Preparing new generation librarians
for
meeting future challenges

Edited by

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Preface

It was a pleasure to edit this volume and also to pen the preface to this volume, which is one of the outcomes of Ahmedabad Library Network's (ADINET) annual seminar marking the celebrations of the Librarians Day 2010. Celebrating the Librarians Day has been an annual feature of ADINET's activities in honour of the great Dr. S.R. Ranganathan, popularly called as the Father of Library Science.   This year's seminar theme "Preparing New Generation Librarians for Meeting Future Challenges" is very apt and relevant today. The main theme was further subdivided into the following subthemes:

• Future of Libraries & Librarians
• Technology Trends in Libraries
• Innovative Services, Processes & Practices
• Role of Library Science Schools
• Case Studies of Libraries Providing Services with Minimum Resources.

ADINET received many papers on the various subthemes and the selection panel that included Dr. H. Anil Kumar, Librarian, Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, Mrs. Roda Bharucha, Director, ADINET and Mr. Satish Deshpande, former Librarian, British Library Ahmedabad reviewed the papers for inclusion in this volume. The papers were sent by professionals and researchers of librarianship from all over the country. The papers that we decided to include in this volume cover topics about technology trends, Library and Information Science (LIS) education, LIS research, national developments in information infrastructure, etc. The main focus area of these papers was on the important theme of preparing new generation librarians for meeting future challenges. The world of learning and education is changing rapidly along with and riding on the wave of technology innovations to offer sustainable, affordable and quality learning systems to the common man. Information is no longer a luxury, it is mandatory for success; whether it is public policy, human development, industry and infrastructure growth or market competition. The single most important factor, if at all there is, for the flux in the ecology of information, has been the technology component. In such a vibrant and ever changing environment, need for libraries and information centres is critical. Rapid changes are forcing the skills needed, for library professionals to make meaningful contribution to an economy, to evolve fast and also be effectively focused.

It is in this context that the main theme of the seminar assumes importance. Preparing new generation librarians for meeting future challenges is the key to development of the profession and also important from the point of libraries to play a critical role in the economy. As mentioned earlier, the selected papers focused on the theme and will, I assume, add value to the readers in their understanding of related issues.

The first paper selected in this volume is "Directions for LIS education: Some stray thoughts" by Prof. Harsha Parekh. The author, a renowned academician and teacher par excellence, contributed this paper based on her thoughts distilled from the past four decades of professional experience. Dr. Parekh talks of the sweeping changes that affect LIS profession and how that has impacted the profession and education, together. She suggests a model of LIS education which is proactive to imbibe the environmental changes that affect the profession and also is learner centric. Reviewing the skills needed for the future library professional, Dr. Parekh proposes a good frame work for LIS educators to consider. I am sure this paper will provide the right setting for the volume in general and the subtheme of LIS education to be specific.

"The future of libraries and librarians" by Dr. R.S.R. Varalakshmi is the second paper included in this volume. The paper is a comprehensive paper on the future of libraries and librarians. Dr. Varalakshmi, aptly selects a quote from Libner that "from a single library to a network of libraries; from one collection to distributed collections; from the catalog interface to multiple interfaces; from books and journals to information fields and streams encompassing traditional and non-traditional forms of scholarly communication. These include such diverse forms and genres as preprints, traditional publications, informal commentary, data sets, software applications, maps, video clips, listserv archives, and web pages all accessible, at least in principle, anytime and anywhere." This quote describes the future library in a very eloquent and relevant manner.

The author goes on to describing the future of LIS in reactive and proactive modes of service delivery. The issues that she covers in the reactive mode are users, management of collections, information services, library 3.0, aggregator service, webliography, information literacy, subject gateways and institutional repositories. In the proactive context, Dr. Varalakshmi touches upon the role in education and learning, knowledge management, content management, design and development of digital libraries and open access

initiatives. Dr. Varalakshmi then describes the future librarians having multi skill sets and defines the vision of a future library as the ability to adopt the technological trends that influence the future of libraries and their information delivery mechanisms. Dr. Varalakshmi suggests a number of initiatives to ensure the implementation of this vision for future libraries and librarians.

