Academic Librarianship in 2nd Decade of 21st Century

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Abstract:

The paper reveals the duties of academic librarian in modern trends such as Emergence of Online Information E-Resources, Ownership vs Holding, Open Content, Emerging in usage of E-books, Resource Sharing through Consortia & Network Connectivity, Virtual Reference, New Form of Scholarly Corroboration, Growing importance of Mobile Technology. It also describes the features of modern 21st century academic libraries like Library automation software, Retrospective Conversion, Electronic Resources, User Oriented Organizational Pattern, Transforming Traditional Libraries into the 21st Century ones etc.

Keywords: *Automation, Consortia, E-books, E-resources, Mobile technology, Open content, Resource sharing, Retrospective conversion, Scholarly corroboration, Virtual reference*

1. Introduction

India has significant advantages in the 21st century knowledge race. It has a large higher education sector – the third largest in the world in student numbers, after China and the United States. Next to China, India is the most populated country in the world. The purpose of education is well-rounded development. Students need a combination of arts, computer science, science, and humanities or literature courses to achieve this kind of development. A well-equipped and well-managed library is the foundation of modern educational structure. It is said that education without library services is like a body without soul. Academic libraries are the nerve centres of their institutions, and must support teaching, research, and other academic programmes. The situation in academic libraries in India is the same as that of academic libraries the world over; however, Indian libraries must provide maximum information with limited resources.

2. Higher Education in India

India has one of the largest higher education systems in the world. The growth rate of educational institutions in India was slow before independence in 1947, but now there are 659 universities, including 45 central universities, 312 state universities, 129 deemed universities, 173 private universities in all disciplines. This reveals that higher education system of India is now most important face for our country.

3. Development of Academic Libraries

The various library development schemes of the UGC during last over fifty years; various grants for infrastructural facilities along with those for develop library collections, beginning and implementing various activities and programmes through INFLIBNET to the sanction of special grants for upgrading library facilities, have kept the academic libraries in the country in shape and services. The efforts of national bodies like Association of Indian Universities (AIU), All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE), National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NACC), and some individual States and Universities too have contributed to this development in terms of formulation of some norms and guidelines for their effective functioning. Planning

Commission, Professional Associations like ILA and IASLIC and State and Central Governments have also their share in this development. City and national level Library Networks too have accelerated the rate of the development of academic libraries in their own ways. The National Knowledge Commission of Govt. of India's Report on Libraries entitled, "Libraries, Gateways to Knowledge: A Roadmap for Revitalization" published in 2007 also directs the future development of an academic library.

4. Academic Librarianship in Modern Trends
Below are some modern trends and their implications to academic librarianship.

4.1 Emergence of Online information E-Resources
We are entering a decade where publishers start talking in terms of online journals only, online books only, and online music only. It's a situation where information is not being visualized in physical form. This changing attitude of the publishers is nothing but a complementary response to the increasingly changing shift of the user from physical to online form of resources. Because of that it is must for academic libraries to hire online E-Resources with the information resources in print format.

4.2 Ownership vs. Holding
In spite of own information (digital) that libraries purchase but no longer store them. Information is accessed locally by connecting to remote servers like publishers' websites or database suppliers' servers. The days of downloading contents or receiving them in form discs for preservation is no longer practiced.

4.3 Importance of Open Content
Open content movement started a decade ago is expected to enter the main stream. For instance two cases are cited from India. The Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) has, today, made all its course materials through the web, accessible to anyone, free. Similarly, National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning (Min. Of HRD, Govt. of India) has made curriculum based videos and web courses freely available to all technical schools in India. Besides saving on education cost or providing access to the unreachable regions, it points to the changing choices of people on when, what and how to learn. The Academic Librarian should be recognizing this new trend and support promotion of open learning.

4.4 Emerging in usage of E-books
Earlier it was imagine that E-books would have a limited impact, that they would not replace print books at any cost. Today the trend seems to be reversed as acceptance of E-books among the users especially by the student community due convenient electronic reading devices, easy to store. Hence, it is requiring for academic librarian should be sensitive about this.

4.5 Resource Sharing through Consortia & Network Connectivity
Result of emergence of the digital environment and connectivity, consortia movement provided a pleased situation for all concerned, the libraries (economical aspects), the user (vast number of resources at the click of the mouse, accessible beyond constrains of time and space) and publishers (increased visibility, and relatively inexpensive operation).
Libraries that have remained principally a local unit so far, except for the limited sharing of resources through inter library loan service; have suddenly become part of a network, confident to meet demand of users for information or document at high speed. An Academic Librarian should be skilful with the workings of operation various consortia in order to bring in the best advantage.

4.6 Virtual Reference
Virtual reference is a situation where users communicate with the reference librarian electronically, over computers and internet without being physically present. The reference

librarian and patron communicate over e-mail, instant messaging, video conferencing, chatting etc.

4.7 New Form of Scholarly Corroboration

Academic Librarian should understand and recognize the emerging form of scholarly corroboration. This new form of authorizing/publishing/researching recognizes reader rating, inclusion of influential blogs, tagging, incoming links etc. These forms of scholarly corroboration (like giving links to blogs in research papers) are being considered for incorporation by important science publishers today.

4.8 Growing importance of Mobile Technology

Mobile learning implies participating in learning activities anywhere, at anytime. In India, the Indira Gandhi National Open University has facilitated download of course materials on to the mobile. Mobile technology offers vast potential as it allows instruction not only in the class room but also extra-mural, in all types of pedagogy like face-to-face, online and blended.

