



MANAGING LIBRARIES IN THE MODERN ERA

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Abstract

Library is an organization where a team of professional, semi -professional & non-professional employees strive to serve a common purpose, mainly to cater to their users in the best possible way. With the passing of decades & centuries many things changed shapes in the arena of librarianship. The shift from micro to macro information , the changes in format of resources , the entrance of upcoming technologies to cause radical shift in dimensions of information storage & retrieval.

Most modern libraries' are 'hybrid' libraries characterized print and electronic collection, manual and ICT (Information and Communication Technology) based services. Hence, they must move beyond their traditional role as custodians of books and integrate new methods of storage and transmission of information into an already existing structure. Modern libraries' must link the users with the information they

seek. Today's users expect more from libraries than ever before.

This paper focuses on the strategic planning, organizational structure, staffing, and change management aspects of library management as experienced by the library professionals throughout the world.

The importance of planning in any organizations cannot be under emphasized. Planning bridges the gap between where we are now and where we want to be. Futuristic aspects of planning are troublesome. We live in an environment where it is hard to make long term plans. Strategic thinking provides a plan of action for resource allocation .It also affects performance and financial success. Strategic thinking is outgrowth of the open system approach to libraries. We cannot successfully manage a library without paying attention to the environment .Analyzing the environment incorporates two sub components i.e. scanning the environment and gathering competitive intelligence.

Library being non- profit organization are becoming more user oriented. They are borrowing ideas from other organizations



such as book stores and stalls. Many libraries are looking for value added opportunities and are compelled to finding ways to market their services and to attract more & more users. Leadership, human resources, information and control system, structural design these are the tools available for putting the strategies into actions. Once the strategies are formulated, these need to be implemented into reality. Various performance measures are used to evaluate these strategies. Future is always uncertain. The library professional must have contingent plans to deal with unforeseen.

Organizational structure is observed in libraries during modern times. Earlier libraries have rigid hierarchies, fixed duties, formal communications, centralized decisions and many rules. Today libraries have totally changed their structure. The emerging new forms of structure in libraries have collaboration, adaptable duties, informal communication, decentralized decisions and fewer rules. The most popular new approach to organization is the 'team approach'. A team consists of more than one person, each of whom typically has different responsibilities. Team work is performed by a team towards a common goal. Team organization has many advantages such as quicken response time, reduced barriers among departments and better morale. Team approach has some disadvantages also. It demands dual loyalties which may give rise to conflicts. More time and resources are spent on meetings. Fewer opportunities are given for traditional career advancements.

Libraries in the 21st century are automated but still there is requirement of skilled staff. Staffing is the personnel function of bringing in and training the staff and maintaining favorable conditions of work.

The staff is the library's most precious asset. The modern librarians need to have traditional library skills including a commitment to service. They must be flexible and able to cope up with changes, be technologically savvy, be an able to work cooperatively and be lifelong learners. There are new trends in staffing of libraries have emerged. Job and work patterns have become more flexible. There is an increasing need for staff development. The globalization has brought a number of challenges before the library professionals. They need new skills in managing staff from different cultural, linguistic and may be national backgrounds. There is also a need for staff development related to additional training facilities for staff. Progress and career development plans must be chalked out in a library. All library professionals need to be lifelong learners.

Library is a growing organism. It needs to change with time. The cycle of change is never ending. Library professionals work as change managers. They need to handle change effectively to survive and thrive in today's digital environment. The future of libraries can be an exciting and challenging one for those libraries that are both able and open to change. Library professionals have look for innovative approaches like participation in consortia and open access ventures for solving the problems of rising prices of library materials.

Pierce Butler observed that the library has been created by actual necessities in modern civilizations. It is now a necessary unit in the social fabric. Library has been changing its role in history as a product of society. Library cannot remain an Iceland and it has transformed its functions and services in this modern environment. Information technology has changed the

role of library drastically. Library professionals have to learn the politics of management and find champions for the libraries cause. Organizational challenges will involve restructuring the traditional library. In this digital age library professionals have to manage a diverse work force. The future of libraries could be made secure only if the librarians adapt themselves to the forces of change.

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