



WWJMRD 2022; 8(04): 30-33
www.wwjmr.com
International Journal
Peer Reviewed Journal
Refereed Journal
Indexed Journal
Impact Factor SJIF 2017:
5.182 2018: 5.51, (ISI) 2020-
2021: 1.361
E-ISSN: 2454-6615
DOI: 10.17605/OSF.IO/QKHDU

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Role and Challenges of Librarian in Internet Age

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Abstract

Information access is made more difficult by technological advancements. The phenomenal rise of the Internet has ushered in significant changes in all fields of science and technology. Rather than being a tool for seeking and retrieving information, the Internet has become the king of all media, allowing us to access virtual information and build a virtual library to give consumers with quick, high-quality service. This paper aims to describe the role and challenges faced by Library Professionals in the internet age. The study concludes that in this digital age, librarians must shift their roles from arbitrary information scientists/gatekeepers to face the problems of the Internet, the World Wide Web, and online access in the knowledge society. As a result, they must improve their knowledge with special skills in the latest IT developments, such as browsing, accessing, and retrieving a specific piece of information across global networks, systematizing and supervising the information by creating digital libraries, and providing quality e-information services to the knowledge society.

Keywords: Librarian, Internet, Skills, Management, ICT.

Introduction

A librarian is a professional who works in a library and is in charge of the library's management and operation. The librarian is in charge of the library and its materials¹. A librarian's typical responsibilities include collection creation and management of the library's resources. A librarian is responsible for the purchase, cataloguing, collection management, and circulation of the library's materials. They also offer services including research, information, instruction, and training². According to stateuniversity.com, there are numerous types of librarians, each with their own set of responsibilities in the community. The titles of various librarians are listed here.

a. Public Librarians

Public librarians work in town, city, or state libraries. Librarians connect with people of all ages in various types of libraries. They make all of the resources available to the public based on their needs. They also put on community activities, exhibitions, lectures, and workshops to benefit society ().

b. School Librarians

School Librarians are employed in either public or private schools. A big part of a librarian's job at the school level may be to teach students how to use the library and to instill reading habits in them (Danladi and Soko, 2018).

c. Academic Librarians

Academic librarians work at the university or college level. They teach their pupils how to utilise the library's database, how to find materials online, and how to discover hardcopy materials in the library.

d. Specially-Focused Librarians

Librarians who work in special libraries are known as Specially Focused Librarians. A special library is one that has books and reading materials on a specific topic. Zoos, government agencies, museums, law schools, hospitals, and other institutions may

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¹ Available at: <https://www.librarianshipstudies.com/2016/03/librarian.html> retrieved on 30-03-2022

² Available at: <https://library.fiu.edu/sywtwinalibrary/libdepts> retrieved on 30-03-2022

follow: Section 2 describes role of librarians in internet age; Section 3 makes the discussion challenges of Librarians in digital age; and Section 4 concludes the paper.

1. Role of Librarians in Internet Age

Librarians' traditional responsibilities include resource storage, dissemination, organisation, and management, among other things. However, in the age of the Internet, librarians can no longer be simply information producers or knowledge guardians. Librarians have traditionally played a crucial role in research and information services, assisting scientists with data and assisting students in locating information (Roa and Babu, 2001). The modern librarian's position, on the other hand, is diverse, and it is continually developing and expanding. Over the decades, this profession has demonstrated its versatility. Librarians are increasingly actively helping the learning and research process, in addition to their traditional job of organising and giving access to material. The internet era has dramatically increased the amount of information created on a daily basis³.

The way students and researchers' access, retrieve, and use information has changed as a result of technological advancements and the use of electronically stored and retrieved information systems. Librarians serve as a liaison between students and teachers (Onuoha, & Obialor, 2015). They assist students in finding the information they seek and in finding books in stacks. They also instruct consumers on how to use the OPAC to save time. In order to fulfill the changing needs of library users in an ICT environment, librarians are expected to continually upgrade their competences and skills in the technology era to increase productivity and efficiency. They constantly fall behind if they do not evolve with the times. The management of digital libraries necessitates a high level of digital competency among library personnel. To use digital library software, assign metadata, and create high-quality digital content, library professionals in the internet age need adequate digital abilities. User Orientation skills, Collection Development skills, Time Management skills, Hardware skills, Software skills, Leadership skills, Interpersonal skills, ICT skills, and so on are the most important skills required of a librarian in order to perform their job effectively and meet the stated objectives.

In their true sense, digital libraries are institutions that house all of their data in digital form. At the moment, however, we have what we can call "hybrid libraries," which are libraries that have both printed and digital materials (Bawden&Rowlands, 1999). However, some definitions include content in both digital and print formats as part of the digital library domain (Cathro, 1999). The digital age has changed the organisation and appearance of libraries. Different user needs have arisen as a result of the growth of the network society or information society. The concept of a digital library, which is an organisational reaction to various user needs, is a concept with significant social and economic implications (Bawden&Rowlands, 1999).

Librarians must develop not only librarianship abilities, but

also IT skills in order to provide adequate services to consumers. The presence of infrastructure and financial affluence are required for access to digital documents; nevertheless, in most parts of Africa, South Asia, and South America, a lack of financial and technological resources might widen the digital gap. A new paradigm for libraries has arisen (Berring, 1993), but libraries must also consider providing access to people at the grassroots level.

Information privacy, information security, copyrights, censorship, and data preservation are all issues that have arisen as a result of the digital age. It's worth noting that the concerns about data privacy and security aren't new. It's worth noting that worries about information privacy, security, and copyrights have been addressed by a number of researchers, including (Kohl, Lotspiech& Kaplan, 1997; Newby, 2002; Fifarek, 2002; Ravi & Kumar, 2004). Though digitization would allow for the rapid flow of information to a variety of consumers in a variety of locales, there is rising concern about the ever-widening digital divide (Byrne, 2003).

