



ROLE OF LIBRARIANS IN INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND DISSEMINATION

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Abstract

The role of librarians in information management and dissemination is the primary role in librarianship and the information cycle as a whole because information management (IM) is all about the control of how information is created, acquired, organised, stored, distributed, and utilised as a means of promoting efficient and effective information access, processing, and use by people and organisations or libraries. Information dissemination is also part of information management. However, it is specific to the provision of information to end users for accessibility. This paper therefore highlights the role of librarians in information management and dissemination with a view of bringing to bare, the fundamental roles of librarians in librarianship. In addition, the transformations necessitated in the management and dissemination of information overtime; due to literature explosion and the corresponding proliferation of information technology in the library thereby changing management and dissemination of information from traditional to electronic, digital and hybrid methods in libraries. With this perspective, there arises the need to equip today's librarians with ICT skills to tackle the evolving challenges in the field of library and information science to remain relevant in playing the major roles of a librarian, especially in information management and dissemination.

Keywords: Librarians, Information Management, Information Dissemination, Library.

1. Introduction

Traditionally, libraries were known to be physical buildings for housing collections of books, journals, manuscripts and other recorded information (Ogunsola, 2011). In today's world, we see a greater change in the way libraries are operated. Through the use of technology, the library walls have been broken. Users are now able to access information remotely through digital and/ virtual libraries. Terminologies associated with 21st century libraries include; automated library, digital library, hybrid library, virtual library and library 2.0 (Halder, 2009).

Some of the principles guiding 21st century libraries are: round the clock accessibility, absence of barriers, libraries are now more active than passive, flexibility and best of breed systems in library services (Ramos, 2017). 21st century libraries identify with library information management systems, cloud information management systems, 24/7 reference services, e-books/content and Online Public Access Catalogue (OPACS) (Chutia, 2015) as an organ in the information cycle. In the 21st century library, there is more life and



energetic atmosphere than the traditional libraries. Many libraries are renovating their library spaces and environments around the concept of 'learning commons' (Litzenberger, 2016). It is the norm for a 21st century library to have wireless connectivity and outlet access. Some libraries even have extended services such as coffee café because 21st century information seekers view the library as their second home due to conducive environments and services offered in the digital age.

For example, traditionally, librarians were known to be responsible for shelving books, they were generally associated with the collection of books. The roles of librarians are unremittingly evolving to suit the current social needs and technological developments. The 21st century libraries operate in the digital world; therefore librarians are required to intensify their skills to remain relevant in their profession. The role of the library in information management and dissemination has now expanded to include knowledge workers/brokers, digital curators, end user trainer/educator, eb organiser and designer, Interface designer, change agents, knowledge manager/knowledge broker, knowledge mapping skills, researcher, website builder and publisher, content manager, consortia manager; strategic planning, systems development and project management, service orientation, marketing and presentation skills, technical, managerial and information technology skills, advocate (act as a lawyer e.g. concerning issues such as copyright law and intellectual property rights), consultant, collaborator, mentor, leader, sifter of information resources, financial manager, subject experts and lastly, policy makers (Shonle, 2017; Halder, 2009; Jain, 2013; Khan & Bhatti, 2012; Melchionda, 2007; Rao & Babu, 2001; Uzuegbu & McAlbert, 2012; Verma, 2015).

Information management (IM) is the collection and management of information from one or more sources and the distribution of that information to one or more audiences. This sometimes involves those who have a stake in or a right to that information. Management means the organisation of and control over the structure, processing, and delivery of information. The librarian's role in ensuring this is critical to the existence and continuity of the library. Hence, the lifecycle of a library revolves around information management.

Information management therefore, has been the issue of concern to library & information professionals all over the world. People have adopted various approaches to information management and there is often controversy and lack of proper orientation about it. Information management systems offer a framework within which to accomplish the management of data and information resources in an orderly and systematic fashion. Information management systems include all methods and procedures for collecting and processing information on a particular resource and formatting that data in a manner which is useful for the users. The libraries are nowadays more serious towards the management of information resource than in the earlier past. The factors that has greatly influenced the information management are: information explosion, proliferation of documents and extensive use of information handling technologies. The books, journals, newspapers, research reports all have contributed to the flow of information. This has brought some new challenges like economic storage, efficient retrieval and effective use of information. The



academic libraries in particular are experiencing difficulties in managing information as they are required to meet the needs of people of varying degree of specialization and interests (Prasad, 2018).

Information management in the digital era has struggled to curtail these challenges through increasing digital storage and the World Wide Web, information retrieval systems, databases, electronic, digital and hybrid libraries and knowledge management systems (Meola, 2016).

