LIBRARIANSHIP: A PROFESSION AT THE THRESOLD

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Abstract

Change is the inevitable consequent of the process of every development. The transitional period having great possibility and opportunity as well itself, the cause of complete extinct. Like any other discipline, LIS profession is also passing through drastic changes and development, which raised many questions against the existence and importance of Librarians. The fate of any profession is depends on, how the professionals could cope up or adopt the new development. Unfortunately, it seems the students-teachers, librarians and library science philosophers are perplexed in the wave of google storm. It needs to identify the preceding issues and problems and their causes to have insight for it to come up. It implies not only to have plan for current issue but also anticipate the future challenges in right time to introspect truly. The task as such is big, and require rigorous enquiry in all respect. This is a very small effort towards systematic investigation focused on academic librarian and librarianship in order to throw the light on today's scenario.

Keywords: Library and Information Science (LIS) education; Library Schools; Library professionals; academic librarianship,

Introduction

Today we are witnessing the revolutionary and drastic changes in every areas of LIS profession. In fact we are shifting from old paradigm replace by new one; naturally it expected to undergo substantial changes in its outlook accordingly. As it happens with every creative process our endorsement and values has to be redefine in the new context. Change is inevitable consequent of the process of development, which also raise the question of existence. The things can only be sustain and survive in this process which could prove their strength, potency, importance and ability of adaptation the change accordingly. The profession exactly standing on the threshold from where, the replacement of old one by new revolutionary idea and practices are inevitable. It is fact, that the fate and success of any discipline is strongly depends on none other than but its education. The failure of the profession is the failures of education which we impart. The gardener has to be hold as a responsible for the poor show of garden nobody blames the plants for that. The education is of that importance.

Knowing the exact problem is as good as solving the half problem. Before dwell much in to the discussion, it would better to draw your sincere attention towards most common issues which indeed most preceding problem before the profession these are as follow.

1. Librarians are not ready to serve the users directly or personally.
2. Librarians rather prefer to enjoy the position of stock holder or care taker instead of service provider.
3. Librarians are comparatively lagged behind in the application and exploration of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in practice.
4. Lack of leadership in cultural and knowledge sphere.
5. Librarians believe in just implementation and execution rather than creator.
6. Poor contribution in productive works.
7. Poor presentation and research skill.
8. Job dissatisfaction is common among the librarians.
9. Degradation approach towards profession.
10. Lack and wide variation in job description from institute to institute and last but not least
11. The users and their information needs are the most neglected element of today's librarianship and LIS research.

It is true and acceptable that there must be some respectful exception but very few and exception can't be the rule of thumb. The list could be much lengthy than this as the observations and issues are categorically restricted to academic librarianship only. Many of above issues are the consequent of failures of education system and education which we impart. These issues are not being recognized for first time, it has previously also and many efforts and experiments has been done such as syllabus revision, semester pattern, integrated and disintegrated course pattern and now 12 + 3 pattern beside seminars, workshop, conference, refresher course and many more in expectation of desire changes, modification and developments. It gives lot of pains to say that all such efforts are end up with failures at some extent and the reason behind is the failures in cultivation of value, professionalism, LIS research and library culture at wide extent. Apart from these reasons many others factors are also involves which can't be neglected. Let's make systematic efforts to check the impact, causes, and measures involves in it. I am still not hurry to draw any inference. Let's have a look some findings and observations. The findings are not exclusive and comprehensive enough but certainly representative.

As it earlier mentioned that the observations are restricted to academic librarianship, hence the findings are also limited to just 133 responses of college libraries affiliated to University of Pune.

1) **1st and 2nd Observation - Librarians are not ready to serve the users directly or personally and Librarians rather prefer to enjoy the position of stock holdings or care taker instead of service provider.**

These observations are resulted into following findings and which indeed very difficult to prove through questionnaire but still the findings are as follow.

1. 71% of librarians are engage in other works such as circulation, administration, institutional and academic.
2. 83% Librarians are facing inadequate manpower problems.

