Abstract
Contemporary libraries are under serious threat due to the increasing pressure of achieving higher level of performance in this competitive global environment. Academic libraries are facing many challenges posed by the contemporary environment, most of which are the result of ICT and digital revolution. The paper discusses the impact of emerging changes on academic libraries. It discusses the need for acquiring core competencies and new skills to manage the modern day academic libraries. It further discusses different sets of skills (generic, managerial and professional skills) required by LIS professionals to manage the contemporary change brought up by technology accelerated environment. The article emphasizes that acquisition of new sets of skills has become essential to survive in this technology-based environment.

Keywords: Academic Libraries; Core Competencies; Information Technology; Traditional Skills; New Skills; LIS Professionals.

Introduction
Technologies have created a new service environment that has pushed conventional boundaries much farther, with the calculated risk and opportunities. In this environment, only those academic libraries can survive that have the ability to deal effectively and proactively to a broad spectrum of contemporary challenges that focus on speed, cost and quality. Professionals working in such libraries need continuous grooming by acquiring core competencies and new skills so that they never become obsolete in this fast changing environment. For this, they need to shift their focus from traditional library activities of collecting, processing, storing and accessing the information to offer customer-centered automated information services, generated by using online/offline databases, e-resources, e-journals, networks and consortia, etc. Today, majority of the libraries are using computers and latest ICT tools and techniques for performing various house-keeping jobs such as, acquisition, processing, and serial control and also for delivering various computerized services to the users. Technology is reshaping the world of academic libraries at an unimaginable speed. So such technologies must be utilized fully to meet the educational goals and objectives of the university in a strategic way rather than following these technologies blindly.

Changing Role of Academic Libraries
Academic libraries have always been regarded to be the nerve center of universities as these are responsible to support the teaching, research and other academic programs of the university. Now these libraries are passing through a phase of great transition being influenced by social, political, economic and technological developments that are taking place in the society. The era is over when academic librarians were involved in house keeping jobs like classification and cataloging, etc. Now they have to act as the knowledge navigators and change facilitators to fulfill the clientele’s specialized needs. For this, it has become essential to use cutting edge technology tools and techniques. The re-engineering of the teaching and learning framework is under way in the progressive universities worldwide. This provides a window of opportunity for their libraries to demonstrate their existing and potential contribution to educational change (Bundy 393).

Today’s environmental pressures are forcing libraries to focus on accelerating technology, innovation, technical complexities, social and legal issues, cost, risk, competence, skills of staff and technology itself. Therefore, the library professionals have to act in a proactive manner to support the twenty-first century educational change.

Effects of Change on Academic Libraries
Thamhain⁴, who is mastering the field of management has given few characteristics of today’s technology-
based business environment, which are equally applicable in library environment. These are as follows:

- Complex library system and cross-functional linkages
- Resource constraint, tough performance requirements
- High task complexities, risks, and uncertainties
- Fast-changing multidimensional user needs
- Intense competition in open global markets
- Collaboration in need of dealing with different organizations cultures and values
- Need for continuous improvements, upgrades, and enhancements
- Need for multidimensional skills, ability to deal with changing virtual learning environment
- Increasing impact of IT on service delivery mode (Use of new means such as instant messaging, virtual reference desk, ask a librarian, Wiki's, blogs, podcasting, etc.)

Current developments are directly affecting the knowledge, competencies and skill requirements of the information professionals to do their job effectively. These changes are occurring at such a fast pace that each day new skills and approaches are required to handle the information and unfurl the new ideas. The changing perception of users and the technological advancements have forced the library and information professionals to enhance their knowledge and acquire new competencies, skills and develop themselves in accordance to the new environment to avoid becoming obsolete and outdated. Thus, it has become imperative to have generic and traditional skills in addition to acquisition of ICT skills, which must be continuously updated. All this demands for environmental scanning, market responsiveness, fast developments, high level of creativity, innovation, collaboration and efficiency.

