Role of Information Technology in Present Libraries

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Abstract: A Library is a pulsing heart of an academic institution and most intellectual source of academic community. It is an agency to carry out the objectives of an educational institution to which it is attached. The advent of the electronic computer, development in the telecommunications and audio-visual technologies has opened up new possibilities in information handling. The Information Technology in general and computer technology in particular has been the harbinger of the library and information system. The paper has highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of the librarians in dealing with information technology in the libraries. The study has been able to identify the problems faced in the process of introducing Information Technology in libraries. The present study had the perspective of the librarian as its focus. A new coordinated effort is necessary for melding application software, hardware and communication infrastructure strategies to provide transparent interconnections for all library end users of colleges.

KEY WORDS: Information Technology, audio-visual technologies, colleges, libraries, communication.

Introduction

A Library is a pulsing heart of an academic institution and most intellectual source of academic community. It is an agency to carry out the objectives of an educational institution to which it is affiliated. The quality index of an institution is dependent on the students, faculty and also the frequency of the library utilization to produce satisfying results. Library is considered as “vital resource centre”, “Heart of an academic institution”, “ocean of knowledge”, “backbone of educational institution” which is aimed at the teaching, learning and research activities in an academic institution.

The advent of the electronic computer, development in the telecommunications and audio-visual technologies has opened up new possibilities in handling information. The Information Technology particularly computer technology has been the harbinger of the library and information system. It has helped in speeding up, collection, processing and distribution of the information. Further the development of micro computers coupled with telecommunications technology has helped compact and portable development of information systems. The new developments in the software design and their applications to multivariate aspects of information storage and retrieval has called for a renewed interest in the development of new information tools for library users as well as library staff.

Information is an important resource, valuable input and power for societal development. The present information age is which is conscious of the value of information and its use. With the advent of computer and information technology many of us could not imagine some of the new technology developments that we have at our finger tips. The world has definitely moved into the age of information globalization. We can now connect at an amazing speed to any graphic-rich and information linked sites around the world.

Most of the College Libraries have been in need of trained personnel to understand and implement new information technology that satisfied their user needs and to promote further development of resource sharing structure in future. High Costs, existing infrastructure and lack of administrative support have caused lack of success in introduction of Information technology in many libraries.

Information Technology and Libraries:

The concept of information is widely used but indistinguishably defined. Scholars, scientists and people are observed to wide range of ideas as regards to information. Even dictionaries seem to differ. The term information has been derived from two Latin words “informationem” and “informare”. Both terms convey the same meaning of giving shape to something and forming a pattern.

Information Technology is the inter connection of computers and telecommunication technology with its allied techniques used for storage, processing and dissemination of information. It has brought whole world together by transcending traditional and geographical barriers. The software are developed more and more user friendly. E-books and E-journals are increasing in the market and available online. Virtual libraries are coming into existence where user sitting on his own computer at any place can have access to information through the internet. National Board of Accreditation (NBA) while accrediting colleges have been laying emphasis of computerization of library services and connecting these with internet.

The application of Information technology
in different types of libraries in India has gained sufficient momentum and it is of continuing interest to information professional in order to provide IT based information handling services. Today, we are living in an age of information. A large amount of information is collected and stored every moment. The ability to handle huge amount of information needs application of new technologies. Information is a vital and necessary product of the modern society. It grows from experience, observation, inference, interaction and utilization of knowledge. It is intended for socio economic development without which the present day human society cannot move. Its role is significant for the upliftment of the education.

The technological tools for disseminating information have progressed from conventional books and journals to electronic journals and online databases, making it possible to obtain the world wide pool of knowledge at one’s doorsteps. It is an accepted fact that the quality of education depends on the resources that the institute has access to. These resources include: highly qualified faculty, well designed curriculum and a crucial support of library and information centre which is well maintained.

The nature and efficiency of information services provided by the library depends upon the computer facilities it has. If a library lacks technological infrastructure, then there is a possibility that it fails to meet the demands of users. In the recent decades, a lot of information has been made available by means of online databases and E-journals. It becomes necessary for libraries to provide adequate facilities for the users to access E-journals.

