

Transformation for Academic Libraries: Experiences at St. Xavier's College Library, Kolkata

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ABSTRACT

Transformation means a complete change in the appearance or character of something or someone, especially so that that thing or person is improved. So, it is a matter of improvement – a chase towards the better; probably not towards the best as time cannot be foreseen to be ended, so changes happen, and transformation will also be in motion. Academic libraries cater information to the targeted population within the four walls of the academic setup. However, the concept is being changed every day and every moment. Now library services of such libraries are gradually breaking the barrier of four walls and thus these are available to the users outside the four walls. This is a case of transformation i.e., a matter of radical change, not in the concept but in the real world of library services. Here in this paper the transformation in the physical form as well as in the digital aspects of an academic library and benefits accrued from it are delivered having a case study on St. Xavier's College Central Library, Kolkata-16.

Keywords: transformation, digital transformation, academic library, college library

I. INTRODUCTION

Society has been transforming every moment since its formation due to its interaction with the outside world as every open system does. Factors behind this are uncountable. However, the main factor responsible for this is Nature, more specifically Her intelligence @ human brain. The library, being a component of greater society, would not have been an exception to that transformation. Transformation means a complete change in the appearance or character of something or someone, especially so that that thing or person is improved (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus). So, it is a matter of improvement – a chase towards the better, probably not towards the best as time cannot be foreseen to be ended, so changes happen and transformation will also be in the motion.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Michalak (2012) focused on the changing pattern of user's expectations for library services and Library collections. He mentioned some factors behind the change. Among these factors technology is a vital aspect. According to him the transformed library is technology diffused, collaborative and outward facing.

D. Wilson (2020) stressed on integration of democratic and transformational leadership practices in academic libraries which can help in decision making, relationship building, communication, equality and also knowing the environment.

Tait, Martzoukou and Reid (2016) pointed out the role of IT utilities in the transformation of academic libraries. Providing collaborative learning spaces, more electronic resources, etc can be made available for transformation of academic libraries.

Llewellyn (2019) said that academic libraries are transforming learning, teaching, and research through digital transformations, partnership, and student experience, enhancing their role in higher education.

Cox (2019) pointed out that research data services in academic libraries have spread globally but future ambitions and skills shortages remain with potential for transformational impacts.

Areas emphasised for transformation include IT utilities, electronic resources, leadership, etc.

III. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The present paper highlights the transformation of an academic library namely Fr. Verstraeten Central Library of St Xavier's College, 30 Park Street, Kolkata-16. Transformation in respect of infrastructure- i.e., physical appearance of the library and the library facilities during the period from 2015 to 2018 is dealt with and the benefits arising out of this transformation - mainly increase in usage of library resources also to be discussed.

IV. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Transformation in the physical form as well as in the digital aspects of Fr. Verstraeten Central Library of St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Kolkata is discussed in this academic endeavor.

V. METHODOLOGY

Basically, it is a case study explained with the help of primary source of information available in the form of reports (in-house) that is utilized along with the human experience gathered out of working in the atmosphere concerned.

Fr. Verstraeten Central Library, St Xavier's College: A Brief Look on Its Transformation:

The Society of Jesus, a Catholic Minority Religious body, established St. Xavier's in 1860. It got affiliation to Calcutta University in 1862. Although this educational institution gives emphasis on the educational and cultural needs of the Christian minority community, there is no discrimination in respect of caste, creed and nationality. Admission to this academic institution is open for all.

St. Xavier's College (Autonomous) Kolkata has the following courses:

- i) UG Courses, ii) PG Courses, and iii) PhD Programmes in select subjects under Arts, Science, and Commerce.

It also offers various professional courses under Career Oriented Programmes.

The college had the following different libraries before January 2009:

1. Arts & science lending library with a reading room
2. B. Com. lending library with a reading room
3. Eco, Pol. Sc. & Sociology lending library

Two reading rooms were also there, namely, the Arts & Science Reading Room and B. Com. Reading Room.

Pitfalls of This Decentralized Library System:

The call numbers of the books were inconsistent and unscientific. Books with similar edition and similar title have different call numbers based on different classification systems, and the multiple copies of a single book with such different call numbers were housed in different libraries -- that is, there was no standardization of call numbers.

