

RECENT TRENDS IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE

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Application of Soft Skill for Sustainable Library Reference and Information Services for Library and Information Science Professionals

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Abstract: *Users' satisfaction and fulfilment of their information need is a very important in the library. Soft skill applications tool can be used to make effective improvement on employees' personality and quality base services. The basic idea of soft skill is continuous improvement in library services. This paper discussed the concept of soft skill and its tool application how effective on reference desk professional and services.*

Keywords: Soft skill, Sustainable, Reference Services, Library Services, SWOT Analysis.

1. **Introduction:** Soft skills are the bridge between knowledge skills and excellence in performance. This is especially in the library reference and information service. In the library, interpersonal relationships within the organization are as important as users i.e., students / faculty members/ outsider member /non-teaching staff relationships. Soft skills popularly known as life skills or behaviour skills are essentially people skills. Soft skill come into play in the areas

of leadership and teamwork, including empowering others, emotional intelligence, negotiation skills, change management, communication skills, interpersonal skills, technical skills, the ability to work with others, time management and team problem solving. These skills make powerful the staff members to understand 'who they are' and how best they can give the service in any given situation.

Due to emerging trends of Information communication technology (ICT) and various management skills, the role and services of library and information science are also changing day by day and provide the efficient and quality-based services. Soft skill is one of the management skills. Its applications are related to personal and interpersonal way which is essential to improve library services. Librarians are not in the position to replace all the existing staff with new staff, we have to ensure training and development that support and focus on personal skills and attitudes in addition to updating professional skills. A good service is bound to encourage the use of the library. The reference desk staffs

interpret the library resources to the users and also the aids them for resources available outside the library. They improve their efficiency and become more alert of modern techniques & saving the users' time. According to Ranganathan, 'reference service 'is the process of establishing right contact between a reader and his documents in a personal way.

According to Hutchins," reference work includes the direct, personal aid within a library to persons in search of information for whatever purpose, and also various library activities especially aimed at making information as easily available as possible." The reference and information service, which help users to locate and obtain specific pieces of information from information sources such as reference books, catalogues, directories, files, abstracting, indexing periodicals, databases (online and CD-ROM) and other reference materials. Library professionals may either help users in searching (direct search) or they themselves do the search for users (delegated search) in online or offline medium of communication.

- 1.1 **What is soft skill?** The essence of a soft skill technique is a continuous improvement of employee and services. Key

principles of a soft skill in a organization are focus on employees training, the eliminating the fear, the use of problem solving teams & long range planning.

a. Definition:

A range of abilities including work ethic, courtesy, teamwork, self-discipline and self-confidence, professional presence, language proficiency, cultural sensitivity, communication skills, ability to accept and learn from criticism, ability to handle client relationships, networking, creativity, ability to motive yourself and lead other the relative importance of each skill varies by profession.

b. Definition:

Soft skills (or employability skills) defined as skills with allow persons to become more effective learners and workers.

1.2 Types of soft skill are

- Communication skills
- Motivation
- Team work
- Problem solving & Decision making
- Professional ethics
- Interpersonal skill
- Leadership
- Time Management

1.3 Applications of Soft skills in Reference and Information

Services: Application of soft skill techniques in reference service can be successfully provided the focus on user on one side and also continuous improvement on the employees' performance in the service. Soft skill is a new management concept of quality improvement. These skills application tools how the staff members can use themselves and it effect on reference and information service and how it becomes effective as follows.

a. Communication skills: These skills can include Listening, Professional behaviour (Manners and department) and Written, verbal and presentation skills etc.

- Giving the reference service by telephonic or personal way to satisfy the users' queries.
- Provide the reference services by using the Listening and speaking skill e.g. Telephonic as well reference desk
- Offer the services by the written and verbal skill. E.g., bibliography, translation, abstracting, indexing.
- Good communication Work under pressure.
- By using the techniques of communication, such as open questions, active listening, eye contact, and verbal encouragement.
- Active listening at the reference desk.
- Negotiation techniques
- Communicate well with users.
- Control the temperaments, neither hot nor cold nor fattened with superiority complex.

b. Motivation: Motivation of personnel through promotion, recognition, and incentives plays an important role. This will create proper management for employees to put in their best efforts.

- Encourage the users by giving the awards.
- Arrange the quiz / essay competition for users to attract the library.
- Increase the reading habits among users.
- Display the new arrivals of information products to attract the library users.

encourage the staff members

c. Team Work: Working effectively as a Team, through & with people and thinking 'we' and not 'I'. Working with the interpersonal relation or together is beginning, people keep together is a progress, and working together is success by Henry Ford.

- Share knowledge with team
- Willing to learn from team members.
- Keeping coordination among team to give efficient long-life service.

d. Problem solving and decision making

- Defined the problem
- Identify the options, choices & alternatives
- Decide and implement solution.

- Monitor implementation.
- Suggest the best alternatives solution.
- Reliability in handling users service problems
- Solve the difficulties which may arise during formulation and processing of searches.
- Posses' quick judgment and correct decision making.

e. Professional ethics: To achieve something in life, it is important to follow some code of ethics and values. Values are the rules which help one differentiate between right and wrong, whereas ethics are a set of principles codified in a formal system followed by a group of people.

- Duty to reader.
- Duty to the books.
- Duty to the profession.
- Duty to the staff.
- Duty to himself (impersonal book selection, service before self, split mind, sympathetic behaviour, tactful, must be industrial and patience in nature, scholar)
- Recognize professional responsibilities.
- Responsible for the quality and extent of the service.
- Share the knowledge, skills.
- Provide the right user to right information.
- Commitment
- Free from favoritism, nepotism and escapism.
- Copyright protection
- Respect the users
- Confidentiality
- Equality of opportunity
- Right to the protection of moral.

f. Interpersonal skill: It is the capability of an individual to do this, influence others, competently

- Strong communication (written and spoken) skills.
- Listen effectively
- Respond promptly, clearly and appropriately to situations.
- Give users and staff individual attention.
- Willingness to help users.
- Arrange the exhibition.

