
SOFT SKILLS REQUIRED FOR CONTEMPORARY LIBRARIAN

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Crossref DOI - <https://doi.org/10.63665/rh.v7i1.47>

Abstract :

Libraries are growing emphasis on the use of information technologies have undergone major structural changes in the terms of collections, organizations and services. With the convergence of traditional methods and new technologies, today's libraries stand alone at a crucial juncture. Libraries have great role in the dissemination of information to the users due to emergence of Information Technology and Management techniques. The librarianship also facing challenge to cope up with the situation and now there is a demand for librarians having multidimensional aptitude in the areas of technical work, administrative work and also in providing user-oriented services along with soft skills. Soft skills, with their multifactor impact on the efficiency of professionals along with technical expertise has become increasingly significant. Like any other profession, the soft skills are required in day-today working for carrying out routine jobs more effectively. In today's digital age, along with technical skills, soft skills are also essential for librarians because libraries have become user-centric information centres rather than just a repository of books. Some of the soft skills which are required by the librarians are discussed in this paper.

Keywords : Soft Skills, Skills for Librarians, Contemporary Librarian, Managerial Skill

Introduction :

Long before the invention of the internet or the printing press, humans had devised ways to preserve and share knowledge. In ancient times, people used various materials such as stone, clay, papyrus, and parchment to record information. Thus, the journey of libraries has progressed from clay tablets, manuscripts, parchment, tree bark, inscriptions on rocks, metal records, and paper to technology, the internet, and ultimately, the use of artificial intelligence in libraries. With the convergence of traditional methods and new technologies, today's libraries stand at a crucial juncture. Physical books, once the cornerstone of libraries, now share their importance with digital resources. With the evolution of library services from traditional information management to digital and interactive user experiences, technical skills, along with soft skills play a vital role for librarians and LIS professionals in ensuring effective library services.

Skill :



Related to ability is the concept of Skill. Skill can be defined as the learned ability to bring about predetermined results with maximum certainty often with the minimum outlay of time or energy or both.

Types of Skills :

Kaatz (1974) has identified three types of management skills that are essential for a good manager. These skills include Technical Skills, Human Skills and Conceptual Skill. The relative importance of these three skills varies with the level of managerial responsibility.

Technical Skills :

It is the ability to apply specialised knowledge or expertise. Though technical skills are acquired through formal training, they can also be learned through practice.

Human Skills :

Human Skills are also called as soft skills. It is one of the most desired skills in today's competitive world. It can be defined as the ability to work with, understand and motivate other people, both individually and in groups.

Soft skills are attributes and personality traits that affect interpersonal interactions and while different, are also as important as technical skills in the workforce. Soft skills are the complete collection of our social, communication and self-management behaviour. These are the skills that enable us to work effectively and 'fit in' at the workplace. Soft skills are a combination of many different things, including Social Skill, character traits and Employment qualities.

Conceptual Skills :

Conceptual Skills are those skills that require the mental ability to analysis and diagnose complex situations. Conceptual skills deal with ideas.

Skills Required for Contemporary Librarian :

Librarians, who were once called keepers of books, are now referred to as information scientists and information managers. They are plying different roles such as Educators, community builders, navigator, trainer, innovators and leaders in technology service provider and many more. But in today's digital era, library professionals cannot succeed solely on their technical skills; they also need certain soft skills to thrive in their profession, attract users to the library, and provide excellent service.

Soft skills are an extremely important aspect of both personal and professional life. Soft skills are collection of several skills - abilities of communication skill, leadership skills, motivation skill, listening skills, reading skill, writing skills, stress management skill,



negotiation skills and presentation skills.

Some of the most common examples of soft skills include:

- Interpersonal skills
- Leadership
- Listening
- Writing
- Stress Management
- Time Management
- Presentation
- Communication skills
- Marketing Skills:

Interpersonal Skills :

Interpersonal Skills are the skills that individuals use to develop and maintain healthy relationship -effective listening, observing, and communicating in an organizational environment. Through listening, individuals gather information, develop working relationship, foster inter-group harmony and build trust. In simple words, Interpersonal skills means a congenial and a pleasant interaction of people with others. Librarian must be able to build good interpersonal skills among the fellow workers, users and others with whom they work closely.

