

CHANGE MANAGEMENT APPROACH TO ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

All innovation is change, but not all change is innovation. The effective management of change is fundamental to a successful and productive organization. The academic libraries play an important role in the academic community by providing necessary forum and resources for faculty and students to do their research and advance their knowledge. In order to effectively meet the growing needs of the clients and achieve success in the management of academic libraries, the academic libraries need to actively address the many challenges for the design and delivery of innovative resources and services. This paper has made an attempt to present the focus the relevance of academic libraries in India, suggest measurements taken for implementing change management in libraries and discuss the challenges and opportunities for academic libraries in India.

KEY WORDS: Academic libraries, Management Systems, Change Management, Library Strategy

INTRODUCTION

Higher education in the India has experienced massive changes over the last decades in terms of student numbers, teaching and learning patterns and funding levels. In this changing situation, the library's function in supporting the learning process is unquestioned. It is directly affected by the educational changes and issues. Academic libraries are considered to be the nerve centers of academic institutions and must support teaching, research, and other academic programmes. The situation in academic libraries of India is the same as that of academic libraries the world over; however, Indian libraries are constrained to provide maximum information with limited resources. It is evident that for the past few years, academic libraries have been operating in a high-velocity environment where information demand, competition, technology, access and copyright issues are constantly changing. However, there has been little systematic empirical research focusing on how academic libraries should strategically respond in order to remain relevant.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The problem for the present and future management of libraries, in an increasingly changing profession, is whether libraries can adopt a more appropriate approach to deal with the consequences of organizational change. The first step towards effective management of change in libraries is the acknowledgement and understanding of the human element in organizations. **Srinath (1993)** as vital organizational factors which must be addressed effectively by personnel management in libraries today if they are to develop an appropriate organizational climate which is open, dynamic and adaptable to change. If motivation is an issue in day to day work, then in times of organizational change – which require increased physical, psychological and emotional effort on the part of employees – it is absolutely essential. It was established that the strategic management of information in academic libraries is facing various drawbacks due to increasing unpredictability in technological advancement. It is becoming impossible to know with the necessary precision what to commit to today in order to be successful tomorrow (**Foskett & Brindley, 1999**). The study further revealed that USIU library staffs are not sufficient to support strategy execution. Insufficient workforce will cause delay and may partly explain why 72.5 percent of respondents said that strategy execution is being overtaken by events. Successful change will be facilitated by the serious consideration by managerial staff of certain human resource management concerns, such as communication, staff involvement, training and development and job design. It is these issues which must be addressed if staffs are to be encouraged to accept change, for without their acceptance, any change attempt may be futile.

CHANGES IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

These academic libraries now take on the key role of providing the competitive advantage to various universities, research and development organizations which play a pivotal role in the process of nation building. Academic libraries are positioning themselves to be the torchbearers and path makers of educational advancement by way of integrating knowledge systems and resources. These academic libraries are required to do serious introspection on their roles, responsibilities and contributions. Comments and observations are noted very frequently on their strengths and limitations in various national and international forums.

Academic librarianship is purported to have changed more over the last few decades than in its entire previous history, and it is suggested that the academic librarians in India have to redefine their roles, and indeed to refine their understanding of what they were trying to do in this decade. The factors affecting

change may be divided into four categories: economics, technology, higher education and organization. Although it must be remembered that it is the particular combination of factors that is causing the major impact on libraries, for reasons of clarity each category will be examined individually. There are also two types of drivers that affect the environment of academic library such as external drivers (i.e. user requirement and market competition etc.) and internal drivers (improving operational efficiency, need to improve the quality of products and services, process improvement etc.).

The economic forces faced by academic libraries are not only some of the greatest concerns in this sector, but also compound the problems posed by other forces, Diminishing or stagnant library funding has led to a greater demand for accountability in library spending and the advocating of quality audits and performance measurement as tools to increase efficiency. In addition, libraries are increasingly looking to other sources of income and fund-raising activities such as charging for certain services to alleviate this problem. The increasing costs of books and journals has fuelled the "access" versus "holdings" debate, and led to increasing reliance on inter-library loans and collaborative and co-operative arrangements.

