

The School Librarian as Information Specialist and Technology Allies

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ABSTRACT

The school library plays an important role in the knowledge dissemination to the young mind of any nation. It is the duty of a school librarian to nurture the information needs of school pupil and make them efficient to contribute towards the nation. When compared to the other countries, the condition of school librarian in India is drastically different and challenging. This research article highlights the role of school librarian as information specialist and technology allies. This article describes the other possible multiple roles, multiple task performance of the librarian as technology specialist.

KEYWORDS: School Librarian, Information Specialist, Technology Allies, Student learning, School Library, Teacher Librarian, Instructional partners.

I. INTRODUCTION

Libraries have always upheld goal of academic success, research excellence and lifelong learning process. With the huge resources of information and knowledge, providing safe and easy to access space to user community the impact of libraries on academic communities is very enormous.

At the same time, there are enough statements to say that library profession is one among few to successfully adapt to the changes for over decade centuries by continuing curate traditional services and expanding digital services in the context of resources facilities and services.

Among few profession library profession is one to successfully adapt for the transformation or transition in the context of services to user community over a decade of centuries by providing traditional services and expanding the digital services to the needs of the users. The school librarian has a responsibility of collecting the diverse learning resources to support diverse learning needs of school children, teacher and school curriculum. Thus they play an important role in academic community.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The transformation of traditional library into virtual library is a result of technological advancement. This has resulted in the transformation of traditional librarian into technological savvy, information specialist and many more roles. As O'Connell (2017) opined critical thinking, creativity and innovative approached to information literacy is a current challenge to school libraries.

Shilling & Cousins (1990) calls school libraries as 'learning laboratories' which promotes students reading and conducting research into small scale projects. Allen, L.E. & Taylor, D.M. (2016) suggests school librarians has to build their library to provide classroom instruction for research driven, product based and project based learning. Patel & Anitha (2021) opined that school librarians needs to put more emphasis on adopting new technological tools with which they can connect to the faster pace of information to serve users. Harris (2011) suggested personal toolkit to the school librarians because the role of school librarian and information specialist is more predominant than ever. Tokwe (2019) also opines that the skills that school librarians require for a modern school library are continuing to change due to the vigorous nature of ICTs. The researcher also emphasises on implement digital learning techniques to provide resources and services to the teachers and students to achieve academic excellence. Kammer et al (2021) suggests that it is a shared responsibility of librarians and academic community to fulfil the goal and vision of their institution. In their research they have listed out t strategies used by the librarians to collaborate more effectively with teachers. Wine (2016) opined that the role of librarian has witnessed a radical change as they have to complement traditional resources and technology integration. To support academic integrity, class room instruction, a school librarian has to perform work as a collaborative team of students, teacher and librarian. Cohen (2019) says that the emergence of new areas of practice and emergence of new curricula has resulted in the expansion of school librarian's influence beyond the library wall and connect to the global community of learners.

Snelling (2021) believe that librarians along with the traditional librarian skills have already equipped with research skills to curate information resources and media literacy and curating resource to lead in this digital era.

Lo, P. and Chiu, D.K.W. (2015) in their research study found that school librarians are improving themselves by actively involving in formation of school curriculum, leading projects, providing classroom teaching collaboration and support.

The present literature review has found that many researchers outlined the roles and responsibilities of a school librarian as program administrator, instructional partner, as information specialist which has also been clearly defined by American School Library Association (ASLA). According to ASLA School librarian should be skilled and knowledgeable enough to educate the students to access, evaluate, and use information from multiple sources in order to learn, to think, and to create and apply new knowledge. They should also constantly update personal skills and knowledge in order to work with teachers, administrators, and entire school community. Librarian should play a leading role in developing policies, practices, and curricula that guide students to develop the full range of information and communication abilities.

3. LIBRARY IMPACT ON STUDENT LEARNING

As studies say that library profession is one among few professions successfully adapt to the changes for over decade centuries by continuing curate its traditional services and expanding digital services in the context of resources, facilities and services. There are many evidences to say libraries huge contribution leads to students learning, librarians competence to generate credible connection between library resources and student use. Student use library resources, services and facilities, like primary sources (books and archival resources, electronic resources etc) as these resources, facilities and services support attaining learning outcomes

3.1. Why library?

Many studies proved libraries have history of more than 5,000 years of existence. It is the importance of the library that has kept libraries alive even in this digital era. Libraries provide place for people of all ages for practice lifelong learning. Libraries level the intellectual playing field.

