

Library and Information Science Education in India: A Historical Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The paper presents a historical perspective of Library and Information Science (LIS) education in India, and traces the growth and development of the subject. LIS education began under the patronage of the erstwhile Maharaja of Baroda when he invited an American librarian to set up public libraries in the state. After independence, Library Associations in the country continued with the efforts of developing LIS education in India. The discipline got recognition with the introduction of various courses at the university level. It has seen periods of growth and maturation. The recommendations of National Knowledge Commission provide an opportunity for reforms and changes in the educational system that needs to be grabbed.

Keywords: LIS education-India, LIS education-History-India

1. INTRODUCTION

Library and Information Science (LIS) education in India will be completing 100 years in 2011. It is time for introspection and a need to know the present status of LIS and areas that need improvement. History provides a picture of the growth and development, which lends a perspective to such a study. This article presents an insight of these historical developments in LIS education in India since its inception.

The beginning of the 20th century marked the beginning of LIS education in India. There is a vast literature crediting Sayyaji Rao Gaekwad, the then Maharaja of the erstwhile princely State of Baroda, for initiating the LIS education movement in the country. American librarians, William Alanson Borden and Asa Don Dickinson were the first LIS teachers in India. John MacFarlane, an Englishman, who happened to be the first librarian of the Imperial Library (now National Library, Kolkata) also shares the credit for training librarians in our country. In fact, MacFarlane's training programme is the first case of LIS education in India reported in literature. It took place between 1901 and 1906 in the Imperial Library when training programmes

were organised for its staff. Later it was extended to librarians working in Calcutta as well as in other states. It is believed that there was an existence of some training in library routines for the staff of university libraries prior to that also¹.

2. THE BARODA SCHOOL

The first formal training course in library routines, to be started anywhere in the country, began in 1911 when classes were held to impart professional training to librarians in the erstwhile Baroda¹. W.A. Borden was invited by the State to develop its library system; library education became part of it. The training programme supported the library development and in turn was supported by the library development. The trainees applied the knowledge and skills acquired during the training programme in library work. On the other hand, the library provided them the infrastructure as a laboratory to practice and learn from it. The class comprised 10 best workers of the library. They underwent one year theory and subsequent practical training for another year. Borden also started a short-term summer training programme (5 months) for town and village librarians, both from within and outside the

State. Book selection, ordering, accessioning, classifying, lending, preparing quarterly and annual reports, billing, children's libraries, travelling libraries, and the knowledge about the new outlook of librarianship were the topics taught in this summer course².

3. PUNJAB UNIVERSITY

Another landmark year in the history of LIS education in India is 1915 when it was started for the first time at the university level in Punjab University, Lahore (earlier part of undivided India). Asa Don Dickinson, the university librarian started the course. The subjects taught comprised were basic like decimal classification, cataloguing rules, list of subject headings, dictionary catalogue, and open shelves. The duration of the course was 3 months. Dickinson also wrote the first book, Punjab Library Primer, in library science, for a better understanding of the course. Incidentally, this was the second such school in LIS education in the world and the first in Asia; LIS education was first started in the U.S.

Dickinson's disciple, Labhu Ram, later revised the course contents. These included: (i) foreign languages; (ii) linguistic survey of India; (iii) basic selection; (iv) law of copyright in England and India; (v) a survey from Tennyson to Bernard Shaw; (vi) sources of provincial histories of India; (vii) oriental bibliography; (viii) milestones of English literature (ix) library buildings, their designs and equipment; (x) Anglo-Indian literatures; and (xi) open access and technical libraries³. The course continued till 1947 with modifications and revisions from time to time. The duration of the course was 6 months and graduation as the minimum eligibility for admission. This was a development towards the maturation of LIS as a discipline⁴.

4. LIS EDUCATION BY LIBRARY ASSOCIATIONS

The LIS education, which took off from the northern and western parts of the country moved towards the south subsequently. LIS professionals realising the need for education acted through Library Associations. The first such attempt was a school set up by Andhra Desa Library Association in 1920. Lectures were organised on various topics related to the history, literature, and culture of Andhra Pradesh besides the library movement. The course was modified later to include more topics of library science⁵.

In 1929, Madras Library Association (MALA) started a School of Library Science for training college and school librarians in the state of Madras. It was an

undergraduate summer programme (certificate) of 3 months duration. The students were taken to Madras University Library for practical work and observing library routines. This was the first certificate course of library science to be started by any state library association in India. Prof. Ranganathan was instrumental in instituting library school under the auspices of the Association and also taught the students. He also acted as the Honorary Director of the school⁶.

