Academic Libraries and Librarianship: A Synoptic View

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" Knowledge is of two kinds, we know a subject ourselves or we know where [and how] we can find information upon it" said Samuel Johnson in 1775.

Present Day Academic Librarians are Firm Believer in this Statement

Academic Librarians

- Academic Librarians i e Librarians heading Universities/Deemed to be universities along with teachers of LIS play a predominant role in the LIS sector. Due to privatisation of higher education employment opportunities are also growing

- They are true representatives of the LIS sector.

- They participate in most of the Committees or Advisory Bodies constituted by the Government or the UGC.

- Examples are NDLI, NVLI, RRRLF etc. In some of the institutions they are treated as members of the faculty.

New Skills and Knowledge of Resources: A Balancing Act

What are the core competencies of librarians? During the preceding two or three decades the situation has changed. ICT Revolution has transformed the information collection, processing and dissemination work

New players have entered the field of librarianship (computer programmers, database managers, data analytics)

What is the 'New Role' of librarians?

Now LIS professionals are required to act as an Intermediary between ever increasing sources of information and their potential users? New skills and higher level of competencies are now needed.

Are we Getting More Spare Time During Working Hours?

- In the 1930's Economist John Mayward Keynes had predicted that technological advances in production would reduce the weekly working hours to fifteen hours by the year 2030.
- The main problem would be how to occupy the leisure?
- Is it happening in case of LIS services? It has predicted that large scale automation in industrial establishment and increasing use of Robots will have an adverse effect on employment.
- It will be interesting to make a 'realistic study' how the librarians spend their time?

Understanding the World of Information Sources: General as well as Specific

Encyclopaedia Britannica first published during AD1768-71 has disappeared from the priority list of subjects or librarians' discourses? No one talks about it.

Now we are in a state of information monoculture with *Wikipedia* at our disposal. The motivation to look for different sources or opinions has reduced. The Joy of the Digital Age is that we can now read more widely. More easily- against one's inclination.

Access versus Ownership

- A major part of library budget is now spent on electronic sources.

- For example IIM Bangalore spends 80% of its annual budget on 64 electronic resources.

- In certain cases librarians (who are rented tenants of knowledge artefacts) have conditional access to electronic resources. They are required to devote more time in negotiating license agreements.

- What about the familiarity with the content?

Academic Discourses: Conferences and Seminars

Academic Librarians and Teaching Faculty of LIS Departments have a major role in organising conferences and seminars or training programmes/refresher courses.

How we can incorporate Education 4.0 or Blended Learning?

More emphasis on 'discussion based' or 'practice based learning' will perhaps produce better results. Communication skill is a major factor for young librarians. They should be encouraged to actively participate in discussions.

Highest Academic Programme: PhD Degree

There is a terrible rush for earning a PhD degree in Indian universities. Two factors are responsible.

- PhD degree holders are exempted from appearing in NET or SLET examination. Persons with doctoral degree can earn advance increment

- It is a mandatory requirement even to become a college teacher. For becoming University Librarian it is a compulsory requirement.

- Number of candidates enrolled for PhD in the year 2016-17 was 1,23,712. The government has a target of producing 20,000 PhD's in a year.

How the Relevance of a LIS Research Topic is Determined?

The most popular way to undertake PhD research is to conduct a questionnaire based survey and to produce results using data processing software like SPSS.

What sort of variables are measured in the survey? Do they add to the already existing knowledge in the field?

There is a scope to think about research on new topics which could be used for the advancement of knowledge in the field. (e.g Citation Analysis of PhD theses Approved by the Department of Economics)

Academic Librarianship: Positive Signs

- Academic Librarians are now conducting awareness programmes for the students and they have been made responsible for operating plagiarism detection tools.

- They are also promoting use of electronic resources. As a result they are coming close to the teachers and researchers as a conduit or link between the source material and users.

- Tech savvy librarians are now getting conversant with emerging technologies like big data, artificial intelligence or expert systems.

Concluding Remarks

- This brief presentation has raised certain issues related to present day work profile or working style of Academic Librarians and LIS Teachers.

- The purpose is to ponder over and discuss these issues.

- In what way we can raise our professional competence and visibility is a major concern.

  LIS professionals have a tendency to believe that excellent library service with all possible 'technological aids' will be rewarded by the community of users. The truth is that excellent library service is only half of the equation for a successful library. The library must be perceived by the community of users as being essential for high quality academic life.