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**A Critical Study of the Professional Skills and Competencies among
Library Professionals with special regard to the Digital Environment and
ICT Usage in Medical College Libraries in Gujarat**

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ABSTRACT

As technology developed continuously with the speed, library professional have to play and innovating role and keep themselves up to date, learn new things and keep track with the technological development. The wide spread use of world wide web and internet technology, made it compulsory for library professionals to accept new skills and latest tools to meet new skill, and use latest techniques to cope up with the new generation libraries. A part of professional skills librarian have to improve their managerial, communicational skill as well as personal competencies. The present paper elaborates the role of library professional in the digital era. An impact has been made to find out impact of ICT on libraries and skills and competencies required in librarian too adapt the digital environment.

Keywords: information communication and technology, Digital library, Hybrid library, skills and competencies.



Introduction:

World has turn into global community with the advent of information communication and technology. Over the decades information technology brings significant change, for that it is necessary to acquire new knowledge. Library plays an important role in development of society as it satisfies information need of users. Nowadays most of the information is available on digital formats. Everyone is in the process of acquiring knowledge and most of them give preference to information on digital form. In these situations, role of libraries and librarians have been changed. Library professional have to enhance their skills and competencies towards digitization. Before invention of ICT the library professionals' work was limited to the boundaries of library, it has spread to the world at large as knowledge is available on electronic media. Thus to performs the new role as a librarian they required new skills that bridge gap between traditional and digital culture.

Information technology is driving force for change in libraries. Plan for building 21st century library is purely depend upon ability of librarians. It is not only to adapt changes but one have to prepare for change, make it possible and shape it. Development of ICT have not only brings challenges in libraries but also in library operations, information resources, information product and services, its functions, competency of staff and their expectation of users for new generation libraries.

Considering the professional development criteria in any field, professionals have to stay up-to-date with latest knowledge, professional skills, and they have to possess the ability to work efficiently in their career. In this competition era, it is essential that professionals have to maintain their proficiency; they have to participate in professional development course and other skill development programs. Education is foundation of any professional. It is prime responsibility of librarians to provide library services to its users with the increasing demand of users.

Current review paper portrait that there are not enough research conducted about the need of professional development and improve ICT skills of the Medical library professionals in



Gujarat. It is true that latest techno –savvy library can be build if librarian are efficient and possess well knowledge of ICT. Therefore it is important to evaluation the need of library professionals for skill enrichment, training and development in changing environment of medical library of Gujarat.

Innovation in technology

Change in library and information media from print to electronic has shown the rise in the life of librarians. These librarians were only custodian of library collection in traditional library. The prime objective of library is to meet the teaching, learning, scholarly – research and other information need of its users including teaching, learning, research scholars and other information need of the faculties. As tools like computer, laptop, and mobile easily available at workplace as well as at home, accessing information digitally becomes more comfortable for patrons. World Wide Web added the value in digital information, but it completely changes the meaning of library. Traditional library has been transformed dramatically to the digital library.

Information seeking behavior varying from person to person is available in various wants (Leckie et. al. 1996). This information is generally available in the form of books, journals, encyclopedia etc. or in any print form. Users have only one option before, to visit library and access information from there. Librarians are considering as custodian of these resources and they help users to access their required information. But now in Electronic era, librarian help users to find out information from various electronic media like e-books, e-journals, online database etc.

(<https://academicjournals.org/journal/IJLIS/article-full-text-pdf/70A6E45898.pdf>)

Technological innovation transforms traditional libraries into digital libraries. They are also termed as virtual or hybrid libraries. As technology change rapidly, library professional have also to play a quick role in adapting latest information technology and keep themselves up to date by learning new skills. It is mandatory for them to keep them techno – savvy to cope with new generation libraries. So today libraries termed in with different roles or names like



computerized library, electronic library, digital library, cybrary, virtual library, library without wall and many more.

Hybrid Library:

Libraries containing mix resources like electronic and traditional are known as hybrid libraries. Generally most of the libraries are hybrid libraries.

- Digital Library:

Where most of the library materials are available on digital format. It can only be accessed through computer is known as digital library. According to Wiederhold, “This library is commonly viewed as an electronic version of library.”

- Library automation:

In a library where access point and housekeeping operations are computerized is called a computerize library or automated library.

- Virtual library:

It is a library where access point is in digital form and these libraries are connected through various networks mainly through internet is call virtual library. This library is called ‘library without walls’. Here no collection is available in print form. These types of libraries exist in limited scale.

- Traditional library:

In this type of libraries resources are available as library catalogue and library collection is in print form. And all housekeeping work of library is done manually.

Skills and competency of library professional in digital era:

In the history of mankind passed through different phases that passed through many revolutions like agriculture, industrial and information. Professional of every field have to upgrade them



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self to cope with these changes. Librarians' journey originally started from clay table and palm tree to digital information resources. In the past decades activities of library professional are, storage, preservation and achieving library material. It is shifted to collection development in printing technology where in modern ICT era, libraries are turn into digital one and their primary responsibility is to satisfy their users demand by proving them accurate information. So their role in new environment has been change.