Libraries in Knowledge Economy
Libraries are entering into an era where the future essentially will be determined by people’s ability to use the knowledge wisely. The knowledge-based economy places greater importance on the diffusion and use of information and knowledge, as well as its creation. In this new economy, libraries are obliged to focus on maintaining and enhancing their knowledge capital in order to develop core competency for survival.

In the knowledge economy the objective of a society changes from fulfilling the basic needs of all-round development to empowerment. Only those education systems that develop interactive self-learning, formal and informal education with focus on values, merit and quality will be promoted. The need of the hour is that worker instead of being skilled or semi-skilled must be knowledgeable, self-empowered, competent and flexibly skilled. In future, the type of work instead of being structured and hardware driven will be less structured and software driven. Management style will emphasize more on delegation rather than giving command. Impact on environment and ecology will be strikingly less compared to industrial economy. Finally, knowledge and knowledge driven institutions and industries will mostly drive the economy. The emphasis in knowledge society will be on sustainable development (Kalam). Dr. Kalam further pointed out “What worked yesterday, won’t work today” and explained some of the modified quotations from the book, “Empires of the Mind” by Denis Waitley, which are as follows:

- Yesterday - natural resources defined power, Today - knowledge is power. University will be a powerhouse for knowledge.
- Yesterday - shareholders came first, Today - customers come first. Education should inculcate sensitivity to “customer” needs.
- Yesterday - employees took order, Today - teams make decision. University can inject team spirit
- Yesterday - leaders commanded and controlled, Today - leaders empower and coach.
- Potential Leaders will be empowered through exposure to the needs of sustainable development.

As society is heading towards knowledge economy, where knowledge is the intellectual capital and universities are the power house of knowledge, academic librarian and his team has to understand tacit and explicit knowledge held by the university, management techniques, relationships and skills that provides the organization a competitive advantage. They have to adapt collaborative working, to geographical and organizational mobility. Therefore, the academic libraries being the central hub are having a greater role to play as knowledge generator, preserver and disseminator to make the society knowledgeable.

Change and Services
As a result of the complex dynamic global educational system, libraries have to change themselves to excel. For this, it has become essential to provide services based on cutting edge technology using latest tools and techniques. Being service oriented institutions, academic libraries existence greatly depend upon the satisfaction of the research scholars, faculty members and students.

Students served by academic libraries need access to a wide variety of resources, which have been traditionally provided by the campus library. However, the newest generation of tech-savvy students has transformed the role of the academic libraries. As a result, academic libraries must rethink the way they serve the needs of university students. In order to remain a dynamic and important component of the
Students often use online resources because they are convenient. College students today expect “the flexibility, geographic independence, speed of response, time shifting, interactivity, multitasking, and time savings that digital networked services provide”. Librarians must consider the changing ways that students are adopting for accessing their information.

Therefore the modern academic library has to bring a change in their collection development policy, role of acquisition librarian, information search strategies, reference service and emerging delivery media (virtual reference desks, ask a librarian, instant messaging, streaming media, Wikis blog, RSS feed, etc). Here libraries have to play a great role in providing information literacy to their users. They have to ensure that libraries are the partners of educational system and working for the same goal and for this, good relationship is being required between different component of university system and libraries, by asking what they want rather telling or suggesting them what to do. For this, academic librarians must focus on environmental scanning, user needs, effective self-assessment and collaboration with different faculties.

**Need for Competence and Skills Among Library Professionals**

Since the dawn of 21st Century, libraries are facing serious transition (Raina, 211-216) on account of the following three main reasons:

- The transition from paper to electronic media as the dominant form of information storage retrieval and dissemination. Convergence of different media, such as text, graphics, and sound, into multimedia resources, has direct impact on this transition.
- Increasing attention on accountability, with focus on quality customer services, performance measurement, benchmarking and continuous improvement. In addition, shrinking financial resources have direct bearing on this shift.
- New forms of work organization such as end-user computing, work-teams, downsizing, re-engineering, outsourcing etc.

