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# Electronic Journal of Academic and Special Librarianship



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## The Role of the Library and Information Science Professionals as Managers: A Comparative Analysis

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### Abstract

The basic aim of this paper to show the core competences of Library & Information Science (LIS) professionals as managers of organizations. In this paper we have done a comparative study of LIS professionals and managers of organizations and found more similarities than differences. This paper outlines and discusses the professional skills and necessary technological skills needed for library science professionals and managers.

### Introduction

‘Management’ has suddenly become a magic word in librarianship. But what is library management that has not hitherto been taken for granted by senior librarians as their essential role as administrators of their libraries? Have senior librarians not in effect been ‘managers’ since time immemorial, for what is librarianship other than managing collections so that they may be exploited to maximum effect by those requiring recourse to them? No part of librarianship can be divorced from the concept of management—not even the more recondite aspects of professional activity such as palaeography or the bibliography of early printed books, for these, too, are concerned with the efficient control of such materials to make them readily accessible to readers. Every librarian—certainly every senior librarian—has always been *ipso facto* a manager, even if he has not descended, as he might well say, to thinking of his duties in such mundane terms. In recent years, however, attention has increasingly been

given to the need to analyze the ways in which a librarian can more effectively carry out his role of making his resources available to his readers.

This is not merely a question of the bibliographic control of the material itself, but also that of ensuring that the library staff are better equipped to ensure that this aim is achieved and that consequently readers are provided with the best possible service. In other words, the emphasis on management is now concerned particularly with methods of improving the efficiency of libraries. New factors have arisen which require a librarian to take cognizance of matters which are more demanding of administrative acumen than was previously the case. One primary factor is, of course, the introduction of computer-based procedures to facilitate practical bibliographical work and thereby improve the technical efficiency of a library. Another important factor is the recent evolution of industrial relations practices which require a librarian to become familiar with the legislation concerning staff relationships which dominates the contemporary scene to an extent not hitherto envisaged—though it is to be hoped that librarians never failed to recognize the need for satisfactory relationships with their staffs in the interest of making their libraries happy places in which to work and therefore effective in providing the human and physical environment in which their resources could be exploited. One must take account also of the adoption of new methodologies such as the introduction of feasibility studies to determine the best methods of achieving particular aims and of surveys designed to measure the success of individual programmes in fulfilling their purposes.

### **Objectives of This Paper**

- To show the role of the LIS professional as manager
- Have an in depth understanding of the technical, human, conceptual skills, and communication skills between LIS professional and manager.
- Appreciate the different uses of skills to suit your position in an organization, and
- Appreciate what skills could mean in building up an organization for manager and a LIS professional for library.

### **The Managerial Skills at Various Levels**

A manager must exercise a unique set of skills. Similarly, at various levels you require different types of skills. Let us start by mentioning the skills required at the technical skill, human skill, conceptual skill, leading skills, planning level, organizing skills, controlling skills, decision-making skills. These skills refer to the personal ability put to use by the manager in specific position that he or she holds in the organizational hierarchy.

As one moves up in the hierarchy of the managerial positions, the responsibility increases. The fundamental functions of a manager such as planning, organizing, leading, controlling and decision-making are the skills required to be mastered by the managers. In order to exercise these functions, one has also to keep in mind, the type of job, the size of organization, the skills and experiences of the people one works with and the time available at his or her disposal to do these management functions.

Katz (1974) talks of three types of skills that are recognized by all managers. These are the technical, the human and the conceptual skills. The use of these skills differs for various levels of managers. Let us understand the skills first and then see how much each skill is used at various levels of managerial hierarchy and what importance each has in the career growth of a manager.

### **Technical Skill**

It is the ability to work with resources in a particular area of expertise. A surgeon must know how to do surgery. An accountant must know how to keep the accounts. Without the technical skill, one is not able to manage the work effectively. The first line supervisor in a manufacturing industry needs greater knowledge about the technical aspects of the job compared to the top boss. In a small manufacturing organization, even the top boss who owns the company needs to know a lot of technical skills.

