



Role of Libraries In Changing Education World

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Abstract

This paper is set in the context of Academic Libraries and their rapidly developing use of information and communication technology [ICT] in changing education world. Its key focus and emphasis is on how the academic libraries influence the changes to teaching and learning that will result from an e-education environment. Understanding the impact of e-teaching, e-learning and e-education is seen as fundamental to moving us forward so that we can make greater use of the opportunities provided by the Internet. E-teachers are considered central to the move toward e-education and the way in which ICT is integrated in the academics.. This paper points how the modern academic libraries provide technology based information anywhere, anytime besides providing resources for innovative and lifelong learning. It also discusses the way the modern academic libraries are related to e-learning.

Keywords: *Academic libraries, e-education, e-learning, e-teaching, ICT, digital libraries.*

INTRODUCTION

A beginning that was made in 1857 by establishing only 3 universities in India has to reach an ambitious target of more than 1000 universities by 2015. Over the last about 151 years, India has established 413 universities. During 2008, “India had 413 universities – 251 of which are state universities, 24 Central universities, 100 “deemed” universities, five are institutions established under State Legislation. India is world’s second largest populated country and it has “550 million people below the age of 25” (NKC, 2007, i). The 2001 Census indicates that the literacy level in the country has gone up to 65.38 per cent from 52.21 per cent in 1991 (NKC, 2007, 8). India is increasingly viewed as an emerging global

power that will contribute in shaping global balance of power in the present century. For this, education has a major role to play in building the knowledge economy of a nation.

Education may be the cutting-edge of capability building, but it cannot give its 100 % without the supporting-edge, i.e. the library and information system. Library occupies an important place in the framework of the academic system. It is not a mere storehouse of books, but is a dynamic instrument of education. Without active support of a library, the whole academic functioning will come to grinding halt. The primary role of a library is not only to fulfill the “mission” of the academic institution to which it belongs to but also to advance its aims and objectives. It is a central place for study and research. To this end, the total functioning of the library has been geared. Catalogues and bibliographies are now compiled, classification system has been devised, and circulation work has been planned and designed. Library is fully computerised and connected with internet. Stressing the role library plays in a university, the University Grants Committee (UK) in its report mentions : “the character and efficiency of a university may be gauged by treatment of its central organ- the library. We regard the fullest provision for library maintenance as the primary and most vital need in the equipment of a university.” (Parry:1968:9).

Trends and developments in Higher Education :

It is acknowledged that universities all over the world face an imperative to adopt and adjust to a whole series of profound changes that fall into six major categories: the increased demand for Higher Education in a lifelong learning context, the internationalisation of education and research, the need to develop co-operation between universities and industry, the proliferation of places where knowledge is produced, the reorganisation of knowledge, and the emergence of new expectations (European Commission, 2003, Virkus and Wood, 2004a).

Changes in Higher Education are so profound that several observers refer to a paradigm shift. Kathy Tiano has characterised the old and new paradigms of Higher Education as follows:

<u>Old Paradigm for Higher Education</u>	<u>New Paradigm for Higher Education</u>
Take what you can get	Courses on demand
Academic calendar	Year-round operations
University as a city	University as idea
Terminal degree	Lifelong learning
University as ivory tower	University as partner in society
Student = 18- to 25-year-old	Cradle to grave
Books are primary medium	Information on demand
Tenure	Market value
Single product	Information reuse/info exhaust
Student as a 'pain'	Student as a customer
Teaching in classroom	Teaching anywhere
Multi-cultural	Global
Bricks and mortar	Bits and bytes
Single discipline	Multi-discipline
Institution-centric	Market-centric
Government funded	Market funded
<u>Technology</u> as an expense	Technology as differentiator

The new educational paradigm has created the need for a reconceptualisation of the roles and responsibilities of librarians. In this context, information literacy has become an issue in many academic libraries and much work has been undertaken to deliver information literacy education.