Libraries are the knowledge hub, learning hub. Libraries also act as catalyst in storing knowledge not only in printed resources, digital resources and also creating their own digital resources and disseminating to the users. It is the key duty of the librarian to record, save, organize and disseminate the knowledge to the right person at the right time.

The school libraries have the responsibility of shaping the future citizens of any country through the rich resources of knowledge/ information available in the world or World Wide Web.

3.2. Why librarians?

The image of a Librarian from the book keeper has been changed to the information specialist. Librarian acquires information, classifies information and disseminates information to the user and also guides user to search and retrieve information. 21st century has witnessed the rapid production of information which resulted in the challenging work of a librarian more challenging.

Librarians are the bridge to the world of knowledge and its users. though the format of information has changed from print media to digital media the work nature of a librarian has not been changed, earlier a librarian has performed works such as acquisition, cataloguing, indexing issue and return of books etc. and provided Current awareness service, Selective dissemination of Information (SDI) service, etc. in the print format, now in this digital world librarian is performing digital information storage, curate, organize, metadata creation, knowledge mining etc. to fulfil the needs of users. To perform all such work a librarian has to educate himself to cope up with the technological advancement, learning environment and users learning preference. Librarian should move on from the assumption of educated clerks to the information specialist and technology allies. As Obadare has opined the dynamic nature of information has also made the role of a librarians change radically.

School librarian provides the learning environment where students can learn to read books, learn to obtain information, and adopt the gathered information from the library in academic needs. It is also a prime responsibility of a school librarian to make the school children to become information literate when they graduate from the school.

To compete with the information explosion, digital evolution and changes in the learning community, school librarian has to be thoroughbred information experts and capable to do high-level research to provide and promote

information access both by traditional and electronic media to the users. Librarians play major role in the information flow chart i.e. from generator to users.

Librarians they have always been major defenders of intellectual freedom. Librarians are the original, and still the best, search engines. Without the aid of Librarians making decisions will be incomplete.

4. SCHOOL LIBRARY

The UNESCO manifesto states that “the school library equips students with lifelong learning skills and develops the imagination, enabling them to live as responsible citizens”. This shows the importance of school library.

Teaching is an activity that takes in the school library (Classroom teacher by assembling a group of students to use library resources) and teacher librarian integrating with classroom teacher can teach students to develop information skills in the library. Effective teaching depends on the creating supportive environment like school library.

School library will always help for effective teaching as school library is the hub of different media and sets faster new innovations, promoting youth participation in technology and with online communities. The school library connects young people to different disciplines of knowledge and structure as an ideal hybrid space for learning.

4.1 School Librarians

India is a country which has witnessed the emergence of teaching from oral lessons to the recorded audio lessons. As soon as the written method of teaching and learning was introduced knowledge and information preservation and dissemination also started through libraries.

So it is evident that in earlier method of teaching and learning in India has also libraries attached to the study/ learning place (Pathashala). The current education system which is based on the British education system is the one which has not seen in the school library in earlier days but then gradually adopted school library system. In India in many of the places

Gradually School Librarian or professional librarian has replaced the place of teachers or non teaching staff who was maintaining school libraries because the education system has recognized the virtue of a librarian. Contribution of Dr. S. R. Rangangathan for the position the librarian has earned now is unforgettable.

Now the librarians have been identified as synonymous to knowledge dissemination. As and when the information age advances the typical role of librarian as a book keeper, classifier, indexer etc. has changed to more information technology profession as data retriever, data processor information specialist, media specialist etc. To cope up with the pace of information/ digital age librarian has to be well educated and well versed in ICT. Obadare is also of the same opinion that librarian’s role has been changed radically as the transition is happening in the digital information field. He also states that “No longer are they to wait for students to ask for assistance in finding information in a place called a library. Their new role makes it imperative for them to provide services and instructions regardless of location, time or format”.

Consequently the digital era has transformed the work nature of librarians to the thoroughbred information experts, this has been resulted in the way of accessing, retrieving and using of information from users.

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The role responsibility of a school librarian is greater than a class room teacher. School librarian introduces the children to the vast area of knowledge of the world bounded in printed book format. They inspire students to read books and to use library effectively.

There is professional standard and guidelines like IFLA School library guidelines, AASL National School Library Standards, National School Library Standards that define the responsibility of school librarian as a leader in the area of technology and integration.

