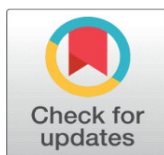


CHANGING ROLE OF SPECIAL LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS IN DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

Dr. Rajashekara G. R. ¹  , Dr. B. S. Biradar ² 

¹ Librarian- Selection Grade, Government First Grade College, Bhadravathi-577301, Shivamogga, India

² Professor and Chairman, Department of Library, and Information Science Kuvempu University, Shankaraghatta, India



Received 24 August 2022
Accepted 25 September 2022
Published 13 October 2022

Corresponding Author

Dr. Rajashekara G.R.,
drjashekar@gmail.com

DOI [10.29121/granthaalayah.v10.i9.2022.4808](https://doi.org/10.29121/granthaalayah.v10.i9.2022.4808)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Copyright: © 2022 The Author(s). This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

With the license CC-BY, authors retain the copyright, allowing anyone to download, reuse, re-print, modify, distribute, and/or copy their contribution. The work must be properly attributed to its author.



ABSTRACT

The role of library professional is vital in special libraries. Professional should be a knowledge manager, information scientist, a good administrator, and a technology person to cope up technical aspect of Special Library. In nutshell professionals in special libraries shall be required to have change in their attitude and behavior to make them fit to the profession. They must be conversant with changing technology and must have access to innovation taking place in specific areas and acquiring specialization in their professional skills. This creates a congenial atmosphere for dissemination of information and its use in different research activities. Consistent training programs will help staff to improve their skills for their routine operations and services. Therefore, this paper made an attempt to give brief overview, challenges, development of special libraries and the key roles and responsibilities of special library professionals in digital library environment.

Keywords: Special Libraries, Research Library, Library Professional, Karnataka

1. INTRODUCTION

Special libraries are natural outcome of the need for information support to research and development, business, industry, expanded functions of governments and similar other organizations. Special libraries are primarily intended for limited and more specific clientele with special field of interest than libraries of traditional educational or public settings. They deal with more specialized kinds of information sources and services both in traditional and digital form [Dhiman \(2008\)](#). Special libraries are specialized in a particular subject or group of subjects. In recent years' special libraries are repositioning themselves as strategic instruments providing

business benefits for their parent organization. A future success criterion for special libraries is to be found in the ability to adopt digital library sources, services, and effective delivery of the same. With the extensive change in the opportunities offered by information technologies, special libraries have experienced a strong move towards becoming more or less completely digitized in order to survive. From the above particulars it is evident that special libraries are unique in nature and play an important role in society. Keeping these facts in mind present study is undertaken to know the trends followed in special libraries

2. NEED OF SPECIAL LIBRARIES

Knowing the importance of special libraries in today's digital information environment, following important needs are listed:

- Chang in research trend.
- High degree of urgency for latest information.
- Thrust for latest development in the interested field.
- Huge amount of information is availability in other than English languages.
- Rapid growth in electronic information sources and services.
- Effort on 'information discovery' from 'information explosion' in all forms in all areas.
- Great discoveries in all arears knowledge that affects in growing specialization in the field.
- Work pressure at global level in the specific discipline with current features.
- Rapid presence of users with diverse nationalities, cultures, field of interest and languages etc. [Asghar and Shafique \(2012\)](#).
- Conversion of traditional print information into digital mode and enable conversion of graphics, text, and audio into multimedia resources.
- Shrinking library budget and increasing user demand for specific information [Singh and Pinki \(2009\)](#).
- Fast-changing multidimensional user needs
- Increasing impact of IT on special library services on delivery mode [Singh \(2006\)](#).

3. FUNCTIONS OF SPECIAL LIBRARIES

The key functions performed in special libraries are as follows:

- To supply up-to-date specialized information sources and services to their specific group of readers in the field of knowledge served by the library.
- To analyse, synthesize and evaluate specific subject information.
- To provide critical reviews, reports, and other information sources etc.
- To provide replies to users and management queries.
- To help research workers in the works of translation, abstracting, indexing, documentation, photographic reproduction.
- Provision of Current Awareness Service and Selective Dissemination of Information, bibliographic, abstracting, indexing and TOC (Table of Content) and other specialized services.

