Abstract
In the 21st Century knowledge management is increasingly becoming a crucial tool. It has already been successfully implemented in academic libraries in India and elsewhere. INFLIBNET, NICNET, INDONET, ERNET, CALIBNET, DELNET, ADINET, MALIBNET, etc. have emerged as the prominent academic libraries in India. Academic libraries are the treasure house of knowledge which cater to the needs of scholars, scientists, technocrats, researchers, students and others who are in the mainstream of higher education. The vision and mission of academic libraries are changing in India. The vast literature gleaned from IFLA, ACRL and allied publications on academic libraries aptly reveal the changing roles and responsibilities of information professionals in the modern society. Academic libraries are positioning themselves to be the torch bearers and path makers of educational advancement by way of integrating knowledge systems and resources. The academic libraries have to be managed on the basis of constant introspection at the individual level and scientific evaluation at the institutional level in this age of knowledge management.

Keywords: Knowledge Management, Academic Libraries, Challenges and Opportunities of Academic Libraries, Future of Academic Libraries.

Introduction
The 1990s have been one of the longest periods of sustained economic growth all over the world since the World War II. This economic growth has impacted all the spheres of human life including higher education. The academic libraries have also grown over a period of time in India and elsewhere. In general, information professionals and librarians have been coping well and addressing the many changes brought about by the electronic information revolution. There are increasing debates, discussions, seminars and other intellectual exercises on academic library management. Efforts are also made to identify the strengths and drawbacks of academic library system with the fond hope of improving the status of academic libraries in the developed and developing nations. The authors have made an attempt to present the salient features of academic libraries in India, focus the relevance of academic libraries in India and discuss the challenges and opportunities for academic libraries in India.

Concept of Knowledge Management
Broadly speaking, Knowledge Management (KM) is a process of creating, storing, sharing and re-using organisational knowledge (know-how) to enable an organisation to achieve its goals and objectives of creating knowledgeable professionals and workforce. The advent of the “e-revolution”, through the growth of global networks has accelerated the use of knowledge management (KM) especially in academic libraries. In the 21st Century KM is increasingly becoming a crucial tool in providing a dynamic and effective service to library users in India and rest of the world.

Management gurus, such as Peter Drucker (1999) asserted, that for industries and institutions “the most valuable assets of a 21st century institution, whether business or non-business, will be its knowledge workers and their productivity”. This affirmation was duly taken up by many academic libraries. Knowledge Management has already been successfully implemented in academic libraries and the policy makers, administrators, scientists and researchers have been actively involved in ensuring knowledge management through academic libraries.

Academic Libraries in India
India is well known as the largest democracy in the world. Today there are a total of 237 universities, including 116 general universities, 12 science and technology universities, 7 open universities, 33 agricultural universities, five women’s universities, one language universities and 11 medical universities along with 12,600 colleges that provide education in all
disciplines. The number of teachers is 3.1 million, and 7.8 million students are enrolled in higher education. Schools of library and information sciences are also established all over the country with a view to create trained information workforce in the country. Indian academic libraries are managed on the basis of tested, tried and trusted principles of management.

Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET)
The University Grants Commission has set up an autonomous Inter-University Centre in 1991 called INFLIBNET which is involved in modernizing university libraries in India. It connects the Indian libraries through a nation-wide high-speed data network. It promotes automation of libraries, develops standards, creates union catalogues of serials, theses, books, monographs and non-book materials; provides access to bibliographic information sources; creates database of projects, institutions, specialists; provides training, etc. Almost all academic libraries, especially university libraries, are members of INFLIBNET. It has also developed library automation software called SOUL (Software for University Libraries) which is distributed free of cost to its member libraries.

Other Networks
Besides INFLIBNET, a number of other national networks and various library networks have also been developed including NICNET (National Informatic Center’s network), INDONET, ERNET (Education and Research Network), CALIBNET (Calcutta Library Network), DELNET (Developing Library Network), etc. ADINET is associated with INFLIBNET, DELNET with NIC and MALIBNET with CFTRI. A good number of higher educational institutions are members of these networks. In particular, DELNET has 752 member libraries including 742 from India and 10 from outside which are engaged in compiling union catalogs, creating various databases of experts, providing training to library staff, ILL, online facilities, reference service, assistance in retrospective conversion, etc.

Library Consortia
Many Indian university and college libraries are not in a position to subscribe to all the required journals and databases mainly due to lack of management support and financial constraints. The libraries are forming consortia in order to facilitate knowledge sharing at a much cheaper rate. Some special libraries and organizations like the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) Library, Inter-university Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA) Library, National Centre for Radio Astrophysics (NCRA) Library, Physical Research Laboratory (PRL) Library, Raman Research Institute (RRI) Library, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) Library, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, Department of Atomic Energy, etc., have established consortia to share electronic access to journal literature. NISCAIR is developing a consortium for CSIR labs for accessing e-journals. Consortia in India are still a new concept that requires proper guidelines and methodologies.

