

SHORT ARTICLE

**Developing a Model of Indian Women Library Association to Support
Open Access Environment in Academic Libraries in India**

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Introduction

With the ongoing Pandemic impacting the countries across the world including India there has been significant challenges for the libraries and librarians in different academic institutions. This floating need for information generation, dissemination and management during this uncertain time has also targeted the allocation of funds and posed a cause of worry. Open Access administers the emerging need for unrestricted access to information to contribute some relief and respite in the shared circle. However, based on different studies alongside referring to the list of Library & Information Science Professionals collected through Documentation Centre for Women and Children (DCWC), National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development portal (2182_20200921124737868.pdf), Physical Research Laboratory (https://www.prl.res.in/~library/list_inst.html), Assam Library Association (<https://bit.ly/3iNAESq>) and other library websites, personal contacts with the women librarians, it has been discovered that women are predominantly visible in different capacities despite majority of women are seen at lower decision-making level. To empower and uplift the women librarians for the betterment of the librarian's community there is an urgent requirement for like-minded Information professionals to come together to form an Indian Women Library Association to support the open access environment in Academic Libraries (IWLA-OA). The association will offer a culture of enhanced learning for women librarians on open access platform rendering a non-profit plan as per Company Act, 2013 in India.

Need for the Study

Along with the initiatives of The Government of India – National Digital Library, Delhi Declaration, group projects like Open Access in India, and so on. the prime requisite is to draft a legitimate structure for the Indian Women Library Association which emphasizes Open Access and Open Access Initiatives in India specially for women at all levels in academic libraries.

With regard to open access for doctoral thesis, the researcher with past experience and following the related studies on Open Access and Open access initiatives, realized that there are abundant resources available around us but there's no such active association that caters to the challenge that is visible in the field. Nevertheless, as a researcher, no support has been extended to masculine or feminine communities, but a need has been felt to have a model of Indian women's librarian. The association which is focused to sharpen the information technology skills, literacy skills and professional skills while inspiring, motivating and mentoring the women librarians by offering different grants and opportunities for an enhanced professional career with eminence.

Literature Review

According to Engeszer, Sarli, & Becker (2014) there has been emerging progress in open access technology. Discussing the mandatory regulations for open access, the authors concluded that academic libraries are leading to bring out unrestricted access to the different knowledge sources within the interest of their users. Libraries are experiencing intensive changes as given in the study by Sultana & Begum (n.d.). The researchers with prominence stated that the ratio of females as compared to the males in the developing countries is not at par. With the changing need on the professional front, the women librarians require motivation to deliver better services. Based on the survey shared in the study there is a huge difference among gender and job satisfaction of the female library professionals. Based on the

recommendations the study categorically stated that it is essential to get proper training for women library professionals during this ever-changing digital age and handle the leadership position with confidence. (Manoff & Manoff, 2001) in his study advocates the role of libraries in the present virtual age. The author focused upon the symbolic need of libraries in and librarians maintaining a balance between the past, present and future to conserve the culture and heritage. Highlighting the transit approach of professional development, training, conference, and so on, the American Library Association under social Responsibility Round Table unit works to establish and prioritize the role of Women Librarian (*Feminist Task Force | Round Tables*, n.d.). Focusing on the history of women in libraries the “Feminist Task Force” unit works on to provide the resources, publication & other materials alongside promotes and initiates the action on the related subjects. To encourage the young readers, the unit brings out content under the project known as “Rise: A Feminist Book Project”. Reinforcing the need and importance of libraries during these changing times (Jaeger, 2011) has elicited the right perspective for the libraries and need to move on in the age of Internet. The study given by (Sultana & Begum, 2012) identifies the gender gap, level of job satisfaction among female librarians. Based on the evaluation of 31 respondents the study indicated that the quality of services depends on the staff of library and job satisfaction plays a vital role in it. The results of the study directed towards the female staff of the library who were found to be less satisfied as compared to male staff members. The study further recommends empowering the female staff members with continuous professional development training with the support of management and the co-workers as well (Kumar & Gupta, 2016) has attempted to portray a holistic approach of continuous education programs as an enhancement to build up capacity for LIS professionals in the present digital age. The research work given by (Ramesh Babu et al., 2007) evaluates the ICT competency required for librarians. Pointing towards needs, means, and methods the study leads to equip the librarians to pace up with the technological changes. The analysis draws attention of the community of librarians to break the traditional mold and embrace the new roles as “cybrarians”, “metadata managers”, “digital literacy managers”, “knowledge mangers”, and so on. Drawing attention to the fact that the role of libraries has drastically changed from print to digital. The authors (Nagpal & Radhakrishnan, 2019) intends to portray that the demand of library patrons are changing and perhaps it is time for library and its services to build up a culture of learning which electronically driven. In the exploration given by Naik & Pathak (2020) indicates that India is shaping up the mechanism for accessing the “scholarly knowledge” through open access in unrestricted manner by initiatives like National Digital Library and so on. Articulating the towards Open access for Academic Libraries the research work given by (Joshi et al., 2012) highlights the floating need for digital access and how libraries play a proactive role in information generation, dissemination and management. Discussing the latest developments, the authors have analyzed that with the advancement in the field of Information technology, the open access content attracts better accessibility for the researchers. In parallel there has been exponential growth in electronic content which is mostly restricted to many institutions due to cost. Correspondingly, many academic institutions do not appoint a trained, qualified librarian for purpose of dissemination, management and control of the scholarly output. While discussing India’s contribution to open access and the momentum which is trending globally the study categorically highlights the open access trends, knowledge repositories and government initiatives. The study overviews the need and the purpose of qualified library professionals in this changing open access world without any restrictions.

