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Management of Change in the 21st Century Libraries and Information Centres

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Introduction

Long before Johnson's 1998 celebrated story *Who Moved My Cheese?* a best-selling text on change was published, Charles Darwin in the Origin of Species (1859), documented compelling scientific evidence on species that became extinct because of mal-adaptation or resistance to change. It is intriguing to discover in today's business world, that most businesses that are making waves never existed beyond few decades. In the same vein, most organizations in the past, that roamed their environments like dinosaurs, are today extinct or too flaccid to make earth-breaking impact. Change has caused all these. Organizations that have realized the inevitability of change have accepted the onerous tasks of managing it. Others that believed otherwise, have unwittingly surrendered themselves to change, to tweak the way it deems fit.

Change is so fundamental to all things in the world that it is the most important obstacle to overcome in a game of survival of the fittest. It is constant for all times. This immutable principle may have been the *raison d'etre* behind the craving by many to understand change, as a phenomenon from wider and deeper perspectives. Consequently, this perhaps, has attracted to the field of management and indeed the entire sciences, as well as humanity, avalanche of change theories, postulations and practices.

Nowhere in the world economy has change made such unimaginable impacts as it has done in the information and communication technology (ICT) world in the past few decades, especially in the last two decades when the ICT wind has blown across every continent of the world.

Contemporary Issues in Change Management

Change by definition requires creating a new system. Managing change therefore requires managers to think about the organization from a new perspective. Duck (1998) argues that this demands from the manager, something beyond mere breaking change into small pieces – total quality management, process reengineering, employee empowerment and managing each as operating machine, akin to treating the human body of one ailment at a time. Change management appears to be influenced by three paradigms viz: deeply held, unconscious set of assumptions and values, things taken for granted, and expectations

Zohar (1997), in his own view, identified two broad influences which managers of change are susceptible to. These are Newtonian and Quantum constructs. Under the Newtonian perspective, change management sees an organization from the perspective of atomicity, with emphasis on separate working parts. This leads to a tendency toward fragmentation. Second, the Newtonian believes that change management is determinate and thus is governed by iron laws. This is why some of their proponents are taken aback when results of change programme are way off from prediction.

The third underlying assumptions of the Newtonian construct on change management is the view that, all answers on change, must be "either, or". That is why those who subscribe to it give premium to change leaders, who 'keep their eyes on the ball' and 'see clearly a particular vision to pursue'. It is from these people that we hear frequent arguments that, there is one best way to do things or the best software package to drive information and communication technology.

The fourth is actuality, which concerns 'here and now'. This anchors on immediate results that can be touched and measured. The fifth concerns 'subject-object split'. Managers influenced by this movement divide the world into the organization and its environment, as well as the organization and its market. According to Zohar (1997), these managers believe that change programme and management, should empower them to manage that environment and to exploit the market. Quite often we hear these managers shouting to their subordinates "Customers are out there and they are to be managed. Their tastes are to be manipulated, their dissatisfactions stoked up, their expectations set".

Sixth change management, under the Newtonian influence, regards the organization, both political and corporate as existing in a constant and seemingly unresolved tension between the individual and the group. That the thrust of change management is to foster the initiative and creative qualities of the individual, while at the same time developing the co-operation and team qualities of the group. It is based on this that we have many change managers stressing the crucial importance of the individual, at the same time, being suspicious of the group. Leadership under this context cultivates own inner light and individual potential, while feeling that there is nothing or little lesson to draw from the great insight and inspiration of the unexpressed qualities of the group being led.

Seventh, Newtonian managers on change management are under the influence of 'focus, certainty, and control'. A story is told of a famous physicist, Lord Kelvin, who often advised his best students to avoid making a career in physics, because they had solved all the problems that required solutions. In other words, there was nothing exciting or new that a newcomer would discover in the subject. Change management under this influence, creates a situation that makes the leader see others and their ways of doing things, as the source of the problems of the organization, while nothing is wrong the way he administers his job.

