
UNIT 11 LIBRARIANSHIP AS A PROFESSION

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11.0 OBJECTIVES

Library and Information Science (LIS) is a noble profession. The BLIS Programme provides students a base for entering into the profession. It is important for anyone entering the profession to know its characteristics. An awareness of the professional duties, functions and obligations would help the students to perform their roles as young professionals effectively. This Unit explains the meaning and characteristics of a profession. It discusses the difference between related concepts, 'occupation', 'vocation' and 'profession'. The Unit also dwells in brief on the evolution and developments in the LIS profession.

After reading this Unit, you will be able to:

- explain the concept of a profession;
- distinguish between a vocation and a profession;
- describe the characteristics of a profession;
- explain how library and information science is a profession; and
- discuss briefly the developments in LIS profession in India.

11.1 INTRODUCTION

A profession is defined as an activity/ set of activities constituting a calling. A calling is defined as an activity for which the performer has a legal and moral right to be paid reasonably whether he works in an organisation or is self-employed. All professions are callings but all callings are not professions. A profession is a specialised occupation or vocation characterised by intensive education and training in a specific field of knowledge with an intension to apply and serve the humanity. Classically there were only three professions: Divinity, Medicine, and Law. Historically, the word "profession" meant an acknowledgement or declaration and it referred to the vow or pledge taken by a cleric or monk. Later it came to be associated with the hippocratic oath taken by a physician and a similar one by a barrister. And the term thereafter came to be associated with all the activities of a religious monk or that of a physician, or a lawyer. (Butler, 1951). These classical professions followed by the coming up of Dentistry, Civil Engineering, Logistics, Architecture and Accounting. With the rise of technology and occupational specialisation in the 19th century, other bodies began to claim professional status e.g. Pharmacy, Logistics, Veterinary Medicine, Nursing, Teaching, Librarianship, Optometry and Social Work. All of these could claim the status of a profession by 1900. Thus, new disciplines including librarianship rose in status and power as a profession.

Every profession strives to persuade the community to sanction its authority to the profession within certain spheres by conferring upon it a series of powers and privileges. The society accords to it recognition in the form of social acceptance. The recognition is accorded to the profession due to the expertise possessed by it that is beneficial to the society.

11.2 DEFINITION

The term 'profession' has been defined differently by the various schools of thought. Some of the accepted definitions are discussed below.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, “professions involve the application of specialized knowledge of a subject, field, or science to fee-paying clientele.” In other words, the professional provides service to the society on the basis of her/his specialised knowledge and skills, and in turn gets paid for it.

Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary defines a profession as “a calling requiring specialized knowledge and often long and intensive academic preparation”. The definition mentions that appropriate education needs to be imparted for preparing professionals. It further stresses that the education should be in-depth and comprehensive. A thorough preparation of the professional would enable her/him to serve the society.

Dictionary of the Social Sciences states that “The term profession denotes occupations which demand a highly specialized knowledge and skill acquired at least in part by courses of a more or less theoretical nature and not by practice alone, tested by some form of examination either at a university or some other authorized institution, and conveying to the persons who possess them considerable authority in relation to ‘clients’. The definition again differentiates a profession from an occupation by mentioning that a professional possesses theoretical knowledge acquired during a specialised programme conducted at a higher level. Sound theoretical knowledge forms the basis of the practice. It helps the individual to practice with confidence, update and evolve with changing time.

Funk & Wagnall’s Standard Dictionary of the English Language defines profession as:

- 1) An occupation that properly involves a liberal education or its equivalent, and mental rather than manual labour; especially, one of the three learned professions, law, medicine, or theology; and
- 2) Any calling or occupation other than commercial, manual, etc., involving special attainments, or disciplines, such as editing, music, teaching, etc. and also the collective body of those following such vocation.

The New College Encyclopedia defines a profession as “a vocation based on long, specialized educational training that enables a particular service to be rendered, representing a high degree of thought, and is distinguished from vocations calling for technical skill alone”.

It can be concluded that a profession warrants:

- A specialised body of theoretical knowledge that is scientific and scholarly;
- Intensive preparation (training) for acquiring needed skills and methods to put the knowledge to work;
- A set of principles, a social code or ethics;
- An organisation (association) that will bind all the members together for consented opinion, collective thinking and achieve high standards in performance; and
- Working with prime purpose of rendering public service.

Professionalism involves a professional character, spirit or methods and standard practices as distinguished from an amateur. An expertise is expected of

professionals with full involvement in, and commitment to those who receive services from them.

Oxford Dictionary defines professionalism as the competence or skill expected of a professional. Ward (2004) observes that professionalism is about individual modes of behaviour that command respect and build trust. It is about excellence in service as measured by recognised standards. It is about delivering services or working to standards that meet the needs and expectation of clients.

Therefore professionalism requires a focused approach towards a particular goal. A professional needs to be confident, competent, and motivated. S/he is expected to be accountable, responsible and committed to the profession.

11.3 PROFESSION VS. OCCUPATION VS. VOCATION

The terms vocation, occupation, job, business are used synonymously with the term profession. But a profession has distinct attributes and differs from a vocation and an occupation. Occupation refers to denote one's source of livelihood, being most generic lowermost in the pyramid starting from occupation, moving on to vocation and then to profession. Vocation is an occupation that demands practical skills on the part of the individual. A profession, on the other hand requires theoretical and practical skills. To clarify by an example, we may say that the job of an electrician is a vocation and that of an electrician engineer is a profession. Theoretical knowledge empowers a professional to know the reasons for the practical actions that s/he takes. It enables her/him to change the course of her/his actions in changed circumstances.

In fact the LIS profession in early stages was considered as a vocation and still, there are people who so believe it. Hence, to give a clarification on the terminology and justify the professional status of LIS the terminology is further explained here. Let us have a look into the related terms that are closely associated but are distinct in their scope.

Occupation: According to Merriam - Webster Online Dictionary, occupation means “an activity in which one engages” or “the principal business of one's life”

Vocation: Merriam - Webster Online Dictionary defines vocation as “the work in which a person is regularly employed”. It involves a routine activity of some kind – physical or scholarly and needs certain or no skills.

Thus, “vocation” and “occupation” are somewhat interchangeable, although “vocation” implies more education or experience. Profession, on the other hand is generally considered related to the higher educated positions like medicine, law.

