

PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES AND SKILLS AMONG LIS PROFESSIONALS IN ELECTRONIC ERA

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Abstract

The changing environment in libraries demands new competencies for future librarians. The study defines and confirms competencies for fresh professionals keeping in view the needs of the ever changing demands of users. Study categorises competencies into three types: Personal, Professionals and Technical. Further distinct preference for information technology competencies has been emphasised. The paper emphasises that acquisition of new sets of skills has become essential to survive in this electronic environment. The paper outlines and discusses the personal, professional and required technical skills needed for library science professionals.

Keywords: Competencies; Emerging Skills; Library Professionals; User's Expectations; Electronic Environment

1. INTRODUCTION

What professional competences should librarians have in order to provide more professional, comprehensive and efficient services for students and teachers in their learning, teaching and research? with the advent of information technology the role of libraries has totally changed now. It is not traditional libraries but become Information/Knowledge resource centre. Library professionals become Information/knowledge professionals. There is great change in library services and infrastructure, Library cooperation services changed in Resource sharing networks & consortia. Information is not only text and pictures. It is electronically available in wide variety of formats, like multimedia, audio and video and complex format etc.

As library users are changing so Librarian also needs different kind of professional's skills and competencies. LIS Professionals have great opportunities and good future with professional competencies and skills. They act as knowledge navigators who search information from anywhere. So they require new range of skills for the management of information and communication skills.

Professionals should reappraise and explore ways to improve their services. The changing role of the LIS professionals emphasizes the need to continuously update or acquire new skills and knowledge to remain relevant to the today's library environment. Professionals may need to restructure their functions, expand their roles and responsibilities to effectively contrite and to meet the needs of a large and diverse user's community. For this, professionals should always be ready at any cost.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To find out the area in which LIS Professionals need to acquire ICT skills.
2. To focus the need for LIS Professionals to maintain competences and skills relevant for the management of the modern day library functions and also capable of prepare them remain relevant for competitive electronic age.
3. To study the basic competencies and skills whether it is personal, professionals and technical required in the changing electronic age.

3. COMPETENCY

Competency is defined as the generic knowledge, skill or attitude of a person required performing a task effectively.

According to Griffiths and King (1985) have defined competencies as "a set of knowledge, skills and attitudes related to the effective conduct and work performance of library and information science professionals"

4. SKILLS

Skills are abilities or proficiencies required of a person in position to plan and execute an action geared at accomplish some task and achieving some goal. The basic goal of information professionals is to fulfill the needs of Library users with the use of various library resources.

According to Cambridge English Dictionary," Skill is an ability to do an activity or job well, especially because you have practiced it."

5. CRITERION SHIFT

- Library Professionals > Information/Knowledge Professionals
- Traditional library >Electronic Library
- Information society > Knowledge Society
- Conventional learning > E-learning
- Basic knowledge> Specialised knowledge

6. SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES REQUIRED IN LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS

Basic aim of library and information professionals is to satisfy the information need of the library user through the provision of the information services and resources. In the present electronic environment, it is required from the librarians to work independently and with the team as and when required to develop user centric applications, programmes and deliver instructions, services and products in its response. It is always expected from the Library professionals to have traditional knowledge and qualifications along with the additional capabilities, experiences and knowledge of latest technology to satisfy ever changing demand of customers. Such competencies includes :

- a) General competencies
- b) Professionals competencies
- c) Technical Competencies

a) GENERAL COMPETENCIES:

- Good Character: LIS professionals must have good and high character, responsible and also have good motivator, visionary and problem solver.
- Creative: LIS professionals must think creatively and innovatively.
- Adopt Challenges: LIS professionals must seek out challenges and capitalizes on new opportunities.
- Positive Thinker: LIS professionals should be Remain flexible and positive in a time of continuing change.
- Effective Communication Skills: LIS professionals must possess excellent communication skills, constantly update personal knowledge base by keeping in touch with the latest development
- Believe in Team Work: LIS professionals must recognize the value of professional networking.
- Good Leader: Librarian should be master in personal and professional development of the staff working within the Information Organization but also should have the quality of negotiate confidently and persuasively, Demonstrates personal career planning, Plans priorities and focuses on what is critical, Leader must have ability to work with difficult people.
- Self-confidence: LIS professionals should be self confident and have capability to take decisions for coming future as and when required.
- Flexible: LIS professionals must flexible, resistant and adoptive in changing environment. LIS Professionals must create awareness among users and make them accept the change.
- General skills: LIS professional should be innovative, problem solver, good decision maker, assertive and also have the presentation, stress management, time management skills.

b) PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES:

