

Library and Information Science Education in India: A Critical Assessment

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Abstract

Purpose: To discuss the developments that have occurred in the discipline of library and information science in India and the challenges posed by these developments to the library and information science schools.

Design/methodology/approach: Data regarding present study was obtained from different library science schools offering different courses at different levels, infrastructure, faculty, learning resources, ICT related tools etc.

Findings: There is heterogeneity existing in the LIS discipline in terms of their affiliation to a particular faculty in different universities. Student's intake capacity also differs and even mode of selecting students to LIS courses also varies. There is no homogeneity in the curriculum adopted by different LIS departments in the country. Even some schools are offering one year truncated Bachelor's and one year Masters courses while others have adopted two year integrated Masters courses in library and information science.

Practical Implications: findings of the study will help in taking concrete steps by apex body like UGC, MHRD etc in providing guidelines for achieving uniformity and homogeneity in the educational sector of LIS profession. As such study will provide inputs for enhancing the quality of education in LIS profession.

Originality/value: Although LIS schools in India have developed on many fronts and are performing a commendable job in producing competent professionals for managing the libraries and information centers but there are some lacunas existing in the present LIS education scenario in India. These lacunas are identified and appropriate measures have been suggested in order to improve the quality of LIS education. Some new ideas have been provided for redefining the LIS profession in accordance with the development in Information and communication technology. Entrepreneurship in LIS in India is still considered as a new concept.

Keywords: Library Science; Information Science; LIS education, LIS schools, India

Article Type: Descriptive, View Point.

1. Introduction: Library and information science (LIS) education in India is now hundred years of age. During these hundred years LIS education has witnessed transformation after transformation in curriculum contents, teaching methodologies and other related aspects. Trends like globalization, privatization, internet etc have brought revolution in the discipline of LIS. In India after independence University Grants Commission (UGC) is playing a pivotal role in bringing qualitative factor in LIS education. UGC has constituted three committees Viz. Ranganathan Committee, Kuala Committee and Karrisadappa Committee that put forward their recommendations for improving the quality of LIS education. These committees brought out curriculum for teaching LIS discipline. Condition of LIS departments improved in terms of physical infrastructure, number of faculty members and in terms of activities whether teaching or conducting research. However, present system of LIS education in India is facing some lacunas and these lacunas are addressed in the present paper.

2. Literature Review: India is an ancient civilization with a rich lineage of cultural heritage. Librarianship in India has a history that can be traced to the period of Vedas, when