- Give library orientation.
- Organize the information literacy programme.
- Organize the book talk.
- Organize the seminar /workshop/training programme
- Self-confidence appearance while giving service.
- Use the effective body language while giving service.
- Well-mannered to give service by staff members

g. Leadership: It is the ability to influence others, with or without authority.

- Understand the needs of the users.
- Design and evaluate programme for users based on their developmental needs and interest and goals of the library.
- Develop effective strategies and resources to use in libraries to support professional interaction and contributions to the larger user community.
- Taking initiative for library development services.
- Taking responsibility for services
- Willing to share the knowledge
- Manage the reference collection.
- Understand the problems.
- Co-operate the staff regarding reference queries.
- Evaluate the reference service.
- Making plan and innovate the services.
- Counselling the users.
- Develop reference question and answer in quality based.
- Develop a good collection of resources.
- Analysing performance problems of the service faced by the staff.
- Planning for effective service.
- Working successfully within a team as well as on own initiative.
- Analyse the requesters' information needs.
- Possess a wide range of intellectual interest
- Promote the professional development activities
- Provides the staff development facility to attain the training /seminar/workshop.
- Build the working environment in the library

- h. Time Management:** According to Ranganathan's fifth law stated that "save the time of the users".
- Create bibliography, indexing, translation, CAS, SDI, E-mail, constant messaging, blog.
 - To create a tool of reference products for user to save the time of users.
 - Establish an instant messaging ID & demonstrate a way to maintain a reference service profile with instant messaging.
 - Prepare the abstracts and indexes of periodicals.
 - Provide literature search and bibliography on demand service.
 - Readiness to respond to users' questions.
 - Convenient service hours.
 - Compile the manual of common reference questions and answer.
 - Know the appropriate persons for clarification or referral service.
 - Evaluate unusual request with regard to impact on library operation and users.
 - Produce reference tools, user better techniques and methods, etc.
 - Selection of books on the basis of user needs.
 - Use internet resources to satisfy user information needs.
 - Use electronic communication channels with community/group forum
 - Helping the reference services to the web-based users.
 - Effectively use of information resources and literature searching utilizing IT based. (e.g., electronic journals, CD-ROMs', and internet
 - Demonstrate to the users to understand the bibliography tools, effective search strategies through search engine, on line database, CD-ROM databases.
 - Make portal and provide user interface to online catalogue and other electronic resources.
 - Helps to catalogue and maintain catalogue work with Uniformity, consistency and accuracy.
 - Teach the users as to how to use the library.

- Give Instruction the users to use the tools like library catalogue, bibliographies, reference works.
- Holding of library exhibitions including display of new additions to the library.
- Compilation of bibliographies, preparation of indexing and abstracting services.
- Display of current periodicals
- Maintenance of special files e.g., clipping
- Prepare guides to use the library and its collections.
- Acquire books in acquisition section in time.
- Library catalogue is placed near the stacks and reference collection.
- Provide the reservation slip to reserve the books.
- Provide duplication or copying facilities.
- Arrange the books properly (classification) on the shelf.
- Making arrangements for interlibrary loans.

Library employee attained the soft skill training programme, which application is very useful to improve them and also provide the best quality service to the user in time.

2.0 SWOT Analysis: In the library, employees can be accepting the application of soft skill in their personal attitude and behaviour. These skill effects applying on reference service to evaluate by SWOT analysis. The Library has carried out a SWOT analysis and the analysis highlights opportunities to plan with vision for the future, taking into consideration constructive feedback from our users.

Strengths	Weakness
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good communication skill• Knowledgeable & energetic reference staff• Supportive staff environment• Good response of users• Service oriented staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Need to learn communication skill• Not easily access the references.• Not proper maintain of catalogue card, classified, indexing, bibliography and abstract.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good relationships with faculty /user • Sharing with other libraries & organizations • Well organized reference collection • Organization funding support • Well dedicated staff, team-oriented • Librarian focused on problem solution. • Organization funding support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of reading space environment. • Lack of share vision • Limited and uneven sharing with other libraries & organizations. • Not supporting and aging staff • Librarian Focuses on wrong problems • Lack of organization funding support
<p>Opportunities</p>	<p>Threats</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network access, wireless • Access 24*7 hours reference service • Open access movement • Online reference service • Internet arability • Access the information from Library web site, portal, blog. • Making the Institutional reference repository collection & documentary services. • Digital collection • Videoconferencing • Less space • Better access • Outreach and marketing reference library services and collection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restrictive copyright and licensing agreement. • Not listening to users. • Changing perception of students concerning the role of the library • Challenging of staying current with rapidly changing technology and difficult of supporting that technology with limited resources. • Increasing cost of Books, Periodicals, CDs, Database • Getting higher cost of technology • Less fund

3.0. Conclusions: Reference and information service is the heart of among all library services. So, there is need to change the reference librarian to information officer and taking initiatives to accept the soft skill techniques and use their application in reference and information service to give effective and user-oriented service with coordination and team work. It is essential for librarian to change himself, with the use of soft skill techniques. Soft skill is a great tool facilitator that would result in enhanced utilization of information resources and services to increase user satisfaction. It requires a change in the attitude of library authorities, professionals and other staff towards their work. Soft skill is a management technique to achieve excellence things. It simply demands to do things different.

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