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## UNIT 4 LIBRARY STAFF: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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### 4.0 LEARNING OUTCOMES

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After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- identify difference between professional and paraprofessional librarians;
- explain the functions, roles and responsibilities of library staff;
- define the role and responsibilities of professional and paraprofessional librarians; and
- describe the key competencies of professional and paraprofessional librarians.

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### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

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This Unit discusses in detail what do librarians and other library staff members do in a library, what roles and responsibilities do they perform in meeting their mandated mission. Library is a service-oriented organisation and users are its focus; customers' satisfaction is their highest priority. To meet this mission, the typical tasks that librarians do are several such as to manage and resource a library, supervise and lead staff, design, direct, formulate policies and apply them to services to meet the information needs of users. They provide expert advice or consultancy services on strategic library management

matters. They develop strategic plans, prepare budget and make submissions and briefings before general management. In larger libraries, librarians manage major projects including infusion of information technology systems and applications, provide leadership, perform managerial and specialist roles, engage in decision making and judgement on strategic matters. Some librarians undertake programmes to market and promote library and information services. In sum, librarians manage information organisations, information resources, information services and apply several tools and technologies for the purpose.

Library performance depends upon how effectively do librarians perform their roles and responsibilities at different levels of management and how do they share their responsibilities among different classes of library staff in meeting their mission. This Unit discusses in detail the roles and responsibilities of library staff, discovers how their roles are changing, what factors are influencing their roles and what kind of core competencies do they need to possess at different levels of management so that they are able to carry out their roles effectively.

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## 4.2 STAFFING PATTERNS OF LIBRARIES

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Libraries need staff for running their operations and services and meeting their missions. The staff recruited for the purpose is positioned at different levels of library management. It is grouped into three classes: professional, paraprofessional and non-professional positions. The professionals are those library employees who have acquired the skills and training in librarianship and possess at least a first degree or its equivalent in library and information studies and are employed on the career cadre of 'librarianship' in the library system. The paraprofessionals are qualified library staff holding diploma/ certificate in librarianship; they assist librarians in the technical and service functions of the library. The non-professional employees comprise library attendants who attend to all patrons and willingly give assistance when needed. Their duties include cleaning and shelving books, routine reading of the shelves and such other duties that may be assigned by the librarian. The non-professionals group also includes a wide range of staff like administrative, clerical and office staff for administrative services.

Grouping library staff into three classes has been the staffing pattern of libraries for the last several decades. This pattern is still the mode despite the fact that over the years libraries have since undergone a series of transformations in their information environment, in the library tools and technologies and in the dynamics of user behaviour. In the composition of total library staff, paraprofessionals account for bulk of the staff and they constitute a vital force in the running of library operations and services.

The division of labour between the two groups – professionals and paraprofessionals – is clear. While professional librarians do the more complex and intellectually rigorous jobs entailing sophisticated judgment calls, supervision and complex operations, on the other hand paraprofessionals perform those tasks that are considered routine in nature. Clerical work typically refers to a variety of office and administrative support duties. In the recent decades, libraries have seen significant blurring of the line between the two groups and now the overlap is such that sometimes it is frequently difficult to identify a staff member as professional or paraprofessional because of availability of more qualified staff for junior positions also.

### Points to Remember

The staff in libraries is distributed into following three classes:

- a) professionals: librarians and other library specialists who possess at least a bachelor's degree or its equivalent in library and information studies.
- b) paraprofessionals: support staff including library assistants, library technicians who possess at least diploma/ certificate in librarianship.
- c) nonprofessionals: library attendants who possess at least high school education. This category of library staff also includes clerical and office staff for administrative services.

### Self Check Exercise

**Note:** i) Write your answer in the space given below.

ii) Check your answer with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

- 1) Briefly mention the categories of staff required in a library and their importance in running library operations.

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## 4.3 MEANING OF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

**Roles:** Role has multiple meanings. It is used to define the exact position a person holds in a library, say, university librarian, deputy librarian, or assistant librarian. Role also refers to what a person does to meet a set of expectations attached to a job or position. A job usually includes several roles. For example, a manager in business organisation is expected to play several roles including leadership, understanding, problem solving, advice and encouragement. Likewise a librarian managing a library is expected to play several roles including collection development, information guide, information provider, information analyst, or technology application leader. Role is thus a description of what a person does in a job or expectations attached to a job or position. A job position or job title is just a convenient name for a role.

**Responsibilities:** Roles outline what functions are essential to meeting expectations from a job; responsibilities imply accountability for the tasks completed in a job. Responsibilities also detail tasks to be completed, results to be achieved in a job and for which s/he can be held accountable. Responsibilities can usually be quantified, such as attending to an average number of clients on reference desk over a specific period of time, or providing full text of e-articles on demand in a week. In sum, responsibilities are a summary of related job duties/ obligations in a job or position.

**Tasks, Duties, Job:** Responsibility is about accountability for actions or inactions in a job; duties are an employee's obligations to perform tasks in a job; duties constitute a major component of the job.

A task is the simplest and most basic element in the job; it is a unit of work, or a set of

actions needed to produce some result. A task is rarely the whole duty; rather it is a part of the duty area, e.g., writing a memo, sorting the mail, etc. Complex positions in the organisation may include a large number of tasks, which are sometimes referred to as **job functions**.

A job is a group of functions, roles and responsibilities that an employee is obliged to conduct. Jobs have titles.

**Points to Remember**

- ❖ A job usually includes several roles. Role refers to what an employee does to meet expectations attached to a job or position.
- ❖ Responsibilities imply accountability for the tasks completed or to be completed in meeting the expectations.
- ❖ Duties are an employee’s obligations to perform tasks in a job; duties constitute a major component of the job.
- ❖ A job is a collection of functions, roles and responsibilities that an employee is obliged to conduct. Jobs have titles.

**Self Check Exercise**

**Note:** i) Write your answer in the space given below.

ii) Check your answer with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

2) Briefly mention the differences between roles and responsibilities in a job or position.

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## 4.4 CHANGING LIBRARY LANDSCAPE

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The library technology landscape is changing rapidly. For managing their mandated missions and services, libraries are showing growing dependence on internet and networks, library management systems and many kinds of other technologies. The emerging digital publication trends, new forms of scholarship and publication and virtual forms of publication in various formats have shifted the focus in librarianship from library-centered service to information centered service. Technology has since become mission-critical to the libraries to manage complex collections of print, digital and electronic materials, to deal with both owned and licensed content, to better integrate with the enterprise infrastructure of the broader institutions through Web services and Application Programming Interface (APIs) and to present modern user interfaces.

### 4.4.1 Factors Impacting Library Staff Roles

The emerging information environment — which has had a major impact in the ways professional librarians manage library systems, resources patrons and services — is redefining their roles. Professional librarians have begun to emerge as technology application leaders, leading the change from physical access to e-access to information resources. With the exponential growth in the body of digital information, librarians

have begun to do the role of educator, guide, instructor offering instructions and assistance to users on how to use internet and search engines to search e-journals, online databases and catalogues, etc. They now offer information literacy and computer literacy programmes for training users. Librarians nowadays design library aides such as web sites, online tutorials to improve access; they evaluate information resources that they select and link to websites and in some cases even manage organisational websites. As innovators, they even take up tasks to build bibliographic and citation databases, institutional repositories, discovery layers and create new user interfaces as needed for faster online searching. They nowadays negotiate with publishers as business managers for subscription to e-journals on consortium rates and settle terms for online access for current e-journals and perpetual access for discontinued journal resources. More than that, librarians play their role as image maker to project a better image of the library to the outside world and to gain management support for more funds. Many a librarians have become information analysts educating top management on institutional performance in research vis-à-vis others.

The factors that seem to have been instrumental in bringing changes in the role of librarians and information professionals are several. Important ones are summarised as follows:

- Information explosion
- Emerging digital information environment
- Searching problems in traditional libraries
- Emerging low cost information technologies
- Changing social needs
- Changing customer behaviour
- Emerging technology needs
- Changing public image of libraries and librarians
- New generation needs – need to improve access, create literate environment.

As the roles of professional librarians change, their responsibilities also change, because roles determine and redefine the job responsibilities. For example, the job responsibilities of librarians in the management of collection development have changed ever since libraries witnessed shift in library acquisitions from ownership to access and control; instead of purchasing resources on ownership basis, libraries lay more emphasis now on licenses for remote access to e-resources and accordingly we see shift in the role and job responsibilities of acquisition librarians. They now coordinate the implementation, process and ongoing maintenance of the electronic resource collection through the life cycle of each resource. They liaison with publishers, aggregators to ensure that electronic resources are as widely accessible as possible, promote the use of these resources and coordinate the library's response to access issues that involve electronic resources.

#### **Points to Remember**

- ❖ In the contemporary library information landscape, technology has since become mission-critical to the libraries to manage complex collections of print, digital and electronic materials. Accordingly, acquisition librarian has become electronic resource librarian.
- ❖ Besides technology, there are several other factors that have been instrumental in expanding and redefining the roles of professional librarians.

**Self Check Exercise**

- Note:** i) Write your answer in the space given below.  
 ii) Check your answer with the answers given at the end of this Unit.  
 3) Briefly mention the factors influencing the roles of professional librarians.

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**4.5 LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS: THEIR ROLES**

**4.5.1 Managerial Roles and Responsibilities**

Libraries are highly structured organisations hierarchically. All libraries have employees working at different levels of responsibility in the hierarchy. Hierarchy of these employee positions is called Levels of Management. The level of management in the hierarchy determines a chain of command, the amount of authority and status the employee enjoys in his position. Library organisations differ in the levels of management in the hierarchy. The number of management levels in any library depends upon the size of its collection, library technology applications, users’ strength and the work force. A university library system supports three levels of management: top level, middle level and baseline level. Librarians working at these levels play their roles both as library specialist and as library manager. The kinds of managerial roles that professional librarians play in a university library at different management levels are discussed below:

**Top Level** – At the top level of the university library system is the university librarian. S/he serves as the principal manager of the university library. Her/his role in library management is mainly administrative, managerial and/or specialist. S/he is responsible for leadership to the library, change management in the library and delegation and staff empowerment. S/he is the source of authority to lead, direct and manage library services of strategic significance to the university academia, students and the university management. S/he devotes more time on planning and library coordinating functions. Her/his major responsibilities are summarised as follows:

- To lay down the vision, mission, objectives and broad policies of the library in consultation with library committees and top management of the university.
- Lead the university library to achieve the highest level of excellence in all strategic dimensions of library activities.
- Issue necessary instructions for preparation of library budgets, procedures, schedules, etc.
- Prepare strategic plans and policies on library services, projects.
- Organise library staff into various functions and services.
- Control and coordinate the activities of all library units, departments.
- Maintain contacts with the outside library world.
- Provide advice, guidance and direction to the staff or arrange necessary advice on library programmes and activities.

- Exercise judgment and initiative to anticipate, conceptualise and resolve sophisticated problems that may have strategic and organisational impact.
- Contribute substantially to organisational performance, or to the body of professional or subject knowledge.
- Lead and manage significant organisational services, projects or programmes.
- Provide authoritative expert advice to the management, the organisation as a whole, or external parties.

**Middle Level** – At the middle level are deputy librarians who head branch library services, library teams or library departments. Their roles are both functional and specialist. As specialists, they are directly responsible for the management of library functions and services such as acquisitions, technical processing, print and e-journals, library automation, user services and others. They are required to perform several different roles of strategic importance within the library functions under their charge. They report to the top management for the functioning of their teams. Their responsibilities are summarised as follows:

- Execute the plans of the organisation in accordance with the policies and directives of the top management.
- Make plans for the units, departments under their charge.
- Send important reports and other important data to top level management.
- Evaluate performance of junior staff.
- Motivate lower level managers towards better performance.
- Secure equipment, materials and services required to support the performance of their roles.
- Exercise judgment and initiative in dealing with a range of complex and detailed operational or conceptual problems and tasks that may extend beyond the immediate work area.
- Undertake initiatives to develop and introduce enhancements to existing practices, systems and procedures.
- Overall staff supervision, projects and initiatives.
- Monitoring of technical standards and practices and writing and administrating grants.