A profession differs from a vocation in the following aspects:

- A profession is mainly service based and not job based.
- The professionals acquire skills by virtue of intellectual training and not on job training.

A profession must have associations at national and state level which a vocation does not have.

Self Check Exercise

Note: i) Write answer in the space given below

ii) Check your answer with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

1) Define a profession and distinguish it from a vocation and an occupation.

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11.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF A PROFESSION

Several authorities attempted a closer review and identified specific elements, which go to characterise a profession. Greenwood identified the following as specific elements that constitute a profession.

- 1) A systematic theory which delineates and supports the skills that characterise the profession;
- 2) A level of authority which comes from extensive education in the systematic theory;
- 3) Community sanction and approval of this authority as expressed in conferring on the profession of such powers as accreditation, formulation of standards of performance, and establishment of rules for admission into the profession;
- 4) A code of ethics which regulates relations of professional persons with clients and colleagues;
- 5) A professional culture sustained by formal associations, consisting of values, norms, and symbols and having at its center the career concept; and
- 6) A service orientation.

According to Martin a profession must have the following attributes:

- 1) A body of specialised complex knowledge;
- 2) Practice based on knowledge that must be of vital importance to the client and the society;
- 3) The practitioner must enjoy the respect of the community due to her/his competence;
- 4) The profession must be organised (professional association);
5. It must have a formal code of ethics which should be enforceable;
- 6) There should be evidence of formal training or education in the body of knowledge identified with the profession;
- 7) The organised association or other recognised body must have the right to test that knowledge and its application;
- 8) The interest of the client and the public must be placed above the immediate interests of the practitioner;

- 9) The practitioner of the profession must be paid directly for her/his services either by individuals or by a group; and
- 10) Admission to the practice and the right to continue in the profession must be the concern of, and in direct control of the society.

According to Ganesh Bhattacharya, the term profession is used to denote a calling with the following attributes:

- It requires specialised knowledge and often long and intensive preparation including learning of skills and methods as well as the scientific, historical or scholarly principles underlying such skills and methods;
- It maintains by force of organisation or concerted opinion high standards or achievement and conduct; and
- A profession commits its members to continued study and to a kind of work which has for its prime purpose the rendering of public service.

A profession displays its self-consciousness in the following ways:

- Dissatisfaction with available training and education for the profession;
- Attempt to standardise practice and introduce theoretical analysis of work;
- Concern with low standards, bad workmanship, and indifferent handling of clientele;
- Attempt to establish co-ordination and co-operation among practitioners;
- Protest about lack of recognition for the occupation; and
- Belief in the emergence of a new and different discipline with wide application.

Chopra listed the following as essential characteristics of a profession:

- 1) Specialised knowledge (learning) and skill (practice);
- 2) Research and continuous in-service updating of specialised knowledge;
- 3) Intellectual activity;
- 4) Social necessity;
- 5) Service to the society rather than personal gains;
- 6) Recognition by public and status in the society;
- 7) Standardised terminology;
- 8) Closely knit professional organisation having an altruistic philosophy;
- 9) Stability of the profession through permanent membership (life career);
- 10) Code of ethics for the practitioners;
- 11) Autonomy of the profession; and
- 12) Authority for the practitioners.

We can conclude by saying that a profession has a philosophy and theory providing it a sound academic pedestal. Research in the discipline should continuously add to the base of knowledge. Professional practice should be based on the critical mass of specialised knowledge. For anyone to be called a professional, one should have gone through a rigorous programme at higher education level. The knowledge and skills should be used to serve the society which should be

uppermost for the professional. It provides a status and recognition to the professionals in the society. Ethics is another important aspect of any profession which the professionals need to practice for selfless service. It should have an association that helps a profession for its advancement and liaison with the society.

Self Check Exercise

Note: i) Write answer in the space given below

ii) Check your answer with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

2) List any six attributes of a profession.

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11.5 LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE (LIS) AS A PROFESSION

Librarianship is a distinct and distinguished profession in modern society. It is engaged in public service and plays an important role in national development. Librarianship today is termed as “Library and Information Profession” since the concept of librarianship has changed in view of the changing information needs of the society.

11.5.1 LIS is not a Profession

For a long time there was dilemma whether librarianship is a profession or not. One of the views is that it is not a profession, it is believed to exist between a profession and a vocation. The medical and legal professions are ancient and hence accepted as professions from time unknown but it is not so in librarianship. Different opinions have been expressed by social scientists about librarianship being a profession. There are those who do not agree with the professionalism of library services. Lancour (1962) does not consider librarianship as a profession on the following grounds.

- 1) It doesn't have the community sanction.
- 2) Librarians' services are not indispensable in the same way as that of doctors. Most of the library employees, both professionals and non-professionals, hide behind the shelves when looked upon for service. They are not able to serve the society confidently to earn their reputation.
- 3) They exercise no real authority with the clients.

Sills (1968) observed that “the profession of the librarianship has not been included in the long list of the professions, even in the International Encyclopedia of Social Science”.

11.5.2 LIS is a Profession

A librarian conserves the cultural and intellectual heritage of mankind and acts as an agent of communication from information generation to the point of use. His services are indispensable in information transfer chain. This opinion was shared by many social and information scientists like Melvil Dewey, Butler, Greenwood, Schaffer et al and they tried to prove that librarianship is a profession as it has many attributes of a profession. Robert D Leigh wrote that librarians have accepted professional status as a goal on the following factors:

- 1) “They are identified with knowledge, which is prime service of occupational prestige in our society
- 2) They are service oriented rather than self-interested at least in certain senses.
- 3) Library and information professionals belong to professional association (state and national)
- 4) They are trained in professional schools, associated with universities.
- 5) They have code of ethics.”

Thus, librarianship can be considered as a profession, as it possesses the following basic characteristics of a profession:

- A body of knowledge imparted in LIS schools;
- Intensive training and continued practice to gain mastery over the skills for knowledge organisation and retrieval;
- Oriented towards service to the society;
- Associations to bind the professionals;
- Standard terminology and practices; and
- Code of ethics.

Education for librarianship at middle and higher levels is imparted at post-graduate level for two years. Teaching different theoretical aspects and intensive training of skills support the view that it is a profession.

