, research, scholarly communication, libraries and information centre, medical health, agriculture and so on. Everything is now dependent on ICTs and going electronic is a way forward in each sector, hence today we have telemedicine, e-agriculture, e-business, e-Government and so on. Digital technology has further transformed communication, learning, and work and most recently, cloud computing. According to Gens(2012) International Data

Corporation(IDC) has predicted that 2013 will be a year of big jumps in small and medium-sized business cloud use and two-thirds of United States–based mid size firms will use cloud services in 2013, as opposed to just half in 2012. Consumers will begin to abandon PCs and embrace mobile devices for Internet use; mini tablets will turbocharge the mobile market and will spur a shift from textbooks to tablets; "Social everything" will create a huge integration challenge for enterprise IT(Gens, 2012). All of this advancement in ICT has huge impact on libraries and information profession. Academic libraries have adopted contemporary technologies to achieve the visible impact of technological applications. They are striving to convert the entire collections into electronic resources and services to e-services(Tikekar, 2009).

Global Evolution in Education System:

Learning in 21st century has changed radically. Today we have new methods of teaching and learning, such as: Open and Distance Learning(ODL), learning management systems, M-Learning, online education venture, virtual campus and Flipped Classrooms. All of these recent trends in education have immense effect on the academic libraries and librarians. Academic libraries provide library services to support users' information needs to support their e-learning and e-teaching and e-research by providing right information at the right time in the right format from

wherever library customers are. Eaton(2010), an educational leader has succinctly described the emerging trends in higher education which are:

- Increased use and integration of technology
- Globalized approaches to learning
- Awareness of economic factors affecting education
- Need for a highly skilled, competitive workforce
- “Borderless” and cross-border education
- Increased student and faculty mobility
- Individualized, customizable, learner-centred approaches
- Strategic partnerships and alliances among governments, school boards, schools and individual educators
- Emergence of non-formal and informal learning, driven by technology
- Frameworks, benchmarks and other asset-based approaches to assessment

Changing Customer Needs:

Customer information needs are largely influenced by the rapidly changing ICTs and education system. With the advent of technology users are well-conversant with latest trends in information environments. This becomes one of the major impetuses for change in modern academic libraries. Library customers have high expectations from the librarians and information professionals than ever before to access the right information and knowledge in the right format and at the right time from wherever they are.

Emergence of Social Media:

This is another drive behind change in 21st century academic libraries. "...social media or web 2.0 is the use of digital media, including Internet and mobile, for collaborating to create user generated content and form self organizing communities. Social media is designed to collaborate, exchange ideas and achieve commonly-shared goals. Examples of social media are blogs, forums, wikis, social networking sites, micro blogging sites, social bookmarking sites, social voting sites, social review sites, MySpace, LinkedIn and virtual worlds(HLWIKI International, 2013). Academic librarians are using them to collaborate with library customers. For example, as a

pedagogical tool, blogs can be used as a means of communication among librarians and library communities such as faculty members and students to provide discussion forums on subject-related topics and current awareness. A wiki is and be used for social interaction among librarians and library customer. Academic librarians are using RSS feeds for Syndicating blog content(on Web sites – including Facebook, into online courseware, etc.), for creating OPML packages for library patrons, for subject guides, for RSS feeds from the ILS, for new books feeds, search feeds, feeds of checked-out books and holds (Oshea, 2008). Educators are using RSS feeds to send contents to students whenever available. Podcasts are being used to provide audio content to support classroom, laboratory, and experiential instruction. Universities are now creating podcast initiatives through iTunes U, most well-known educational podcasting service (Medscape News, 2011). Thus, web 2.0 has profound impact on the roles of IPs. Web 2.0 technologies have transformed the way people in information industries engage with their clients, collaborate on projects, promote their services and gather community knowledge (Terrell, Richardson & Hamilton, 2011).

Changes in Scholarly Communication:

New scholarly communication comprises of digital scholarship, institutional repositories and open access. New scholarly communication and publishing models

are developing at an ever-faster pace, requiring libraries to be actively involved or be left behind(Murphy, 2012) in sharing and disseminating intellectual outputs.

