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Role of Librarian in Guiding Research and Executing Sponsored Project

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ABSTRACT

A librarian is a person who works professionally in a library, providing access to information. In addition, librarians provide instruction on information literacy. Librarians' roles vary from the custodian of resources to providers of diverse nature of activities ranging from collection development, organisation of knowledge, information services, preservation and conservation, and management. Now the role of librarian is not only limited to information gatherers, organisers or disseminators but continues to evolve in support of long-term learning as information generators. This exploratory research study will seek to investigate the role of librarian in guiding research and executing sponsored projects. The purpose of this study is to explore the interest and involvement of librarians in research activities by finding the number of research papers read by them per week, number of research work guided/sponsored projects executed by them. Apart from it, data would be collected regarding various activities like developing online space to share research, setting RSS feed to track new research, facilitation workshop/seminar/brainstorming sessions, etc. carried out by librarians in promoting research. In addition to this information pertaining to topics of research interest of librarians would be gathered and also various motivational factors and impediments in guiding research/executing projects would be studied.

Originality/Value: This study would help in knowing the attitude of librarians towards research activities. It would also help in assessing the factors which could promote the interest of librarians in guiding research work/taking up sponsored projects and also removing impediments that hamper their research work, so that metamorphosis of librarians can occur from knowledge managers to knowledge creators.

Keywords: Role, Librarian, Research, Sponsored project, Library, Factors

INTRODUCTION

Librarians across the world are constantly reinventing themselves as they have to respond to changing community needs and the benefits as well as challenges posed by new and emerging technologies. It is essential for them to confront and successfully adapt to the future needs of users in a world that is continually and rapidly changing. This confirms that the role of librarian, specifically reference and information service, remains in a unique position to support their communities in learning, work, recreation, creativity and innovation. The challenge for librarian leadership is to measure its role in innovation and the impact of library services in the local community context. Librarians are expanding their role beyond the traditional collection acquisition and curation duties to serve more fully as educators, technological guides and communicators both across campus and across the community. This increased focus on outreach, innovation and information technology skill-building has enabled modern academic librarians to better adapt to the needs of their patrons by helping researchers win research grants and contracts, promoting and exploiting new technologies and models

of scholarly communication, increasing the visibility and research profile of the institution, contributing to institution-wide initiatives, working in partnership with academic departments, connecting with researchers to enhance the value of library services, providing a better work environment for researchers, ensuring easy access to high-quality content, representing the values of the institution and scholarship, etc.

The role of the librarian in research and projects not only displays the value of librarians but also gives a clear picture of librarians' contribution towards the scientific community. It also illustrates the loss of research productivity without them. As librarians move into new research support roles, their formal skills training is as important as informal training, mentoring and support networks. Librarians' roles in supporting research need to be scoped to determine the skills and expertise required by them within a team, faculty and institution. In-depth knowledge of the research process in specific discipline areas may be required by librarians to enable them to contribute as a full partner in the research activity. Thus, it is true to say that librarians in all sectors of a library wear many different hats and provide numerous services to patrons.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Librarians play a very significant role in contributing to knowledge society through research and executing projects. Tenopir *et al*. (2012) point to 'a more active and visible role in the knowledge creation process by placing librarians at all stages in the research planning process and by providing expertise to develop data management plans, identify appropriate data description, and create preservation strategies'. In recent years, there has been considerable discussion about the key role which university libraries can play by engaging with their research community. As a result, libraries are scoping, developing and implementing new roles and service models, especially in the relatively new area of research data. The article by Brown *et al*. (2015) explores the specific challenges experienced by a traditional academic librarian at Griffith University as they moved into a new

role as a data librarian. The author moved from a long-time role as an academic services librarian, working with a Science and Engineering Faculty, to a role as data librarian working on a federally funded climate change adaptation project which aimed to provide advice to natural resource management bodies around Australia. It was found that this transition needed to be underpinned by a skills development programme, a mentor/coach and a support network of specialists. Authors then outline some strategies to facilitate this type of role transition, which include investing in a range of training and staff development activities, leveraging existing core librarian capabilities and understanding the researcher's perspective. This article concludes with a suggestion that several national organisations will continue to have an important role in supporting librarians as they develop new skills.

