

Inevitability of Soft Skills and Professional Communication for Library Professionals in the Contemporary Scenario

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Abstract:- The advancement of ICT in the field of library profession has made this profession utmost advance, competitive such as other managerial professions. In this contemporary scenario, every librarian must have good knowledge of ICT as well as have excellent communication skills also. It is not a choice for a librarian although it is a need of survival in this profession. In this modern era, the role of libraries and librarians has changed from storehouse of information and care taker to actual learning centre and information manger. At the same time the appearance and distribution of information also took new shape and way. Now library professionals job also require some of the special skills and competencies apart from the basic skills and practices of librarianship. Therefore, this paper discusses the professional skills and soft skills required by the library professionals to be effective in rendering service to the user's community. In addition to this, leadership skills, interpersonal skills, presentation skills will also be discuss for making a librarian skilled as per the demand of this challenging and contemporary scenario.

Keywords: *ICT, Communication Skills, Leadership Skills, Interpersonal Skills, Presentation Skills.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Soft skills are a combination of people skills, social skills, communication skills, character traits, attitudes, career attribute, social intelligence and emotional intelligence quotients among others that enable people to navigate their environment, work well with others, perform well, and achieve their goals with complementing hard skills. Soft Skills, a buzz word today has attracted the attention of students, professionals and entrepreneurs all over the world. Employability, being the major concern today, every individual aims at getting coveted jobs. Employability today is commensurate with proving multiple skills in varied situations in a fast changing world. Hence, everyone aspiring for jobs today has to prove one's mettle in various situations where one requires to be armed with different skills, which, collectively come under Soft Skills. One may be armed with good competence of one's subject but one cannot compete with his peer groups unless one has the potential of performance. Performance can be ensured with the demonstration of certain abilities that can help a professional communicate, confirm, convince, evaluate and look into the continuing as well as the upcoming trends of the corporate world from time to time.

While communication skills top the list of employability skills, soft skills such as team playing, problem solving, decision making, planning, organizing, self learning and self management have become extremely important. However, studies reflect that a large number of library science professionals being produced every year, among which only very few are employable in reputed Institutes/ Universities. Most of them are unsuitable because of the lack of soft skills, particularly communication skills, which are essential for library industry.

II. CONTEMPORARY SCENARIO

The role of libraries and librarians changed from storehouse of information and care taker to actual learning centre and information manger and at the same time the forms and distribution of information also took new shape and way. This is due to advancement in information and communication technology. Due to this change, library professionals job also require some of the special skills and competencies apart from the basic skills and practices of librarianship. The libraries experiencing tremendous change, the electronic information has occupied huge place in the publishing industry during current days. New type of information transfer channels have come in existence, such as e-books, blogs, information gateways etc.

Besides, soft skill development is inescapable for library professionals and for their overall and all-round growth it is indispensable for them to have proficiency over English language and Soft Skills. Since English communication is inevitability in today's scenario and devoid of it, it is very not easy for librarians to survive in the professional world. To express them globally it is crucial for them to have an admirable proficiency over this language. Whether it is higher education, doing research, going abroad for study or doing job it is inevitable for library professional to have an expertise over English language and soft skills.

III. SOFT SKILLS

The major objective of the paper will elaborate the soft skills and competencies required for the library professional to increase visibility and effectiveness of the libraries in the 21st century. Therefore, some of the soft skills which are required by the library professionals to

fulfil the core objective of the library and information centres are as follows:

- a) Effective Communication skills
 - i. Listing Skills
 - ii. Speaking Skills
 - iii. Reading Skills
 - iv. Writing Skills
- b) Interpersonal skills
- c) Presentation skills
- d) Problem-Solving Skills
- e) Evaluation of Library Services
- f) Strong Work Ethic
- g) Positive Attitude
- h) A Groomed personality.
- i) Attraction of users towards library
- j) Marketing Skills
- k) Adaptability of New Technology

A. COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Proper communication skill is an important and significant skill for the library and information professionals. Command on language especially English and also regional one will improve the communication. Good communication skills also require understanding people, self-confidence. With this one can achieve a lot and solve problems too. In the major way communications skills work on LSRW theory which means Listing, Speaking, Reading and Writing skills.

a. LISTING SKILLS

The library professionals must have good listening skills; librarian or library staffs interact with different types of users all the time. According to P. B. Mangla- “users are the God of library”. So carefully listening to users can identify the exact requirement and then provide the service accordingly.

b. SPEAKING SKILLS

Mastering on speaking or oral language skills may be very rewarding for librarians or library professionals since a good command of oral communicative proficiency helps them to express their knowledge, ideas, thoughts and feeling towards users.

c. READING SKILLS

Reading is an essential element at every profession. This is because reading is a means of discovering information to expand one's knowledge and understanding of the subject of any kind. Therefore, reading skills build the subject knowledge and other information of library professionals.

d. WRITING SKILLS

For a library and information professional the communication skills are not enough to direct interaction with other people. The ability to be able to write clearly and effectively is the key to communicate. This set of skills should not be limited to journalists or professional authors. Poor written communication can be frustrating for the reader and potentially damaging for the author.

