

## IMPERATIVES OF SKILL DEVELOPMENT IN 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY COLLEGE LIBRARY

**Dr. Rajlaxmi Dash**

Ramanand Arya DAV College, Bhandup (E).

**Abstract :** As the world veered toward 21st century and work everywhere became increasingly technology dependent, need arose to reorient the work culture in college libraries. The paper attempts at emphasizing on the imperatives of continuous skill development in multifunctional environment of the library and its management. With rapidly advancing technology, the imperatives are growing in importance with each passing day. Therefore, skill development of library personnel at all levels ought to be a continuum with a view to meeting the growing expectations of library users.

**Keywords:** Imperatives , Skill Development, Century .

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Skill development is a general terminology applied to all branches of science. Skill enhancement is a continuous, unending and never stoppable process. Each development in science and technology brings in the question of adaptability to that technology. Therefore what was good yesterday is obsolete today and what is good today is likely to become outdated tomorrow. This throws open the challenge for institutions to cope up with developmental ethos of science and technology. In the 1960s, when there were no computers in India everything was done manually. The railways were sailing card tickets. Even the printing of book was through manual type settings. In the library all catalogue cards were hand written. With rapid proliferation of computer technology everything has changed and children even wonder how these things were laboriously done then and how it has become easy now, all thanks to computer. This paper outlines the imperatives of skill enhancement in the present day world by emphasizing on the versatility of skill development in libraries across the board.

#### Then and Now

In yesteryears, Libraries, both academic and public, were rendering too much of physical work because every small bit of things were hand written on volumes of papers. Today we need in the library a big designated place for computers to feed library data. For this we need computer operators, data entry personnel and computer analysts, besides having several computer terminals for student use. Few college libraries across the city of Mumbai have specially trained personnel for libraries. But there is an acute need for more skilled library personnel.

In yesteryears books did not have computer bar codes or even ISBN numbers. Today it is essential for publications to have them and skilled persons are required to read the metadata of the book i.e. data on the book itself contained within the first few pages of the book. Library personnel are required to be specifically trained to make correct data entry for students and library users.

In yesteryears proliferation of information was limited. Newspapers, magazines and journals and finally thematic books were the source of information. Today search engines such as Google, Yahoo and Wikipedia are prime sources of information dissemination. Library personnel not knowing how to handle Google, Wikipedia or Yahoo have been rendered useless employees of the library.

In yesteryears photocopying of library material was manual. Readers used to take copious notes of

what they would reproduce in their research. Today copy and paste is the new method, often without citing the source. For this copy paste work library need to house several computer terminals or provide laptop accessibility to all students having library cards.

In yesteryears, there was no need for colleges to insist on students knowing computers. Today the rule of the game has changed. Colleges insist that student possess a laptop all the while they are in the college. Some colleges collect money to provide laptops to students.

In yesteryears, the expectation of the society from a library was less and limited. Today the expectations are high from each individuals working in the library, thereby throwing open a challenge for the library staff to gear up technologically to meet the expectations of the students and the society. There is thus a need for the college as an institution to expend more on skill development of the existing library employees now. And for future recruitment, chosen only technology savvy personnel will be chosen to handle all library related jobs.

In yesteryears library budget was a fragment of the college budget. Today, in most university and renowned colleges, it is a separate budget. The library as a department has acquired for itself a special status by virtue of being the knowledge hub of the institution. The better the library, the better our graduates. In terms of skill development, the better the input into the library, the better you expect the output to be.

21<sup>st</sup> century has turned library professionals of the past to information and knowledge professionals of the present, thanks to the massive proliferation of information. Knowledge has become power. Dissemination of knowledge has thus become a powerful medium of communication between the service provider(library) and service consumer( the users). Almost everything has changes except the nomenclature of the Library. Thus what worked well yesterday, may not work well today. Denis Waitly in his book "Empires of the Mind" succinctly summarized the comparative aspects of challenges yesterday and today. He said:

? "Yesterday - natural resources defined power, Today - knowledge is power. University will be a powerhouse for knowledge.

? Yesterday - shareholders came first, Today - customers come first. Education should inculcate sensitivity to "customer" needs.

? Yesterday - employees took order, Today - teams make decision. University can inject team spirit

? Yesterday - leaders commanded and controlled, Today - leaders empower and coach. Potential Leaders will be empowered through exposure to the needs of sustainable development."

