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ORGANIZING LIBRARY INTRAPRENEURSHIP

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this paper is to analyze and evaluate how librarians could help transform their libraries into productive, innovative knowledge organizations. Libraries must be able to attract new users to increase footfalls through innovation. They should learn how to adopt entrepreneurial models of operation to maximize user satisfaction and attract investments from private sectors. Library professionals should take the initiatives to help design and foster entrepreneurship business models to make libraries economically independent and socially competent organization. They should adopt a model of knowledge entrepreneurship where librarians, besides being knowledge managers, would also act as intrapreneurs within their organization.

KEYWORDS: *Library, knowledge organization, entrepreneurship, intrapreneurship model, LIS professional*

1. Introduction

Public libraries need to reinvent themselves to justify their value and existence to remain relevant in the age of digital information (Smith, 2019). This could be achieved by devising long-term sustainability policies that would help libraries to reorient their attitude towards adopting enterprising policies similar to one that is socially entrepreneurial. This is required to secure access to sources of funding or to generate some revenue to recuperate from dwindling government funding. Libraries, therefore, need to reorient their operating strategies and think strategically to become more creative and innovative in their operations by supporting enterprising attitudes to operation. What options do modern day libraries have in order to support and gear up enterprising attitudes to library operations? What measures do they need to overcome challenges to their functioning, management and existence? Should they adopt entrepreneurial business models to promote innovation in service and knowledge management (Zawawi, 2012)? Or, should they introduce intrapreneurial initiatives to

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remain viable, self-dependent institutions of learning? They need to, because that would save them from closure². In this age of digital access and the internet, when *e-books* and *e-Journals* are fast becoming preferable alternatives to printed books, journals and magazines, there is a definite need for innovation in library operations. Moreover, there are more individuals today who can afford to buy personal copies of printed books than there was in the past. Public Libraries, therefore, have become less important in public lives although they are meant to spread knowledge within rural and urban settings. Today, the user footfalls in public libraries have dwindled sharply across the world and if one goes by the data published from IFLA and the International Library Statistics, libraries are disappearing across the globe. According to one report, out of nearly four lakh functioning libraries, about less than one lakh libraries have shut down in the past decade or so (Jinoy Jose, 2018). Therefore, librarians need to design strategies to revive, revitalize and reorganize libraries to enable them to survive in the age of digital access. This research points to that direction only. In the following sections, we shall discuss about strategic models which libraries could adopt, i.e., entrepreneurial vis-à-vis intrapreneurial models.

2. Revitalizing Libraries: Turning Libraries into Active Organizations

The idea should aim to revitalize and restructure library operations and services so that they could be able to attract users by offering better quality services with innovative products. Libraries should strive to address shrinking resources and scarce funding (Batthini, 2014) to support digital integration and library automation to enrich their service delivery. The growing demand for information and knowledge services makes it relevant for libraries to explore plausible options and exploit workable opportunities to design and deliver state-of-the-art user services. The problem is that most public libraries in India are resistant to change and lack the eagerness to innovate. The problem, therefore, which we are here to address, can be summarized as follows:

- (i) Libraries need to innovate in order to attract new users,
- (ii) Libraries must accept and encourage change,
- (iii) Public libraries should adopt a revenue generation model to remain viable,
- (iv) Libraries must innovate in order to compete with the digital world. They may choose to adopt entrepreneurial or intrapreneurial models of innovation,

² See <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/columns/the-cheat-sheet/where-have-the-libraries-gone/article25498405.ece>.

- (v) Libraries should strive to introduce novel products and services to attract new users, and
- (vi) Libraries should strive to maximize the satisfaction level of users/patrons

Some experts have the view that libraries should go beyond offering traditional services like reading rooms, or provisioning books, magazines and periodicals. Indeed libraries as community knowledge organizations are peaceful, quiet places of study as they foster the culture and habit of learning. In this respect, librarians should take the initiative to plan for improvements in their service delivery. They should design innovative products and services to offer to their patrons. Librarians, especially in emerging nations should strive to improve the service channels. Several frontiers on which libraries must improve to make their services more efficient are as follows:

- (i) Improvement in library staff behavior (most important),
- (ii) Show a positive attitude towards visitors, patrons, and users,
- (iii) Improvement in library environments,
- (iv) Prompt service response,
- (v) Enable faster user access to desired information,
- (vi) Maintaining rigid library operating schedule (fixed opening and closing times),
- (vii) Periodical update of library catalogues,
- (viii) Convenient user access and overseeing user comfort,
- (ix) Availability of library materials.