Quantum change management on the other hand has eight fundamental assumptions: First, that the organization's change programme and management is tittered on 'both-and'. As Zohar (1997) succinctly captures this thus:

> It has both unique, particlelike individual aspect and a shared,

> relational, wavelike group aspect. I am me, my genes, my history, and my unique experience, but I am also all these others with who I live and work and share experience with and to whom I relate. Neither my private, individual self nor my public relational self is more important or more primary". All these must be integrated and utilized for the maximum benefit of the organization and the community it serves. And since the existing infrastructure is inadequate to support those aspirations, new ones are nourished to take care of the repositioning.

Second, that every change programme and management should be holistic and contextual. It must extend across the organization. Third,, every change management must be self-organizing. It must remain at the edge, 'poised precariously...yet creatively between order and chaos'. Change programme and management within this sphere has no hard limits, nor set of definable boundaries. Although some constraints may be there, it is not allowed to determine the direction of management of such change. Though it is a character, yet this is always moulded. Change management must continue to re-invent itself and always remoulding its brain.

Fourth, change management is free. Though change may be constrained by material resources, past experience, environmental conditions, yet change managers that subscribe to the quantum theory, argue that its boundaries must be elastic and in a state of flux, subject however to a creative uncertainty. Fifth, change management must be flexible and responsible at the edge. Thus the change manager must come to terms with the fact that he is part of the organization; and the organization, part of the society. Given this fact, he must approach all issues about change from participatory stance. For the action wrongly taken could have very adverse impact on the organization.

Sixth, quantum change management assumes that the organization thrives on diversity. When an organization is used to one truth, one-way worldview or expression of reality, one best way of doing things and unambiguous choice, it drives away initiative and abort dreams. A change manager under quantum influence regards all these things as obstacles to change implementation. The belief is that, plural way of accommodating the multiplicity and diversities of societies, markets, individuals, customers, employees, make for a better change programme management than the Newtonian 'one-way' observatory. Seventh, a change programme and management should be playful. Zohar (1997) has argued that ninety-nine percent of all species (or organizations) that vanished, had tight structure that failed to respond to environmental conditions. More importantly was fear to take risks. They believe that, to live in the present is more comforting than sharing or taking the risk about the future. Often when the future comes like a hurricane, they are blown away. But when a change programme has much elements of playfulness, its new organization invariably create infrastructure that encourage play and reward structures and recognize the value of taking risks.

Eight, change management must be vision centred and value driven. Under the Newtonian influence, a change manager believes that his duties and responsibilities are to ensure that employees are made to sell products or services. And the best result of any change programme management must be to meet present demand, to manipulate demand, to manipulate the public and market taste, and to desire the organization's products or services. Marketing drive is woven around society's illusion.

Change programmes and management that are influenced by quantum preachment go beyond all these. They recognize that people seek meaning that go beyond frustrations and limitations. They see people, customers, employees and environments as living systems that obey evolutionary laws, and are always reaching beyond themselves to new possibilities. Organizations that subscribe to this, toe the philosophical line of providing their customers and employees, new possibilities, dreams and meaning. The deep vision and value of the organization

drive all these.

Notwithstanding, whether one subscribes to the Newtonian or Quantum change management, one thing that must be admitted of change is that, it is never effected without some pains and discomforts. That is why some advocates have advised organizations to manage change with processes such as tinkering and kludging (Abrahamson, 2000). These in plain language means that change should be effected in piecemeal followed at appropriate interval by larger ones. Companies that can manage overall change with these processes, according to these advocates, would achieve dynamic stability. It should however, be admitted that no matter how dynamic stability is managed, it is a difficult task to handle, though it has great advantage of allowing change to be effected without fatal organizational pains.

There is no doubt that one of the compelling reasons of the new attitudes of librarians and information managers worldwide is what has been called "the recent, worldwide acceleration in the pace and impact of change". It has been said, for instance, that it took 112 years to discover and apply the technology of photography, it took 56 years to develop and disseminate the use of the telephone; 35 years for the radio, 12 years for television and only 6 years for the atomic bomb. Change is thus today a significant fact of life whose impact is not always neutral. Indeed, if anything, the impact of most changes tends to be disorientating especially if it is not anticipated, planned for and properly managed.

