The Information Professional at Crossroads

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Abstract.
Information Technology has dramatically impacted the librarian and their relationship to the communities they serve. This paper discusses some of the changes that have already taken place and suggests changes that one may observe in the future.
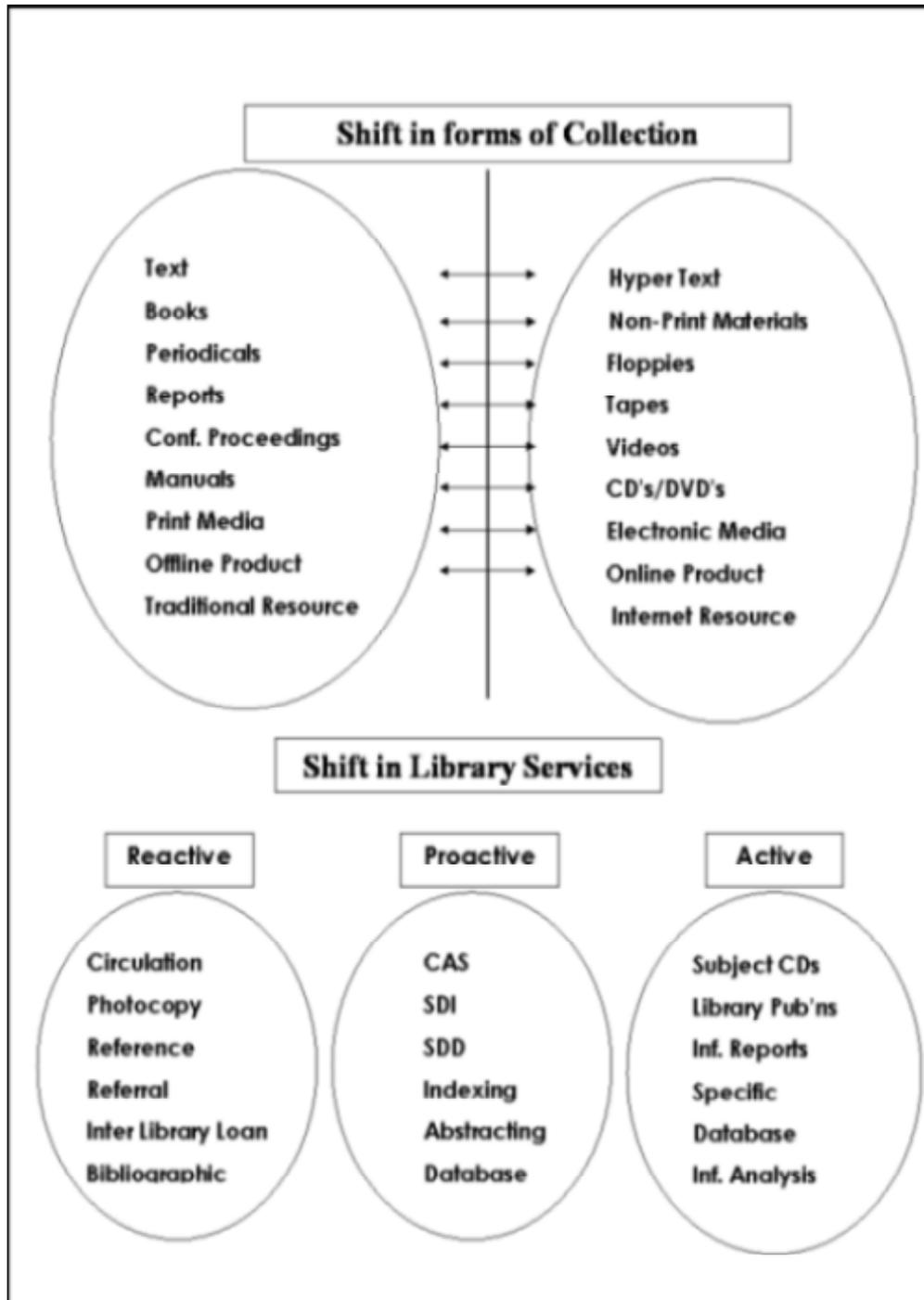
1.   Introduction

As we are at the threshold of year 2002, we librarians must reassess and reconsider the changing library environment. Librarians, individually and collectively, cannot ignore the changing shape of information services that are emerging. Everyone knows that the primary objective of libraries is to organize and provide access of information. This objective will never change, but the format and methods that we have used will change dramatically; thus, providing new opportunities and challenges.