- To procure literature published on the latest developments across the world both in print and electronic forms.
- To arrange specialized books, articles, reports, and other information sources on Inter Library Loan.

4. GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF SPECIAL LIBRARIES IN INDIA

After the First World War research activity received great impetus with the growth of scholarly society and establishment of research institutes. As the process of industrialization began to expand there was the need for establishing special libraries in order to provide to the requirements of researchers. The growth and developments of special libraries is presented chronologically as bellow [Muqueem \(2014\)](#):

- Thanks to the efforts of a great scholar and *Supreme Court Judge Sir William Jones* who was instrumental in setting up of the '*Asiatic Society of Bengal*' in 1784. In the same year, a library was also established in the society. It is claimed as the first library in India.
- The first engineering college was established in India was '*Sir Thomson College of Engineering*' in 1847 in Roorkee. Later it was converted in to *Engineering University*.
- In the years 1878 and 1889, '*Survey of India and Botanical Survey of India*' (Calcutta) were respectively established.
- This was followed by the establishment of '*Haffikine Institute*' by the Government of India in Bombay in 1899. Primarily, it was intended to be a '*Plague Research Laboratory*'. Gradually it was converted in to '*Center of Research on Preventive Medicine*'.
- According to researchers there were around thirty-five scientific libraries by the end of 19th century.
- In 1909 the Tata's established '*Indian Institute of Science* in Bengaluru. This institute has been considered as India's first school of advanced research.
- The leading organization of Indian scientist's viz. the *Indian Science Congress* was started in 1913 with its headquarters at New Delhi.
- Subsequently 1922 *Indian Research Fund Association* was setup.
- It was in 1923 that the *Imperial Institute of Animal Husbandry and Dairying* was established in Bangalore. The process of expansion of this institution was completed in 1936 and I was given a rename as *Imperial Dairy Institute*. In addition to this in 1955 *National Dairy Research Institute (NDRI)* was setup in Karnal, Haryana.
- In the year 1925 *Central Coffee Research Institute (CCRI)* was established.
- *Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)* was started in 1929.
- The premier institute in the field of statistics *Indian Statistical Institute (ISI)* was established in Calcutta. A branch of this institute has been established in Bangalore.
- In 1930 India's first radio service *All India Radio (AIR - Akashvani)* was established.
- In 1934 *Indian Industrial Research Bureau* was established.

- *National Institute of Sciences of India (NISI)* in 1970. Its nomenclature was changed in 1970 as *Indian National Science Academy (INSA)*. It is considered as India's premier scientific institute, similarly this organization is similar to *Royal Society of London* in UK.
- In 1940 *Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. (HAL)* was established.
- The formation of *Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)* was completed in 1942. It may be noted that, at present 43 national laboratories, 138 field stations and 02 industrial research associations are operating under this premier institute.
- In 1948 the Government of India established *Atomic Energy Commission*. Along with this *Reactor Research Centre (RRC)*, *Kalpakkam*, *Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC)*, *Bombay* and *Variable Energy Cyclotron Centre (VECC)*, Calcutta was also established.
- In 1949 *Defense Science Organization* was started.
- A large number of institutes such as *Central Food Technological Research Institute (CFTRI) Mysore*, *National Chemical Laboratory (NCL) Pune*, *Central Fuel Research Institute (CFRI) Jadavpur*, *National Metallurgical Laboratory (NML) Jamshedpur* and *National Physical Laboratory (NPL), New Delhi* were established in 1950.
- *Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)* was setup in 1950.
- In 1952, CSIR established the *Indian National Scientific Documentation Center (INSDOC)* and incidentally it is the national documentation center pertaining to scientific activities. Later in the year 2002 was renamed as NISCAIR (National Institute of Science Communication and Information Resources).
- The counterpart of its UK's ASLIB was established in India in the year 1955. It was named as *Indian Association for Special Libraries and Information Centers (IASLIC)* in Kolkata.
- Television media *Doordharshan* was established in 1959 by Govt. of India.
- Central Power Research Institute (CPRI) was initiated in 1960.
- In the year 1966 *All India Institute of Speech and Hearing (AIISH)* was set up.
- India's first software company *Tata Consultancy Services (TCS)* was established in 1968.
- In 1969 establishment of *Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR)*.
- In 1970 ICSSR established *Social Science Documentation Centre*. Later in 1986 it was renamed as *National Social Science Documentation Center (NASSDOC)*.
- In 1977 *National Information System in Science and Technology (NISSAT)* was setup with the guidance and assistance of UNESCO.
- In the year 1981 Software legend *Infosys* was established in 1981 in Bangalore.
- In 1985 *Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts (IGNCA)* was established.
- *National Research Center for Cashew Research (NRCC)* was established in Puttur, Karnataka in the year 1986.
- *National Institute of Rock Mechanics (NIRM)* was set up in 1988 in Bangalore.

