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Research in Library and Information Science

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Abstract

Research in Library and Information Science (LIS) briefly means the collection and analysis of original data on a problem of librarianship done within the library schools according to scientific and scholarly standards. This article briefly describes the research, its need and history, etc in LIS and presents the pattern and state-of-the-art of research in LIS in India. The reasons for slow growth in research in LIS in India and scanty financial support to it have been explored. Several suggestions to catalyse the research activities in LIS in India have been given. It concludes that there are research opportunities and research atmosphere in India and the library professionals and LIS faculty should be involved in research to improve information sources and services.

1. WHAT IS RESEARCH

Research is a scientific undertaking which by means of logical and systematised methods, aims to discover new facts, or verify old facts and to analyse their sequences, interrelationships, casual explanations and the natural laws which govern them. Research is a careful, critical study or examination in seeking facts or principles; intelligent and diligent investigation in order to ascertain some thing. It answers questions by the accumulation and assimilation of facts which lead to the formulation of generalisations, correct or verify knowledge.

Research is an intellectual act that starts with the asking of a question and progress through the critical and analytical study of evidence and arrives at new conclusions or new knowledge.

Webster's New International Dictionary defines research as 'studious enquiry or examination; specifically and usually, critical and exhaustive investigation of experimentation having for its aim the discovery of new facts and their correct interpretation, the revision of accepted conclusions, theories or laws, in the light of newly discovered facts or the practical applications of such new or revised conclusions, etc'.

Research is governed by the rule of objectivity and not of subjectivity. A research may aim at the following objectivities:

(a) to find new generalisation with old data;

(b) to know old conclusions with new data;

(c) to attempt to reach more conclusions from the same set of data;

(d) to put forward an entirely original idea or theory or to discover an unexplored horizon of knowledge;

(e) to find or to resolve contradictions existing in the area of study; and

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(f) to continuously develop a discipline or field of study with the use of scientific and rational methods.

Research thus helps in examining the validity of old conclusions or to findout new facts or generalisations and purport to give a new insight into the existing problems. Research means advancement of science and knowledge. However, it must be kept in mind that a research may not lead to an ideal solution to a problem. In fact, a good piece of research must give rise to some problems requiring further research.

2. RESEARCH IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE (LIS)

Research in librarianship briefly means the collection and analysis of original data on a problem of librarianship done within the library schools according to scientific and scholarly standards. Research in this connection broadly includes investigations, studies, surveys, academic work at the doctoral, postdoctoral level and research by practicing librarians, information personnel and documentalists.

2.1 Need for Research

The need for research in librarianship stems mainly from three reasons:

(a) Educational function—advanced studies in Librarianship.

(b) Critical function—critical approach to librarianships.

(c) Symbolic function—result of growing professionalism in library profession.

Library and information science is actually an interdisciplinary field. It embraces a variety of problems, professionals, organisations and intellectual commitments. The continuity between an order base of knowledge and practice and newer concepts and methodologies. It implies a balance between theoretical explorations of information and of applications to the improvement of information service, even if in practice, the balance is often uncertain.

Library and information science research activitiy maintains its historic focus on research that improves information services. At the same time it draws techniques from many disciplines in clarifying its concepts and attacking its problems.

2.2 History of Research in LIS

Research in librarianship does not have a long history. When the degree of Doctor of Library Science was first established by Melvil Dewey, the then Director of the New York State Library School at Albany in 1891, the idea was that the degree should be awarded Honoris Causa for conspicuous professional achievement rather than for research. There is no record that the degree was ever granted. The establishment of the Grauate Library School at the University of Chicago in 1926 included immediate provision for awarding the earned degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

The first doctorate in library science was Mr Eleanor S Upton for his thesis, *A guide to source of seventeenth centuary English history in selected reports of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts* (Chicago, 1930). The first school of librarianship of the United Kingdom was established in 1919 at the University College, London. Strangely enough provision of PhD facilities had to wait till 1960s. The Postgraduate School of Librarianship and Information Science at the University of Sheffield in 1963 can be considered as the first milestone in formal doctoral research activity in United Kingdom.

2.3 Applied Research

Because of the heavy reliance of library research on the techniques of social science research, especially statistics, the initial research in librarianship, no wonder, was considered as statistical investigation. Because, the methods and techniques of librarianship itself had been empirically derived, it is not surprising that research in librarianship was also emperical in the beginning. Later library research gradually started plunging into other types and areas.