IV. INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Interpersonal skills are fundamental to successful relationships at personal professional and socially. This interpersonal skills self-assessment questionnaire will help

you to understand how well developed your interpersonal skills are and identify areas that you can practice and improve. The library professionals must be able to build good interpersonal skills among the fellow workers, users and others with whom they work closely.

V. PRESENTATION SKILLS

Presenting information clearly and effectively is a key skill to get your message or opinion across and, today, presentation skills are required in almost every field. Presentation skills would become useful during interaction of library professionals with users, management, publishers and vendor etc.

VI. PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS

Librarians should have that skill, “skills of problem solving”. It is a very significant skill which takes place each and every day in the library. For instance, librarians are working as a team leader or manager in the library. They have a huge team and the coordination of all works, staff and management is looking after by librarian only. So librarians should have problem solving skills than they will get the best results from the users and as well as from staff.

VII. EVALUATION OF LIBRARY SERVICES

Library professionals must able to evaluate and questions by themselves about the services which are offered to the user's community. This self evaluation technique will help to understand and find out loop holes in the services and also lead to modification of services which could able to attract the users community, in turn it will help to achieve the maximum efficiency and effectiveness.

VIII. STRONG WORK ETHICS

Work ethics is the prominent skills which every profession demand in the current scenario. The library profession is also converted as industry and other leading profession therefore, every library professional has to be careful about the work ethics and if they are not knowing about this skills so learn from some others professions. Traditionally, work ethic has been understood as a value based on hard work and diligence. Capitalists, for example, believe in the necessity of working hard and in consequential ability of enhancing one's character. Socialists suggest that a concept of “hard work” is deluding the working class into being loyal workers of the elite; and working hard, in itself, is not necessarily an honourable thing, but simply a way to create greater wealth for those at the summit of the economic pyramid.

IX. POSITIVE ATTITUDE

In the present scenario maintaining a positive attitude at work will benefit for career and steer towards a promotion. Besides, Studies have shown that having a true positive attitude makes your view of life seem broad, full of possibilities. That view leads to actually living in a way that makes it natural to be exposed to and acquire new skills. The positive attitude towards work place is important skill.

X. A GROOMED PERSONALITY

Today every employer demands active and smart employee. Library profession has been transformed entirely in the decade. Now, librarians have to learn skills regarding dressing, body language, communication and always look active and smart. This is a corporate area and every profession dominated by this strategy and library profession is also demanding active and smart librarians.

XI. ATTRACTION OF USERS TOWARDS LIBRARY

The library professional must be able to attract the users toward the library. The librarians must use different kinds of techniques to attract the users (orientation and extension) and maximize the usage of information resources and services of the library.

XII. MARKETING SKILLS

Wee (2003) stated that in this information age, marketing and promotion of our services are pivotal to our survival and also Martey (2000) implied that libraries must survive and thrive because they still have role to play in the community. Librarians like all other professional should adapt to and cope with the changes taking place in the environment in which they operate. Therefore, library professionals must have marketing skills, which would in turn, help to increase image of the library and information centres and serve the users effectively.

XIII. ADAPTABILITY OF NEW TECHNOLOGY

Ashcroft (2004) stated the need for the skills, roles and characteristics of the LIS professionals to change in order to cope with the change in technology and. The library professionals must be able learn new technology, which would be very useful in effective rendering of the services.

XIV. CONCLUSION

In this competitive world scenario the other progressive countries have been able to utter themselves much better to the exterior world owing to their ability to make the right kind of sound at the right place and at the right time, our library professionals regardless of degrees/qualifications and plausible capability haven't been able to make ourselves that noticeable in the world market, mainly because we haven't focused on developing our soft skills and professional communication. Studies recommend that soft skills are equally essential for performing well the job as hard skills. The purpose of this paper is to get attention of library professionals towards importance of soft skills and professional communication. This is the right time so we library professional must be understand the importance of soft skills their personalities in order to make them professionally skilled so that the professionals are able to convey his knowledge and talent precisely to the users and as well as management.

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