

Importance & Problems of Communication Skill and Technical Skill in Library Professionals in Present Scenario

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to find out the importance and problems of communication skill as well as technical skill in modern age in the library science professionals. As the changes occurred in library environment, the library and information science professionals should be acquainted with different skills. This paper tries to reflect some skill required for the library and information professionals working at information technology environment and highlights on different programmes to enhance these skills among the professionals. This study uses both qualitative and quantitative approaches along with review of related literature. The conceptual and textual information related to the present study were collected from primary and secondary sources of information such as books and National and International journals etc. This article highlights about the important skills for library science professionals & role of librarian in the age of knowledge.

Keywords: Communication Skills; Technical Skills; Information Communication Technology; Library Science Professionals.

1. Introduction

Library is a non-profit service enterprise. But it has a particular management process, which brings a lot of benefits. The basic elements of this process, planning, organization, leadership and effective and efficient management of control systems in libraries contain important functions. Although the steps involved in this process and strict criteria have been met to support this process, even the most basic need to skip a critical element of success: "Communication skills and Technical skills". In the Modern World, the role of the LIS professionals is adapting to changing technologies, information environment and customers' expectations (Ghante, 2011, 188p.). Library professionals are increasingly responsible not only to provide traditional library information services but also to deliver online information services according to the actual user needs in these days. Librarians need to keep up with their users' expectations to survive and service them. So the modern information services provide to the users a librarian having a proper technical skill. Technical skills mean those skills which are required to handle information technology and its other related fields such as computer operation, networking, telecommunication Medias, creation of online database, designing of websites, searching information from internet etc.

2. Communication Skill

Communication is the part of our everyday life. Every individual needs to be well equipped with the tools to communicate effectively, whether it is on the personal front, or at work. In fact, according to the management gurus, being a good communicator is half the battle won. After all, if one speaks and listens well, then there is little or no scope for misunderstanding. Thus, keeping this fact in mind, the primary reasons for misunderstanding is due to inability to speak well, or listen effectively. Communication skills are the set of skills that enables a person to convey information so that it is received and understood. Communication skills refer to the repertoire of behaviours that serve to convey information for the individual.

Developing the communication skills can help all aspects of our life, from our professional life to social gatherings and everything in between. The ability to communicate information accurately, clearly and as intended, is a vital life skill and something that should not be overlooked. It's never too late to work on your communication skills and by doing so improve your quality of life. So communication is the dynamic process by which we exchange messages to satisfy our needs.

3. Scope of the Study

The purpose of communication is to allow the exchange of information, ideas, concepts, emotions, thoughts and opinions. It is done with aim of socialization as well as development. The communication skill is to provide an opportunity for staff to learn communication techniques and practise them in real settings. It aims to allow the participants to have a comprehensive understanding of communication processes to relate them to their own specific situations and personality types. Specifically every communication situation is different. Effective communication is all about conveying your messages to other people clearly and unambiguously.

According to Barker Interactivity in learning is “A necessary and fundamental mechanism for knowledge acquisition and the development of both cognitive and physical skills”. Interactivity is not simply the ability to speak back to machine but as Cronje (1996, 13p.) explains; interactivity has to do with simulating the interchange between two people who are communicating meaningfully. Increasing rates as well as maximum need for the speedy access of latest information in the present day-to-day context, the libraries are now becoming an inseparable and integral part of an information-based society. Because of the increasing awareness among the users, availability of new resources and advanced application of information communication technology, the library is changing its traditional concept rapidly. Libraries have adapted to the modern information technology and provide the services to users in better ways.

As library and information science professionals communication skill and technical skills play an essential role to develop the library services. This study discuss that what types of skills is required as a library professionals. The main aims of this paper to explore that what types of skills are required in a library professional. The goal of proper communication skills as well as technical skills in the library is to ensure that users make good use of the library's resources bought with scarce funds, that library staff should know what their responsibilities are and perform them properly, and that the libraries' parent bodies can know and appreciate the problems of the libraries and offer necessary assistance regularly.

4. Importance of ICT in Library

ICT has transformed our lives and reshaped the nature of everyday activities and in the cotemporary times a society has emerged which is called the “information society” or ‘knowledge society’, a society in which all activates are directly or indirectly driven by information. This is the era of information explosion in which large amount of information is being generated at every moment (Galhotra, 2008, 124p.). The main aim of every library is to collect, store, retrieve, and disseminate the information to the users. In the earlier time the amount of information product is very less, so the librarian could easily control the library resources manually. But now a day, information is created in a single minute in every day life. So the handling of the huge amount of information without any Information Communication Technology (ICT) is very difficult task. With the help of computer and Internet the big amount of information is easily controlled now days. In 21st century the ICT has great prospective for variety of applications in libraries as it contributes to improve quality, increase productivity, more efficient operations, better resource sharing and more effective services to the users. With the advent of the ICT, libraries became automated that was an initial step towards modernization. It all started with the mainframe computers in the early days to the client/server computing in the mid 1990s accompanied with other changes such as networking, internet usage, e-publications, more specially moving towards the library without walls, web tools application for libraries, consortium practices are to name a few. Moreover, in the recent past a new huddle of technology is ready to dislodge all its precedents so far and it looks more promising.