Breakthrough:

These libraries were integrated into one centralized entity. Then this single entity i.e., the Central Library started working on January 16, 2009 with open access systems for its patrons removing the barriers of restricted access to library materials.

Benefits Accrued from This Phase of Transformation:

The new centralized system offers open access to the readers. Now they can easily find their required materials from the library shelves. Timely access to library documents has become a reality. It results in an increase in the use of library materials to a greater extent under this new centralized open access system.

Due to no standardization of call numbers, as said earlier, it was not at all possible to develop a centralized library database. The college got College with Potential for Excellence (CPE) status in 2006. Then a new project entitled "Bibliographic Description Conversion and Standardization of Documents" was undertaken with the financial support from UGC under CPE Scheme in January 2008. This was a retro-conversion project with the following objectives:

- To introduce a new classification system namely, Dewey Decimal Classification-22nd edition
- To introduce a new subject descriptor system namely, Sear's List of Subject Headings-18th edition
- To introduce a new cataloguing system according to the scheme of Anglo-American Cataloguing Rule-2nd edition
- To bring the entire library collection under the single umbrella of three above-mentioned internationally standardized document processing systems

Introduction of Library Management Software (LMS):

To provide data-entry for developing a centralized library database the library management software LIBSYS 4.0 (Release 6) had been introduced. With this it was possible to develop a fully automated catalogue search system and to develop a fully automated barcode-based circulation system.

Implementation of Open-Source Library Management Software (LMS) in 2014:

Implementation of KOHA, an open-source integrated library management software, was another change that happened in 2014. It replaced LIBSYS, an expensive proprietary LMS. This LMS helps in automation of library house-keeping operations. These operations include library users' registration, library materials (books, journals – both printed as well as electronic resources) acquisition, cataloguing, circulation (book issue/return/reissue) of library materials mainly printed books, accounting aspects like library overdue fine calculation, total expenses calculation, generation of different types of reports for management decision making, etc. Management of branch libraries is easy with lesser amount of budgetary allocation. WEB OPAC (online public access catalogue) searching facility with dedicated server was initiated.

Management of Branch Libraries

Two branch libraries namely, Raghampur Campus Library at Raghampur, the rural face of St Xavier's College and B. Ed Library at the main campus. These libraries are managed and controlled with this open source LMS.

Introduction of RFID Technology:

Another feature in this transformation phase in 2014 is the introduction of RFID technology. KOHA software has been integrated with RFID technology and installation of self-circulation kiosk to handle rush hour transactions for saving time of the users is also done in this year. The entire library is now integrated with the Gate Security System with the help of two pedestal antennas (RFID enabled).

Repositioning of the Library in 2015:

Every year St. Xavier's College (Autonomous) Central Library, now christened as Fr. Verstraeten Central Library (Fr. Verstraeten was the first principal of this college), grows in terms of collection but in this year, it grew in terms of safety and security (a vital parameter for any service sector to be qualitative) as this year witnessed a relocation of the Central Library to a new place – a place having more safety and more space. It was shifted from the main building to the old hostel building inside the Park Street Campus. It was repositioned with more space and also with more safety in terms of the weight burden of above 80,000 books (now these books are kept in the ground floor) which was earlier located in the second floor of the main building which is very old.

Floor Area in the old block: 1,115 sq. mts.

Floor Area in the new block with more space: 1,323.55 sq. mts

New library housed in: The ground floor (lending section)
and 1st floor (reading Section).

Safety in the new block: Burden of over 80,000 books at the ground floor.

Newly Added Section: E-Resource Access Centre and a seminar room.

Floor Area Management for Lending Library:

- **Mezzanine Floor** added to the Lending Section:

To expand the physical space of the library a mezzanine floor has been built in the Lending Section of the library which fetches a picturesque view of the Lending Section.

- **Uniform Rack System:**

Library Service is under the purview of the Service Sector. So, to make the service qualitative **physical appearance plays a vital role**. Considering this, a uniform rack system has been installed throughout the Lending and Reading area of the library.