The third paper, "Role of library science schools for meeting future challenges" by Dr. Pratibha Gokhale, seems to be a perfect continuation from the previous papers. This paper starts with the listing of various important landmarks in Library and Information Science (LIS) education in India and goes on to describe the various programmes and their history in India. In the section on Research in Library and Information Science in India, Dr. Gokhale provides the doctoral programme information and in the section on Research Programmes in the country, she lists the masters in philosophy programme in LIS in India. She also provides the data of research output in Indian Universities in terms of number of doctoral candidates that LIS has produced over the years in India. One of the most interesting parts of the paper is definitely, the subject wise analysis, wherein Dr. Gokhale reports the various research topics and their shifting pattern, as undertaken at doctoral level in the LIS subject in India. She points out that the relevance of the topics to the profession's need is quite well reflected in the topics. Dr. Gokhale also writes on issues of relevance to librarianship in the context of future needs and describes the topics of information and its management and the role of LIS schools. She provides many suggestions for the LIS schools to meet the future challenges.

The fourth paper is, "LIS education in 21st century: Trends, challenges and expectations," written by Prof. U.A. Thaker. This paper attempts to review the state of LIS education in the state of Gujarat. The data provided includes staffing, degrees offered, curriculum, facilities in place, and so on at the various departments of LIS in Gujarat. The author also suggests various improvements in the LIS educational domain to prepare LIS professionals to meet the challenges of the digital era.

The fifth paper is on "Future library systems and services," by Dr. A.R.D. Prasad. This paper by Dr. Prasad looks at various technologies that will be relevant to libraries in the future. The main areas of focus in this paper are: Technology and Libraries, Library Management Software, Digital Repositories, Harvesters and other tools like RSS (Really Simple Syndication) and Z39.50 protocol and SRU/SRW. Dr. Prasad also delves into various relevant issues when implementing technology in libraries and also

talks about the comparison of Proprietary Vs Open Source Software. A strong proponent of Open Source Software applications in libraries, Dr. Prasad leads us to other important technology applications that include Digital Preservation, Open Access to Information and the Semantic Web. In his interesting conclusion, Dr. Prasad states that we should, in addition to looking at the impact of technology, understand and contribute to the reverse of this and focus on what libraries can offer to technology domain especially in the context of traditional library and information science offerings like organising and retrieval tools and techniques and their relevance to futuristic semantics based information services.

"Introduction to digital reference services," by Ms. Parul Zaveri is the next selected paper wherein, Ms. Zaveri has lucidly described the concept of digital reference services and their relevance to libraries today. She discusses various issues related to digital reference services that include need for digital reference services and forms of digital reference transaction. She talks of the asynchronous form of digital reference services with apt examples that include email reference, reference via web form and chatterbots. She also provides the examples of simple chat reference, instant messaging, extended chat reference, VoIP ("Audio-Chat" or Internet Phoning) and reference via video under the category of synchronous form of digital reference services. Ms. Zaveri also provides the example of web contact center being adopted as the most common software for providing this service in many libraries all over the globe. She also talks of Collaborative Reference and the trend of virtual reference services through social networking.

"SaaS based LMS - A boon to libraries," by Mr. P.C. Shah and Mr. K. Suyash is a paper that propagates the Software as a Service (SaaS) model of business delivery. The authors provide insights into one of the latest technologies that is proving to be the panacea to hardware, software and maintenance related problems in libraries. SaaS has proven to be a successful technology in various sectors of the industry and the authors propose the adoption of this technology in the library sector. The paper provides practical insights into the adoption of SaaS in libraries and may help managers who are looking for similar solutions. Shah and Suyash also provide a detailed estimate for library professionals looking to computerise a 5000 collection library and a 50,000 collection library through annexure provided along with the paper.

The next paper is, "Using RSS feeds and e-alerts to increase user awareness of e-resources in library and information centers," by Mr. Imran Mansuri. This paper is a good and basic introduction to RSS technology that will

facilitate a foundation level understanding of RSS technology and its application in libraries. A practical approach has been adopted by the author in conveying the understanding that RSS technology is becoming increasingly important and demanded for in libraries and it is a fact that library professionals need to adopt this technology as soon as possible to render user friendly and user relevant LIS services.