5. Methodology of the Study

The present study is importance and problems issues of communication skill as well as technical skill in library professionals. It is a pure conceptual study. This study uses both qualitative and quantitative approaches along with review of literature on this particular theme. The conceptual and textual information related to the present study were collected from primary and secondary sources of information such as books and National and International journals etc.

6. Library Communication

Communication skills are necessary for the development of self-advocacy and self-determination, important skills for lifelong success. It is important to develop a variety of skills for both communicating to others and learning how to interpret the information received from others. Knowing our audience and understanding how they need to receive information is equally important as knowing ourselves (Abraham, 2010, 2p.). Library is a place where the information is collected, processed, stored, and disseminated to the users for an effective use. It represents a major storehouse of human knowledge. In any library, proper communication skill is very important for the librarian and library staff. Library communication is carried out within the library and in some cases between libraries. In communicating, meaning and understanding between the people involved has to be established.

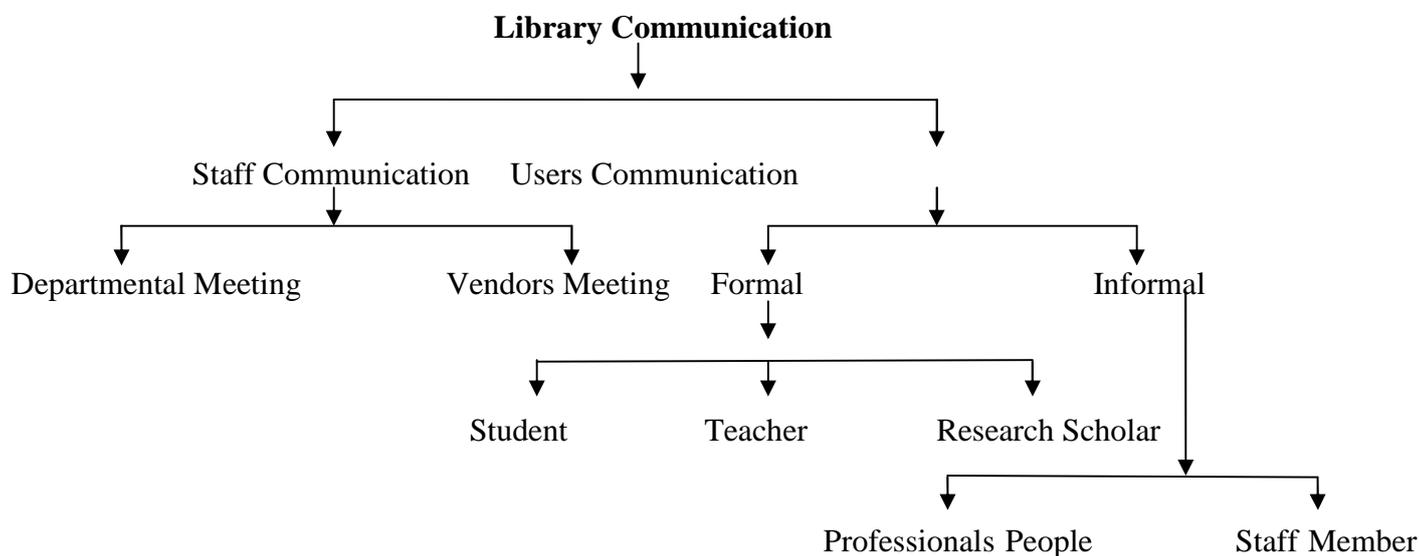


Figure 1: Library Communication Model

6.1 Staff communication

Communication among the staff of the library has an effect on the way the library is managed. Communication must flow upward and horizontally across the organization just as much as it flows downward. Regular meetings are held to discuss the library rules, regulation, implementation of new services, consult about the purchasing of books of every department etc. Because the entire library staff cannot be at those meetings, heads of the various departments, sections or units and other designated representatives will have to meet formally or informally and resolutions or decisions of such meetings made available to other members of staff for them to understand and fulfil with. Some meetings are solely for the members of the top of the administrative hierarchy, and decisions that affect other staff are made known to them.

