Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1. BACKGROUND

The profession of librarianship has been witnessing far-reaching changes world over since the last decade of the 20th century. New technological and socio-economic developments are bringing forth unprecedented challenges for the profession as its very survival is in question globally. The driving force behind all these changes is the revolution in the field of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). The highly networked world is witnessing convergences of ideas and institutions with 24/7 exchanges of billions of bytes across the world. A new pluralistic global society is replacing the divided and stratified national and organizational cultures as old barriers are crumbling down. On the other hand, a recession–ridden global economy, increasing consumerism, disappearance of political polarity and innumerable financial and political scams and scandals, along with media exposures all over the world including India are rocking the very ethical foundations of this highly connected world. No institution or profession has remained unchanged or unscathed in such a volatile environment. There is a rapid decline globally in the deference traditionally shown towards professionals and widespread threat to the professions (Feather, 2011, p. 261).

Widespread availability of information in various electronic media and the increasing self-sufficiency of the users have led to interrogation of the place of both the librarian and the library, of all types, in the society. These developments have led the professionals to redefine the concept of library, the knowledge base and competencies of the librarians. In India, both the profession and the libraries are immensely affected by applications of ICTs and economic compulsions during the last two decades. ICTs have changed beyond recognition all in-house and user services in a library. There is a
paradigm shift from acquisition for self – sufficiency to resource sharing, from long shelf-life to fast redundancy; from on-the-spot use to 24/7 remote access and from dependent to disappearing users. Various new economic compulsions due to expensive IT infrastructure, monopolistic e-publishers, financial stringency and pressures for resource generation are influencing the professionals and the libraries in multifarious ways.

All these developments are bound to affect the ethos of the profession that is shaped by interaction of personal, professional and organizational values (Froehlich, 1997, p. 80). The core construct of the ethos of library professionals is a set of core values or ethical principles and beliefs. This ethical system operates both at subconscious level and in formal organizational level in the form of ethical codes. Few Organizational Behaviorists believe that ethos serves as the fixed referent point during turbulent times that guides action when everything else is ambiguous (Caza, Brianna, & Cameron, 2004, p. 173).

This study explores the professional ethos of the select community of special library executives of Delhi and also analyses in-depth its manifestations in organizational ethos in two case studies of special libraries.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The ethical values and beliefs that constitute ethos of the library service enforce its professional character and provide sustenance value to the profession especially when it is facing threats globally. New technological, economic and political forces have profound impact on the traditional values of Service, Equality, Intellectual Freedom, Information Literacy etc. While new values generally associated with the private sector, such as Innovation, Collaboration, Accountability, Leadership, etc. are bringing about far reaching changes in the character of the profession. There is a widespread threat perception among many professionals that ranges from undermining of core values to concern for the disappearance of the profession. In 1997 the McLeod
lecture underlined that the public service ethos of library service was threatened by the information revolution driven by the market forces of the private sector (Hendry, 1998, p. 99). This threat perception is still universal in the 21st century. Resultantly, professionals in this decade are dealing with increasing ethical dilemmas. They are coping in various ways with or without formal organizational support.

In this scenario the ethical foundation of the profession, the value systems of the professionals and their professionalism need reviewing and reinforcement. For this purpose the process of formation of ethos needs to be understood and analyzed. Identification of the circumstances and attitudes required for development of an ethos conducive to the emerging values become necessary to empower the professionals to face the period of transition successfully. Strengthening of the moral responsibilities of associations of the library professionals has also become essential. The international library association IFLA revised its statues in 2008 and earlier ALA restated the general principles and values in 2004 in response to such requirements (IFLA, 2008; ALA, 2004). SLA issued Vision, Mission and Core values statements in 2003 and launched an SLA Alignment project in 2009 for bringing “clarity and unity to the core identity and values of the profession and the Association” (SLA, 2009, Alignment project, para 3). Subsequently SLA issued professional ethics guidelines in December 2010. However in India, no such efforts have been made by the library associations.