Change Management in Library and Information Centres

For any organization, including the library, change can come from one of two sources: internal or external. Internal changes are changes initiated within the organization and relate to how to do things, when to do things or what new things to do. The critical issues here are how to make these changes generally acceptable to or accepted by the majority within the organization. Thus, the issue of participation, manipulation and resistance become of some significance in the management of internal change. All of these issues are strategies to influence the response of individuals within the organization to the changes. They are calculated to positively affect the perception of the individual as well as his attitudinal and behavioural disposition to the changes.

Participation entails involving those to be affected by the change in its formulation and implementation. This way it is more likely to secure their commitment and general willingness to accept the consequences of the change process. However, it is recognized that participatory strategies of managing change can be time-consuming and costly and there may be need in certain circumstances to use a strategy of personal power. This may be indeed more appropriate in situations where there is formal, recognized and accepted authority or where personal power arises from the effect of charisma. In either case, power strategies are best used where commitment to the changes process is not essential for its successful implementation or where the resources available are limited or when little resistance is anticipated.

Participatory strategies, however, must not be confused with manipulation. Manipulation is the conscious structuring of an event so that others, in spite of the semblance of participation, end up behaving in the manner intended by the change agent. Manipulation could involve the use of inducements or hidden threats to secure compliance or weaken the temptation to resist change. Its long-term success is, however always in doubt.

Resistance to change must be recognized as an initial first reaction of the majority of people. Within an organization, therefore, this can best be dealt with through negotiation and the change process facilitated through counseling, enlightenment and education. The effectiveness of such negotiation can be greatly enhanced by

appreciating the causes of resistance. This could include fear of losing some current advantage of benefit, a sense of inadequate arising from the challenge of acquiring new skills, new behavioural pattern, new attitude or new ways of thinking or relating to people. On the other hand, resistance or hostility to change could entail a fundamental difference of viewpoint and could be a health development to be used constructively. Those resisting a particular change often have something of value to say. For this reason, the basis of their resistance should be adequately considered and made use of as appropriate.

Nonetheless, it is external change or changes in the environment in which the organization has to function that are often the more crucial ones. Changes in the environment tend to be of tremendous import and often taxes the creative ability of the organization. Such changes at best can be anticipated but can rarely be controlled. And yet it is from such changes that threats to the very survival of the organization could and do arise. Changes in the environment of an organization tend to arise from one or more of four sources: technological, economic, social and political.

Technological changes are either process or market driven. In the former, new methods, processes or approaches of doing things while in the latter, new products might force on an organization a change of emphasis. Technology development has been the most potent factor making for dramatic changes in the information world. Changes can lead to turbulent or traumatic situations within any organization. The goal of change management is thus to modulate and contain the negative consequences of such turbulent or conflict situation whilst drawing strength and renewal from the many opportunities that change provides. Management of change thus entails accurate and insightful anticipation of such opportunities and the adoption of suitable strategies to capitalize on them.

Management may feel that it has perfectly valid reasons for introducing organizational change, for example to respond to changes in the environment – market or technological, deal with the new arrangements required following an acquisition, merge or takeover or to eliminate overlapping areas of activity. Other reasons include to cater for the introduction of new activities or the elimination of old ones, gain economies of scale by amalgamating activities, facilitate better co-ordination, control or communications and to decentralize operations to place decision making closer to the point of action, to reduce the size of an unwieldy head office and/or to cut down on bureaucracy, centralize operations to provide for better control from the top, accommodate management changes and to 'shake up the business a bit'- management have been known to articulate a belief that change is a stimulus in itself. There could be some truth in this in a stagnant organization, but 'change for change's sake' is a dangerous doctrine.

Librarians and Management of Change

Librarians and information specialists are approaching a decision point. They must decide whether they will create changes in libraries that parallel the changing needs for information in society, and thus thrive in the electronic age, or whether they will continue to serve their traditional role as the custodians of books and other information media. In the words of Dowlin (1984) "the library has traditionally been defined as a place for books and the librarian as a keeper of books. The librarians' ties or association with books has served as an asset. We have been able to use the romantic aura of books to colour ourselves as important. Yet, as society has developed other means for storage and transmission of information and knowledge, our ability to impress society with our importance has decreased, our ties to books may become a liability".

