
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND THE FORTHCOMING OF LIBRARIANS IN VARIOUS UNIVERSITY & COLLEGE

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Abstract :

In the field of library and Information science on the way information technology is gradually taking over certain employment performed by librarians professionals and Information professionals. This may be the reason why many of the scholars have submitted that the discipline of librarianship may cease to exist in a couple of years if nothing is done to solve the problem.

In the light of this, this article seeks to identify ways in which technology has taken over certain aspects of the field of librarianship with the aim of proffering solutions and identifying other means in which the 21st century librarian can make himself relevant especially with the current dearth of employment opportunities.

Keywords: Information technology, Libraries, librarians and librarianship

Introduction :

In centuries gone by, librarians were seen as keepers and custodians of books. This perception also affected the image of the library, this was because many people saw the library as a room with stacks of books where individuals particularly students who wanted to read beyond the scope of what they were taught in class found shelter. No wonder, the field was regarded as library science and not library and Information science or library and Information technology as we have it recently.

Libraries also in an attempt to respond to change and growth based on the fifth law of librarianship introduced the use of computers and other technologies into their day-today operations. Therefore, operations such as acquisition, cataloguing and classification etc shifted from the manual method to the automated method. The introduction of technology also brought about the development of certain concepts such as e-resources, e-libraries, digitalization etc.

The invention of computers by Charles Babbage and other technologies such as printing press by Johannes Gutenberg gave a face lift to libraries, librarians and librarianship in general. As a result of this, many people from other disciplines began to minor in librarianship having seen the hidden potentials in the field.

Methodology :

This study is based on the review of primary and secondary literature such as journals, internet articles, conference proceedings and seminar papers.

Conceptual Framework :

Technology :

Technology is the application of techniques, systems, processes and skills to solve complex human challenges and problems. Thiel defined the term as "any new and better way of doing things".

Arthur (2009), sketches out three out three conceptions of technology which are:

1. "Technology as a means to fulfill a human purpose"
2. "Technology as an assemblage of practices and components."
3. "Technology as the entire collection of devices and engineering practices available to a culture."

In the field of librarianship, any process or technique that makes library operations faster is known as information technology. Information technology can be defined therefore as any form of technology that speeds up the rate at which information is created, edited, disseminated and stored for future usage.

In other perspectives, the term could be defined as the application of computers and other devices such as emails, printers, faxes and scanners in the acquisition, processing and storage of information.

Technology and Libraries:

The changes brought about by advances in technology with particular reference to information technology have been so extensive that it is difficult to assess their total effect, but is clear that libraries are in the state of fundamental transformation.

The short run perspective believes that the application of information technology in libraries has made library operations easier, faster and more efficient. The short run perspective also believes that the application of information technology also eliminates drudgery and repetitive work.

Although, the long run perspective believes all the assumptions of the short run perspective, however it differs in its own view because it examines the human factor. A task performed by 5 individuals in the manual approach are now been carried out by just an individual in the automated approach.

Components of ICT in Libraries :

Although information technology is a standalone concept, there are other components associated and conjoined with it. Islam and Islam (2006) have identified some of these as follows:

1. Artificial intelligence: this entails the development of machines to emulate human qualities such as learning, reasoning and teaching.
2. Software technology: this has to do with the development of computer programs that could aid library operations. Softwares used in library operations include: Microsoft packages, tinlib, Alice for Windows etc.
3. Media usage and development: this has to do with managing information resources available in digital formats such as CDs, projectors, microfiches etc.
4. Workstations: these are specialized computers that help to distribute large amounts of data from a central source known as a server to other computers within the same network.
5. Microchips: these are technologies that contain silicons and other electronic components. They are usually used to protect and secure library materials from been stole.
6. Emails and hypertext: e-mails (electronic mails) are messages sent over the Internet. They are usually used for current awareness and selective dissemination of information.

Uses of Information Technologies in Libraries:

Information technologies perform a variety of functions. These include the following:

1. Cataloguing and classification: the invention of information technology has made the process of organizing knowledge faster. The introduction of computer had made it easier for the formation of Union catalogues.
2. Indexing and Abstracting services: in the place of the manual system of capturing important keywords in a document, computer programs are now been used to perform this tasks.
3. Database Management: database management softwares are been employed to manage user information. Instead of the manual system of capturing the particulars of library users, databases are now been created to capture it.
4. Current Awareness Service: this service has to do with creating awareness about library products and services.

Benefits of Information Technology in Library services Without mincing words, information technology has aided the growth of libraries in many ways.

Vijayakumar and Vijayan (2011) have listed some of the benefits to include the following:

1. Collaboration and creation of library networks

2. Reduction of staff workload
3. Round the clock access to library services by users.
4. Efficient and effective service delivery to library clientele
5. Access to unlimited information from different sources
6. More up to date information
7. Availability of information in different formats

Some Challenges :

1. Insufficient funds for maintenance ICT equipments
2. Development of online instructional materials
3. Information literacy and instruction
4. Website management
5. Unemployment

Librarians who want to be gainfully employed must harness the skills necessary for sustenance. These skills include: social media analysis and marketing, blog management, programming and coding using Java and HTML.

Conclusion :

From the foregoing, this article has been able to identify the nexus between information technology and its impacts on the field of librarianship. However, in order to ensure that the field of librarianship does not go into extinction, all hands must be on deck. Apart from that, the following must be put into place in order to bridge the identified gaps:

1. Libraries must constantly train their staff to be IT compliant. This will reduce the rate at which their jobs are given to other individuals not within the purview of librarianship. These include database management, web design, software management and installation.
2. Librarians in training must be exposed to entrepreneurial opportunities in the field of library and Information Science. Such opportunities include indexing and abstracting, research assistance, research analysis, database management etc.
3. Librarians must not depend on only what they learn in school. Their tentacles of knowledge must spread to other disciplines. Librarians should be "Jack of all trades, master of All". In essence, they should have certain amounts of knowledge on all discipline of human endeavor.
4. Leveraging of information retrieval skills. Librarians must constantly update their information retrieval skills.

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5. Effective lobbying and advocacy is necessary in order to raise funds to maintain information technologies.

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