S.R.Ranganathan contributed to the development of library profession in India by developing standard terminology, theoretical principles, LIS education – from certificate to research level, and introducing specialisation and standardised practices. Library profession in India owes a lot to his contributions. To quote Ranganathan “Librarianship is a noble profession. A librarian derives his joy by seeing the dawn of joy in the face of the readers who were helped in their search for the right information at the right time.”

Self Check Exercise

- Note:** i) Write answer in the space given below.
ii) Check your answer with the answers given at the end of this Unit.
- 3) Why is librarianship not considered as a profession?

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11.6 EVOLUTION OF THE LIS PROFESSION

M.A.Gopinath opined that there are three distinct stages in the evolution of the LIS profession.

11.6.1 Scholarly Period

Before the middle of the 19th century the libraries were owned by kings, noblemen and monasteries. Only monasteries were interested in the collective use of libraries that were managed by scholars. Nalanda and Taxila University libraries belong to that period in India. The libraries during the period are characterised as collections with access to limited few. The books were prized possessions in view of the treasure of knowledge they represented and also the labour involved in their production.

11.6.2 Vocational Period

The next century saw the birth of librarianship. In UK and USA public libraries were started in the 19th century and managed by persons devoted to the work. This led to the development of a new vocation – librarianship – that involved the art of book selection, classification, cataloguing, and reference service. Later, programmes were designed to train librarians. The specialisation resulted into considering librarianship as a ‘skilled occupation’.

11.6.3 Professional Period

Over the period librarianship developed from a vocation to a profession having a body of knowledge, laws, principles, techniques for processing information and serving the users. The application of scientific method to librarianship gave it the status of a profession. It has been six decades now but there is still a cross section of the society who like to debate on whether librarianship is a profession or not.

Librarianship as an Occupation: In ancient times, during the civilisations of Mesopotamia and Babylonia librarianship emerged as an occupation. There were libraries at Alexandria, Taxila, Nalanda and in Rome that were managed by librarians. Librarians were employed in libraries maintained by kings and monasteries. Thus the profession emerged as an occupation / employment.

Librarianship as a Vocation: In the medieval times more and more libraries were established that were managed by scholars. In the initial stages they developed special skills for organisation knowledge and recalling it as per user requirements. Many of these skills were applied on trial and error basis with no scientific foundation. This was the time when librarianship was considered as a vocation and not as a profession.

Librarianship as a Profession: With the industrial revolution and universalisation of education, knowledge production had increased. The academic institutions considered libraries as centres of knowledge activity. Further the establishment of British Museum (London), Bibliotheca Nationale (Paris) and the Library of Congress (Washington D.C) inspired for the development of public libraries and other types of libraries. The library legislation in UK that enacted Public Library Act also boosted the situation. Consequent to the increase in number of libraries and the librarians, associations were developed in USA (American Library Association) and UK (Library Association). Library science courses were offered

by universities as graduate or post graduate programmes. Library science got its own knowledge base when codes like Cutter's 'Rules for a Dictionary Catalogue' and 'Dewey Decimal Classification' were developed to achieve standardisation in the technical aspects of librarianship. Thus librarianship emerged as a profession from vocation.

Self Check Exercise

Note: i) Write answer in the space given below.

ii) Check your answer with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

4) What are the stages in the evolution of librarianship?

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LIS Profession

The discovery of writing and media for recording accumulated knowledge resulted in the possibility of preserving recorded information for reference beyond the barriers of space and time. The invention of paper and printing opened up larger opportunities in this line. The twentieth century witnessed the emergence of various professions and librarianship is one among them. The mechanism of communication, through print, non print and electronic media and informal communication through invisible colleges has been duly institutionalised through the library. In simple terms, library is a channel of communication and librarian is the mediator of communication. Librarianship is developed both as a science (body of knowledge) and an art (the skills). The motto of the LIS profession is to meet the needs and demands of users. However the variety of sources is changing from print to digital; the services changing from traditional reference service to internet based services for online access. Librarianship today has an even more critical role to play in building up awareness among the members of the society and help them to adjust to changes in the information environment.

What is Librarianship/Library Science?

The primary purpose of LIS profession is to provide access to information pertinent to user request with great speed and thus, achieve user satisfaction. Hence it is service based. Keeping this basic purpose in view many LIS scientists define the LIS profession (librarianship) in different ways. In essence it is the science and art of managing libraries.

Harrod's Librarians' Glossary (Fifth edition) defines library science as: "A generic term for the study of libraries and information units, the role they play in society, their various component routines and processes, and their history and future development. Library science is used in the United States in preference to the British term *librarianship*"

R.L. Mittal describes librarianship "as a noble and service oriented profession which encourages all types of reading and education."

P.N. Kaula defines “Librarianship developed as practice; as a body of techniques evolved from certain adhoc assumptions about how people use books”

According to Danton “Librarianship is that branch of learning which has to do with recognition, collection, organisation, preservation and utilisation of graphic and printed material”.

Mayors defines librarianship as “That branch of human knowledge which is concerned with the production, care and use of recorded human knowledge”.

Dakhole characterises librarianship in the following words:

- 1) “Librarianship is a branch of human knowledge
- 2) It is a profession
- 3) It is tool for information or knowledge
- 4) It involves social service
- 5) It is a department of scholars not mere a craft”.

Self Check Exercise

- Note:** i) Write answer in the space given below.
ii) Check your answer with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

5) Define librarianship/library science.

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11.7 TRANSFORMATION OF THE LIS PROFESSION

There is a profound change in theory and practice of library profession over the passage of time. The custodian librarian had to grow in to become a knowledge organiser and information transmitter. It is axiomatic that libraries and civilisation go hand in hand. The concept of librarianship has been changing according to the demands of the society and the bewildering growth of the communication media. The whole history of librarianship indicates some broad landmarks, with different phases. The first phase of librarianship comprised of the “custodianship of the resources of knowledge”. From that stage it traversed to the contemporary roles of “knowledge manager” and “digital librarian”.

Social institutions are affected by movements and changes in the society around them and the library is no exception. The media revolution, the computer and communication technology, the changing behaviour of user community and the increasing social responsibility of libraries have had a great impact on the LIS profession. The present librarian is vested with new responsibilities like managing information networks, and conducting online searches, managing digital preservation and development of digital libraries. The profession is more active and meaningful in the present day information world. Librarian acts as an advisor,

interpreter and mediator for user's information needs. Thus the work performed by today's information professional, seems quite different and challenging in both forms and formats than in the past. Thus, LIS profession is gaining a new identity. LIS professionals are now identified as webmasters, network administrators/managers, information literacy providers, information facilitators etc. The following paragraphs explain the stages in the evolution of LIS profession.

