

Perception of Semi-Professionals in using ICT in Manipal Academy of Higher Education Libraries

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ABSTRACT

Application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is one of the best practices observed in libraries as it enables automation and modernisation of library services. Today's environment is digitally driven and library semi-professionals play an important role in providing up-to-date information to the users using modern technologies. The objective of the present study was to assess the perception of semi-professionals with respect to the use of ICT in Manipal Academy of Higher Education Libraries by them. 58 Library Assistant working in the seven constituent institutional libraries of MAHE at Manipal campus were included in the study and data were collected using questionnaire. The findings of the study revealed that EasyLib, the library automation software, and Electronic Public Access Catalogue (EPAC) had most impact on the role of semi-professionals (84.2 %) in providing ICT enabled services to the users. More than thirty percent (31.5 %) of the semi-professionals were of the opinion that ICT has considerably changed their duties and responsibilities. Semi-professionals are also of the opinion that they are now in a position to provide faster, more accurate and up-to-date information services to the users in their libraries. The findings of the present study support a need to implement the appropriate technologies in the libraries as they support the semi-professionals in their library housekeeping activities as well as in providing effective library services to the users.

Keywords: Semi-professionals; ICT applications; Perception; Implementation of ICT; MAHE libraries

1. INTRODUCTION

Libraries became an integral part of an academic institution so that it fulfills the aims and objectives of an institution for which the library primarily exists. Modern libraries have advanced so much with the implementation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Information technology has given birth to the digital library concepts. Implementation of modern technologies like library automation software, installation of RFID and development of library portals have necessitated the library staff members of all levels to depend on technology to render better services. The shift in library collection from print to online calls for a team of staff, particularly semi-professionals in a library who are competent enough to handle ICT applications and also provide IT-based services in the library. With the birth and rampant use of the Internet, online catalogs of other libraries and bibliographic databases can also be accessed for reference. They are expected to learn new methods of providing innovative services with the help and use of ICT. For this, the technology also must support them so that it does not become obstacles in rendering their services. Thus, this paper is aimed to study perception of semi-professionals caused by implementation of ICT in Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE) Libraries.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Dasgupta¹ is of the opinion that “in this increasingly globalised economy, knowledge and the skills are key differentiators of nations as well as individuals. It is globalisation which determines the university education and research trends emerging today. Indian librarians of today serve in a society which is actually in flux, torn by the technological revolution and rapid political changes. Librarians and information professionals in India are now experiencing both excitement and anxiety as a result of the sweeping societal changes.”

According to Webster's Dictionary², “Library Semi-Professionals are library personnel with features of professionalism in their work but with less knowledge, skill and judgment than full-fledged Library Professionals.”

ICT implementation and modern technologies help library semi-professionals in rendering new and improved services so that the library users can understand the knowledge collection process. It has been observed that several studies have been conducted on perception of library professionals in using ICT in libraries. But only few studies have been conducted on perception of semi-professionals in using ICT in libraries.

According to Sarojadevi K., Padmamma S., Walmiki R.H.³, “forthcoming years are only digital platform to libraries, since more advantages of digital resources are over traditional collections.”-

The study conducted by Wasim Raja, Zubair Ahmad and

Arun K. Sinha⁴ explores how information communication technology and related automated systems can support semi-professionals endeavour towards improved management of knowledge sharing and dissemination.

In this modern world, the role of semi-professionals is an ever changing one. He/she has to adapt to the various new technologies which are forever flooding the market and thus making life easier for information seeker. Thus the role of Semi-Professionals is diminishing as more and more people are self-dependent on retrieving information on their own⁵.

The study conducted by Mallaiah⁶ unfolds major implications for performance management systems and process in University libraries. The respondents included professionals and semi-professionals from various colleges of 15 university. The key issues addressed in this study are perceived importance and perceived the performance of workplace attributes, performance appraisal, issues considered during appraisal, knowledge, and competency of the employee performance, suggestions to improve respondent's views about disturbances which occur at work and overall satisfaction levels. The finding of the study on the semi-professionals at Central University reveals that academic libraries need a continuous development and training program for semi-professionals.

The survey conducted by Kumar⁷ has been aimed to estimate the level of knowledge on ICT skills by the semi-professionals. According to him "changes in society and demands for information utilisation have forced the information professionals to look for more effective and efficient methods for processing, storing, and retrieving information to cope up with the application of modern information technology."

3. NEED FOR THE STUDY

Due to information and communication revolution, the purpose for which the users are coming to the library has changed over time. The role of the librarian has become that with more responsibility. Thus to assist the librarian in rendering valuable library services, the role of semi-professional staff has become more supportive and responsible in nature. There is a need to know the perception of semi-professionals because of the following reasons.

