ROLE OF LIBRARIES IN KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

SANGITA GUPTA

Professor and Head, DLIS, University of Jammu, Jammu, India
E-mail:sangitauniv@gmail.com

The dissemination of Knowledge is one of the cornerstones of civilization

- John F.Budd

Abstract-knowledge is the primary factor of production compared to capital and labour. Knowledge society is 'a society that creates shares and uses knowledge. In the emerging knowledge society, library and information centers are committed to provide access to information and knowledge resources and services to meet the information requirements of the community. Therefore it is high time for LIS professionals to accept these changes and challenges and act as the successful knowledge managers.

Index Terms: Knowledge, Knowledge Society, Knowledge managers. Library Professional

India is one of the oldest civilizations with kaleidoscopic variety and rich cultural heritage. During the period of 62 years of its independence, it has achieved multifaceted socio-economic progress to be self-sufficient in agricultural production. India is now tenth industrialized country and sixth nation to have gone in the world into outer space to conquer nature for the benefit of the people. (Palmer-Jones, Sen, 2003) Moreover the changes can be seen in the social ,economic, cultural and political areas of our society.

KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

In the 21st century, a new society is coming into existence where knowledge is the primary factor of production compared to capital and labour. Knowledge society is 'a society that creates shares and uses knowledge for the prosperity and well-being of its people.' (www.digitalstrategy.govt.nz/templates)

"Knowledge societies are not a new occurrence For example, fishermen have long shared the knowledge of predicting the weather to their community and this knowledge gets added to the social capital of the community .What is new is that

- With current technologies, knowledge societies need not be constrained by geographic proximity
- Current technology offers much more possibilities for sharing, archiving and retrieving knowledge
- Knowledge has become the most important capital in the present age, .and hence the success of any society lies in harnessing it."

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/knowledge-society)

Modern information and communication technology has connected the world on all levels so closely that the entire globe has become a net from which we can connect practically from any one point to another. Therefore in such an interconnected society, one cannot distinguish one from another. Therefore, if we can state that knowledge in the past was in a way "connected" with an individual, it is today the characteristic of the society as a whole, an interconnected society

FACTORS /CHARACTERISTICS OF KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

- Universal access to information
- Skilled citizens who heavily rely on ICTs.
- Occupations- Creativity and management.
- Equal access to education
- Preservation and promotion of cultural diversity including multilingualism
- Freedom of expression
- Network of Knowledge organizations and corporate culture

Team work, collaboration and standardizations - the norms for knowledge sharing

Knowledge is considered as capital and commodity in the contemporary knowledge industry**.** It has become a public good and must be accessible to all irrespective of age**,** caste, colour, education, occupation and religion. During the 21st Century knowledge determines the economic growth of the nations, where as during the last two -three centuries capital and labor were the main resources behind the creation of wealth of nations. Dr Abdul Kalam (2008) (former President of India) talked with the students and stated that :

"Efficient utilization of existing knowledge can create comprehensive wealth for the nation and also improve the quality of life including better education, healthcare, infrastructure and other societal needs."

About two third of the world's wealth now comes from knowledge based companies like Google, Microsoft, Yahoo, Tata Consultancy Services, etc. National Knowledge Commission (India) also recognized that access to knowledge is essential and stated "Access is one of the most fundamental issues in a knowledge society."

According to some demographic experts, at the present moment about half of India's population is young which is projected to continue till 2025-30. This youth population (between the age group of 20-25) cuts spending on dependants, aiding economic growth. It gives the country a potential edge over China, where an ageing population (due to one-child policy) could slow its economy by 2030.. "Until now, the world blamed India for its huge population, but now it could envy it," Amartay Sen said. But "whether India can benefit from its youth India population? will depend on economic development and equitable social development". It all depends upon creation, dissemination and utilization of knowledge by the society.. In order to avail the benefit of this situation, majority of people in India must be helped to overcome 'information poverty' .The knowledge deprived have to be given access to relevant and timely information and knowledge. Internet plays an important role in dissemination of information and knowledge. (National Knowledge Commission)

No. of Internet Users

Countr	2009	2014	% Population in 2014
China	338,000,000	641,601,070	46.03%
America	227,636,000	279,834,232	86.75%
Japan	94,000,000	109,252,912	86.03%
India	81,000,000	243,198,922	19.19%
U.K	48,755,000	557,075,826	789.90%

Source "World Internet Statistics
www.internetworldstats.com

In India the usage of internet is very less as compared to other countries despite the fact that National Knowledge Commission in India has recognized that that access to knowledge is essential by various means including internet usage. Hence libraries have to play an important role to bridge the gap between the information poor and information rich by ensuring that people from all walks of life have easy access to knowledge they look for.

According to NKC (India):

- Library and information services are fundamental to the goals of creating, disseminating, optimally utilizing and preserving knowledge.
- They are instrumental in transforming an unequal society into an egalitarian, progressive knowledge society.

Libraries play a fundamental role in our society. They are the collectors and stewards of our heritage; and organizers of the knowledge in the books by cataloguing, classifying and indexing them. They take the knowledge of the past and present, and lay it down for the future. Traditionally, the library was a physical place where the collection of various types of documents such as books, journals, videos, CD-ROMs, etc were organized. The decade 1990s is seen as a critical decade when IT revolution led a new world and provided an important break-through in acquisition, processing, storage and dissemination of information The dramatic changes in IT resulted in new pattern of scholarly inforcmation available on network and instant access to the information cutting geographical and time barriers.

CHANGING PARADIGMS

1. Possession to access
2. Changes in the way to access information:
   -Subscription to Free access
3. Print-based publications to electronic documents.
4. Stand-alone libraries to networks.
5. Monopoly to competitive environment.
6. Passive user to active user.
7. Authority based decision to user based decision
8. Institutionalization to deinstitutionalization
9. 24x7

Today's technological developments are so fast and multi-dimensional that information revolution is becoming confusing. In that context even the 'knowledge workers' in information-dependent jobs are finding it difficult to discern the patterns and trends. The role of the librarians is not limited to classifying and cataloguing documents ,answering reference queries or indexing articles rather they have multifaceted role to play such as- **Knowledge manager, Search Engine guru,, Project manager, Information Architecture specialist, Multi-media user ,Intermediary ,Enabler / facilitator, Team player, Trainer / educator ,Evaluator and Marketer ,Negotiator, Fund-raiser, webmaster, aggregator**, etc..

So far, LIS professionals are only the information managers and libraries act as information management centers. The changing paradigm made the users as customers. Knowledge rather than information is now considered as an asset. Hence it is inevitable for LICs to act as knowledge centers rather then information centers. Library professionals have a big challenge to open doors to knowledge, skills, thoughts and ideas available in the libraries in various areas and make them accessible to the people in the emerging information scenario. They should be competent enough to meet the present and future information needs of the masses in the society.

The emerging social and technological changes led to knowledge society where in knowledge is considered as capital and commodity determining the economic growth of the nation. In the emerging knowledge society, library and information centers are committed to provide access to information and knowledge resources and services to meet the information requirements of the community. LIS professionals have to be more interactive, collaborative and dynamic, so that the information can be made available to all those who seek

information irrespective of physical, geographical and time boundaries. Therefore it is high time for LIS professionals to accept these changes and challenges and act as the successful knowledge managers.

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