

## Academic Library Services In Digital Age

**Tiparse M.D.**

Librarian , Rajarshi Shahu Law College, Barshi, Dist.-Solapur.

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### ABSTRACT

*Academic libraries are important in the development of students and teachers. For nation building, academic libraries play significant role. Use of ICT has transformed the system in the libraries. However, there are challenges in the field of library information services of dealing with the ever-increasing complexity of information and selecting useful information.*

*The research paper highlights the technological opportunities that can be useful in addressing various challenges. The information in this paper will prove useful to you in recognizing that it is more appropriate to view library service from the perspective of the user rather than the intermediary, i.e. the librarian. That there is a close linkage between these two also needs to be emphasized.*

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### KEYWORDS:

Information, Management, Bibliographic services, Information Technology.

#### 1) INTRODUCTION:-

Library service is turning to be dynamic with the retrieval system itself in a state of continuous and periodical revision. The changing perspective about user needs is also to be noted. Four special features may be recognized in the changing perspective: a) the enhanced role for online service, b) library user education, c) services for special groups, and d) subject orientation. The relationship between the user, the librarian and the physical complexion of documents underlines the state of flux in contemporary times.

#### 2) PLANNING OF LIBRARY SERVICE :-

What is fundamental to the planning process? The scope of library service is determined by the objectives of the parent organization. In many progressive libraries, library services provided are indicated in a written statement. In respect of academic institutions like universities and colleges, it is the objective of enhancing educational capabilities in course work and research that determine the course of action. Library is thus an instrument that helps to cultivate information skills in teachers and students towards independent learning. Planning process comes very handy in academic institutions. It is futuristic in design, It lays down targets to be achieved, It also indicates the steps to be taken, and provides handy mechanism for self-correcting evaluation. Planning process is however inconceivable without careful community profiling, strictly in accordance with the actual and realisable needs of the user community. Above all, library service to the academic community is to be viewed dynamically in terms of a) external environments, b) user community and c) the governing framework. The challenge of change is impelled by external forces. It has also its internal dynamics. Internal and external variables equally determine the extent of change through their interplay.

#### 3) MANAGEMENT OF LIBRARY SERVICES:-

Management of library services is all about decision-making and problem-solving. While planning is based on a theoretical framework, decision-making (the basic component of management) is on practice, thus it introduces the human element with all its glorious uncertainties. The principles of management of library service are best understood in terms of the 'classic management' cycle. Peter Lawrence has identified three stages in his cycle: "Planning (setting objectives and determining the means to achieve these objectives); organizing and co-ordination.

#### 4) THEORY OF LIBRARY SERVICE:-

Many tend to believe that library is all practice and no theory. It is not a very happy position and contrary to the developing situation. As the significance of library service comes to be increasingly recognized, it is but inevitable that a certain element of theoretical framework is introduced into it. The future of library service is closely allied to the developments in the field of information science and the very definition of information as a concept. It is possible to identify five key aspects for the provision and use of library service towards formulation of the theory of library service:

- ✦ inquiries;
- ✦ retrieval;
- ✦ the process of becoming informed;
- ✦ the demand for library services; and
- ✦ the allocation of resources.

#### 5) LIBRARY SERVICE AND ITS USERS AS A SYSTEM:-

When library service is viewed as a paradigm, it is required to perform four functions: 1) information, 2) instruction, 3) guidance, and 4) stimulation. Hitherto reference service has been defined as “the process of establishing contact between reader and book by personal service”. When viewed in the context of above-mentioned paradigm, the Ranganathan definition is concerned primarily with Information and Guidance. It drops out Instruction entirely from within its purview. It is possible to interpret the perspective of Ranganathan, which was in line with the world view of his times, as a one-sided perspective of librarians. Reference librarians are assigned an activist role in his scheme of things. User is considered naturally to be placed at the receiving end. The lacuna with such a scheme is too obvious. It is not possible to view library service and its users as a system.

#### 6) BIBLIOGRAPHIC SERVICES:-

Traditional concept of bibliographical services has been transformed in years beyond recognition. The maximum impact has been made by information technology upon the nature and character of bibliographical services. The induction of information technology has brought about a qualitative transformation by making an impact on the structure of library organization. It thus effects every character of library services. The balances between what is provided from within the organization and what is serviced by external agencies have changed. The concept of inter-library loan has become completely redundant. The impact of information has been wide ranging on the nature and extent of library service. Electronic publishing and documents delivery have changed the structure of information services. Similarly online information, interlending networks and facsimile transmission have helped in implementing the local resources of libraries. They but also enabled the libraries to replace them entirely.

