Trends, Challenges and Future of Library and Information Science Education in India

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ABSTRACT

The technological revolution paved the challenges for the library and information science (LIS) schools not only in India but also in the west. Responsibilities of LIS departments and teachers are increasing to produce best LIS professionals to lead the 21st century librarianship. The major responsibility of the LIS departments in India is to groom LIS students in the philosophy, knowledge, and professional values of librarianship, as practiced in libraries and in other contexts, and as guided by the vision of the 21st century librarianship. LIS education and training facilities in India are undergoing rapid changes. During the past 10 years, the number of library schools/departments has grown substantially, both for regular and distance education programmes. Reorientation has been common in most LIS departments, and review and revision in curriculum has also been noticed. The quality of LIS educators has also improved and research output is experiencing new dimensions. Increase in the use and access to information and communication technologies (ICT) for LIS education is now more evident. This paper discusses the challenges LIS education faces in the 21st century and how to make LIS education more relevant and effective.

Keywords: LIS education, LIS trends, LIS issues, LIS challenges, future of LIS education

1. INTRODUCTION

Library and information science education in India is largely a 20th century phenomenon. It has a history of a century behind it and has developed into a distinct discipline to meet the growing dimensions of library service and the changing needs of the society. Realising the importance of professionally trained personnel to manage libraries effectively and efficiently,

library training programmes were started at several places even before independence. The first formal course for librarianship training in India was started sometime in 1911 in Baroda[1].

LIS education is linked with the growth of libraries. The origin and growth of the libraries depend on the educational and cultural conditions of the society at any time[2]. Library

as a social organ has certain social obligations. These obligations vary with the educational and cultural needs.

The personnel working in libraries must have proper library education then only they can use and implement the library techniques effectively to suit the requirements of the users. The LIS professionals should take responsibility to educate the users in accessing required information and must keep them update to cope up with the ever-changing information requirements[3].

2. LIS EDUCATION IN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW

The origin of librarianship, the temporal changes in its discourse and delivery provides a metamorphosis of the influence of several factors. For instance, the library education commenced with training till a formal course in library science was started in the US by Melvil Dewey. Today, study of knowledge management and knowledge organisation inherently stands on the edifice built by him.

Training and education in LIS in India dates back to 1911 and has kept pace with the developed countries of the world. It is gradually evolving and has spread its roots throughout the country. The credit for starting a formal course in library education in India goes to William Alonson Borden and Asa Don Dickinson, both students of Melvil Dewey. Alonson Borden started a training course in 1911 at the Central Library, Baroda, followed by Dickinson in 1915 at the Punjab University, Lahore (now in Pakistan). Thereafter, other universities and library associations also started setting up library schools.

Madras Library Association in 1928, and Bengal Library Association in 1935 started a certificate course for librarians. Among the universities, Madras University under the leadership of Dr S.R. Ranganathan, took over the certificate course from Madras Library Association in 1931, and later in 1937, converted the course into a Postgraduate Diploma in Library Science. It was the first diploma

course in library science in India. The Andhra University in 1935, Banaras Hindu University in 1941, and the University of Delhi in 1947 are some other universities which started this course. The University of Delhi in 1948, under the guidance of Dr Ranganathan, started a Master's degree course in library science and also provided facilities for research leading to PhD. It was the first university to start the MPhil course in 1977.

Presently, library education is being provided by a variety of institutions such as traditional universities, open universities, deemed universities, polytechnics, affiliated colleges, professional associations, and documentation centres, etc. Currently, there are about 120 universities, including correspondence and open universities, in India offering LIS education at Bachelor's and Master's levels, and 63 universities which offer doctoral degree in library science. Besides, National Institute of Science Communication and Information Resources (NISCAIR), New Delhi, and Documentation Research and Training Centre, Bangalore, offer two-year Associateship in Information Science[4].

The LIS education has expanded vertically, but there are marked disparities in its profile, curriculum, available infrastructure, and in the levels of collaboration. The disparities are due to political interference, non-availability of resources and delayed adoption of technological innovations on the part of planners and administrators. The condition of LIS education in many developing countries is also the same[5].

3. TRENDS IN LIS EDUCATION IN INDIA

Common trends noted in the growth of LIS schools around the world are review and revision of curricula, increased use of ICT, decrease or increase in the number of students, amalgamation and reorientation[6,7]. These trends noted in the context of Indian LIS programmes are relocation of the academic administration of LIS schools (Information Science at the University of Madras, and NISCAIR in New Delhi), and expansion of LIS departments.

3.1 Levels of LIS Education

Changes that took place in India in the field of LIS from the initial stages to the present day can be identified as informal training to formal training; certificate to diploma; diploma to degree; and degree to research programme.

