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## Dari Editor

Komunikasi di antara manusia di serata dunia telah berkembang dengan pesat dari semasa ke semasa dengan penghasilan teknologi baru hasil daripada kajian berabad lamanya. Kini, teknologi tersebut telah dilabelkan sebagai teknologi tradisional atau antik oleh sesetengah pihak setelah ianya mengalami perubahan demi perubahan yang sangat ketara.

Dulu, perhubungan antara manusia disebarikan melalui manusia itu sendiri atau melalui lukisan di bang dari semasa ke semasa dan telah didominasi oleh pelopor-pelopor dari Negara Barat yang telah berkurun lamanya memikirkan tentang masalah-masalah komunikasi ini, bermula di kawasan Tigris dan Eufrates lebih dari 3,000 tahun Sebelum Masihi dengan penghasilan bongkah-bongkah tanah liat ke papyrus sehingga ke kaedah teknik pencetakan tekanan oleh Johann Guttenberg.

Sehingga kurun ke 20 di mana sebuah agensi milik Jabatan Pertahanan Kerajaan Amerika Syarikat telah mencipta peralatan teknologi komunikasi era moden yang telah menghubungkan dunia yang dikenali sebagai Internet. Hasil kajian ini adalah penting terutama sekali untuk pertukaran data dan maklumat, diadaptasi daripada penciptaan litar telefon.

Begitu juga di Malaysia, setelah berlakunya ledakan maklumat dan penyebaran maklumat tanpa sekatan, pihak berkuasa telah mengambil tindakan dengan mengawal, merancang dan mengadakan pelbagai aktiviti khusus kepada rakyat Malaysia bagi mengambil kesempatan penyebaran maklumat yang memberi kepentingan penduduk di negara ini.

Walaubagaimanapun, pihak berkuasa melalui agensi-agensinya telah mengambil inisiatif menapis maklumat-maklumat tersebut yang berbentuk negatif, berbaur perkauman dan yang boleh mengikis kebudayaan rakyat di negara ini. Generasi muda disaran mengambil peluang dan aktiviti yang ditawarkan seperti membuat laman sesawang untuk memasarkan apa jua produk keluaran mereka termasuk perkhidmatan yang ditawarkan.

Diharapkan dengan terbitnya majalah ini akan memberi maklumat yang berguna kepada sesiapa sahaja yang terlibat atau mahu tahu bagaimana mereka boleh berkembang dengan hanya menjadikan rumah sebagai pejabat mereka dan "*Generasi Glokal Menghadapi Dunia Tanpa Sempadan*" menggalakkan perkembangan tenaga manusia bersifat kelas dunia (global) dari segi pemikiran tetapi berasal dari rantau ini tanpa meninggalkan walau sedikit pun ciri-ciri sebagai rakyat Malaysia.

Akhir kata, Sidang Editor ingin mengucapkan terima kasih kepada semua pihak yang menjayakan penerbitan ini. Selamat Membaca.

### MAKLUMAN

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# REDEFINING THE ROLES OF THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIANS

by Dr. Wan Ab. Kadir Wan Dollah & Mohd Zaihan Hussin

**Abstract:** *Tugas pustakawan khususnya di institusi pengajian tinggi semakin mencabar dengan revolusi digital serta kemunculan teknologi yang semakin canggih. Para pustakawan perlu berubah bagi menyesuaikan diri dengan peranan dan tanggungjawab baru sebagaimana disarankan oleh penulis. Antaranya adalah fungsi dalam pengajaran, khidmat perundingan dan penyelidikan.*

**Keywords:** *Librarians, Academic Libraries, University Librarians, and Librarians' Role.*

## INTRODUCTION

Librarian is a professionally trained staff, responsible for the administration of a library and its contents, including selection, processing and organization of materials and delivery of information, instruction, reference and loan services to meet the needs of its users.

## THE ROLE OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIAN

Librarians can be referred to as '*mediators between the user and the information*', and '*navigators of information superhighway*' (Huling, 2002: 867). According to Thomsen (1999):

*'As we move into the 21st century, librarianship is being transformed in response to greater changes in society as well as to our own evolving sense of direction for the profession. Reference librarians, always on the front lines of the profession, connecting library patrons and library services, are especially sensitive to these changes and to the confusion and stress that change can bring.'* (p. 1)

The role of the librarian has changed greatly over the last two decades with the emergence of information technology and the huge impact in the librarianship and information provision. The role grew from that of a collector and preserver of information resources to a professional involved in very complex issues of organization, dissemination and access to information.