School librarian play a more responsible role than class room teacher, he introduces the primary sources like an encyclopedia, dictionary or thesaurus etc. to the students and teaches how to use library database, online resources. Librarian has the capacity and ICT skills to lead through technology integration and fulfill the information need of students as well as teachers.

As technology has become a crucial element of teaching and learning, school librarians, as information specialists has to play innovative role to integrate technology with school curriculum to provide information without boundaries and to lead academic integrity

The effective integration of technology and academic curriculum depends on both students capacity to select technology tools to retrieve information and librarian's skills to retrieve information, analyze, synthesize the information and present it professionally in a timely manner. It is the vital role of a school librarian to ensure the students to prepare succeed and participate in a digital society through technology as a learning tool. The growing dependency on technology in the current education system has moved information literacy to the forefront in education which has given the school librarian an opportunity to perform as a leader in academic environment.

There is handful of studies that describe the different role and expectation of the school librarian as information literacy (IL) instructors. The studies have found that School librarians are not merely managers of the school libraries they are also expected to serve as administrators, teaching consultants, information specialists and IL teachers and suggest that information literacy instructions to the school students should be given in elementary and secondary-school levels. The professional status, amount staff time, manpower as well as resources are interrelated to the librarians professional status.

School librarians needs to be more involved in contributing to the overall school curriculum as an IT experts and collaborating frequently with teachers to enhance their teaching. Librarian has to cope-up with the students' fast-changing learning needs and emerging technologies in learning and teaching.

Hence, it is a collaborative effort of school librarian, classroom teachers and principle to succeed in achieving information literacy instructions to school students. To educate the benefit of information literacy skills instruction and implementation for the school curriculum to the school administrator/ principal and teachers is a prime responsibility of a librarian.

4.2 School librarian as Information Literacy instructors

Information literacy can be defined as the ability to find, evaluate, organize, use, and communicate information in all its various formats, most notably in situations requiring decision making, problem solving, or the acquisition of

knowledge. The dependency on information tools and technology on current education system has brought the information literacy to the forefront. Librarians possess information literacy skills such as computer literacy, communication skills, research skills etc which has lead librarian as information literacy instructors in many academic institutions.

Bernstein (Bernstein proposes (2010c). opine that, school teachers don't have proper training to assume the information specialist role, where as school librarians can effectively engage themselves in Information literacy instructor to both teachers and students.

Many research studies have found that librarian being a information literacy instructor has succeeded in contributing to the students learning, collaborating with the teachers. Librarians possess professional knowledge in information technology and they apply their level of excellence in curriculum development, collection management, use of ICT in classroom teaching etc which has conveyed that school librarians are leaders in information literacy instructors.

4.3 Librarian as information specialist

Information specialist are the person who can able to collects, records, organises, stores, preserves, retrieves, and disseminates printed or digital information. Librarian is performing the same from ages. As technology advanced school librarian has developed the skills of supplementing school resources by using information technology tools such as blogs, animation, web 2.0 etc to assist students in the learning tasks, making educational videos, helping in projects, presentations etc. School librarians are actively engaging themselves by communicating with students, teachers and management team to provide information services and access 24/7 and to connect the school with the global learning community.

As school students are new to information/ knowledge society, librarians took the responsibility to literate about the copy right and ethical use of information as they are expert in fair use of information. They have the responsibility to encourage students to use library resources both in print format and in digital format. They also have to encourage students for self learning through online apps, educational videos, educational websites etc. Meanwhile librarians have to assess the student's curriculum needs and evaluate their library collection and collection management policies to manage information service effectively.

As information specialist school librarians understand and analyze the learning need/ information need of users, resources to be provided, they contribute to develop information hub in the school and overall development of students learning achievements.

4.4 Librarian in terms of leadership

A good leader is the one who takes his team towards the success or to achieve a certain goal, they work to inspire team. ASLA & ALIA (2001) has described librarian as leaders in curriculum and learning leaders (AASL, 2017) and leaders of information literacy (SLA, 2016). Librarian takes a proactive role in influencing the development of innovations such as e-learning and ensures that information literacy skills are incorporated into all forms of curriculum and learning. Librarian are skilfully handling plethora of information available on the internet to offer various information/ academic needs utilizing their communication skill, skill to adopt changes and vision. Librarians are actively communicating with the school management in developing school curriculum, they are communicating with teachers to provide new tools and technology to enhance teaching skills and information need,

they are communicating with students to understand the academic need. Further they are involving in decision summing in curricular activities, suggesting new tools and technology to improve teaching and learning to sum up all we can assume that librarians are playing a role of leaders in academic environment.