5. Features of 21st Century Academic Libraries

The academic libraries as such are varied in nature, subject areas, and sizes too. One model or road map for moving towards their 21st century versions may not work. However, some issues common to most of them may be specified as *special feature of the 21st Century Libraries.* They are as follows:

5.1 Library Automation Software

Organization of an academic library in modern era is starts with selection of the suitable library automation software. It is experienced that proper professional guidance in this behalf is not available to libraries and their authorities. Following are some examples in this regard. In number of cases the library software is prepared by Computer department / section of the Institution. In this situation all requirements of libraries are not satisfied. The libraries have no choice other than going ahead with this ineffective and incomplete library software. Though these library software are better than the freely available and downloaded software on Internet as they are not improved or upgraded as per growing needs. Sometimes the software of the Library Networks made available free or at concessional rates to its member libraries. Though the Networks initially do take care to make them more professional, but always they do not satisfying effectively customization needs of individual libraries. They also lack the service base and troubleshooting assistance, when needed.

Commercial library software is promoted with marketing skills. Though quality of some of them is good they are expensive for smaller libraries. ***Open Source*** library software has entered on the scene of late offering a new alternative. The tag of free *library software'* attracts many small and large libraries to it. For its smooth and uninterrupted use a lot of planning including financial is necessary, in addition to the essential skill of the library staff to operate it on their own. Library Software, in fact, should facilitate both library operations and library services and enhance their scope, periodically. Library software is a one time purchase and it is basic for automation and up gradation. All the concerned should be aware of this. The technological versions as DOS based, Window based, Linux based, Web enabled have their respective merits. They are much related to the computer configuration available and maintained in the library. Library software help integrate different tasks of a library saving time and simplifying procedures. Moreover by using certain modules of the software libraries can do many more house keeping tasks like stock verification and generating various reports. Electronic security systems too are integrated with it. The library professionals should get themselves familiar with these varied potentialities of library software and make maximum use of them for the benefit of their clientele.

5.2 Retrospective Conversion

With a view to achieving the visible impact of technological applications the entire collections of the library are required to be brought in their range. Many academic libraries have to struggle for this necessary exercise. The staffs on the establishment are not in a position to carry out this work of backlog. 'Out sourcing' is a way out. But it is unfortunate that due importance is not given to this work and it is got done quickly not following the professional norms. This leaves the library weak in retrieval of the material it has in its stock. A large number of documents in the stock remain hidden from potential users. A common observation is that due attention is not given to the assignment of the subject descriptors which is considered to be one of the core professional skills. Free text search or scores of keywords search result into frustration of users. Meeting subject approach to documents needs professional touch.

5.3 Electronic Resources

Electronic resources are now occupying a prominent place in academic libraries. They do have an edge over the print material in saving space and in easy and quick transfer, both on line and off line. Use of growing number of e books and e journals moves a library towards its 21st Century character. Joining a *Consortium* for increasing the ability of the library to offer its readers an opportunity to browse a wide range of journals is a new version of resource sharing. Linkages and aggregates are special features of the electronic resources. The knowledge with licence tags is a must for a library professional these days. While going in for electronic resources their continuous availability on the Library Computer System should be underlined. Due attention should be given to it while signing agreements or MOUs before subscribing to them. A digital section of the academic library is the first in this direction. It can slowly be developed by providing with the necessary infrastructural facilities in the Library itself. New additions in this section will keep it more used day by day. The new ideas like Institutional Archives can be undertaken with the start of such digital library sections. This encourages having a dynamic Library Website catering to the campus and outside campus spread clientele remote library services.

5.4 User Oriented Organizational Pattern

The Library should be run as a Service Organization and not as an administrative office. The present management in most of the libraries is more restrictive than reader friendly. Library timings, library rules and regulations, library facilities etc. are need a fresh look in the changing environment. Academic libraries are functioning along with other activities of the Institution. If they want to be the integral part of the Institution they have to adjust with other activities as well as to maintain their identity, and their exclusive services. Their role is that of a facilitator of achieving the high goals of these Institutions of higher education. As for students they are in the Institutions for a limited period and libraries have to pull them under their valuable influence by catering to their various study and research needs effectively. Class rooms and library reading places have distinct features. However, the library in its entirety: stack rooms, reading areas, computer installations, service designated sections should serve as the extension of the class rooms and teachers rooms. For this all necessary gadgets, new equipments, modern facilities in every respect should find place in the Library. The changing organizational pattern implies this.

5.5 Transforming Traditional Libraries into the 21st Century ones

The responsibility of transforming traditional libraries into the 21st Century ones mainly falls on their librarians. There is a lot of preliminary work to be carried out by the library behind the counter so as to serve readers well. This work is of technical and professional nature. All the work involved like procurement, technical processing, preparing a document for circulation, and actual lending transactions has undergone changes. Publishers' websites, Virtual Book Stores are pouring information of varied nature. Using these resources is a sign of moving with times. Internet Resources are at the services of all but librarians can use them as tools for better services to readers. Bibliographical and reference services too can be extended more quickly and

specifically. There are quite a few professional websites useful as companions to library professionals.

6. Conclusion

It is shown that in 21st century with the faster technological development the trends are changes in every decade. Libraries are also affected from these technological revolution which force librarians to be familiar with such new trends. Traditional librarianship is now shifted to smart librarianship. With the use of latest technology libraries may enhance their information services provides to the users.

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