

IMPACT OF LIBRARY CONSORTIA ON LIS EDUCATION

By

Apurba Jyoti Majumder

Deptt. Of Library & Information Science

Gauhati University

apurbajyoti@gmail.com

1 INTRODUCTION

The way and pace at which information is generated, organized and used is witnessed rapid strides in recent times. Hence, the discipline of LIS meant to manage and provide information service may not be taught effectively and practiced perfectly through a framed curriculum in the formal education steam alone. Driven by the market demands and user needs, the discipline is embracing other disciplines like computers, communication technology, cognition research etc. to continuously monitor and augment their skills to arrive at 'pinpointed information from the deluge'. Manual means of tackling information will not help the user/professional to solve emerging problems in the actual research setup and also the present day researchers expect a faster response to their information needs. Information management and servicing in a highly matured and skill intensive activity and it requires people with different educational backgrounds. Electronic access is increasingly providing a large proportion of current information instead of print and allowing access through a variety of platforms on a twenty-four hour basis. As the traditional custodians of information, librarians need to be aware of the implications of these changes and develop technological and managerial skills that will enable them to make effective use of information to meet their organization and changing needs. However, many librarians lack confidence to learn and master the skills required in adopting the increasingly sophisticated technology. It is vital that they must be kept in touch with modern developments and maintains a proactive approach to work in an ever-changing information world. Professional profiles are changing so rapidly and very radically these days impacting the librarian's portfolio, since libraries are becoming knowledge management organizations with librarians as their active agents. Perhaps the most important development of libraries during the current decade has been the move from organizational self-sufficiency to a collaborative survival mode as personified by the growth of library consortia.

Information technology is now a level of cooperation that is much broader and deeper than ever before.

2 ISSUE & CHALLENGES

The crucial issue as we move from the library focus to direct electronic user focus is the definition of the role of the librarian and information professional. Historically it is clear that two professions of IT and library have a different working style. While the traditional librarian allegedly seeks stability/perfect standards with scant regard of time, the IT specialist's approach emphasizes speed and efficiency; it is imperative that as we proceed further, we need to marry efficiency and flexibility with risk taking and vision.

For librarians and information professionals the networks and consortia management brings a need for a constant update of their professional knowledge and competencies. Among the changes foreseen include:

- Increased use of campus network- and /or Internet delivery of information and information service such as e-books, e-journals, electronic shelving, electronic reserves, inter-library loan, references and bibliographic instruction;
- Shift in emphasis from ownership of sources of library-based information to delivery and access of shared or licensed resources;
- Librarians "re/packaging" information for distribution to users;
- Shared collection development, increased acquisition of "non-print" materials, and greater emphasis on the development or archives for non-digitized material;
- Academic librarians "partnering" with faculty to improve the academic community's information literacy, as well as enhancing the quality of acquisitions and services;
- The increased use of paraprofessionals to accomplish tasks which once were solely the function of professional librarians;
- Adapting to the distributed environment made possible by the new technologies and made necessary by Internet enabled information delivery and the increasing use of distant learning.

3 ROLE IN LIS EDUCATION

LIS education is the study of library operations. In today's e-environment and faster growth of information sources, it is impossible for a single library to cater all the needs of its user. Here comes the concept of resource sharing and in case of

journals it is the term consortia. As in library science we learn techniques to manage library, so it is very important to have full fledged knowledge of consortia for proper management of a modern library. The consortia approach of subscription of journals has a great role in LIS education. The various areas where consortia influence LIS education are:

- 3.1 Availability of journals:** Journals are the root of development of any subject so as in LIS also. Journals are very costly and it is difficult for a university library or a LIS department to procure all the subject journals needed for the students. In this section consortium has opened up the doors towards diversified knowledge. Consortia provide scholarly journals for the students at reduced cost as a part of the group sharing the journals.
- 3.2 Advantages in research:** A research process needs up-to-date and current knowledge. Journals are the source of that. Unlike printed journals which take time to be available, e-journals through consortia or Internet are available as soon as they are published. It has a great impact on the research process.
- 3.3 Serial Control:** During traditional mode of journal subscription the process was very complicated. The library staff had to keep the records of journals generally in 'kardex' and had to update it regularly. It was the only source of information about an existing journal and its availability. But today's LIS students need not to earn about kardex or tradition purchasing methods. By the consortia mode of subscription it is generally a central or government organization which takes the initiative on behalf of the participating libraries and they jointly prepare on draft for agreement. The librarian only has to satisfy that his needed journals are included in the list and all the conditions are suitable for him.
- 3.4 Maintenance:** The one of the major thing that used to be learned by the LIS students is the maintenance of the journals and their back volumes. It is tough job. Again he has to make other informed about the back volumes in future on demand and it is a space consuming effort. But consortia approach has given them the opportunity to archive e-journals electronically and serving the users with a click, thus saving the time for him. Now the students have to learn only to make copy and preserve it.

3.5 Indexing & abstracting services: The e-journals provide links to references and related websites. So it is not always to prepare indexes. The abstracting service is also easy as the journal contains abstract & he has only to learn copy and send to relevant destination.

4 NEED OF THE TIME

The information professionals need to access their new role and acquire new skills to cope-up with the ever changing technological environment. Librarians, for one, are faced to make decisions on future library services that match users' need and behaviour. Internet is a flourishing medium for communication and influencing the practice of librarianship throughout the world. Today libraries are pursuing their old mission (Library Cooperation) with a new face (Consortia); those attempting to fulfill their mission by traditional way in changing times, find themselves confronting old obstacles; stagnant resources, increasing output of publications, rising expectation by their clientele, and relatively inflexible structure within which to work.

Presently, what we need is a hybrid form of information professional: someone who possesses both content management and technology skills, someone who can acquire the latest computer service proficiency without hampering the virtue of the old librarianship such as classification, subject arrangement and indexing. In order to achieve the expertise in managing library consortia and networking, the following areas may be considered:

- Necessary modifications, innovations and changes have to be brought into the existing syllabus in universities to generate better relevance and quality of education.
- It is also recommended that traditional methods of teaching should be replaced by IT based teaching.
- Practical sessions of library science courses should be converted as learning by doing the actual professional work setup rather than a mere simulation of the same in classroom.
- It is essential to make mandatory for students of library and information science to serve few months of internship in a modern library.
- Encourage libraries and librarians to collaboration across libraries to form consortia and to strike good deals and value for money in terms of collections development and information access.

- Use computers and allied technologies to preserve class lecture so that student can refer back the same in self-study, the same could also be used for distance learning.
- Expertise of faculty and practicing librarian should be shared across institutions through formal and informal arrangement to provide their expertise to learners in different institutions.
- The practice of offering conventional courses on the distance mode was stretched beyond limits now and their experience in providing conventional education in numbers and spread could be utilized for training working professionals.
- Some of these courses can be conducted on a modular basis facilitating the participants in pick those of interest. Apart from teaching faculty, expert librarians and information scientists would also be involved in these programs to bridge the gap between peach and practice.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Consortia approach has eventually changed the scenario of LIS education to a great extent. Today this profession is also treated as an emerging profession and the credit goes to technology. The research process has increased and it is the sign of development of a subject. Though we are still lagging back, but a small step is always the start of a giant leap. Now the state government aided LIS schools can also taste the sweetness of scholarly international journals in their campus and the librarians has to take responsibility to take it further.



Apurba Jyoti Majumder (B.Sc., MLISc.) did his graduation in Zoology & completed his PG in 2007 from Gauhati University. He has successfully cleared UGC/NET (June, 2006) and selected for JRF (December, 2007). His areas of interest are library automation, internet, e-journals, library software etc.