- In 1989 *Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Research Scientific Research (JNCASR)* was established under the guidance of scientist Prof. C.N.R. Rao in Jakkur, Bangalore.
- In 1990 *Indian Institute of Plantation Management (IIPM)* was set up.
- *National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS)* was established in Bangalore in 1992.
- *National Institute of Design (NID)* was established in 2006.

5. CHANGING ROLE OF SPECIAL LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS IN DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

The behaviour, role, expertise, and knowledge of special library professionals must be reformed in a race for significance, respect, and resources. The special library professionals should have good technical knowledge and capacity to discover specific areas in which technology can help the organization in achieving its organizational goals. Professionals should know the user information requirements, work commendably in association with members to enrich research activities, study recent skills for effective services [ALA \(2010\)](#). Special library professionals will need to get specific cross training programs for efficient handling of challenges. The key roles and responsibilities of special libraries in digital library environment are as follows:

- Many a time the heads of special library, apart from being administrators must act as facilitator in order to ensure the best use of library resources.
- Professionals must be prepared to assume leadership and provide expertise while assisting the users to understand material and adopt the same in their learning and research activity. They have to play a vital role in ethical management of knowledge-based information system and its usage. In nutshell, they must act as catalyst. To discover something new in specific areas of research that the organization carries out. No doubt this task is highly challenging but if the professionals in special library are dedicated and have commitment to work the issue can be easily sorted out.
- This is not enough the professionals in special library must be thorough with analysis, repackaging of information, content management systems and establishment of digital repository management systems in specific field [Thamaraiselvi \(2009\)](#).
- Professionals are required to prepare research reports in accordance with the requirements indicated by the staff of the organization.
- Sometimes they must be smart enough to have shortcut intelligence to gather information with utmost competence and speed.
- They should know about research activities carried out by other organizations in similar area so that duplication of such research work in the parent organization can be avoided.
- Professionals should know how to verify the authenticity of information resources viz. internal and external reports before they are being published.
- On top of this the professionals must create a sophisticated database for organization to retrieve their in-house information.
- Professionals must identify patents and trademarks of other organizations to avoid unnecessary legal complications.

- It is a known fact that they are the main stakeholders to the library purchases, so they must evaluate and compare the IT tools and information sources for special library digitization before entering in to purchase deal.
- The leadership of professional's lies in training the junior staff and new recruits to handle database and IT tools, such training should be more efficient and cost effective. [Wittwer \(2001\)](#).
- Professionals must have awareness to design and development of web-based applications, innovative emerging technologies, and services.

They must facilitate the researchers and users to trace, retrieve, store, and disseminate digital information sources and services. Proper instruction has to be given to users through several applications, networks, platforms, databases through a special library's information communications.