Library research and enquiries took not only the shape of purely historical or descriptive studies, but also survey research and

experimental research. Of late, operations research techniques have been adapted to quantitatively analyse library problems and as a basis for decision making. All these research efforts which aim at solving the immediate problems could be termed as applied research. Applied research is emperical and practical. It can be helpful for improving tools and techniques.

2.4 Pure or Basic Research

Pure or basic research aims at primarily obtaining theoretical knowledge and the logical process involved in the phenomena. It pursues knowledge for the sake of knowledge itself. It is more often than not, an intellectual exercise aimed at finding some theoretical conclusions. A few studies in our subject areas have been identified as basic research, because they were directed toward the fuller understanding of the subject.

2.5 Bibliographical Research

This is closely related to libraries. This type of research is concerned with first identifying previous work related to the problem at hand and then submitting it to some form of analysis in order to arrive at a clear understanding. Work done by earlier and more advanced researchers is also included in this type of investigation, the main aim being, to find out what is already known about the topic—often in order to establish a base upon which to build a study which investigates the unknown.

This type of work is usually called as 'library research'. One should be careful, not to confuse between research done in libraries (bibliographical) and research about libraries (scientific research).

2.6 Team Research

The complexity, diversity and inter-disciplinary nature of present day knowledge demands cooperative research by scholars and scientists from various disciplines. Such a team approach only can solve multiple problems. Team research represents organisation for the purpose of reducing the uncertainity of outcome and minmising the possibility of failture. Since all human knowledge constitutes broad canvas of librarianship, and information science is a discipline that is emerging from cross fertilisation of ideas involving the ancient art of librarianship, new art of computing and the art of new media of communication inter-disciplinary and team research are gaining importance.

2.7 Research in Librarianship in India

Though library training classes were started in Baroda in 1911 and at Panjab University (Lahore) in 1915, systematic training programme to be started in India was at Madras University in 1931 under the leadership of Dr SR Ranganathan. This course was upgraded as a full one year postgraduate diploma course in 1937. The first Masters programme in library science was started by the University of Delhi in 1948. University of Delhi has also the distinction of starting doctoral studies in library science in India.

2.8 Solo Research by Ranganathan

Ranganathan as a single scholar made multi-dimentional contribution to various facets of the discipline. His contributions were seminal and had permanent impact on library science. He wrote more than 60 books and roughly 1500 technical papers. Since the inception of DRTC, the solo research turned into team research.

2.9 Research Output in Indian Universities

There are about 80 library schools in India offering BLISc programme and over 48 universities offering MLISc programme. At one time, there were about 8 universities offering MPhil programme. Presently about 4 universities are offering M Phil which mainly serves as a preliminary course to doctoral studies.

As part fulfilment of these programmes, students have to submit dissertations. Though the projects at BLISc cannot be counted as research works, those works produced at

MLISc, M Phil and Ph D programmes can be counted as products of research.

S.No.	Course	Nature of Work
1.	BLISc	Assignments, bibliographical essays, bibliographics, short essays
2.	MLISc	Project work/dissertation
3.	M Phil	Dissertation
4.	Ph D	Thesis

3. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL CONTROL OF RESEARCH ACTIVITIES IN INDIA

Research moves through stages from the preliminary exploration of a problem to the evaluation of published results. At almost every stage of a research project there are settings for dissemination activity such as meetings and conferences and there are sources such as publications and information services that report research activity. Researchers as producers and consumers of information have needs that range from specific knowledge of techniques to awareness of research in related activities in India can be discussed under the following categories.

3.1 Completed Doctoral Research

A bibliography of doctoral dissertations accepted by Indian universities 1857–1970: Social Science (Inter University Board of India, (now renamed as Association of Indian Universities), New Delhi, 1974) is the only source for completed doctoral theses in library and information science. *The University News* of the AIU keeps updating the information. IATLIS Communication, and Herald of Library Science also provide such information from time to time.

3.2 Research-in-Progress

Announcements of ongoing research activities are reported in some journals. This is an occasional feature of *IASLIC Newsletter, ILA Newsletter,* and *IATLIS Communication.* However, they do not contain any information on methodology and/or scope of research.

3.3 MLISc Dissertations

One good source for MLISc dissertations is *Librarian's Diary* (Vijaya Enterprises, Hyderabad, 1983). The year-wise listing of MLISc dissertations of Bangalore, Bombay, Burdwan, Madurai-Kamaraj, Osmania, Poona, Rajasthan, and SNDT universities is available in this publication. Information about Delhi and Punjab Universities is not available. The unpublished MLISc dissertation entitled Annotated and *Classified Bibliography of Project Reports* submitted to the Department of Library Science, University of Delhi, since 1968 by Syed Reyaz Ahmed (1979) covers dissertations submitted to the University of Delhi. Recently Research in Library and Information Science in India. A Bibliography has been published by PSG Kumar, A *Tejomurthy and HR Chopra. It covers* MLISc dissertations upto 1984 and PhD theses.