In an age of specialization, technical skill is perhaps the most familiar one, required of the greatest number of people. Katz pointed out that mostly the vocational and on-the-job training programmes are concerned with developing this specialized technical skill. In your desire to become an efficient administrator, particularly at the first level, this skill becomes indispensable to efficient operation. As a supervisor of a set of workers, you would like to ensure if your workers have sound grounding in the principle, structure and processes of their individual specialty along with actual practice and experience during which your workers are watched and helped by you as a superior. This appears to be the best way to develop the technical skill. A workshop superintendent knows how to ensure that his or her technician is well equipped with the technical skill required for the work. An office superintendent ensures that persons work with him or her are having adequate technical skill for typing, shorthand, preparing draft etc. for doing their job. Quite a lot of training programmes for equipping the people with technical skills are going on all over the country in industries, hospitals, banks and educational institutions. As you move up in the managerial hierarchy, perhaps this skill becomes relatively less important than the human and conceptual skills. In a relatively small organization, where you yourself are the owner and at the top management level, you need a lot of technical skill yourself.

## **Human Skill**

Human skill is the manager's ability to work effectively as group members and to build cooperative effort within the team he or she leads. Every managerial level requires interaction with other people, whereas technical skill is primarily concerned with working with things (processes or physical objects). The first level manager is involved on a regular basis with the personal problems and life events of many non-managers. It is therefore natural that he or she must be able to work through these personal situations and effectively lead subordinates. He or she has to perceive and reorganize the perception of his or her superiors, equals and subordinates and his or her own behavior subsequently.

If you have a highly developed human skills and if you are aware of your own attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs about other individuals and groups, you are able to see their usefulness and limitations. And you are likely to accept others' viewpoint, perceptions and beliefs, which might be different from yours.

Human skills can be developed without any formalized training for some. Many others are to be individually aided by their immediate superiors who themselves should possess the human skill in order to be able to impart that. An important part of the procedure is the self-examination of the individual's own concepts and values which may enable him or her to develop more useful attitudes about himself or herself and about others. With this change in attitude, there may also develop some active skill in dealing with human problems. You as a superior may like to observe your subordinate's ability to work effectively with others. You may probably improve your own human skill of rating people for their effectiveness as you become more experienced in this art.

## **Conceptual Skill**

Conceptual skill means the ability to see the organization as a whole and it includes recognizing how the various functions of the organization depend on one another. It also makes the individual aware how changes in any one part of the organization affect all the others. It extends to visualizing the relationship of the individual business to the industry, the community and the political, social and economic forces of the nation as a whole. Thus, the manager gains insight into improving the overall welfare of the total organization.

As a manager you should have the ability to coordinate and integrate a variety of factors. You need to view situations and determine the inter-relatedness of various factors. The success of any decision depends on the conceptual skill of the people who make the decision and those who put it into action. For example, you are trying to

introduce some change in the working policy in your manufacturing organization. It is very important to know the effect of such a change on production of goods, control, finance, research and people involved in these processes. Finally, it is equally important right down to the last executive who must implement the new policy. So at every level of the management, no matter which level you belong to, you have to recognize the overall relationships and significance of the change in order to be an effective manager. With this the chances of your success as a manager are greatly increased. Look at the organization as a whole and try to understand the inter-relationship of its parts while introducing a change in policy.

### **Presentation Skills**

Management is the art of getting things done. A presentation is a fast and potentially effective method of getting things done through other people. Presentations are used as a formal method for bringing people together to plan, monitor and review its progress.

First, it puts you on display. Your staff needs to see evidence of decisive planning and leadership so that they are confident in your position as their manager. They need to be motivated and inspired to undertaking the tasks which you are presenting. Project leaders from other sections need to be persuaded of the merits of your project and to provide any necessary support. Senior management should be impressed by your skill and ability so that they provide the resources so that you and your team can get the job done.

Second, it allows you to ask questions and to initiate discussion. It may not be suitable within the presentation formats of your company to hold a discussion during the presentation itself but it does allow you to raise the issues, present the problems and at least to establish who amongst the audience could provide valuable input to your decision making.

Finally, presentations can be fun. They are your chance to speak your mind, to strut your stuff and to tell the people what the world is really like. While you hold the stage, the audience is bound by good manners to sit still and watch the performance.

### **Communication Skills**

As a manager (concerned with getting things done) your view of words should be pragmatic rather than philosophical. Thus, words mean not what the dictionary says they do but rather what the speaker intended. Suppose your manager gives to you an instruction which contains an ambiguity which neither of you notice and which results in you producing entirely the wrong product. The greatest source of difficulty is that

words often have different meanings depending upon context and/or culture. Thus, a “dry” country lacks either water or alcohol; “suspenders” keep up either stockings or trousers (pants); a “funny” meeting is either humorous or disconcerting; a “couple” is either a few or exactly two. If you recognize that there is a potential misunderstanding, you must stop the conversation and ask for the valid interpretation.