**Base Line Level** – At the first level of library management in a university library are assistant librarians who report to deputy librarian or university librarian depending upon what their local practices are in the organisation. They work under general direction of a senior professional, deputy librarian, or the university librarian. They perform their roles as supervisors. Their responsibilities include:

- Provide professional library and information services.
- Assist in the development of library and information services and systems.
- Coordinate with other library teams on library and information management projects.
- Assign and supervise jobs and tasks to the support staff of the team members.
- Guide and instruct support staff in the team for day to day activities.

**Libraries: Basics and Contexts**

- They are responsible for the quality as well as quantity of output and service.
- Be responsible for providing training to the workers.
- Arrange necessary materials, resources for getting things done.
- Prepare periodical performance of support staff.
- Motivate support staff.

**Self Check Exercise**

**Note:** i) Write your answer in the space given below.

ii) Check your answer with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

- 4) What do you understand by term ‘levels of management’ in an organisation? Briefly describe the kinds of roles librarians perform at the middle level of management in a university library.

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**4.5.2 Specialist Roles and Responsibilities**

Library managers can be described by the functions they perform and the roles they play at different levels of management. In the last section we discussed roles that librarians perform as library managers at different levels of management. In this Sub-section we will look at the specialist roles that librarians perform in addition to their managerial roles. The Table 4.1 lists the specialist roles and responsibilities of professional librarians in managing technologies for library automation, e-access, local to global resources and collaboration with outside libraries.

**Table 4.1: Role and Responsibilities of Professional Library Staff**

<b>Roles</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
Technology application leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Identifying library technologies and their implementation.</li><li>● Developing websites, digitising/converting content.</li><li>● Technical support, system administration/maintenance, data conversion, data migration, system analysis and testing.</li><li>● Open source software development, usability testing, interoperability, and digital library technology.</li><li>● Metadata, access and retrieval mechanisms (bibliographic records, finding aids, EAD, MARC, DUBLIN Core records), quality control.</li><li>● Databases, subject guides, library aids, library interfaces, discovery layers, online tutorials, etc.</li></ul>



Collection development manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collection development and management of materials in all formats and in all models.</li> <li>• Licensing terms and agreements for subscribing online resources.</li> </ul>
Project manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write library project proposals for grants.</li> <li>• Determine scope and requirements of projects</li> <li>• Coordinate, execute, schedule activities, and control resources for projects such as digital library system installations, technical standards/practices, design, development and implementation, digital preservation, digital repository, digital contents aspects, etc.</li> </ul>
Educator, guide, and service provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information literacy, computer literacy, staff training, reference and public services, liaison, professional activities, and user studies.</li> <li>• Educate faculty members, helping them to understand the usefulness of e-resources and new modes of inquiry.</li> <li>• Educate students the process of gathering information from printed materials and electronic resources in a library.</li> <li>• Raise awareness that the process of gathering information is as important as the information itself.</li> </ul>
Information Provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide access to relevant information materials for research, teaching and academic development.</li> <li>• Create and develop motivating, flexible physical and digital learning spaces.</li> <li>• Collaborate with classroom teachers to plan, implement and evaluate course materials and content inquiry-based programs.</li> <li>• Provide and promote quality fiction to develop and sustain in students the habit of reading for pleasure and to enrich their intellectual, aesthetic, cultural and emotional growth.</li> </ul>
Information analyst	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyse citations in the published literature for mapping research and research assessment.</li> </ul>

### Self Check Exercise

**Note:** i) Write your answer in the space given below.

ii) Check your answer with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

5) Briefly outline the role and responsibilities of the professional librarian as technology application leader.

### 4.5.3 Skills and Knowledge Needed

The library environment within which librarians execute their core mission has changed dramatically. The use of electronic information and related technologies has become indispensable in the delivery of library services. Users are adapting to a new and ever changing digital information environment. To provide innovative, value-added services and to meet the evolving needs, new areas of expertise are developing. These considerations make it clear that the professional librarians must adapt to the changing information environment and build skills and knowledge accordingly. They need to develop core competencies in three broad areas: i) information technologies, ii) librarianship, and iii) organisation management so that they can play their roles and fulfil their responsibilities to the expectations of user clientele.

Core competencies are defined as a combination of skills and knowledge in such domains of knowledge as are important for organisational success, personal performance and career development. Besides, professional librarians need to possess certain personal competencies to work effectively and contribute positively to their organisations, users and profession. In particular, personal competencies range from being strong communicators to demonstrating value-addition of their contributions, to remaining flexible and positive in an ever-changing environment.

A summary of competencies as needed for professional librarians is displayed in Table 4.2 to 4.4. These competencies must be studied and advanced in order to succeed in managing libraries, resources, services and to be able to apply tools and information technologies for the purpose.

What is given in Tables 4.2 to 4.4 is a list of core competencies in IT, librarianship and organisation management. Fortunately, one need not have to acquire all of these competencies to be an effective library and information professional. What you need is just a mix of competencies from each category: some traditional librarianship skills, some value-adding skills, some level of familiarity with IT, some generic skills and some of the attitudes and traits and some domain knowledge. Traditional librarianship skills are still relevant especially their knowledge of information sources and searching, collection development, information organisation for storage and retrieval. But to remain relevant and effective in contemporary IT dominated environment, professional librarians need to be broad-based to know a little of everything; they also need to be an expert in a small number of areas.

One needs different sets of competencies for different types of information jobs in different environments. Information professionals working in corporate organisations and corporate libraries will probably need more value-adding skills, entrepreneurial skills and domain knowledge. Professionals working in academic libraries probably require more technology skills as well as traditional skills. Public librarians may need more social and community building skills. As the work environment can change rapidly, information professionals need to assess periodically which new skills they need to acquire and which current skills need to be strengthened. However, because of the individual's education background, aptitude and personality, it may be difficult for her/him to acquire certain types of competencies.

