REENGINEERING OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES – ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

Libraries are considered as the temples of knowledge.   But looking at the current scenario, the fact is established that the libraries especially public libraries have become inactive.   Poor funding, lack of proper infrastructure and quality services have led these libraries in the state of dismay.   The situation demands the attention of the authorities that must think seriously for its reengineering and restructuring.   However, reengineering as a process has various issues and challenges.   The current paper is an attempt to highlight these issues and suggest the remedies for the same.

Keywords: Public Libraries, Reengineering, Challenges

Introduction

Libraries are considered as the temple of knowledge. It is the basic requirement of all the civilizations necessary for the valuation of the scholarship and learning of the few intellects. The valuable ideas and thoughts shared in the form of concrete writings are preserved in these storehouses and carried forward to the next generations. Working on already established information expressed in the form of books help the nations to grow on the path of economic progress. Therefore, public libraries are the very important part of any society or a nation.

Various types of libraries including academic, public, national and special libraries have their own specific importance and a different way of working. Their basic aim of transferring knowledge from writers to the readers in various forms including books, reports or digital books and cds spells out their significance for any nation. However, the changing needs of the digitalized learners have made it compulsory to have a relook on their working and plan for reengineering if needed.

Public Library: An overview

While defining the public library, the UNESCO Manifesto for Public Library (issued in 1949 and revised in 1972 and 1994) states, "The Public Library is a practical demonstration of democracy's faith in Universal education as a continuing and life long process in the appreciation of the achievement of humanity in knowledge and culture. It is the principle means whereby the record of man's thoughts and ideas and the expression of his creative imagination are made freely available to all. It is concerned with the refreshment of man's spirit by the provisions of books for relaxation and pleasure. The Manifesto further emphasis that

i) The Public Library should be established under 'the clear mandate of law';

ii) It should be 'maintained wholly from public funds';

iii) There should be no 'direct charge' for its any of the services;

iv) It should be open 'for free and equal use by all members of the community', irrespective of their age

Thus, we can say that the public libraries are established with the following objectives:

- To promote the speed of knowledge, education and culture in the society
- To strengthen the forces of socialism, secularism, democracy and social laws
- To provide equal opportunity of free access to the various users may be urban or rural areas

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But if we look at the actual working of these public libraries, we would realize that there is a dire need of making changes in these libraries. Due to lack of funds, infrastructure and ineffective services, the users are not at all satisfied with these libraries. Many libraries have become non-functional and inactive which is a great loss for any nation. The basic purpose of establishing these libraries is not at all served.

Reengineering of Public Libraries: Need of the day

In the nineties, Re-engineering started as a buzzword in all the fields. Re-engineering refers to a rapid and radical redesigning of process, services, policies and the organizational structure of an organisation. Daniel P. Petrozoo and John C. Stepper in their book "Successful Reengineering" define the term Reengineering as "the concurrent redesign of processes, organizations, and their supporting information systems to achieve radical improvement in time, cost, quality, and customers with regards for the company's products and services."

Though this definition is based on the company environment; it is also applicable more or less in Library and Information System and Services. In the broader sense, the term includes the modification of the existing system by the computer based system or new human based system. The basic aim of reengineering is to revive the working of the institution in order to serve the actual purpose of its establishment. Thus, public libraries reengineering has also become an important need so as to cater to the need of the public by improving its quality of services and enhancing the satisfaction graph of the users. ,

RE-ENGINEERING OF LIBRARY OPERATIONS

For efficient library housekeeping operations, a library should be automated with standard Library software. With the help of information technology, the library housekeeping operations will be redesigned in the following manner:

- ✓ Automated acquisition system
- ✓ Automated cataloguing system
- ✓ Automated circulation system
- ✓ Automated serials control system
- ✓ Automated reporting system
- ✓ Automated stock verification system
- ✓ Automated document searching through online catalogue.

Benefits of Reengineering

Reengineering of public libraries will provide the following benefits:

- ✓ Users expected library services thereby increasing library users and library use.
- ✓ Save the time of users
- ✓ Change in traditional practices which are replaced by using technology
- ✓ Better Library Management with coordination of staff
- ✓ Protection of records and timely report production

Reengineering of Public Libraries: Issues and Challenges

However, Reengineering of Public Libraries is not an easy task. It requires a total revamping and restructuring. Various challenges faced in Reengineering process are as follows:

- ✓ Impact of ICT on Libraries.
- ✓ Explosive growth of information and documents
- ✓ Increased cost of the documents and information materials
- ✓ Increase in users information needs
- ✓ New role of the librarian and greater responsibilities.

- ✓ Latest techniques and concepts in handling of information.
- ✓ New electronic information environment.
- ✓ Creation of databases and its security.
- ✓ Marketing of library and information services.
- ✓ Skilling and reskilling of library personnel and IT training

Conclusion:

Thus, Reengineering of public libraries is a solution to change the way public libraries are functioning making it more active and user satisfying. The above challenges of Reengineering can be easily dealt with a positive attitude and the cooperation of all the stakeholders including the users, the library staff and the higher authorities. If everyone takes the process in the right sense, then it is a comfortable and cheapest way of rejuvenating the public libraries leading to the development of education throughout the nation.

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