Library staff should give top priority to user satisfaction so that library patrons could maximize the utility derived from using library services. It shall be kept in mind that library policies in no way should “limit” user access to knowledge and information resources being made available in the libraries. Libraries must “promote” community learning among readers and patrons, teachers and students alike. Libraries should aim to turn themselves into productive knowledge organizations and strive to market their new products and services by aligning business objectives with growth opportunities. For this to take shape, libraries and librarians must change their perspectives towards library operations (Batthini, 2014). They should think like innovators—or rather “intrapreneurs” so that they could turn libraries into sustainable creative knowledge production and service centers. This might be possible if librarians themselves take the initiative forward in designing policies by aligning their intrapreneurial objectives to long-term sustainability concerns.

3. What model is attractive to LIS professionals?

Is the “entrepreneurial” operating model attractive to LIS professionals? We think that libraries require social entrepreneurship model (Peredo & McLean, 2006) which might fit best in such scenarios where knowledge management would go hand in hand with organization of knowledge in libraries. Now, how such an operating framework should be designed for libraries to foster innovative business models? To overhaul library operations and improve service delivery, librarians should use several variables of library operation including user footfalls data to assess library assets and evaluate user needs. User access data is a very important variable for the appraisal of user needs and demands (Bailey & Faulkner, 2018). The growing demand for knowledge resources makes this point quite relevant. In order to take libraries a step further, and to make them financially self-dependent, library management must adopt economically sustainable models of operation (Kostagiolas, 2011). This could be in tune with intrapreneurship initiatives by asking library management to provide a “vision” for the future. In fact, intrapreneurship could be a viable model for organizational empowerment (Moghaddas *et al.*, 2020). It can empower libraries with the knowledge and expertise to design innovative policies for sustainable library operations. LIS professionals should be trained to exploit emerging opportunities to turn them into profitable endeavors without straining users’ pockets.

Now, Entrepreneurship is indeed a viable, profit-making economic behavior that initiates a person with a venturesome spirit to bring something “new” to the table, carry it forward with a business plan to execute it, and bear all the financial risks and responsibilities associated with it (Gartner, 1989). Entrepreneurship focuses on revenue generation through new product design and innovation. It also expands the production and services horizon by exploiting niche opportunities that focus on increasing revenue for the firm. But given that entrepreneurship is a business model for the private sector, and because libraries are not profit-seeking revenue-earning organizations, this model may be difficult for libraries to adopt. However, some authors think the entrepreneurship model is well suited for LIS professionals (Batthini, 2014). Intrapreneurship— is a behavior wherein an individual works within a company or an established organization to introduce innovation to invigorate the ongoing business with activities that are novel and venturesome (Pinchot, 1987). An intrapreneur is an entrepreneur who remains within the security of an established company or organization. This seems, as far as libraries are concerned regarding their mode of functioning and operation, a viable model or option which they can adopt to provide

better services and generate revenue. With this Intrapreneurship model, they could make some profit without turning into a profit-seeking organization. Now the question one may ask is—should libraries aim to generate revenue and strive to become profit-seeking knowledge organizations? Although the idea of entrepreneurial librarianship (Saberri, 2018) is not a novel concept, designing libraries for the sole purpose to foster entrepreneurial initiatives could jeopardize the social benefit it provides. It may also erode the value of libraries that are considered socially beneficial and welfare-centric knowledge organizations.