Other Salient Features in Fr. Verstraeten Central Library at the New Place:

- Three lending counters (fully air-conditioned)
- Two reading rooms (fully air-conditioned)
- Safe and purified drinking water
- 24×7 CCTV Surveillance
- Cubicle for faculty members

Infrastructural Development @ E-Resources Management:

- **Fr. Verstraeten Central Library E-Resource Centre for Advanced Studies and Research:**

This is a newly developed state-of-the-art E-Resource Library for accessing e-resources. It works via college intranet. The patrons can access e-resources with the help of tabs, smart phones, and other devices. It started working from August 2017. Here e-books are downloaded and stored in a dedicated server (IP Address available for users). These are available only for viewing, no downloading facility available keeping in mind the copyright norms.

This is available for the researchers and advanced learners of academic fraternity of St. Xavier's College. It is a step ahead to keep the college library abreast of the technological advancement of the modern world of the information age.

Its instant access feature would 'save the time of the readers' in its true sense as it does not make them rely on the charity of so-called hi-speed internet services. This endeavor was an example of practical implication of the Father of Library and Information Science Prof. S R Ranganathan's laws of Library and Information Science- truly a growing organism in its exposure when space crunch is an inevitable issue in the coming days.

- **Institutional Collaboration to Access E-Resources Through Resource Sharing:**

To facilitate access to the increasing number of digital resources the Central Library has the institutional membership of the following:

1. American Library
2. British Council Library
3. National Library and Informational Services Infrastructure for Scholarly Content (NLIST) hosted by INFLIBNET
4. Developing Library Network (DELNET)
5. National Digital Library of India

Digital Resources:

Digital resources for on-campus and off-campus remote access include the following:

1. Prowess IQ (an online database) hosted by Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE)
2. Economic Outlook (an online database) hosted by CMIE
3. ProQuest Online Database
4. Indiastat Online Database
5. E-book procurement on perpetual subscription

Introduction of Anti-Plagiarism Software to Facilitate Research Activities with Academic Integrity:

i-Thenticate, an internet-based similarity detection service software, (hosted by the American Company Turnitin. LLC) on annual subscription was procured to help research community.

Introduction of Institutional Repository:

Open-source software DSpace has been installed for digitalization of institutional resources.

Computerized Library Attendance System:

To measure the footfall of the Central Library an in-house developed computerized attendance system has been installed which also helps to generate automated reports for the students with Library Hours.

Total Collection of the Library includes the following [As on 30th June 2023]:

Items	Total number
No. of books (Lending section)	62,996
No. of books (Reading section)	24,492
No. of Books (Book Bank Section)	1,237
No. of Periodicals	128
No. of PhD Thesis (awarded to the College Research Scholars)	33
Databases	6
E-Journals	47
Anti-Plagiarism software	2

Overall Impact of Transformation:

Access is now open, and it is very easy.

Safety and security are ensured.

Communication barriers are removed with e-mail alerts, signage and display in monitor.

Reliable and assured services with huge resources, both print and non-print, are ensured.

The number of footfalls has increased many a fold.

VI. FINDINGS

CENTRAL LIBRARY FOOTFALL DATA 2018(July) - 2023(June)					
	2018(July) -2019(June)	2019(July)-2020 (June)	2020(July)-2021(June)	2021(July)-2022(June)	2022(July)-2023(June)
Koha (All Category Total)	96578	74511	4978	21115	72819
NLIST (Users)	479	671	2733	1223	1299
CMIE ProwessIQ (Total Hits Consumed)	110	697	4069	767	2613
CMIE Economic Outlook (Total Hits Consumed)	35	49	1204	143	175
IndiaStat (Total Views)	2154	5526	1408	4348	2701
iThenticate (Document Count)	227	5759	8422	7726	6347
ProQuest (Searches_Platform)	0	0	981	4191	3752
Reading Room Usage Data	5155	13107	141	2319	18955
Total	104738	100320	23936	41832	108661

Library usage shows an increasing trend. Academic years 2019-2020, 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 were greatly affected by COVID-19; if we compare the data during normalcy for the years 2018-2019 and 2022-2023, then we see that the usage was increased from 1,04,738 to 1,08,661. (ProQuest subscription started from the academic year 2020-2021).

VII. CONCLUSION

Our context in the matter of transformation is centered round academic libraries only. If we, the librarians, do not entertain or embrace the change happening in the society, transformation is quite impossible to be materialized. Managing change effectively and efficiently is prerequisite to have a desired result on transformation. Time is a variable concept- always moves ahead and gives birth to new phenomenon every moment which ushers transformation. We, the librarians, must be careful of this.

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