



Judicial Libraries in the Information Era: In the 21st Century, Role-Smart Law Librarians

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

The majority of legal studies take place in libraries. This paper discussed the services the judicial library helps legal practitioners render to members of the bar and bench. In the 21st century, information law plays a vital role and is the lifeblood of legal professionals. The "information age," also referred to as the "computer age," is defined by an explosion of information and fast technical innovation. This technological progress is the trend that is currently influencing legal research, teaching, and study. There are many social media platforms available today, but legal librarians in academic contexts face significant hurdles when users of their libraries find and use these technologies. In order to keep the library up-to-date and maintain a positive rapport with patrons, a librarian working in a library needs to possess a variety of skills, including curation, leadership, subject expertise in law, and research and technology abilities. The author outlines the competencies needed for a legal librarian in the digital age in this paper. This paper centers on them. On the issues raised, recommendations were made.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, the law library serves as the judicial system's service division. It is necessary for the administration of justice, the growth of legal education, and the smooth operation of a society that respects the law. When judicial officers lack the time to thoroughly peruse the abundance of information available in the law library, they utilize it to access relevant reports and actions. Law libraries are specialized reading rooms for professionals in related fields, most of whom are lawyers, law professors, attorneys, and other professionals who require pertinent legal literature and publications. The contemporary period owes a great deal to publishing and computer networks for data modification and dissemination [1-3]. The use of digital media, such as music, video, television, cameras, the internet, and cell phones, is commonly discussed while using this word. The computer age and the information age are other terms for the information age. Technological advancements have brought about changes in the dissemination of knowledge and communication practices [4]. Knowledge was formerly unavailable, but this technical innovation has increased its flow and made it possible to obtain it rapidly. These technologies are all concerned with data storage and transfer. Every aspect of human activity is impacted by the revolution, including the legal field [5,6].

The future of law librarianship is extremely interesting and demanding, with the potential for significant change, as noted by Marke [7]. Rather than being afraid of these developments, law librarians must prepare for them by anticipating them. We have to direct their path, or else they will overtake and bypass us. Information and communication technology, or ICT, is the current craze that permeates legal research, teaching, and study. Legal knowledge is crucial for both the development of a case and the avoidance of litigation [8,9].

1.1 Judicial Libraries

Generally, each state has one High Court; however, the constitution allows for the existence of a single High Court for two or more states (Article 231). In India, there are 25 High Court libraries, and there are many libraries in India connected to courts; the Supreme Court library in New Delhi and the High Court libraries spread

throughout 18 states are just two examples. The Supreme Court and High Courts are served by libraries that are linked with the Bar Association. There is nothing comparable to the locally maintained county law library seen in other parts of the country. However, these judicial libraries' resources are largely utilized by the judges who use them, much like those of their American equivalents.

1.2 Nature of the Judicial Library

There are libraries for courts (judicial libraries), the ministry of justice, university law departments, and organizations that deal with law (NJI, NJC, etc.). They provide services to judges, magistrates, law students, practicing attorneys, and other legal institutions. According to Anaeme (2015), judicial libraries are those that are situated on court grounds. Libraries' principal objective is to acquire and make accessible fundamental legal materials in print and non-print media for research, with the goal of enhancing the efficient and timely administration of justice.

1.3 Information-era Technologies

The internet is one of the resources that have made it possible for knowledge to flow freely. The internet is composed of millions of computers that are connected globally to allow for the continuous movement of information from one computer to another. These computers are found in residences, workplaces, governmental buildings, and educational establishments. When someone discusses going online, they are referring to having an internet connection. You can utilize the internet as a resource to find almost anything interesting.

1.4 Objectives of Information Technology

The following were the primary goals of information technology, according to Dada:

- (a) To make it easier to store, retrieve, and share crucial legal data for the efficient conduct of legal research and study;
- (b) To commend the execution of routine tasks such as the modification of law (Noter-Up) indexing and abstracting services;
- (c) To act as a liaison between the various legal education institutions and to promote

the cooperation and working relationships that are required of them. Moreover, this would make governance and sharing easier;

- (d) To aid in the creation of legal studies curricula that would be applicable and accepted worldwide;
- (e) To support instruction and learning in specific contexts, such as most court cases, group discussions, teleconferences, and videoconferences;
- (f) To usually allow widespread, immediate access to current information;
- (g) Encourage effective networking among different legal training institutions in order to cross-pollinate knowledge across diverse legal fields;
- (h) To make it more efficient for numerous students and researchers to have immediate access to case law and other legal materials rather than having to wait in line to check out a small number of library books;
- (i) To make it easier for teachers and students to communicate effectively, especially in remote learning and continuing education programs.