11.7.1 Custodian

The library custodians are keepers of culture, preservers of creation, and defenders of future. Their duty earlier was to keep the books intact rather than allow them to circulate freely among readers. Thus the first generation of librarians was mere custodians / keepers of recorded knowledge and culture.

11.7.2 Librarian

With the invention of printing in 15th century there was less need for the protective function of libraries. The librarian moved away from just being the "custodian of books" to information / knowledge collection manager. The philosophy changed, library resources were meant to be put into use, it was felt to circulate the books for better utilisation of knowledge. So the diffusion of knowledge by lending books became the predominant function of the library in 20th Century. It was also realised that the utility of library resource depends upon the skills and knowledge of people who direct, operate and manage the library. Hence a human agency, the librarian was felt necessary to provide personal assistance to users in providing relevant information and assisting them in its utilisation.

Thus the traditional librarianship started shifting from material handling to information handling. In this process of transmission of knowledge, librarian stood as mediator between the originator (author) and the end user. With the bombarding generation of information termed "information explosion" and the need for the same growing in a big way, importance of librarianship has been realised among people in the society. It was during the postwar period that the responsibilities of the librarian changed drastically, because of rapid growth in book collection and new emphasis on the 'use' of library resources. The amount of literature published in every subject grew exponentially. In addition the growth and production of secondary sources also increased significantly. Hence it became very difficult to find out specific information from this huge mass of information. Since the needs of the information seekers are varied, information is processed, preserved and disseminated according to the users' specific demands. In the process specialised services like documentation, current awareness, selective dissemination of information and translation etc. are provided.

11.7.3 Documentation Officer

With changing times, users expected specific information to be culled out from sources to be provided to them. This gave birth to the concept of documentation activities in libraries. Increasing specialisation resulted in the post of documentation officer in libraries. Documentation centres have been set up to meet the requirements of specialised users in research organisations. The job of the documentalist is to collect, organise and disseminate the information from books, monographs, serial publications and non print sources and provide information pin pointedly and precisely according to the users' requirements. Bibliographical, information

consolidation and digest type of services are provided in documentation centres to serve specific needs of users.

Documentation officer needs to be aware of the subject/area of interest of her/his users. S/he should constantly update herself/himself in the ongoing developments in the field. S/he should have a good command over the language and skills of summarising, etc. Technology has enabled to provide these services more effectively and efficiently.

11.7.4 Information Officer/Scientist

It is the responsibility of the library to build up collection of information in anticipation of future use. The increasing information and its increasing importance have led to the evolution of libraries into library and information centres. Identification of distinct user groups and developing suitable information services like providing access to the virtual collection through a website at any time and anywhere is the responsibility of information scientist. As the use of information increases in the society, the importance of library and information centres also increases. This demands for special skills in information professionals to create, collect, communicate and consolidate the information on behalf of the clients. The speedy and radical explosion of information has greatly transformed the role of libraries and information centres. Thus, the change in the mission of librarianship has significant implication for the library profile in the 21st century. In this new environment library networks play major role in the process of global networking of information. Hence the scope of library becomes universal and the information specialist works as a disseminator of digital information, rather than the custodian of information.

Moreover the emergence of information society transforming into knowledge society has increased the complexities of information accessibility, reliability and dependability. With the advent of internet, books and journals arranged on library shelves in traditional libraries are also getting into virtual shelves in electronic libraries, thereby enabling digital seamless remote access to information for all users. This has paved way for the emergence of concepts ‘digital library’ and ‘digital librarian’.

11.7.5 Digital Librarian

Digital libraries are electronic libraries wherein all the collections in full text are in digital form and access to the collection is through networks. The very mission of digital libraries is to create new approaches to acquisition of resources, new storage and preservation, classification and cataloguing, intensive use of electronic systems and networks. Thus the present role of digital librarian extends his services far beyond physical boundaries. They provide innovative resources and services, and play an important role as digital librarian in connecting old graphic records, to machine readable forms, and create new records of text, graphics, and sounds and multi media. They integrate all the memory institutions like libraries, archives, museums. Thus they have stemmed out of the traditional brand of gatekeepers of information, to information gateways and information skill developers. In this scenario of transformation Swarupanandan (1995) felt that “Change from the information custodian to information salesman passing through the information transmitter indicates the growth of information industry on the one hand and the proliferation of professional arenas on the other”.

Self Check Exercise

- Note:** i) Write answer in the space given below.
ii) Check your answer with the answers given at the end of this Unit.
- 6) What is meant by digital libraries?

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11.8 CATEGORIES OF LIS PROFESSIONALS

LIS professionals are generally involved in the process of acquisition, processing, organising and maintaining documents in a library and providing various types of information services based on these documents and their experience. In certain cases, say, in a small library, all these activities are performed by a single individual. In certain cases, an individual may be involved only in a single activity, say cataloguing. Generally, these personnel are trained through certain institutions like universities and associations, and are paid for the jobs they perform.

In our country, many libraries are being run by untrained persons. According to definition, these persons do not fall under the category of library professional. Similarly, accounts staff, clerical staff, class four staff like security guards, cleaners are not considered as library professional. Technical staff like binders, cameramen for microfilming, and photocopier operators are also not included in this category.

Library professionals include among others library administrators, classifiers, indexers, cataloguers, reference librarians, classificationists, teachers of library and information science, and thesaurus constructors. We can also include librarianship, bibliometrician and bibliographer in this category. The library professionals can also be categorised according to the institution they serve, e.g. school librarian, college librarian, and university librarian. Categorisation is also possible according to the subject, i.e. medical librarian, law librarian, and so on.

You are aware of the functions of many of these personnel. Hence, we shall describe them briefly in this Unit. A person in charge of a library is called a librarian. Sometimes, he/she is also termed as library manager.

11.8.1 Library Administrator

A library administrator is responsible for the administration of a library. The head of a library is usually designated as chief librarian and his/her subordinates as deputy librarian, assistant librarian, etc. Sometimes, he/she is simply called a librarian, a library manager or a director. He/She possesses expertise in planning, organisation and management of various activities and services of a library and is considered to be a good source of information in these areas.

