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An exploration study on the image perception of library professionals in the society

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Abstract
The image of a profession is created in form of the judgment or perception of others by analyzing the nature of work, type of work, customer satisfaction, quality and quantity of the performance etc. This generalized image of the profession applies to all the professional of the same profession. People always have different mindset for various profession and professionals. The status and cadre of any person always recognized by his/ her work and profession in our society. This article deals with image perception of the library professionals in all over the world. The role of library professionals observed in print media, commercial advertisements and cinemas also helps to create a perception, opinion and image in the society.

Keywords: Perception, professional image, reel librarians, movies, image, society, print and electronic media

Introduction
In the dynamic digital landscape, academic libraries are undergoing a significant transformation, shifting their focus towards supporting an information-driven economy rather than merely providing ready-made solutions. The ever- expanding demand for information and media-savvy individuals, equipped with the essential skills to navigate the vast sea of both genuine information and disinformation available online, presents a new challenge for library professionals. Today's technologically adept generation, often referred to as the "Google generation" or the "Net Generation," has grown up in a digital era, which has fundamentally altered their approach to information processing and learning. As they challenge traditional educational paradigms, academic libraries must adapt to this changing environment and play a crucial role in fostering information literacy among users. The availability of digital collections plays a pivotal role in facilitating knowledge creation, but merely offering access to resources is not enough. Librarians now serve as guides and facilitators, encouraging users to find answers on their own rather than providing ready solutions. Emphasizing the educational use of digital collections, librarians play a vital role in this shift, ensuring that library services are accessible and user-friendly for online users. Amid the rising competition from alternative information providers and services, academic libraries must align themselves more closely with the unique needs of their institutions. This requires a more diverse approach, differentiating libraries as universities strive to set themselves apart. Library and Informational Science (LIS) professionals cannot rely solely on their own university experiences to shape the design and delivery of services in modern academic libraries. A comprehensive understanding of the digital environment and evolving user expectations is essential for effectively navigating this transformative journey.

From the ancient time the social cadre and status of any person determined by his/ her work in our society. It is assumed that a teacher will be that person who wears loose kurta, paijama and holding spectacles on his eyes. Means life style of a teacher will be very simple. There is the same perception about the other professions like as lawyer, doctor, police personnel, leader, nurse etc. There are various perception about all the professionals like a lawyer surely wears a black coat and holds various files on his hands, doctor wears a white coat have a stethoscope in his/her neck, leaders always wears kurtapaijama, a policeman will surely be a rude person and so on.

The perception is a term related to the ability to see, hear, or become aware of something through the senses. The perception is a process in which a person frames an image of any concept through senses. In this process a man does not come directly contact to the object but he/she frames an image through the experiences of other person and sometimes he/she frames image of any professional by self-experiencing and analyzing the work, work culture and nature of a job.

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Perception is a belief or opinion often held by many people and based on how things seem.

The work we do and how we do it contributes to the build our image in our society. In our society people create and build an image of professionals as they interpret their work, work place, work culture, communication skills and nature of job. These perceptions create his/her societal image, status, cadre etc.

The same is here in case of the Library professionals. The people think that a person is low educated, baldness, holding 10-15 keys in his hand, wearing loose shirt and trouser, having thick glass spectacle on his eyes will be the librarian. This is a common perception about librarians from a long time in our society and it is a stereotype image of library professionals. Mostly person think librarian is a clerk and his main work is only to issue and return of the books. The image of librarian is like a store keeper and custodian in our society. It is very difficult to change their opinions, once formed because public have formed a permanent image and perception of librarians in their minds.

According to Joshi (2008) [12] image is a mental picture of a person, of what they are look like. Perceptions are formed by experience with the person or persons, in this process it is not necessary that person does not come direct contact to him/ her but make a perception about professionals through secondary sources like electronic or print media, friends, neighbors, films etc. This type of image perception is not a static feature and it changes over time and with each new experience."

According to Rothwell (1990) [16] the staff of library are not always held in such high esteem and the general public does not have positive image of the librarians. The librarians have the stereotype image in the library.