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knowledge has been transmitted through oral tradition. Libraries were part of shrines, mosques, temples, palaces, madrasas etc. Mangla (1998) writes that in librarianship, the past history of India, like that of several other countries in the 'East' is that of a country having libraries with little emphasis on 'Library services' in modern sense. In other words 'Librarianship' a profession then confined to collection and preservation of recorded materials existed in India from time immemorial (Mangla, 2004). The seeds of library science education programmes were sown in India during 1911, owing to the initiatives taken by Sayajirao Gaekwad II the ruler of the erstwhile Baroda state who had realized the importance of libraries as the most crucial factors for all round development of the society and for education of the masses. In 1910 he invited W.A. Borden from USA for establishing a network of libraries in the state of Baroda. The Maharaja also visualized that suitable manpower is required for manning these libraries. Under the directions of Borden, he started a library training programmes at Baroda in 1911. Another landmark year in the history of LIS education in India is 1915 when LIS course was started in Punjab University at Lahore under the direction of, Asa Don Dickenson. The Vice Chancellor of Punjab University, Lahore (now in Pakistan) invited Asa Don Dickinson from USA to organize the Punjab University Library, introduce library training and teach modern library methods to those librarians who were employed in the university library and its affiliated colleges in Punjab (Aman & Sharma, 2005). Dickenson started a three – month library course in 1915, which later was extended to six months duration. On completion of the course, students were awarded a certificate in library science (Kannur, 1986). This school has the pride to be the first school of library science (in undivided India), patronized under university system. The training school at Punjab University was considered to be the second known library school in the world, the first being the Columbia School (Agarwal, 2004). In the University of Delhi, Department of library science was established in 1947 to conduct Post-Graduate Diploma Course. University of Delhi was the first university to start a doctoral programme in library science in the entire British Commonwealth in 1949. By the end of 1950's there were 13 library science schools in India (Krishan Kumar & Sharma, 2008). Dr S. R. Ranganathan conceptualized Documentation Research and Training Centre (DRTC), Bangalore under the auspices of Indian Statistical Institute in 1962 for imparting a specialized training programme in documentation. DRTC was conducting a course leading to "Associateship in Documentation and Information Science" (ADIS) but now it is labeled as Master of Science in Library and information Science since 2008. Indian National Scientific Documentation Centre (INSDOC), now named as National Institute of Science Communication and Information Resources (NISCAIR) started a course in Associateship in Documentation in 1964 and this course is now labeled as Associateship in Information Science (AIS). Library science courses were also started in five more universities-Hyderabad, Osmania, Panjab, Poona and Rajasthan in the decade of 1960's (Patel & Krishan Kumar, 2001). During 1980's, in addition to formal teaching courses, some universities introduced correspondence courses at various levels. While M. L. Sukhadia University and Kashmir University introduced correspondence course at certificate level, Punjabi University started a diploma course and University of Madras initiated postgraduate courses. Andhra Pradesh Open University started a degree course in 1984. Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi, introduced BLIS in 1989. It has played a pioneering role in LIS education, and conducts BLIS, MLIS, Ph.D. and PGDLAN (one-year postgraduate diploma) like courses through correspondence mode (Krishan Kumar & Sharma, 2010). The decade 1990's is labeled as the "period of modernization" and "period of consolidation" in the annals of LIS in India (Krishan Kumar & Sharma, 2008; Khoo, Majid, & Lin, 2009). In 2004 there were 146 library schools [85 university level library schools, 27 offering LIS courses through correspondence or distance education and 32 colleges and institutions conducting different LIS programmes, 2 organizations, viz., NISCAIR and DRTC offering two year Associateship in information

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science (Jagtar, 2004). In 2005, government of India constituted National Knowledge Commission. This commission has also identified the role played by libraries in creating knowledge societies and has recommended the creation of LIS education at advanced level in India.

3. Problem Statement: Although LIS education in India has attained tremendous growth and has witnessed transformation after independence, however there remain some lacunas. What are the challenges LIS education faces in the present day world is the focus of the present paper.

4. Aims and Objectives: Objectives of the present study are:

- a) To know the heterogenic and homogeneous features in Indian LIS education in terms of nomenclature, faculty affiliation, intake capacity, procedure for selection of students, physical infrastructure, teaching methodology, laboratories, libraries and like other features.
- b) To provide some suggestions for achieving uniformity in the LIS education sector in order to produce competent pass-outs who are able to face challenges posed by the changing times not only nationally but also at the global level.

5. Methodology: Data regarding present study was obtained from different library science schools offering different courses at different levels, infrastructure, faculty, learning resources, ICT related tools etc.

6. Findings: During these 100 years LIS education has witnessed a number of developments and these developments have put forth a number of challenges. Some of the developments along with challenges are enumerated as under:

a) Nomenclature of LIS Departments: Institutes offering instructions started their journey in India with the nomenclature of library science. These library science schools have responded to the developments in the discipline positively and relabeled their departments and courses as Library and information Science instead of Library Science with the exception National Institute of Science Communication and information Resources (NISCAIR) and Documentation and Research Training Center (DRTC) offering two year programme of "Associate-ship in information Science" that is equivalent to Master's Degree in Library and Information Science. These findings reveal that Information Science has penetrated into the discipline of Library Science.