11.8.2 Classifier

A classifier generally classifies books following certain scheme of classification, say Dewey Decimal Classification. While classifying, first of all the classifier has to ascertain the subject the book is dealing with. For this purpose, he/she has to go through the title, contents, and sometimes even through the text and index of the book. This apart, many a time he/she is to consult reference books like dictionaries, encyclopaedias, gazetteers and who's who. This process helps him/her to learn the topography and ramifications of a number of subjects bit by bit. A classifier of a general library gradually becomes knowledgeable practically in all subjects. While classifying, sometimes he/she encounters books on subjects that do not figure in the classification schedule giving an indication that the subject may be new. Thus, the classifier becomes aware of a new subject much before its entry in a classification scheme, dictionary or an encyclopaedia. He/She also comes to know about the word denoting the new subject. Thus, a classifier knows better than others about the books on new subjects that have entered a library because he/she has to spend more time on the book while deciding its class number. Needless to say, this process helps him/her to remember the book for a long time and turns him/her into a good source of information about books available in the library, the subjects in which the library is strong and weak.

11.8.3 Cataloguer

You all know that one who catalogues documents following a catalogue code or a set of cataloguing rules is a cataloguer. While cataloguing, a cataloguer gathers information about the title, author, collaborator, edition, imprint, collation, ISBN, price, etc. of the book. He/She also gathers information usually from the class number about the subject of the book. In the course of his/her work, a cataloguer gradually comes to know about the authors writing books, the subjects in which the library is becoming strong or weak, the publishers renowned for publishing books in particular subjects, etc. In these areas, the cataloguer becomes good source of information.

11.8.4 Classificationist

One who designs and builds up a scheme of classification on sound principles is a classificationist. For example, Melvil Dewey, S R Ranganathan, H E Bliss were all classificationists. There are two types of classificationists: general and specialist. A general classificationist builds a scheme of classification covering all subjects. On the other hand a specialist classificationist builds up a scheme on a particular subject, say education. A classificationist is an expert not only in the principles of classification but also in epistemology. He/She studies the origin, nature, growth, proliferation and limits of human knowledge; does research as to how a new subject comes into being, how it proliferates into branches and sub-branches, and how a particular subject decays. They also study the relationship of various subjects. The structuring of knowledge and fitting every component of knowledge in that structure also figure within the purview of their expertise. Expertise in all these areas makes them to be useful sources of information on different aspects of classification and knowledge.

11.8.5 Indexer

Since long, various types of indexes are being provided in documents to locate information using author's name, title of the document, key term, geographical name, chemical formula, etc. With the advent of computers, computer-aided subject indexes like KWIC, KWAC, and KWOC have also come into being requiring least human involvement.

An indexer compiles indexes based on some principles, guidelines and tools. To aid indexers standard lists of subject headings, thesauri, etc. are being developed and updated from time to time. Indexing systems like PRECIS, POPSI and Chain Indexing have also emerged. Indexing does not always prove to be a simple job. In compiling some indexes like formula index in chemistry subject knowledge becomes an essential prerequisite.

An indexer who has been continuously indexing for years knows how a subject is developing, proliferating into its various branches, and building up linkages with other subjects. He/She also becomes an expert in compiling and consulting indexes and using indexing tools like Library of Congress List of Subject Headings, Thesaurus of Engineering and Scientific Terms, etc. Such people prove to be highly useful in providing expert advice on indexing and solving various indexing problems.

11.8.6 Reference Librarian

All of you have studied reference service in the BLIS programme and learnt about the qualities, qualifications, experience and job requirements of a reference librarian.

We are not dwelling up on these aspects of a reference librarian here, but highlighting the role he/she plays as a powerful information source.

In response to the demand of users, a reference librarian has to consult more books and documents compared to other staff of the library. In this process he/she becomes more knowledgeable about the contents of books held in a library and provide answers to queries from unimaginable sources. To illustrate this point a few real examples are being cited here. In mid-1960s, B S Kesavan, the then Director of INSDOC (now NISCAIR), was interested to find out the address of an Australian librarian. Internet was non-existent in those days. Who's Whos did not provide the answer. One very young staff providing reference service basing the nucleus of National Science Library searched out the information from the Australian Library Journal! In early 1980s, a query was received from an engineering institution at the National Science Library, New Delhi as to the meaning of 'tribology'. All possible reference sources including the latest dictionaries were silent about the word. It was thought that the word might have been derived from the word 'tribes'. But the enquirer pointed out that he/she knew this much that it was an engineering topic, and had nothing to do with tribes. Finally, one senior staff of the Library ferreted out the information from a booklist informing about new books. The publication recorded a conference proceeding on the subject [probably it was the first conference on it] where the definition of tribology was given. The word connotes the science and technology of friction! These examples show that a reference librarian should be well read and well informed, person having a fair knowledge of information sources.

11.8.7 Library and Information Science Teacher

All of you have seen library and information science teachers. They take classes in various courses of library and information science and many of them guide research students. They also write textbooks, course materials, etc. In our country, a library and information science teacher generally teaches more than one subject. However, specialisation is gradually setting in. Today you may find that all library and information science teachers cannot teach bibliometrics or computer applications. Only specialist teachers are teaching those subjects.

A teacher is not only an expert in the subject he/she teaches, but also knowledgeable in various methods of teaching, and courses and curricula of various universities and institutions teaching the subject. Many of the teachers suggest the research topics to the students. In some foreign universities, e.g. University of Malaya, a teacher announces in advance the research topics in which he/she can guide the students for doing their project works. Here, a student gets a very good opportunity to select the topic of his/her choice.

11.8.8 Thesaurus Designer

A person who designs a thesaurus is called a thesaurus designer. This is a new group of professionals that emerged several decades ago especially with the advent of computers in the field of library and information science. Thesauri being developed for information retrieval purposes are different from Roget's Thesaurus. Designing and construction of these thesauri require specialised knowledge of thesaurus construction as well as the knowledge of the subject for which the thesaurus is designed. For deciding descriptors for the thought content of a particular document, and for its subsequent retrieval from a computerised database, a thesaurus provides immense help.

A thesaurus constructor knows all the essential principles and methodologies of thesaurus construction and thereby can guide or impart advice to others for the construction of a thesaurus.