Prins and Gier (1995) [15] concluded on the basis of International survey that the library profession has been facing image problems for a quite long time. Further they stated that there is no easy and fast solution to change the image of the library professionals. Librarians should find out new ways to sort out this very serious issue.

The status of librarian has been a controversial topic in the academic circle of our country. The most probable reason seems to be the image of old librarian still lingers on in the present society. Library profession is insufficiently recognized in our society. In olden times, a person who is low educated could be considered fit to the work as a librarian. His/her main job was to take care of the keys of the almirah and act as a custodian of the books. The library was open once in a blue moon to oblige or obey some VIP. The ordinary man in those days did not have the privilege to use the library, as he does today. The librarians of those days had to do nothing else but to take custody of books. Such conservative conditions prevailed for a pretty longtime, say centuries, and the image of librarian continued to persist because there were no training course nor did they do any special work like the modern time library professionals.

The Changing Roles of Libraries and Library Professionals

Once perceived as mere storehouses of books and librarians as caretakers of these collections, libraries and library professionals have undergone a profound transformation with the advent of technology. The rapid advancements in technology have revolutionized the field of library and information services, reshaping the delivery of information from traditional sources to electronic resources, online databases, and digital storage and retrieval systems. Computers now play a crucial role in processing, storing, and disseminating information within libraries. The quantitative assessment of resources no longer defines the value of libraries; instead, when managed adeptly, these changes can effectively provide the right information to the right user at the right time. Information and communication technology (ICT) has not only impacted the intricate housekeeping operations but has also facilitated communication and networking for information collection and distribution, turning libraries into vast oceans of internet-based services.

The influence of ICT extends its reach to every profession, including librarianship, leading to an explosion of information and heightened user expectations. Library and information professionals are compelled to adapt to these evolving societal needs and working styles. The ever-changing landscape of technology necessitates continuous upgrades in technological awareness for library professionals to deliver the best possible services to their users.

In the past two decades, the dissemination of information has undergone a complete transformation, with a digital publication chain taking precedence, even for printed books. The culture of utilizing publications, particularly scholarly papers and journals, has shifted towards digital formats, valued for their rapidity and ease of access. This trend has contributed significantly to the digitization of printed culture, resulting in more printed books being digitized as technology progresses. Libraries now face the challenge of preserving printed heritage for future generations and deciding how to approach this process.

In the present era, the rapid development of technology, the digitalization of information, the abundance of e-resources, and the growing demands of users have reshaped the library landscape. Libraries have transcended their physical confines and transformed into digital or virtual libraries, accessible beyond traditional brick-and-mortar structures. Information and communication technology has triggered a drastic shift in the traditional methods of information storage, retrieval, and dissemination, prompting library professionals to transition from traditional librarians to information or technology managers. To stay relevant and effective in this ever-changing environment, today's librarians must continuously update their knowledge of the latest technology.

LIS Professionals and Capacity Building

Libraries have always been a primary source of knowledge and social development, catering to the diverse information needs of users worldwide, including students, researchers, and educators. Over time, libraries have witnessed significant transformations, from housing chained documents and clay tablets to handling digital resources in the cloud-based environment. While some traditional services have given way to the digital age, libraries continue to play vital cultural, educational, and informational roles in society.

In today's electronic society, libraries, and information centers have embraced automation, with a majority of resources available in electronic formats. This necessitates library professionals to adopt modern tools, techniques, and

technology across all aspects of library functions, from collection development and organization to dissemination and preservation. To cater to the information needs of modern users, particularly the digitally savvy net generation, LIS professionals are compelled to enhance their skills and knowledge in handling contemporary tools and technologies.

Capacity building programs for LIS professionals serve the purpose of planned development, aiming to improve their knowledge, output rate, management abilities, and overall capabilities through training, incentives, technology, and acquisition. These programs focus on enhancing effectiveness, often at the administrative level, and can be equated with terms like organizational development, institution building, and funding. By enhancing organizational capacities, such as infrastructure, operations, financial health, and programs, capacity building initiatives ensure better efficiency and improved structures and processes.