Trends and Developments in Academic Libraries :

Children today are growing up in a world that has changed significantly over the past ten years. They are comfortable around technology that they have known all their lives. The changes going on today create an opportunity and a necessity for a transformation in the education system and in the way children are taught. Children are not the only ones who must be prepared for change. There have been great educational changes over the past ten years. "There is one role in education that has been forced to keep up with changes brought about by the information age, computers and the changes in society" (Baumbach,1995, p. 248). That role is the one of the

library professionals, whose job is becoming more important. In the past ten years, libraries have transformed from places where students go for books, into information centers of schools. New technologies bring many opportunities and challenges to academic libraries and library professionals.

Academic libraries are the libraries attached to colleges and universities. Preservation of and access to knowledge and information is their main mandate while supporting the mission of the respective colleges and universities. Information and communication technology (ICT) has made a deep impact on all types of libraries. Today we are talking about digital and virtual libraries. The ICT is providing the library and information professionals with both opportunities and challenges. There is a paradigm shift from standalone libraries to library and information networks; from printed publications to digital documents; and from ownership to access. This transition is the result of the impact of ICTs, the Internet and the web on different types of libraries.

What is in Name

What is in name? A rose is a rose is a rose. Whether it is a traditional library or a digital library, the mandate of the library remains unchanged. It is preservation of, and access to knowledge and information to facilitate progress. The role and reach of library is expanding. In fact, we are on the long tail of the web. Library is no more a physical place alone. It is rather a gateway to world's knowledge and information. Information is available to the stakeholders round the clock. But the main issue is not facilitating end-users access to pertinent information; rather it is to develop critical thinking skills among the information seekers. The content and the format must be personalized according to the information needs of the end-users. It is necessary, as information needs vary from person to person, place to place and time to time.

A transformed higher education environment, which depends increasingly on the internet to deliver programmes and to access and disseminate scholarly information, has presented libraries with many challenges. Libraries are well placed to assist – and in many instances to lead – their institutions as they navigate these changing Higher Education landscapes. Libraries are at the forefront of this technological wave, making use of electronic and web based tools to provide new routes to information, and to develop new services for learning, teaching and research. Libraries and their librarians are also leading the way in

trying to bridge the so-called 'digital divide' – the gulf which unequal access to technology and information can all too easily create. The central message to emerge is an important one: libraries are delivering many new and innovative services, are embracing changes in their role and responsibilities, and are securing greater support from within their institutions. At the same time, they need to get better at explaining what they do and can do, and at understanding what their clients need. Libraries have always been more than just repositories for books, and librarians have always been much more than just their gatekeepers. But it is evident that modern academic libraries are providing a greater range of services than ever before, while librarians for their part are applying their traditional expertise in exciting new ways.

Academic and research libraries created a way of thinking about and managing educational resources at a time when ink on paper was the principal mode of communicating thought. Academic and research libraries have often been positive agents of change in the past. Collectively and individually, academic libraries have made substantial progress in providing new modes of service in such areas as publishing programs, research data creation, copyright offices, and institutional repositories. By exerting visionary leadership and making the right choices within and beyond their institutions. Academic libraries can continue to exert a positive force that allows them to remain integral to the transformational process.

Role of Academic Librarians In e-Teaching and Learning

Nowadays academic librarians are a part of e-learning process and are actively participating by providing online and in person modules, guides, subject and class based lists, as well as reference (synchronous and e-mail). The librarians offer classes and courses on research strategies, help students in determining useful scholarly resources, work with the faculty in planning and developing distance education courses (in particular online courses) to integrate concepts of information literacy throughout the curriculum.

By a study it was seen that the librarian facilitating the e-learning are establishing a positive relationship between the academic achievement and use of open shelf library books. The librarians should play a dedicated role in supporting instructors and administrators to realize the potential of e-learning through the provision of service models unique to libraries.

Librarians somewhere have found to develop web based modules to support course integrated instruction session, encourage students to actively follow the librarians' presentation using their own topics for selected searches.