Aligned with 21st century libraries services Gorman have formulated the New Five laws of Library Science:

- Libraries serve humanity
- Respect all forms by which knowledge is communicated
- Use technology intelligently to enhance service
- Protect free access to knowledge, and
- Honor the past and create the future

The above five laws represent modern academic libraries. Libraries exist to serve humanity by equipping people with the right kind of knowledge to serve the society and thus advance the well-being of humankind. Today there are various methods of scholarly communication and libraries are supposed to use all of them depending on the needs of its customers. As technology is the major drive to all the changes, librarians are supposed to explore and exploit technology to its optimum potential to enhance the provision of library services. Librarians are supposed to be gurus of intellectual property protection and consult and advice academia on related issues

such as copyright. Librarians have to maintain their traditional core values of the profession and at the same time manifest library services in new ways addressing the constantly changing needs of user communities.

Role of 21st Century Librarian:

The environment in which librarian work is changing in terms of greater access to a range of information, increased speed in acquiring information, greater complexity in locating, analyzing and linking information, constantly changing technology and adaption, lack of standardization of both hardware and software, continuous learning for users and staff, management of financial investment for technology.

In the present electronic environment, academic librarians are required to work independently or as a team to deliver service-oriented and user-centered applications, instructions, programmes, projects and services. The major roles of 21st century librarians are:

- Technology savvy/ experts by training in both using and training technology.

By implementing a variety of digital web-based projects, initiatives and infrastructures, librarians preserve, extend, and facilitate access to information

and knowledge comprising humankind’s cultural, scientific and intellectual heritage.

- Knowledge workers
- Supporting study, not just storing books
- Effective marketers
- Understanding all users and stakeholders
- Demonstrating their value as a pivotal in scholarly communications
- Knowledge gatekeepers as subject experts
- Networkers and knowledge brokers
- Digital content managers,(taxonomies, metadata, Dublin Core etc.)
- Good researchers both for personal and professional development
- Web designers
- Blended librarian etc

Challenges:

To co-op with the changing library trends and customer needs twenty-first century academic libraries are facing numerous challenges. The key challenges can be distinguished as below:

- Transition from print to digital Content
- Continuing education and training of library staff
- Intellectual capital management
- Technological-trauma and infrastructure
- Change management to respond to increasingly changing library community needs
- Adopting Just-in-case to just-in-time approach
- Continuous budget decline
- Negativity towards libraries because of other competitors
- Book keeping expert to research expert
- New scholarly communication

- Growing demands for service and increased expectations
- Staff resistance to change
- Gaining and sustaining competitive edge over the competitors

A Way Forward:

It is essential for librarians to move along with the modern trend in order to be relevant. In view of the prevailing challenges to librarians of academic libraries the following are suggested as a way forward:

- Create a new road map by learning new skills and competencies.
- Blended librarianship should be a way forward for 21st century librarians.
- Assume and adopt new cultural norm and have proactive attitude.
- Use a media marketing campaign to market the services and products.
- Introduce new initiatives.
- Improve ICTs such as the internet, intranet, hardware and software as well as internet bandwidth.
- Continuous learning of new technologies.

- Endeavour continuously to improve and maintain a good image among library community and other stakeholders by showing uppermost enthusiasm, passion and validity.

Conclusion:

The 21st century academic libraries will need to acquire more perspectives and new competencies to face the coming challenges of the 21st century. Librarians should prepare themselves the complex challenges of the future by dealing with rapid and substantive changes, managing the diversity of people and views and thinking globally. In addition they need to focus on both the internal and external variables that affect libraries.

Librarians traditionally have been on the forefront of making information available to users. They will continue to be so, but the means and methods used in order to achieve this aim are undergoing rapid changes. The role of librarians in the new publishing scenario has been expanded. It involves new tools and techniques and reflect changed requirements and new end user behavior.

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