

# Stress and Workload Management in Digital Librarianship: An Approach to Identify the Causes and Attainable Solutions

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**Abstract:** *Stress is the feeling that we get under pressure, where as stressors are the factors to which we have tendency to respond in our environment. Every individual in the earth has to experience this at any point of his life and Library & Information science professional are not exception to this. Thus no one can avoid stress and pressure in his work and life; hence the greatest way is to manage it so that it can be converted to productivity and potency. This article attempts to outline stress and workload in terms of LIS profession. It tries to focus types of stresses of LIS personnel and their possible reasons. This paper also evaluates the factors to manage the stress of LIS professionals in digital environment.*

**Key Words:** *Stress Management, Workload Management; Stress Factors, Digital Librarianship.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

According to Oxford dictionary, “Stress is a state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or demanding circumstances”. Stress is the changes, which our bodies experience and tries to regulate to the recurrently changing environment. It has both physical and emotional effects on us and may produce positive or negative feelings. As a positive outcome, stress can drive us to carry out desired action, lead to grow new awareness and an exciting new perspective. As a negative influence, it may end up in feelings of distrust, rejection, anger, and depression, which in turn can lead to frustration to work and also several health problems such as headaches, elevated blood pressure, heart disease, insomnia and many severe health issues. Stress symptoms can affect human bodies, their thoughts and feelings, and their overall behaviour. Being able to recognize common stress symptoms will show manifold pathways of managing them. The library environment has changed significantly over the past few decades. With the advent and implementation of modern information and communication technologies, the activities associated with library have moved gradually from the manual library to electronic library, digital library and modern virtual library. With this change they are now being compelled to cope up with the recent development and need to develop their competencies as required. The demand of information and information seeking behavior of the library users have also been changed due to modern cyber technologies. This successively modified the nature of jobs, workloads and mindset of LIS professionals drastically. The works of new age library professionals are now more stressful, nerve-racking and challenging in compare to previous decades.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

**Charles A. Bunge (1989)** in his article ‘stress in the library workplace’ emphasized on having awareness of the important sources of stresses in the library workplace and showed how the stressors affected the library personnel both physiologically and psychologically.

**Schneider (1991)** carried out a research on stress and job satisfaction among librarians in which it was discovered that the major issues that bring stress to the employees include poor communication between staff and Management as well as lack of opportunity for staff to lend their views on issues affecting them.

**Liz Farler and Judith Broady-Preston (2012)** conducted a case study on ‘workplace stress in libraries’ investigating workplace stress in a further education college library service. The authors found that interaction with students can be stressful or enjoyable, depending on context. The need to control noise levels, modify student behaviour and balance the needs of different user groups are cited as stressors.

**Promise Ilo (2016)** conducted a study on ‘Managing Stress Among Librarians in Selected University Libraries in Ogun State Nigeria’ and found that female librarians reported higher level of job stress than their male counterparts. This study reported that shouldering multiple roles expose women to more stressors than male employees.

## 3. OBJECTIVES OF STUDY:

- To find out the various types of stresses and work pressures faced by library professionals in the digital age.
- To identify the different factors which cause stresses and anxiety for the librarians in catering proper library services in the digital environment.

- To suggest some possible measures for managing the stresses and workloads.

### 3. METHODOLOGY:

The present study is a general analysis based on study of various literatures and observation of situations.

### 4. TYPES OF STRESS AND WORKLOADS IN LIBRARIES:

The stresses that experienced by the librarians of digital era can be broadly divided into following types:

**4.1. Technological Stress:** The emergence of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in libraries is the most important factor that cause stress for LIS professionals. Due to rapid transformation in the ICT based tools and techniques the LIS professionals find it hard to keep pace with the changing digital library environment.

**4.2. Job Security Stress:** The implementation of modern ICTs and development in LIS infrastructure has forced the LIS professionals to attain new knowledge and skills along with the traditional library functions and services. On the contrary, there is limited scope for them to undergo in service training programme, higher studies, refresher courses etc, which has increased a considerable amount of stress among professionals. Further, with the increasing intrusion and appointment of IT/Computer Science people into the LIS profession have created fear among LIS professionals about their job security in future.

**4.3. Physical Stress:** The Digital Library Environment has changed the physical structure of the job environment. Due to this sitting in front of computers for a long hour, working in air-conditioned environment etc have also resulted in the physical stress and illness.

**4.4 Emotional Stress:** Lengthy work hour, handling different types of user groups, lack of proper compliments, lack of deserved dignity etc. are also causing mental burden on the LIS staff and consequently causing physical illness. Stress is not necessarily negative for performance of the individuals. Some level of stress is desirable to generate enthusiasm, creativity and productivity. Stress could be beneficial or detrimental. A beneficial stress motivates the employees.

### 5. CAUSES OF STRESS IN MODERN LIBRARIANSHIP:

There are mainly three sources from which stresses can be derived. These are physical, mental and situational. Physical stress can be brought on by overwork, lack of rest and poor diet. Mental stress can be traced to a persons' mental state of mind, which involves expectation, fears, regrets etc. Situational stress is derived from the interaction with the outer world like interaction with modern technologies, role as a library manager etc. The digital library environment has displayed a radical change in the function and services of libraries. Consequently the library & information science professionals have exposed to a substantial quantity of stress in their routine library activities. The most obvious factors that are responsible for causing stresses for LIS personnel are sated below.