As with all effective communication, you should decide (in advance) on the purpose of the conversation and the plan for achieving it. There is no alternative to this. Some people are proficient at “thinking on their feet” - but this is generally because they already have clear understanding of the context and their own goals.

### **Time Management Skills**

Time management is one of those skills no one teaches you in school but you have to learn. It doesn't matter how smart you are if you can't organize information well enough to take it in. And it doesn't matter how skilled you are if procrastination keeps you from getting your work done. The time management is very effective for supervisory positions.

Supervisory positions can be very stressful and overwhelming when specific deadlines need to be met. Leaders need to be able to handle tasks and assignments in a timely manner. Time is similar to finances and both need to be budgeted wisely.

### **Leading Skills**

Leading people requires that the leader must understand the values, personality, perception and attitudes of the people. As an individual you act differently from another individual because of your values, personality, perception and attitudes. This is a very important factor to be understood in relation to the other person who may be your superior or subordinate. Let us carry out the following activity in order to understand each of these factors.

**Value** is a conviction that a person holds about a specific mode of conduct and the importance of that conviction to the person. For example, given below are certain work values. You may like to rank the three important values you would like to pursue at work. The ranking should be done in order of importance you attach to them.

**Personality** is a sum total of personal traits or characteristics of an individual. It is also a conglomeration of the forces within the individual. Our personality is determined by our physical constitution, beliefs and values in our culture and the situations which have unique influences on us.

**Perception** is the process by which individuals organize and interpret their impressions of the environment around them. Hearing, seeing or smelling or feeling or tasting a stimulus come before we process and interpret it. In picking up a stimulus, processing and interpreting it, often the reality and perception are distorted. Individuals always try to minimize the changes in perceiving any thing. Managers and subordinates, for example, distort messages or other's opinions or behavioral patterns.

**Attitude** is a person's tendency to feel and behave in a particular manner towards an object or a person such as organization's selection programme or a manager's planning approach or a colleague etc. You cannot directly observe it, but its consequences can be observed. Attitudes are learned. They have three aspects, i.e. *cognitive, effective and behavioral*, only one of which, behavioral, can be observed. The cognitive aspect of the attitude refers to the beliefs, perceptions and ideas about your attitude towards a person, object or situation. The effective aspect of the attitude refers to the feelings and emotions about your attitude towards a person, object or situation. The behavioral aspect refers to the action aspect of the attitude.

## Planning Skills

As part of the management process you attempt to define the future state of your organization. You are not trying to predict the future, but rather to uncover things in the present to ensure that the organization does have a future. Hence planning skills will include:

- Being able to **think** ahead,
- Ability to **forecast future** environmental trends affecting the organization,
- Ability to **state** organization objectives,
- Ability to **choose** strategies that will help in attaining these objectives with respect to future trends, and managers are expected to acquire skills to interact with intermediate planning systems such as using a computer.

## Organization Skills

As you have seen, planning specifies the future course of direction of an organization. The organizing process follows the planning process. While planning specifies **what** will be achieved **when**, organizing specifies **who** will achieve **what** and **how** it will be achieved.

## Controlling Skills

The skill of controlling consists of actions and decisions which managers undertake to ensure that the actual results are consistent with desired results. In planning for the



organization the management sets the objectives, which are the desired results for the organization to attain. Any deviation between the actual and the planned results must be corrected by the management by taking appropriate actions and decisions. In this skill therefore, management has a predetermined standard, the information about the performance of the organization and a corrective action in case the standard set by the organization is not fulfilled. You may like to know how the controlling skill is related to the other form of management skills we touched upon earlier

### **Decision-Making Skills**

Decision-making skills are present in the planning process. They pervade all other areas such as organizing, leading and controlling. You will appreciate the simple difference between a manager and non-manager in so far as managers make all the decisions at all levels in the organization. Think for yourself at the level you are, and whether you take a good or a bad decision, it will ultimately influence in a big or a small way your performance. Hence, management skill of decision-making for routine or non-routine problems is a time consuming activity and certainly poses a challenge to the manager for making a number of important decisions, good in quality and satisfactory in producing solutions to a problem. A manager's effectiveness lies in making good and timely decision. Again, remember, in the decision-making process, you may like to decide on repetitive or routine problems. Processing admission applications in a college or preparing a patient for an operation in a hospital are examples of routine problems. Such routine problems are different from complex, novel problems.