- The semi-professionals who are more exposed to technology are performing their roles with much more ease than before
- The application of IT has made the technical processing jobs in a library more automated
- The dynamics of acquiring e-resources from publishers and vendors have also changed over time and the semi-professionals have to more knowledge about the kind of information contained in the e-journals, e-databases and e-books.

Constituent institutions libraries of Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Manipal have evolved over time and the use of ICT is very evident from its style of functioning. Manipal Academy of Higher Education libraries have seen an increase in the number of library staff required to run the libraries. The semi-professionals who are working and rendering their services in institutions libraries are facing the challenge of using it to their advantage. Due to this digital revolution, there

has been a change in way semi-professionals provide services to the library users. There is a need to understand the perception regarding duties and responsibilities which affect the quality of services given to the library users.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to understand perception of semi-professionals in using ICT in Manipal Academy of Higher Education Libraries. Following are the objectives of the study.

- To gauge the current level of ICT applications implemented and services initiated in Manipal Academy of Higher Education Libraries
- To understand the impact of ICT implementation on semi-professionals' role at the libraries
- To know the difficulty if any faced by semi-professionals in using ICT application in their libraries
- To assess the training needs of the semi-professionals in using ICT

5. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study primarily focuses on only the perception of semi-professionals in using ICT, and it is limited to only the 58 Library Assistant working in the following seven constituent institution library of Manipal Academy of Higher Education at Manipal campus.

- Kasturba Medical College (KMC) Health Sciences library
- Manipal Institute of Technology (MIT) Central library
- School of Communication (SOC) library
- School of Management (SOM) library
- Welcome Group School of Hotel Administration (WGSMA) library
- Manipal Centre for European Studies (MCES) library
- Manipal Centre for Philosophies and Humanities (MCPH) library

6. METHODOLOGY

The data required to conduct the data analysis was collected by using the questionnaire method. Convenience sampling method was used to carry out the study. The total number of semi-professional library staff (Library Assistants) working at seven constituent institutional libraries of Manipal Academy of Higher Education at Manipal campus is 60. Out of 60 semi-professional library staff members, 58 Library Assistants were included in the study. The structured questionnaires were self-administered to 58 Library Assistants and all of them have responded by filling the questionnaire distributed to them. The questionnaire were distributed and data were collected in the month of April 2016. Out of the 58 duly filled questionnaires, 57 of them were considered for data analysis percentage of responses is 98.28. One questionnaire was omitted due to lack of relevant response.

The data collected through questionnaires were coded and entered for data analysis in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 16.0), currently known as Predictive Analytics Software (PASW).

7. DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected back have been analysed and made interpretations about the perception of Semi-Professionals in using ICT in MAHE Libraries.

7.1 Respondents by Gender

It is evident from the Table 1 that out of the total respondents 57.89 per cent are male respondents, and 42.11 per cent are female respondents.

Table 1. Gender-wise distribution of respondents

Gender	Library Assistants	Percentage
Male	33	57.89
Female	24	42.11
Total	57	100

7.2 Library-wise Distribution of Semi-Professionals

The Table 2 shows that a maximum number of library assistants is present in KMC Health Sciences Library and MIT Central Library. This is due to increase in collection, services, and users in these two libraries compared to other five library of MAHE at Manipal.

Table 2. Library-wise distribution of semi-professionals

MAHE Libraries	Library Assistants	Percentage
KMC Health Sciences Library	29	50.9
MIT Central Library	18	31.6
WGSMA Library	3	5.3
SOM Library	1	1.8
MCES Library	3	5.3
MCPH Library	1	1.8
SOC Library	2	3.5
Total	57	100

7.3 Types of ICT Applications Implemented and Services Initiated

The data regarding the types of ICT applications implemented and ICT-enabled new services being provided in MAHE libraries over a period has been collected in this study. The purpose of collecting this data was to gauge the extent to which ICT had changed roles of semi-professionals and the extent to which they are trained to use these applications for providing library services. Following are the types of ICT applications implemented and ICT enabled new services initiated in MAHE libraries.

7.3.1 Types of ICT Applications Implemented

- Electronic Resource Management and Search Solution (ERMSS) Software
- Bar-Code
- EZProxy (Remote Login Access to Library Subscribed e-Resources)
- EasyLib (Library Automation Software)

- Library network
- Electronic Public Access Catalogue (EPAC)
- Library webpage

7.3.2 ICT Enabled Services Initiated

- Literature search
- Current awareness service
- Document delivery service
- Automated circulation
- Resource sharing
- Remote login access to e-Resources
- Online resources
- Digital repository
- Online catalogue

7.4 Impact of ICT Applications on Day-to-Day Activities of Semi-Professionals

Respondents were asked to express their opinion on the impact of ICT Applications in their day to day roles/activities. EasyLib, the library automation software, EPAC (online catalogue), Library web page, ERMSS and Bar-Coding had impacted on their activities the most (84.2 %, 84.2 %, 57.9 %, 56.1 % and 50.9 % respectively) as stated by semi-professionals in this study.