11.8.9 Bibliographer

Compilation of bibliographies is one of the important library activities. Many libraries of the world, especially special libraries provide bibliographical services to its users. While preparing a project report or pursuing research work, a student is also to compile bibliographies or look for already existing bibliography on that subject. Compilation of a bibliography is an interesting job and helps the compiler to go through numerous sources, some of which might be rare, uncommon, or totally new. Thus, the process of compiling a bibliography makes the compiler an expert about the various types of sources of information available on a particular topic and also about the methodology of compilation.

11.8.10 Librametrician

An expert on librametrics is termed as a librametrician. The word 'librametrics' was coined by S R Ranganathan in 1949. Later on A Neelameghan elaborated its scope. Librametrics is a discipline that measures library activities, library collection, personnel, building, furniture, etc. Librametric studies quite often entail mathematical and statistical applications. Librametricians are the sources of information relating to quantitative studies of various library objects and activities.

11.8.11 Bibliometrician

An expert on bibliometrics is called a bibliometrician. Though the bibliometric study initiated more than a century ago, it started developing only after the World War II. Like librmetrics, it also deals with measurement or quantification and involves mathematical and statistical techniques. In this case, the objects of measurement are the documents and their contents.

Bibliometricians study among others the growth of literature in a subject, scattering of literature of a subject in various types of documents, ranking of journals from various angles, ranking of authors of a subject depending on their output, active life of literature, obsolescence, and so on. They can easily find out the extent of use of various types of documents in a library, weak and strong areas in terms of collection of a library, rate of growth of a library, and so on. Bibliometric study has picked up quite well in our country. Every year a good number of papers are emanating from India.

Bibliometricians can provide answers to many queries relating to the ranking of periodicals in the world, important contributions being produced from a country, rate of growth of literature of a country, use of journals and other documents in a library, various indicators of periodicals like impact factor, immediacy index, and so on.

11.8.12 Content Developer

With the advent of Internet, engendered the idea of content development. It involves designing, creation, and deployment of the content in cyber space. Usually it includes text, sound, images, animation and provision for interaction. Suppose you want to develop a website for your institution, first of all you will have to think about the content of the website, that is, the information you intend to place in the website for your institution. Normally, you would like to include among others the following information about your institution: name, postal address, telephone no., telegraphic code, e-mail address, fax no., year of foundation, name of the head of the institution, names of various divisions and their respective heads, history, objectives, functions, achievements, special facilities available, library and the services being rendered by it, and publications. The textual matter relating to all these will have to be written by somebody and authenticated by the head or someone nominated by him/her. You may like to make your website colourful. Hence, you will also have to decide the colour of the various parts of the text. Also you are to decide the format, types of fonts, and the font size for various headings and other parts of writing. You can include pictures of your institution, various divisions, important personnel and so on. Taking care of all these, you will make the text ready. If you want to include some speeches along with the sound, you can do so. Some portion of the website can be animated. The provision for interaction can also be there. The person who has visited your website can be requested to sign and give his/her opinion about your website. Many might give their opinion and some good suggestions whereby you can improve upon your website.

The job of a content developer has been described above very briefly. There are specialised courses on content development which one may undergo to gain required knowledge about the same. Normally, a content developer is a computer

professional and he/she possesses sound knowledge about the software packages available for content development.

In many of the LIS courses ‘Content Development’ has been included as one of the courses.

A content developer also acts as an information source in as much as he/she can give advice about various facets of content development to the clientele.

Self Check Exercise

Note: i) Write your answers in the space given below.

ii) Check your answers with the answers given at the end of the Unit.

7) Explain why all persons working in a library are not called library professional.

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8) Name different categories of library professionals.

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9) Describe for what type of information you will approach a classificationist.

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11.9 LIS PROFESSION IN INDIA

Libraries have a long existence in India. They date back to millennia before the birth of Christ. The professional development and changing trends can be attributed to the prevailing information environment. The following paragraphs present the developments under different periods.

11.9.1 Ancient Period

During the ancient period knowledge was not documented. There was no script and hence no written records. Vedic literature was preserved by scholars by word of mouth from generation to generation. The scholars were known as the “living libraries” or “walking encyclopaedias” who preserved the nation’s culture and religious heritage.

With the invention of script records were made on both perishable and non-perishable materials like “bhurjapatra” (the bark of a tree) and palm leaves. The bhurjapatras were smeared together into pustaka or book. To facilitate memory and for the purpose of reference, the great Rishi’s collected Vedic literature and piled it in a cottage called “Grantha Kutir”. These are examples of reference libraries during the ancient period. Priests and scholars maintained those libraries. As such the profession of librarianship was not known during ancient times.

11.9.2 Medieval Period

According to Chinese travellers Fa-Hien and Hiuen Tsang, library facilities were provided under the name of “Buddhist Viharas in Pataliputra”. Kings like Ashoka, Kanishka, Harsha and Bhoja maintained libraries with huge collection of literature on different subjects. This indicates that kings maintained large libraries but there was no indication of trained librarian-s managing them. As such, librarianship as a professional category did not exist during this period also.

The Mughal emperors are well known for their love for books. During their period, great poets like Tulsi Das, Kabir, Meera and Rahim produced religious literature. The literature produced by literary persons was preserved and kept in closed access. It is evident that the existence of libraries was there during this period. It was during the Delhi sultanate that many libraries were established. Sultan Jalaluddin Khilji established an imperial library and appointed “Amir Khusru” as its librarian. Babar the founder of Mughal Empire brought a treasure of rare manuscripts from his forefather’s personal libraries in 1526. Thus the first Mughal Library was established in 1526. His son Humayun Khan was also fond of books. He appointed a librarian for his personal library.

Although many of the Mughal emperors had personal libraries it was in the regime of Akbar (1556-1605) that a separate department for libraries was created to look after the public libraries in the capital. Akbar maintained a library called “Trikihi-I-Akbari” which contained rich collections in the field of history, philosophy, science in addition to Hindu and Muslim culture. The other Mughal emperors like Jahangir (1605-1637) also established libraries. The Mughal kings not only maintained libraries but also kept them under management of librarians. “Faizi” a Persian poet was appointed as librarian of the imperial library of Akbar. So also the king Humayun appointed “Lal Beg” librarian for his collections.