ICT brings change in different aspect of human life in 21st century. It provides new opportunities in the field of business, learning and communication. It change the world in new society called the knowledge and information society. Nowadays world gathered into global village. ICT bring change in socio-culture, political, educational and economic. According to Salisu (2002), ICT bring new approach in the working pattern. With the other area libraries is one of the main area which is deeply affected by ICT as it is backbone of information age

Libraries always face changes with the time. In ICT era use of technology is must. Professionals have to learn about information technology, troubleshoot and to learn about what internet resource helps students and teachers can. Since last few decades a large scale of technological revolution, encourage professionals for common required leanings. New method of communication, virtual space of library thought knowledge common, the explosion of social media as well as mobile device, tablet and related application have changed traditional library. This huge change is because of introduction of information communication and technology. It affect drastically on the knowledge and skills of library and information professionals. This change requires librarians to arbitrate efficiently and effectively. Discipline specific knowledge (Orme, 2008), general skills, personal competency like attitude, values and personal traits, one should understand metadata, knowledge of digital content creation and management, affective communication skills, problem solving, team work (Nonthacumjane, 2011) are the abilities have to adopt by the library professionals to cope with technological revolution.

To encourage library profession to use the technology affectively is the biggest challenge in the digital era. Now they are no more caretaker of library. They required to serve as information service provider, with certain information technology skills (Li, 2009). As technology affects



every function and level of library operations and services, librarian has to expect the changing demand of their users and they have to prepare for adapting new skills and competency. With the technical change they have to improve professional skills, including business and management, teaching and leadership skills. Hastings (1996) says, “ it is more necessary that library professional should possess particular personal qualities rather than specific technological skills.

Additionally, with lots of mentioned professional skills, professional must possess wide range of personal and transferable skills to manage changing digital environment where they are working. The management and interpersonal skills makes the librarians more effective managers and service provider in digital environment. In the word of Hastings (1996) says, “it is more important that digital library possess personal qualities rather than specific technical quality.

Thus library and information professionals must adapt change and accept new electronic information environment. They have to learn about new technologies and aware with the strength and weakness of the same. They have to remove fear about use of computer and technical aspects but they have to move forward with the latest technology and stand at essential position in their organization. They can also act as leading role in marketing their library resources by dealing with information in digital format, creating webpage and advertise their services to the external customers. At every industry technological revolution is taken place. People are in search of how to enhance their skills in the digital environment and first thing they remember is about library and information centers. So libraries should stand first to adapt digital technology so that they can help the society for innovation.

Changing role of librarian:

Role of librarians are changing with the technological innovation. In digital information era, electronic technology, world wide web technology and increasing growth of CD-ROM products, digital libraries that uses number of multimedia information, products like movies, speeches, images and photos to sound, use of online, CR-ROMs and other digital sources of



information and infrastructure for accessing material increases daily. In this condition library becomes online worker, help citizen for selling services. Help to find information faster than their competitors, librarians should access information faster than non-information worker can get it, from the available digital resources in the library. Because of these role librarians are termed as digital librarian, digital information professional, cybrarian and information broker etc.

We can say that availability of information online in technological era and its tremendous use, give librarian opportunity, not a risk. All the users are not techno –savvy they need help of librarian to find out their required information. Information providers have to work as digital information resources. So in digital era informational professional work as:

Librarian

Information manager

Information adviser/instructor

System and networking

Information broker

Change agent

Application leader

Facilitator

Innovator

Database manager etc.

Library and information center are termed as important center for institutions because they are responsible for supporting teaching, research institutes and other academic programs. Now libraries are on the way to great change, they are affected by the social, political, economical and technological development. The time passed when they are engaged in manual housekeeping operations now they act as a knowledge exporter to satisfy their clients requirements. It is essential to use technological tools, it encourage professional to focus on technology, innovation, technical and social complexity, cost and staff capacity. Therefore library professionals have to take initiative to support 21st century technological innovation.



Competency V/s Skills:

Both the terms can be used as interchangeably but it is essential to distinguished them. We often use the word skill and competency as it represents the same meaning. Although they are related but there are important difference between both the terms.

Skills:

Skills are the ability in an individual. It generally applied in a specific setting complete predefine result. It can be learned with the help of training or by experience.

Competency:

Competency allow person to give positively to their organization and the library professional. Larsen describe competency as “combined theoretical knowledge and practice expertise that make individual able and encourage taking right decision in their working environment.

Easy formula to remember competency is:

Skill + knowledge + abilities = competency

(<https://sprigghr.com/blog/alignment-direction/skills-vs-competencies-how-skills-and-competencies-are-different>)

Need of skills and competency among library professionals

Since the beginning of 21st century, libraries are facing evolution (Raina, 211-216) for three main reasons:

- The evolution from print to electronic media as a leading form of information storage, and its dissemination. Union of different media, text, graphic and sounds in multimedia has directly affected on evolution.
- Increasing attention on responsibility for best performance and quality customer services.



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- New type of work environment like end user computing, team work, reengineering, outsourcing etc.

Conclusion:

In the era of digital environment, one needs the knowledge and expertise over LIS professionals. We as a library professional have to take the advantage of it and provide the information to our patron at right time to the right users, it is our actual policy. In 21st century library information communication technology becomes essential. It makes drastic change in working of library as all traditional operations have been transformed into digital one. The librarian has to understand the innovation in the library and information science field, adopt the technology for better services and upgrade themselves for continuous development of their field. It is also found that the role of librarian are now been changed from library gatekeeper to digital librarian or cybrarian.



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