The distinguishable change has been the increase of storage capacity of the devices ex: Flash memory card, CD-ROM and DVD’s which has led to changes in libraries. Due to the increase in storage capacity and availability of the information online has led to Virtual libraries which in turn made it easier to disseminate the information to the users.

Technological change is posing a particular challenge to librarians in developing countries. Librarians in developed countries moved quickly to learn and adopt new information technologies. The advancement of microelectronic computers and other new technologies have revolutionized library operations and services globally. The library online system has improved the operation of acquisition, cataloguing, serials handling and circulation services. DVD technology is taking over the printed indexes and online searches increasing access to full text electronic database has become a part of library automation giving grater scope to vendors and network managers.

The future of the library would be marked by culmination of technologies/ techniques which would act as a new library with state of the art techniques. Former President of India, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam has asked publishers all over India to get ready to bring out their publications/books in digital formats by 2020 to make India to succeed in the scope of world digital knowledge. Dr. S.R. Ranganathan, in the 1950s said “technology will become an important part of libraries”. His prediction has become a reality. The information available now is even from outside the library, to those who are all interested in seeking information.

The Information Technology Association of America (ITAA) defines Information Technology as: “The study, design, development, implementation, support or management of computer based information systems, particularly software applications and computer hardware. Information Technology deals with the use of electronic computers and software to convert, store, protect, process, transmit and retrieve information securely”.

Objective:

The advent of technology has given greater opportunities to libraries irrespective of their location to get access to information worldwide so as to meet information requirement of students, teachers and research scholars. To accomplish this it is necessary that libraries have to come together to share their resources and also to put their effort to access resources mutually. In this context the application of information technology becomes foremost for all the libraries. Hence there is a need to conduct the present study.

There is a gap between the demand of the I.T students for technology based services and supply of the traditional based information services by the libraries. To explain the importance of application of information technology in libraries, so as to meet the ever changing technology demands and to offer suitable suggestions for effective utilization of networked information there is a great need to take up this study. No study has been made on “Application of Information technology in selected libraries in Rayalaseema area of Andhra Pradesh” so far. So the investigator attempted to study the efforts made by the colleges for application of Information technology in their libraries.

The views and comments offered by the users and librarians have enabled the investigator to offer some feasible suggestions for gaining maximum benefit from the application of the Information Technology in college libraries.

These suggestions are mentioned below

1. Some of the librarians and study are limited to rudimentary services like providing circulation service on computer. It is suggested that they
must go a step further and provide services like online database access and access to E-journals.

2. It is suggested that libraries should invest for developing of library web pages and provide services like Web – OPAC and access to digital resources. Renewal and registrations can be carried out from the web page.

3. Ever changing Information Technology demands the library professionals update to new skills of technology management regularly. Hence it is recommended that the college management should encourage staff to attend workshops / training programs on library automation and use of IT in libraries.

4. It is suggested that the college libraries should use common library software. Now-a-days open source software is freely available, which allows us to alter and customize the software as per the needs of the libraries. KOHA and MOODLE are popular open source software types. When libraries use open source software, they have the potential to deal with similar users and issues accordingly.

5. A standard policy for E-resources should be maintained by the libraries in the study, in order to follow a set of standard practices for acquiring and managing of IT based resources. A specific budget should be allocated for E-resources.

6. A good number of students and faculty have filled the suggestions column of the questionnaire that it is better to install few more computers with internet browsing in their library to accommodate more users. Hence it is suggested to increase the number of computers to their libraries based on the need of the students and faculty.

7. Many of the users have expressed opinion that to access the information from E-resources on various subjects. Then one should be familiar with the websites providing information. Hence it is suggested that address of resourceful website should be displayed on the notice boards of the library and college computer center for better reach of the information.

Conclusion:

The paper has highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of the librarians in implementation of Information technology in the libraries. The study has been able to identify the problems faced in the process of introducing Information Technology in conventional libraries. College libraries have to select their technological infrastructure from several generations of hard ware, operating systems and many software applications in order to meet the requirements of students and faculty.

As a prerequisite for managing new evolving technologies, library administrators and IT professionals have to work more closely together to plan and implement information storage and retrieval system as well as networks. The present study had the perspective of the librarian as its focus. A new coordinated effort is necessary for melding application software, hardware and communication infrastructure strategies to provide transparent interconnections for all library end users of colleges.

References:


