Strategic planning for sustainable LIS profession in the world of AI

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Artificial intelligence (AI) based tools and technologies are rapidly increasing in each and every task ranging from academia to business organizations. It comes with a lot of benefits and advantages over the traditional methods and system of doing tasks. There is no denying the fact that without embracing AI tools, it is very difficult for the Library and Information Science (LIS) profession to survive in the complex information world. Therefore, a strategic plan is required for ensuring the sustainability of the LIS profession in the world of AI.

Over the years, the LIS discipline has seen a lot of changes in academia and practice. Since AI is the future, LIS disciplines should include this in their curriculum for preparing future tech-savvy professionals. Updating the curriculum on a continuous basis and the inclusion of technologies more and more should be given top priority if we really want to make our profession sustainable. The traditional and conservative mindset of the LIS profession should be changed to a dynamic one who will not fear change and innovation. This is to be realized by the LIS professionals that without continuous development and growth, nothing can exist in this fast world. The LIS professionals need to look at the areas of services in libraries and information centers where AI tools can be adopted and implemented. The feasibility study should be given priority before adopting any AI tools. For example, chatbots and virtual assistants can provide 24x7 hours of support to the user community, answering queries and assisting with research. In addition, AI can facilitate advanced data analytics, enabling LIS professionals to gain insights into user behavior, preferences, and trends, which can inform collection development and service improvement. AI, for sure, will not be the reason for the professional displacement but will offer the LIS profession more freedom to involve themselves in more complex and value-added LIS tasks which require human touch. Collaboration and networking are one of the key elements when talking about strategic planning. The regional LIS professional body and international bodies like International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) can take the initiative to discuss the strategies that the library and information profession should undertake to survive in the emerging AI world. The best practices regarding AI in Libraries and information centers around the world should be promoted and shared. Collaboration should also be established with entities outside of the LIS organizations like AI experts, IT developers, policy makers etc. To cope with the AI environment, LIS professionals also need to consider continuous personal development. In this regard, libraries and information centers should be bound to arrange training, workshops, seminars, visit programs etc. for the LIS professionals. The role of LIS professionals here is also paramount for detecting their flaws and trying to mitigate them. While talking about AI, one of the most important areas for strategic planning could be the preparation of AI usage policies and guidelines. These guidelines should emphasize transparency, accountability, and the protection of user privacy.

Additionally, the LIS profession should advocate for ethical AI practices within the broader information and technology sectors, contributing to the development of standards and regulations that promote fairness and equity. Research and innovation should also be considered in strategic planning for developing tailored AI tools for the library and information centers.

LIS professionals also need to redefine their roles in the changing AI world. The libraries and information centers need to be transformed into a trusted knowledge and learning hub for digital inclusion. LIS professionals can work as change-makers and leaders in media and information literacy education, digital literacy, ethical use of AI, privacy and data protection etc. They can offer training sessions for diverse groups in using AI tools, arrange workshops for awareness of AI and provide relevant and authentic resources on AI. LIS professionals can empower users to navigate the digital world confidently and responsibly.

IFLA, the apex body of library and information professionals developed a library strategic response to AI where they outlined the impact of AI on libraries, strategic context and a library SWOT, strategic responses to AI etc. They further provided a statement on libraries and AI where specific recommendations to governments, libraries and library associations have been discussed. IFLA also established the Artificial Intelligence Special Interest Group (AI SIG) which supports and works towards implementing the recommendations as well as adding value and impact to that statement on libraries and AI.

In the world of artificial intelligence, proactive and thorough strategic planning is essential for the sustainability of the LIS profession. The Library and Information Science (LIS) profession may effectively adapt to the evolving technological landscape and maintain its position as a relevant and dynamic area by adopting AI technology, promoting ongoing professional development, resolving ethical problems, and forming collaborations.