**Table 4.2: IT Competencies Needed for Library Staff**

Competency Area	Competency definition and skills required
<b>Core Technology</b>	<p>Advanced understanding and knowledge of hardware and software concepts in computers and networks, network equipments and peripheral devices. Can apply expertise for system administration, network administration, and security. Can apply software programs that perform basic computer and local area network functions.</p> <p><b><i>Demonstrable Skills and knowledge</i></b>                      Hardware                      Internet                      Operating Systems                      Software Applications                      Networking and security                      Server administration</p>
<b>Internet</b>	<p>Advanced understanding of the protocols, structure, organisation, and various web tools that make up the Internet</p> <p><b><i>Demonstrable Skills and knowledge</i></b>                      Internet                      Web Tools                      E-mail Applications                      Web Design &amp; Development                      Web markup languages</p>
<b>Library Systems &amp; IT Infrastructure</b>	<p>Advanced understanding of the systems that support automated library functions, including e-resources management, user interfaces, library information services, learning tools, and integration of information technology in libraries for appropriate changes</p> <p><b><i>Demonstrable Skills and knowledge</i></b>                      Library management systems                      Content management systems                      Digital library systems                      Digital library architecture                      Digital archiving and preservation                      Electronic resource management systems                      Software applications                      Database development and management systems                      Office tools                      Imaging tools and technologies                      Technical and quality standards                      Cloud based library systems                      New emerging technologies</p>
<b>IT Planning /Policies</b>	<p>Advanced knowledge and understanding of current and emerging trends in IT and to use this as the background to write IT policies, IT plans, and IT training programmes for IT infusion in libraries</p> <p><b><i>Demonstrable Skills and knowledge</i></b>                      Create, evaluate and implement library policies for computer, Internet, wireless usage, and technology disaster. Develop and maintain a library technology plan including a computer replacement plan in the context of emerging technologies.                      Develop and implement programmes for staff training in technologies.</p>

Table 4.3: Professional Competencies in Librarianship

Competency Area	Competency definition and skills required
<b>Collection Development and Management</b>	<p>Advanced knowledge of understanding the current and emerging concepts, issues and methods related to the selection, acquisition and management of resources in all formats. Can provide leadership and strategic direction in the transition from print to electronic acquisition models and also leadership in collaborative activities.</p> <p><b><i>Demonstrable Skills and knowledge</i></b>            Knowledge of Information sources  <i>life-cycle</i> management of electronic <i>resources</i>            Needs of users            Group purchasing models, methods            Analyse pricing patterns            Licensing and agreements – liabilities, warranties, perpetual access, embargos, permitted uses, cancellations            Usage statistics and analysis            User access authentication technologies            User interfaces for e-access            Consortial agreements            Vendor negotiations</p>
<b>Information Organisation and Retrieval</b>	<p>Advanced knowledge and understanding of information systems for information retrieval, resource discovery, resource description, open access scholarly indexing, personal information management protocols, and social tagging.</p> <p><b><i>Demonstrable Skills and knowledge</i></b>            Principles of Information organisation            Classification, taxonomies, and ontologies,            Cataloguing, bibliographic descriptions, metadata            Indexing            Information systems workflows</p>
<b>Information and user services</b>	<p>Knowledge and understanding of user service principles and techniques to provide users access to information, analytical and packaged information services. Design and organise online reference service.</p> <p><b><i>Demonstrable Skills and knowledge</i></b>            Database searching            Federated searching            Online search aids            Assistive and adaptive technology services            Online Reference/ Enquiries            Information literacy, computer literacy, and statistical literacy.            User services promotion skills.</p>

<b>Research and use studies</b>	<p>Knowledge and understanding of conducting research studies, writing and editing research reports and papers in the field of library and information science.</p> <p><b><i>Demonstrable Skills and knowledge</i></b>  Quantitative and qualitative research methods.  Literature survey to discover central research findings of the field.  Skills to assess the actual and potential value of new research  Knowledge of professional issues  Trends and professional development  Technical writing skills</p>
<b>Knowledge of Organisation</b>	<p>Knowledge and understanding of the vision, mission, and objectives of the organisation</p> <p><b><i>Demonstrable behaviour</i></b>  Commitment to the organisation's mission; its services and the materials it provides;  understand and accepts her/his role in accomplishing branch or department priorities  adheres to the policies, principles, standards, methodologies, procedures, rules, laws and regulations, guidelines of the organisation in the working context;  applies policies and procedures fairly;  supports organisational goals and policies</p>

**Table 4.4: Management Competencies Needed for Library Staff**

Competency Area	Competency definition and skills required
Leadership	<p>Be a leader, give advice, dare to think and make decision, provide vision and guidance to library staff, contribute effective strategies in library services and resources, set effective leadership to teams, directions and goals for the team accurately and appropriately, have astuteness and wit to tackle problems, be thoughtful, reliable, persuasive such that others will willingly follow ones lead, be a good model in terms of responsibility</p> <p><b><i>Demonstrable Skills and knowledge</i></b>  Communication and interpersonal skills  Vision, establishing direction  Collaborative leadership  Team leadership  Innovating  Change management skills  Overcoming obstacles  Mentoring skills  Motivation skills  Critical thinking</p>
Communication	<p>Ability to communicate and exchange information, correctly perceive and understand users, ability to negotiate, be a good listener, and use language correctly.</p> <p><b><i>Demonstrable Skills and knowledge</i></b>  Teaching and group presentation skills  Writing skills  Grant/proposal writing skills</p>

<p><b>Teamwork</b></p>	<p>Ability to work with others, build reliability, encourage unity and good relationships, make the team to achieve goals by encouraging freedom of thinking, accepting individual differences, exchanging knowledge, sharing responsibilities and jobs</p> <p><i><b>Demonstrable Skills and knowledge</b></i>                  Conflict management skills                  Change management skills                  Interpersonal communication skills                  Motivate team members</p>
<p><b>Organisation Management</b></p>	<p>Knowledge and understanding of new management principles and theories appropriate for libraries</p> <p><i><b>Demonstrable Skills and knowledge</b></i>                  Management of organisation and human resources                  Financial management                  Office management                  Promotion and marketing management                  Services and resources development                  Project management/leadership                  Collaboration and partnership development                  Strategic management for building cooperation among libraries, networking, and participation of stakeholders                  Legal issues</p>
<p><b>Personal attributes</b></p>	<p>Vision, adaptability, flexibility, and eagerness for new experiences and knowledge, employee centered, risk taking, multicultural awareness, commitment to the profession, integrity, creativity, self-awareness, ambition, tenacity, previous experience, tenacity, accountability (personal responsibility), personal energy, delegation, self-confidence, emotional intelligence, diplomacy</p>

**Points to Remember**

- ❖ To remain relevant in the changing information environment and to fulfil their roles and responsibilities to the expectations of user clientele, professional librarians need to develop core competencies in library technologies, management of library resources and services and leadership and organisation management.
- ❖ One needs different sets of competencies for different types of jobs in different information environments.
- ❖ Information professionals working in corporate organisations and corporate libraries will probably need more value-adding skills, entrepreneurial skills and domain knowledge.
- ❖ Professionals working in academic libraries probably require more traditional skills. Public librarians may need more social and community building skills.

