

Review Article

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

Abstract:

The study and practice of law is essentially library-based. 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," commonly known as the "computer age," is characterised by rapid technological advancement and an explosion of information. This technological advancement is the vogue that is now pervading the study, teaching, and research of law. A lot of social media tools now exist, but the sourcing and usage of these tools by users of law libraries pose serious challenges to law librarians in academic settings. The librarian who is working in the library needs to have skills like curation, leadership, subject knowledge in law, research skills, technological skills, and discipline to maintain the library and be friendly with users. In this paper, the author explains the skills required for the law librarian in the digital era. These form the focus of this paper. Recommendations were made on the issues therein.

Keywords: information, judicial libraries, law librarian, information technology, legal Databases

Introduction:

In the 21st century, the law library functions as a service division for the judicial system. It is essential to the efficient operation of a society that upholds the law, the advancement of legal education, and the administration of justice. Judicial officers utilise it to access pertinent reports and Acts when they don't have the time to thoroughly go through the plethora of information available in the law library. Law libraries are specialised libraries that provide relevant legal literature and periodicals to their clients, the majority of whom are lawyers, law professors, attorneys, and other professionals in related subjects. In the modern era, knowledge spread widely due to publishing and the manipulation of data by computer networks. The phrase is frequently used in reference to the use of digital media, including music, video, television, cameras, the internet, and cell phones. Other names for the information age include the computer age and the information era. The spread of knowledge and the use of communications have changed as a result of technological developments (Lallana, 2003). This technological advancement has boosted knowledge's free flow and made it feasible to obtain it quickly, which was before unattainable. All of these technologies deal with the transfer and storage of data. The revolution has an effect on every area of human endeavour, including the legal sector.

Marke (1964) once remarked that the future for law librarianship is highly challenging and exciting, pregnant with the seeds of great changes. We, as law librarians, must anticipate these changes and plan for them rather than fear them. We must influence the direction of their course,

lest they overwhelm us and pass us by. Information and communication technology (ICT) is the vogue that is now pervading the study, teaching, and research of law. Legal information is important not only for the advancement of a case but also to prevent litigation.

Judicial libraries

The High Court libraries dispersed over 18 states and the Supreme Court library in New Delhi are only two instances of the numerous libraries in India that are linked to the courts. The Bar Association also runs affiliated libraries for the Supreme Court and High Courts. The county law libraries that are maintained locally in other parts of the nation lack an equivalent. Nonetheless, just like their American counterparts, the holdings of these judicial libraries are primarily used by the judges who use them.

Nature of the Judicial Library

There are libraries for courts (judicial libraries), the ministry of justice, university law departments, and organisations that deal with law (NJI, NJC, etc.). They provide services to judges, magistrates, law students, practising 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. Information-era Technologies

One of the tools that has enabled this unrestricted flow of knowledge is the internet. To enable the constant transfer of information from one computer to another, the internet is made up of millions of computers that are worldwide interconnected. You can find these computers in homes, businesses, government organisations, or educational institutions. When people talk about going online, they mean that they are connected to the internet. The internet may be used as a resource to find just about anything of interest.

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 programmes.

2. 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. 2007 (Germain)

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.

E-mail Communication

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

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.

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,

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.

LAW LIBRARIES:

By virtue of their distinctive collection and services, law librarians and law libraries play a special and crucial role in determining the standard of the legal system at all levels. A law library is a specialised library used for legal research by law students, attorneys, judges and their law clerks, historians, and other experts in the field of legal history.

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 encyclopaedias, 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)

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND LAW LIBRARIANSHIP

Due to the ongoing expansion of information and the alteration in judicial and legislative decisions, law librarianship is the most dynamic and difficult profession. As a result, information and choices that develop and change quickly must be captured, maintained, updated, and made available via law libraries and librarianship. Given this connection, law libraries may not be able to obtain and deliver this information and other pertinent materials for the benefit of their clients—judge, defence and prosecuting attorneys, arbitrators, academic lawyers, and members of the public—without the use of information technology. According to Dada (1989), law libraries, particularly reference It is required of libraries to put together helpful bibliographies, directories, manuals, guides, and descriptions of their holdings and recent purchase. 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 (IT). Information technology improves library services provided to judges, attorneys, law students, and the general public as well as global access to legal resources.

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

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.” (Shrivastava, 2008)

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 (2022) defines a law librarian as legal information professional whose job is to research, analyse, 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 organisations. 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. Roles of Law Librarianship in the Emerging Knowledge Society

The Special Libraries category includes law librarianship, which is an extremely difficult career. Regarding the types of information needed, forms, accessibility, and timeliness, the user's information requirements in this field differ. According to Frederic (1963), a law library is an institution of extraordinary social significance in a free society and an essential component of the administration of justice. Law students, instructors, practitioners, judges, civil servants, members of local government, lawmakers, jurists, researchers, and the general public are all potential users of law libraries. By facilitating public access to legal resources, law libraries play a crucial part in the administration of legal information in courts, law firms, and academic institutions to support the justice system in the twenty-first century. Law librarianship in India 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 user can seek the assistance of a law librarian to determine their areas of knowledge gaps and to find the pertinent information sources required to complete a task. This is indicative of how law librarians' duties are being redefined in the knowledge economy, with a particular emphasis on helping users acquire and access current, pertinent legal information. It is implied that law librarians themselves must not only be knowledgeable in their chosen profession but also demonstrate a sincere interest in the needs of the user. The legal librarian will greatly benefit from ongoing personal growth, it is suggested.

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

T.H.E 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

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.

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 phenomena that has improved the free flow of information and the instant transfer of knowledge. Law librarians must reimagining themselves as knowledge managers rather than information managers and make sure that library resources are accessible for aiding the imparting of knowledge, skills, ideas, and thoughts necessary for individual empowerment in the legal system.

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