### 21<sup>st</sup> Century Needs

Since the core competence remains intact while everything related to it has changed, there is a need to understand and interpret the contexts in which information is originated, stored, organized, retrieved, disseminated and used. A definite information architecture laden with modern technology has emerged and one has to comprehend the reality to be a part of it. If you are not a part of it, you remain outside of it and that is of no use. The need of the hour is to visualize the future directions and prepare a roadmap to provide the most effective and efficient library and information services to the users in the 21st century. It is also essential to comprehend the legal and policy issues such as patent and copy right associated with providing services.

The Dynamics of social development has four components. From agrarian society to Industrial Society to Post-Industrial Society to Information Society is a long way library has traveled in serving the users. In the present day Knowledge Society there are several components library personnel have to take care of with emphasis being laid on the following:

- Primary Focus on Professional Knowledge and Skills (Technology, Management and Communication)
- Library Professionals to Information Professionals
- Traditional Library to Digital Library
- Library Cooperation to Resource Sharing Networks/Consortia
- Collection Development to Content Development
- Conventional Education to Web-Based Education
- Information Society to Knowledge Society

All these components require to be implemented in the context of a modern era library where books should be stored somewhere else and the library ought to have computer terminals to serve as a guide to the entire holding and accordingly guide the information seekers to the point where knowledge lay. Thus before the librarian, there are five major issues to be addressed in the context of skill development in library;

and all of them are important. They constitute, in a nutshell, four categories of activities: 1. Academic 2. Management 3. Technology and 4. Legal.

- Academic need is increasing with more demand for expanded version of theme or issues under discussion. And this requires in-depth information. When a report or thesis is being submitted, the demands are all the higher than it was ever earlier. Curriculum and syllabus are becoming sharply focused and enriching with input from professional knowledge of those involved in disseminating them. The role of the librarian and library personnel is to meet this growing demand of the day.
- The entire architecture of library management has changed. Scientific management methods with continuous skills development associated with new technology and keeping pace with development of new techniques of communication has become quite significant. The librarian at the top has to monitor everything new coming in the way. Therefore skill enhancement at the top most level has also become a prerequisite.
- Technological advancement has helped develop every institution, library included. Competence to handle sophisticated technology in an automated, networked and virtual environment is what we need today in the library. Thus professionalism has forced us to change the old habits and embrace the new which has considerably facilitated our functioning.
- Legally, the librarian is not a law graduate; yet he/she has to know the rulebook of Copyrights/Intellectual Property Rights, Cyber Laws and so on. Plagiarism is an offence and the librarian must caution the library users not to steal the ideas of others. In an electronic environment, legal issues have become significant with their impact affecting not only the national but international boundaries. Everything in digitalized form blurs the boundaries between the national and international, thereby making legal issues urgent for librarians to understand gravity and seriousness of violation of any rule. No library can escape digitalization process that involves various kinds of equipment, doing various odd jobs in different areas of library management.
- In order to understand the needs of digitization, there is first of all a need to comprehend the methods and equipment, involved in digitalizing a library. The Digital Library is an Open Access Initiative through library Website. Its design and maintenance ought to involve competent individuals, who understand the content of digitalized development, its concept, scope, salience of organizational mechanism, content Analysis, Web-based content development such as: HTML, XML, HTTP, PDF, Acrobat and so on.

The leitmotif of any library is to provide and promote free and equitable access to information and client services, facilitate the acquisition, licensing or creation of information in a range of medium and formats, design and deliver customized information services and products; assess the value and effectiveness of library and information facilities and services rendered to students and scholars. Balancing education with in-depth research and practically managing a library where thousands of students throng everyday is a challenge facing the contemporary librarians across the profession.

## CONCLUSION

Proliferation of information through electronic medium has created a virtual environment for accessing the domain of knowledge without country or border barriers. 21st century has thus transformed library professionals to Information Professionals through "Education for Information". Libraries across developing countries are compelled by the pressure of information to keep pace with development with the developed world despite their resource constraints. Therefore Library and information schools and educators as well as all professionals engaged in the field must be committed to act as qualitative problem solvers and effective information managers

Possessing broad range of capabilities to meet the highest demand in the information sectors involving academia, corporate world and the government is the way out. This pushes us constantly and continuously to meet the challenges in new millennium. The emerging library system is complex and cross functional. It is a high risk zone for the under qualified to meet the fast changing multi-dimensional needs of the users. Tough performance requirements coupled with resource constraints compound the problems of library management, where one person does the work of three. Yet there is a need for continuous improvement, upgrade, and enhancement of skill in the library and knowledge profession.

The need for multidimensional skills, ability to deal with changing virtual learning environment

and cope up with different problems of service delivery in the library leads us to learn, learn and only learn from the impact of IT to use new means such as instant messaging, virtual reference desk, ask help of a librarian, Wiki's, blogs, podcasting, and so on.

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