UNIVERSITY LIBRARIAN'S COMPETENCIES: A CASE STUDY IN SRI LANKAN STATE UNIVERSITIES

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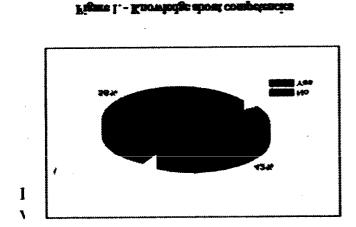
In the rapidly changing environment of the world, Library and Information Science (LIS) has a high value. The role of university librarians should be critically evaluated, and library and information science professionals require certain core competencies to manage Libraries/Information centers in an effective manner. In the fast changing technological environment, LIS is changing and growing by the day. University librarians should rethink about their knowledge, skills and competencies. Increasing needs of library users in the present decade, the university libraries have seen its advanced changes due to information technology and communication[1]. There are other factors too, such as, increasing number of students admitted to higher education, increase of higher education institutes, in the Sri Lankan education context, narrowing down of education system to "knowledge hub in the Asia", more people engaging in education. The professional qualities and skills are necessary for a new era of library professionals in today's environment. Some professional library organizations suggested core competencies for LIS professionals. The information professionals in university libraries have to work in this ever and rapidly changing environment[2,3].
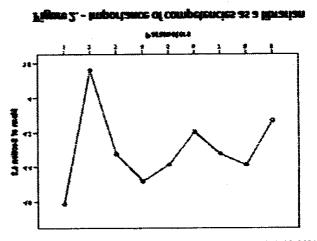
Sri Lankan universities managed under the university Grants Commission (UGC). There were thirty five higher education institutions operating under the UGC, including fifteen Universities, three Campuses and seventeen institutes. All Librarians, Deputy Librarians, Senior Assistant Librarians and Assistant Librarians, employed in them are considered as university Librarians. The information professionals should always prepare to adopt environmental changes. Library and information professionals' aim is to provide the right information to the right user at the right time and at right cost. So librarians must develop the competencies to function their library services effectively and efficiently. Many library organizations have tried to present some guidelines on the essential competencies for the library professionals. Competencies are the skills, technical knowledge and personal attributes that enable individuals to contribute positively to their jobs' effectiveness and efficiency. In Sri Lankan university context, there were no competencies identified for librarians. The focus of the research is to elaborate the necessity of gaining, adopting and improving professional competencies of Sri Lankan university librarians. For the purpose of focusing the importance of this study, the following objectives are expected to achieve.

1. To identify the University librarians' competencies.
2. To examine the competencies required for the LIS (Library and Information Science) Professionals in the fast changing environment.

Research was conducted in a quantitative manner where, primary and secondary data were collected. The secondary data were gathered from the books, articles, research reports,

previous University studies and other relevant periodicals by various scientists and authors relating to the topic. In addition, the primary data were collected through a questionnaire for the review of University librarians' competencies through a sample size of ninety, from the University librarians in the state Universities in Sri Lanka and collected LIS resource person's views through a questionnaire representing resource persons who were 15 in number. All data were analyzed with reference to the aforesaid hypothesis and the variables stipulated in the questionnaire. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data in the descriptive manner so that the interpretation of outcomes and achieving of research objectives was elaborated in the data analysis. Librarians and information officers in any organization in Sri Lanka were considered as the population on this research. University professional library staff, including Librarians, Deputy Librarians, Senior Assistant Librarians and Assistant Librarians considered were as a sample on this research.

were very essential for the Sri Lankan University Librarians and there were nine competencies identified for the university librarians. Both parties mentioned that most valuable competency of the Sri Lankan Librarians is the communication skill, out of the identified nine competencies. Arranged from the highest to the lowest; communication skill, knowledge expertise, administration skills, human resource management, accessibility of getting exposure, planning and projects management, marketing concept and skills, training management, and outstanding exception (Figure 2). This research identified conducting workshops, seminars, conferences; short courses, industrial training and foreign training to update university librarians' to be the important factors to increase the competencies for Librarians.

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