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“Changing Roles and Responsibilities of Librarians in the Digital Era: Opportunities and Challenges”

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ABSTRACT:

With the rapid advancement of technology and digital transformation, libraries have undergone a significant transition from traditional physical repositories of books to modern digital libraries offering global access. This evolution has reshaped the roles and responsibilities of library professionals, who now require advanced information technology skills, digital literacy and innovative approaches to manage resources efficiently. The study explores the changing responsibilities of librarians in the digital era, highlighting their roles as researchers, information providers, coordinators and preservers of digital resources. The emergence of digital libraries has expanded access, enhanced efficiency and facilitated better resource management but has also posed challenges such as information overload, skill requirements and effective information sharing. The paper concludes that library professionals must continuously adapt, acquire new IT and communication skills and embrace innovations to remain relevant in a rapidly evolving knowledge environment. The success of digital libraries depends largely on the ability of librarians to integrate traditional values with modern technologies to ensure accessibility, preservation and user satisfaction.

KEYWORDS: Digital Libraries, Librarianship, Information Management, Digital Literacy, Library Science, Resource Preservation, Information Sharing

INTRODUCTION

With the changing technology and diversification in the needs of individuals and users, the roles and responsibilities of the concerned professionals have also evolved. This has led to frequent changes and updations with the recent developments. One of such disciplines includes library. With the introduction of digitalisation in library science, the roles and responsibilities have also evolved, with the emergence of digital library, the way of accessing resources, nature of users, efficiency requirements and methods of retrieving the information have also changed¹.

TRADITIONAL LIBRARIES VS. DIGITAL LIBRARIES

Traditionally, libraries were a storehouse of books stored and maintained in physical manner and can be accessed with manual cataloguing. These libraries occupy a huge physical space and have limited accessing capacity.

Digital libraries however, are supported with the help of a digital platform with internet connectivity and global access. Digital libraries provides with 24 x 7 access from any corner of



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the world with network and the information can be stored and retrieved in the form of PDF's and documents.

CHANGING RESPONSIBILITIES OF LIBRARIANS IN DIGITAL ERA

The environments of librarians/Library Professionals have been ever changing from manual to digital. This changing environment demands a change in the role performed by librarians. It requires more expert skills of information analyzation and sharing among various users³. There are many major responsibilities performed by library professionals in digital scenario.

- i) **Mode of access to Resources:** The concept of digitalisation have shifted the mode of accessing resources from manual efforts to digital access. The librarian must possess digital information skills and various modes of accessing these digital resources. There should be awareness about services and resources in the community⁴. Some of these resources includes DELNET, INFLIBNET, e-Shodh Sindhu, Different Databases, Advanced Search Techniques, Web OPAC, etc.
- ii) **Community Skills:** These skills play a prominent role in developing and improving the social role of a librarian and facilitates better resource utilisation and management in digital environment⁵.
- iii) **Scope for Innovation:** Digital library is subject to constant innovations and developments. A digital librarian plays an important role in developing the innovative skills and enhancing digital literacy among its users⁶.
- iv) **IT Knowledge:** The whole digital world revolves around information technology and requires continuous changes and modifications. A librarian must be aware about the latest developments and include them in their professional workplace⁷.
- v) **Coordination:** A library professional is staff responsible for coordination between the changing digital environments. Coordination leads to effective and efficient utilisation of digital resources and providing optimum level of user satisfaction⁸.

ROLE OF DIGITAL LIBRARIAN

A Digital librarian can be defined as a specialist who is responsible for the arrangement and organisation of a digital library and manages activities of data storage, information skills etc⁹. The library environment includes various dimensions and the librarian perform versatile roles at different stages.

- i) **Librarian as a Researcher:** A librarian can work as a researcher and perform various functions like retrieval of information and providing comprehensive data. A librarian analysis the content of information and the available resources to meet the user satisfaction requirements.
- ii) **Librarian as Information Provider:** Providing information is one of the most important function of every librarian. With the advent of digitalisation, the requirement for librarian's



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role as an information provider has also diversified. It requires special training and skills and easy evaluation and analysis of information¹⁰.

- iii) **Librarian as a Coordinator:** Librarian works in coordination with rest of the library staff. Librarian plays the role of coordinator and organises workspace and orientation programmes for the library staff for generating information and skills about digital information. This will facilitate more coordination and cordial relations between the librarian and the other staff.
- iv) **Librarian as a Preservator:** Digital resources require continuous preservation and efficient storage of information so that they can be accessed anytime and can be used for future references. So librarian plays the role of preservator of library resources and ensures their timely availability and optimum utilisation¹¹.

CHALLENGES FACED BY LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS

- i) **Information Management:** There is vast availability of information in the digital world. This information can be relevant to the user's requirements. The librarian faces the problem of providing information timely and useful to the user's demands. So, information management is one of the major challenge faced by library professionals.
- ii) **Information Sharing:** A librarian requires a specified and well defined channel for the sharing of information so that the required information reaches the relevant user on time. It also includes various other aspects like mode of sharing the information, the saving techniques and retrieval of the stored information¹².
- iii) **Skill Requirement:** The digital world is exposed to continuous changes and evolutions. These changes require new and modified skills by the librarian. Some of these skills include information skills, communication skills, digital literacy skills etc. These skills play a very important role in providing the efficient and relevant information to its users¹³.

CONCLUSION:

The digital era has redefined the very nature of libraries and the responsibilities of librarians. From being custodians of physical collections, librarians have transformed into facilitators of knowledge in a dynamic digital environment. They now act as **researchers, information providers, coordinators and preservers**, ensuring that information is not only accessible but also credible, relevant and preserved for the future. However, this transition is not without challenges. Information overload, continuous skill requirements and efficient information management demand that librarians upgrade themselves with the latest IT knowledge and digital literacy skills. Strong communication, coordination and innovation are equally necessary to meet the expectations of modern users. In conclusion, librarianship in the digital era is both an opportunity and a challenge. By embracing technological advancements, acquiring new competencies and fostering



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user-centered services, librarians can transform libraries into vibrant digital knowledge hubs that ensure equitable access, effective preservation and long-term sustainability of information.

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