2. Challenges for Digital Librarian

The following are the most extreme and invasive concerns and challenges that library and information science professionals confront in providing digital information services to the knowledge society in the current internet age:

1. Most Diverse Group of Library Users in the Past

This diverse group of library users places a high demand on librarians to provide traditional library services to some clients while also developing new technology-based services for Digital Natives. Customers on the Digital Fugitive and Digital Native sides of the customer service spectrum are on opposite ends of the service spectrum, yet both deserve good library services (Matthews, 2011).

2. Users of a New Generation:

They are entering higher education with skills, knowledge, and possibilities formed by their usage of the Internet, digital media, and mobile communication technology. Students frequently start their information search with Google or other commercial or social search engines. To improve students' understanding and to accommodate an increasingly diverse range of users, academic library professionals must create a virtual electronic learning system.

3. Copyright Issues

One of the most significant challenges that today's library workers face in offering electronic/digital information services is the widespread use of software piracy and plagiarism. The cost and adequacy of retrieving the data are also taken into account. When negotiating access with a publisher, the librarian must agree to certain restrictions on electronic reproduction and circulation. People outside the accredited user group can readily receive electronic articles. The library is responsible for raising awareness about copyright issues among its patrons.

4. Privacy/Confidentiality

One of the greatest difficulties in getting online information is maintaining privacy and secrecy. To prevent software theft, photocopying, or downloading the entire contents of any e-resource at once, the right to get information and the right to withhold or limit

³ Available at: https://publishing.aip.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/AIPP_PromotingResearch_LibrariansRole.pdf retrieved on 25-03-2022

access are both required, posing a delicate dilemma between privacy and information rights. Almost all users nowadays have their own e-mail accounts, and they frequently send and receive important information, including secret programmes and databases, via e-mail and save them for future use. As a result, ensuring the confidentiality of e-mails is a major concern. Another issue in safeguarding databases on the Internet and Intranet is defending one network from another in order to maintain information privacy.

5. **Cybercrime and Online/Virtual Security**

Cybercrime has now become a common threat on the internet. To avoid this problem, take the essential Virus Proof precautions when downloading e-information from any other system. Hacker-proof processes can be used to tailor databases to secure the system against infections. The Network systems will be forced to adapt to separate login and password systems. The real threat in a LAN setting is the steady erosion of individual liberties due to the automation, integration, and connectivity of many small, distinct record-keeping systems, each of which may appear inoffensive and entirely justifiable on its own. It is critical to implement database security software or firewall technology to address the aforementioned database security challenges and issues.

6. **Obstacles posed by technology**

Information access is made more difficult by technological advancements. The American Library Association's 1995 Code of Ethics declares unequivocally that everyone should have access to information. The current explosion of material available on the Internet puts the traditional American Library Association (ALA) code of ethics, which is taught in library school, to the test. Every day, librarians make moral decisions based on their organisations' traditions. Some companies use a login and password to restrict access to specific levels of personnel. Because these actions go against librarianship's essence. Establishing clearly defined access policies will aid in determining who has Internet access, under what conditions, for what purposes, and with what limitations.

7. **Digital e-resources collection**

Another basis of librarianship is collecting items and making them available to all current and future users. The librarian's task is to contribute and build realistic collection-development policies, which include the acquisition of and provision of access to electronic resources for current and future users. Librarians and libraries are no longer merely collecting and caring for print materials, thanks to the rise of electronic resources. Electronic materials, unlike print books and journals, cannot be added to a collection on a permanent basis.

8. **Digital e-resources conservation and archiving**

Conserving e-resources for access would be a difficulty for librarians in an electronic environment where there is unlimited and continuous access, yet performance is lacking. As a result, there is a disconnect between what should be maintained and what should be accessed. If we want to keep electronic resources/documents safe, we must also keep all of the

software and gear that we use to read the documents we create. At the moment, there are two fundamentally different methods for preserving digital data: migration and emulation. There is always a risk associated with any solution. Certain proprietary formats may not be compatible with migration.

9. **Manpower**

Another major issue is a lack of skilled manpower to conserve e-resources and deliver adequate e-information services to the knowledge society. Technology skills, personal skills, learning and teaching capacity, team skills, commitment to ethics, leadership skills, communication skills, creativity skills, planning and implementing skills, and so on are becoming more important for library workers. As a result, library education must be modified to address the new difficulties and issues that the knowledge society is presenting. To satisfy the increased demands of the knowledge society, qualified personnel should be hired. Staff development programmes are critical to the organization's sustained success in a continually changing environment both inside and outside the library (Al-SuqriWaseemAfzal, 2007).

3. **Conclusion**

The phenomenal rise of the Internet has ushered in significant changes in all fields of science and technology. Rather than being a tool for seeking and retrieving information, the Internet has become the king of all media, allowing us to access virtual information and build a virtual library to give consumers with quick, high-quality service. In this digital age, librarians must shift their roles from arbitrary information scientists/gatekeepers to face the problems of the Internet, the World Wide Web, and online access in the knowledge society. As a result, they must improve their knowledge with special skills in the latest IT developments, such as browsing, accessing, and retrieving a specific piece of information across global networks, systematising and supervising the information by creating digital libraries, and providing quality e-information services to the knowledge society. To strengthen the strength of teaching and research in institutions of higher learning, library staff must be capable of working effectively in collaboration with faculty members. Today's librarian must be able to deal with new issues and devise strategies for overcoming them. The librarian of the twenty-first century should collaborate with other professionals to continue providing services to consumers whose needs change on a daily basis.

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