### **Core Professional Competencies for Librarians**

Continuing Professional Development is an essential part of the modern library information professional's successful career planning & prospects. The LIS professionals with better personal, professional and technological competencies have great opportunities and bright future in the modern libraries. Application of new ICT in to the libraries immediately requires improvement of different kinds of skills and knowledge in library information science professionals. Continuous staff training on emerging technologies is essential to learn, improve and develop various kinds of professional skills, knowledge and competencies.

Professional competencies can be thought of as flexible knowledge and skills that allow the librarian to function in a variety of environments and to produce a continuum of value-added, customized information services that cannot be easily duplicated by others. They relate to the librarian's knowledge in the areas of information resources, information access, technology, management and research, and

the ability to use these areas of knowledge as a basis for providing library and information services.

The technology is complex and librarians have not developed the skills to understand it, exploit it or create it. Those few who do have such skills find they have a very marketable commodity and can make a better living elsewhere.

There is an urgent necessity to learn a great variety of professional competencies to accomplish the role of professional librarian in the constantly changing challenging web environment. Professional competences enable librarians to respond effectively and efficiently to the constant development of new technologies. Some of the unique competencies of the LIS professionals are discussed in the following sections.

## **Technical Skills**

In the age of 21<sup>st</sup> century LIS professional must be aware of emerging technologies. It has become increasingly important that librarians keep up with technology and have certain basic skills. In the current scenario library professional must have the knowledge of HTML, Networking, scripting languages, the ability to deal with the back-end of the OPAC, the ability to translate library services into the online medium, the ability to troubleshoot basic computer and printer problems, or just a good healthy knowledge of emerging technologies.

***Online medium:*** LIS professionals need to do so much online these days, way beyond basic catalog and database searching (which sure isn't easy either). Librarians have to be able to use search engines and use them well. They need to be able to find quality online resources. They need to help patrons set up e-mail and teach basic Internet skills. They need to be able to troubleshoot problems users are having accessing online library resources, at least to the extent where they can figure out if the problem is on the library's side or the user's side.

***Ability to troubleshoot new technologies:*** It is just a part of the good user service we provide in libraries. Most of the time when you are working in library our user-facing problem, using the scanner, fix the printer, and troubleshoot any other technology problems they may be having. As we get new computers, printers, scanners, etc. then we will need to learn how to troubleshoot those. The key is just being able to have a decision-tree in your head of what to ask or try when there is a problem. Many librarians cannot troubleshoot this stuff. Most of the time when we troubleshoot any technical problem, we would just throw up an "out of order" sign because we just didn't have enough computer knowledge to figure out what the problem was. It was really bad user service. Librarians should be able to play with the technologies in the library, to learn what problems commonly come up, and to fix them if necessary, because it *is* often our responsibility to fix them.

***Ability to easily learn new technologies:*** Most of the time people comment that there are so many new technological things at the library that they can't keep up. Whenever we intimated to use new gadget in the library we always asked to IT team of that organization to send an expert to the library to teach library professional how to use it. The best way to play with that technology. It is hard to learn to use first time that when a user asking you to use it. Learning about new technology is definitely a skill. People need to learn how to learn about new technologies without having to ask other people for help all the time.

### **Time Management Skills**

Time management refers to a range of skills, tools, and techniques used to manage time when accomplishing specific tasks, projects and goals. This set encompass a wide scope of activities, and these include planning, allocating, setting goals, delegation, analysis of time spent, monitoring, organizing, scheduling, and prioritizing. Initially time management referred to just business or work activities, but eventually the term broadened to include personal activities also.

As par fourth law of library science which is “save the time of users.” This also has become more important that librarian muse developed the time management skills. Because to provide better or effective services to our user time also a factor suppose if we do not provide a desired information to a user on its requires time so our whole effort to search that information would be useless if we could not provide their desired information on time. So library professional also need to developed time management skills also.

### **Presentation Skills**

This is a huge one. LIS professional must have highly effective presentation skills. Suppose when he wants to implement a new technology or service for Library clients firstly he must create a proposal for management he must show that what would be the consequence of this new technology which tool to use to train staff, market the service etc. he must show the role of that new technology in currently being used in libraries. he can develop & practice reader's advisory skills to promote reading habit among all level of users. Through his presentation skills he can increase awareness of the role of libraries & librarians in promoting information literacy. For that he can use variety of presentation techniques to convey information to his users with different learning styles.

