

**CHANGE ADOPTION AND ADAPTATION IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN INDIA:
LIBRARIANS' PERCEPTIONS**

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ABSTRACT

The present paper is about the changes taking place in the university libraries in India. This paper is an attempt to take the librarians' perceptions about the changes and how they are adopting and adapting to them. The literature surveyed in this context shows that much work has been done at the international level and no major study has been taken place in India till now. Based on this survey it is concluded that changes have been taken / taking place in almost all the areas of the library. Overall change adoption, adaptation and technological changes in the university libraries in India are going on at a slow pace, but there is also a lot of scope for further improvements in these, so that the libraries get prepared for facing the complex information challenges at local and global levels. Efficient management of all these shall lead these libraries to build their change capabilities to meet the complex information requirements of users in the change-intensive information environment across the globe.

Keywords: University libraries, Change adaptation, Change adoption, Change management, Drivers of change, India.

Introduction:

Educational institutions around the world are undergoing a radical change and the Indian university libraries no longer remain an exception to this. Today academic librarians are facing much challenging work-environment where change is driven by technological innovations, growing client expectations, shifts in government policies and financial pressures. The privatisation of higher education in India has already led to an increase in the competition among different universities. Further, as the government is fully geared to allow the entry of foreign universities into India, this competition among higher education service providers will become tougher in the near future and the job of university libraries will become all the more challenging. In such a competitive environment the user has become more demanding, thereby imposing a threat to university libraries which put up resistance to change

The amount, diversity and speed of information available through the state-of-the-art technological developments, have forced the libraries to change the mode of services and operations for the benefit of library users. On the one hand changes bring about growth and experience, but on the other hand, there is strong resistance to changes (Siddiqui, 2003). The challenge for librarians, therefore, is how to control and implement the change-process (Curzon, 1989; Diedrichs, 1996). Unprecedented change in scholarly communication, management

strategy, global connectivity, and rise in digital libraries constitute a very short list of major trends that make information work in higher education a fascinating and challenging prospect (Tucker, 2000). Library philosophy and practice have shifted from purchasing materials and offering services “just in case” to “just in time”. The cost of access appears to be more affordable than the cost of ownership, though it comes with the accompanying risk of loss if no one purchases or preserves an item (ending the viability of interlibrary loan) or if no one archives or converts digital collections to the new formats and platforms that the future will bring. The widespread adoption of technology and reduced barriers to its access accounts for these trends and also for the speculation that the digital divide is disappearing (Singleton and Mast (2000).

To cope up with these problems greater managerial skills are required. The participative management, proper and timely communication, “top down” to “bottom up” managerial style are required. Continuous training is needed to maintain employment prospects in an increasingly competitive workplace. Librarians must adopt the idea of a user-centered culture. The library managers should bring about these changes in such a way that these are evolutionary ones and not revolutionary ones.

Literature Survey:

Change, by its nature, is unpredictable, and often unmanageable, yet an organisation’s success depends on an ability to predict and control change in some way. To derive maximum benefit from new opportunities and avoid reactive situations, it is essential to manage change. Further, as change accelerates, the problem of managing it gets complicated and stressful. The proliferation of change management literature in the library and information field indicates that these issues are becoming increasingly important as more and more libraries are developing a virtual presence (Higuchi, 1990; Lee, 1993; Riggs, 1997; Meyer, 1997; Nozero and Vaughn, 2000). Nearly two decade ago, Dougherty and Dougherty (1993) observed that the current rate of change in information field was higher than ever before, while libraries’ ability to respond quickly and decisively had never been more constrained.

Every organization likes to think that it lives in a time of unique challenge and change. To stay fit and compete, every organization needs to go through the process of change. The drivers of change for each period are different and each organization responds to the challenges in a particular way. Large number of external as well as internal factors are driving change in libraries (Jagtar; 2009). Libraries exist in a shifting landscape, bounded on one side by increasingly broad user demands, and on the other by the complexities of information and also the constrictions of limited resources. An explosion of information, in multiple formats with inflationary prices, has begun to cause an unprecedented structural shift in the design of programs, the organization of operations, collection and the mode of services (Rowley and Black; 1996).

Technology has been one of the key factors influencing the pace of change, often driving change itself while making it possible to do more with fewer resources, allowing the distribution of value-added services to users (Riggs and Sykes; 1993). Academic librarians face a challenging work environment where change is driven by technological innovation, growing client expectations, shift in government policies and financial pressures. Providing effective services and products demands a willingness to adapt to these realities (Bryson; 2006). Growing electronic resources and declining library budgets, leadership-deficit, widening digital divide, resistance to change, poor interpersonal skill, declining culture of reading and assimilation and lack of team-spirit (Jagtar; 2009) are a few barriers in the adoption to new technology. Changes

imposed by the technology add disruption and uncertainty, which is never comfortable (Wind and Main;).