**Self Check Exercise**

**Note:** i) Write your answer in the space given below.

ii) Check your answer with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

- 6) List skills that professional librarians should acquire to become effective as a technology application leader.

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## 4.6 LIBRARY PARAPROFESSIONALS: THEIR ROLES

Paraprofessional and clerical employees comprise the bulk of library staffs. Of these, library support staff or library paraprofessionals work in many important and often multiple roles. Paraprofessionals work in all types of libraries including public libraries, academic libraries, school libraries, special libraries and information centres. They assist professional librarians to acquire, prepare and organise materials. They run day-to-day library operations essential to effective functioning of the library and perform supportive customer services under the direction of a supervisor. In addition, they carry out such other tasks as are assigned by their supervisors. Typical jobs for paraprofessional library staff are: supportive customer services (circulation, public service), acquisition and technical services (acquisition, preparation, organisation and maintenance of materials), clerical work and assisting users in locating appropriate resources. Paraprofessionals in smaller libraries handle a wider range of duties, while those in large libraries usually specialise. For example, in large libraries, one person is responsible for binding, one for journal check-in, another for ILL borrowing and so forth. Staff responsible for the circulation duties is required to work only in circulation. In small libraries, paraprofessionals perform multitasking roles. They handle things like circulating materials, processing new materials, checking in magazines, answering the telephone and supervising students using the library independently. The budget determines how library staff roles are handled. Whenever there is not enough staff, support staff members are asked to do the jobs that aren't specifically their class. Who does what is determined on a local level although there are national trends.

### 4.6.1 Changing Roles of Paraprofessionals

New trends in library information environment (as outlined in Section 4.4) have caused the library to reexamine, redistribute and even eliminate some functions and services. For example, elimination of role of professional librarians as the reference desk librarian. The purchase of electronic-only journals and e-books has eliminated some traditional support staff roles. Libraries no longer subscribe print journals; libraries therefore no longer need support staff dedicated to that task. With new services and collections, the need for a higher level support staff member with the ability to handle functions in multiple areas of the library has become more evident. New trends are certainly redefining the roles of the library staff, effectively propelling professional librarians out of the physical library space called "library" and driving them into digital space - the academic home of the patron.

In the emerging scenario, paraprofessionals have to develop expertise in the technical aspects of running a library, operating and maintaining information services and systems such as the library OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue) and maintaining web platforms. They need to spend more time working directly with computers. They need

to take additional responsibilities, for instance train library users in the use of Web tools and other software including open source software. They also need to lend good technical support such as to install, troubleshoot and maintain hardware and software. The range and complexity of their duties will vary with each position, the size and type of the library they work in and each library's specific needs, goals, or mission.

#### 4.6.2 Roles and Responsibilities

Nowadays paraprofessionals work mainly in six major areas of the library service – technology support, helping users find information, collection development and maintenance, technical services and circulation. Given below are the kinds of roles and responsibilities that support staff members perform in these areas routinely to run various library functions and services.

##### Technology Initiatives and Support

- Teaching how to use the internet, technologies and equipments relevant to information seeking, access and use;
- Helping people set up email accounts;
- Teaching users how to use online resources e.g. e-books, e-journals;
- Giving users login details for library computers and helping them when they have problems/forget passwords, etc.;
- Providing technical support on systems and tools (i.e. loading e-books from website on to a e-reader);
- Maintain computer databases used to locate library materials; and
- Maintain databases, web pages and local area networks.

##### Helping Users Find Information

- Provide assistance to teachers and students by locating materials and helping to complete special projects.
- Answer routine reference inquiries and refer patrons needing further assistance to librarians.
- Guide patrons in finding and using library resources, including reference materials, audiovisual equipment, computers and electronic resources.
- Conduct reference searches, using printed materials and in-house and online databases.
  - Search library resources, compile bibliographies and provide information on subjects of interest to the organisations.
- Answer patrons' questions and help them find library resources.
- Deliver and retrieve items throughout the library by hand or using pushcart.
- Compile bibliographies and prepare abstracts on subjects of interest to particular organisations or groups.
- Help plan and participate in special programs, such as used-book sales and outreach programs.



### Collection Development

- Process print and non-print library materials to prepare them for inclusion in library collections;
- Verify bibliographical data for materials, including author, title, publisher, publication date and edition;
- Prepare order slips for materials to be acquired, checking prices and figuring costs;
- Promote/display/ weeding/ordering stock;
- Describe/catalogue/arrange physical or digital material in useful ways so that people can find it;
- Deal with stock management / complaints, etc. in accordance with IPR rules;

### Technical Processing

- Review subject matter of materials to be classified and select classification numbers and headings according to classification systems.
- File catalogue cards according to system used.

### Circulation

- Loan library materials to patrons and collect returned materials.
- Handle interlibrary loans.
- Register new users and issue library cards.
- Reserve, circulate, renew and discharge books and other materials.
- Enter and update patrons' records on computers.
- Process interlibrary loans for patrons.
- Compile and maintain records relating to circulation, materials and equipment.
- Collect fines and respond to complaints about fines.
- Issue identification cards to borrowers.
- Send out notices about lost or overdue books.
- Chase and collect books back and enforcing fines.

### Collection Maintenance

- Sort and re-shelve returned books, periodicals and other materials.
- Organise and maintain library materials.
- Sort books, publications and other items according to procedure and return them to shelves, files, or other designated storage areas.
- Perform shelf revision on a regular basis.
- Take actions to halt disruption of library activities by problem patrons.
- Organise and maintain periodicals and reference materials.

