

# A Critical Study on “Progressive Innovation in Academic Libraries and Role of Librarians” in the Digital Era

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**ABSTRACT:** *Since the Academic Library and Education are the twin concepts for a successful educational development in an institution, rejuvenation of the Academic Libraries is a necessity in the 21st century. For a Progressive evolution of the Library we need to make reasonable efforts. Radical Innovation is not advisable in an Academic Library. We should honor the past and create the future. Use technology for improving our life and respecting the new developments in 21st century Learning Commons. 21st century libraries offer inspirations to the user groups by providing the materials, programming, visual arts and maker activities using sustainable innovations and teaching and motivating the new generation to improve the current best practices. The 4Cs of 21st century Learning are Critical thinking, Communication, Collaboration and Creativity. Among all the new developments, strongly recommending a corner for the physical library along with its physical collection which is an essential component of an Academic Library and the role of a 21st century Librarian while organizing the knowledge during the Library Technology interchange are the main components of the paper.*

**Keywords:** Innovation in Learning Commons, Resources and Services, Library Consortium, Academic Libraries

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## 1. Introduction

Libraries are the multi model knowledge centers. “Library is a heart of an Academic Institution”. As said by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the Libraries are indispensable tool of learning process from school life – Higher education – Colleges till the research - Scholar phase and beyond by developing creativity,

Innovation, Imagination and Critical thinking which enables them to be responsible citizens. Interactions, Involvements, understanding, Co-operation and Co-ordination if the educational teams are necessary for educational achievements. We collectively achieve self-realization as we grow towards higher and higher levels of consciousness, becoming more knowledgeable, more rationale with a wider understanding of ourselves and of the world. The 21<sup>st</sup> century libraries are reinventing themselves for

providing quality service to its user community. Finding the ways to expand the library beyond its walls to deliver exceptional and Innovative services to Library users and achieving Innovative outcomes. Selection of the suitable Innovative idea and implementation of the same in the respective libraries with the help of the suitable survey and analysis is the big responsibility of the Librarian in each institution. Co-operation of the educational teams in the Institution and neighboring Libraries – National & International (Inter Library Co-operation) by sharing the ideas, resources and services are also very important for a successful and progressive Innovation in Academic Libraries. Latest technologies and current trends converting the Libraries as an “open platform”. Infrastructure Development for a Digital Library Management is one of an Interlibrary initiative to collect, manage, preserve and provide access to the digital collections. Library Maker spaces are the creative initiative implementing to the modern libraries to attract the user community for teaching and motivating the new generation to improve the current best practices. Introduction of the Library consortium for Interlibrary cooperation is also discussed in this paper.