## **Communication Skills**

Communication has a great importance in providing better services to users. He communicates the value of library service to decision makers, staff and users. When he provides information to the user he must communicate clearly and respectfully with customers and colleagues. Always Demonstrates active listening skills with customers and colleagues in his workplace. Communication is not only must be effective with users only but must have ability to negotiate effectively with publishers, customers, management & vendors.

## **Customer Service**

Nowadays librarians must be customer oriented. He can demonstrate a sincere commitment to customer service. Always he must try to observe customer needs & try to provide their desired information on time. Through continual design & improve user-oriented information products & competencies he can provide them better customer services. Always show them confidence & competence to deliver perfect customer services.

## **Evaluation and Assessment Skills**

LIS professionals need to understand how any changes in the way the library provides services will affect all stakeholders. Sometimes he focuses on the needs of one group and ignores the fact that the changes that will benefit one group will not benefit another. With any change, librarians should create a list of all of the different stakeholders and actually discuss how it will affect each of them. When we say “stakeholders” we must mean not only our patrons but staff, IT, and administrators. If you implement a project that library staffs don’t support, the likelihood of success is poor. For that continually analyzes, investigates and assesses the information service needs of the users & according to our stakeholders needs we can design and deliver specialized value added information products and services. Time to time we can evaluates the outcomes of the use of library and information resources and services for which we can conducts research to find solutions to the identified information management problems.

## **Managerial skills**

In managerial skills we include technical skills, human skills & conceptual skills. Technical skills involve process or technique knowledge and proficiency in a certain specialized field. These skills are more important for Librarian also because library professional also dealing with a huge no. of staff doing the organization’s work. The technical skill involves the Librarian’s understanding of the nature of job that people

under him have to perform. Human Skills involve the ability to interact effectively with people. Librarian interacts and cooperates with employees & staff also. Because Librarian deal directly with people, this skill is crucial. Librarian with good human skills is bale to get best out of their people. Conceptual Skills involve the formulation of ideas, conceptualization about abstract and Complex situations levels. Conceptual skills refer to the ability of a Librarian to take a broad and farsighted view of the organization and its future, his ability to think in abstract, his ability to analyze the forces working in a situation, his creative and innovative ability and his ability to assess the environment and the changes taking place in it.. Thus, technical skill deals with things, human skills concerns people, and conceptual-skill has to do with ideas.

### **Knowledge of Policies, Procedures, Issues and Standards**

- Maintains current awareness of professional issues impacting libraries
- Demonstrates knowledge of library policies, procedures and service standards

### **Knowledge of Information Sources and Services**

- Develop specialized subject knowledge about the purpose of the organization
- Identify materials appropriate to customers' requirements and their abilities
- Expert knowledge in the content of information resources and ability to critically evaluate and filter them
- Develop and deliver convenient, easily accessible and cost effective information services to the users (CCFR)

### **Commitment to Life-Long Learning**

- Take responsibility for the development of one's own professional career
- Remain knowledgeable in current events and technologies
- Pursues learning opportunities, personally or through formal training
- Flexible in adapting to new situations, systems, tools, environments
- Anticipates accepts, adapts and manages change effectively

### **Other Skills**

- Marketing and promotion of library services
- Project management skills
- Digital rights management
- Knowledge management skills

## Conclusion

For decades, LIS professionals have been creatively managing the information and research resources of their firms on behalf of attorneys and clients. The evaluation, acquisition, organization, sharing and distribution of information in all formats, including books, periodicals, online services such as Lexis and Westlaw, internal work product documents and database resources, is an integral part of their expertise. Similarly, providing comprehensive research services utilizing a wealth of legal and non-legal resources is a service of long standing. In addition, law firm librarians have extensive experience in training attorneys and paralegals in the use of the full range of information resources to minimize the amount of time involved and maximize the quality of the result.

On the basis of above points which, we have discussed i.e. technical skills, leading skills, communication skills, project management skills, time management skills, digital rights management, knowledge management skills, user satisfactions of the manager and LIS professional is the same. A manager's aim to marketing and promotion of their products but the LIS professional aims to marketing and promotion of library service. We can say LIS professional is playing the role just as manager.

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