Mr. Mansuri in his paper covers the following issues; RSS feeds, RSS feed reader, advantages, limitations and issues on using RSS feeds, RSS format, working of RSS, e-alert service and its importance in libraries and also provides examples of major publishers that provide RSS feeds & e-alerts services.

The next paper, an important one included in the volume, is, "National Library and Information Services Infrastructure for Scholarly Content (N-LIST): Extending Access to E-Resources to Colleges," by Dr. Jagdish Arora and Ms. Kruti Trivedi. The authors provide a comprehensive description of the project N-LIST sanctioned by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India under its National Mission on Education through ICT. One of the leading champions of consortium movement in the country, Dr. Arora along with Ms. Trivedi provide a total picture of the project that aims to provide for access of electronic resources to government and government aided colleges and cross-subscription to e-resources amongst technical institutions and universities, i.e., subscription to INDEST-AICTE resources for universities and UGC-INFONET resources for technical institutions. The paper also includes the resources subscribed, beneficiary institutions and the N-LIST-Associate Programme. It elaborates on pricing model for subscription to e-resources, cost effectiveness of the programme and its implementation methodology. The authors outline governing structure, participating institutions and their roles in the project. The paper also elaborates on potential growth and future endeavors of the N-LIST Programme.

"National Knowledge Network (NKN)," by Mr. Manoj Kumar is again a descriptive paper, on a very ambitious and an acutely needed project, NKN. The National Knowledge Network (NKN) project is one of the major initiatives by the government of India in recent times to enhance the quality of education in the country through application of information technology. The NKN is envisaged as probably the biggest initiative of the government to network all institutions of higher education and research in the country. If NKN succeeds, India would have truly ushered in the technology revolution

in the domain of education. Mr. Manoj Kumar provides all details of the project starting from the Preamble, Objective, Design Philosophy and Features of NKN to the various NKN projects and their status. The paper also discusses the National Mission on Education through ICT (NME-ICT), a project which will support the NKN project in a major way.

In summary, this volume is a collection of selected papers on various topics relevant to the theme of "Preparing new generation librarians for meeting future challenges." The volume, I am sure will add value to the existing literature on similar topics that are very important for librarianship today.

All the authors have made un-substitutable contribution in making this publication a possibility. This also makes me mention, gratitude and thanks to all the authors, on behalf of ADINET and on my personal behalf.

Publishing this volume adds pleasure to the task, as it marks the celebration of Librarians Day - 2010 at Ahmedabad. I must join ADINET in thanking Allied Publishers, Ahmedabad for their generous support in printing this volume.

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Directions for LIS Education: Some Stray Thoughts

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Abstract

The author, a renowned academician and a teacher par excellence, contributes this paper based on her thoughts distilled from the past four decades of professional experience. Dr. Parekh talks of the sweeping changes that affect LIS profession and how that has impacted the profession and education together. She proposes an updated model of LIS education which is proactive to imbibe the environmental changes that affect the profession and also is learner centric.

1. Introduction

Distance provides a different perspective and facilitates looking at the bigger picture. A re-look at Library and Information Science (LIS) education from the vantage point of a distance of several years has given rise to several stray thoughts on the subject which is shared with fellow professionals in the following pages. One would also like to state that distance brings with it risks of overlooking details and a disjoint with the reality.

During the forty years of professional involvement there have been major changes. Each change, as it happened, was viewed a step in the evolution of the library as an institution; however taken together they have resulted in a paradigmatic shift in the profession. Not only has the content of librarianship changed, but the context in which it was practiced has altered beyond recognition.

2. Context

The basic difference in the context in which libraries function, is that the primacy of print has given way to a multiplicity of communication media.

Print, which was considered as the third communication revolution, has been replaced by the fourth revolution in the field namely digital communication. The resulting ease of research, writing, editing and publication has led to an increasing quantum of information and subsequently, information overload for library users.

Along with an explosion in the quality and range of information there has been growth in information providers. The library, which had a near monopoly as a bank of collected information resources has yielded this privilege to include other types of similar collections. This has brought about what is described as a 'Copernican Revolution' in the position of the library. (Fig. 1)

Fig1: Copernican Revolution in Information Access

View of Library "Ptolemic"   View of Scholar "Copernican"
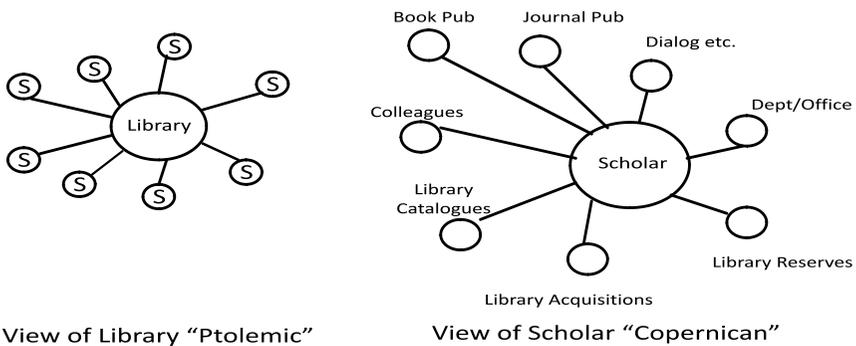
The use of technology to retrieve information has at the front end been made extremely simple. Used to what they consider 'ease' of retrieval, library users now expect instant, easy to use, point of use services.

3. Content

The functions of the library have been briefly described in terms of the 3 A's, i.e., acquisition, access creation, and archiving. All three major tasks have undergone a major shift. The materials we acquired used to be paper based and each library focused on the items it needed. Today, the materials we acquire include an increasing number of electronic and audio-visual materials in a variety of digital formats different in their structure (e.g. databases, e-journals, pictures, films, etc.) and in their file formats.

Frequently, we do not even buy them but instead lease them or rather purchase the right to use them.

OPAC, Dublin core, digital object identifier and such phrases have been added to our vocabulary of access creation. The familiar card catalogue has almost disappeared and with it so should our textbook chapter on "Forms of Catalogues". An entry in a computerised catalogue provides access from multiple points, so why are we still teaching 'types of catalogues'?

Archiving, interpreted to include storage, maintenance, preservation and security, too has expanded to include backups, firewalls, format migration and other concepts unheard of by the last generation of librarians.

In addition to new ways of doing the traditional functions there are several new areas of service delivery which were not conceived of then be it electronic document delivery or a digital reference desk

4. Implications for LIS education

The cumulative effect of these changes has been a total change in the collection, organisation, service delivery and management of the library, as an institution. The skills required of the librarian to run a library in today's world are very different than what were required a generation ago. LIS education has not only to be modified but completely reengineered.

There is general agreement that there is an urgent need to revamp the LIS curricular; but there is little clarity in what and how changes should be made. The instinctive reaction has naturally been to include more technology, but in the process are we losing the complete picture?
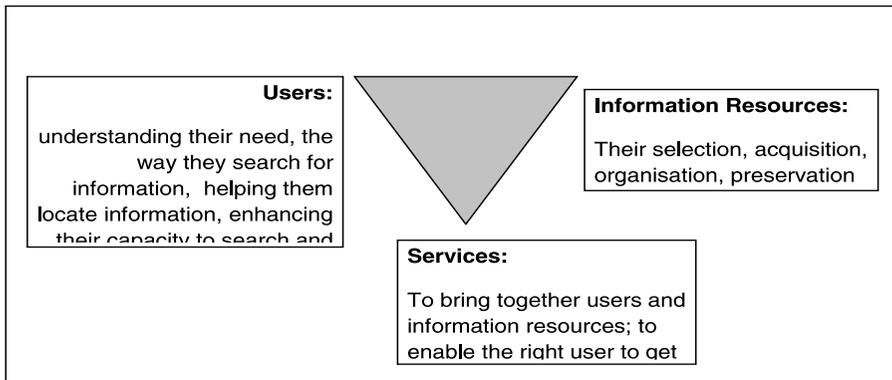
Before we seek to decide on a new framework for our professional education programmes, it may be worthwhile to look within and assess the nature of the knowledge and skills we are at present providing to our graduates. I believe they fall into three broad categories: User related, information resources related and services related. (Fig. 2).