Auckland (2012) outlines the wide variety of data management roles in which an academic librarian may be involved: from a largely advisory role (e.g. providing advice and referral on within-project data management, long-term preservation of research outputs and compliance with policy and funding mandates) to a hands-on role (such as applying advanced skills in developing metadata schema specific to disciplinary standards and individual research projects). Aslop *et al*. (2007) exploratory research study seeks to investigate the phenomenon of academic librarians working in other paid roles on university campuses in addition to working as librarians. Its purpose is to explore how prevalent this phenomenon might be, to discover what other types of paid positions librarians are engaged in and to ascertain what the perceived advantages and disadvantages could be of working in dual roles on campus. An online survey was administered and results point out that some academic librarians are engaged in working in multiple roles on campus. Furthermore, a majority of those surveyed saw a number of advantages to such arrangements. Finally, whether the librarians agreed or disagreed with librarians working in dual roles, all respondents seemed to stress the importance of the primacy of librarian work as the major factor in

determining whether or not to pursue other paid opportunities on campus. Results point to a need to open a conversation among librarians as to what academic librarian work should constitute both now and in the future.

Federer (2013) explained the role of the librarian in funded project. A grant from the National Library of Medicine funded a librarian to join a UCLA research team as an informationist. The informationist meets regularly with the research team and provides guidance related to data management, preservation and other information-related issues. Early results suggest that the informationist's involvement has influenced the team's data gathering, storage and curation methods. The UCLA Library has also changed the librarian's title to research informationist to reflect the new activities that she performs. The research informationist role provides an opportunity for librarians to become effective members of research teams and improve research output.

Objectives

1. To find out the number of research work guided/ sponsored projects executed.

2. To determine the number of research articles read per week.

3. To evaluate the domains of research interest.

4. To know about the activities conducted to promote research.

5. To study the motivational and demotivation factors for research.

METHODOLOGY

The quantitative research design was adopted and survey research method was used to conduct the study. A structured questionnaire was used to collect the data from the library professionals/librarians who have participated in the study. The questionnaire contained only close-ended questions. Totally, 80 online

questionnaires were distributed for this study. The collected data were analysed and interpreted.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Findings and interpretation were related to the data collected and its analysis. Out of 80 online questionnaires distributed, 61 were received back. Maximum participants (72%) who have participated have around 15–20 years' work experience and are associated with academic libraries. From the analysis of data, the following interpretations were drawn.

Number of Research Work Guided/Sponsored Projects Executed

Number of research work guided or the sponsored projects executed shows how actively librarians are involved in the research field. It also depicts librarians' activeness in research work apart from normal routine library tasks. Participants' response in Table 1 shows that most of the librarian, that is, 59% of the participants have not guided enough research work or sponsored projects. Very few, that is, only 4% participants of the study have carried out more than five sponsored projects or more than five research work guided in their service.

Table 1: Number or Research Work Guided/Sponsored Projects Executed by Librarian

Number	Percentage of response
0	59
1–2	20
3–5	17
>5	4

Number of Research Articles Read Per Week

Research articles read per week shows the keen interest of librarians in research and current development occurring in the library and information science fields. As shown in Table 2, most of the library professionals, that is, 74% read 1–2 research articles per week. All the library professionals who have participated in the study read at least one research article per week as none has responded for the option of no research article

Table 2: Number of Research Articles Read per Week by Library Professionals

Number	Percentage of response
0	0
1–2	74
3–5	19
> 5	7

read per week. Thus, it can be interpreted that all library professionals are interested in gaining knowledge about the current developments in the library science field.

Domains of Interest

Domains of interest are the field in which librarians are interested in guiding or doing research work and taking up sponsored projects. Table 3 depicts that most library professionals are fascinated by digital library as shown by maximum response 43% followed by 27% response for library automation. The reason for digital library and library automation fields as the choice of research might be due to transformation of traditional library into digital library.

Table 3: Domains of Interest for Guiding Research or Taking Sponsored Projects

Domains	Number
Library Automation	27
Library Management	8
Digital Library	43
Library Finance	4
Traditional Knowledge Management	8
Marketing of Library	10

Activities Conducted to Promote Research

To keep on promoting and supporting research, librarians need to develop new platforms for facilitating research. Most of the librarians conduct workshops/conferences/brainstorming seminars for sharing new developments to promote research as shown by the maximum percent response, that is, 56% in Table 4, followed by 20% response for creating online space to share research ideas. Workshops/conferences/brainstorming seminars

Table 4: Activities Conducted by Librarians to Promote Research

Activities	Percentage of response
Online space to share research ideas	20
Setting RSS feed to help researchers	8
Workshops/conferences/brainstorming session	56
Developing new apps/software's for research	4
Carrying projects to motivate researchers	12

are the most widely used methods by librarians for promoting research might be because library professionals think that mass gathering in these activities leads to more sharing of ideas and intellectual knowledge.