b) Faculty Affiliation: LIS departments in India are associated and affiliated with different faculties like humanities, social science and in few cases to faculty of science. It is creating doubts and uncertainties about its exact position and status of LIS profession. The question why the same discipline is treated differently by universities is yet to be answered. In the wake of inclusion of subjects like Information Technology, Communication Technology, Management and Statistical topics in the curriculum of LIS, it is high time to position it in the Faculty of Science as is placed in many universities in India. This will increase the probability of attracting the attention of more brilliant students towards the LIS Profession. Homogeneous Faculty Affiliation for Departments will increase the credibility of the profession in the society.

c) Courses Offered: Different courses are imparted by LIS Schools in the country. These courses are:

- i) *Certificate Course:* Certificate courses are mainly conducted by Library Associations; however, some departments in universities and affiliated colleges are also conducting this course. The duration of the course varies from few months to one academic year. However, this course has now become obsolete.

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ii) *Undergraduate Diploma Course*: Undergraduate courses are conducted by women polytechnics as a two-year course after higher secondary or intermediate. It prepares students to be junior librarian and hold library assistant positions.

iii) *Postgraduate (PG) Diploma Course*: PG courses in some selected LIS areas of specialization are offered at the university level as a one-year course. e.g., PGDLAN and PGDM offered by IGNOU and BHU respectively.

iv) *Bachelor of Library and Information Science (B.Lib.I.Sc.)*: This is a one-year degree course conducted by universities after students graduate with a basic degree. However, in some colleges, LIS is offered as an optional subject at the Bachelor of Arts level. For this, the students opt for LIS as one of the optional paper, along with other optional papers in social sciences or the humanities.

v) *Master of Library and Information Science (M.Lib.I.Sc.)*: It is a post-graduate course offered after B.Lib.I.Sc with duration of one year.

vi) *Master of Library and Information Science (Integrated M.Lib.I.Sc.)*: Many of the universities, which were initially offering B.Lib.I.Sc. and M.Lib.I.Sc truncated courses, have now switched over to a two-year integrated M.Lib.I.Sc. course. 2-year integrated M.Lib.I.Sc. programme is gaining acceptance among the LIS schools in Northern India.

vii) *Associateship in Information Science*: Since 1964, the Indian National Scientific Documentation Centre (INSDOC now NISCAIR) New Delhi is offering Associateship in Information Science (AIS). The Documentation Research and Training Centre (DRTC), Bangalore, is also awarding AIS (now renamed as Master of Science in Library and Information Science).

viii) *Advanced Training Course in Information Systems Management and Technology*: This one-year advanced training course in Information Systems Management and Technology is provided by the National Centre for Science Information (NCSI), located at Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore (Dutta & Das, 2001). Specialized courses at diploma level are conducted by different LIS schools in the country e.g. IGNOU conducts Post Graduate Diploma in Library Automation and Networking (PGDLAN), Banaras Hindu University (BHU) offers Post Graduate Diploma in Manuscriptology (PGDM) etc.

ix) *M. Phil. Programme*: This programme is offered with the intention of developing research oriented personalities.

x) *Ph.D Programme*: This is an advanced level research programme being offered after the completion of M.Lib.I.Sc. or M. Phil. degree in library science. The general qualification for admission is M.Lib.I.Sc.

d) Intake Capacity of Students: Intake capacity varies among the schools a great deal in both truncated and integrated levels. There are no norms fixed on the basis of which intake capacity for a department is determined. Number of students admitted for different courses in Library and Information Science need to be decided keeping in view the infrastructure and faculty strengths of the department. It is better to train few students by providing quality education than to produce an army of graduates and postgraduates who are not being taken care because of paucity and deficiency of different resources necessary for providing qualitative education. Moreover, studies need to be carried out to interact with stakeholders to identify and determine the employment market so that what is produced is consumed.

e) Procedure for Selection of Students: There is no uniformity in the procedures adopted by surveyed LIS departments for selecting students. One of the following four different procedures are adopted by LIS departments for selecting suitable candidates in different courses. The procedures are