The UGC conducted a survey and found that about 142 university libraries had computer and Internet facilities which were interlinked to INFLIBNET. UGC has also launched a major initiative called UGC-INFONET which provides high speed Internet connections in order to facilitate electronic access to professional literature including research journals, abstracts, review publications, and databases from all areas in science, technology, social sciences and humanities, and so on. Today, a number of professional journals are available over UGC-INFONET to all universities. The subscription initiative under UGC-Infonet is an important portal for sharing print as well as electronic resources amongst university libraries. INFLIBNET functions as a resource center with an aim to cater to the needs of its members for resources not accessible to them in electronic media or are available in print media.

INDEST Consortium
The Indian National Digital Library in Science and Technology (INDEST) Consortium was established by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD). The ministry provides funds required for the subscription to electronic resources for 38 academic institutions, including the Indian Institute of Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, Regional Engineering Colleges, Indian Institute of Managements, and about 60 centrally-funded/aided government institutions through the consortium. The INDEST consortium is the most ambitious initiative so far in the area of engineering and technology disciplines. The primary objective of libraries is to organize and provide access to information, and it remains the same although the format and methods have changed drastically.

Relevance of Academic Libraries in India
Academic libraries are the treasure trove of knowledge which cater to the needs of scholars, scientists, technocrats, researchers, students and others who are directly associated with the mainstream of higher education. In this competitive age, the policy makers have to rise to the occasion and create a new generation of knowledge workers. The information personnel of the academic libraries are also called upon to equip themselves with the best tools, techniques, procedures and practices. The ways in which people communicate, and acquire and share knowledge, will inevitably have an impact on the library, its services, and its staff (Miller, 2006). The academic libraries play an important role in the academic community by providing necessary forum and resources for faculty and students to do their research and advance their knowledge. In order to effectively meet the growing needs of the clients and achieve success in the management of academic libraries, the academic libraries need to actively address the
many challenges for the design and delivery of innovative resources and services (Cohen, 2007).

Academic libraries are also required to play the role of scholarly partner in exploring new pathways to knowledge and acting upon this (Gelfand, 2007; Ogburn, 2008, Abram, 2008). It is widely acknowledged that meaningful reference work and research support is absolutely essential to ensure successful dissemination of knowledge to the clients on the basis of meaningful team spirit and work.

It is imperative that subject reference workers adapt to the reality of dealing with socially networked clients. Reference interaction has always been a conversation (Lankes, 2008); moving towards reference in the social environment is therefore a natural development that has been shown to be not only practically viable, but also to benefit the community of users in the field of higher education. Academic libraries are required to develop know how and show how systems which are highly essential elements of meaningful academic library management.

Challenges and Opportunities
The vision and mission of academic libraries are changing in India. These academic libraries now take on the key role of providing the competitive advantage to various universities, research and development organizations which play a pivotal role in the process of nation building. Academic libraries are positioning themselves to be the torchbearers and path makers of educational advancement by way of integrating knowledge systems and resources. These academic libraries are required to do serious introspection on their roles, responsibilities and contributions. Comments and observations are noted very frequently on their strengths and limitations in various national and international forums.

The vast literature gleaned from IFLA, ACRL and allied publications on academic libraries aptly reveal the changing roles and responsibilities of information professionals in the modern society. The academic libraries are also called upon to exploit all forms of digital and telecommunication technologies and explore new avenues and possibilities for the enhancement of knowledge resources which are available in different forms and places. The builders and managers of academic libraries are also required to enrich computer security and authentication techniques which promote information diffusion.

The information personnel are also required to enrich their professional competence and leadership qualities which would facilitate meaningful identification, location and evaluation of information resources in order to promote professional excellence among the user community. The “user-centred” paradigm has been adopted in the developed countries to create customizable interfaces and enrich the process of collection development in the academic libraries. The academic libraries really demand a well conceived, designed and maintained systems, practices and operations which would effectively meet the needs of different constituent groups and individual users. The administrators are mainly responsible for creating and sustaining software, hardware, human resources and data bases which would go a long way in promoting research and development in India. “The proficiency of library information science (LIS) and information skills must be complemented by hardware and software skills for working in an information technology (IT) intensive environment” as rightly suggested by Foo, S. and other scholars.

Conclusion
The academic libraries have to be managed on the basis of constant introspection at the individual level and scientific evaluation at the institutional level in this age of knowledge management. Academic libraries in India are called upon to play a crucial and leading role over other types of libraries by transforming their information management skills, techniques, practices and resources. Redefining roles and responsibilities, constructive intervention of the organization leaders in institution building endeavors, positive involvement of information personnel in delivery system and constant evaluation of goods and services will make the Indian academic libraries highly appropriate and resourceful in future.

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