Academic librarians generally serve the subject academicians to provide information regarding teaching, learning and research. Though not everywhere, yet e-learning has been integrated in the curriculum of most of the university by different faculties. From the library side it has been a great opportunity to integrate the library resources and services in support of learning, research and outreach. In recent years several bold steps have been taken to integrate e-learning with the academic work. Most of the modern academic libraries are digital and e-learning can effectively take place in a digital environment. Academic libraries apply appropriate communication technologies in support of e-learning and e-research by providing seamless access to electronic resources and services. Electronic resources include online catalogues, databases, multimedia, online journals, digital repositories, electronic books, electronic archives and online / electronic services. The utilization of cutting edge technologies by academic libraries to provide access to resources and services in support of learning, teaching and research has benefited both on-campus, part time as well as distance learners. Both students and lecturers can undertake learning and research without being in the library. It is quite understandable that an e-learning environment can provide both students and faculty with a sustainable infrastructure and seamless access to knowledge, course content, information resources and services, all from integrated service point. The initiative which should be taken by the academic libraries should take an initiative towards establishment of an e-learning support centre which would undertake training of the academic staff in integrating the educational technology into the curriculum to provide access to the content. As a part of this initiatives an Educational Technology unit will develop e-learning smart classrooms, along with video conferencing and assignment tools enabling flexible learning and teaching with the students studying at their own place. The academic library must have a holistic approach in e-learning whereby different traditional and digital methods and media are integrated in learning and teaching. As faculty and instructors have began to adopt e-learning strategies as a part of their teaching repertoire, libraries played a key role, helping to find and organize resources to complement programmes and courses making use of e-learning in order to provide support to students working through their assignments.

The role of the academic library for e-teaching and e-learning process can be carried out if the library has two types of **requirements** filled up:

- i) Technical and Functional requirements
- ii) Technical and Cultural requirements

Technical and Functional Requirements

- a) display and integrate a variety of information windows as part of a learning activity
- b) aggregate access (discovery and exchange) to content in any given learning context
- c) provide bibliographical tools that permits easy searching and reference completions
- d) provide access to tools that render and present content in user customized formats
- e) integrate plagiarism software into course management systems to encourage good practice and to assess reliability of content.

Technical and Cultural Requirements

- a) embed library resources in course management systems
- b) integrate third party commercial information services
- c) customize portal facilities for storing personal preferences
- d) provide easy access to virtual reference services at the point of need.
- e) embed training modules to assist in information seeking.

As a part of e-learning an academic library must provide the **services** to its students and staff from remote access which include:

- i) New acquisitions to indicate newly acquired materials for each department.
- ii) View your patron record to see materials borrowed by an individual customer with an option to
renew the borrowed materials without visiting the library.
- iii) Request for materials that are borrowed by another user. Upon return of the material, communication is sent to the user who made the request to come and borrow the material.
- iv) Users can suggest additional items that the library should acquire based on their need. The request can be made online.
- iv) Materials placed on reserve by lecturers for specific courses.
- v) E-mail communication is provided through the system to enable a two way communication
between the user and the library.
- vi) Online charges and fines are made available to users.

- vii) Searching for past examination papers by faculty, department and course numbers providing access to full text.

Changing Role and New Opportunities :

The purpose of this paper, and the subsequent report, is not simply to list the many types of services that libraries provide. However, sketching these briefly helps to understand the challenges they face, the expertise they have, and the skills they need.

- **Navigation in a complex world** : Although the internet – in some parts of the world – makes accessing information much easier than in the past, finding the *right* information has arguably got more difficult. While students were previously exposed to only a limited range of quality assured and peer-reviewed material, they will now encounter information from a wide range of sources. Understanding how to navigate to reputable sources is vital if students are to avoid confusing information with knowledge.
- **Improving the learning experience** : Librarians have responded by developing ‘information literacy’ modules to help students improve their critical and analytical abilities – and in doing so are working in partnership with academics to make substantial contributions to the quality of education. Where internet access is more limited and time and connectivity are constrained, the skills to find the right information are arguably even more critical. Libraries in Africa and Asia have made ambitious attempts, but often lack wider support for these initiatives.
- **Digital solutions for students and scholars** : Entry points to library resources are often electronic and dispersed, through libraries’ own websites or those of major publishers and content providers. Finding the right ways in can be a challenge. Libraries are leading collaborative projects to build digital libraries and are working with others to develop virtual learning environments.
- **Rethinking library spaces** : Even if electronic resources mean that less space is needed for books, libraries are still needed as places in which students and researchers can gather and work. The physical library space is accordingly changing to accommodate alternative learning and study spaces. ‘Information commons’ integrate