11.9.3 British India

The British rulers brought English education to this country and rejuvenated the Indian tradition of scholarship and learning. A number of learned societies and institutions were founded by the British rulers including the three universities, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras in 1857. In the beginning, scholars and bibliographers were appointed to manage the affairs in a library and gradually the profession of librarianship came into existence. One can say that the profession owes its existence to Gutenberg who brought innovation with printing technology.

11.9.4 Independent India

In the beginning of 20th century special libraries like Geological Survey of India, Indian Institute of Science etc., were established. All these were manned by part

time librarians. Librarianship on professional grounds started only during the first half of the twentieth century.

Special training for librarianship was initiated in 1911 by an American trained librarian W.A.Borden at Baroda with the initiation of Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad. The king was instrumental in the development of library system in the princely state of Baroda. He also undertook the training of librarians to manage these libraries.

The real feel of the profession of librarianship came when another American Asa Don Dickinson started a training programme for Indian librarians with the help of Panjab Library Primer in the year 1916. However the real sprit in the profession was noticed after India got independence when a large number of universities, college and autonomous research organisations were founded. New libraries were opened and job opportunities for librarians increased to a great extent. "Indian librarianship secured the status of a profession mainly because of the contributions and teachings of Ranganathan as a life time venture."

Ranganathan’s contribution to Indian LIS profession: Indian librarianship is recognised in India and abroad due to the able leadership of Dr. Ranganathan. The development of the profession is closely associated with the development of the subject as a science with unique body of knowledge. S.R.Ranganathan through his Five Laws of Library Science, dynamic theory for knowledge organisation (Canons and Principles for Classification and Cataloguing) and introducing specialisations and special services like documentation contributed to the development of the profession in India. The development of education in library science in India is the primary contributions of Dr Ranganathan as he started BLSc, MLSc and PhD programmes. He formulised the research programme, organised seminars, inspired the formation of associations at national and state level, and advocated the need for library cooperation. He was the driving force in the establishment of Indian National Science Documentation Centre (INSDOC), now National Institute of Science Communication and Information Resources (NISCAIR) and Documentation Research and Training Centre (DRTC).

Having had initially the powerful influence of Ranganathan to be bestowed with recognition and respectability, the library and information profession, over the years, has acquired importance for its service orientation and status of honor as purveyor of knowledge and information. The qualifications, skills and knowledge required for library and information personnel, have enabled them to get salary and service conditions and other privileges at par with academics and scientists. By and large the profession is vibrant and moving forward. The society recognises its role and contribution.

Self Check Exercise

Note: i) Write answers in the space given below.

ii) Check your answers with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

10) Trace out the developments of LIS profession in pre-independent India?

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11) Mention the changes occurred in LIS profession in independent India.

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11.10 SUMMARY

A profession involves the application of specialised knowledge in a specific domain for the benefit of the society. In other words, the professional activity involves systematic knowledge and proficiency and its societal application. Librarianship is a young profession compared to other established professions like medicine, law etc.

There is subtle difference between ‘occupation’ that means employment or job; ‘vocation’ that demands some sort of skill in performing a job that can be gained as on job training; and profession that requires specialised knowledge and skills to handle a specialised field of study.

A profession has the following characteristics:

- a) A professional has requisite knowledge and skills based on long and intensive preparation in an institute of higher learning, beside self-learning and self-practice;
- b) The knowledge should cover the scientific, historical and scholarly principles underlying the skills practiced. Such knowledge should enable the professional to answer the ‘what’, ‘why’ and ‘how’ of the practice;
- c) The members of the profession should maintain high standards of performance conducting themselves individually and by force of the profession;
- d) The profession should ensure that its members remain constantly aware of updated in the latest developments in knowledge and skills; and
- e) The professionals must provide dedicated public service based on the knowledge and skills acquired.

Besides the above listed characteristics, a profession should have the characteristics of self-consciousness by exhibiting the following behaviour:

- i) Realisation of shortcomings in education and training facilities and motivation and commitment to update knowledge and skills amongst the professionals;
- ii) Standardisation in the professionals tools and techniques so as to use them easily resulting in increased effectiveness and efficiency;
- iii) Concerted efforts in bringing professionals together in resource sharing for professional work and service;
- iv) Monitoring the professionals for maintaining standards in performance and rectification of any shortcomings in services or handling of the users;

- v) Lodging appropriate protests on the lack of recognition of the profession in respect to status, working conditions, responsibilities, salary, etc. and
- vi) Encouraging a scientific outlook in professionals and ensuring research and development in the foundation discipline for wider applications and maintaining it a mission- oriented discipline.

The mission of the foundation discipline of any profession is social. For medical profession, it is 'health for all', for the legal profession, it is 'justice for all' and for the library and information science profession it is 'information for all'.

Librarianship deals with handling universe of knowledge, hidden in documentary sources – print, microforms or electronic. There are views in support of and against the acceptance of library science as profession. However in the present day information environment it is being accepted as a profession.

The evolution of librarianship has a long history. Librarianship as called by the British or Library Science as termed by the Americans has struggled a lot to become a profession. In fact it started as occupation, changed to vocation and transformed to profession over centuries.

“Librarianship is that branch of learning which has to do with recognition, collection, organisation, preservation and utilisation of graphic and printed material”.

The role of a librarian has transformed from being a custodian or keeper of books to librarian – to collect and keeps track of their use. However after World Wars, drastic changes occurred and special libraries were established for the industry and scientific research. The position of documentalist aiming at specialised services to specialist users emerged followed by the emergence of information scientist to serve the users using Information Communication Technologies.

The latest trend is for digital libraries and virtual libraries that interconnect the libraries at global level through internet and handle digital collections. Libraries that were judged by the collection that they possessed are judged today by the access to information that they provide.

History of librarianship in India can be divided into ancient, medieval, British and independent India. There was no librarianship in ancient times though libraries were present; Mughal Emperors contributed to the development of libraries and librarians. British India has seen the growth of academic librarianship. However the real growth of library profession in India is visible only after independence.

Therefore the growth of library profession has a long history and it has passed through several stages before attaining the status of a full fledged profession.

11.11 ANSWERS TO SELF CHECK EXERCISES

- 1) Profession is a specialised occupation characterised by intensive education and training in a specific field of knowledge with an intension to apply and serve the humanity.

Vocation and occupation are interchangeable. The major difference between a profession and a vocation, occupation is that a profession is mainly service

based and not job based whereas avocation and occupation is a routine activity where one engages so that the person is regularly employed. Secondly a profession acquires the skills by virtue of intellectual training not on job training but in a vocation, occupation does not require any specialised skills.