Librarians have always served as guides to information resources. If the philosophy of service is to find the vehicle carrying the information, it needs to be expanded. If the librarian's concern is for supplying the information, regardless of the container, one has already made major progress towards the electronic library.

Whereas the conventional criterion is to find the container of the information, the new criterion in the ICT era is based on finding the information. Therefore, librarian or information specialist who is ICT literate is a valued professional also viewed as an agent of information transfer and an advocate for information accessibility.

The study further sought for appropriate cope to the highly changing environment. The table below provides ranking of various suggested measures.

a. Change Management Initiatives

1. Changing the system and structures as well as getting rid of obstacles that undermines Strategic behavior
2. Continuous training programs for staff and users
3. Institutionalizing change process through standard operating procedures
4. Institute mechanisms that ensures team work and collaborative approach to problem solving
5. Prompt communication and open discussion with library stakeholders

6. Develop and ensure leadership development and succession
7. Library managers to maintain interactive dialogue with staff in order to manage issues that may blindside them
8. Coherent policies on hiring, promoting, rewarding and developing staffs
9. Coaching and replacement of staff who cannot cope with change
10. Periodic attitude surveys to chart the progress of change effort

b. Paradigm shift induced by ICT in libraries

1. Traditional libraries to digital libraries
2. Card catalogs to Web OPACs
3. Chains/ magnetic strips to RFID tags
4. Print journals to online electronic journals
5. Ownership to open access model
6. Library physical access to remote accessibility
7. Information availability from library working hours to 24/7
8. Photocopies to digital copies
9. Standalone libraries to Information networks
10. Real time to virtual libraries

c. Library Staffs involvement in Service Delivery

1. Timely acting on feedbacks and suggestions gotten from users' satisfaction surveys
2. Encouraging team approach to information services
3. Through regular in-house staff training programs and regular maintenance of facilities
4. Through periodic open forums with all library staffs
5. Involvement of library users and all library staff in change management initiatives
6. Through established strategy-supportive policies and operating procedures
7. Institutionalizing library's values and philosophy
8. Instituting a comprehensive code of ethics and compliance procedures
9. Through benchmarking schemes and programs
10. Through staffs' annual performance appraisals
11. Through one-to-one coaching

d. Measures to Overcome Challenges

1. Strengthen the role of library in supporting research and development
2. Periodic compensation review
3. Have excellent equipment
4. Conducting periodic environmental surveys
5. Strengthen the role of library in information literacy program
6. Annual user satisfaction surveys
7. Rigorous technological innovation
8. Services differentiation and positioning
9. Objective annual staff development programs
10. Provision of online point-of-need tutorials
11. Through innovative and aggressive marketing and promotion
12. Regular review of library strategy, departmental structures and administrative systems

With reference to the paradigm shifts and changes that are occasioned by adoption of ICT in academic libraries, following as ideal measures for consideration during the development, execution and evaluation of library strategy.

- i. Continuous research on user needs
- ii. Strengthen staff training and development program
- iii. Institute responsive feedback mechanism and system from all stakeholders
- iv. Involve, train, and educate users on library's strategic management process
- v. Link library strategy to institutional strategy and goals
- vi. Strengthen the role of librarian as an educator
- vii. Create practical linkages between library strategy development and implementation
- viii. Evaluate strategy for feasibility and acceptability
- ix. Digitize information resources
- x. Allow access to electronic resources from outside the institution
- xi. Establish effective performance management systems
- xii. Take advantage of fiber optic cable to improve access to electronic information on campus
- xiii. Establish standards on user support and services.

CONCLUSION

Change is no more a matter of choice; however, it is the most important obstacle to surmount by individuals and organizations that desire to survive. Change as a phenomenon, has long been studied in science, art and humanity. Academic library system is the heart of the higher education systems in India. As the time is passing, nature of different administrative task and housekeeping operation in library and information centers is changing. Redefining roles and responsibilities, constructive intervention of the organization leaders in institution building endeavors, positive involvement of information personnel in delivery system and constant evaluation of goods and services will make the Indian academic libraries highly appropriate and resourceful in future.

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