## 2. Innovation in Learning Commons

Learning commons have its physical and virtual face. Ideas, strategies and programs are the Library Innovation Toolkit for the “progress for the sake of progress”. The true innovation helps to meet the needs and aspirations of the user community now and in the future. Librarians need to take leadership positions like Innovators and focus on Generation, Acceptance and Implementation of new ideas, processes, products and services for a well-controlled dissemination of Information and user satisfaction. Innovation is always a surprise. Innovation is “turning an idea into a solution that adds value from a customer’s perspective.” (Nick Skillicorn). The functional & practical definition of Innovation is “Staying Relevant” (Stephen Shapiro). “Idea collection” is very important for understanding the new trends and developments in the universe. Use the “idea collection” only for the reference purpose. Idea selection should be done depends on our own organizational requirements. Inter Library cooperation, Library consortium, Resource sharing all are the Innovative initiatives of the modern Libraries. Basically, we must focus on the Digital Library management initiative for collection, management, preservation and resource sharing. Innovation in the Library practice can be seen in the evolution of thinking about training in the use of tools, how to think critically about the information, media literacy, data literacy, and scholarly communications that allows to contribute more effectively to the development of students as creators of digital content and as engaged digital citizens. Futurism warns us to avoid tunnel vision to keep an open mind. The Librarian as futurist does not sit, wait and watch for the future to unfold; he is an active participant in shaping whatever it becomes and constantly queries how he can make it better.” (Mathews 2014). Now we have to embrace innovation and future thinking in our continued metamorphosis. Careful implementation of the Educational Technology is a big responsibility of the Librarians depends on the user groups. A sea of change, Scholarly communication, Talent Management, Innovation in Academic Libraries, Innovative programing, Transformation, Academic Library Transformers, changes in Higher education, Scholarly communication and user expectations are driving a continuous need to adjust, transform and recreate ourselves. Academic Libraries are the corner stones of a community. It is a lifeline to the world and all the information on it, one-stop-shopping center of information offering lifelong learning opportunities. Digital medium provides opportunities for Innovation and advancement in library functionality and capability like Accessibility (the ability to overcome the limitations of space), Availability (the ability to overcome the limitations of time), searchability (the ability to probe information in new ways), Currency (the ability to make information available in a more timely way online), Research ability (the ability to ask new questions that could not be posed with printed information), Dynamism (the fluidity of the presentation and the ability to reshape the information), Interdisciplinary (the ability to carryout research across the multimedia fields and to explore new approaches to a topic), Collaborative nature (the ability to incorporate conversation and debate among scholars and students into the use of a work), Multimedia aspects (the ability to integrate text, images, sound & video into the presentation), Link ability (the ability to use hypertext to connect a work to related materials), Interactivity (the ability to use hypertext to connect a work to related materials), Interactivity (the ability of the user to not only read and view the information, but also to interact with the digital text and images and to use and repurpose them in creative ways), Procedural qualities (the ability of the computer to carryout task over and over again with high accuracy and efficiency), Spatial capabilities (the ability to view objects in multi dimensions and relationships), Encyclopedia qualities, the almost unlimited capacity of the computer to store and display massive volumes of information without the limitations of the physical format.

“Technology can become the “wings” that will allow the educational world to fly further and further and faster than ever before – if we will allow it.” (Jenney Arledge). According to Albert Einstein “The Human spirit must prevail over Technology.” ICT (Information Communication Technology) is a diverse set of technological tools and resources used to communicate and to create, disseminate, store and manage information (Web). With all these facilities we must try creating a dynamic learning environment. Educators need to be in the digital space and proper navigation needed for the dissemination of the information. We should maintain symbiotic relationship of the Technology and Education.

### 3. Resources and Services

In an Academic Library, the resources and services should encourage and support the psychosocial and cognitive development of the user community, especially in the higher education. Role of Traditional Libraries in an Academic Library is very important. As part of the student development, physical collection and its arrangement will help to give the picture and idea about the library. Academic Librarians are arranging Library Orientation Sessions (Student Development programs and services) group-wise or individual basis for educating the students. During this process the students are informed about the different categories of resources, its use and brief description of the journey of a book from acquisition till the collection in the ready to use form. Experience of. With my 16 years of experience as an Academic Librarian, would like to strongly recommend for keeping the Traditional Library as part of an Academic library along with the current best practices. An Academic Library should have physical and virtual face. Today is the day of learning something new. “When I learn today, doesn’t make yesterday wrong. It makes tomorrow better.” (Sue Ward)

For all the developments it will be better to respect the past and create the future. New generation will accept the technological revolution and they can easily cooperate with the changes. But we must consider the group of users who are still prefer to and used with traditional resources for their research preparations. They cannot imagine a world with digital form of resources. According to a survey conducted among the library users, no one is preferring a paperless society but happy to invite the new changes and accepting the changes. According to the majority Holding a book and reading (Seeing & feeling) while studying is a different experience which we cannot get from a digital medium. So, while rejuvenation of the libraries special attention is needed for considering requirement of different varieties of user community. If the coming one is better idea, these already came to the people in the past also in their future vision. So, running behind the advanced technologies are not only the measure of the user satisfaction but respect the demands of the whole community.

