Libraries as Change Agents

Prasun Maity

Librarian, Kabi Joydeb Mahavidyalaya Illambazar, Birbhum (W.B)

Abstract: *In the modern era, the value of libraries is much more than one can imagine. However, the libraries must also go through certain changes. An agent of change, that's the expectation set for the libraries of today's world. In this paper we will try to highlight some of the major requirements that can secure the status of the libraries across the world as a Change Agent. In order for the libraries to remain an important factor and a changing agent in the society, this paper will discuss how important it is for the them to implement stretching along with focusing on discussing, soliciting, targeting, teaming and targeting.*

Change and transition aren't just buzzwords. Whether it is technology or politics or economy, each one has the capability to change how the world works and therefore is changing the social and political scenario around us as well. In the academic world, libraries are also embracing and adapting to the changes and gradually are coming up with their own set of strategies to not only increase but to maintain their relevance and importance in the society.

In the truest sense, the libraries need to realize that in order to become a driving force for individuals or society, they need to have the skills to cope up with the fast and ever-changing communities. In this paper, we will strive to explore a proactive approach in explaining the differences between libraries being able to maintain their role as a change agent and barely coping up or handling the changes responsibly. We will also discuss the strategies that the libraries need to adopt and the need for the change in personal attributes as well as mindsets in order to be able to achieve the status of a Change Agent in various societies of the world.

We will face several questions while writing this paper such as what traits are needed for a modern-day library to be able to become a bearer of change. Also, how ready, as a society are we to build a librarian who plays a crucial role in building a library as a factor causing the change.

Through this paper, we will try to define the crucial and important skill sets coupled with mindsets that a librarian is required to have in order to make the whole library system in the community, evolve..

Keywords: *Library, librarians, agent of change, knowledge, information technologies, society*

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's world, the library needs to transform and evolve into an agent of change. And there's no gainsaying the fact if libraries wish to remain useful in the society, they will have to level up their game and create an impact on various aspects of the social structure such as targeting, soliciting, discussing, informing, teaming, so on and so forth. Without creating a direct impact on these aspects, it won't be possible to give the title of "Agent of Social Change" to the libraries. While libraries can be a place where people still go for information but it's essential that the focus should be placed on providing and invigorating information not within the environment but also outside the box.

Accessibility is something the libraries need to work on as well as in order to become an agent of the change in the society in the truest sense, the library should reach to each and every patron that it has rather than waiting for them to show up. After all, we live in an era of digitization and the library system's inherent strength lies in their comprehension of the information as well as value. The potential to be able to select the most relevant and best information and also organizing it into categories for easier accessibility basically indicates that libraries are capable of a detailed understanding of their clients' requirements and needs.

Unfortunately, the role libraries played in earlier days has no value or significance in today's day and age as it was quite limited. The world and the society needed more than just collecting, assisting and organizing information. What we need today is a repository of knowledge through which we can be informed about the material, it's availability and enjoy assistance in libraries collecting the information on our behalves. Along with information, libraries are ideally meant to be a part of the discussion involving various issues for which the material was to offer enlightenment and background at the same time. Soliciting users is also something libraries are responsible for so that they can be given an idea through extensive demonstration programs about how to use the information collected in the best possible way and their purposes.

Targeting the key patrons in any organization and teaming up with the management body of the institutions regarding how to address problems along with stretching job descriptions of the organizational roles of the libraries in order to fit the needs of the institution it serves, better.

The gradual development of the communication and information technologies along with their impact on the technological as well as economical factors lead to stimulation of the changes that allowed the discussion of the formation or building a new society. The changes in the society is monitored quite correctly with the help of Frank Webster's explanations of the modern attitudes to society and Manuel Castells' Network Society Theory. Both these theories originated from the generation's theory on demo graphical sciences along with the theory of Marc Prensky's titled Digital Native and Digital Immigrants. The changes in the society is usually monitored in more than many dimensions as per various environments like economic, technological, social and cultural and ultimately manifests into information infrastructure.

Along with a society that's transitioning, all the social institutions face various needs of their creators. Library is also not an exception. The roles of library in social system as well as adoption of new functions. The present roles of all the libraries need to be reconsidered depending upon the enhanced requirements of the social system as well so that it leads to the adoption of new functions. These six under estimated actions should be implemented wisely if the library system wishes to prosper and wants to remain useful to the users as well as the institutions they serve or will serve in future.

Background:

There's one question that has baffled people-why are libraries extremely underutilized and under-appreciated? In the earlier day, libraries were place where people can study in quiet and peace, enhance their knowledge. Libraries represented a certain degree of sophistication because libraries had a monopoly on useful and organized information. The librarian was never asked how they acquired all that information or the policies that used to make in order to make all the information easily accessible. In fact, libraries were viewed as a gateway or a medium of information and knowledge and librarians were known to be the keeper of information. To put it precisely, a librarian had the potential to help a research candidate get access to not only information but specific publications as well.

People were often excited to have found new information in libraries as they lead to greater discoveries too later. Libraries were not just a good reference service but the power of organizing information to enhance serendipity seemed fascinating. However, back then no one understood the classification system properly as library was the only means of acquiring information which also in a way created a limit on the source of knowledge as no one understood libraries as a system. The librarians were also available to assist and help the patrons so no one bothered to even about the intricate details of the library system and the power of library as a change agent in the society.

The Era of the Internet:

Ever since the advent of the internet, the information became quite easily available and readily available at the fingertips. The information available across the web also became accessible, so much so that the idea of the library users drastically changed. Library was no longer considered a source of vast knowledge and information. The user found the information they get in libraries to be limited.