The significance of capacity building goes beyond individual skills and extends to better environmental management in society. Through awareness-raising, education, training, and peer learning, these programs create a supportive environment with societal backing for effective environmental stewardship. Moreover, capacity building efforts strengthen relationships between organizations and the outside environment, improve information systems, and enhance the ability of individuals to manage and protect the environment in various sectors. Overall, capacity building empowers LIS professionals and organizations to navigate the complexities of the digital era and meet the ever-evolving demands of modern users and society at large.

The Changing Role of LIS Professionals in the Digital Environment

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Sources of Image Perception

In our society most of the people believed that librarians are reserved in nature, meek, submissive, subdued, less approachable, nervous and effeminate. There is a common misconception about the library professionals that every person working in the library is a Librarian. The public almost have no idea about the work of a librarian and other library staff. Libraries in olden days were manual and librarians used to manually complete all the housekeeping activities. Libraries were also out of reach to common people and the rich person used to visit public libraries for their leisure period. The scopes of academic libraries were limited and some reputed institutes had the library facilities.

Firstly, Layman never directly came across in the contact of librarians. Secondly, the print and electronic media and cinema have a great impact on our society, so the as the librarians are featured in the literature, commercial advertisements and films directly reflected a perception about the library professionals.

Image Perception in Movies

Let's have a look the image of librarians featured in Hollywood: In most of the Hollywood movies the librarians' role is featured as female and she is shown as fatty, having thick glass spectacles and a low paid employee. The first film on librarian "A Wife on Trial" released in 1917 was a silent movie. In this film the librarian was a female, she was featured as simple lady. The sequel of the film "The Wishing Ring Man" was released in 1919. First time the role of librarian featured on a male in the film "A Very Good Man" in 1919. Person shown in the film is smart guy of 30 years old. Between 1920 to 1927 two films were released in which librarian's character projected, both characters were middle age and shown always having their hands over the mouth saying shhh…shhh.

"Curse of Demon" 1957, "Hot Spell" 1958, "FBI Story" 1959, "The Magic Man" 1962, "You are a Big Boy Now" 1966, "Only Two Can Play" 1962, "Good Bye Columbus" 1969, My Side of Mountains" 1969 etc are some movies in

which librarians' character were featured. Now the image of librarians was changed comparatively to movies released during 1919 to 1955. Now 78% roles of librarians were fractured on Female and 22% role given to male actors also. Some movies librarians were entertaining and quite young and sometimes flattering.

In 2006, a film released "My Super Ex Girl Friend", in this movie the character is confused and uptight. "The Librarian" is a series of fantasy adventure movie. The Librarian protects a secrete collection of artifacts. Now in the latest movies the role and character of librarians are changing rapidly. Now we take some examples from the Bollywood: The Movie "Jo Jeeta Wahi Sikandar" released in 1992, the library is shown as a meeting point of couples and a place for recreation. Movie "Lage Raho Munna Bhai" 2006, a scene is featured on library, in this scene the library shown with full of dust and there is no user in the library.

The famous character of Librarian is featured in the movie "Main, Meri Patni aur Woh" released in 2005. The Character Mithlesh is a University Librarian, he is unsecured about his height and personalities and confused. In the movie he is called "Chhotey Babu". Try to remember the character of Dubey Ji in the Movie "3 Idiots" released in 2009. In this movie the Principal does not know that who is the librarian of the college? The character of Dubey Ji is a stereotype and one can clearly see the old image of librarians wearing Kurta-Paijama, wearing glasses, depressed and confused man. These two characters - Dubey ji and Chhote Babu are the character of perception.

Image in Print Media and Advertisement

Yontz (2003) [19] analyzed the American children's literature published in books from 1909-2000. In 35 published books mostly librarians were female character but after 1970 the some male characters were also introduced. The librarians were depicted caring, helpful, soft spoken, hardworking and always supportive in nature." Images of librarian's in comic books found both positive and negative aspects.

