



THE CHANGING ROLE OF LIBRARIES IN THE FUTURE SCENARIO OF INDIA

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Abstract

Throughout history India, the role of the library was to serve as a storehouse, an archive of manuscripts, art, and important documents. The library was the centre of information revered by most because each contained the foundational building blocks of information for all humanity. In medieval times, books were valuable possessions and these were far too expensive for most people to own. As a result, libraries often turned into collections and store houses of books. A huge turning point in the evolution of libraries was architected in the 21st century. Leading up to today libraries have consisted of large collections of books and other materials.

Keywords: changing role of Libraries, future scenario, Librarians – Catalysts for Change.

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i. Beginning the Transition

The libraries have transitioned from a time where information was scarce and precious to today where information is vast and readily available, and in many cases, free. People who in the past visited libraries to find specific pieces of information are now able to find that information online. The vast majority of people with specific information need to longer visit libraries. However, others who read for pleasure may, still regularly patronise their local library, out of choice.

ii. Future Scenario of library

I have put together eight key trends that are affecting the development of the next generation library. Rest assured that these are not the only trends, but ones that have been selected to give clear insight into the rapidly changing technologies and equally fast changing mindset of library patrons.

1. Communication systems: Communication systems have been rapidly evolving. If you were to construct a trend line beginning with the 1844 invention of the telegraph, you will begin to see the accelerating pace of change: 1876- telephone, 1877- phonograph, 1896- radio, 1935- fax machine, 1939- television, 1945- ENIAC Computer, 1947- transistor, 1954- colour television, 1961- laser, 1965- e-mail, 1973- cell phone, 1974- Altair 8800, 1989- World Wide Web, 1990- Online Search Engine, 1992- Web Browser, 1994- Palm Pilot, 1996- Goggle, 1999- P2P, 2002- iPod, 2004- Pod casting, Facebook- 2005 and twitter- 2007. One obvious question, in this case, what is the ultimate form of communication and will we ever get there? While we are not in a position to know the “ultimate form” of communication, it would be a safe bet that it is not writing and reading books. Books are a technology, and writing is also a technology and every technology has a limited lifespan.
2. All technologies used today will be replaced by something new: Media formats are continually disappearing. Print media was replaced by the non print media, which in turn was replaced by the electronic media.

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3. Search Technology will be more complicated. Many people today think our present day search technology is fairly simple. But the simple search days are numbered. The vast majority of today's search industry is based on text search. Text search being expanded to cover the various languages of the world and some forms of image, audio and video search are currently in place. However, next generation search technology will include the ability to search for such attributes as taste, smell, texture, reflectivity, opacity, mass, density, tone, speed, and volume. As we achieve the ability to conduct more and more complicated searches, the role of the librarian to assist in finding this kind of information also becomes more and more important. People will not have the time and skills necessary to keep up on each new innovation in the search world and they will need a competent professional to turn to.
4. Time compression is changing the lifestyle of library patrons: The spectrum of human need is continually expanding. The paradigm of "need" is changing, evolving, and most importantly, speeding up. Time compression is affecting nearly every aspect of our lives, but as we compress our time, we are also compressing our needs.
People today sleep, on average, two hours less per night than 80 years ago, going from 8.9 hours per night to 6.9 hours. 35% of lunches today are eaten on the run. 65% of young people surf the web and watch TV at the same time. In a recent survey 44% of the people in our society are having trouble making decisions because of sheer data overload. So as the spectrum of human need grows, opportunities for libraries to meet these needs are also growing. However, "needs" are a moving target, so the library of the future will need to be designed to accommodate the changing needs of its constituency.
5. We may be transitioning to a verbal society: Keyboards remain as our primary interface between people and electronic information even though inventors have long felt there must be a better way. The days of the keyboard are numbered. As mentioned earlier, all technology ends and soon we will be witnessing the end of the keyboard era.