3.4 Professional Organisations

We do not have any professional organisation in India which disseminates the results of research. It is time we have an Association of Indian Library Science Schools with a Research Interest Circle attached to it.

3.5 Research Journals

Besides MLIS dissertations, PhD theses, and monographs, research work is regularly published in various Indian periodicals. Some important journals containing articles of research standard are:

1. *DRTC Seminar.* Bangalore. 1962–. Half-yearly.
2. *Herald of Library Science.* Lucknow. 1962–. Quarterly.
3. *Library Science with Slant to Documentation.* Bangalore. 1964–. Quarterly.
4. *Journal of Library and Information Science.* Delhi. 1967–. Half-yearly.
5. *International Information, Communication,* and Education. Lucknow. 1962–.
6. *Annals of Library Science and Documentation.* 1954–.

Bibliographic control and dissemination of research knowledge helps researchers in many ways. we require studies of the type, quantity and quality of the research, on the number, characteristics, and most important research findings. Such studies might contribute to an

understanding of the research process and activity in library and information science, and improve it in some measure.

4. INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION SYSTEM ON RESEARCH IN DOCUMENTATION (ISORID)

In 1972, the Unesco started, in cooperation with the FID, the ISORID project with a view to lesson the time lag in notifying information and to ensure international coverage. The major objective of ISORID is to collect, organise, analyse, and disseminate information on research activities in documentation, libraries, and archives. The ISORID is to include

(a) Research in the field of documentation including doctoral dissertations and research in closely related fields applied to documentations and

(b) Other selected activities of interest to research and development (not generally covered by the indexing and abstracting services). Besides covering research projects and research reports, ISORID also covers in progress research, research methods, research findings, funds used, etc.

5. NATIONAL INFORMATION TRANSFER CENTRE, INDIA

Under the ISORID programme, DRTC, Bangalore, has been designated as the National Information Transfer Centre (NITC) for India. It has the following responsibilities:

(a) To collect information on research projects undertaken and research report/publications published, within the country and make available to the UNESCO Secretariat;

(b) To provide, on request, similar services to other interested UNESCO member states, organisations and specialists; and

(c) To encourage the utilisation within the country, of the services to be provided by the Secretariat of UNESCO through ISORID.

6. INFORMATION ON INDIAN PROJECTS

Seetharama reported 115 research projects on the basis of India's input to ISORID. The eight types of categories of research projects based on the list of subject descriptors used in ISORID to coordinate indexing and retrieval of research projects are given in table 1.

Table 1: Research projects based on the list of subject descriptors used in ISORID

No.	Subject	No. of Projects
1.	Information Science	1
2.	Documents Primary (4); Secondary (11); Elements of documents (1)	16
3.	Organisations of information Systems and networks (2); Organisations (24)	26
4.	Information work Processing: Analysis (1); Cataloguing (3); Classification (42); Indexing and Indexing Languages (13); Supporting media (Computer programmes, programming) (1)	60
5.	Document reproduction and reprography	1
6.	Services and information transfer	3
7.	User studies and users	6
8.	Personnel and training	2
	Total	**115**

Seetharama also categorises library and information science research in India as under (Table 2):

Table2: Research projects on the basis of type of research

Research	Descriptive	Exploratory	Evaluative	Total No. of Projects
Fundamental	8	–	–	8
Applied/Developmental	92	4	2	107
Total	100	4	2	115

7. FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH

In India, research is conducted by individuals such as faculty and research scholars using their own or limited institutional resources. Most of the research in library and information science in India is personal and is affected to some extent due to financial constraints. we do not have a separate national agency for funding research in our subject.

The UGC caters to library and information science research as a part of its general programme. Raja Ram Mohan Roy Foundation limits its grants mostly to public library studies. R&D sections of leading industries do finance some research projects, but generally they are tuned to the interest and services of that particular institution. The proposed CLISR (Council of Library and Information Science Research) should look to the financing aspects. Research takes people, brains, energy, time, money—and it takes a lot of them. Not much, relatively speaking, is being spent on this activity. Large chunks of money are essential for library and information science to establish the kind of research environment that exists in some other disciplines and then to test the relationship of that environment to the quality of education provided within it.