The keywords: “Knowledge management”, “information management” and “information dissemination” are familiar terms used in the information world. The management of information has long been regarded as the domain of librarians and libraries. Librarians and information professionals are trained to be experts in information searching, selecting, acquiring, organising, preserving, repackaging, disseminating, and serving. However, professionals in information technology and systems have also regarded information management as their domain because of the recent advances in information technology and systems which drive and underpin information management. One of the clearest evidences of this is that the positions of “Chief Information Officer” (CIO) in many organisations are generally held by information technologists instead of librarians. In fact, most of the work of CIOs has to do with developing and managing the IT infrastructure and systems, not the managing of information per se. (Lee, 2015)

With the growing interest in knowledge management, many questions have been raised in the minds of librarians regarding: the difference between information and knowledge; between information management and knowledge management; who should be in charge of information and knowledge management; would librarians and information professionals with appropriate education and training in library and information science be most suitable for the position of “Chief Knowledge Officer” (CKO) in their organisations; and what libraries can do in implementing knowledge management.

2. Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

Choo (2008) defines "information management as a cycle of processes that support the organisation's learning activities: identifying information needs, acquiring information, organising and storing information, developing information products and services, distributing information, and using information". Radon (2016) pinpoints the importance of Information Management in Libraries even in the modern ICT environment as “the new technologies of the Internet and beyond will require more expertise in information management”. Rowley (2018) proposes four different levels of information management: information retrieval, information systems, information contexts, and information environments. Effective information management, according to him, needs to address issues at all of these levels.



Hence information management plays an important role in this context in order to manage information resources and services in the library. Information Management skills definitely help the library professionals in facing these revolution and challenges. Library professionals are the most valuable information asset in Libraries. Library patrons expect from LIS professionals to help in accessing and retrieving the relevant information at the correct time and managing information. They are involved in managing Information and information management work in libraries. These professionals who carry out the information management responsibilities require specific knowledge, skills and attributes related to managing information, library services, archiving, data management, content management, information access and retrieval in the context of Digital Information product and services.

Skills for managing Digital Information

The Library professionals who work in the hybrid libraries are required to have knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to create, store, analyse, organise, retrieve, and disseminate print and digital information. The new digital information environment requires librarians to acquire new skills like web 2.0 technologies, internet, ICT and soft information management skill to manage a vast amount of digital information and sustain the Digital information and services over a long period of time.

Library professionals of this information age must also realize the importance of the new knowledge and skills and update them for making the library sustainable and managing the flood of information effectively. Importance of this concept was highly revealed by Bhaskar, and Martens (2008) that “The new librarian combines a collaborative attitude, social awareness, creativity and cultural knowledge with management skills, knowledge of digital developments and the ability to enter into alliances. The librarian of the future is able to innovate the discipline based on content. Not single-handedly, but together with colleagues, other libraries and social partners. This requires talent as well as a large measure of professionalism and expertise” (Morgan, 2014).

Ezema and Ugwu, (2014) Identified interpersonal, leadership & management and information technology skills are the main skills required by librarians for the emerging digital library environment. The study also found that the librarians’ skills in interpersonal, leadership and management are higher than in information technology. Chowdhury (2013) suggests the following measure in-order to be a successful and sustainable digital information services to the libraries: Accommodate new and emerging user information behavior; Improve digital and information literacy, Improve web accessibility to accommodate all kinds of users, especially those that have special needs, Accommodate new and emerging social networking and the social informatics models in specific areas such as digital education, digital health, digital culture, and so on.

The role of digital librarian in the management of digital information resources has a remarkable impact in today’s library. Digital information system management refers to the overall competencies (knowledge, know-how, skills and attitudes) necessary to create,



store, analyse, organise, retrieve and disseminate digital information (text, images, sounds) in digital libraries or any type of information. In the work of Sreenivasulu (2018), to describe the roles of the digital librarian, there is usually a focus on the following:

Guardian of information super highway (ISH): The information super highway is a vision or a metaphor. It envisions a fusion of the two-way wired and wireless capabilities of telephones and networked computers with a cable TV's capacity to transmit hundreds of programs. Services would be delivered by telecommunications networks, cable TV networks, and the Internet and mobile communications. Infrastructure that provides bandwidth-on-demand and information-on-demand services are called information superhighway. There are two types of information services such as public (free) services and commercial services. The use of existing telephone, fax, and analogue TV broadcast services will be supported in the initial information superhighway. In addition, new services such as videophone, multimedia electronic messaging, digital TV/HDTV broadcast and movie and video-on-demand service, will be provided also. **Guardian of the global digital library/ the universal digital library:** The digital library is really a transitory phase towards the universal digital library, a vast distributed information and active repository accessible from anywhere with increasing improved indexing, extraction and summarization techniques. It will be a library without walls or national boundaries.