The course consisted of two parts. Part I covered theory (laws of library science including library organisation, classification, cataloguing, and library routine). Part II (practical) covered classification according to colon scheme and cataloguing according to cataloguing rules of the Madras University Library⁷. In 1931, the school was taken over by the University of Madras. The certificate course continued up to 1937. In 1938, the 3 months training course was suspended and was replaced in July 1938 by a one-year full-time postgraduate course, leading to a diploma course in librarianship. Throughout, the period of his service in the University (1931-1944), Ranganathan continued to be the head of the school. Two members of his staff were co-teachers⁸. It may be noted that Ranganathan, taught library science courses at the University right from 1931 to 1946. University of Madras was the first university in India to offer one-year postgraduate diploma in library science. Only persons employed in libraries were admitted to the course. Thus, India became one of the first countries to introduce full-time postgraduate courses in universities, the credit for which goes only to Ranganathan.

In 1935, Bengal Library Association started a training camp for librarians, a precursor to the summer course provided by the Association in 1937. The summer course was later upgraded to a certificate course.

5. LIS EDUCATION BY THE UNIVERSITIES

Introduction of LIS courses at the university level dates back to 1915 when Punjab University started a certificate course. The LIS courses got a boost in 1935 when due to the efforts of Dr M.O. Thomas, Andhra University started a diploma course in library science. The course was later upgraded as a postgraduate diploma in 1961. In 1938, a postgraduate diploma course in librarianship was started by Madras University by taking over the course earlier offered by MALA. The course was open only for working librarians, and owes its credit to Ranganathan.

Banaras Hindu University (BHU) was the second university after University of Madras to start a

postgraduate diploma course in 1941. The minimum qualifications for admission to the course was intermediate or matriculation with four years of working experience in a library (Andhra University, Department of Library and Information Science, 1987, p.7) In 1965, BHU, was the second university to start MLIS courses; courses were later discontinued during 1968-69⁹. This was closely followed by the part-time evening course leading to Diploma in Librarianship started in 1943 by Bombay University. The credit for starting the course goes to Dr P.M. Joshi, the then librarian of Bombay University. It was a postgraduate diploma course of two terms. The course was also open for matriculates who had to devote four terms instead of two terms.

In 1945, University of Calcutta started a one-year diploma course, due to the efforts of Kumara Munindra Deb Rai. It continued till 1968 and was upgraded to BLIS in 1969. Prof. S.R. Ranganathan was a pioneer in the LIS education in India as evident from his initial efforts at Madras University and BHU. In 1947, he moved to University of Delhi and started the first postgraduate diploma course. The first batch was awarded diploma in 1948 and continued their studies and were awarded BLIS in 1949. In the same year, a two-year programme for MLIS was introduced replacing the BLIS programme. Simultaneously, the PhD programme was launched by the university in 1949. University of Delhi was the first university to start a doctoral programme in library science in the entire British Commonwealth. In 1956 Nagpur University and M.S. University, Baroda also started library science courses. The next year saw the beginning of library science courses in Vikram University, Ujjain. The first PhD was also awarded in 1957 to D.B. Krishna Rao from the University of Delhi. His guide was Prof. S.R. Ranganathan. Library science courses were also started in five more universities—Hyderabad, Osmania, Panjab, Poona and Rajasthan by the end of 1960.

It is reported that there were about 12 library schools in 1960s, imparting library science education in the country at all levels except the MPhil degree. The period of growth of library science started in early sixties¹⁰. The main reason was the allocation of funds for libraries in the third five-year plan of Government of India. Another major factor was the support extended by UGC to libraries and library education. Many new library schools were started in sixties.

Early 1990s can be described as the period of Modernisation of library science when modernisation of libraries started taking place¹⁰. Government of India gave a thrust to application of information technology, through various incentives. UGC also chipped in with liberal funding for establishing computer laboratories. Library schools started revising their curriculum, introducing

courses on computer application in libraries, information science, and established computer laboratories for giving hands on experience to their students. This was also a period of consolidation.

6. PERIOD OF GROWTH IN LIS EDUCATION

The decade of 1960s saw some very important events taking place affecting LIS education in the country. Ranganathan conceptualised the premier education and research institute, Documentation Research and Training Centre (DRTC), Bangalore under the auspices of Indian Statistical Institute in 1962 for imparting a specialised training programme in documentation. Another parallel institution, Indian National Scientific Documentation Centre (INSDOC), now named as National Institute of Science Communication and Information Resources (NISCAIR), was established under the aegis of Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), Delhi, in 1957. It started a course in Associateship in Documentation in 1964. Prior to this, it organised short-term training programmes for librarians which it continues to do as its objective of providing continuing education for LIS professionals. These are two premier institutions in the country providing specialised training in documentation and information and have been providing national input and support to the development of the profession in the country. They have updated their curriculum regularly keeping in tune with the changing time.