7.5 Providing the ICT Enabled New Services by Semi-Professionals

Table 3 clearly reveals that as per the opinion of the majority of the respondents (50.88 %), access to online resources was the most rendered new ICT-enabled library service in MAHE Libraries. However, 40.35 per cent of Semi-Professionals were of the opinion that EPAC (online catalog) is the most recent library service. Digital repository, literature search and current awareness services (CAS) were perceived as new services according to 38.60 per cent, 31.58 per cent and 29.82 per cent of respondents respectively.

Table 3. ICT enabled new services provided by semi-professionals

ICT enabled new services	Library Assistants	Percentage
Literature search	18	31.58
Current awareness service	17	29.82
Document delivery service	11	19.30
Automated circulation	22	38.60
Resource sharing	15	16.32
Remote login	11	19.30
Online resources	29	50.88
Digital repository	22	38.60
Online catalog (EPAC)	23	40.35

7.6 Changes in the Semi-Professional's Role

Query regarding the extent to which the semi-professionals' roles have changed by the implementation of ICT in their libraries indicated that ICT-enabled services have

made it possible for the semi-professionals to give a faster response (52.6%) to the queries of the users. Quality, accuracy, timeliness, and user-friendliness have been rated as 31.6 per cent, 33.3 per cent, 38.6 per cent and 26.3 per cent respectively by the respondents. Significant percentages (43.9%) of Library Assistants were of the opinion that they could provide up-to-date information to their library users using ICT.

7.7 Opinion on Up-gradation of Skills of the Semi-Professionals

Respondents were asked whether ICT implementation has demanded up-gradation of their skills. It is evident from the Table 4 that most of the semi-professionals ‘agreed’ that their skills needed up-gradation. A small percentage of semi-professionals ‘strongly agreed’ that implementation of ICT has demanded knowledge and skill up gradation amongst the semi-professionals.

Table 4. Opinion on upgradation of skills of the semi-professionals

Extent	Library Assistants	Percentage
Strongly Agree	10	17.54
Agree	45	78.95
Disagree	2	3.51
Total	57	100

7.8 Responsibility Levels of Semi-Professionals due to ICT Implementation

With the implementation of ICT to provide library services, 75.44 per cent of library assistants felt that their responsibilities increased, while a small percentage felt that responsibilities decreased as depicted in the Table 5.

Table 5. Responsibility levels of semi-professionals due to ICT implementation

Extent	Library Assistants	Percentage
Increased	43	75.44
Decreased	14	24.56
Total	57	100

7.9 Impact of ICT on Duties and Responsibilities of Semi-Professionals

ICT implementation has an impact on the duties and responsibilities of the Semi-Professionals as depicted in Table 6. Most of the semi-professionals (31.5%) felt that ICT had ‘totally’ changed their duties and responsibilities. 22.8 per cent of the semi-professionals felt that it changed their duties to ‘some extent.’ Still others 21.1 per cent opined that ICT had ‘significantly’ changed their duties and responsibilities. A small percentage 15.8 per cent felt that it ‘slightly’ changed their responsibilities.

7.10 User Satisfaction towards Services of Semi-Professionals

A majority of the respondents (66.67%) felt that users were ‘satisfied’ with their services while 28.07 per cent of

semi-professionals observed that users were ‘very satisfied.’ The rest were uncertain in their opinion as shown in Table 7.

Table 6. Impact of ICT on duties and responsibilities of semi-professionals

Extent	Library Assistants	Percentage
Significantly	12	21.1
Totally	18	31.5
Some Extent	13	22.8
Slightly	9	15.8
Not at all	5	8.8
Total	57	100

Table 7. User satisfaction towards the services of semi-professionals

Extent	Library Assistants	Percentage
Very Satisfied	16	28.07
Satisfied	38	66.67
Uncertain	3	5.26
Total	57	100

7.11 Repetitive Nature of Semi-Professional’s Activities

Table 8 reveals the repetitive nature of the semi-professional’s activities. With the implementation of ICT majority of the semi-professionals (49.12%) felt that their activities were ‘totally’ repetitive. 22.81 per cent respondents felt that their activities were repetitive to ‘some extent.’ A small percentage (15.79%) had responded that repetitiveness was ‘slightly’ present.