- i) Merit in qualifying examination
- ii) Entrance test and Merit in Graduation
- iii) Entrance test –cum –interview
- iv) Performance in Entrance test

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f) Physical Infrastructure: Traditionally LIS schools have been part of the university library system and naturally they used to be housed in library buildings facing a number of problems in terms of inadequate physical facilities. Now when majority of the departments are having their own buildings or share separate buildings with other departments conditions have improved a lot.

g) Teaching Tools and Aids: LIS schools have by and large adopted teaching methods and methodologies that are in vogue in other disciplines. Majority of LIS departments in the country are equipped with different teaching aids like LCD, OHP, Slide Projectors, TV/VCR etc that are being employed by teachers to make teaching and learning environment more and more interesting. Conventional “chalk and talk” method adopted for teaching is augmented with other non-conventional methodologies like power point presentations including slideshow, Wikis, Learning Management System etc.

h) Departmental/Seminar Library: Majority of the LIS schools in India have departmental libraries in order to facilitate easy, quick and frequent access to the relevant materials but the collections mainly consist of printed materials. Departmental Library serves as a reservoir of knowledge for LIS department. This library should be the model library for the LIS students and must be equipped with the latest technological gadgets used in the management of libraries and library services. It's operations and services should be fully computerized. Information Sources available in different formats over & above print format should be acquired by the departmental library. The person concerned with the handling and managing of departmental library should be a person equipped with the competencies demanded by the LIS profession of today because only an illuminated person can illuminate the budding professionals in the premises of the department. Information sources acquired should be relevant and current.

i) Faculty Status: There is disparity in the number of the permanent faculty members in the LIS departments. Reputation of any course depends on the teaching standard which presupposes the adequate faculty strength with good academic record, up-to-date knowledge of the subject and adequate teaching experience. LIS schools in India poorly staffed need to be strengthened as per the norms of UGC. While selecting the faculty members, latest trends in LIS sector particularly the multidisciplinary nature of the subject need to be given due consideration. The emerging trend that favors LIS schools is to employ faculty having qualifications in Library and Information Science and an additional degree in some cognate area like Information and Communication Technology. Existing faculty members should be given an opportunity to attend the capacity building programmes being conducted by Academic Staff Colleges (now UGC-HRDC) of Universities, national institutes of reputation like NISCAIR, DESIDOC, DRTC etc.

j) Teacher –Student Ratio: Teacher student ratio varies among the surveyed LIS Schools to a great extent. Number of students admitted for different courses in Library and Information Science need to be decided keeping in view the infrastructure and faculty strengths of the department. Studies need to be carried out to interact with stakeholders to identify and determine the employment market so that what is produced is consumed.

k) Teaching Methodology/Pedagogy: LIS departments in the country are using multiple teaching methodologies comprising of both conventional and non conventional methods to ensure active participation of students in the learning process and making teaching –learning process attractive and interesting. Teaching methodologies applied include

i) Lectures, organizing seminars, Group Discussions.

ii) Medium of instruction in majority of LIS departments is through English language. However, a few departments along with English are also imparting instructions through other languages e,g Panjabi and Hindi language.

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iii) Conventional “chalk and talk” method adopted for teaching is augmented with other non conventional methodologies like Power Point Presentations including slideshow, Wikis, Learning Management System etc. in almost all the surveyed departments.

iv) Students of LIS department, University of Kashmir also attend virtual classes in EMMRC (Educational Multimedia Research Centre) being organized by different agencies in the country e.g. Consortium for Educational Communication (An Inter University Centre of University Grants Commission on Electronic Media).

v) IGNOU is adopting a separate teaching methodology that is composed of Radio counseling, Study material, Counseling by teachers at study centers, lectures by eminent teachers through Gaynwani, and other mass-media channels like Doordarshan etc. for empowering students with knowledge.