The Objectives of the Study

To foster the skills and literacy related to Open Access and Open Access Initiatives the IWLA-OA will contribute with the following objectives:

- To build up a sustainable and resilient system for moving onto the automated and digitized environment in Open Access environment
- To share best practices to adopt and develop the resources under unrestricted environment.
- To offer specialized courses and impart trainings for professional development and skill enhancement in all possible formats on Open Access and Open Access Initiatives
- To prepare the women librarian for the challenges and opportunities by presenting awards and grants
- To develop and strategize policies for implementing research in Open Access Environment

Scope of the Study

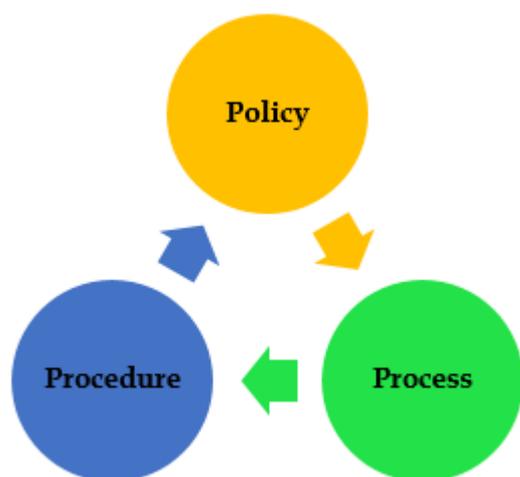
The study focuses on the women librarians in India to offer a platform for networking, skill enhancement, professional development, and leadership opportunities. The study will provide a legitimate structure for Women Association with standard operating procedures in the field of Open Access and Open Access Initiatives for Academic Libraries at schools, college and university levels. The members of the Association will be offered support and training for integrating Open-Source Automation Software like Koha, CORAL and Managing Digital Repository using DSpace along with specialized courses will be offered in the or a digital library, Outreach Programmes and E-mentoring.

Structure of Committee

The different committees will be formulated to perform different work and its task following the three P's – Policy, Process & Procedure

Figure 1

Task of the Committee



Council of Members as proposed would work as general body would consist of President, Vice- President, Secretary, Joint Secretary, Treasurer, Conveners. Following the three P's different groups or divisions will be put in practice different types of Academic Libraries – School, College & University.

Board of Management shall be the decision-making body that would hold overall responsibility for smooth execution of the Association. The Board would be formed consisting of members elected by the council and would be held accountable to the Council.

Methodology

To connect with the Women Librarians across the country different social media platforms will be used. IWAL-OA would work with a non-profit statement offering the skill enhancement, strategy, networking, and leadership opportunities for women librarians in India. With the working plan, financial plan, structure, strategy, services, and members on board would work for the benefit of the women librarian community to progress further. The measurable entities to analyze and interpret the venture would be –

- Growth in the number of members registering for IWAL-OA.
- Number of Conferences, Seminar, Webinar and Workshops offered.
- Increase in the number of enrolments in different courses in emerging competencies.
- Increase in successful design, creation and execution of various courses.
- Number of awards/ grants offered.
- Number of Faculty/Trainers/Leaders on board.
- Quantum of Research output of the members in terms of research publications
- Engagement analytics can be measured through social media platforms in terms of followers.
- Increase in the number of collaborations with different institutions/ Groups/Organizations.
- Increase in number of placements for Women Librarians.

Limitations of the Study

The proposed model is to focus on uplifting and empowering Women Librarians across India within the limited allocation funds. The study is limited to impart knowledge, information, training and implementation on Open Access and Open Access initiatives. The access model will be delivered through online and offline mode with applications only in IT skills, literacy skills and professional skills of Women Librarians in India.

Conclusion

In the present study, the role of Library Associations combining with strategic tools and policy to deal with paradigm shift has been discussed. The study proposes a model to train and equip the women librarians to support open access environment in academic libraries in India. Perhaps, there are many Library Associations active however there is no such Women Library Association in the country. Therefore, this model is proposed to enhance the culture of knowledge and the requirement of qualified professionals in this Open Access world of learning. Initially, the proposed model is limited to Indian Women Library Professionals however the progressing years may proceed with a global outlook. The Association shall

continue to function with the help of membership, donation and sponsorship while maintaining quality & standards. A global expansion of the knowledge community of Open Access will be a part of the agenda in the progressing years.

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