Another important event that has a role in the growth and development of LIS education in the country is the setting up of the Review Committee for LIS education in the country in 1961 under the chairmanship of Ranganathan. In 1965, the Committee gave recommendations that had far reaching impact on LIS education. Some of these included: Have separate faculty for teaching, do away with librarians acting as part-time faculty; delineated separate objectives for BLIS and MLIS courses; anyone seeking admission in LIS courses should have done a six months apprenticeship in recognised library, and a student teacher ratio of 1:10 for BLIS and 1:5 for MLIS. It also recommended a course that was almost the same being practised at the University of Delhi. The formation of Indian Association of Teachers of Library and Information Science (IATLIS) in 1969 was another important happening towards the end of the decade. IATLIS further helped in the growth and development of the discipline. It organised its first seminar in 1970 on teaching methods in library science.

The decade, 1970-80, saw a gradual development in the LIS educational scenario in the country. Some more courses were added. University of Calcutta introduced two-years MLIS in 1974. There was a need

felt to update the syllabi in view of the increasing importance of information. Karnataka University, Dharwad, organised a seminar to discuss the changes required in BLIS syllabi to accommodate components of documentation and information to enable the students to handle information related jobs. A landmark in the development of curriculum took place when the University of Delhi organised a national seminar on curriculum reforms in 1978. New courses were proposed for MLIS. These included System Analysis and Statistical Methods, and Information Storage and Retrieval. Some courses were revised to include components of international information systems, data banks, etc. University of Delhi added another milestone to its credit when it introduced MPhil programme for the first time in the entire commonwealth region. This decade also saw the second PhD being awarded to Dr Pandey S.K.Sharma after a gap of almost twenty years after the first PhD was awarded to Dr D.B. Krishna Rao.

Microcomputers appeared on the scene in library activities and services during the 1980s. Accordingly, library schools began incorporating computers in the syllabi. University of Delhi was one of the first to introduce an optional paper on computer application that included Pascal programming language also. Another development during this period was the introduction of two-years integrated MLIS in the North Eastern Hill University (NEHU) in 1986 and Madras University in 1988. It was felt that two-year MLIS would put it on the same pedestal as the other Master's degrees and also the curriculum would be better spread if integrated over a two years period.

In late 1980s, in addition to formal teaching courses, some universities introduced correspondence courses at various levels. M.L. Sukhadia University and Kashmir University introduced correspondence course at certificate level. Punjabi University started a diploma course. University of Madras initiated postgraduate courses. Andhra Pradesh Open University started a degree course in 1984. Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi, introduced BLIS in 1989. It has played a pioneering role in LIS education, and conducts BLIS, MLIS, PhD and PGDLAN (one-year postgraduate diploma). Its printed course material is considered of high quality¹⁰.

7. PERIOD OF MODERNISATION IN LIS EDUCATION

Initiation of automation activities and development of software packages in libraries started in 1990s. The fillip came from none other than UNESCO, when it gave the free software CDS/ISIS to libraries. Not only that, it provided expertise for training. International experts trained resource persons in the country. Simultaneously,

custom designed and later proprietary software came into the market. LIS schools started incorporating LIS software in their curriculum. Initially, hands-on sessions were organised in the computer centre of the universities.

Later departments started developing their own computer centres. Curriculum reforms also took place in 1992 with the directive coming from the Curriculum Development Committee Report¹¹ headed by Prof. P.N. Kaula, the doyen of LIS teachers. It recommended course contents for BLIS, MLIS as well as integrated two-year MLIS degree. In fact, it directed the universities to switch over to the integrated mode of education. The decade also gave birth to library and information networks (INFLIBNET, DELNET, CALIBNET, etc.) in India to overcome the increasing resource crunch. Alongside, the developments in telecommunication technology were also slowly incorporated in the curriculum.

LIS entered the new century with the CDC report¹² in 2001, emphasised to face the onslaught of ICT. The report stressed on the need to have integrated two-year MLIS, gave new topics to be included in the curricula along with many optionals to allow the professionals to choose from alternative careers. University of Madras changed the name of their degree to Master of Science in Information Science dropping the term 'Library' altogether.

A step further, International School of Information Management (ISIM) was established to offer MTech and PhD degrees in information systems and management. It is a truly international venture with faculty from India and other countries. DRTC also revamped its curriculum, even changing the name of their degree to Master of Science (MS) in Information Science. The latest development is the introduction of e-education in which the IGNOU took the lead by introducing MLIS in the e-mode in 2008.