Listening Skill :

Listening skills are the ability to hear attentively and process information correctly. These skills can enhance our understanding about others especially those who are subordinate to us and are not in a position to openly and assertively express their opinions. Listening skills lead to effective communication. Librarian must have good listening skills , this is very much required while providing services and to interact with different of users, and also answering queries raised by user's community.

Communication Skill :

The communication component combines written, verbal and nonverbal transmission and exchange of information. A very critical soft skill in any profession is communication- both written and verbal. We all use different languages to communicate and get our ideas across in order to connect with the person around us Command on language will improve communication. Communication is much more than just our ability to express ourselves by speaking and writing. Communicating effectively is the single most important soft skill one must processes possess today.

Leadership Skills :

Leadership, a critical management skill, is the ability to motivate a group of people



towards common goal i.e. leadership is a quality to lead the team of workers. The library is an organization where a team of professional, semi-professional and non-professional employees strive to serve to cater the needs of their users.

Hence, it is required to have leadership skills to manage and guiding the team time to time, as every subordinate is important for carrying out their work efficiently for smooth running of library. So librarian as a team-leader has always the role of motivator in such a way that all his team members become capable to work adequately as per the requirements of the job in hand.

Negotiating Skills :

Negotiation is an important interpersonal skill very useful in wide variety of situations and managerial role. This term means having the ability to read discuss and reach and agreement in a professional manner. It is important to effective business communication. Communication is at the heart of any negotiating process. These skills are required on special occasions such as handling bulk purchases, specialised data bases subscription with vendors etc. Also sometimes in delicate situations like library committee meetings or avoiding undue requirements from arrogant users etc.

Writing Skills :

In library internal correspondence is required for letter, office order, notice, agenda, minutes, circular, memo, etc and external correspondence is required for letters of enquiry, complaint letter and quotation letter, etc. Writing skills play an important role for librarian during the course of written communicating with users, management and publishers and suppliers.

Presentation Skill :

Presentation Skills are the skills we need in delivering effective and engaging presentations to variety of audience. Presentations are a powerful tool for communication and expression. Presentation skills are a part of public speaking. Presentation skills include the abilities and qualities necessary for creating and delivering a presentation to communicate information and ideas. Presentation skills are important for librarians to effectively promote services, conduct information literacy training or programme, ultimately enhancing user engagement and professional credibility. Strong presentation skill helps bridge the gap between complex information and user understanding, foster community interaction, and secure support for library initiatives.

Time Management Skill :

The fourth law of library science, states, "Save the user's time." Time is essential for providing effective service to our users. If we fail to provide users with the information they need in a timely manner, our efforts to find that information will be wasted. Therefore,



librarians must develop time management skills.

Stress Management Skill :

A reality of today's digital library era is that librarians face constant challenges in their work environment. Stress is a natural reaction to challenges. It affects all aspects of life and can cause both mental and physical harm, so it's important to know the right way to deal with this problem. The best way to manage stress in a digital library environment is to: create a supportive culture; understand the differences between people; recognize signs of stress; and address problems as they arise. Therefore, stress management skills are essential for librarians today.

Marketing Skill :

Marketing is about keeping users abreast on resources and services that match their interests. Marketing plays a very vital role in creating awareness for library and information products and services. Therefore, it is crucial for librarian to be aware of the many marketing tactics such as making a library website, emailing users, setting up exhibits and displays of new arrivals, planning user education programme, offering electronic access to information etc. Librarian must have marketing skills, which would in turn, help to increase image of the library and serve the users effectively.

Conclusion :

Despite the changes brought about by the digital age, libraries remain valuable institutions for preserving, disseminating, and connecting with knowledge. In a rapidly changing digital environment, technical skills are essential—but they alone are no longer sufficient. Soft skills, along with technical skills, are also essential today. Soft skills often reflect personality, character, or a person's work ethic—things that cannot be explained or measured. In today's digital age, librarians must possess the ability to work in teams, collaborate, and adapt to change. Librarians must possess interpersonal and communication skills, as well as be organized and courteous. Soft skills such as communication, presentation, time management, stress management, and leadership have become crucial for effective collaboration, innovation, and organizational strength.

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