For the successful implementation of technology, attitude of staff needs to be positive to ICT(Fine; 1986; Evald; 1996). The negative attitude of the staff can be converted into positive with proper training and external education programmes. These steps can help in increasing individual's knowledge about the technological skill and reducing attitudinal barriers to the acceptance of technology (Igbaria et al., 1997). Successful training can enable us to appreciate that staff have different needs and so require different training methods. Resistance is also a natural response to change that managers should try to understand, as and when it occurs (Spacey et al; 2003)

Librarians require the dynamic, ruthless pursuit of new roles if they wish to survive (Fourie; 2004) yet at the same time they are also cognizant of their need to retain empathy, tireless dedication, commitment and a service-for-free orientation within their staff (Sidorko and Yang; 2009). Empowering staff to shape responses to the changing environment is vital. Sims (2002) is of the view that maximizing employee involvement as essential to it. Readiness to change exists when the security level is neither very high nor very low (Clark; 1994). Bryson (2006) identifies strategic and scenario planning as two tools which help organizations to understand drivers of change and to develop its effectiveness. To remain competitive libraries must have intrinsically-motivated and high-performance employees. Frequent orientation programs can generate passion for the organizational vision (Rolfe, Jo; 2010).

Objectives of the Study:

The present study was carried out with the following objectives:

1. To identify the key drivers of changes in Indian university libraries.
2. To identify the ways adopted by university libraries to adopt and adapt to changes.
3. To find out challenges and problems faced by librarians in managing changes.

Scope of the Study:

This study was limited to general universities located in North-Western region of India (states and territories covered in this region include Chandigarh, Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab and Rajasthan). Only those universities in this region were covered in the study that were at least twenty years old at the time of study. Only general universities were covered in the study excluding agricultural, engineering, medical, open and technical universities.

Method

Questionnaire method was used to obtain information from the chief librarians and section heads of university libraries. A total number of 70 questionnaires were distributed personally to chief librarians as well as section heads in university libraries. A total of 63 (90%) questionnaires were returned and considered usable. The data were analyzed using simple percentages and frequencies.

Results and Discussions

Drivers of Change

Nearly all (98.4 percent) respondents indicated Information and communication technologies (ICTs) as the main driver of change, Most of the respondents (95 percent) indicated e-resources as a driver of change, More than four-fifth of the respondents(80.9 percent) considered users'

needs and expectations as a driver of change in the university libraries. Apart from these, management policies, knowledge-management, shrinking budget, physical space, government policies, cultural change, globalization and privatization were other key-drivers of change identified by the respondents. More than one-third of the respondents (36.5 percent) were of the view that the university libraries in India had been undergoing major change for the last 3 to 5 years.

Areas of Change

A visible change had been observed in different areas of the libraries such as e-collection, reference service, OPAC, technology as well as rules and policies. Most of the respondents (85.7 percent) indicated that e-collection had undergone major change in library collection. More than two-third (68.3 percent) were of the view that reference service had undergone major change in the area of library services; Nearly two-third (65.1 percent) indicated that libraries were acquiring new technologies to improve their services; More than half (63.5 percent) were of the opinion that libraries were undergoing major change in the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC). More than half of the respondents (54 percent) were of the opinion that major changes were also taking place in the library rules.

Objectives of Change

The respondents were asked about the objectives of their library for shifting to new changed systems, majority of the respondents ranked “improvement and increase in services” as their top priority, followed by “Improvement and increase access to resources” and “increase in number and expectations of users”.

Nearly two-third of the respondents (66.7 percent) went for change when new technology became so well known that everybody acquired it. Nearly half of the libraries (49.3 percent) had always been adopting new technologies in the past to match their users’ needs. More than one-third of the respondents (39.7 percent) made use of the past trends before going in for change and nearly half of the respondents (44.4 percent) gave only general consideration before adapting to consequential change. In most of the libraries in-house training is provided to the staff.