Dr. William Crossman,

Founder/Director of the Comp Speak 2050 Institute for the Study of Talking Computers and Oral Cultures, predicts that s we say goodbye to keyboards we will begin the transition to a verbal society & predicts that 2050 literacy will be dead. While the accuracy of his dates and the wholesale transition from literacy to a verbal society may be debatable, there will undoubtedly be a strong trend towards verbal information. Computers will become more human-like with personalities, traits, and other characteristics that will give us the sense of being in a room with other humans.

6. The demand for global information is growing exponentially: We must understand the culture, society and systems to learn about the rest of the world are key to our ability to prepare ourselves for the global societies of the future. At the same time that we learn about global societies, a new era of global systems will begin to emerge.
7. New era of Global Systems: Our present global systems include international trade, global sea transportation, the Metric System, global news services, global mail systems, time zones, global air transportation, and global stock trading. Two of the newest global systems include the GPS system and the Internet.
8. Libraries will play a key role in the development of global systems because they will be charged with archiving and disseminating the foundational pieces of information necessary for the new systems to take root. Libraries themselves are a global system representing an anchor point for new systems and new cultures.
9. Libraries – from a centre of information to a centre of culture: With the emergence of distributed forms of information, the central role of the library as a repository of facts and information is changing. While it is still important to have this kind of resource, it has proven to be a diminishing draw in terms of library traffic. The notion of becoming a cultural centre is an expansive role for the future library. It will not only serve as an information resource, but much more, with the exact mission and goals evolving and changing over time.

A culture-based library is one that taps into the spirit of the community, assessing

priorities and providing resources to support the thing deemed most important. Modern day cultural centers include museums, theatres, parks, and educational institutions.

The library of the future could include all of these, but individual communities will be charge with developing an overall strategy that reflects the identity and personality of its own constituency.

iii. Changing Role of Librarians

The role of a library within a community is changing. The way people interact with the library and the services it offers is also changing. Earlier the Librarianship was the discipline that promotes an integrated approach to preserving, identifying, capturing, evaluating, retrieving, and sharing the significant knowledge and information assets of society.

Today, the profession has grown way beyond anything that even the father of library science could ever have envisaged, with dependent libraries and storage sites all over the world. But throughout the centuries, the Library and the profession have remained staunchly faithful and open its doors to any and all in pursuit of learning a long and noble tradition. On which the librarians are determined to continue to build, develop the collections, raise money to keep the ancient infrastructure in good repair, and welcome those ever-increasing numbers of readers and visitors to the libraries.

Libraries now have an entirely new approach, in which digital information and communications technology are playing an increasingly crucial role. "Digitisation" and users are to enjoy the journey and relish in the wonderment of what tomorrow may bring. The automation of the library, the use of CD-ROM's and the Internet has dramatically changed the role of the librarian, making their job more demanding.

iv. Librarians – Catalysts for Change

Librarians recognize that information sources are rapidly changing from print resources to electronic resources and the library must assume a leadership role with the teaching of these new technologies. They recognise the important roles their positions and resource centres have in preparing students for information and technology. Today's librarian plays many distinct yet interrelated roles in order to accomplish the goals as a teacher, collaborator, curriculum leader, instructional leader, information specialist, instructional technologist, a programme manager, advocate and as an information specialist.

v. Conclusion

There are many aspects to the role of librarians. They can be leaders into integrating technology and the information specialists who provide both physical and intellectual access to material through teaching the knowledge ethically and effectively. They are resource managers and must be up to date in reviewing new materials in order to develop their collections.

Library Resource Centre's and librarians are really at a crossroads. They are called on to play an increasingly important role in information literacy and electronic information and to communicate knowledge ethically and effectively. They are resource managers and must be up to date in reviewing new materials in order to develop their collections.

Library Resource Centre's and librarians are really at a crossroads. They are called on to play an increasing important role in information literacy and electronic information retrieval, analysis, and synthesis. If librarians are failing to embrace the challenge of this new role it will inevitably lead to obsolescence. To meet these changes, we must not be content with the present status, for it requires personal commitment and hard work.

"If nothing ever changed, there would be no butterflies"

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