The impact of new technological and economic developments on the tools and techniques of library service and competencies of the professionals have been studied innumerable times by Indian library professionals but their impact on the ethical base of the service and professionalism are not analyzed to the same extent in the context of any type of library. Every Indian professional operates within a subconscious ethical system. However, their ethos or ethical issues and beliefs are generally not topics of discourses in India so far as librarianship is concerned. Critical studies on professionalism are very few. Both quantitative and qualitative researches on core values or ethical
principles are almost non-existent. Awareness about the role of a code of ethics among the Indian professionals is rarely studied. There is no study available to explain how professionals or the libraries are coping with the overwhelming changes from psychological or ethical perspectives. Though there are scattered references on change management but there is complete apathy towards attitudinal studies for understanding change of ethos or culture in a library. Consequently, no studies are available to analyze the forces responsible for success or failure of a library in developing the organizational ethos required for facing the challenges of new technological advances.

In view of above, a study focusing on the above mentioned unexplored issues related to professionalism, ethical dimensions and dilemmas faced by the library professionals in India is essential at this point of time. After all, ethical competency is the additional value that a professional brings to any task (Fisher, 2011, p. 268). Ranganathan’s organic view of a library as an ecosystem responding to changes in its environment also demands the study of its organizational ethos.

3. OBJECTIVES

Following are the objectives of this study:

i. To understand the professional ethos of library professionals in select special libraries.

ii. To comprehend the extent of change, if any, in ethos of special librarianship due to the impact of new technological and economic developments.

iii. To understand perceptions of professionals about the core values of Indian librarianship with reference to special library service.

iv. To analyze the interplay of professional and personal ethos of professionals that shape organizational ethos of a special library.

v. To understand the rhetorical strategies adopted by a special library to communicate its ethos through the website.
vi. To understand if applications of ICTs create an innovative ethos in a library.

vii. To analyze the role of leadership in changing organizational ethos of a library.

viii. To understand the level of professionalism among special library professionals.

ix. To find out awareness about code/s of ethics among special library professionals.

x. To identify ethical dilemmas facing the special library executives with reference to professional values in their actual work environment.

4. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This is a study of the professional ethos of selected special library executives of Delhi and its change. It also deals with the professional ethos as reflected in organizational ethos of two leading special libraries of Delhi i.e., the National Social Science Documentation Centre (NASSDOC) and the National Council of Education Research & Training (NCERT).

Ethos is a concept that has diverse interpretations and a wide range of connotations. This study has adopted a value-centric approach to its interpretation in keeping with the contemporary trends in various professional disciplines. The thrust of the study is identification of the shared values of the professionals serving in special libraries and attitudes towards values and also understanding the nature of their professionalism. In the study of values, Intellectual Freedom has been studied mainly in terms of censorship, since the issues related to protection through Copyright and IPR are discussed frequently in Indian library literature and so have not been dealt here. Various ethical theories have not been discussed. Roles of library associations in the formation of ethos have also not been covered. In case studies the focus is on convergences and divergences of official and professional ethos from the perspectives of core professional values. Since such conflicts generally
influence and shape the organizational ethos. Each value has myriad of ramifications in professional activities, it is impossible to cover all those in a single study like this. Therefore, preferences of professional values and attitudes towards selected values as reflected in primarily verbal and written communications and inter-personal behaviour only of the professionals of the special libraries have been covered in case studies.

Change in ethos has been studied both in terms of differences in value system of the professional community in historical context as well as through identifying traits in staff of specific libraries that support development of specific New Age values of Innovation, Leadership, Accountability and Collaboration. In the digital decade, adoption of new technology is viewed as an innovative activity that furthers organizational goal. In libraries Innovations are either directly driven by new technology or facilitated by new technology, therefore case studies have specifically focused on development of innovative ethos primarily in terms of applications of ICTs.

The study covers senior most or top library managers referred here as Library Executives of selected special libraries of Delhi. For selection of special libraries following two works have been consulted – Library movement and library development in Delhi & Chandigarh by Kumar (2010) and Directory of libraries in Delhi and NCR by Pathak (2011). Kumar’s (2010) book has a list of 549 special libraries of Delhi divided under eight categories (Kumar, 2010, p. 646-681). Since the categorization is irrational with some overlapping Kumar’s list was not followed in totality. Pathak’s (2011) directory which does not contain a separate list of special libraries but has a list of Prominent libraries, most of which are special libraries, besides Government and Academic libraries of Delhi and NCR. On the basis of these two sources, a master list of special libraries of Delhi, scattered under various categories in Kumar’s (2010) and Pathak’s (2011) books, was compiled for this study.

