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IMPACT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ON SPECIAL LIBRARY AND ITS SERVICES



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1. Introduction

A library is a collection of information, sources, resources and services and the structure in which it is housed. It is organized for use and maintained by a public body and institution, or a private individual. In the more traditional sense, a library is a collection of books. A special library is a term for a library that is neither an academic or school library, or a public library. Special libraries may include law libraries, news libraries, government libraries, corporate libraries, museum libraries and medical libraries. Special libraries are also sometimes known as “information centers”. Special library all over the world today fulfil a whole variety of different services at a wide range of locations. This diversified spectrum of activities is by no means a recent development. At the time that the Special Library (SLA) was founded at the 1909 conference of the American Library Association (ALA), Special Libraries already had little to do with traditional library tasks. The services performed by special libraries in the early century could be regarded as documentation.

Information Technology

The advancement of science and technology has made a tremendous improvement and changed almost all walks of life. Especially, the magnetic word information technology has been chanted in all corners’ of the global arena and been incorporate in organizational, managerial, developmental and marketing sectors. The services rendered with the help of IT are faster and more effective. Moreover,

it creates faith and confidence about the products and services of and organization among its customers.

Information Technology and Libraries

Libraries which were considered only as the storehouses of knowledge have got a new outlook in the modern information technology era. The activities which were carried out manually in libraries with so much of pain and strain are being carried out smoothly with the help of IT with greater effectiveness. Library organization, administration and other technical processing have become easier and more quantum of work can be done in relaxed mood. IT, which is the basis for the MBO, generates more results at a given time.

Changing Dimensions of Library Services

The implementation of IT in the special libraries has demanded new forms of the library services to get more users satisfaction. Digital library services have evolved after the implementation of IT in the library and information centers.

2. Traditional Fields of Library Work

Library facilities have existed for thousand of years as collection of literature and knowledge per se, as places of reading and academic investigation of contents, and sometimes as museums in which books of all sorts are collected. The definition of a library as a business and thus the necessity of adequate control and corresponding management is relatively new. The traditional tasks of a library can be described as the creation, processing,

harnessing and maintenance of library holdings for assigned users. In traditional libraries this usually involves collections of monographs, series and journals in a printed form. To achieve this central core function, the classical tripartite structure distinguished between acquisition, cataloguing and user services.

2.1 Acquisition

The central processes of acquisition are the selection and ordering of literature as well as its accession after delivery. The actual purchase requisition, catalogue order entry, confirmation of delivery, invoicing and checking delivery are among the detailed steps in this process. The media in a digital library are of an electronic nature. They include CD-ROMs, e-journal or other electronic information frequently provided online via the www. Selecting and ordering this literature has to break new ground. Orders are often placed electronically by e-mail or directly with the provider on his home page. Instead of the familiar delivery by post and then opening the package, incoming inspection, stamping and the (traditional) accession process, delivery is now frequently effected electronically: as and ftp file, e-mail attachment or even retrieved from the internet by a password.

2.2 Cataloguing

In order to make holding available they must first be catalogued formally and with respect to subject in a more or less complicated system. Only then can a library be used in the strict sense. Traditional media are catalogued by traditional cataloguing departments is traditional card catalogues or in OPACs. The media are thus indexed according to author/title and subject and provide with certain “imprints” as physically identifiable media. The medium is given a shelf mark for a concrete physical location in the stacks or reading room. The formal and subject description and also the location is therefore quite clear. In case of electronic and digital media, this type of processing becomes blurred instead of a physical location there is a server address, a drive specifier or a URL.

2.3 User Services

The traditional activities of the user services consist of satisfying the user’s requirements with

the aid of traditional holdings in reading rooms and stacks. The new electronic digital documents must also be made available to the user. The concepts for presenting the holdings are still based on traditional media and must completely revised. Against the background of the discussion on “holding versus access”, the way in which the holdings are presented will become and issue of the “Organization of the information environment”. This does not only require reorganization but also rethinking. Completely new strategies must be developed so that the supply of information will also be adequately ensured in future with electronic digital documents. It is impossible to present holdings of electronic information with traditional literature methods. Instead of a reading room classification system and stack shelf marks, virtual access must be realized via electronic interfaces. The issue of user friendliness is transformed into software ergonomics. This has an enormous impact on the activities and qualification of the staff in the user services departments.

3. Digital Library

A digital library is a library consisting of digital materials and services. Digital materials are items are stored, processed and transferred via digital (binary) devices and networks. Digital services are services that are delivered digitally over computer networks. It maintains all, or a substantial part, of its collection in computer accessible form as alternative, supplement, or complement to the conventional printed and microform materials that currently dominate library collections.

3.1 Purpose

The purpose of digital library is facilitate access to electronic information, print material and library services to ensure that the information needs of user community are met, regardless their location.

The purpose of digital library is to provide -
Interaction with potential information users; -
Interaction with information resources; and -
Mediation between information resources and users to add value during the information transfer process.

3.2 Services

The purpose of digital library services is to enable the users to access the information required for knowledge enhancement. Digital library

services in special library include information about all the services, collection, digital resources, library instruction sessions and services. The specific services of digital library include providing remote access library resources both printed and non-printed, service deliveries and generation information on library. Depending upon the bylaws or regulations of the individuals' organizations, the access could be limited to members.

4. The Model Special Library

A model special library would provide the following services to its users regardless of their geographical location. -Users services such as membership, query -Database search - Circulation of books, photocopying of articles etc.- Interlibrary loans_-Reference support for subject searches._- Access to library catalogues, database, internet.- Electronic reference desk. - User education and training programmes

5. Requirements

The internet has become single most important platform enabling connectivity to services providers, customers, suppliers, and employee.

Successful implementation of a digital library requires: - Budgetary and management support. - Acquisition digital content_- Infrastructure support, - Expanded remote access - Hardware upgrades - Software support and - Support of staff.

6. Indian Scenario of Special Library

Regarding library environment, the digital movement is yet to take off. In absence of strong telecommunication channels, the internet facility is yet to find it success. Financial constraints are the major hindrance for the growth at national, local and organizational levels. As a result the implementation of IT facilities for libraries are not receiving adequate support from their parent body. Majority of libraries in India do not have computer facilities. The print media is still major source of information in libraries. The Indian special libraries will be deprived of digital information if they cannot find a mechanism to acquire such material and a facility to read them. Sooner or latter the management authorities would realize the need of this vital change and start tuning to the present day requirement.

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