In today's context what modifications are required in the above knowledge and skills? I believe that the basic areas continue to be relevant; what is required is the ability to transfer them to different contexts. Thus, for example, with regard to classification, students should understand the

principles underlying the schemes of book classification rather than the details of a particular classification scheme so that they are able to categorise different types of data, information, documents whether they are in databases, libraries or websites. Instead of a particular cataloguing code, they need to know how different documents may be identified and sought for; instead of managing a library, they should have the proficiency in managing content, websites, digital libraries, records, documents and even knowledge.

Fig. 2: Knowledge and skill areas of LIS professionals

Users:

understanding their need, the way they search for information, helping them locate information, enhancing their capacity to search and

Information Resources:

Their selection, acquisition, organisation, preservation

Services:

To bring together users and information resources; to enable the right user to get

In addition to the ability to apply traditional skills in different contexts, proficiency in handling all information communication technology is obviously essential. Not only do we as a profession need the ability to use a variety of equipment but also to apply them in the provision of services. .Techniques such as webcasting, video conferencing and social networking need to be brought into the fold of library services. Only then will the library grow as an institution and continue to be relevant in the changing context.

I believe the days of the generalist librarian are over. As more users integrate information searching in their daily activities library skills are getting either pushed back to backend jobs or brought to the fore where the librarian needs to work closely with the user. This closer interaction involves sufficient knowledge of the user's field of interest. Domain knowledge familiarity is again becoming an essential. Only when the information professional talks to the user in his language, only when he is able to understand his visceral need will the user turn to him for help.

How does one translate these needs into professional education? From the earlier discussion, it is evident that the curriculum needs to be widened with more subjects to be introduced. Also, the depth at which many of the subjects are taught needs to increase. The broad directions of the change are towards making LIS education of a longer duration, more relevant and increasing flexibility. A choice based, modular, credit system seems to provide opportunity for experimentation.

A Module may be considered as a self-contained cohesive unit of the curriculum that forms a meaningful whole. It will have its own title and objectives and will be further divided into units. Modules may be designated as compulsory or optional, theory oriented or practical/practicum, part of a regular course or an add-on programme. A module may have some specific pre-requisites for learning. Thus a student may study some module (X), only after she has completed another required module (Y).

Each module will carry weightage of credit(s) which will depend on the content of the module. Generally, a module would carry between 2 to 4 credits. A credit would refer to the work on the part of the student. One credit course (module) implies that it will require 15 class hours. For practical, practicum, internship, fieldwork, research, etc. this may vary. Depending on the type of content and circumstance, the teaching of a module may be compact or spread over a term.

To take advantage of this system, and UGC's pushing for it in higher education, the profession needs to undertake intensive preparatory work. Firstly, some agreement on the broad objectives of the programme(s) should be garnered. Secondly, each traditional course and each unit included in it needs to be looked at freshly, openly and critically. As each unit is examined, the following questions asked:

1. Why are we teaching this?
2. What are the objectives?
3. Are these relevant today?
4. For whom?
5. Should all professionals whether they work in traditional library setting or non-library institutional settings or working outside institutional settings know this?

Based on such detailed analysis, we would be able to come up with a core of minimum modules as well as additional modules. The pre-requisite(s), if any, of modules may also become obvious at this time. The next task would be to analyse the skill requirements of the new job areas and similarly work out additional modules which may be offered. Finally, an assessment of areas which non LIS students would benefit from could be worked out. For example, a module on 'Children's Literature' may be useful to one aspiring to a school librarian (an emerging job market in India) as well as students of Literature or even Primary Education. Similarly, a module on 'Using the Internet' could be of benefit to students of other disciplines.

Timetabling, I realise, will be an issue difficult to sort out but some agreement within an institution regarding blocking some days for optional modules may help. Further, some LIS modules can be covered either as a capsule 3/4 day programme or spread throughout the term. A department may also be able to develop self-supporting add-on certificate and diploma programmes.

5. Conclusion

The task before us is not easy but as LIS educators, is it not our responsibility to provide relevant education to our students and also to provide capable information professionals to the society?

I end with a well known quote of Robert Frost:

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep, And miles to go before I sleep.