The compiled master list of 209 special libraries of Delhi includes libraries of research institutions, organization or bodies in all disciplines belonging to both
For the survey of professional ethos, 109 library executives of leading research libraries were selected as samples (list in Appendix II). The selection was following the criteria which included reputation of the library and its accessibility to non-affiliated users.

Two libraries for case studies were selected to understand if applications of ICTs and role of leaders can generate innovative ethos or change ethos of a library.

5. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Dealing with concepts such as ethos and values, which are abstractions, has some inherent limitations. Since these are not precisely measureable as individuals tend to have subjective interpretations statistical validation is not always applicable and quantitative methods are not adequate. Ethos being an experiential concept, generalizations based on quantitative study cannot be stretched beyond a point. Therefore, case study method combining both quantitative and qualitative techniques has also been undertaken for in-depth analysis in selected locations of two special libraries in Delhi.

The connotation of the term Special Library has been quite wide. Extreme differentiations in services and clientele result in great diversity in this category. For the purpose of studying ethos, libraries of research institutions or such learned bodies, organizations or associations supporting research activities and serving both in-house and non-affiliated users have been selected. This process of selection has been followed to ensure some degrees of homogeneity in sampling. Therefore, libraries of Ministries (since these are not research institutions) and private hospitals are not included. Again, departments of universities, though conducting research, are also excluded since these libraries fall under the category of academic libraries and function differently under university systems. Corporate libraries are also excluded. The criteria for selection also lend an unintentional bias towards the libraries in public sector.
However, it is also worth noting that the convergence that is taking place globally in all sectors of knowledge and information has made traditional categorization of libraries increasingly irrelevant now. The change of title of the famous Aslib series of *Handbook of Special Librarianship and Information Work* to *Handbook of Information Management in 2001* perhaps signifies this trend. The professionals serving in other categories of libraries in public sector are facing almost similar challenges and predicaments. Thus the term *Special Library* has lost its earlier exclusivity to a great extent and is used in this study only for the sake of convenience and not to signify an exclusive category.

There is very limited literature available on ethos or ethical issues related to the library service in India. Available international literature in English are mostly related to the American and European scenario. Thus, a truly multinational perspective is not available. Again, lack of bibliographic control of Indian library literature and incomplete and incorrect information on the website of IASLIC proved to be great hurdles. The general comprehension level of the executives also proved to be an impediment in understanding of value terminologies during the survey.

6. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research questions were formulated for this study on the basis of theoretical assumptions that resulted from literature review and personal experience. These questions formed the basis for especially the qualitative research and to some extent the quantitative research also since mixed research methods have been followed for this study.

Following are the research questions :

i. Which are the core professional values cherished by the professionals in special libraries?

ii. Is there any change in professional ethos during the digital age?
iii. How do the libraries communicate their official aspirational ethos through websites?

iv. Are there differences in value preferences of the professional community in specific organizational locations?

v. What is the relationship between organizational ethos and professional ethos of the serving professionals?

vi. Do applications of Information and Communication Technologies generate an innovative ethos among professionals and in the organization?

vii. Is effective leadership essential for changing the ethos of a library?

7. HYPOTHESES

Following hypotheses have been framed to be tested through the general survey of special library executives:

i. Service is the top most ranked core value for the special librarians but it is restrictive in nature in a special library.

ii. Age, professional qualification, total professional experience and experience in current position do not influence ranking of core values.

iii. Gender does not influence ranking of professional core values.

iv. Majority of the special librarians are unaware of JOCLAI’s Code of Ethics.

v. Acceptance of new values signify change in professional ethos of special library executives.

vi. Conflicting attitudes towards the value of Service and Equality of Access reflect dilemmas among special library executives.
vii. Majority of the librarians of special libraries are in a state of dilemma regarding their attitude towards the value of Intellectual Freedom of Expression.

viii. Accountability towards the profession, organization and users generate conflicting attitudes among special librarians.

8. OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

i. Profession

The term profession has been defined variously. The general trend has been defining the term on the basis of criteria. In 1915 Abraham Flexner suggested criteria viz., intellectual and personal responsibility, a substantial body of knowledge, practical use to society, organized into associations, characterized by an idealism, as the basis for determining whether or not social work could qualify as a profession (as cited in Osman, 1995). This trait approach, though criticized later, continue to prevail in the study of professionalism since Parsons (1954), Etzioni (1969) to Kirkpatrick and Ackroyd (2003) and Torstendahl (2005) (as cited in Morrell, 2007). Surprisingly, the criteria enumerated by Flexner (1915), more or less, still signify professionalism of an occupation.

ii. Ethos

Ethos has been defined in this study as constituting of values including beliefs and dilemmas. It is shaped by an interplay among professional, organizational and personal values that sometimes generate conflicts or dilemmas. This interpretation of the concept of Ethos is based on fusion of two most significant efforts in Library and Information Science to define the term by Rothstein (1967) and Froehlich (1997). Following Froehlich’s (1997)
value-centric approach, the term Ethos has been used here to denote personal, professional as well as organizational ethos of a special library.

iii. Ethics

In general terms “Ethics involves moral issues and choices and deals with right and wrong behavior” (Luthans, 2008, p.47). The relation of Ethos with Ethics is sometimes ambiguous. In this study Ethos is seen as an extension or expression of ethical principles as some scholars treat in Business Ethics. (as cited in Caza, 2004, p.173).

iv. Code of Ethics

A Code of Ethics is a formal statement of the profession’s values regarding ethical behaviours (Shachaf, 2005, p.514). Bekker (1976) believed that a Code Of Ethics should be an expression of Ethos of an occupation (as cited in Finks and Soekefeld., 1993, p. 305). The codes also state or imply the shared values of librarians and information professionals; and also acknowledge the various principles and factors that are being balanced and set minimum standards of conduct (Froehlich 1997, p.78).

v. Value

Gorman (2000) quoted Rockeach (1973) to define the term Value as “an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of – existence. A value system is an enduring organization of beliefs concerning modes of conduct or end-states of existence along a continuum of relative importance” (as cited in Gorman, 2000, p. 6). Budd (2006) has described the core values for which he used the term ‘professional goals’ as genuine expressions of the professional Ethos (p. 257). The term Values are also used interchangeably with Ethical principles as is done by Dole, Hyurich and Koehler (2000) and Schahaf (2005).
vi. **Belief**

According to Bryson (1990) “beliefs are the acceptance of values or convictions about values” (p.322 - 323). He further explains that values have a moral dimension and influence the beliefs and attitudes of individuals and groups.

vii. **Ethical Dilemma**

Ethical dilemmas occur when there are conflicts between or among personal, professional or organizational values. According to Rubin and Froehlich (1996), “this conflict is most conspicuous when the values of information professionals appear to conflict with commonly accepted notions of moral or right conduct” (p. 49).

viii. **Library Service**

The term *Library Service* has been used here to denote this essentially service profession. This unitary term has been used interchangeably with the term *Librarianship*. The term is used in this study to denote management of library with its, collections, services, personnel and programmes. *Library & Information Science (LIS)* is the term used in this study to denote the discipline in academic context only.

(a). **Librarianship: Problem of Definition**

*Librarianship* is a generic term for all categories of library but unfortunately though the profession has completed a century of its existence there is no consensus about its usage or definition. The use of the term *Library Service* for the profession in this study can be explained in view of the problem of definition that this profession faced since a long time. The term *Librarianship* always had a definitional problem that has been discussed by many scholars and professionals. Few authors like Narayana (1991), Hurt (1992), have written about it at length. Narayana (1991) observed about the nomenclature –
“Is it librarianship, library science, library service or information science?” (p. 87).