Further, changes in the curriculum of these courses have taken place in response to the changing conditions and demands. At Master's level, special courses such as computer applications, system analysis, industrial information and medical information systems, expert systems, knowledge management, economics of information, marketing of information, digital libraries, etc., have also been introduced.

3.2 Nomenclature of LIS Schools

The nomenclature of the LIS schools in India is not uniform. Most of the LIS schools are known as Department of Library and Information Science. However, certain LIS schools are known with different names as given below[8]:

- ✂ Department of Library Science and Documentation

- ✂ College of Library and Information Science

- ✂ School of Library and Information Science

- ✂ Institute of Library and Information Science

- ✂ Institute of Library Science

- ✂ Department of Studies and Research in Library and Information Science

- ✂ Faculty of Library and Information Science

- ✂ Department of Information Science

- ✂ Library Science Training College

- ✂ School of Studies in Library and Information Science

- ✂ School of Library Science

- ✂ Library and Information Science Division

- ✂ Department of Library and Information Management

- ✂ Department of Library Science and Manuscriptology.

3.3 Pattern of Degrees Awarded by Different Universities and Institutions

The education framework of LIS in India at present is as given below[9]:

- ✂ Certificate (CLISc) course: A six months course sponsored by the State Library Associations, state and central libraries, and some other universities

- ✂ Diploma in Library and Information Science (DLISc): A one-year course offered by many polytechnics

- ✂ Bachelor's degree in Library and Information Science (BLISc): A one-year course sponsored by many universities

- ✂ Master's degree in Library and Information Science (MLISc): Postgraduate programme of one year after BLiS/BLISc

- ✂ Master's degree in Library and Information Science (MLISc): Postgraduate programme of two years after any Bachelor degree. Some universities are still offering one-year MLISc for the BLISc degree holders

- ✂ Master's degree (MSc) in Information Science of two years offered by Madras University and Baba Saheb Bhimarao Ambedkar Central University, Lucknow

- ✂ Master's degree in Library and Information Science (MLISc): A five-year course. It is an adventurous attempt by the Annamalai University in the recent years

- ✂ MPhil: Full-time/part-time course of one year/two year duration

- ✂ PhD: A full-time/part-time programme, which leads to the award of Doctor of Philosophy in LIS

- ✂ Postgraduate Diploma in Library Automation and Networking (PGDLAN).

3.4 LIS Education in Indian Languages

The medium of instruction plays a vital role in imparting education, particularly professional education. Language is a vehicle to transmit knowledge and the library professionals exist to facilitate communication. It is an unsolved debate whether to impart LIS education in English or in regional languages. Though many schools are teaching LIS in English, but allowing students to write their examinations in their mother tongue.

There are certain implications in imparting LIS education in regional languages. These are: availability of expertise, curriculum, and course material; background of students seeking LIS education; marketability of LIS graduates and postgraduates who have studied in regional languages; national integrity; trends in LIS education at international level and global village concept. Hence, LIS education in India would be much more effective if imparted in English only. Further, imparting LIS education in regional languages may impede the very philosophy of the subject. Still teaching at Certificate and Bachelor's levels in regional languages is dominating in some Indian library schools[10].

3.5 Emergence and Salient Features of LIS Education

Proliferation of LIS schools offering various levels of education has resulted in quantitative expansion. The culture of utilising the part-time faculty in different ways has not improved the mental abilities of the students of LIS in comprehending the latest emerging trends[11].

Inadequate infrastructure facilities in the existing LIS schools in the universities and mushrooming of distance education programmes all over India have increased the productivity without any organised planning of manpower requirement. In addition, self-financing courses and programmes of some private institutions are only commercial ventures for profit making. The truncated and the integrated courses, both in semester and non-semester schemes, lack uniformity with regards to curriculum, marks allotment and practical exposure to the latest technologies. At the same time, some of the LIS schools have made appreciable efforts in revising the course curriculum, and revamping the total structure by introducing choice-based credit system (CBCS). CBCS is going to be a trendsetter in the LIS education programme as it will equate the Indian degrees with any international degree.

UGC Model Curriculum 2001[8,12] has given a new impetus by way of modular structure emphasising two-year integrated MLISc programme. The Model Curriculum has given enough freedom to the respective Board of Studies to structure the curriculum as per the local and regional requirements without diluting the original frame. Curriculum also has a clear emphasis to blend the tradition with technology and to eliminate some routine historical and traditional components. By and large, this can be further examined by a high power National Body consisting of experts, teachers and practitioners, and focusing more on converging cutting edge technologies. The Model Curriculum can pave the way for maintaining the uniformity and high standards in LIS education.