**5.1. Digital emergence:** The information and communication technology (ICT) is a fast changing phenomena. Accordingly the application of ICT in libraries is also changing at an alarming rate, which creates stress among library professionals.

**5.2. Tech-oriented Library Environment:** Many libraries have migrated from older manual system to automated systems and more recently to newer more sophisticated digital library systems. Staff members must unlearn old habits and procedures and learn to understand the new system

**5.3. Transformations in Type of library Documents:** In addition to hard copy, most libraries are now acquiring at least some materials in alternative formats, such as CD-ROM or electronic documents or digital format. These materials, which were once handled on an ad hoc basis, must now be incorporated into the normal acquisitions workflow.

**5.4. Physical changes in library:** Problems or changes in physical facilities have become a vital problem in today's libraries. With the increased use of electronic formats, the library authorities are reluctant to expand facilities to cope with increasing space requirements. Some libraries are actually moving into new facilities with less space or losing space to other functions. But the hybrid type of libraries having both print and non-print documents face much problems relating to change in physical facilities of the library.

**5.5. Changes in information seeking behaviour of the users:** With the development of various micro subjects, information explosion, time bound academic programmes etc users attitude towards pin pointed information have

changed. Accordingly the acquisition, organization and retrieval of information in quickest possible time have given a tremendous amount of stress in the mind of library professionals.

**5.6. Meeting the expectations of the tech-savvy and busy users:** Keeping pace with the development of the moderns cyber technologies the users are now always in a haste and is not always willing to provide enough time to get their services. This in turn becomes a crucial stressors for the librarians to meet the users demand in time and precisely.

**5.6. Lack of enough staff strength:** Restructuring, layoffs, loss of staff positions, and doing more with fewer people have become increasingly common which has been a source of stress with the increasing workload. . Further problems such as illness, disability, or death of a member of the library community have a growing impact on co-workers.

**5.7. Lack of required attention from the authority:** A lack of necessary compliments from authority and struggles with management are also major reasons of stress for LIS personnel.

**5.8. Lack of proper social respect:** Lack of desired and deserved social dignity and respect are not a negligible factor that creating mental negativity of LIS staffs.

**5.9. Lack of sufficient funds:** inadequacy of required financial support from administration also causing stress as it hinders the librarians to cope up with modern changes in library services.

**5.10. Insufficient modern infrastructure and training:** To adjust with the continually changing environment LIS professionals need tech-savvy library environment and proper training to use them.

## **6. MANAGING STRESS OF LIS PROFESSIONALS IN DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT: SOME TENTATIVE SOLUTIONS:**

Stress management can be complicated and confusing because there are different types of stress Identifying stress and being aware of its effect on our lives is not sufficient for reducing its harmful effects. Hence the LIS professionals should proceed in the following steps for better stress management with the ever-changing library job situation.

**6.1. Changes in mindset:** LIS professionals need to change their mindset and avoid fear of using modern tools and technologies relating to modernization of library functions and services.

**6.2. Become aware of the stress factors:** (a) It is necessary to notice the distress, which arises due to change in library environment i.e. from manual to digital. (b) Determine the events from the group of events, which distress professionals and what it means to them. (c) Determine the body responds of the professionals to this stress.

**6.3. Reduce the intensity of your emotional reactions:** The stress reaction is triggered by the perception of danger, which may be physical and emotional. In order to handle any unpleasant situation it is better to adopt more moderate views, try to see the stress as something the professionals can cope with rather than something that overpowers them.

**6.4. Maintain the emotional balances:** To maintain the emotional reserves, some skills need to be developed by the library & information Science professionals. Also realistic goals should be pursued which are meaningful to them rather than goals set up by others that they do not share.

**6.5 Physical fitness and healthy diet:** These factors are not at all negligible Well-nourished bodies are better prepared to cope with stress, so be mindful of what you eat and what you do to maintain your physical health.

**6.6 Proper training in managing stress:** Last but not least if the stress is in the acute or chronic state proper psycho-physical training may be necessary.

## **7. CONCLUSION:**

Today's fast-paced library environment called upon to do more than what the professionals did in the past both in their personal or professional lives. Stress or strain in the workplace is presently a subject of great concern irrespective of any field. For example, there is increasing awareness that excessive stresses are often harmful to employees' health, and stress, as a cause for disability, can obligate employers and their insurers to worker compensation. Above all, it reduces the efficiency of the workers if the factors creating stresses are not managed in proper manner and in time. This is equally applicable to library professionals too. It is simply unattainable to get rid of all sources of stresses in the digital library workplace but, the library managers can manage stress among their

teams which will help to reduce some of its consequences, such as: poor morale, reduced performance and team conflict. The best way to manage stress in digital library environment is: produce a friendly and supportive culture; appreciate people's differences; identify the signs of stress; resolve issues as they arise; consider teambuilding; enable autonomy; and to have a contingency plan.

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