National Knowledge Commission (NKC)¹³, set up by the Government of India, has recommended certain measures for the overall development of LIS education in the country. These are:

- (i) National Mission on Libraries should be set up immediately, for a period of three years. The Mission should subsequently be converted into a Permanent Commission.
- (ii) Revamp LIS education, training and research facilities. The proposed: Mission/Commission on Libraries must assess as soon as possible the manpower requirements of the country in the area of LIS management, and take necessary steps to meet the country's requirement through LIS education and training.

- (iii) To keep the LIS sector abreast of latest developments, necessary encouragement should be given to research after evaluating the research status in this field.
- (iv) Establishing a well-equipped institute for advanced training and research in library and information science and services would provide the necessary impetus to this task.
- (v) A system should be set up to foster close co-operation between the teaching/research faculty and practicing librarians at all academic and research institutions.
- (vi) The minimum staffing pattern for the BLIS course and the MLIS has been recommended.
- (vii) There should be a 1:10 teacher-student ratio.
- (viii) It was felt that the Department should have not more than 50 students in one class for BLIS course, 20 students for MLIS course, and PhD students according to the University norms.
- (ix) All departments of LIS should set up computer centres and well-equipped departmental libraries with appropriate teaching tools.
- (x) Appropriate physical facilities such as classrooms, must be made available to each LIS Department.
- (xi) E-learning materials for upgrading the skills of the existing staff should be provided.
- (xii) Teachers who will teach in areas such as ICT applications in libraries and other modern methods, should have a specialisation in these areas. A system must be set up to allow stringent review of the performance of teachers. A suitable system of rewards, including promotions, should be instituted.

This is a golden opportunity for LIS education to improve. It has been realised at the highest level that libraries and library science education need revamping. Librarians should come together and act to take the profession on a high pedestal.

8. DISCUSSION

LIS education has moved a long way with training programmes in library routines and procedures for library staff and outsiders. The next development was acknowledging the participants with certificates. The duration of the programmes was extended to 3 months and later to 6 months. The real pedestal for growth took place when universities started offering certificate programmes in library training. University training

provides a stamp of class in higher education. The programmes were later upgraded to diploma and further to postgraduate diploma. Admission was made stringent when only graduates could get admission to it. Thus, library science education was accorded a status of postgraduate education setting the roots for library science as a discipline.

The next step in the evolution of LIS education came when the postgraduate diploma was re-named and upgraded to a BLIS and later to MLIS. This development was an important factor giving the academic recognition to the discipline. It all required the hard work and vision of committed and dedicated professionals, like S.R. Ranganathan, S. Dasgupta, Asadullah Khan, and M.O. Thomas to name a few. Introduction of PhD programme and the award of the first PhD was another landmark in LIS education in India.

Contribution to seminal literature at international level by Ranganathan kept the Indian flag afloat at the international level. The contents were added to syllabi at various levels. There was Indianness in library literature. Parallel developments in the library scene acted as a reservoir to the graduates passing from LIS schools. But the situation did not continue for long due to two reasons: (a) Mushrooming growth of library schools without taking into consideration the demand and supply position in the country, and (b) Opening of library schools without the minimum basic physical and intellectual infrastructure. This continued for long, resulting into a quantitative growth with little qualitative growth. The syndrome affected all levels, from bachelor's degree to the PhD level.

There are still some individual cases in the form of institutions and individuals who have recognition in LIS education. Lessons need to learn from these taking as case studies. Collaborative and coordinated efforts are required on the part of teachers, librarians and active associations. Issues are more or less recognised, there is a need for strong will to work for overall improvement.

9. CONCLUSION

Libraries hold a special position in the development of a society is evident from the fact that rulers took keen interest and are responsible for the origin of LIS education in the country. Experts from abroad were invited to provide a strong base and an international touch to it. LIS education in India is fortunate to have its torch bearer none other than the father of library science, the great Prof. S.R. Ranganathan. Of all his qualities, his being a teacher was a boon to library science in India. He contributed everywhere, whether initiating departments, courses, outlining contents or

planning a research base for the discipline. Department of library science in the University of Madras, Banaras Hindu University, University of Delhi, DRTC are all his babies and still have a name amongst others. We need to take stock of the situation: what have we achieved, where we are, where we could not reach, and how to improve. History is a great teacher. We learn from our tradition; what led to a name for the country in LIS education throughout the globe. One obvious reason is Ranganathan. But library professionals need to ponder over what he taught us and continue on those lines. Canons of context and currency are some of his important teachings. Library science need to change according to the needs of the time. It is high time, librarians and teachers should come together to overcome all shortcomings and take LIS education to greater heights.

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