Digital librarian acts as symbiotic human-machine guru: The digital librarian acts as an intermediary in the task of massive digitisation of information, its storage, dissemination, managing the archive, and making available digitised networked information to the end users. Digital librarians and computers depend on each other for processing and dissemination of digital information and both are interrelated. **Navigation, browsing and filtering:** The navigation of the future would tend to integrate with the human-assisted information retrieval from the networked universe and would support rapid information navigation and precision retrieval. The digital librarian is an expert in navigating, browsing and filtering, digital reference services and electronic information services from the digital information sources.

Multimedia search and indexing: A multimedia digital library requires not just standard indexing and retrieval, but also sub-document indexing and summarization techniques - more than that of paper documents. **Knowledge and data mining:** The digital librarian will require a limited knowledge of data mining and discovery of knowledge from digital libraries to extract unmet information needs of users. For this purpose, unsupervised learning techniques such as clustering, and composite term discovery techniques, etc., are useful. **Search and retrieval co-ordination:** It requires comprehensive knowledge of the retrieval engines and indexing structure so that the digital librarian can achieve the goal of creating information queries with respect to the search system.

Digital librarian's interface functions and roles in the management of DIS: A fundamental role of a Digital Librarian in digital libraries is to act as an intermediary who brings together users and information. Digital library access tools are the right set of tools used in



novel ways to tackle a plethora of challenges and opportunities for information access technology and faster access. Digital information access: There is a variety of information retrieval techniques, including metadata searching, full-text document searching. In knowing what can or cannot be retrieved from the digital library information sources, the digital librarian acts as an expert in the acquisition of digital information.

Accessing and retrieving digital information through digital library access tools: The method used to store, find and retrieve digital information from DIS is called the access method. The technology used to access information digitally provides "navigation paths or digital library access tools" through the digital information system (DIS). Mobile information access, a vision of tomorrow: The ability to access information on demand at any location confers competitive advantage on individuals in an increasingly mobile world. The data from shared file systems; relational databases, object-oriented databases, and other repositories must be accessible to programs running on mobile computers (Sreenivasulu, 2018).

Different from the traditional library, a fundamental role of a Digital Librarian in digital libraries is to act as an intermediary who brings together users and information in digital format. Digital library access tools are the right set of tools used in novel ways to tackle a plethora of challenges and opportunities for information access technology and faster access (Kikuchi et al., 2016 in...). There is a variety of information retrieval techniques, including metadata searching, full-text document searching. In knowing what can or cannot be retrieved from the digital library information sources, the digital librarian acts as an expert in the acquisition of digital information while the dissemination is static and user-oriented. With that, a website can be accessed for information of user's needs. Sometimes, a search may be conducted to retrieve information from databases or digital libraries.

3. Information Dissemination

To disseminate (from Latin disseminare "scattering seeds"), in the field of communication, means to broadcast a message to the public without direct feedback from the audience. The key to effective dissemination is to match the means to the message and needs of the audience. Information dissemination in context to librarianship beside the traditional means that bring users in contact with information, according to Virginia (2018), includes and not limited to press releases, media archives, newsletters, public relations materials, web pages and the social media.

There are services provided by the library to the users often. Those services may include instruction on how to access and use library materials at ease. The Library services / facilities that may be accessed include circulation service, reference service, online reservation of books, recommendation of library material, current awareness service, inter library loan service, photocopying/printing service, orientation and information sessions, selective dissemination of information, audio visual service and multimedia section.

Library services that ensure dissemination of information included book displays at the entrance of the library, catalogues and publication but now includes CAS, SDI, new



arrival's information, mobile information services, email, text message and the use of social media platform. Services provided by the library to online students can include instruction on how to access and use library materials; reference services to provide quick and in-depth answers to student questions; and materials delivery services that provide students with access to library materials online or items delivered to students' homes.

4. Conclusion

The roles of librarians as information managers and information disseminators are rapidly changing thereby necessitating a shift from traditional library to electronic library for the librarians to stay afloat in the information cycle favorably. For that reason, information management should not be restricted to the traditional library. There is increasing need to include knowledge of information management of electronic resources in order to meet arising challenges in the information cycle. Such knowledge and expertise will translate into the effective management and dissemination of information resources and services in a hybrid library that is today's trend.

The author therefore concludes that the role of librarians in information management and dissemination has expanded to accommodate electronic information along with the traditional legacy method. Hence, the need for training and retraining of the 21st century librarian to stay afloat of the rising challenges in effectively carrying out his duties.

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