2.   Goals

This paper attempts to review the role of library professionals in their present environment and suggests key skills that will need to be considered if professional progress is to occur. The focus of the paper is on rethinking the role of a library professional, both in relationship to his personal identity and the community he serves.

3.   Solutions

The paper describes the changes taking place in the library as they relate to the collection, library services, information management, and the overall shift in attitude and approach to the library profession. It also enumerates the role of the librarians in the 'IT' era, such as that of manager, resource procurer, creator or disseminator, preserver of culture, knowledge organizer, researcher or retriever, educator, lifelong learner, expert or advisor and advocate. etc. The paper also addresses the competencies required to perform these roles.

Shift in forms of Collection

Text   ⟷   Hyper Text
Books   ⟷   Non-Print Materials
Periodicals   ⟷   Floppies
Reports   ⟷   Tapes
Conf. Proceedings   ⟷   Videos
Manuals   ⟷   CD's/DVD's
Print Media   ⟷   Electronic Media
Offline Product   ⟷   Online Product
Traditional Resource   ⟷   Internet Resource

Shift in Library Services

Reactive	Proactive	Active
Circulation	CAS	Subject CDs
Photocopy	SDI	Library Pub'ns
Reference	SDD	Inf. Reports
Referral	Indexing	Specific
Inter Library Loan	Abstracting	Database
Bibliographic	Database	Inf. Analysis

Shift in Information Seeking Features Of Users

Quantity	Quality
Delay was Tolerated	Timeliness Expected
Information Acquisition	Information Access
Process Oriented Retrieval	Result Oriented
Related Information	Specific Information
Less Aware	Highly Aware
Passive User	Active User
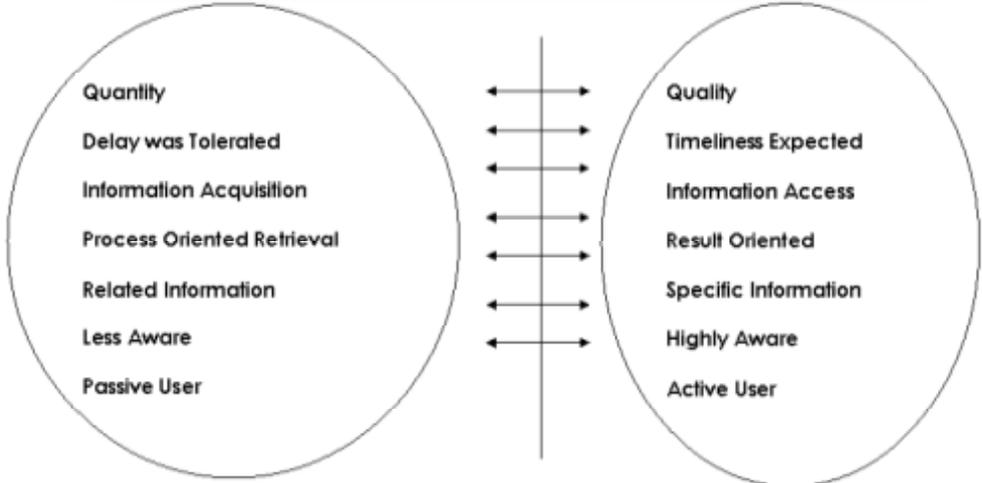
Shift in the professional's approach to work

Process Oriented	User Oriented
Reactive	Proactive
Information Retriever	Information Access
Subject Oriented	Jack of All
Information Gatherer	Information Analyst
Individual Work	Team Work
Store House	Service center
Preservation	Use

Forces exerting on the profession

Information explosion

Socio Economic Political & Cultural Environment

Global Village

Network Environment

Inf. Technology

Competition

Library

Cooperation

Internet

User Awareness

Legal Developments

Information Highway

Challenges/Change/Growth

Role of Librarian

Manager
Resource Procurer
Creator/Disseminator
Preserver of Culture
Educator
Life Long Lerner
Expert/Advisor/Advocate
Friend/Guide
Philosopher
Innovator
Leader
Communicator
Negotiator
Entrepreneur
Information Specialist
Network Specialist

Competencies

Contextual
Conceptual
Content/Curricular
Transactional
Evaluation
Leadership Quality
Motivating Ability
Management Technique
Good Listener
Time Consciousness
Patience
Cool/Happy mood
Smiling Face
Effective Communication
Commitment to Service
Honest