The need for organized access to information has increased in the electronic age. A profession that can organize millions of books brings many of the skills needed for organizing information, regardless of format. If a book is viewed as a means to an end – access to information – it then becomes possible to consider other means to the same end and to include these means into design. The role of

librarians and information specialists today is to increase access to information. New skills therefore need to be learned. The process of changing libraries and information centres has started. It is time for the librarians and information specialists to tackle the task systematically.

We must develop and define our role before others force their definition upon us. In order to arrive at our definition, we must become aware of the elements that impact what we do now, or will do in the future. Librarians and information specialists have crucial roles in managing and providing access to information. The electronic library is an important ingredient for the quality of life in future societies and libraries and librarians have the responsibility for bringing them into being. The process is not simple, it will require the mastery of many and varied tools by those who care to fulfill the promise.

Librarians have always served as guides to information resources. If the philosophy of service is to find the vehicle carrying the information, it needs to be expanded. If the librarian's concern is for supplying the information, regardless of the container, one has already made major progress towards the electronic library. Whereas the conventional criterion is to find the container of the information, the new criterion in the ICT era is based on finding the information. Therefore, a librarian or information specialist who is ICT literate is a valued professional also viewed as an agent of information transfer and an advocate for information accessibility.

It is important to note here that change management in the information world entails most importantly, both human and equipment. Human in the sense of managing the professional angle to change management in information provision brought about by the ICT while change management in equipment involves managing the new ICT equipment that is gradually replacing the old conventional criterion of finding the container of information by finding the information itself. Hence, the need to discuss the management of change in library information resources. This includes preservation of digitized library information resources and requirements, also the problems with digitization of library information resources.

Preservation of Digitized Information and Requirements

According to Rothenberg (1999), one of the changes of the information age is the preservation of digital information. The world as a whole now sees digitization as the solution to a wide range of problems emanating from the new information technology. This is unlike in the past when information was recorded simply on such diverse media as pebbles, papyrus parchment and plastic. In this period, most information was printed on paper. As a result of this very simple forms of information documentation the traditional and most expedient method of ensuring long term access to that information was simply to protect the integrity of the medium on which it was recorded that is to repair and rebind books.

The word digital information or document is a function of the new digital technology in the handling of information. It derives from the new informational artifact, which includes document, data, and records of all kinds in all media. Digital document according to Rothenberg (1999) include informational artifacts "some aspects of whose intended behaviour or use rely on their being encoded in digital form". The term digital in this context denotes means representing sequence of discrete symbolic values – each value having two or more unambiguously distinguishable states – so that they can, at least, in principle, be accessed, manipulated, copied, stored, and transmitted entirely by mechanical means, with high reliability.

One of the common characteristics of digital information or document is that they possess a peculiar collection of core digital attributes that must be retained. With the above characteristic it will therefore take the following conditions for the preservation of digital document to be effective: the document must possess the ability to be copied perfectly, it must be accessible without geographical constraints

and to be disseminated at virtually the incremental cost, given the existence of appropriate digital infrastructure. Other conditions are that, it should be machine-readable so that they can be accessed, searched, and processed by automated mechanism that can modify them, reformat them and perform arbitrary compilation on their content in all phases of their creation and distribution and furthermore, new inherently digital document forms such a dynamic, distributed, interactive hypertext and hypermedia, must retain their unique functionality, including their ability to integrate information from disparate traditional sources, such as books, periodicals, newspapers, mail, phone messages, data, imagery and video.

Problems with Digitization

When the traditional form of library resources like books, pamphlets, journal etc. are digitalized, the digital storage media have had their lifetime unnecessary shortened. This is because with time and change in technology the new media will require new information format, which will be copied into it.

In most cases, most of these digital storage media require apparatus to make them readable. With change in technology these hardware and software become obsolete thereby shortening their useful life span. The generally visible problems with digitalization of library resources according to Rothenberg (1999) include:

- Most digital documents and artifacts exist only in encoded form, requiring specific software to bring their bit stream to life and make them truly usable.
- As these programme or the hardware/software environment in which they run become obsolete, the digital document that depends on them become unreadable due to their own encoding

Apart from the technical aspect there are administrative, procedural, organizational and policy issues surrounding the management of digital materials. Digital documents are different from traditional papers documents in ways that have significant implication for the means by which they are generated, captured, transmitted, stored, maintained, accessed and managed. Paramount among these differences is the greatly reduced lifetime of digital information without some form of active preservation. This change management in library resources should be taken seriously in order to forestall the loss of vital information without any hope of their recovery.