4.5 Librarians and Technology allies

School librarian role is now to make their school future ready, to accommodate effectively the new ways of teaching and learning, to choose appropriate method and resources to their school. School librarian with their ICT skill, are providing services like faster learning experiences to the students and introducing students to real world skill and hands on studying. Librarians have been fulfilling the information needs of three generation of users like the first type of users who are fugitive to technology, second type of users who can handle technology along with traditional library services and the third type of users who are born digital and prefer only digital media for their information needs. Librarians have showed their equal proficiency in serving users by using traditional print resources and also digital resources. Librarians are well versed in handling both digitization of information and digitally published information. To stay competent and to assist school students in the current digital era librarians are applying more effort to update their professional knowledge and ICT skills.

Many research suggests that technology and media plays a large role in the ways that student can get connect to learning. Librarian also has to play a critical role and articulate the critical needs of the users. Similarly many studies have shown that school librarians are the most digital literate staff in the school compared to teachers. They are excellent in communication and collaboration through digital media tools.

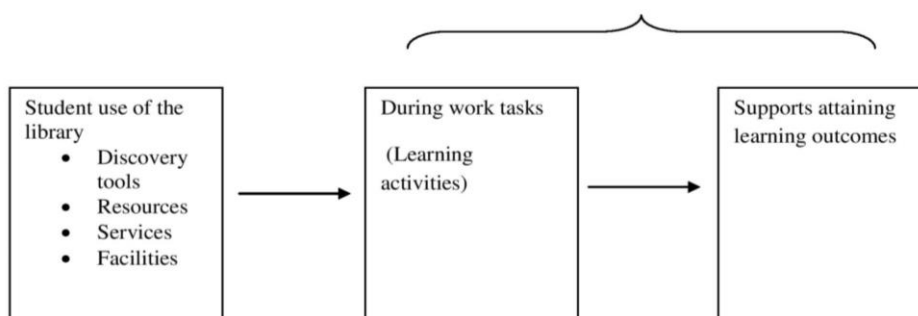
School students are now depending on digital media and technology along with print books, as it has been the part of current education system. Currently students are of the opinion that the school librarian is the right person who can understand their diverse educational needs, dependency on technology and proper use of tools and technology. These circumstances have encouraged school librarians to improve their expertise in technology, information literacy, print as well as online resources to assist school learning and teaching environment.

It is duty of a school librarian to understand the student's everyday interest to build their extracurricular interest along with the formal school education, to inculcate reading habit, writing habit, by introducing students to fiction, non-fiction, science, educational movies etc. Librarian should make framework to educate students to utilize social media technology and social networks, digital hubs, virtual worlds to their educational needs.

A frame work should be build to act as a bridge to connect students learning with resources and technology, it should highlight the role of librarian defining the correlation between library resources and students learning.

Framework

Learning activities cross walk



As information service provider and as a leader a school librarian shows his expertise in selection, acquisition, evaluation and organization of information resources and technologies in conventional and digital format to the students. School librarian should have a great understanding of their library collection and acquire library resources based on the academic curriculum.

With the emerging technologies librarians can become allies by adopting creative learning, help students to visualize and understand the future of the students. They are the best personnel to be postured to direct students in learning for education. School librarian play an important role in training teachers on the ethical uses of social media, technologies, online communities and virtual worlds to enhance learning.

Today librarian is the best suited to act as their peer mentors to different new innovation throughout their school organization. They can be effective allies in helping students connect their engagement with technology and the interest with their learning school. Librarian is information specialist and technology ally by connecting and facilitating to online communities and powerful tools, Such as social network sites, virtual worlds, and educational sites and so on.

CONCLUSION

The potent for the school librarian to be technology ally is inevitable. The study observation shows that librarians are utilising emerging technologies in many of the ways as young students. The Study also observes that the school librarians are more likely than teacher to communicate and collaborate via digital media tools. With these potential activities in the school communities Librarian will have an approach to potential avenues for innovation to participate and have a voice in education policy, curriculum integration for students and sometimes librarian can influence to change these policies. Librarian should have awareness to the use of new media tools to deeply engage students in learning will require the careful balance of multiple factors including knowledge of the curriculum, new trends in technology and how these trends might come into conflict with existing school policies or classroom policies. Effective teaching depends on the creation of supportive environment like library which ultimately imposes challenges for students, results in providing quality work and developing of students as active learners.

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