3. 79% Librarian do not provide Reference Service.
4. 97% do not provide Reader Advisory Services.
5. 92% Librarian do not organize Initiation programme for new user.
6. 88% Librarian never extent extension service.
7. 53% Librarians never participate in cultural or any other prograame of college

Above statistical picture can shade some light on reasons behind the 1st and 2nd observation, in fact many other factors are also involves which can't be reflect through questionnaire such as poor response of reader, lack of professionalism, apathetic approach of librarian, lack of due knowledge and information and fear of committing mistakes.

2) **3rd Observation - Librarians are comparatively lagged behind in the application and exploration of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in practice.**

This observation has been drawn through two different findings i.e. a) Computer application skill and b) Internet application (web 2.0 and 3.0) skill. Computer application skill encompasses E-reading, Typing, Programming, Housekeeping, Music listening, movie watching etc. Whereas Internet application skill covers E mailing, Data mining, Blogging, Twitting, Chatting, membership and use of Subject Gateways, Portal, Study circle and discussion group etc. This has been ranked during 63 to 90% and 30 to 48% respectively. It is clear that this won't be a clear estimation of Information Literacy skill and ability of librarians.

3) **4th Observation - Lack of leadership in cultural and knowledge sphere.**

Academician expected to come up with leadership in various fields having progressive thinking this can be reflect through various factors such as education qualification, language competency, Reading habits and publication etc. And the findings are as follow.

1. Art graduate community among LIS professional are dominant and about 87 %
2. Competitive examination competency includes NET, SET, MPSC, UPSC, GRE, TOFEEL and other examination has been rated during 25 to 33 %.
3. Language competency particularly English Language encompasses reading, writing and speaking has rated during 13 to 21 %.
4. Presentation skill includes teaching, delivering lectures, Reporting, writing which was ranked between 3 to 15 %
5. Organizing skill covers organization of seminars/ workshop/ conference, cultural programme, participation in NSS programme, Participation in academic committees and organization of book exhibition was ranked during 6 to 9%.

4) 5th Observation - Librarians believe in just implementation and execution rather than creator.

This observation implies creative implementation and developments in library administration, management and services, which is difficult estimate exactly but still tried to find in term of their library software as an example. It found that

1 86% librarians are running the software without any modification.
2 2% librarians are using Open source software.
3 14% librarians could not run the software which they have and doing manually.

5) 6th Observation - Poor contribution in productive works.

Productive work of a librarian can be measure in term of compilation of Bibliographic products, Information products, Literature search services, Alerting Services, Reader Advisory Services etc. This is most thrusting area of modern Librarianship. The survey founds 18 % Librarians are only engage in such productive work.

6) 7th Observation - Poor presentation and research skill.

Research skill is the back bone of any profession to sustain in the changing scenario. It requires Conceptual and Analytical Thinking, Effective Presentation and systematic Data Collection.

Research is scientific method of rediscover the knowledge starts with some fair problems. Only uninfluenced mind could see the problems as it is and hence bias free mind is inevitable prerequisite of scientific research. Because it is nothing to prove something pre decided. Today the most unfortunate incident happens with social sciences particularly Library Science that many research tries to prove what they have decided before the scientific enquiry begins and end up without significant addition to amount knowledge.

For the sake of profession it needs to carry out extensive survey to know the current situation and trends will only help in reinstate the objective of LIS research. Nevertheless implication of 10th, 11th plan of UGC and 6th pay commission resulted in to undertaking of minor, major, M.Phil and PhD research projects; still objectives, quality output and new addition is the subject of deep fervor.

7) 8th and 9th Observations - Job dissatisfaction is common among the librarians and Degradation approach towards profession.

This general inference has been drawn from following observation and findings i.e.

a) 92% Librarians said what they are doing is not productive.
b) 81% Librarians believes that their absence does not alter the situation.
c) 97% Librarians opined that no administrative and financial powers have crippled their importance in the institute and decision making ability.
d) 69% Librarian felt – Teacher dominant environment cause for unreasonable interference and degradation treatment.
e) 97 % Librarian do not ready to choose LIS profession for their children.