Articulating Vision and Change

Failed change exercises in library and information centres are in most cases traceable to blurred vision. A visionless organization equally driven by a visionless manager will normally be unconscious of its environment, such organizations slip continually and consistently until they end up in the abyss. Truly great organizations understand the difference between what should never change and what should be open to change, between what is genuinely sacred and what is not. This rare ability to manage continuity and change – requiring a consciously practiced discipline – is closely linked to the ability to develop a vision.

Collins (1984) opined that vision provides about what core values and purpose to preserve and what future to stimulate progress toward. A well-conceived vision of a change in library and information centre consists of two major components – core ideology and envisioned future. The former defines what the library and information centres stand for and why it exists. The latter is what the organization aspires to become, to achieve or create – something that will require significant change and progress to attain. Vision is actually a function of the organization's environment – internal and external.

Successful change managers understand that it is more important to know what the organization is than where it is going, for where it is going will change as the

world changes. Library is a part of the larger society and a creature of its immediate environment, whatever the type. Its resources, income, problems, opportunities and survival are generated and conditioned by the environment. To deal with change, library and information centre managers have two major options: react to the signs that changes are needed, thereby making piecemeal modification to deal with particular problems as they arise and develop a programme of planned change, making significant investments of time and other resources to alter the ways their organization operate. In this case the library and information centre manager anticipates and initiates the change process.

The Problems of Change

Those affected by organizational change may not perceive it the same way. They have seen it all happen before. They may call it organization by whim not by design. They will have seen fashions for centralization and decentralization come and go. And they may quote wisely amongst themselves the old saying: 'organize-re-organize-disorganize'. If they are classicists they may even be able to quote someone else who felt about re-organization as they do – Gaius Petronus Arbiter, a Roman governor of Nero's time who complained: "We trained hard, but it seemed that every time we were beginning to form up to teams, we would be reorganized. I was to learn later in life that we tend to meet any new situation by reorganizing, and a wonderful method it can be for creating the illusion of progress while producing confusion, inefficiency and demoralization".

These fears and reactions may seem to library management to be unreasonable, but they exist, and they can seriously prejudice the success of a change, however carefully it has been planned and executed.

Adverse Reactions to Change

Adverse reactions to reorganization from the point of view of those affected by it are not unreasonable. It constitutes change, about which most people are wary, if not overtly hostile. The reasons for resistance to change in the library and information centres are quite clear: it is a combination of a fear of the unknown, a reluctance to change familiar and comfortable working habits, a belief in general that change is always for the worse, and a feeling in particular that the individuals affected by it are going to lose out in a number of specified ways. The most frequently expressed or felt fears about organizational change are: loss of job, reduction of career prospects, downgrading of work and possible reduction in present or future rates of pay, loss or erosion of carefully built up empires and loss of status. Others are reduction responsibility and job interest, need to learn new skills, which could be difficult, new and unknown bosses, or even new and known bosses if their bad reputations come before them, break-up of well established work groups and friendships and transfer to new, unknown (or known and disliked) locations or departments. The list is formidable but not exhaustive. There are other adverse reactions people can have to organizational change, and, whether or not they are justified, every attempt must be made to prevent them from happening before they arise or if this is impossible, at least to deal with them swiftly if they emerge.

Why Change Management Fails

Most managers conceive change as an event rather than a process. As an event, change stops at the level of restructuring; as a process, it seeks a total turnaround in the structure, the culture and the human ware of the organization. Real agility of the organization is achieved only when every function, office, strategy, goal and process, when every person is able and eager to rise to every challenge. This type and degree of fundamental change, commonly called revitalization or

transformation, is what more and more organization see but all too rarely achieve. There are two basic reasons: large organizations have strong tendency and remarkable capacity to resist change of all kinds and most often, the kind of change being sought is so much more radical and uncomfortable than anything required by a shift in strategy or process or corporate structure. Revitalization as referred to here does not amount to incremental change, rather it includes shifts in strategies and involves a permanent rekindling of individual creativity as well as responsibility, a lasting transformation of the organization's internal and external relationship.