Present IT based environment has demanded new job requirements, new roles, adequate competence and different kinds of skills from the professionals which would help them to develop new product and services in response to new developments. For this, the existing staff must be trained continually to sustain in the global competition market. Skills and competencies once acquired cannot guarantee lifetime survival in this constantly changing electronic environment. These need to update regularly through continuing professional development programs. LIS professionals with appropriate competence, skills and proactive attitude can excel in their new role of knowledge navigators, and facilitators in the knowledge based society.

**Skills Vs Competencies**

In literature, the terms skill and competency have been used interchangeably but it is very important to distinguish them. Skill is practical ability, a facility in carrying out an action whereas, competency is often defined as the underlying attribute and mental ability that govern how an individual interact with the world. Competency enables individuals to contribute positively to their organizations and the library profession. Skill can be seen in an action in the way someone carries out a task, competencies are hidden inside the person but influences how he uses his skills (Clarkson 130). Larsen (4) also described competencies as “Combined theoretical knowledge and practical experience that makes individual able and willing to take the right decisions in the daily working environment”. Thus, competencies are the skills, technical knowledge and personal attributes that contribute to an individual’s success in particular position, whereas skill is the capability acquired by a person through training to successfully complete a particular job.

**Core Competencies**

Thus the need of the hour is that library professionals must address to critical information needs of their users by developing their core competencies and skills. In order to manage the change, professional as well as personal competencies are required. The American Association of Law Libraries has created a document for the core competencies required by law librarianship which are equally applicable in other types.
of libraries also. According to the document, the core competencies aim to:

- Demonstrate a strong commitment to excellent customer service by recognizing and addressing the diverse nature of the library's patrons and community.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the library system and the library profession with adequate awareness of issues, standards, trends, current best practices and competence in the use of information technologies to support teaching, learning, and research.
- Understand the use of methodologies, including digital imaging and recording technologies, for creating reproductions of primary source materials.
- Maintain awareness of changes in the scholarly uses of information technology and user expectations and monitors and implements changes in technology and information systems.
- Familiar with local procedures concerning acquisitions, prioritization for processing, shelf preparation, collections management, and preservation for special collections materials.
- Exhibit leadership skills including critical thinking, risk taking, and creativity, regardless of position within the management structure.
- Share knowledge and expertise with users and colleagues.
- Display excellent communication skills and is able to promote the library and advocate for its needs.
- Familiar with publishing trends and communicate effectively with publishers and other information providers to advance the interests of the library.
- Recognize the value of professional networking and actively participates in professional associations.
- Actively pursues personal and professional growth through continuing education.

(Source: http://www.aallnet.org/prodev/competencies.asp)

New Skills
In present day environment, professionals owe much greater responsibility to be an effective information professional. Closer look at the existing skills of the professionals reveals that for facing the challenges of today and tomorrow, they not only need to acquire wider range of skills but also need to keep themselves up to date. Biddiscombe (166) stressed on the need of maintaining and preserving those essential skills that have always made librarians respected in their communities. He further adds that they need to retain their flexible working skills, their openness to new ideas and their personal attention and caring approach to user needs. New environment demands that LIS professionals must remain flexible and adaptable for the change. Realizing the fast upcoming advancements, Sridhar in 2000 predicted that LIS professionals must have technical skills, IT skills and managerial skills as the world is in transition. Thus acquiring new skills is the demand of the time for number of reasons like:

- Fast incoming technological changes;
- Emerging structural changes;
- To prepare staff for changes coming in the work culture of the parent organization or to give transferable skills to make the staff more employable anywhere;
- One may not have all the skills to do the job he currently holds, or because the job itself is changing (Lawes 29).

The style of doing the job by the professionals is changing the way to perform each task associated with the job. It is not always possible to recruit the staff with new skills. What is possible is to provide regular development opportunities that prepare them for the new roles. This is possible by continuing education in order to maintain job effectiveness in a changing information environment and to meet the demands put upon them by the society. Information professionals need to continue to learn, update and refresh their knowledge to prevent the onset of professional alienation in performance and to adjust to the culture and change prevalent in a new information environment (Odini, 103).