Over the years various terms have been coined to denote this profession such as *Library Economy* or commonly used *Library Science*, first used by Ranganathan or occasionally used *Library Management*. However, none of these terms enjoy the longevity of use and popularity like that of the term *Librarianship*. But even the term *Librarianship* has lost its general acceptability world over after Information Technology started gaining prominence in the professional theory and practice. Gorman labelled this term old-fashioned in his book written in 2000 (p. 10). In the latter half of the 20th century, the phrase *Library and Information Science* was widely used for both the academic discipline and the profession. Hurt (1992) pointed out that “the salient point is that adding information to library science does not accomplish much” (p. 156).

The term *Library Service* is used in this study to denote only the profession. Though this term is used in libraries in plural to denote activities meant for users, yet the use of the term in singular to denote all the services and even the profession is not new. Russell used the term *Library Service* as early as in 1943 (p.1). Shera used the term *Library Service* in his book *Introduction to Library Science* in 1976. Neelameghan (1970) and Sharma (1977) also used the term *Library Service* for the profession. Lancaster (1988) and Jayarajan (1997) used the terms *Information Service* (both singular and plural) and *Library Service* almost interchangeably. Paul (1991) used the term *Library Service* to denote it as a service unit or department in an organization and also as a service profession. Rubin and Froehlich used *Library and Information Service* for librarianship in 1996. Budd used the term *Library Service* to denote the profession in 2006.

Analogies of usage of the term *Service* to indicate professions are available in age old professions like administrative service, medical or legal service. The researcher is in total agreement with Hurt (1992) when he opines “it may be
that the old definitions are the best, but any viable profession and discipline must take the time to make an in-depth re-examination.” (p. 154).

ix. **Special Library**

The term *Special Library* has been defined variously. However, the following definition of special libraries provided by UNESCO in 1958 is the most comprehensive one which mentions that - “these libraries may be attached to various bodies, such as parliament or a government department, a scientific or other research institution, a learned society, professional association, museum, industrial association, chamber of commerce, etc. … Special libraries are primarily designed to serve a limited number of experts, scientists, research workers, etc. and not coming within any of the categories—national libraries, university and school libraries” (Singh & Kumar, 2005, p. 4). Here the term *Special Library* has been used selectively to denote libraries of research institutions and such learned bodies, organizations or associations serving both in-house and non-affiliated users.

9. **ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY**

The present study has been organized into the following seven chapters:

*Chapter 1: Introduction* explains background of the problem studied, the objectives of the study, research questions, hypotheses and operational definitions of the core concepts of the study.

*Chapter 2: Review of Literature* presents a comprehensive survey of interdisciplinary Indian and international literature on ethos and related concepts such as ethics, values, ethical dilemmas etc.

*Chapter 3: Research Methodology* deals with various research methods adopted for this study in details. Both quantitative and qualitative methods have been combined to study the experiential concept of ethos. The chapter includes separate sections on quantitative technique of questionnaire survey applied to study general professional ethos and qualitative method of case studies for ethos of the library service in organizational locations.
Chapter 4: Ethos of Library Service: A Conceptual Framework explains the concept of ethos, its evolution through history and various approaches to study of ethos in LIS. It also deals with various theoretical frameworks applied for research of ethos in other professional disciplines such as, Education, Public Service Management and Business Communication.

Chapter 5: Construction of Ethos for Special Library Service explains the concept of ethos in the context of special librarianship. The chapter focuses on explaining the process of identification of a set of core values for special library professionals on the basis of literature review and survey of codes of ethics/statements of core values, etc. issued by various associations of special library professionals. JOCLAI’s Code of Ethics has been discussed in details. This chapter also explains all the constituents of ethos such as values, beliefs and dilemmas of the library professionals culled from the related literature in international as well as Indian contexts. This discussion thus provides the background for the empirical and qualitative research undertaken and explained in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 6: Data Collection and Analysis is in two parts. The first part deals with the survey of library executives of select special libraries of Delhi for understanding professional ethos. It describes various techniques adopted for collection of data and problems faced in applications. The second part deals with the case studies of the two special libraries, NASSDOC and NCERT. It deals with the collection of data and its analyses using mixed methods of research.

Chapter 7: Findings, Suggestions and Areas of Further Research deals with the findings of the survey of the special library executives for professional ethos as well as a comparison between the two case studies. It also provides recommendations and identifies areas of further research for future.
REFERENCES