1.5 Social Media Tools

Web-based and mobile technologies called social media tools can be used to transform communication into an interactive discourse. Wikis, blogs, RSS, Facebook, podcasts, Twitter, iPad, iPhone, iPod, Youtube, Instagram, WhatsApp, Pinterest, Kaizala, MStears, and Google Meet are a few of them.

Law Blogs- A blog (derived from online blog) is a website that is made up of entries that are obtained by date and topic and are organised chronologically. A law blog is known as a blawg. Law students, legal commentators, and professors particularly like creating and participating in blogs, which they list on the websites of their law schools as part of their professional activity. Attorneys write about their areas of competence [10].

1.6 Collaborative Encyclopaedia

The best illustration of a collaborative encyclopaedia that allows for unrestricted editing

and contributions is Wikipedia. Wiki technology is its foundation. One of the most popular websites in the world is Wikipedia.

RSS Developed by Netscape in 1999, RSS (Really Simple Syndication) is a syndication technology that has grown in popularity for compiling updates to blogs and new websites.

1.7 E-mail Communication

Through electronic mail, resources and questions may be posted to students. It saves the problem of sourcing for the materials physically

1.8 Diverse Electronic Discussion Forum

An online forum such as Facebook enables participants to pose questions and articulate their views. Thus, it is very suitable for large class academic activity, even beyond the teachers and students.

1.9 Legal Databases

Online legal databases are now being used by many law schools across the world to access legal resources. Data bases house a huge amount of data and knowledge available for teaching and practice upon qualification as a lawyer, since, in large measure, legal research will be conducted by lawyers in practice,

1.10 Video Conferencing

This is an online forum that can inject international and comparative flavour into the curriculum of legal education as it enables guest speakers from a distance to share resources.

2. LAW LIBRARIES

Law librarians and law libraries play a unique and vital role in setting the standard of the legal system at all levels because of their unique collections and services. A law library is a specialised library that is used by historians, lawyers, judges and their law clerks, law students, and other legal history specialists for legal study.

Legal scholars can access law library collections and carry out legal research with the assistance of a law librarian. The Internet and ICT have quickly transitioned from technology to social media. Web 2.0 has evolved into a global metaphor for decentralised and distributed

cooperation networks. The absence of direct provision of materials is a problem that affects all law librarians. Law librarians' new responsibility is to promote the use of open-source and free information. Law librarians are information specialists who focus on making legal information more accessible. The collections of laws currently in effect, session laws, superseded laws, foreign and international law, and other research resources, such as resources for continuing legal education, legal encyclopedias, and legal treatises, may be found in print, computer-assisted legal research, and microform formats in a law library. Some law libraries serve scholars too. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law_library)

3. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND LAW LIBRARIANSHIP

The most dynamic and challenging job is legal librarianship because of the constant flow of new material and the constant changing of judicial and legislative decisions. Therefore, legal libraries and librarianship are necessary for the collection, upkeep, updating, and dissemination of rapidly evolving information and choices. Because of this relationship, law libraries might not be able to access and provide this data together with other relevant materials without the use of information technology, which would be beneficial to their patrons, who include judges, attorneys for prosecution and defence, arbitrators, academic lawyers, and members of the public. Dada [11] asserts that legal libraries, in particular reference Libraries must compile useful directories, manuals, guides, bibliographies, and descriptions of their current acquisitions and holdings. Moreover, they ought to provide editing, indexing, access points, and abstracting services. These responsibilities undoubtedly call for the assistance of a legal librarian through the use of information technology. Information technology improves library services provided to judges, attorneys, law students, and the general public, as well as global access to legal resources.

3.1 The role of the Law Librarian in information in the 21st century

3.1.1 The law librarian

"The modern approaches to information management pose challenges to law librarians, who must pay attention to information flow and access in the international arena. With the

appropriate directions, law libraries play an integral role in helping researchers and lawyers understand their legal rights and responsibilities and provide related references in the concerned case. "While librarians in other organisations may convince their users to give them some time for catering to their information requirements, a court librarian has to furnish the desired information at once because the case is being argued in court and the desired information is needed in the course of the argument. So a law librarian has to provide the information instantly without any excuse. Because of this reason, a law librarian has to be a very alert professional and must develop his or her own tools and expertise to provide the desired information instantly [12]."

Typically, a law librarian is primarily concerned with the responsibility of providing legal information resources to members of the legal community, including private legal practitioners, paralegal staff, judges, teachers, faculty members, and students in the academic environment. The American Association of Law Libraries [13] defines a law librarian as a legal information professional whose job it is to research, analyze, and evaluate the accuracy, validity, and quality of information sources. Their roles also include teaching, training, writing, managing, procuring, and classifying library materials. Law librarians are usually engaged in various establishments, including, law firms, courts, law college libraries, law school libraries, government departments, and related organizations. Every law librarian aspires to match the information needs of the users with the required legal information for personal improvement, research, and decision making.