Table 8. Repetitive nature of semi-professional’s activities

Extent	Library Assistants	Percentage
Significantly	3	5.26
Totally	28	49.12
Some Extent	13	22.81
Slightly	9	15.79
Not at all	4	7.02
Total	57	100

7.12 Difficulty of using ICT Applications and Dependence on ICT Applications

Data about the difficulty of using ICT applications and dependence on ICT applications were recorded in Table 9. While making the respondents answer queries on difficulty of using ICT applications, 22.8 per cent responded that EasyLib posed some difficulties. 26.3 per cent of Library Assistants had no role to play in the use of EZProxy, but if given a chance they would have found it difficult. Library Webpage and Library Networks were perceived to be difficult to handle by 15.8 per cent of respondents.

Table 9. Difficulty of using ICT applications and dependence on ICT applications

Extent	ICT applications (percentage)						
	ERMSS	Barcode	EZProxy	EasyLib	Library Network	Library Webpage	EPAC
Difficulty of Using ICT Applications	5.3	1.8	26.3	22.8	15.8	15.8	7.0
Dependence on ICT applications	49.10	38.60	21.10	70.20	43.90	24.60	73.70

Further, the data collected during the study shows that Library Assistants depend most on EPAC (73.70 %) and EasyLib (70.20 %) respectively in answering the user queries. The respondents also shared their opinion that ERMSS (49.10 %), Library Network (43.90 %) and Bar-codes (38.60 %) were other ICT applications they depended on in providing the services. EZProxy and Library Webpage were considered dependable by 21.10 per cent and 24.60 per cent of respondents.

7.13 Need of Training in Using ICT Applications

Implementation of ICT in MAHE Libraries has also led to the semi-professionals responding that they must be trained as the following table reveals. Most of the semi-professionals (71.9 %) felt that they needed training in access to e-resources. The study revealed that less percentage of respondents (12.30 %, 15.80 %, and 17.50 %) is of the opinion that they needed training in using computers (PCs), accessing the Internet and using library web page, respectively.

8. FINDINGS

Following findings were drawn which gives an overview of the perception of Semi-Professionals in using ICT in Manipal Academy of Higher Education Libraries.

- It was observed from the study that the use of EasyLib, EPAC, and Bar-Code had impacted on their day-to-day roles as stated by the majority of the semi-professionals
- The study revealed that ICT-enabled services have made it possible for the semi-professionals to give a faster response to the queries of the users and provide more accurate and up-to-date information services to the users in their libraries
- Semi-professionals who participated in the study stated that their responsibility levels have increased with the implementation of ICT applications in the library
- The study has given evidence that 31.5 per cent of respondents have experienced a ‘total’ change in their duties and responsibilities whereas 21.1 per cent of semi-professionals experienced ‘significant’ change as per the study
- It was found from the study that 66.6 per cent of semi-professionals had noticed that users experienced ‘Satisfaction’ in the way Library Assistants provided services. 28.07 per cent of respondents noticed that users were ‘Very Satisfied’ with their ICT-enabled services
- The repetitive nature of the roles amongst semi-professionals was gauged and half of the respondents have felt that their activities were ‘totally’ repetitive

- Although most ICT applications were not difficult to handle or manage, 26.3 per cent of semi-professionals faced difficulties with EZProxy (remote login access), mainly because it didn’t come under their domain. Further, it was found out from the study that EasyLib (Library automation software) and Library Webpage posed occasional difficulties as suggested by 15.8 per cent respondents
- The study confirmed that dependence on ICT to provide Library services was inevitable as 73.70 per cent, and 70.20 per cent of respondents regularly depended on EPAC (online catalog) and EasyLib (automation software) respectively for providing library services
- Training themselves in the already existing technologies or acquainting themselves with new ones were considered to be an important need of the semi-professionals. As per the study, 71.90 per cent of the respondents felt the need for training in accessing e-resources whereas training in the use of library web page was given less priority by the semi-professionals.

9. CONCLUSIONS

From the study, it can hereby be said that technology has transformed the functioning of libraries as the semi-professionals use ICT to provide effective services in Manipal Academy of Higher Education libraries. Most of the ground work required for a properly functioning library are performed by the semi-professionals and thus if their dependence on the use of ICT applications result in better, faster, accurate and up-to-date service, this, in turn, reflects on the image of the library itself. Properly and efficiently functioning library ultimately satisfies the knowledge needs of the students, faculty and researcher who are the end users and they are the ones who keep a lasting impression of the library as a place of exploration, supporting and achieving the aims, goals and objectives of the parent institution, the very purpose for which it exists.

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