Traditionally, the librarian's function was to assist in the collection development and acquisition, cataloguing and classification, circulation, provision of reference services, and preservation, conservation and archiving.

As the library evolves into a digital library, reference librarians have been considering how to adjust reference services to the new environment and new information needs. According to some statistics, users' enquiries at the reference desk are declining (Palmer, 1999 and Lessick, 2000). To a great extent, with the digital library and plenty of self-help information, users feel able to access resources and services themselves.

Despite this, however most researchers and practitioners agree that reference service and user education are still essential in the digital library (Chowdhury, 2002; Lipow, 1999). Training sessions are needed to improve the users' information literacy skills. Today the reference librarian's responsibilities have increased by societal expectations for information access through enhanced electronic capabilities. Reference librarians like other librarians working in the other divisions are the key to the continued success of libraries.

Raghavan (2000) outlined new roles and challenges for the librarian in the digital era such as:

- educators, trainers and facilitators to emphasis competency in information handling and lifelong learning, distance learning and virtual learning,
- leadership or managerial role,
- manager and advisor of web and electronic sources such as Internet, CD-ROM indexes, and full-text databases
- collaborator by forming partnerships with other organizations to satisfy the needs of the users
- as a human resource manager, link with human resources to the mission and goals of the organization
- as a marketing manager, helping the organization to develop an appropriate competitive edge to stay ahead in the market as well as reduce professional malpractice by developing core competencies such as interplay of knowledge,

understanding, skills, and attitudes required to do a job effectively (p. 2-3).

In discussing the future role of librarian in the virtual library environment, Burke (2003) highlights the following points:

- to provide intellectual access to information in any format
- to evaluate available sources of information
- to organize and structure information
- to ensure the preservation of information
- to provide specialized staff to offer instruction and assistance in interpreting resources and access to resources (p. 4-10).

According to Tedd (2003), no job responsibilities had changed as much as the information profession had in the last five years with the development of the range of Internet-based technologies. Information specialists now have added responsibilities as workers in the 'knowledge economy', these include being:

- Information gurus and guardians of information quality and ensuring that users have access to information from the most trusted sources
- Business managers and knowing how to deliver appropriate information services (either from in-house or by outsourcing) to meet the needs of the users
- Teachers/trainers to ensure that the users (and colleagues) know how to access relevant sources of information

- Information advocates serving as the information 'champion' for the organization to influence management and ensuring that everyone in the organization remains competitive by having the information and tools they need to make decisions faster
- System designers to develop and design appropriate systems for the delivery of information to their users in an appropriate manner (Tedd, 2003: 119).

From the views highlighted, the digital revolution has brought changes and affected the librarian and other information professional. This scenario is also changing the roles of the reference librarian into teaching, consultancy and researching besides providing access to information.

The reference librarian must guide users in information gathering, information skills and tools, organizing information resources, search strategies and basic reference works. It has become necessary for the reference librarian to be involved in research by facilitating access to information, such as finding, delivering and summarizing information. It is believed that librarians will increasingly become members of research and development teams and play more role in the information creation process (Adida, Lisdar and Rafidah, 2003).

Librarians are also facing various challenges in the digital environment, such as building the resources, sustaining the resources and library staff training to fulfill the need of users in the information age. This has led to the substantial needs for a new breed of information professionals who must be well equipped with ICT knowledge and skills to work in the digital era. The changing of job specification

has brought the changing nomenclatures to suit to the librarian new roles such as digital librarian, digital information professional, cybrarian and information broker (Sreenivasulu, 2000).

Today, it is almost impossible to identify a library or librarian that is not affected by computers, digital information and electronic infrastructure. Librarians of today must know how and develop new skills to monitor trends and technologies in their respective industries and for the future. Reference librarians are presumed to have basic understanding of ICT knowledge and information retrieval skills in order to perform their job effectively. According to Abdoulaye and Majid (2000) the uses of Internet in academic libraries in Malaysia have proven that all the respondents (reference librarians) possessed a high level of computing skills. They should not feel threatened by the technological development but should embrace the opportunities to provide better service to their users.

## CONCLUSION

Academic librarians should have knowledge of principles, methods and practices of library administration and library science besides the ability to communicate effectively with all levels of staff and students. They also have to keep abreast of changing trends and technology, plan and develop new systems. They must have ability to review and evaluate service levels, needs and interests of the academic community. Academic librarians are responsible for the overall management and operations of the library to ensure that there are adequate resources, facilities and services to meet the needs of university curriculum, students and staff.

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