- Knowledge resources (books, journals, i.e. resources, Internet): LIS Professionals provide Library services through books, journals, thesis, dissertation etc. in order to meet the user's requirements. So they should be perfect to provide knowledge to users through these knowledge resources.
- Technological facilities and resources: LIS Professionals should be master in accessing other library's catalogue, online database, internally published newsletters, reports and journals, bibliographies, indexing and abstracting services. LIS Professionals should be expert in providing technological facilities and resources to users.
- Financial resources: He should be able to Plan Budget. He should be able to maintain and develop of cost-effective policies and information services that are aligned with the strategic directions of the organizations and client groups. He should understand the importance of Skills for manpower training.

c) TECHNICAL COMPETENCIES

Technological skills are those which are required to handle information technology and its other related fields such as computer operations, telecommunication Media, creation of online database, designing of websites, searching information for internet etc. Borderless libraries are nothing but advanced application of information technology on the library, so LIS Professionals must be familiar with IT skills.

- **Hardware, Software and Networking Skills:** Skills of General purpose programming, Networking, knowledge of Computer hardware, software and as well as using of internet and other library related networks like DELNET, INFLIBNET etc. Speedy resource sharing and dissemination is possible only with proper computer networking skills.
- **ICT Applications in Libraries:** With the help of ICT tools it is possible to store, retrieve and disseminate and organise information by creating websites and databases and much more. Information is now published both electronically and by print making it accessible to users according to their demand. Most of library services are ICT based, it is important for LIS Professionals to be well informed about new development in ICT.
- **Automation:** Today every job of library like acquisition, circulation, cataloguing and serial control etc need automation for prompt result.
- **E-Resources:** Thousands of open access journals have been created fulfilling the promise of so called gold open access. That is why, New electronic word mesmerise the new generation to use most the electronic databases instead of print journals.
- **Digital Library:** To digitalise the thousands ancient books and manuscripts LIS professionals have the knowledge of skills of digitalization to preserve the cultural heritage of India/ Institution. Intellectual capital having appropriate

skills in understanding how to make use of technology and resources in digital environment.

- **Operating systems:** Knowledge of Windows, UNIX, LINUX and other operating systems
- **Bibliographic Database Management:** Bibliographic Database Management skills with World processing, Graphics, Spread sheet & Presentations.

7. MULTIMEDIA NAVIGATION

With the emergence of internet and associated technologies, in particular Multimedia has opened an entirely new medium for providing improved information services and resources for users.

- **RFID:** RFID, Smart card and Biometric technologies are used in number of ways around the world, and security has become significant in information technology and these applications involving data sharing and transactions through the internet. So in this electronic era Library is a power house and RFID is a centralized facility.
- **Web:** Quality of Web page Development and Content Management.
- **Social Networking:** There are lots of social networking sites on the Internet. Users can select the suitable site according to their need and demands like blogs, e-portfolio, formal and ad-hoc communities etc. Social Networks focuses on the supporting the relationship between librarians and students for learning, teaching, content development and professional development etc.
- **Cloud Computing:** Cloud Computing is Internet based development and use of computer technology. Cloud computing services provide common applications online that are accessed from a web browser, while the software and data are stored on the server.
- **Database management systems and mobile technology:** Mobile technologies change the way people communicate since they provide information retrieval and other communication options on a single device.

8. CHALLENGES FOR LIS PROFESSIONALS

- 1) **Fear to adopt Technology:** In the age of technology, library professionals must know about the ICT. This is also a big challenge in the present age.
- 2) **Electronic Information Environment:** Users has demand of web based product and services so there is need to focus on electronic information environemnt in the library.
- 3) **Lack of better online services:** In electronic era, there is need of availablity of full text material on the internet, better abstracting and indexing online services, need of quality base library and information services.

- 4) **Lack of faculty development programme and training:** Training and FDP like programme nourishes professionals to cope up with the present demand of users. But lack of use and access the online resources due to insufficient knowledge become a big challenge for new potential professionals.
- 5) **Lack of Insufficient Funds:** LIS professionals require sufficient funds in their library budget in setting up and their maintenance. Unsustainable, inconsistent and partial funding to community-based initiatives mostly found in library.
- 6) **Lack of awareness and literacy of technology:** Literacy of information and technology is another big challenge.

9. CONCLUSION

This study has identified sets of competencies for fresh professionals. With the development of cutting edge technologies in library, the Library professionals should be well prepared for their duties and also aware with new trends in their fields of knowledge. They require positive & proactive attitude towards change and continuous reinvention of the competence among professionals. The result of study show that a list of needed technological tools in which user feels comfortable in customer driven market. To fulfill the 4th law of Ranganathan there is need to develop LIS professionals with core competencies and emerging skills not limited to having knowledge of ICT but also understand how to utilize these Information communication skills for the development of new and useful gadget for providing new services based on users interest with a single click.

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