To enhance the teaching skills, methods and techniques including practical orientation to the interdisciplinary cluster of subjects, training programmes, workshops, refresher and orientation programmes need restructuring by adding required technological value in the contemporary context. "The Library profession do not attract the best talent in the country for a variety of reasons; the quality of entrants is very poor." This is an upright statement taken from the Ranganathan's Report (1965). Even after four decades of the Report, the situation, however, remains to be the same, may be because of better educational options available for the students after 10+2. The situation is not specific to library science but is true for basic sciences also. Students are opting for library science not by choice but by chance or by accident.

4. DISTANCE EDUCATION IN LIS IN INDIA

Distance education (DE) in India has its roots in the early 1960s. It was mainly confined

to the courses in arts, social sciences and humanities at graduate and postgraduate levels. The first open university (Andhra Pradesh Open University, now Dr B.R. Ambedkar Open University) in India was established at Hyderabad. This was followed by Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) in 1985 on the lines of the British Open University. The DE in LIS was started in the early 1980s by Dr B.R. Ambedkar Open University (the then Andhra Pradesh Open University) and Annamalai University. Since then, there is a phenomenal increase and growth of the learners through DE. The number of DE institutions has also increased considerably due to economic viability and as a means of additional resource generation for the parent universities. A list of universities offering LIS courses in India through DE is given in Table 1.

4.1 Methods used for Imparting LIS Courses through DE

The universities offering LIS education adopted the following methods for imparting LIS courses:

- Supplying printed course materials

- Conducting contact classes (the duration and the number of days for classes varies from institution to institution and course to course)

- Supplying feedback course or assignments

- Supplying audio-visual materials; mostly tapes, audios and videos

- Radio and television broadcasts of some lessons by the experts.

Over the years, the technology use has remained relatively stable in India. Packets of reading materials[13] are being sent by post/mail to the learners, and they also respond to the tutors/instructors with feedback sheets by post. It is like one-to-one interaction. Some universities are conducting contact classes in addition to the supply of reading materials. But use of ICT and Education Satellite (EDUSAT) hopefully will now bring lot of potential changes in imparting DE in India.

5. LIS EDUCATION IN INDIA: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

The policy makers of LIS education in India including University Grants Commission, Ministry of Human Resource Development, National Assessment and Accreditation Council, Experts Committee Members of LIS, teaching community and management should take into account the following issues/challenges at the national level and a uniform policy for all the academic institutions in the country for the development of LIS profession towards better recognition at par with any other discipline.

5.1 Technology-mediated LIS Education

LIS education in India is being pushed ahead of the actualities by implementing computer applications and other areas of information technology. The following barriers are confronting the use of ICT in the training and education of LIS in India:

- Lack of infrastructure facilities available at the disposal of LIS departments

- Lack of ICT access to LIS learners and teachers

- Lack of financial resources to augment and adopt the latest innovative means

- Lack of proper perspective and policy development by the top management of LIS institutions

- Lack of perception on the part of LIS learners

- Lack of facilities to set up virtual libraries

- Lack of well-connected telecommunication facilities to explore and exploit the latest innovations in the information delivery and consumption

- Lack of interest on the part of faculty (in most cases) due to obvious reasons[14]

The challenges of technology-mediated education in LIS are formidable. These challenges are greatly magnified, when viewed in the light of the expansive goals of an institution.

Table 1. Universities in India offering LIS courses through DE

University	Courses Offered				
	CLIS	BLIS	MLIS	PGDLAN	MPhil
University of Madras, Chennai	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Annamalai University Annamalai Nagar	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Madurai-Kamaraj University Madurai	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Alagappa University Karaikkudi	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
S.V. University, Tirupati	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Dr B.R. Ambedkar Open University, Hyderabad	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Andhra University Visakhapatnam	No	No	Yes	No	No
Kakatiya University, Warangal	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Nagarjuna University, Guntur	No	Proposed	No	No	No
University of Hyderabad Hyderabad	No	No	No	Yes	No
Karnataka State Open University, Mysore	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Kuvempu University, Shimoga	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
IGNOU, New Delhi	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Kashmir University, Srinagar	Yes	No	No	No	No
University of Rajasthan, Jaipur	Yes	No	No	No	No
Punjabi University, Patiala	Yes	No	No	No	No
Mohanlal Sukhadia University Udaipur	Yes	No	No	No	No
G.G. University, Bilaspur	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
Dr H.S. Gaur University, Sagar	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Kurukshetra University	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Yashvantarao Chavan Maharashtra Open University Nasik	No	Yes	Yes	No	No

The following challenges may be listed in the context of Indian scenario:

� Do we have sufficient, viable, and functional infrastructure facilities to augment the technology-based instructions?