6.2 Users communication

The users of the library need communication to achieve desired information-seeking goals. Communication is an exchange of information; it takes two or more to exchange information. So when a user visits the library in search of information resources, and is helped by a reference librarian, communication takes place. Information is exchanged and acquired. The reference librarian is an assistant to information seekers, a translator of different information sources, who queries users on what they need, and feeds the information seeker with the desired materials to work with (Abraham, 2010, 3p.). The circulation desk is another place where significant communication takes place between library staff and users. Users interact with the staff concerning enquiries, and borrowing and returning materials.

The academic library, basically two types of user's communication - one is formal communication and another is informal communication. Student, teachers, library staff, Research scholar etc when they communicate, that is called formal communication. In our society there are so many users like retired people etc. when they are communicate the librarian to use the library materials, this communication is called informal communication. Communication is not only must be effective with users only but must have ability tonegotiate effectively with publishers, customers,management &vendors (Ghante, 2011, 189p.).

Another crucial kind of communication between staff and users is the publicizing changes in policies and services of the library. Suggestion boxes placed at strategic points around the library may yield useful information that can be supplemented by occasional user surveys. The library can also hold meetings with designated university officials when considering a collection building in line with university programmes. The library can also make connections with other university libraries for services like interlibrary loan.

7. Problems of Communication and Technical Skills in the Library

7.1 Problems of communication skills in staff

A simple attitude to service and responsibility on the part of some library staff results in failure to communicate effectively with the users and leads to inefficiency and poor service. A library that is staffed with unqualified librarians, who do not actually know their duties and responsibilities and who cannot communicate effectively, leads users to lack interest in using the library. They also failed to provide the information of the users.

7.2 Problems of communication skills in users

Most of the library users are not even aware of the various sections of the library and how and where to locate information and materials. Some of them do not understand the need to interact with the librarians when they need information. Some of them do not want to ask for help and leave the library without the information that they need. Some users may not be able to frame their query in a way that is comprehensible. So, if the staff or librarians are not able to analyses the query as it is expressed, issues of semantics arise and the librarian might not be able to satisfy user needs.

7.3 Problems of technical skills in staff and users

Many libraries' librarians and library staff don't know how to operate the computer and Internet and how to search the information. They are not aware of the modern information and communication technology. So this problem creates barriers for good information services to the users. One the other hand most of the students belonging to the rural areas don't know about computer, so basically they failed to search the up-to-date information.

8. Required Communication Skills for Library Professionals

For today's librarians having professional degrees in library and information science is not sufficient unlike in the past. There are demands for librarians having multidimensional aptitude in the areas of technical work, administrative work and also in providing user oriented services along with soft communication skills(Mazumdar, 2007, 425p.). Like any other profession, the communication soft skills are required in day-to-day working for carrying out routine jobs more effectively. The librarians working in large organizations like corporate offices are already practising these skills through by experience or training. Following are soft skills required forbecoming a successful library professional.

8.1 Writing skill

For a library and information professional the communication skills are not enough to direct interaction with other people. The ability to be able to write clearly and effectively is the key to communicate.This set of skills should not be limited to journalists or professional authors. Poor written communication can be frustrating for the reader and potentially damaging for the author. Would you buy a product from a website or any where else full of spelling mistakes?

8.2 Listening skill

The library professionals must have good listening skills as he/she has to interact with different types of users all the time. According to P. B. Mangla- "users are the God of library". So carefully listening to users can identify the exact requirement and then provide the service accordingly.

8.3 Communication skill

Proper communication skill is also important for the library and information professionals. Command on language especially English and also regional one will improve the communication. Good communication skills also require understanding people, self-confidence. With this one can achieve a lot and solve problems too.

8.4 Interpersonal skill

Librarians have to deal with all levels of people like management, users, colleagues in library, vendors etc. To deal with each one of them in rightful manner requires interpersonal skills. When you work in large organization, it is most important to build rapport with all departments, which helps in managing the library and providing better services to everyone.

8.5 Public relation

One needs to use public relations very effectively to attract users in libraries through various ways. It also helps to bond with users and vendors too. Also it gives ability to work with other professionals. This type of relation is not only needed in library but also in any types of organisation to run it successfully.

8.6 Customer service

Customer is the library users, and to satisfy his needs is customer service. The librarians are bound to give attention to their users and provide services through CAS, SDI or other specialized services. The customer service emphasizes the customer satisfaction, which guarantees that user will always come back to the library.

8.7 Project management skill and presentation skill

The presentation skills are required in report writing, library committee meetings and even in daily works. It represents the library management overall for users. It not only emphasizes the individual skills but also library presentation by means of its decoration, user's guides, and library ambience.

8.8 Leadership skill

Leading a library, whether big or small, is very difficult task, if the librarian doesn't have proper leadership skills. Because in any library so many staff is there, so handling all the staff and users is not a simple thing. In any library Librarian must have proper leadership skills.