8) **10th Observation - Lack of uniformity and wide variation in librarians job description and the users and their information needs are the most neglected element of today's librarianship and LIS research.**

It is well known fact of Indian academic sector that there is no such accredited and audit central body established which can evaluate and monitor the quality, quantity of education, discipline or the branch of study. Indiscriminate colleges, department are being opened at commercial basis under the influence of politicians. It is also worth to note that maximum private colleges are run by the educational firms of politicians, where less salary, lack of infrastructure and dually qualified staffs are the usual scenario in higher education sector in India. This led towards the exploitation and forced them to work on very meager wages. Libraries are just an unproductive luxury of no use for them hence mostly neglected and treated badly. Librarians are never accepted as an qualified academician in such environment and treated as clerk so for non academic works are usually assigned to library staff. It will insightful to see some common practices and scenario among higher education in India as follow.

4 Inadequate and inefficient supportive staff in library.
5 No decision power and authority given to librarian.
6 Non academic works and assignment.
7 Do not maintain the seniority of librarian.
8 Discouraging by appointing Professor In charge to Library.
9 Library staff never compensates or never give extra manpower for extra curricula activities or programme such as YCMOU, IGNOU etc Courses.
10 Any time library staff can be used for other works without libraries consent.

These are some representative examples of practices although not comprehensive enough but certainly thoughtful. It doesn't mean that these outcomes are of one folded, it is rather the consequent are multifaceted. The biggest problem lies in the unpardonable practice of current librarianship. I feel no hesitation to say that today's librarians are totally ignore the important third pillar of library i.e. users. A very less or no attention is being paid towards the users information needs. And no systematic efforts are taken to assess the needs of users but rather satisfied by providing access to the whole database which I think as good as keeping the library open to access and expect that the user should help themselves them own in the traditional environment. Surprisingly, librarians are talking great deals about the information literacy in order to empower the users. None of academic libraries are trying to compile information products or bibliographic services to their local library users.

The above observations and findings may succeed to give some bluer picture of the profession at some extent. I agree that the survey is not complete and exclusive enough in all respect but it surely a representative one. I dare not draw any conclusion from this which I would like to leave for the professional to think in this direction also. I rather like to make a sincere urge that lets make the firm commitments and systematic efforts to find-out the effective solution or at least let's estimate gross reality which could help in solving half the problems.

An electronic publication era has brought the fundamental changes into responsibility of librarians. Earlier preservation and security of reading materials of a library was the sheer responsibility of concern librarian but now it is at publisher or provider disposal so for librarians are now just access provider which any one can do. I think this is most preceding issue has put a Big Question on librarian's existence and importance in library this and other many issues are round the corner. Although these enquiries and findings are from academic sectors but more or less the scenario of every library and librarianship is same and could be applicable to all sectors. In this background let me conclude with some suggestions for further kind consideration.

A) Library profession is service orientated profession and library culture needs to be deeply cultivated in the mind of students.
B) Systematic effort need to be taken to reinstate the prestige of service.
C) Teachers of LIS should also extent library services unlike teacher of Medical Science.
D) A due attention should be paid to classic Library Science just as technology oriented vision.

E) Emphasis on adequate training for development of Information Products in the syllabus (Assignment and Project).

F) Service and condition or job description of Librarians should be standardize at UGC level.

G) In service training programme must be available in certain area unlike refresher course which could give working orientation.

H) Best Librarian Awards should be started at various level such as National, State, Regional on the line of Best Teacher Award.

I) In order to reinforce Librarian by financial power, syllabus also to incorporate Financial Management, Financial Risk mgmt, fund Mgmt and Audits etc.

J) Decline numbers of active users from library and their reading habits is most neglected and preceding concern in today's technological scenario, hence LIS research need to more focus on user study, users need and user education.

These are just some issues but not complete & comprehensive enough & need not accepted as it is, rather it must be thought in this direction. Let me close by not merely hoping but inviting all of you to make a firm commitment & resolve to work together to make profession one of the most productive.

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