The need for institutional financial support for research is being increasingly realised in India. With the infrastructure in library and information science education we have developed over the previous twenty years, and given the financial support by bodies like the UGC, ICSSR, Raja Ram Mohan Roy Foundation, research in library and information science will most certainly increase in the years to come. Though major research funding makes it possible to complete projects in comparatively short time intervals, it is to be remembered that good quality research can be done without major funding.

8. REASONS FOR SLOW GROWTH IN RESEARCH

Though India has contributed a lot to library science. We are still lagging behind as far as library and information science research is concerned. The reasons for this are not too far to be identified, the main being:

(a) Traditional methods of teaching, and lack of research orientation;

(b) Lack of research experience by the faculty and librarians;

(c) Absence of knowledge about research methodology;

(d) Inadequate strength of the faculty, which is overburdened with doing classroom teaching;

(e) Nonavailability of many qualified research supervisors;

(f) Earlier intake of inefficient, indifferent, and disinterested persons by the library profession;

(g) Inadequate financial support;

(h) Lack of good library facilities and services;

(i) Absence of essential data;

(j) Entry of majority students to research in library and information science from an academic background which does not prepare them for this specialised activity;

(k) Lack of incentives for doctorates; and

(l) Absence of identification of research areas.

The problems can be overcome by encouraging faculty research. Incentives and facilities must be provided to the faculty, not only to do research by themselves, but also to encourage and guide those who have interest, motivation, and aptitude for research. The actual involvement of teachers and students in research work is necessary, and proper environment conducive for research should be created in all library schools, especially those catering to master's course. One cannot agree more with Shera, when he writes, a profession, that would know itself must support and engage in productive research. But research, important as it is, is not the be-all and end-all of human life, or even of human professional life; and every librarian does not have to be researcher in order to prove the hairychested masculinity of the profession. Research is too important to be left to dilettani and amateurs, and its pursuit should be reserved for those who are qualified for it by aptitude, education and motivation". How wonderfully true this statement is, even today, after twentyone years.

9. SUGGESTIONS

When all is said and done, the research activity in library and information science in India is not at a very high ebb. It is slowly, but steadily, picking up the threads, and gaining in strength from point to point. The increasing interest and aptitude for research deserve encouragement, direction,. financial assistance, and coordination. It requires a concentrated endeavour on the part of the faculty, working librarians, and library schools. A few suggestions are given below to accelerate the speed of research in library and information science in our country.

1. On the patterns of the CSIR, ICAR, ICMR, ICSSR and NCERT, a national body CLISR (Council of Library and Information Science Research) should be set up. This can identify research areas; formulate national research policies, design and coordinate research activities; and work as a clearing house.

2. Library and Information Science Clearinng House need to be established in India, with responsibilities for monitoring, indexing and abstracting research reports, conference proceedings and other publications in the field.

3. Library and Information Research Round Table (LIRRT) should be established in India. Its main objectives could be:

(a) To contribute toward the extension and improvement of library research;

(b) To provide opportunities for discussing, disseminating and evaluating library research projects; and

(c) To orient and educate the members of the ILA, IATLIC, IASLIC and other professional bodies, concerning research methods and their usefulness.

The LIRRT could have an Information Exchange Cell which can provide a platform for presenting and discussing the completed, inprogress, and proposed research. Any individual, library, documentation centre, or organisation interested in research could become a member of the LIRRT.

4. There must be provision for 'Information packages' (standard searches) on topics of current interest relating to the library and library services, with detailed research project descriptions.

5. An annual list of completed research at the Ph D, M Phil, and MLISc levels should be issued. Similarly, a register of current research in library and information science in India should also be established. This work may be allotted to one or two library and information science teaching departments.

6. Research in library and information science in India should be made the theme of an All India seminar. In this, bibliographical organisation of research, dissemination of research, national research policy, funding of research, publication of research reports, etc could be discussed thoroughly and a consensus arrived at. All efforts and persuasions must be made to see that the recommendations of such a national seminar are implemented, in the real sense of the term.

10. CONCLUSION

Every profession needs men and women having imagination, and who can see beyond the details of their routine jobs. Library profession is no exception to this and needs such people. It is this need which advanced study and research in library and information science is meant to fill. On the whole, there is evidence that research in library and information science in India is alive—although certainly not without problems. There are research opportunities and research atmosphere in our country. The library professionals and the library and information science faculty are neither so perfect nor so dead that nothing is left to be done. It is my sincere hope that this paper puts its humble, but firm step in the right direction, and the proceedings of this national seminar would bear fruit and deliver the goods.