Adoption of New Technology in Libraries

More than half (57.1 percent) respondents had agreed to considerable extent that pursuing attitude of the employees helped them in its easy adaptation of new technology. More than half (54 percent) respondents had agreed to a large extent that availability of new and better technology helped in the adoption of new technology. More than half (53.9 percent) respondents were of the view that the libraries should have well laid technology adoption policy. Nearly half of the respondents (49.2 percent) believed to a considerable extent that government & university policies as well as top management support were helpful in this direction. Nearly half (47.6 percent) respondents agreed to some extent that formal education-programs should be developed to include all classes of users ranging from top management to lower level. More than one-third (42.8 percent) respondents believed that changing users’ needs and expectations are also responsible to a considerable extent in new technology adoption. More than one-third of the respondents (41.3 percent) were of the view that increasing competition was also causing a threat to some extent in the change adoption policy. More than one-third of the respondents (38.1 percent) had agreed to a considerable extent that opportunities created due to globalization and privatization were a factor for adopting technology in the libraries. Apart from these, changing culture, e-resources, shrinking budget, physical space and knowledge management were also some of the factors concerning the new technologies adoption reported by the respondents.

Barriers in Adopting New Technology

Majority of the respondents were of the opinion that shrinking budget, staff resistance, problems with compatibility of technology, risk of failure, lack of skilled staff and disruption in services were the barriers in managing change in the libraries to some extent where as lack of support from the university authority was not a barrier at all.

Change Adaptation in the Libraries

More than half (58.7 percent) respondents indicated that they had to redesign their library/sections to some extent for adapting to change. More than one-third (36.5 percent) respondents had agreed to some extent that for adapting to change they had to shift staff within the library. Nearly half (50.8 percent) respondents were of the opinion that to some extent they had to recruit suitable persons from outside to make change adaptation effective. To some extent outsourcing of the library services had also been done by more than one-third of the respondents (41.3 percent) to adapt to change in the libraries. More than half (54 percent) librarians were of the view that to large extent training was imparted to the staff for bringing about changes in services. More than one-third (36.5 percent) of them changed plans, policies and rules to a considerable extent for adapting to change.

Barriers to Change Adaptations

60.3 percent respondents were of the opinion that staff resistance to change was a major barrier in the change adaptation process. More than half of the respondents 37(58.7 percent) were facing problem to some extent with the compatibility of technology in adapting to change. Majority of them believed that lack of in-house technical support and lack of skilled staff were also the barriers to some extent. A little more than half of the (52.4 percent) respondents agreed to some extent that lack of support from vendors was also one of the barriers in the change adaptation.

Managing Change-Adaptation

More than half (54 percent) respondents were agreed to a considerable extent that their staff was willing to accept change. Nearly half (45 percent) of them were of the view that their libraries had well laid change adaptation policies to a considerable extent. More than one third (42.8 percent) respondents were of view that they had overall higher education level of staff to a considerable extent, which facilitated the change adaptation. More than one third (39.7 percent) respondents had agreed to a considerable extent that their university authority supports their library in change adaptation efforts through its initiative and control. More than one third (36.5) respondents were of the opinion that to some extent their professional staff helped in easy adaptation to change as compared to non-professional staff.

Effectiveness in Change Adaptation

When the respondents were asked how the effectiveness in change-adaptation could be increased, 'empowerment' was reported by 41.3 percent as their top priority, and 'extensive training' by 22.2 percent. This was followed by 'Job security' and 'Rewards' by 19 and 17.5 percent respondents respectively.

Outcome of Change Adoption and Adaptation

Libraries across the world are going through the process of adopting and adapting to change, so as to make them visible, viable and more productive. More than one third (39.7 percent) respondents had agreed to a considerable extent that they had been able to increase the number of library users by adopting and adapting change in their libraries. Nearly half of the respondents (46 percent) were of the opinion that they had been able to increase the number of services by doing this. Majority of the respondents were of the view that they had been able to reduce service time and improve the quality of service to a large extent by adopting and adapting change.

Majority of the respondents agreed to a considerable extent that there was increase in management efficiency and improvement in collection-development as well as management. Most of the respondents were of the view that the problem of insufficient budget and staff had also been solved to some extent. More than one-third of the librarian (41.2 percent) had agreed to a large extent that there was increase in number of library users and 46 percent respondents also believed that they had been able to provide remote access to users by adopting and adapting change in their libraries.

Conclusion

Based on the conclusions derived on issues identified at the beginning of the study, it can be concluded that the current status of change adoption is fairly good in India, while the status and pace of change adaptation is not very encouraging in these university libraries. Change adoption policies are also there as per 77 percent respondents. Updation of change adaptation policies is not considered a priority by the university libraries. Overall change adoption, and adaptation and technological change in the university libraries in India is going on at a slow pace, but there is also a lot of scope for further improvements in these, so that the libraries get prepared for facing the complex information challenges at local and global levels. Efficient management of all these shall lead these libraries to build their change capabilities to meet the complex information requirements of users in the change-intensive information environment across the globe.

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