Gaining Acceptance for Change

Prevention is better than cure. Armstrong (1984) offered solutions to hostility, fears and adverse reactions that are often confronted by change managers:

- Base the change on a thorough organizational analysis
- Involve those concerned in the analysis – explain why it is carried out and seek their views on what improvements are required
- If the change is forced on the organization, explain why it is happening and, if at all possible, allay fears at this stage about adverse effects.
- Consult people on alternative methods of dealing with the situation. Try to get them to 'own' the solution as theirs, and not something imposed upon them by an unfeeling management.
- Accentuate the positive benefits – if they exist – to those affected by change. They could include increased responsibility, more clearly defined duties, the removal of barriers to communication, new challenges and opportunities, greater security in a more effective or prosperous organization, or the chance to learn new skills.
- If the changes may adversely affect individuals or groups of people, attempt to mitigate them in advance by offering, if the worst comes to the worst, generous redundancy settlements involving voluntary redundancy where possible, 'outplacement' benefits, i.e. redundancy counseling and help to find alternative work, generous relocation allowances, retraining facilities guarantees, if feasible, on loss of pay or status, and a measure of choice about relocations or transfers.
- Be prepared to modify the ideal solution in response to any reasonable fears expressed by those concerned – show willingness to listen and to act accordingly.
- Take particular care in defining the new organization and the responsibilities of those concerned. Involve everyone affected in drawing up job descriptions. Set up training schemes to develop new skills and communications programmes to get the message across about changes.
- Get groups together with their existing or new bosses to discuss the changes and their implications and agree jointly on how they are going to be managed.
- Consider the use of third parties or 'change agents' to facilitate change and get involved in discussion on what is happening, why it is happening and what everyone should do about it.

Conclusion

Change is no more a matter of choice, however, it is the most important obstacle to surmount by individuals and organizations that desire to survive. Change as a phenomenon, has long been studied in science, art and humanity. But the renewed interest, which the subject has attracted in recent times, appears to have come from the successful application of distilled rules in evolution to organizational management. These rules in the hands of Charles Darwin, received exquisite exposition. But credit goes to Peter Drucker, who has played invaluable role in importing this science into the service of management. In recent times, Johnson,

fully aware of the power of story wrapped in anecdotes, has gone a step further in his best selling text – *Who moved my Cheese* fame – to drive home the need for both individuals and organizations to accept changes, to avoid being deformed by superior forces which trail change. Like it or not, change has assumed a life of its own.

It is perhaps expedient to work for change than to allow change to impose itself on the organization. Change programmes and management have been found to be influenced either by Newtonian or Quantum assumptions. While the former approaches change mechanically, the latter approaches change from the perspective of wave-like front that engulfs all things and require all resources to be integrated into a single being, in order to solve problems that come to the organization as a result of change. No matter how one stands on how to approach change, one thing so crystal clear about it is that, it never came without some form of pains and discomfort. This by the way, is recognition that changes have inherent forces of disruption, which if not properly handled could bleed the organization to death.

It should be borne in mind that the management of change in the library and information centres is always a measure of the ability of those at the helm of affairs of such organizations to plan against the uncertainties of the future. Often, we need to remember that the present situation in any organization is to a large extent the results of decisions made in the past. For this reason, it is vital that present librarians and information professionals must not allow themselves to become totally captive to past decisions. It is of the essence of managing change that the management of any organization must continue to question the basis of decisions made in the past and to effect changes that would stand the organization in good stead in the future. The imperative of innovation, of the systematic and effective abandonment of obsolete practices of yesterday is a key factor in the renewal and growth of the library and information centres.

Change management has remained with the corporate world for a long time; it will remain so for so much longer. It is obvious that change management conceived and conducted outside of the employee is bound to fail. Leadership during change management period also has to be persuasive just as much as it should be focused. Change management must be driven by a clear definition of employees' commitment to new goals in terms that everyone could understand and act on. Without such leadership, employees will remain skeptical of the vision for change and distrustful of management, and management will likewise be frustrated and stymied by employees' resistance.

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