l) Computer Laboratory: Computer laboratories established by almost all the LIS departments in India should be upgraded with latest electronic devices and gadgets so that students are able to acquire knowledge and skills in handling the ICT component of libraries confidently. In order to produce competent professionals, LIS departments should have a balance between theoretical and practical aspects of the ICT component. This is because mere theoretical exposition cannot produce competent professionals. Practical training for computerized routines like house-keeping operations, provision for information services, internet access, online and CD-ROM searching, networking etc should be given due attention for developing ICT related competencies among the students. Terminals available in computer laboratories should be made available in sufficient numbers, so that students get full exposure to the ICT facet. The laboratories should be supported with standard library software packages both open source and commercial source softwares.

m) Curriculum: So far as curriculum in LIS schools is concerned, a lot of variation is found in the nomenclature of papers and course contents. Number of papers taught in both truncated and integrated courses by different departments also varies. Conventional papers like Bibliography, Documentation etc are either deleted or incorporated with other papers and new papers based on the emerging trends in the field are introduced. Basic core and foundational subjects like Classification and Cataloguing papers have been clubbed together in most of the LIS schools, in order to give space for the emerging fields like ICT based papers.

i) Curriculum Uniformity: As there is wide disparity among LIS schools in the courses / papers, name and number of papers in the curriculum, it is suggested that a uniform curriculum and uniform course should be adopted by LIS schools. This will enable the schools to join hands for improving the quality of LIS education that will help them to face the challenges posed by the recent developments in a joint manner.

ii) Curriculum Revision: LIS curriculum needs regular up-gradation and revision in order to accommodate and incorporate the latest developments in the profession occurring at national and international level. However a balance need to be maintained in the contents related to digital libraries and conventional/traditional libraries—that is the demand of present information landscape existing in India where hybrid libraries are in existence. In India there will be two types of libraries i.e. Digital and Conventional type. In this context it is required that majority of our manpower have to manage libraries in traditional way where classification, cataloguing, circulation, and other activities are mostly to be carried out manually. In this situation, the LIS education has to look after both the aspects and may continue to provide both educational configuration for manually operated conventional library system and fully computerized Library and Information Centers as well. In such cases the educational institute of the country may have to introduce some special paper like Manuscript Librarianship, Organization of Non-Book Materials etc.. Digital Librarianship, Community librarianship, etc., which would take care of providing depth knowledge on the

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digital libraries. This may help to produce manpower, which will be suitable for both types of libraries.

LIS syllabus has to be revised from time to time incorporating new areas of knowledge and eliminating irrelevant and obsolete areas. A proper balance has to be made between theory and practice. Courses like 'Knowledge Management', 'Information Literacy', 'Communication Management', 'Web 2.0 /3.0', 'Multimedia', 'Records Management', 'Users Study', etc. are to be included in the syllabi of LIS education.

iii) UGC and LIS Curriculum: UGC published Model Curriculum in 2001 and thus it is now ten years old. Many developments have taken place in the discipline of Library and Information Science during these ten years. In order to accommodate these new trends in the curriculum, it is suggested that UGC should again take the initiative for revising the CDC-Report 2001.

n) Global outlook: It is suggested that keeping in view the present trends like globalization, privatization and liberalization, contents of the LIS need to incorporate the concepts evolved and adopted worldwide. It will ensure that the pass-outs from these departments will find a market for themselves beyond the frontiers of the country.

o) Internship in LIS: Internship is a very good way of getting firsthand experience and a reliable way of finding out about the intended career. In order to produce competent and capable professionals, internship concept needs to be given a serious thought. LIS departments should identify reputed and renowned organizations and establish rapport with them to undertake internship for LIS professionals.

p) Accreditation: In order to promote quality there is need and scope for over viewing and monitoring the operation and maintenance of LIS schools in India. In India, there is a school of library and information science where just one permanent teacher runs the show. And there are schools languishing for Physical, Human and Technological Resources. This calls for an effective accreditation system. Either a professional association like IATLIS etc may be assigned the responsibility or the UGC may constitute a committee to undertake accreditation of these schools.

