

# Study Of Soft Skills In Library Profession: An Overview

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## **Abstract:**

*This research paper examines the critical role of soft skills in the library profession, highlighting their impact on enhancing library services and professional competence. While traditional library education emphasizes technical skills, soft skills such as communication, teamwork, leadership, and emotional intelligence are increasingly recognized as vital for effective user engagement and collaborative work environments. The study identifies key challenges hindering the development of these skills, including limited formal training, time constraints, and institutional undervaluation. Through a comprehensive literature review, the paper explores strategies to integrate soft skills training into library and information science curricula and professional development programs. It also underscores the importance of fostering a supportive workplace culture that encourages peer mentoring and open communication. Ultimately, the research advocates for prioritizing soft skills development to equip library professionals to meet evolving user needs and contribute meaningfully to the dynamic landscape of modern libraries.*

**Keywords:** *Soft skills, library profession, communication, teamwork, user services, adaptability, professional development.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In recent decades, the role of libraries has expanded significantly, evolving from conventional repositories of printed collections into dynamic, user-oriented information centers. Contemporary libraries are increasingly integrating digital resources, community services, and user engagement programs, demanding a broader and more diverse set of competencies from library professionals. While technical skills such as information retrieval, cataloguing, and digital archiving remain essential, there is a growing recognition of the importance of soft skills in supporting effective service delivery. These include communication abilities, emotional intelligence, adaptability, and interpersonal collaboration, which enable librarians to meet the evolving expectations of users and to function efficiently in team-based environments (Ismail et al., 2024). As libraries continue to play a pivotal role in knowledge dissemination and user education, the presence of well-developed soft skills among library staff has become instrumental in improving institutional performance and enhancing user satisfaction (Kuey, 2024).

## **LITERATURE OF REVIEW**

Ismail et al. (2024) found that library professionals primarily develop soft skills through informal learning, such as peer interaction and workplace experience. Akanbi & Edem (2023) emphasized that communication, emotional intelligence, and interpersonal skills significantly improve user satisfaction in academic libraries. Kuey (2024) highlighted that MOOCs are effective in enhancing librarians' soft skills, particularly in leadership and collaboration. Tammaro & Roncaglia (2023) asserted that digital library environments require advanced soft skills such as remote communication and user empathy. Okike & Asogwa (2022) concluded that effective reference services rely heavily on librarians' interpersonal and problem-solving skills.

### **3. Objectives of the Study**

- i. To identify and define key soft skills relevant to the library profession and analyze their role in enhancing professional effectiveness and user engagement.
- ii. To examine the current level of awareness, development, and application of soft skills among library professionals in various institutional settings.

- iii. To explore strategies and best practices for integrating soft skills training into professional development programs and library science education.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, primarily based on an extensive review of relevant literature and secondary data sources. It analyzes existing research, professional practices, and training approaches to understand the role of soft skills in the library profession, highlighting their impact on service delivery, teamwork, and user satisfaction.

## DISCUSSION

### 5.1. Importance of Soft Skills

Soft skills are generally defined as a set of personal attributes, social behaviors, communication proficiencies, and emotional intelligence that determine how effectively an individual interacts with others and manages their responsibilities in a professional setting. In contrast to hard skills, which are task-specific and typically acquired through formal education or technical training, soft skills are more intuitive and transferable across roles and professions. Within the domain of library and information science, soft skills are essential for building positive relationships with users, interpreting information needs accurately, resolving service-related conflicts, and fostering collaborative team environments (Tammaro & Roncaglia, 2023). Their relevance has increased with the shift toward digital library services and user-centered approaches, where human interaction and empathy play a critical role in delivering personalized services and ensuring user satisfaction. As such, soft skills are no longer optional, but a fundamental component of professional competence in modern library settings.

### 5.2. Role of Soft Skills in Enhancing Library Services

In the evolving landscape of library services, soft skills have emerged as indispensable in shaping user experiences and promoting service excellence. These competencies significantly influence the quality of interactions between library personnel and users, fostering an inclusive, responsive, and empathetic service environment. Skills such as active listening, verbal communication, emotional intelligence, and cultural sensitivity contribute to building trust and facilitating effective reference services, particularly in diverse academic and public settings (Akanbi & Edem, 2023). Moreover, soft skills enhance internal operations by promoting collaboration among staff, streamlining workflows, and supporting shared leadership models. In the context of modern libraries, which are increasingly adopting digital technologies and community-oriented initiatives, soft skills play a crucial role in facilitating user training, digital literacy programs, and participatory services (Kuey, 2024). Thus, the integration of soft skills within professional development strategies is essential for aligning library services with contemporary user expectations and institutional goals.

### 5.3 Role of Soft Skills in Enhancing Library Services

Soft skills play a critical role in elevating the quality of interactions between library staff and users, thereby creating an inviting and supportive atmosphere conducive to effective service delivery. These interpersonal competencies—such as communication, empathy, and conflict resolution—not only enhance user satisfaction but also contribute significantly to professional growth by fostering effective teamwork, leadership, and customer service (Akanbi & Edem, 2023). As libraries increasingly integrate digital technologies and expand their community outreach, the importance of soft skills becomes more pronounced in navigating the complexities of user engagement and collaborative work environments (Kuey, 2024). Consequently, the deliberate cultivation of these skills is essential for modern libraries striving to meet diverse user needs while maintaining operational efficiency and a positive organizational culture.