✣ Do our finances permit to go for the Internet-based resources delivery?

✣ Are our learners capable of using virtual environment or virtual laboratories or virtual-field courses?

✣ Whether the computer-mediated instructions can ameliorate the potential decline in education standards?

✣ Whether the learners are information literate in the academic community?

✣ Whether the faculty is ready to take challenges to welcome the technology-based instructions and whether it can design and develop the modules on such lines?

5.2 Restructuring of LIS Courses

Many changes have come about in the curriculum of LIS courses in response to the changing conditions, demands, and trends in the information environment[15]. The new dimensions in LIS have been influencing the curriculum of LIS courses. The following factors have contributed towards the restructuring of LIS courses:

✣ Increasing volume and variety of information sources and diversity of techniques used to access these sources

✣ System analysis and management techniques being applied extensively in the library and information centres

✣ The emerging demand for the digital libraries

✣ Increasing demand for the effective bibliographical control of information and creation of databases in various branches of knowledge

✣ Obsolete curriculum still in vogue in many library schools; it has often been lamented that the current course contents of LIS programmes show no relevance to the present day information demands

✣ Lack of training/internship programmes during study period or absence of internship modules in the courses

✣ Use of traditional teaching methods

✣ Ever changing employers needs and demands

✣ Use of ICT in libraries

✣ Changing curricula of UGC NET or SLET, and examination pattern

✣ Changing dimensions in subjects like information management, preservation, and bibliographic standards.

Most of the LIS schools in India do not impart education on modern courses and hardly come up to the international standard. Moreover, they do not reflect the latest changes resulted by the ICT. Most of the courses are theory-based. The need for restructuring the LIS programmes has become imperative because of fierce competition both at institutions and within the profession[16].

In this context, it is pertinent to quote Galvin: "Library science schools should achieve and maintain an optimal balance between tradition and innovation. It is useful to try to identify more precisely those aspects of librarianship that are likely to change in the nearer or long term future..... effective professional education must incorporate both veracity with respect to the present and sensitivity with respect to the future" [3].

6. FUTURE OF LIS EDUCATION IN INDIA

A broad perspective of LIS education in the developing and developed nations gives an indication that LIS education in India needs to enhance some of the vital aspects such as large scale integration of the allied subject fields. Harmonisation of teaching-learning programmes, collaboration and exchange, use of the facilities offered by international and global organisations and

induction of the equity components are absolutely must to get recognition in the national and international job market.

These days, the concept of assessment and accreditation has taken roots in the higher education system. Establishment of few model schools of LIS education on the pattern of Royal School of LIS, Denmark, will encourage and enrich the quality of LIS education to suit the multiple requirements of employers in the job market. This may also further the value of LIS education, which can greatly contribute to the R&D, and development of cultural and corporate sectors including the service sector[17].

In view of this, it is desirable that the library schools in India must adapt themselves to the changing situations so that they can turnout better professionals who can meet the challenges posed by the changing environment. Library schools that are not able to adapt themselves may become irrelevant and have to close down sooner or later in the years to come. History has a lesson to teach. In the USA, those library schools which did not moved with the time, were either closed or merged with other schools dealing with information science/information studies[18].

7. CONCLUSION

Today, LIS education is no more an education for the mangers of libraries only, but has become an education for the consumers of knowledge also. It is a change from managing libraries by librarians to manage the flow of information by one and all. Earlier, LIS students after the education became librarians, now professionals teach this science and learners choose this profession to manage the information.

The need of mere library schools is over in the present context. Better schools having adequate finance, physical and library facilities, equipment, and qualified and experienced faculty is the need of the hour. The LIS schools should aim at educational excellence and serve as pacesetters. Such schools should try to produce a new breed of professionals capable to successfully perform their role in the fast changing information needs of the society using new information technologies such as word processors, dedicated special purpose microcomputers, and telecommunication technology. The library schools should assume the role of leadership and responsibility to produce competent manpower for the present as well as future needs of different kinds of information centres including university libraries. To conclude in the words of Lancaster: "We must shift the focus of our professional concern away from the Library as an institution and towards the skilled professionals who will become a professional practitioner on par with medical and legal practitioners."

It is often said that the 'future is uncertain', but the future of LIS professionals can be visualised now itself unless and until necessary measures are taken by the LIS teachers in particular to train the forthcoming incumbents with the most up-to-date curriculum emphasising more on ICT skills so as to prepare the information professionals for leadership role. Mere blaming the librarians is not a solution to the visibility of librarianship, but at the same time, a unique accreditation or certification system, quality of education and distance education trend has to be monitored.

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