- 2) The profession should have the following six attributes:
 - 1) A body of specialised complex knowledge.
 - 2) The practitioner must enjoy the respect of the community.
 - 3) The profession must be organised.
 - 4) A code of ethics which regulates the relations of professional persons with clients and colleagues.
 - 5) A professional culture sustained by formal associations consisting of norms, symbols and having at its centre the career concept.
 - 6) A service orientation.
- 3) Librarianship is not considered as a profession according to some social scientists like Lancour (1962) and Sills (1968) on the grounds that it does not have community sanction and librarians services are indispensable. In their opinion a library could function without the library employees consisting of both professionals and nonprofessionals. Third factor is that library employees could not exercise any authority on the clients where as a doctor or a lawyer could command respect from their clients. Last important factor was that the profession of librarianship has not been included in the list of the professions mentioned in the International Encyclopedia of Social Science.
- 4) According to M.A.Gopinath there are three distinct stages in the evolution of library profession.
 - 1) *Scholarly Period* (roughly to 1850): During the mid 19th century libraries were owned by kings, noble men and monasteries. Scholars managed the libraries that were attached to the monasteries like Nalanda and Taxsila Universities that were great centers of learning during that time period. At this point of time Librarianship was not formed completely.
 - 2) *Vocational Period* (1850-1950): In 1950 the evolution of Public Libraries in United Kingdom and United States of America lead to the development of a new vocation Librarianship. It involved the art of book selection, classification, cataloguing and reference service. Later many training programmes were developed and finally this profession was considered as a “skilled occupation”.
 - 3) *Professional Period* (after 1950-): With the passage of time Librarianship developed from vocation to profession having a body of knowledge, laws, principles, techniques for processing and serving the users. The application of scientific method to every library technique made it a learned profession. Thus Library Profession became full fledged for managing different types of Libraries.
- 5) Librarianship is defined “as a noble and service oriented profession which encourages all types of reading and education”. Library Science is defined

as “ a generic term for the study of libraries and information units, the role they play in society, their various component routines and processes and their history and future development”.(Harrold’s Librarian Glossary fifth edition) The British term librarianship is referred in United States as Library Science.

- 6) Digital libraries are electronic libraries where in all the collections in full text are in digital form and access to the collection is through networks. The very mission of digital libraries is to create new approaches to acquisition of resources, new storage and preservation, classification and cataloguing, intensive use of electronic systems and net works.
- 7) A library professional is one who has been trained in library and information science. S/he is also paid for the job that he/she does. In a library all are paid for the jobs they do. However, all are not trained in library and information science. For example, a library clerk is not trained in library and information science. Hence, all persons working in a library are not library professionals.
- 8) Library professionals may be categorized as the library administrator (designated variously as chief librarian, librarian, library manager, deputy librarian, assistant librarian, etc.); classifier, cataloguer; classificationist; indexer; reference librarian; library science teacher; thesaurus designer; bibliographer; librarmetrician; bibliometrician; and content developer.
- 9) A classificationist possesses deep knowledge of the principles of classification as well as epistemology. He/She studies the origin, nature, growth, proliferation and limits of human knowledge; does research as to how a new subject comes into being, how it proliferates into branches and sub-branches and how a particular subject decays. He/She also studies the relationship of various subjects and structure of knowledge. Hence, one can approach a classificationist for any type of information discussed above.
- 10) The development of Library and Information Science profession in pre-independent India dates back to the establishment of the special libraries in Geological Survey of India, Indian Institute of Sciences. These libraries were managed by part time librarians. Thus librarianship on professional grounds started only during the first half of the twentieth century. Later a special training in Librarianship was initiated in 1911 by an American trained librarian W.A.Borden at Boroda under the patronage of the king Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad. Another American Asa Don Dickinson started a training programme for Indians with the help of ‘Punjab Library Primer’ in the year 1916 at Lahore (now in Pakistan). In 1926 the most significant development is the contributions and leadership of S. R. Ranganathan who is considered as the father of Library Science. He developed Five Laws of Library Science and Normative Principle, Canons for Classification and Cataloguing. Ranganathan provided a knowledge base to LIS.
- 11) S.R.Ranganathan’s contributions and teachings towards Indian librarianship secured a status of a profession in independent India. After India got independence a large number of universities, colleges and autonomous research organisations were established. New libraries were opened and job opportunities for librarians increased to a great extent. The qualifications,

skills and knowledge have enabled Library and Information Science profession to get salary and other privileges at par with scientists and academicians. Finally society recognises its role and contribution.

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As an academic librarian you'll manage, organise, evaluate and disseminate information, providing support to members of an academic community including students, researchers and lecturing staff. You may be responsible for a specific academic subject, developing specialist knowledge and completing other functions such as: resource ordering, loans. develop and manage collections of books and journals (both paper and electronic), as well as websites. select, acquire and catalogue information using library and information software. In librarianship the parallel landmark title is, of course, Williamson's Training for Library Service,⁸ which raised the same kinds of questions about library education that Flexner had raised about medical education, and introduced the same kind of drive within the field toward critical analysis and tangible improvements. It. Preparation for a profession, says Greenwood, "must be an intellectual as well as a practical experience."²⁶ Librarians themselves have recognized their weakness in scholarly research and publication, and the social scientists have not been diffident about reminding them of it, lest they forget. There had also been an 11-year lapse between Rossi's statement and the cold comfort of Librarianship as a Profession book. Read reviews from world's largest community for readers. Excerpt from Librarianship as a Profession For the individual... Goodreads helps you keep track of books you want to read. Start by marking Librarianship as a Profession (Classic Reprint) as Want to Read: Want to Read saving... Want to Read. Is librarianship a dying profession? 3 Answers. Lisa Justis. , Librarian at East Mississippi Community College (2014-present). Answered November 24, 2019 Author has 675 answers and 114.8K answer views. Contrary to popular belief, librarianship is not about books—it is about information. No. Librarianship is just as much if not more so about information, and getting/accessing that information, making it available to whomever is looking for it. This can be in the more traditional format of monographs (printed books), serials (printed magazines), etc. or digitized/online formats of them. It is also becoming more common for professional librarians to help people sort through the vast amounts of information available and find what they need.