Since library managers are not in the position to replace all the existing staff with new staff, they have to ensure training and development for the professionals to keep them updated. With the increase of pressure on information professionals to keep up to date, and to maintain and improve productivity, attending skill development courses is required time to time (Ramaiah and Moorthy, 25). Regular LIS courses must focus on training on IT applications in libraries (Gulati, 347-348). Today, with the advent of both information and communication technologies and global competition, new hybrid skills and competencies are required in order to become more customer-sensitive and customer-centered (Singh, 520). To survive and sustain in the present environment, one has to have combination of generic, traditional and ICT related skills like, digital archiving, content development, developing metadata, electronic database searches, network consortia access etc.

Categories of Skills Required
Though various skills are required but the skill needs depend on role and context of the parent organization.
As all skills do not relate to everyone, a summarized set of skills under three broad categories of skills, i.e. generic, managerial and professional skills have been listed below in Table 1.1 (Fisher 2004). (Fouire 62-74) (Oldroyd 30:45-49:69:78:99; Sridhar 141-149; TFPL Skill Set):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1.1: Skills Required for Electronic Environment</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Generic skills</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Communication skill</td>
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<td>2. Flexibility</td>
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<td>3. Adaptability</td>
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<td>4. Assertiveness</td>
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<td>5. Self-confidence</td>
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<td>6. Creativity</td>
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<td>7. Innovation</td>
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<td>8. Analytical skills</td>
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<td>9. Problem solving</td>
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<td>10. Decision making</td>
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<td>11. Service attitude</td>
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<td>13. Improving one’s learning and experience</td>
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<td>14. Presentation skills</td>
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<td>15. Stress management</td>
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<td>17. Interpersonal</td>
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<td>18. Group skills</td>
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<td>19. Working with difficult people</td>
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1 Metadata is the data that describe the content and attributes of any particular item in a digital library. This is data about data or a catalogue to web document as catalogue card is to print documents.

2 Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) is an international effort, the goal of which is to define a set of generic guidelines for the textual material in electronic form. It is basically concerned with two things: one is what textual feature should be encoded in electronic environment to make it more explicit and second is to, how encoding should be represented for loss-free, platform independent interchange.

3 Extensible markup language, which allows designers to customize formatting (tags), to greater definition, achieves transmission, validation, and interpretation of data between applications and organizations.

4 Z 39.50 is a standard developed by National Information Standard Organization (NISO) for information retrieval that allows any library using a Z 39.50 compatible automated library system to access remote library collection. It specifies a response protocol between client and server.

5 Knowledge management is managing organizational knowledge to solve the organizational problems. It includes managing tacit as well as explicit knowledge.
Conclusion
In the technology driven knowledge economy, academic librarians and his team has a very important role to play as they have to satisfy the critical multidimensional information needs of their users. They have to use those technological tools in which the user is comfortable in order to sustain customer driven market. There is a need to equip them with core competencies and emerging skills required for the service delivery in electronic information environment. These skills are not only limited to having knowledge of ICT application but also related to understand how these can be utilized with a proper blending of traditional library skill for providing information with a single click to fulfill the fourth law of Ranganathan, i.e. “Save the time of the user”. However today, the changing perception of users and the technological advancements have forced the academic libraries to introduce new services based on user interest. Thus, it has become imperative to have generic skills in addition to acquisition of traditional and ICT competence, which must be continuously updated so as to meet the need of changing service delivery mechanism. Therefore, adequate knowledge of IT and its application in libraries with a positive attitude can make the real difference between the real and desired situation. Managing and working, both in a modern academic library has become a highly specialized job, which requires proactive attitude towards change and continuous reinvention of the competence among professionals. Traditional linear work processes and top-down controls are no longer suffi-cient, but are gradually being replaced with alternate organizational designs and new management techniques such as management by objectives.

References
21. TFPL Skills Set: Knowledge and Information Management Skills Toolkit. 16 August 2006 http://skillstoolkit.tfpl.com