3.2 Roles of Law Librarianship in the Emerging Knowledge Society

The very challenging field of law librarianship is included in the Special Libraries category. The users in this profession have different needs when it comes to forms, forms types, accessibility, and timeliness of information. A law library is an institution of great social significance in a free society and a crucial part of the administration of justice, according to Frederic [14]. Potential users of law libraries include members of local government, lawmakers, jurists, practitioners, judges, civil servants, law students, educators, and the general public. Law libraries are essential to the management of legal information in courts, law firms, and academic

institutions in order to assist the justice system of the twenty-first century. This is because they make legal resources more accessible to the general public. In India, becoming a law librarian is still a new field, and much needs to be done for the development of law libraries in a coordinated manner.

Legal professionals rely largely on legal knowledge for their everyday operations as part of their traditional role, whether in the courtroom between attorneys and judges or in the classroom between teachers and pupils. Without access to legal information, society will remain unchanged. Improved knowledge frequently leads to innovation, growth, and development. It is impossible to overstate the value of knowledge to attorneys and students of law as essential elements of the legal system. In essence, a branch of librarianship called law librarianship serves this purpose.

A legal user can approach a legal librarian for help in identifying their knowledge gaps and in locating the relevant sources of information needed to finish a task. This demonstrates how the roles of law librarians are evolving in the knowledge economy, with a focus on assisting users in locating and acquiring relevant, up-to-date legal material. It is assumed that law librarians themselves have to have a genuine interest in the needs of the user in addition to being competent in their field. Continuous personal development would be very beneficial to the legal librarian, it is advised.

However, Sthul (2019), in her approach, enumerated eight skills the librarian must possess in the 21st century to function effectively as a knowledge facilitator;

1. Identity Management: Law Librarian should be able to examine the profiles of users to assist them by matching their knowledge needs with the necessary legal material that may be useful to the user.
2. Network Awareness: It is expected that the librarian will be well-versed in the use of social networking sites for sharing views and creating awareness through networking.
3. Expert Search: It is crucial in this era of technology and multiple search engines that a librarian be skilled in navigating the web to find resources and potential library users.

4. Content Management: In this context, law librarians can cross-link people and ideas among the conglomerates of different groups.
5. Context Awareness: Law librarians should be diversified in their knowledge and have the ability to link information to people's profiles.
6. Collaborative: networking ensures knowledge sharing, establishes a communication link with experts, and allows users to develop a teamwork skill.
7. Flexibility: easy content creation and sharing, easy file updating, and personal contact
8. Ability to Teach: In addition to other managerial functions, the law librarian must be willing and able to train users about new technologies, skills and competences needed to survive in the new environment. Users need to know how to navigate the web as a new method of learning requires a form of connectivity with other people as knowledge is no longer acquired in a linear manner.

4. MODERN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SKILLS NECESSARY FOR ALL LIBRARIANS

The Journal (2005) published some 25 technology skills that every librarian should have. These are:

- World Processing Skills
- Spreadsheets Skills
- Database Skills
- Electronic presentation skills
- Web navigation skills
- Web site design skills
- E-mail management skills
- Digital Camera
- Computer network knowledge applicable to the school system
- File Management and Windows Explorer Skills
- Downloading software from the Web (knowledge includes e-Books)
- Installing Computer Software on a Computer System
- Web CT or Blackboard teaching skills
- Computer-Related Storage Devices (knowledge: discs, CDS, USB devices, zip discs, DVDS etc)

- Scanner Knowledge
- Knowledge of PDAS
- Deep Web Knowledge
- Educational Copyright Knowledge
- Computer Security Knowledge
- Blogs Knowledge
- RSS Knowledge
- IM knowledge
- Wikis knowledge
- Audio eBooks Knowledge

4.1 Suggestion for Improvement of Judicial Libraries in India

- Enhanced Funding
- ICT Infrastructure
- Manpower Training and Human Resources Management
- Consortia Building
- Electricity Supply and Proper Ventilation
- Subscription to Online Legal Data Bases
- Enriching our Local Content
- Mass Digitization of legal Materials
- Open Access Legislation
- Legal practitioners attained orientation programmes.

5. CONCLUSION

To take advantage of this unrestricted information flow and quick transfer of knowledge, which is here to stay, judicial librarians, judicial libraries, and their parent organisations must work in concert. Always move forward and never go back. The difficulties presented by information technology advancements for law libraries are significant but not insurmountable. As there are rivals in the field, law librarians in Nigeria must be ready for the challenge and embrace this worldwide phenomenon that has improved the free flow of information and the instant transfer of knowledge. Law librarians must reimagine themselves as knowledge managers rather than information managers and make sure that library resources are accessible to aid in the imparting of knowledge, skills, ideas, and thoughts necessary for individual empowerment in the legal system.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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