- Special library professionals should have knowledge of design, develop, launch, and maintain of digital content management systems. Further, they must be capable of suggesting measures, make recommendations, evaluate several methodologies, guidelines, and standards for employing computer software in the course of making and preserving digital collections in special libraries.

Thus, professionals in special libraries must be versatile in the choice and adoption of latest technologies instead of sticking on blindly to the conventional mode of library operations.

6. CHALLENGES IN SPECIAL LIBRARIES

Time has come for special library professionals redefining the status and the new challenges in profession. In this era of technological progression, information explosion and transformation in research activities special libraries have to focus on following issues:

- The professionals of special library are confronted with many challenges they have the tough task of transforming the entire library system from book to resources of high-quality information resources in different formats.
- Professionals must have willingness to consider the adoption of emerging technologies as is required by the user community in the present scenario [ALA \(2010\)](#).
- Special library professionals must have a clear idea about issues connected with copyright and archival issues of electronic information resources.
- The real challenge lies in their presence of mind in acting as not just as physical owner of information but in being portal for access the huge and widespread information resources.
- Only then libraries and library professionals will be able to establish their identity by recasting their attitude and skills to perform better in accordance with altering models of knowledge creation and distribution to serve the user communities.
- Professionals are required to have good rapport with library users and provide right information to right user at right time to enable speedy research activities and uphold the spirit with which the special libraries have been thought of.

7. CONCLUSION

It is witnessed from the special libraries that additional care is given on recent information sources. Finally, the trace is given in the direction of digital service or digital learning to deal with information at the desktop. The role of library professional is vital in special libraries. Professional should be a documentation officer, knowledge manager, an information scientist, a good administrator, and a technology person to deal with technical aspects of Special Library. In nutshell professionals in special libraries shall be required to have change in their attitude and behaviour to make them fit to the profession. They must be conversant with changing technology and must have access to innovation taking place in specific areas and aim at acquiring specialization in their professional skills. This creates a congenial atmosphere for dissemination of information and its use in different research activities. Consistent training programs will help professionals to improve their knowledge for their routine operations and services, and better understanding of knowledge resources such as, books, journals, databases, patents, standards, technical reports, and electronic resources including web-based resources. Further /ICT tools and techniques is the requirement of the hour for complete growth of the special libraries by this it can be prove the motto "Early information, early victory".

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

REFERENCES

- Asghar, M. B., and Shafique, F. (2012). Service Evaluation in Special Libraries of Bahawalpur : A Comparative Study of GCT, QMC, and UCET. *Library Philosophy and Practice*, (Accessed on 05-Jan-2015).
- Bilawar, P. B. (2013). Special Library : A Gigantic Information Centre for Specials. *American International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*, 3(2), 134-140. (Accessed on 29-Nov-2015).
- Changing Roles of Information Professionals (2010). American Library Association (ALA). (Accessed on 16-Nov-2014).
- Dhiman, A. K. (2008). *A Handbook of Special Libraries and Librarianship*. New Delhi : ESS ESS Publications, 47.
- Kumar, K. (1987). *Library Organization*. New Delhi : Vikas Publishing House.
- Muqueem, S. P. (2014). Special libraries in India : An overview. *Knowledge Librarian*. 1 (1), 140-159.
- Singh, S. P., and Pinki (2009). New Skills for Lis Professionals in Technology-Intensive Environment. *Globalizing Academic Libraries : Vision 2020* (ed.), Delhi University Library System, 331-6. New Delhi : Mittal Publications.
- Singh, S.P., and Kumar, K. (2005). *Special Libraries in the Electronic Environment*. New Delhi : Bookwell.
- Thamaraiselvi, G. (2009). Vision and the Changing Roles of the Future Special Library Professional in the E-Learning Environment : Challenges and Issues. *Globalizing Academic Libraries : Vision 2020* (ed.), Delhi University Library System, 139-45. New Delhi : Mittal Publications.

Wittwer, R. (2001). Special Libraries-How to survive in the twenty-first century. *The Electronic Library*, 19(4), 221-225.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/EUM0000000005746>.