Some comic characters introduced viz. Rupert Giles, Lucien the librarian, Supermen's Kryptonion birth mother Lara, Captain Comet, Oracle etc presented a positive images in American comic books. In 1968 Tiparillo Cigars "Should A Gentleman Offer To A Librarian?" Sexy Vintage Original Magazine Print Advertisement was published showing the Gentleman image of the profession. Kellogg's Pop-Tarts Commercial (1992), a person is taking the book from the shelf and he is blowing the dust off and then sitting down to read. Librarian is sitting on the chair. This presented a completely negative image of the profession. In the advertisement of Packred Bell Commercial in 1996, the image of librarian presented in a negative and promote "shushing" image of librarians. Another advertisement of DHL, the stereotype female librarian is presented with saying shh…shh. Kit Kat Commercial (2004), Mercedes Benz and Hydrogen Vehicle advertisement, repeats the same stereotype image of librarians. Further in the Herbal Essence Shampoo and Confused blonde advertisements, we can see yet another glass wearing, conservatively dressed librarian who shushes her patrons. Close up Commercial and Coca –cola Commercial advertisement reflects the library is a meeting point for couples.

Author, Writer, Script writers, presenters etc., should not to be blamed because they are also from the society, therefore, they write and present the characters as per their perception and views. What did they see, think, experience and learn about any character, they used to write down with their image perception. Same as in the case of librarians, the image of old librarians, old libraries and characters in cinemas and printing media are still lie heavy on the image of librarians.

Are These Perceptions True? …..Certainly Not

Now the libraries are fully automated. The policy of collection development, information processing, information dissemination, management of libraries, services etc. are completely changed and all the activities are doing with the help of library software and ICT. Today the librarians are highly skilled and well qualified. Now-a-days the concepts of libraries are changed and the mottos of libraries are optimum use of the recourses. Today librarians are not the custodian of books, now he or she is the Knowledge Manager to spread the information for the user satisfaction.

Librarian is supposed to collect, organize, classify, catalogue, index, abstract the information and knowledge. He or she further, require organizing study groups, debates, quizzes, essays, taking formal classes, collect and disseminate information from other sources or internet etc to the students and teachers and provide reference service. He or she also provides Career guidance and counseling, Current Awareness Services (CAS) and e-resources to the students. Are all these more clerical jobs? Certainly not! They are very advance intellectual and academic jobs. As a matter of facts they require more technical skills and academic maturity than what imparting of a class-room lecture requires.

Now the old and stereotype images of librarian's are completely wrong. Now library professionals are highly educated and they are well professionally trained and qualified having Doctorate degree, UGC NET, Masters in Library and Information Science, Diploma or degree in Computer Science, Automation etc. They also have sound knowledge of Information Communication Technology. Now Librarians are also wearing trendy clothes, shoes, black sunglasses, having cars etc. He / she is living in modern sense and speaking fluent English. The librarian of today is a highly qualified person entrusted with still higher responsibilities. He/she guides not only students but also provide great help of teachers, researchers and scientists. He/she works as a resource person in the institute.

Now librarian is key person for an institute. Majid & Haider (2008) [13] investigated the perceptions and stereotypes image associated with the library professionals in Singapore. They found the public image of library professionals has improved with the extensive use of ICT. The general public of Singapore also thinks that the person is bookish, quiet and conservative dressed is a librarian. Librarians work is boring easy and routine type and there is no higher education is required for the librarian's job. According to the study made by Julia A Wells (2013) [18] about the Female librarian in films. This study analyzed the stereotype image of women librarians during the past 60 years has changed or not? The study concludes that the images of librarians are changing and toady librarians are dynamic, qualified, positive high-tech. Sawant (2018) [17] investigated that Librarians come in contact with students, fellow professionals, higher authorities, administrators and their dressing has an impact on them. Today, the women

librarians have trendy and modern clothing sense and they are maintaining decency and diligence. Alena Ptak-Danchak (2012) [1] concludes that Librarians need to understand the research process and expand the subject knowledge for liaison subject librarians. Therefore, today we required highly skilled and technical library professionals who can satisfy the current demands and challenges of the profession. Morgan (1996) [14] explores the various skills required for the future libraries. Technological changes are very important and all Information technology, teaching, management and research related skills are required for future library professionals.

