Preface

Libraries are under ever-increasing pressure to enhance their technological capabilities in order to meet academic demands and compete with alternative information providers for survival. This transition period of shifting to the modern librarianship from traditional librarianship is very crucial, particularly to the librarians of the developing countries, as they are experiencing severe shortages in terms of funds, technical persons, and ICT experts. In addition, there is an obvious reluctance towards technology and new information media from the part of users as well as from the library staff. The main reason for this divergence is the fear of technology due to lack of confidence. Academic libraries are an essential component of any educational institution, be it a college or a university. The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) recognizes this fact and asserts that university libraries are indispensable to the functioning of universities and the achievement of their academic missions. So important are university libraries to IFLA that it has a University Libraries section, which seeks to promote: "the integration of the library in the core institutional functions of learning, teaching, research, and services" (IFLA, 2003). Accordingly, the academic library exists to assist the academic, researcher, or student in the process of their self-discovery, adoption of high ideals in life, and the improvement of scholastic efficiency through self-study and the upliftment of the capacity for critical thinking. Before the advent of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) academic libraries were the sole custodians of information, which was predominantly in print. ICT brought changes necessitated by new information packaging. Academic libraries are faced with managing hybrid resources (print and electronic) and are challenged to acquire the necessary skills. Furthermore, electronic information is eroding the monopoly of academic libraries as the sole access point to information. Nevertheless, academic libraries can maintain their place by serving as an access point to both print and electronic resources. This book discusses the nature of academic libraries in the digital age, including resources, the concept of universal access, and the role of universal access to print and electronic resources. It also presents and describes a conceptual model of resource access for academic libraries in developing countries.

The basic function of the academic library is to assist and support the study and teaching that goes on in the academic institution. In this effort, the academic library aims to capture and hold the interest of the academic community's reading, to produce intelligent users of all types of documents, and to cultivate in users an appreciation of libraries as academic institutions. The academic library provides essential reading materials and documents for research. In order to determine the extent to which an academic library is achieving its objectives, one should examine the extent to which the users use the library resources. A well-established library is essential for any academic institution. As a focal point for teaching, learning, and research, it is expected to provide standard information resources. Today, academic libraries are struggling to keep their place as the major source of inquiry in the face of emerging digital technology.

Digital technology has revolutionized not only the way information is packaged, processed, stored, and disseminated, but also how users seek and access information. Academic libraries no longer restrict themselves to print services such as collection development, cataloguing and classification, circulation and reference services, current awareness, selective dissemination, and other bibliographic services, but have extended their efforts to interdisciplinary concepts and computer software and hardware and telecommunication engineering and technology.

A librarian is a person who looks after the storage and retrieval of information. In a workplace, the librarian is usually a professional who is trained and educated to deal with information in a wide variety of formats and settings. Librarians help users to navigate the voyage of Internet and evaluate information efficiently. Librarians offer a helping hand for users to find out the required piece of information and to use it for personal and professional purposes. Due to the advent of Internet, World Wide Web, and the proliferation of the online catalogue, the role of librarians has changed. Now librarians are more efficient and have new roles as intermediary, facilitator, end-user trainer/educator, Web organizer and designer, researcher, interface designer, knowledge manager/professional, and sifter of information resources. This book is likely to prove useful and informative for LIS professionals, academicians, academic administrators, higher education researchers, students, and those interested in modern librarianship.

S. Thanuskodi
Alagappa University, India

REFERENCES

IFLA. (2003, June). *Newsletter, 31.*