9. Technical Skills for the Library Professional

The modern librarian should be a professional that possesses standards and values that function effectively and smoothly in a technological environment (Gerolimos and Konsta, 2008, 691p.). Technologies have created a new service environment that has pushed conventional boundaries much farther, with the calculated risk and opportunities. The library professional have essential modern technical skills to manage the library in a modern age. Some of the important technical skills required for the library professional are discussed below.

9.1 Technological skill

Technological skills mean those skills which are required to handle information technology and its other related fields such as computer operation, networking, telecommunication Medias, creation of online database, designing of websites, searching information from internet etc. As library professional technological skills is very important. Because now a day users don't have time to spend more time to use the library resources. If the library has a good infrastructure with high technology then it would be able easily provide the information to the users in single minute. So the librarian must be equipped with well technological skills to operate the modern information technology.

9.2 Computer and information technological tools using skill

The librarian in the cyber world must have the skill of using computer and other information technological tools properly. Because quality of the library services is depended on the quality of the librarian's performance. Skill of computer operation, application of bar code technology, creation of database and its updating, designing and updating of web pages etc. are required for the web-based librarians.

9.3 Skill of using Internet and computer communication networks

Skill of using Internet and computer communication networks is very important for library professionals. Skill of handling different computer communication networking architectures and systems i.e. LAN, MAN, and WAN as well as using of internet and other library related networks like INFLIBNET, CALIBNET, DELNET etc. are required for a modern library professional working in IT environment to tackle the problems and challenges raised in building and maintaining a digital web-based library. Speedy resource sharing and dissemination of information is possible only with the proper computer networking skills like current awareness services, SDI services etc. (Mazumdar, 2007, 427p.). Moreover, the librarian and information professionals should have the knowledge of network protocols like TCP/IP, UDP, SMTP, HTTP, FTP etc.

9.4 Software skill

As a library professional the basic software skills is very important. He/she should have the knowledge about Microsoft Office products and other alternatives, anti-virus software, personal firewall software, Telnet, HTML editors; basic ability to understand the operating system; knowledge of what you have on your computer; knowledge of how to figure out what (operating system) others have ability to test & learn new software (librarians are often asked to troubleshoot any program installed on library computers); in depth knowledge of email software, understanding of POP3 vs. I-map etc. Besides all the basic software, there are a lots of library related softwares like SOUL, KOHA, LIBSYS, GREENSTONE, etc. whose basic functions are must be known by the librarian.

9.5 Information retrieval skill

As the web-based libraries are the database of databases, the librarian should have the professional technological skills of comprehensive retrieval of right information from a particular database in logical and analytical manner and to provide it to its users at the right time. The librarians should be in a position to help its diversified user community by providing retrospective searches, ready reference services, bibliographic services, selective dissemination of information services etc.

9.6 Preservation skill

As like traditional library in digital library environment, also the librarian should have the preservation skill for the E-Resources. Therefore, the library professional should have the knowledge of cryptography, firewall, and different anti-virus software for prevention and preservation of E-Resources.

9.7 Other skill

As a library professional beside the communication as well as technical skills some other important skills are required.

9.7.1 Managerial skill

No organizational function can be successfully carried out without successful managerial skills. It is very important for the smooth functioning of any library. In every library required proper planning and perfect understanding. As the librarians or library professional are the manager of a library and information centre, they should have some basic managerial skills for managing the different sections like Finance, Human Resource etc. They should have to apply some of these managerial skills in planning, decision-making, motivating etc. Time management skill is one of the important managerial skills required for a successful librarian. Total Quality Management (TQM) of library and information center is mostly reliant on the managerial skill of the librarians.

10. Library Professional in Digital Library Environment

The rapid development of information technology and communication system has brought a revolutionary change in the organization and management of information. Now, education styles have become important in providing students to participate actively, communicate in a flexible environment, share information universally, personalize education and environment for their self and learn independently aside from place and time. In present electronic information age, where information is treated as an economic resource, a marketable commodity and as a social wealth, the librarians are to play an active and important role in the process of information communication system (Mazumdar, 2007, 422p.). The libraries are facing new challenges, new competitors, new demands, new expectations and a variety of information services from users. They are now to be more acquainted with the skill of handling new technologies related to collection, processing and dissemination of information. Thus the library personnel should develop their professional proficiency and communication skill in order to meet the challenges emerging out of digital library Environment.

11. Conclusion

The knowledge-based society is a society where the value of knowledge is known and decisions are made and activities performed on the basis of knowledge. In such a society librarians' role is to organize, control, and manage. Traditional methods and thinking cannot meet the needs of library users in a knowledge-based society. Librarians need new skills in the modern time to deal with the knowledge-based environment. These include knowledge management, information and computer skills, scientific and practical skills, and ability to support educational programs of different organizations. So it is clear that as a library professional in the modern age, he/she must know communication and technical skill to systematically manage the traditional library as well as digital library.

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