q) Cooperation among LIS Stakeholders: There must be coordination and cooperation between LIS departments in the region. Provision for exchange of faculty, students and other resources will yield good results for promoting the cause of LIS profession not only in the Northern area but in the whole country.

r) National Organizations and Associations: As information landscape is rapidly and regularly changing because of change in the social, economic, technological and other related sectors of societies, there is need for regular introspection of the competencies in the field of LIS. At national level, a body like UGC should constitute a committee for this purpose. Professional Associations like ILA, ITALIS etc can also play an active role in activating this movement in the country. National and international conferences organized by these and other like bodies can be helpful in this aspect. Collaboration and cooperation at global level with organizations like UNESCO, IFLA etc can be a catalyst to speed up the process of creating competent and capable professionals for whom the job market is not limited in the country but whole world is open to them in the global village.

s) Consolidation: India as of now has more than 100 LIS schools offering courses at different levels. Then, there are universities which have distance education programs with huge intakes. All formal and distance education institutions produce professionals with varying competencies. And, job opportunities are not that abundant. The country would do well to stop establishing new LIS schools and take up consolidation of paraphernalia in the existing schools. Even a cursory glance on the existing schools will bring forth a number of ailing schools producing ill-educated professionals who remain misfits and unfits everywhere. Thus instead of expansion, it is suggested that a mechanism should be created whereby expansion is controlled and consolidation is promoted.

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t) **Specializations:** LIS schools are offering specialization through elective papers like Agricultural Information System, Health Information System, Business Information System and many others, it is suggested that need based, practice oriented and market driven courses should be introduced keeping in view the current information landscape. There is also need and scope to promote continuous professional development activities to hone up the professional competencies of the professionals and familiarize them with emerging specializations.

u) **National Knowledge Commission (NKC) and LIS:** It is high time that the recommendations of National Knowledge Commission is given a practical form by implementing the suggestions of the Commission regarding Libraries and Library and Information Science Profession, particularly the recommendation regarding setting up an Institute for Advanced Training Research in Library and Information Science and services that will take care of training and research concerns of the LIS faculty in India. The Government of India may designate DRTC or any other institution for this purpose and provide it the paraphernalia to diversify and increase its activities.

7. Conclusion: LIS Profession being a vibrant and dynamic field is undergoing transformation after transformation with the emergence of new developments in socio-economic environment, knowledge and scholarship. Although, the basic functions like acquisition, processing, preservation and dissemination of information remains the same, the mode of performing these activities has changed, as machines and electronic gadgets are employed in order to achieve efficiency and effectiveness in library operations and services. Technological changes along with economic and cultural changes have created tsunami like conditions in the information landscape. New information organizations like electronic libraries, digital libraries, virtual libraries etc are being created. Traditional philosophies of preservation are replaced by modern philosophies of access not only limited access but access to every bit of information anywhere and anytime. Libraries are open 24x7 throughout the year. These and other allied developments demand that Library and Information Professionals need to be competent enough to manage libraries and allied institutions in the emerging information environment. Library and Information Professional need to be multi-skilled in order to survive in an environment of constant and rapid change. All these developments have a great impact on Library and Information Science schools having the responsibility to produce competent professionals to man and manage libraries of today and tomorrow. LIS schools are taking appropriate steps in order to face the challenges posed by the revolution brought about by Information and Communication Technologies. A study of the selected Library Schools in Northern India revealed that all these schools have realized the need to revamp their programmes in order to educate and train human resources to operate in the emerging information landscape. Though they have traveled quite some distance in this direction, they have long to go to equip themselves to produce competent human resources for libraries and allied institutions of today and tomorrow. They are in need of sufficient and competent faculty, need based curriculum and require sufficient and adequate physical resources in terms of lecture halls, computer laboratories, library support and instructional technology support. However, efforts on the part of the schools offer an optimistic note that these schools shall tweak or transform to face the changes and challenges of the emerging information landscape.

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