Information Technology Impact on Libraries

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Abstract

Academic libraries and information centers play important roles as sources of valuable records, which help to meet the information needs of the society. In modern settings, these centers are often equipped with state of the art information technology (IT) resources in order to facilitate information acquisition, dissemination and access to resources domiciled in remote repositories which where beforehand not possible. This paper demonstrates that effective use of Information Technology (IT) will enhance the current operations of university library and assist the library users to carry out their various activities in the library.

The strength of the academic library lies in the strength of its services through which it can ensure effective use of its information resources and play its role in fulfilling objectives of education.

Keywords: 21st century; Modern libraries; Knowledge; Technology.

INTRODUCTION

Information plays a very important part in human life. Since the mid-21st century, the role of information has increased immeasurably as a result of social progress and the vigorous development in science and technology. Osundina (1973) stated that the library of today should not merely store documents and preserve them; it must also devise means by which the contents of such documents

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can be rapidly and effectively transmitted for use. As per Elisha (2006) academic libraries play a prominent role in providing information services in various forms to researchers, scientist, policy makers, planners etc. The information technology (IT) is the application of computers and other technologies to the acquisition, organization, storage, retrieval and dissemination of information. Information technology (IT) is a strategic resource that facilitates changes in competitive behavior, marketing and customer service. Information technology is a resource that links the "marketing orientation" and "technology exploitation" of an organization, which clearly has to be harnessed and managed correctly (Barnes, 1993; Clear and Votel, 1990; Oasis, 1989).

Information technology has a major impact on academic library services. In 20th century the library services were responsive because they were rendered at the request of the library users. However, in the beginning of the 21st century the library services have become more positive and proactive as these are now offered not only on

the users' request but also at the initiative of the library personnel. The information technology has impact in providing efficient and effective services, helping to control the rapid growth of information, facilitating cooperation, etc.

Information technology application in library and information field has made remarkable progress in the world. Information Technology not only affects the technical services of libraries but also shapes the library services that are being offered to the public. Worldwide libraries have been exploring new technologies for providing better and faster access to vast information resources and efficient information services to their users. Information Technology has offered better solutions to achieve greater level of efficiency, productivity and excellence services in libraries (Sahu *et. al*, 2011). Abubakar (2010) observes that we now live in a changing society where information technology has taken the center stage and is accompanied by massive increase in knowledge which leads to a new paradigm in the Library and Information Science (LIS) field.

Information technology has impacted on every sphere of academic library activity especially in the form of the library collection development strategies, library building and consortia etc. It has not only changed but also speeded up the services in many areas which are as follows:

1. **Format of documents:** IT has impacted the format of the books, periodicals, etc. which are now available in non print format also. It is now transforming printed books and journals into digital format and storing them for posterity.

2. **Operational activities:** IT has its effect on such housekeeping activities/tasks as circulation control, acquisition, accessing, cataloguing, serials control, etc. Automation of all these tasks has made them more effective and convenient/easy to access. These routine task of issue of documents and submission/return of documents,with these activities most of the users in academic libraries are more concerned, has become faster than earlier time.

3. **Library OPAC:** The Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) is an access tool and resource guide to the collection of a library or libraries which provides bibliographic data in machine-readable form and can be searched interactively on a computer terminal by users. It also provide effective access to information retrieval system.

4. **Management processes:** Information technology has been helping academic libraries in managing the library stock, planning, organizing, staffing, leading, controlling, control of overall performance, effective managing and so on.

5. **User orientation:** User orientation activities have been changing to avail the users with the application of IT. The interaction between the user and librarian/information personnel has become faster/increase and making library resources and services more convenient to users.

6. **Access to Information Resources:** IT has influenced to expand/widen the access points of the users to the library/information resources to their advantage. It has made possible online, easy, and continuous access with multiple user access facility to the entire range of collection including the electronic resources. This saves the valuable time of the researchers and academicians like.

7. **Online Databases:** With the increasing demand of computer friendly users, IT has helped them to make more database in bibliographic as well as full text sources. The web enabled databases are easily accessible from the user desktops.

8. **Current Awareness Services:** The purpose of a current-awareness service is to inform the users about new acquisitions in their libraries. Public libraries in particular have used display boards and shelves to draw attention to recent additions, academic libraries can generate current awareness services by using internet and many libraries produce complete or selective lists for circulation to patrons.

9. **Library Networks:** The era is now for Electronic publishing because it is simple and without time lag. Many library and other networks have been made possible by IT and its applications in libraries. Library Networks at international level include OCLC, RLG, CURL, JISC and national level include INFLIBNET, DELNET, ERNET, NICNET, UGC-INFONET, and so on. Library networking should provide a means for efficient and reliable resource sharing for documentary sources, human resources and consortia based access to journals or databases.

As the rapid growth of information technology in the library services has been changing for better. IT has changing the nature of library and libraries strategic and continue to exert a major influence on

the strategic direction of library in society. Library and Information Science (LIS) education in this changing society where changes occur due to the emergence and advancement in Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs), requires the LIS professionals to acquire new IT skills for survival, The influence of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) is now manifested in every sphere of human endeavor including the LIS field which is considered as pervasive.

CONCLUSION

In view of changing environment, considerable attention is paid to the impact of information technology in various areas of library services to improve over the existing scenario. As a result of IT, the face and nature of reference and other library services has been changing for better. The time for virtual reference is there to stay in the twenty-first century indicating the possibility of paradigm shift. It may, therefore, be stated that information technology will continue to improve the effectiveness of academic library services in the times to come.

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