### 5.4. Required soft skills in the LIS profession

Here is a comprehensive list of required soft skills in the Library and Information Science (LIS) profession, along with brief explanations of each in the context of library work:

Sr. No.	Soft Skills	Description / Relevance to Library Work
1	Communication Skills	Essential for clear verbal and written exchange with users and colleagues, vital for effective reference services and documentation.
2	Presentation Skill	Enables librarians to effectively deliver training sessions, workshops, and user education programs, improving information dissemination.
3	Interpersonal Skill	Facilitates teamwork, collaboration, and positive relations with users and staff, enhancing library service quality.
4	Problem Solving Skills	Helps librarians analyze and resolve user issues, technical problems, and operational challenges efficiently.
5	Devotion to Library Services	Reflects commitment to supporting academic missions and delivering consistent, quality service to all users.
6	Strong Work Ethics	Involves integrity, punctuality, and professionalism to ensure reliable and trustworthy library operations.
7	Positive Attitude	Encourages a welcoming environment and resilience, helping librarians handle challenges and foster user satisfaction.
8	A Groomed Personality	Professional appearance and demeanor enhance user trust and the library's reputation.
9	Attracting Users Towards Library	Involves promotional strategies, user-friendly services, and outreach to increase library engagement and usage.
10	Adaptability to New Technology	Enables librarians to embrace new tools and systems, improving service efficiency and meeting evolving user needs.
11	Leadership Skills	Includes guiding teams, strategic planning, and decision-making to drive innovation and meet institutional goals.
12	Planning Skills	Important for resource allocation, project management, and aligning library services with institutional priorities.
13	Time Management Skills	Helps prioritize tasks and manage workload to ensure timely and effective service delivery.
14	Teaching Skill	Supports educating users on research methods, information literacy, and resource utilization to enhance academic success.
15	Teamwork	Promotes a cooperative work culture among library staff, improving problem-solving and service quality.

### 5.5. Challenges in Developing Soft Skills

Despite the recognized importance of soft skills in the library profession, their systematic development remains a significant challenge. One primary obstacle is the insufficient emphasis on soft skills within formal library and information science (LIS) education programs. Traditional curricula often prioritize technical competencies, such as cataloguing, classification, and digital resource management, while neglecting interpersonal, communication, and leadership skills that are equally vital for effective service delivery (Ismail et al., 2024). Additionally, many practicing library professionals face time constraints and workload pressures that limit opportunities for soft skills training and professional development (Akanbi & Edem, 2023).

There is also a pervasive undervaluing of soft skills in some institutional cultures, where technical expertise is often regarded as the sole indicator of professional competence. This perception hinders investment in soft skills development and reduces motivation among staff to pursue such training voluntarily. Furthermore, the absence of standardized frameworks or assessment methods for evaluating soft skills creates difficulty in designing effective training programs and measuring outcomes (Tammamo & Roncaglia, 2023). These

challenges collectively impede the holistic growth of library professionals, affecting both individual performance and the overall quality of library services.

## 6. Suggestions

Addressing these challenges requires deliberate and multi-faceted strategies aimed at embedding soft skills development within the professional lifecycle of library staff. First, incorporating structured soft skills training modules into LIS curricula is essential. Such integration ensures that emerging professionals graduate with foundational competencies in communication, teamwork, conflict resolution, and emotional intelligence (Kuey, 2024). Second, libraries and educational institutions should organize targeted workshops and continuous professional development (CPD) programs that provide practicing librarians with practical tools and experiential learning opportunities to enhance their soft skills. These programs can be offered through in-person sessions or increasingly through online platforms, including MOOCs, which have demonstrated efficacy in skill enhancement (Kuey, 2024). Third, fostering a culture of peer mentoring and regular feedback encourages ongoing personal growth and accountability within library teams. Peer support mechanisms facilitate the exchange of best practices and constructive critique in a non-threatening environment (Ismail et al., 2024). Lastly, promoting open communication and collaborative workplace cultures enables library professionals to apply soft skills in real-time, enhancing team cohesion and user engagement. Such an environment not only nurtures interpersonal skills but also aligns staff efforts toward shared institutional goals, thereby improving service outcomes (Akanbi & Edem, 2023). Collectively, these strategies can help bridge the gap between technical expertise and interpersonal effectiveness, positioning soft skills as a central pillar of modern library professionalism.

## CONCLUSION

Soft skills have become essential in the library profession, complementing technical expertise to meet the changing demands of modern library services. Effective communication, teamwork, emotional intelligence, and leadership enhance user interactions and foster a collaborative work environment. However, despite their importance, soft skills often receive insufficient emphasis in formal library education and ongoing professional development, limiting librarians' ability to fully engage with diverse user needs and institutional goals. Addressing this gap requires the integration of structured soft skills training into library science curricula and continuous learning programs. Encouraging peer mentoring and fostering open, communicative workplace cultures can further support the development and application of these skills. Ultimately, prioritizing soft skills is crucial for improving service quality and adapting to the evolving role of libraries in the digital and community spheres. Investing in these competencies will empower library professionals to contribute more effectively to user satisfaction and organizational success.

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