Motivational Factors of Research

Motivational factors are the incentives which generate the interest of a person in performing task. For performing research, there are certain factors that motivate librarians. Figure 1 shows that most of the librarians are interested in conducting research mainly to gain knowledge for personal development followed by to increase their API score for professional development. Very low percent response, that is, 4% in Table 5 for monetary benefits shows that librarians are least interested in guiding research or taking up sponsored project for money and increasing monetary gain could not help as motivation factors for guiding research.

Demotivational Factors in Research

Demotivational factors hamper the librarian in taking up research activity and there can be many reasons like lack of time, lack of interest, etc. Table 6 and Figure 2

Table 5: Motivational Factors for Conducting/Guiding Research Work for Librarians

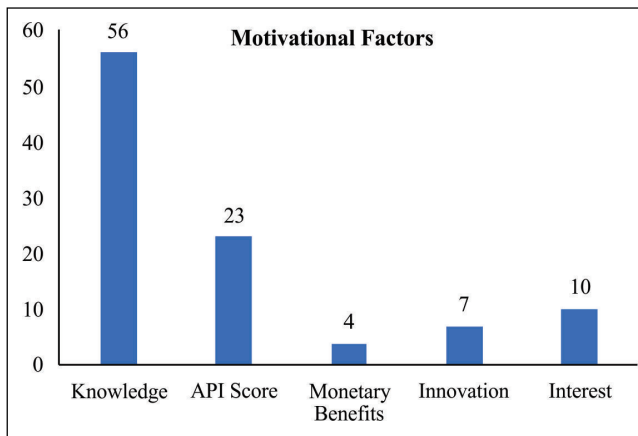| Motivational factors	Percent response
Knowledge/personal development	56
API score/professional development	23
Monetary benefits	4
Innovation	7
Interest	10

Figure 1: Percent Response of Librarians towards Motivational Factors

shows that for a maximum number of librarians who participated in the study, lack of time is the major impeding factor in guiding research work or taking sponsored projects. This major impediment of lack of time might because librarians are busy doing all the routine and administrative tasks of the library with no time left for taking up additional research activities.

Table 6: Demotivational Factors for Conducting/Guiding Research Work for Librarians

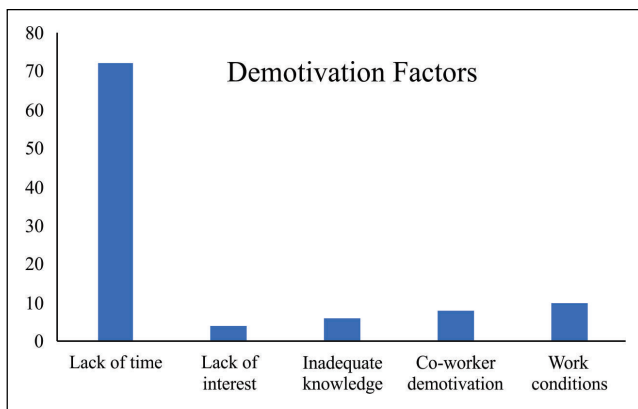| Demotivational factors	Percent response
Lack of time	72
Lack of interest	4
Inadequate knowledge	6
Co-worker demotivation	8
Work conditions	10

Figure 2: Percent Response of Librarians towards Demotivational Factors

CONCLUSION

Librarians are highly skilled in research processes. They possess unique knowledge of the necessary breadth and depth of information resources in various specialties. Librarians keep themselves updated on the expanding trends and paradigms not only in the library profession but also in all disciplines. Librarians are working in information production cycle and playing a more substantial role in the information creation process. In this article, the new role of librarian in guiding research and executing sponsored projects was discussed. Several key findings have emerged from this study like majority of the librarians who have participated in the study have not guided any research work or executed any sponsored projects in their service. Most of the librarians read 1–2 research papers per week to keep themselves abreast of the latest developments in the library and information science field and mostly have interest in digital library field. Most of the librarians conduct workshops/conferences/brainstorming session for promoting research. Gaining knowledge and personal development is the motivational factor and lack of time is the demotivational factor for librarians in guiding research and taking up sponsored projects. Thus, from this study it could be found that the role of librarian is constantly evolving from mere information gatherer and organiser to active participant in the information production cycle. Today's librarian is not like traditional librarians who just perform routine tasks but nowadays they are actively taking keen interest in guiding research and executing sponsored projects.

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