- Operate and maintain audiovisual equipment such as projectors, tape recorders and videocassette recorders.
- Prepare volumes for binding.
- Ensure that the library stacks are orderly and tidy.
- Putting back in place according to floor plan.

### 4.6.3 Basic Skills and Knowledge Needed

To play their roles effectively, paraprofessionals need to build competencies in important areas such as technology, access, technical processing, collections, teamwork and collection maintenance. The competency sets that they need to possess in each area are described below. These competency sets are adapted from the ALA-APA recommendations for their certification program designed for library support staff.

#### Technology

- Ability to assist and train users to operate public equipment, connect to the internet, use library software applications and access library services from remote locations.
- Ability to demonstrate role of technology in creating, identifying, retrieving and accessing information resources with appropriate information discovery tools.
- Ability to perform basic troubleshooting of technical problems and resolve or refer those problems as appropriate.
- Ability to access and use basic assistive technologies, where appropriate, to ensure that all users have equitable access to technology.
- Ability to use technology and to use it to enhance the overall effectiveness of a library, including web based methods of improving technological access to information.

#### Access

- Knowledge and understanding of the traditional and non-traditional organisation schemes for collections.
- Ability to apply and manage the appropriate processes, technology and equipment for circulating library materials, resource sharing, reserves and user services.
- Ability to apply copyright principles and policies pertaining to access functions such as reserves, document delivery and interlibrary loan.
- Ability to apply the policies and procedures for resource sharing among libraries.
- Ability to use effective communication skills to explain access services policies and procedures.
- Ability to maintain collections by shelving, shifting and shelf reading.
- Ability to identify and solve problems related to circulation and resource sharing processes.
- Ability to assist in data collection and reporting on collections and services.
- Capable of evaluating resources and finding the best ones for addressing different questions or issues.

- Ability to quickly and professionally search databases, internet resources and catalogues to find needed information.

### Technical Processing

- Ability to apply and manage the appropriate processes, computer technology and equipment for cataloguing and classification.
- Ability to use the basic cataloguing and classification tools, both print and online, including bibliographic utilities and format standards.
- Ability to apply and use the basics of standard metadata formats and cataloguing rules to select, review and edit catalogue records and to generate metadata in various formats.
- Ability to apply and use the basics of classification and organisation schemes for collections.
- Understands the value of authority control and its basic principles and can identify and apply appropriate access points for personal names, corporate bodies, series and subjects.
- Understands the value and advantages of cooperative or collaborative cataloguing practices to enhance services.
- Understands the value and purpose of cataloguing and classification to help users find the resources that they seek.
- Understands the role of technology in creating, identifying, retrieving and accessing information resources and demonstrate facility with appropriate metadata storage and retrieval tools.

### Collections

- Understands how to use integrated library systems, other appropriate online tools and data to manage collections.
- Understands the basic principles of collection development and management.
- Ability to assist with decisions regarding selection, de-selection, retention and replacement of all types of library resources.
- Understands the basic principles and can apply the appropriate procedures to the processes that provide users access to a wide variety of content.
- Understands the various ways in which content, in multiple formats, is produced and distributed to libraries.
- Understands the value of resource sharing agreements and apply them to collection decisions.
- Understands and can use the recognised standard evaluative sources to assist with collection development.
- Understands the principles and basic practices regarding the preservation of library resources.
- Ability to apply appropriate methods and techniques for accurate preparation of library resources.

- Ability to explain and apply policies regarding library collections.

### **Teamwork**

- Understands the basic concepts of interpersonal relations, customer service, teamwork and communication.
  - LSS select the most appropriate medium for communicating based on the language, communication styles and needs of library users and colleagues.
  - Ability to resolve conflict in a positive and productive manner and judge when to refer situations to a supervisor.
  - Ability to use effective communication skills to enhance approachability and to transmit information.
  - Ability to practice proactive customer service by anticipating and maintaining awareness of users' needs.
  - Ability to use effective verbal and non-verbal skills that provide the library user with a positive interaction.
  - Ability to use the tools of delivering difficult or sensitive information.
  - Ability to participate effectively on teams, commit to meeting agreed-upon goals and objectives, communicate respectfully and professionally and support team decisions.
  - Ability to seek, give and accept constructive feedback from co-workers, supervisors and users.
  - Team player.
  - Ability to communicate well with library staff as well as with all users and guests.
  - Strong level of customer service skills.

### **Collection Maintenance**

- Attention to Detail
- Has knowledge and understanding of library classification
- Has intimate knowledge of all collections in the library and their arrangements
- Communication: Oral and Written
  - Planning and Organising
  - Professionalism
  - Service
- Excellent customer service skills
- Familiarity with automated library systems in use within the library
- Strong self-motivation
- Ability to perform manual tasks such as lifting, pushing, pulling and bending

### Points to Remember

- ❖ The typical roles of paraprofessional library staff are supportive customer services, acquisition and technical services, clerical work and assisting users in locating appropriate resources.
- ❖ Paraprofessionals in smaller libraries handle a wider range of duties, while those in large libraries usually specialise.
- ❖ Nowadays paraprofessionals work mostly in six major areas of the library service – technology support, helping users find information, collection development, technical services, a circulation and collection maintenance.
- ❖ To be able to play their roles effectively, paraprofessionals need to build competencies in important areas such as technology, access, technical processing, collections and teamwork.

### Self Check Exercise

**Note:** i) Write your answer in the space given below.

ii) Check your answer with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

- 7) List skills that paraprofessional library staff should acquire to support and advance technology initiatives of a library.

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## 4.7 LIBRARY NON-PROFESSIONALS: THEIR ROLES

Non-professional staff in a library comprises attendants and administrative staff. Their role is to support professional and paraprofessional librarians so that library is able to carry out its day-to-day functions effectively.

### Library Attendants

Library attendants work as part of a service team assisting librarians and library assistants, library technicians with library and office tasks and procedures. Typical tasks may include:

- Working as part of a team in a library or information service environment
- Identifying and correcting minor faults with multimedia equipment
- Re-shelving returned library resources
- Dusting and cleaning of library furniture, stacks, office staff and user services area
- Assisting clients with how to use information services e.g. electronic catalogues
- Using electronic information management and cataloguing tools for data entry.