The above studies clearly indicate that all the negative perception and image of librarian's like stereotype, low educated, non-technical work, rigid etc are wrong. Today highly skilled, friendly, qualified and trend library professionals are required to maintain the modern library and information centers.

Why perception is not changing?
When the working condition, services, process, technologies, role of library and library professionals are changing in the present environment and we are on the web portal instead of manual register, using eresource, providing e-mail alert services, OPAC, online document delivery, e-services, open access, 24×7 services etc, so why the perception is not changing? We should know that what are the factors are still dominating the old image of librarians? Let's consider some facts; some years back all the doctors were called simply doctors.

As the intensity of work changed and specialized practices started in the medical fields like heart, bone, child, teeth, nervous system, skin etc. The terminology for the specialists changed like Cardiologist, Orthopedics, Pediatrics, Dentist, Neurologist, Dermatologist, Psychologist etc. They adopted new terminologies as per their specialization of work and to satisfy the need of the day. In the research Institutes all are scientists but they classify them according to their nature of job and responsibilities. They divided various specialist into various grades as Scientist-A, Scientist – B, Scientist – C, Scientist-D and so on. In Education system, the nomenclature of the post Education Officers is changed to Deputy Commissioner (Academics)/Assistant Commissioner (Academic), Director of Education etc.

All the teachers are classified on the basis on their qualification and nature of institute like Primary Teacher, TGT, PGT, Lecturer, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, Professor, HOD, Dean etc. In the Police department, in the present scenario the post of Daroga renamed as "Police Inspector" due to demand of time and changing the nature of work. The Nomenclature of the post of Driver in Railways changed to "Loco Pilot". The designation of the post of Collector is changed to "District Magistrate" to make the post more exhaustive. Nomenclature of clerk is obsolete now-a-days and Senior Secretariat Assistant – SSO and Junior Secretarial Assistant – JSA word is using for clerks. The name post Patwari changed to "Lekhpal", in banks Cashier is renamed as "Cash Manager". As we can observe that all the departments are changing the nomenclature of the post as per the work, demand, nature of changing environment, need of the time. But still we are the Librarians, librarians and librarians.

We are not meeting the demand of the time and we are still behind the time. Person working anywhere is librarian whether it is a public library, school library, college library, university library, special library, research institution, e-library and so on. All are the librarians and librarians, this is the root cause of the image perception about the librarians because a person, layman and student could not differentiate between a Librarian of Public Library and University Librarian. All the regulatory bodies like UGC, AICTE, NCTE, MCI, CBSE and all the state government bodies are not providing the promotional avenues to the librarian's to the higher academic posts. Some of the regulatory bodies have the disparity with librarian and staff, so they are not getting the benefits at par the teaching communities. Librarians are also equally qualified like the teachers but institute are not taking benefits of his/her experience and potential. Their experience and energy must be utilized. They are not getting suitable place in academic committees, examination, decision and policy related issues.

Conclusion
Libraries are now called "Learning Resource Center" so there is no doubt that the designation of librarians must be change. National Knowledge Commission clearly recommended to change the designation of the post of Librarian and the post should be re-designated as per the cadre and academic status of the institute. This is the high time to re-designate each and every cadre of librarian post to give them proper regard, social status, cadre and recognition in the society. Debates should beopen at the various platforms to discuss the issues of library profession like status, cadre, pay scale, role, promotion, designation etc. Educationist, Policy Maker and Authorities should take this issue very seriously and act in a positive direction because library professionals' image has been a matter of concern since the beginning of the library profession. This is the bitter truth that designation always matters and provides the social status in our society to everybody.

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