Quality products along with information are now exposed to a marketplace of information. The essential question here is "What is your organization costing?" and "What does the institution gain from your existence?" In the answers, lies the hope transformation that the libraries need in today's day and age. Coast and the overall perception are two dominating factors in society today that all the organizations need to deal with. Therefore, it's high time libraries start addressing how they wish to be perceived and justify the costs.

It is essential to align the missions and goals of the libraries with that of the client institution. However, it is a well-known fact that instead of giving the clients what they ask for, it is better to provide them with they need. One must definitely ask, "What does the institution need that the library can provide?" The answer to that question is quite obvious- information awareness. Without quality and good information, it is highly unlike that any sound decisions will occur. This is what the libraries need to focus on as in the past, they waited around for the decision makers to ask for services which won't work today as they will have to compete in providing viable information to the decision makers.

Library's Roles for the Changing Society -

U.S. scientist Jesse H. Shera in the year 1976 has justified that the library is a wide part of a social system which was created by people while Shera in the year 1976 named naming libraries as the social institutions for the requirements of the society. The library is known to be a social infrastructure and therefore the changes in the environment can have a huge impact. J.H. Shera also mentioned that the libraries are a force that is responsible for uniting the society as a whole along with being an inseparable part of the society.

Social transformation is related to modifying the existing social order as well as convention or status quo. In the year 2004, Elsen, Green and Geels, has noted that the social transformation not just revolves around broadly to modifying the existing social order, convention or status quo but also includes new markets, technological artifacts, relations and user practices along with infrastructures and cultural meaning. Libraries and the role of the whole library infrastructure during the social change is known to be essential to achieve specific goals such as inspiration, communication tactics, tangibility and action-oriented language.

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Society uses libraries to reach and fulfil their desires. Scholarship that is responsible for connecting the sides as a factor that influences and encourages the society to improve which in turn will establish a connection between people and environment!!

Libraries also act as one of the parts of ''Social Transformations in Contemporary Society'', 2014 (2) ISSN 2345-0126 (online) 125 the system in this part of the triangle, created and supported by the needs and expectations of the society, according to J. H. Shera (1976).

According to Shera, the three sides of the triangle, should work in harmony. Sadly, in our society, very little attention or care is given to knowledge. J.H. Shera further specifies in the centre of the triangle communication acts as the medium of culture which is known to touch different aspects of life such as traditions, ideas, customs along with other components of culture. All this is happening irrespective of space and time.

To put it more simply, in the societal system, the library is supposed to be an integral cultural factor that too in the wider sense which as per David Reith distinguishes the roles that are meant to fulfil all the social needs. The researchers and the scientists observed that the role of a library comprise of performed functions. It plays a Repository role above all. Repository role because it is responsible for storing as well as managing all the documents belonging to different individuals in a society. In order to do so, the libraries acquire as well as collect, conserve as well as preserve

the document created by humanity. Another essential role that libraries play is that of an Information role. Dispersion of the acquired data or information.

Another prominent role that libraries play is imparting education as education is responsible for connecting both the formal and informal learning along with the function of organizing teaching and finally civil consciousness. The societal role of the library takes care of functions like dispersing the library's resources in the entire society. This role mainly revolves around effective services, the document task of the library along with the inclusion of socially sensitive groups to the cultural and social activities. The research scholars have also observed that they can fulfil multiple roles at the same time. Libraries are known to fulfil the cultural role of the society as well. They carry out several functions amidst cultural environment like dispersion and support of cultural identity, supporting culture of the local communities along with imparting versatile cultural understanding and inspiring the inhabitants to participate in the local community. The whole library system has a huge impact on the local learning centre and education. It supports both informal and formal and education by providing the newest and useful information and stimulating as well as supporting grownups to learn for their whole lives. Libraries act as a social change by offering opportunities to study and a suitable environment for studying apart from organizing gatherings.

Finally, we'll talk about how libraries act as an agent of change in the society in the most basic yet special information service role. Libraries support as well as encourage activities performed by local business and plays an active role in carrying out activities of research and education. The library system also supports the local government and authorities. The library fulfils its roles through a network of libraries. So, to sum it up, libraries are an integral and crucial part of the social change as the entire library network

which comprise of libraries from different parts of world, is the flag bearer of educational, informational and socio-economical changes in the whole world!

II. CONCLUSION

The analysis of the scientific publications has successfully revealed the relationship between the roles that library plays and the ever-changing society. The change in the society is intricately associated with its changing environment. While we analyzed society's economic, social, technological and cultural environments, along with the infrastructure of information, we also observed that not only quantitative but qualitative changes were also happening. Changes in the environment is known to affect different members of the society. On the basis of the immigrants and natives of the digital world, it is quite evident that the change in the society ideally has different impacts on them. For example, for the digital natives, communication and contemporary technologies of information are a necessity. However, for the digital immigrants it is just another tool, a means to carry out their work. In today's social system, there are social institutions, and the library happens to be one of them. Libraries are known to coherent with the social system directly and create roles that fulfil the requirements set by our society. However, there's no denying the fact that the library can fulfil more than one role at a time. If one analyzes the influence caused due to changes in the environmental changes, he will reach to a conclusion that various libraries act as mediators of information which in turn proves to be quite helpful for the immigrants of the digital world because it can allow them to access and use quality information quite easily and freely.

On the contrary, as far as the natives of the digital world are concerned, they are being surrounded by huge amount of information and technologies constantly and might need the library as a medium to be in or to communicate as well as share their experiences with their colleagues, friends and people who share common interests with them. Therefore, the accomplished analysis led to the evaluation of the influence that the library has on the changing society, theoretically. It is also true that further empirical analysis is required in order to purify the roles of the libraries to be in tandem with the expectations and needs of today's societal system.

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