## **Administrative Staff**

The roles and responsibilities of the administrative staff mainly depend on how big is the library. In big university libraries there is a department dedicated exclusively for looking after the administrative services. Included in the administrative staff category is a wide variety of duties and position titles. Typical positions in a large university library include administrative officer, office assistants and office clerks. Admin staff may or may not have a post graduate/diploma degree in library and information science.

### **Administrative Officer**

Functional roles may include personnel management, office management and stores and purchase management to ensure administrative and personnel services so that library runs smoothly and accomplishes its goals on a daily basis.

### **Office Assistants, Clerks**

Office assistants, clerks are support staff to admin officer. They perform a variety of office and administrative support duties such as record keeping, sorting and filing, typing, word processing, photocopying and mailing out material and mail sorting. Clerical support also involves day-to-day office tasks, such as answering phones and entering data into spreadsheets.

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## **4.8 SUMMARY**

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This Unit describes what librarians do in a library; what their functions, roles and responsibilities are in organising and managing a library for conducting various user services. The Unit describes that staff recruited and positioned at different levels of management in a library are classed into three groups: professionals, paraprofessionals and non-professionals. The Unit lists their roles and responsibilities at different levels of management. The Unit further explains that in the contemporary library information landscape, technology has since become mission-critical to the libraries to manage complex collections of print, digital and electronic materials. Technology has since influenced roles of librarians and paraprofessionals. Besides technology, the Unit lists several other factors that have been instrumental in expanding and redefining the roles of professional and paraprofessional librarians. Librarians can be described by the functions they perform and the roles they carry out. The Unit describes in detail their functional roles and specialist roles. To remain relevant in the changing information environment and to fulfil their roles and responsibilities to meet the expectations of users, professional librarians need to develop core competencies. The Unit therefore describes the core competencies that professionals and paraprofessionals should have in library technology, management of library services, leadership and organisation management. One needs different sets of competencies for different jobs in different environments. Information professionals working in corporate organisations and corporate libraries will probably need more value-adding skills, entrepreneurial skills and domain knowledge. Professionals working in academic libraries probably require more technology skills as well as traditional skills. Public librarians may need more social and community building skills. The typical roles of paraprofessional library staff are supportive customer services, acquisition and technical services, clerical work and assisting users in locating appropriate resources. Paraprofessionals in smaller libraries handle a wider range of duties, while those in large libraries usually specialise. Nowadays paraprofessionals work mostly in six major areas of the library service-technology support, helping users find information, collection development, technical services, circulation and collection maintenance. To play their roles effectively, paraprofessionals

too need to build competencies in several areas such technology, access, technical processing, collections, teamwork and collection maintenance. The Unit describes competencies sets for paraprofessionals also.

## 4.9 ANSWERS TO SELF CHECK EXERCISES

- 1) The staffing in libraries is distributed into three classes: professional, paraprofessional and non-professional.
  - a) Professionals are librarians and other library specialists who possess at least a first degree or its equivalent in library and information studies. Professional librarians do the more complex and intellectually rigorous jobs entailing sophisticated judgment calls, supervision and complex operations.
  - b) Paraprofessionals are support staff including library assistants, library technicians who possess at least diploma/ certificate in librarianship. Paraprofessionals work in all types of libraries including public libraries, academic libraries, school libraries, special libraries and information centres. They assist professional librarians to acquire, prepare and organise materials. They run day-to-day library operations essential to effective functioning of the library and perform supportive customer services under the direction of a supervisor. In addition, they carry out such other tasks as are assigned by their supervisors.
  - c) Nonprofessionals are library attendants who possess at least high school education. This category of library staff also includes clerical and office staff for administrative services. The non-professionals comprise library attendants who attend to all patrons and willingly give assistance when needed. Their duties include cleaning and shelving books, routine reading of the shelves and such other duties that may be assigned by the librarian. The non-professionals group also includes clerical and office staff for administrative services.
- 2) Role defines the exact position a person holds in a library, say, university librarian, deputy librarian, or assistant librarian. Role also refers to what a person does to meet a set of expectations attached to a job or position. A job usually includes several roles. For example, a manager in business organisation is expected to play several roles including leadership, understanding, problem solving, advice and encouragement. Likewise a librarian managing a library is expected to play several roles including collection development, information guide, information provider, information analyst, or technology application leader. In sum, role is a description of what a person does in a job or description of expectations attached to a job or position. Besides, a job position or job title is just a convenient name for a role. Responsibilities imply accountability for the tasks completed or not completed in a job. Responsibilities are a summary of related job duties/ obligations in a job or position.
- 3) A librarian managing a library is expected to play several roles including collection development, information guide, information provider, information analyst, or technology application leader. The factors that seem to be influencing such different roles are several. Important ones are summarised as follows:
  - Information explosion
  - Emerging digital information environment

- Searching problems in traditional libraries
- Emerging low cost information technologies
- Changing social needs
- Changing customer behaviour
- Emerging technology needs
- Changing public image of libraries and librarians
- New generation needs – need to improve access, create literate environment.

4) Libraries are highly structured organisations hierarchically. All libraries have employees working at different levels of responsibility in the hierarchy. Hierarchy of these employee positions is called **Levels of Management**. The level of management in the hierarchy determines a chain of command, the amount of authority and status the employee enjoys in his position. Library organisations differ in the levels of management in the hierarchy. The number of management levels in any library depends upon the size of its collection, library technology applications, users' strength and the work force. A university library system supports three levels of management: top level, middle level and baseline level. At the top level is the university librarian. At the middle level position are deputy librarians who head branch library services, library teams or library departments. Their roles are both functional and specialist. They are directly responsible for the management of library functions and services such as acquisitions, technical processing, print and e-journals, library automation, user services and others. They are required to perform several different roles of strategic importance to the library. They report to the top management for the functioning of their teams. Their responsibilities include:

- Execute the plans of the organisation in accordance with the policies and directives of the top management.
- Make plans for the units, departments under their charge.
- Send important reports and other important data to top level management.
- Evaluate performance of junior staff.
- Motivate lower level managers towards better performance.
- Secure equipment, materials and services required to support the performance of their roles.
- Exercise judgment and initiative in dealing with a range of complex and detailed operational or conceptual problems and tasks that may extend beyond the immediate work area.
- Undertake initiatives to develop and introduce enhancements to existing practices, systems and procedures.
- Overall staff supervision, projects and initiatives.
- Monitoring of technical standards and practices and writing and administering grants.