4. How Business Concepts Might Relate to Library Services?

How do the two concepts of business—entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship relate to library and library science professionals? Libraries are not profit-making entities nor are librarians profit-seeking individuals. So, in what respect any of these concepts may remotely associate with libraries that are “managed” knowledge organizations being places of individual learning to have nothing to do with profit-making? Now it shall be noted that although the roles of modern day librarians are not markedly different from what it was in the past, today’s libraries and librarians face more challenges from shrinking resources and competition from digital access to information on the internet. Most small and medium-sized public libraries in India and elsewhere suffer from resource scarcity and lack of innovation, for they operate on an archetypical model with petite or no improvements in service quality management. Since most public libraries do not aim to generate revenue from their operations, they face several challenges on their operations frontier (Smith, 2019). Mark Smith (2019) very competently highlights the challenges that libraries face today, and some of these challenges can be summed up as follows:

- (i) Public libraries need to reinvent themselves as vital institutions of knowledge dissemination to justify their existence,
- (ii) Decline in readership could be attributed to people’s addiction to smart phone and loss of our ability to focus on longer information; i.e., books,
- (iii) Decline in reading leading to retreat from intellectual engagement of the libraries, the reason libraries continue to loose readers,
- (iv) Undermining the potential impact and the value of public libraries as centers of community information hub, and
- (v) Remodeling is needed in library education for librarians to be creative and find innovative ways to justify their existence.

Because libraries are not profit-seeking organizations, the rising cost of operation and dwindling footfalls, despite increasing demand for knowledge resources, are threatening their very existence. Unless libraries bring about drastic changes by introducing new models of functioning with new products and services, they feel threatened towards closure. This has been the case for several small and medium-sized libraries around the world which have closed their shutters permanently (Jinoy Jose 2018). In order to remain buoyant and functional, libraries should promote as well as support intrapreneurship behavior within their organizational settings. The nature of such intrapreneurship activities needs to be understood by the LIS professionals (Batthini, 2014). Library professionals are trained as managers of library affairs and organizers of library events and operations. This model, with its core elements of intrapreneurship behavior, could be particularly attractive to library professionals. It would provide them with the much needed opportunity to design new products and services that could earn revenue for the libraries from exogenous sources; i.e., hosting talk shows and events, seminars, conferences, book launch, etc.. There are many other options by which public libraries could generate revenue (Pautz, 2014) without straining users' pockets. Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals could readily adopt intrapreneurship ventures by remodeling their libraries to create a new unit of productivity, a new section or a new ancillary for introducing revenue earning operations. Subscription-based user services could be introduced to offer entirely new and highly creative works of intellectual productivity like books and magazines or subsidized digital access to online materials with considerable discounts and rebates. Libraries could partner with corporate and private firms who deal with knowledge resources to introduce special products and services on a partnership basis. Libraries could, in essence, leverage the marketing capabilities and IT expertise of their business partners for marketing new library products and services. In fact, Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model could save libraries from going into oblivion, and is a viable option for libraries to continue their operations (Jordan, 2008). Business partners of libraries (i.e., private firms) on the other hand, would get access to new expertise and resources too which could benefit them in their business frontiers. All it necessitates is the real enterprising and enthusiastic initiatives from library professionals to design, plan and then, go ahead with the plan. These would epitomize the roles of librarian as intrapreneurs too. However, all these initiatives would require substantial investment and funding to support any change and development. Therefore, departmental budget allocation for libraries and librarians is an essential component for library innovation. Librarians are

best managers of library operational expenses, so they can prudently allocate funds for initiating and maintaining library programs.

Often in management science, some observe that perception of opportunity follows product design and networking (Crilly *et al.*, 2004). A new, visionary product designed out of entrepreneurial imagination may open up new avenues of business opportunities. Now, once a product or service has been developed, it may require the product to have a market. LIS professionals should master the art of entering new markets with their new products and services. This is more about understanding the conceptual approaches to entrepreneurship and marketing. In order to well establish a product in a competitive market, or to enter a market with already established goods and services, it requires strategic marketing acumen to be successful (Drucker, 1985).

5. Conclusion

A librarian is the best organizer of library programs. A librarian could also become an intrapreneur to organize entrepreneurial activities by designing and planning, and effecting innovative activities which would most likely attract more patrons and further enhance the image of the library. Librarians must innovate and learn how to align business activities with growth opportunities so that libraries would keep functioning as viable, sustainable community knowledge organizations. The goal of this paper has been to discuss these issues and emphasize several solutions to empower libraries with ideas of social intrapreneurship.

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