Libraries are the centers where people can find their required books for the references. Those who cannot afford the prices of books which are required for their educational purpose are mostly depending on the libraries. In the current situation as mentioned digital medium are not a solution for all the users. Librarians can only advocate for these kinds of issues and solve the issues in a reasonable way. 4Ps of Innovation are Products, Place, Promotion and Public Relations. Investment on e-resources has a direct impact on the productivity of an institution and there will be easy access (24 x 7) for these resources also. This will be easy for self-directed learners. Role of modern librarian is extremely demanding one. For engaging the students to use library resources need to introduce Co-browsing technologies. Librarians (knowledge managers) are creating point-of -use electronic guides and arranging Library Information Literacy Programs for the user community in the Academic arena. Now long-range thinking stops because virtually all information needed is available in large quantity for a user to select from and from varied sources.

### 4. Library Maker Spaces

Library Maker space is an area and/or service that offers library patrons an opportunity to create intellectual and physical materials using resources such as computers, 3-D printers, audio and video capture and editing tools, and traditional arts and craft supplies. (Web definition)

Current generation is not interested to sit and read/ study for long time. The students are not interested to visit library due to the special environment which is necessary in a library and it is managed by strict policies and procedures. To change that situation, libraries started to find flexible rules depends on the situation. As part of that there are Study rooms inside the Library, who prefer a quite study environment and Group study rooms where students can perform their group activities as team. These changes are also helping to attract the students and other user groups to library. Introduction of maker spaces in libraries is an advanced step for attracting more students’ community and introduction of more technologies in the current era. So, Maker space is a constructivist and constructionist movement. Maker spaces provide an interactive environment inside the library where the learners can create, invent and learn things in the practical methods. The place is making changes for good. Possibility for creativity and innovation promotes environment of creative activities in the Library. Introduction of maker spaces is one of Innovative uses of library spaces. Maker spaces transform Learners into Inventors. Libraries can illuminate the learning communities with the latest technologies and maker spaces. So, they can devote cognitive resources to more complex operations. Some of the interesting titles used in the libraries for addressing the makerspaces for bringing the attention of the user groups are “Idea Lab”, “Creator’s Corner”, “Maker Space &Tech Lab”, “we are makers!”, “Maker Space Resources”, “Make It @ your

Library”, “Maker spaces @ your Library”, “Maker space: Learn, Make, Innovate”, “Library maker spaces in Action!!!”, “Science & Technology Maker spaces”. (Web reference).

## 5. Library Consortium

A Library consortium is a group of libraries who partner to coordinate activities, share resources and combine expertise. (Wikipedia). The information has become the right of every individual. Innovation revolutions made the libraries to adopt new technologies for their service and also reduce the cost of providing information. In the present age of Information Explosion & Digital Revolution, no Library is self-sufficient with its collection or services. It is the responsibility of an Academic Librarian (Knowledge Managers) to provide right information, to the right people at the right time. This vision for the Academic library has significant moderation in the cost increase for knowledge, acquisition and access as new model of scholarly publishing are successfully launched. It envisions massive expansion and diversification in new learning communities. Library cooperation & Resource sharing are the solutions for meeting the current users’ demands. Enhanced user services and satisfaction is the principal rationale of the cooperative activity. Library consortium is one of the achieving cooperation which enables libraries to work together more effectively and efficiently. Enhanced user services and greater satisfaction of user demands are the principal rationale for co-operative activity among the libraries. Cooperation in terms of resource sharing and collection development is one of the solutions for meeting the user demands in the digital era and it is a money saving initiative that use technology to improve user’s experience. Eg: LIWA Consortium of United Arab Emirates.

## 6. Conclusion

Education and Educated community are the vital factors of a nation. Library service improve knowledge and skills for positive productivity as a tool for national development. Library-Education-Literacy and National Development always went hand in hand. An academic library is primarily concerned to pro-create an urge for creating idea and developing new ideas which will transform the learners into the inventors. It is the traditional/ conventional physical library that provides a basis for the digital library. Progressive growth of the Academic Libraries in its function and infrastructure, resource sharing, cooperation in its form of open data platform is necessary in the current era of Information & Technology Abundance for educational development for the effectiveness of the educational support for the new generation and by providing an opportunity to use the modern developments and explore their ability for the national development. Information Communication Technology has an effective contribution to teaching and learning with the options of universal access to education, equity in education, the delivery of quality learning and teaching, efficient educational management, governance and administration (Web). Another further development from the digital library is the advent of Virtual Library.

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