library resources with ICT facilities, information advice and training, and areas for individual and group study.

- **Supporting research** : New technologies mean that libraries can serve research in powerful new ways. While libraries have typically focused on sourcing material from outside the institution, many are now finding new ways to make their own scholars' research more prominent. Many libraries are using electronic publishing tools to build institutional repositories which both showcase and centrally archive their own material more effectively and, in the case of theses and dissertations, preserve valuable work that might typically have remained unpublished. By making repositories freely available online, researchers' work is more readily discovered through mainstream search engines.
- **Advanced ICT skills** : will be particularly critical to enable librarians to translate their expertise into online environments and to adopt the latest technologies for library services. Realising large-scale initiatives requires a range of skills for effective project management, including the ability to build and lead cross-departmental collaborative teams.

Librarians have not traditionally been teachers in the formal sense, but information and research skills demand that they develop their role in this direction too. As information, its access, delivery and management, and the technologies to do this, underpin more and more aspects of higher education, librarians find themselves occupying critical roles.

Challenges & Opportunities :

The impact of web based e-learning and teaching environment has influenced every facet of library and information services in academic libraries and providing new opportunities and challenges to the library professional for involvement in the knowledge based society including electronic and multimedia publishing, Internet based-information services, global networking, web based digital resources etc. The emerging challenges of acquiring and providing access to electronic knowledge resources require librarians to change their role from traditional librarian to information scientist by learning and applying new skills to understand the evolving technologies to manage and provide quality on-line information service to the knowledge society. So the vision of the future academic library

professional must be to create a World Class Networked Global Library and Information Centre to provide timely web based quality information service to the user in time in the e-learning environment.

Hence ensuring and organizing access to educational materials in the electronic environment is an important factor in determining realistic requests for development and advancement of education. The information revolution and the pervasive thinking that everything is available on the Web have created new challenges to the traditional library professional ethics. Since, almost all the educational institutions, organizations, universities and academic associations have created their own websites with the digital repositories on Internet, the global networked environment has paved the way and opportunity to e-literacy.

The impact of web based e-learning and teaching environment has influenced very much on every facets of library and information services in Academic Libraries and providing new opportunities and challenges to the library professional. With the ascent of digital documents and digital libraries, library and information professionals' role has expanded and challenges have increased manifold. These challenges relate to collection management, knowledge organization, digital preservation, online searching, content management, knowledge management, and promoting the use of libraries and networks. Now 24x7 access to information is available round the clock and the traditional constraints of space and time stand collapsed. Library Information Professionals have the opportunity to provide global reach to the indigenous knowledge. Similarly, we can get access to world's knowledge and information through the Internet provided we have the will, skill, and the appropriate attitude. These opportunities and challenges can be handled effectively by competent library personnel. Sound knowledge base, pertinent skills and pro-active positive mind set are the essential components of a competent library and information professional.

Conclusion :

In this presentation I have attempted to place into context and describe my views on the role technology in the library and in the changing face of higher education. Technology extends the reach of higher education by expanding its borders and engaging the world to include outside practitioners and the public in the collaboration with faculty, students and staff in the development of new knowledge in various fields. Academic library need to respond to the growing and diversifying information needs of the end-users. Academic libraries must

become a local gateway to world's knowledge and information. The future is uncertain but bright. We will have to create a relative balance of printed publications and digital documents. Our future library must be a hybrid library, which must be user-centered and expert-assisted.

Thank You

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