Non-availability of documents locally is no longer a handicap. Similarly non-existence of bibliographical resources is no hurdle. Accessibility is thus no longer a local phenomenon. The whole world has opened up as an accessible resource.

The academic libraries in this country are on the verge of great revolution with the prospects of UGC-sponsored INFLIBNET (Information and Library Network). Local, regional and national network shall be linked directly with international databases. There are many distinct advantages in online search services like immediate access, constant updating, automatic printing, effective and faster searching. The major problem arises from the cost factor. Library service has been considered to be free and a matter of right so far. Would the developing countries be in a position to bear the burden through the good offices of public funding? The issue however does not detract from the utility of online search services.

#### 7) USER EDUCATION

The very concept of library service implies dependence. It is not so in actual practice. One actually grows out of the other. Library service and user education are a continuum. Here is a perfect instance of dialectical relationship, in which synthesis is born out of contradiction between the two categories. To user, user education as symbolized by independent study is in fact the indication of all that the traditional library service.

Apparently there is a lot of confusion about what user education stands for. The philosophy of user education is best summed up in the following statement: The major assumptions are that “a) there exists a mind which plays a significant role in learning, b) the mind is endowed with a structure, called cognitive structure, which is in-born with built-in capabilities and limitations, c) the cognitive structure is primary and precedes experience, and d) the primary function of mind with its cognitive structure is abstraction”. In the above statement, there is repeated emphasis on cognitive processes. It underlines the essence of user education. How do the cognitive processes fulfill the objective? It is as simple as that cognitive processes bring about a transformation, whereby the learner turns into a self-learner and independent thinker. (User education becomes a handy instrument for the promotion of learning). It also inculcates independent study into the learner, who at this stage becomes the master of all he surveys. He imbibes the art of problem solving by himself. Independent study has thus become the highest objective of user education.

#### 8) INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

**Information technology has a major impact in four areas of library service:**

- Raw material (books, periodicals and other documents)
- Operational processes (routines like circulation controls)
- Management processes (stock management information)
- User orientation (the nature of user interaction)

Information technology impacts the mind of the largest number. It is ideological in nature changing the world view of librarians and users. Its fuller remains yet to be seen.

The nature of physical artifacts like books gets completely transformed. Information technology converts information carrying artifacts into digital data for the purpose of storage (e.g. optical disc), processing (e.g. computing), and transmission (e.g. data communication networks). The direct impact is felt on the format of library artifacts, their location and retrieval.

#### 9) CONSTRAINTS OF LIBRARY SERVICE:-

There are three types of institutional constraints that need to be considered for underlining the limitations of library service. Environmental factors are inhibitions that should not be overlooked in designing a cost-effective library service;

- “Physical: the library as building
- Organizational: the library as a bureaucracy.
- Attitudinal: as reflected by ‘the mind set’ projected by the profession’s establishment”.

The physical and psychological barriers resulting from an ill-suited library building are enormous. The very size of the building may be an inhibitory factor. Decentralization of library services is an attractive counterpoise. The advocates of user service have long advocated the ‘outreach’ program whereby library service reaches the user at his place of work and home. Internal organization of spaces is possible, so that the organization reflect a user-oriented approach and more user friendly atmosphere congenial to the maximal use of library resources and services.

The new concept of sign system for libraries is catching up fast. Signs are placed strategically in the library for rationalizing the traffic patterns, as well as to assure effective use of resources of the libraries by users in self-directed and self-guided tour of the library. Signs also have an aesthetic quality about them.

The managerial approach with its emphasis on problem-solving is effective related to the bureaucratic approach is ‘the mind set’ protected by the profession’s establishment. Many library workers are ill-equipped by training and approach to bring to bear a fresh mind. Recognition is also to be given by them to the induction of innovations to meet new challenges in library service, as well as to look at the old problems with a fresh mind. This may require transformation in drastic organizational structures and value systems.

#### CONCLUSION:-

The research paper presents the need of planning process and management of library service. There involves the logical, decision making and problem solving process. The paper also highlights the theory of library service. Some areas such as circulation control, reference work and bibliographical services are discussed. The necessity of user education is highlighted.

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