- 5) The roles and responsibilities of the professional librarian as technology application leader are suggested as follows:
- Identifying library technologies and their implementation,
  - Developing websites, digitising/convertting content,
  - Technical support, system administration/maintenance, data conversion, data migration, system analysis and testing,
  - Open source software development, usability testing, interoperability and digital library technology.
- 6) The technology application leader must develop advanced understanding and knowledge of hardware and software concepts in computers and networks, network equipments and peripheral devices. S/he should have the expertise in system administration, network administration and security. S/he should be able to run software programs, perform basic computer and local area network functions. S/he must have demonstrable skills and knowledge in hardware, internet, operating systems, software applications, networking and security, server administration, advanced understanding of the protocols, structure, organisation and various web tools that make up the Internet, e-mail applications, web design and development and web markup languages.
- 7) Paraprofessional library staff should make efforts to acquire following skills to support and advance technology initiatives of a library.
- Ability to assist and train users to operate public equipment, connect to the internet, use library software applications and access library services from remote locations.
  - Ability to demonstrate role of technology in creating, identifying, retrieving and accessing information resources with appropriate information discovery tools.
  - Ability to perform basic troubleshooting of technical problems and resolve or refer those problems as appropriate.
  - Ability to access and use basic assistive technologies, where appropriate, to ensure that all users have equitable access to technology.
  - Ability to use technology and to use it to enhance the overall effectiveness of a library, including web based methods of improving technological access to information.

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## 4.10 KEYWORDS

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- Accountability** : taking personal responsibility for results - positive and negative.
- Adaptability** : flexibility and eagerness for new experiences and knowledge.
- Advocacy** : effectively conveying the importance of libraries to their parent institutions, to their target audiences/constituencies and advancing the values of the library profession (e.g. empowering

users to be self-sufficient, freedom of expression, upholding the right to access information and knowledge in all expressions, preserving the corpus of human knowledge for future generations, etc.).

**Ambition**

: wanting to be successful, want to achieve in the library profession.

**Change Management**

: being able to work effectively in the face of ambiguity; open mindedness to change and adaptation of work habits/behaviour to different conditions.

**Collaboration**

: working with diverse groups, in and out of the library, in pursuit of shared goals and with an appreciation of diverse perspectives; taking the library's story into the community.

**Commitment to the Profession**

: continuing education, attending conferences, writing about programs and advances; advocate for the profession.

**Communication Skills**

: speaking, writing, listening; understanding your message and conveying it to others.

**Conflict Resolution**

: work with people to get past conflict, cutting off conflict before it gets started or before it becomes toxic; not ignoring conflict - addressing it.

**Customer Service**

: both internal and external; remembering that users are the focus of the library.

**Decision Making**

: making well-informed decisions in a manner that is perceptive of the implications; committing to actions even when faced with uncertainty in order to fulfill organisational goals.

**Delegation**

: handing off both responsibilities and sufficient authority to accomplish necessary tasks.

**Demonstrating Leadership**

: being perceived as a leader; taking charge of situations effectively.

**Flexibility**

: changing course when necessary, changing plans to be successful.

**Initiative**

: the capacity to identify issues and to develop and implement solutions to address those issues.

**Innovation**

: applying the imagination for the purpose of devising solutions to problems and designing new methods/procedures when established ones do not suffice or they are inexistent.

**Integrity**

: following professional code, being honest, being a role model for how to behave; honesty.

- Intelligence** : IQ; education, cognitive abilities.
- Interpersonal Skills** : effectively working together with others of different levels or different positions (staff and public); good social skills; building rapport.
- Knowledge** : In the context of information professionals it is the knowledge and understanding derived from accumulated experiences of individuals or from self-learning and development. It consists of information, knowledge, experiences related to the work in academic libraries.
- Marketing** : promoting the expertise, services, collections and facilities of the library to a varied users (e.g., undergraduate students, graduates and faculty in all disciplines) and making the case to administrations for the library as a vital institution in the research enterprise and for teaching and learning.
- Mentoring** : providing useful advice and feedback to new members of the profession to help them to learn and attain success in the field and in their new positions.
- Modeling Values** : being transparent and committed to values; acting on values.
- Motivating others** : bringing forward the best performance in others; keeping people going toward goals, even when things are hard or boring.
- Negotiation** : working with others to arrive at mutually acceptable/beneficial solutions.
- Personal Attributes** : Attribute refers to thoughts, feelings, opinions, attitudes, motivation and personal needs of the information professionals that are related to the work in academic libraries.
- Planning** : setting goals and developing strategies to achieve those goals.
- Presentation Skills** : ability to speak in front of an audience – with or without technology.
- Previous Experience** : experience as a manager, or in previous library jobs.
- Problem solving** : identifying problems, determining relevance and accuracy of related information and using good judgment to come up with solutions; possessing the ability to manage and resolve conflicts/ disagreements in constructive ways.
- Resource Management** : finding money, facilities to accomplish goals.

**Risk Taking**

: not taking the easy way; taking a chance of failure; bold or courageous action.

**Self-awareness**

: understanding your own motivations, knowing your own strengths and limits.

**Self-confidence**

: knowing you can handle the responsibilities of your job and life.

**Sense of Humor**

: keeping a situation light; looking at the funny side of things; laughing at self.

**Skills**

: In the context of information professionals skill refers to the ability derived from practices to the level of expertise in the work related to the operation of academic libraries.

**Strategies**

: Strategies are specific plans of action that excellent performers typically employ to achieve competency goals.

**Teamwork**

: working as part of the group, not always leading it.

**Tenacity**

: staying focused on goals, continuing to work toward goals despite obstacles; persistence.

**Time Management**

: multitasking, being punctual, following schedules.

**Vision**

: looking at the future and see where the library can go; articulating directions.

**Writing Skills**

: preparing persuasive grant proposals or reports.

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**Library Staff: Role and Responsibilities**

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## **BLOCK 2**



# **LIBRARY ROUTINES**



