

LIS Education in India: Vision 2021

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Abstract

We are witnessing a paradigm shift in education methods fueled by ICT, social media and today's job requirements at national and international level. In order to meet requirements of modern information services this generation would require entirely new sets of skills. The traditional practices and services are taking new shape and with this role of librarians are being redefined. There is a continuous requirement of incorporating appropriate technological subjects in the curriculum. LIS professionals and administrators are continuously showing their concern about the quality of education being imparted by library schools in India. There is a need for LIS Departments to constantly fine-tune their syllabus to incorporate new modules and contemporary information handling skills to prepare the young professionals for the emerging areas of librarianship. The core subjects of library science education should be sustained and a layer of specialized skills and competencies of modern practices of information handling should be added over these.

Keywords: LIS Education, Web 3.0

India is amongst the first few countries in the world to start Library Science education program. It is now more than a century old. Starting with a Certificate course in 1911, it is now offering Masters, PhD and DLitt programmes in more than 180 independent departments in universities and colleges. However, LIS Education is on crossroads to meet the challenges posed by the current ICT revolution.

LIS Education in India, like education in other subject fields, is challenged on multiple fronts especially in the current decade. These challenges include keeping identity of LIS education, continuously reframing the syllabi, attracting good students, training of teachers and so on. LIS education on one side has to impart training on basic concepts of library science and other side it needs

to cope up with emerging skills of information handling. There is a continuous requirement of incorporating appropriate technological subjects in the curriculum. The traditional practices and services are taking new shape and with this role of librarians are being redefined. Today's librarians' job and responsibilities have been restructured as of their predecessors. While they still work as information and research experts, they are increasingly expected to assist students, researchers, scientists, teachers and professionals to develop skills and familiarity with modern research tools and practices. This role among others, require greater involvement in the core curriculum or research areas as guide or instructor and be part of sustained research or teaching programmes.

Today the ways and means of managing the information has totally changed. Information and communication technologies have completely



revolutionized the process of organization, disseminating and seeking the information. The Information searching and seeking behavior of this generation has been completely reformed. This calls for revamping of LIS education to meet requirements of modern users having access to ample data through networks. LIS professionals and administrators are continuously showing their concern about the quality of education being imparted by library schools in India.

Today's education system demands for greater amount of flexibility from LIS educators and calls for close cooperation of LIS professionals for ascertaining the skills required to handle modern information management practices. It is agreed that it would not be possible for LIS educators to completely eradicate the skill gaps. Still, it certainly calls for closer cooperation between Library educators and Library professionals to work together and constantly revise curriculum as per the expectation of marketplace and reduce the gap between teaching and practice. Both can work together to prepare young professionals to embrace opportunities for interesting yet challenging career.

In this digital era Google, Wikipedia, popularity of social media, use of hand held devices, high speed connectivity, development of Web 2.0 and now 3.0 have compelled the library science educators to review and drastically revise the syllabus and teaching practices. Web 1.0 was about creating static websites with the help of HTML, CSS and java script having hardly any interaction provisions. There were not many web apps and hardly any provision of streaming music and video. Web 2.0 brought a significant change from web 1.0 as it started with interactive interfaces and witnessed rise of different

media consumption platforms including Facebook, Wiki, Flicker, YouTube, etc. This gave genesis to creation of communities of likeminded persons and made it simple for everyone to share information more freely. We are now in Web 3.0 era.

2. Web 3.0

In Web 3.0 era everyone has to participate in the networked society in a more transparent way. In this period focus has to be on the users then the libraries and library practices. Professional library staff has to concentrate on services rather than the techniques. Web 3.0 is an era of decentralization where the apps are using decentralized networks with reign supreme. Web 2.0 was primarily controlled by the corporate sector or institutions with the slant to their benefit. The web 3.0 brings human aspect back by proving improved security and privacy to the users rather than making institutions and corporate stronger. Some of the benefits of Web 3.0 have been enumerated below:

- ❖ Towards privacy from monopoly
- ❖ Highly secured networks
- ❖ Ownership of data
- ❖ Uninterrupted services
- ❖ Interoperability
- ❖ Permission less blockchains
- ❖ Semantic web
- ❖ Ubiquity (being everywhere all the time)

Library and information services will soon migrate to Web 3.0 techniques including block chain, bigdata, Artificial Intelligence, etc. Web 3.0 base dapps will soon replace traditional services and applications.

3 Competencies and skills development

By 2021 Library and Information Science education has to prepare its students to meet challenges of increasingly complex life and work environment. The learning and innovative skills LIS students need to acquire include:

- ❖ Creative & innovative
- ❖ Critical thinking & problem solving
- ❖ Communication & Collaboration.

LIS education of 2021 has to prepare students to meet information needs of the users who live in the technology and media driven environment dominated by profusion of information (reliable / not fully reliable or false). Today's users live in the environment of rapid technological advancement, strong ability to collaborate and make individual contribution on an unprecedented scale through social media, e-publishing and other digital media. LIS educators need to prepare students to navigate the complex life and work environments in globally competitive knowledge era by developing sufficient life and career skills. A few of them are enumerated here:

- ❖ Initiative & self-direction
- ❖ Leadership & responsibility
- ❖ Flexibility & adaptability
- ❖ Productivity & accountability
- ❖ Social & cross-cultural skills

LIS teaching has to develop multi-dimensional ability of the students to sustain and grow in this highly competitive job market. Today learning requires more than identifying specific skills to the

students. The revised syllabuses of library Science schools, in addition to the traditional subjects, try to include the following topics:

- ❖ Create, communicate and share information using ICT tools
- ❖ Management and analysis of Research data including bigdata
- ❖ Management of scholarly output of the organization
- ❖ Use of ICT to research, resolve problems and design responsive services.
- ❖ Acquisition, organizing, retrieving, preservation and conservation of digital information
- ❖ Searching and evaluating electronic information
- ❖ Use of social media for information handling and to connect with users
- ❖ Library Management including communication, drafting, interpersonal skills
- ❖ Evaluation and Feedback of information services

Educational challenges can easily be overcome with the help of ICT with the provision of laptops / desktop / tabs and good connectivity. In the recent years, connectivity has improved and charges for the same have been dropped drastically. Here the focus should be on guided use of technology rather than providing tools for general use. LIS teachers should provide relevant syllabus material and focus should be on pedagogy and teachers support. LIS students need not to learn the technology rather its use should be supplemental and practical.

4. Propositions

Library and Information Science is exceedingly dynamic subject and its requirements are ever changing with the advancements in the technology.

It is the high time where LIS Departments have to take a leap forward approach and continuously revise their syllabus to incorporate appropriate technological topics in their curricula.

LIS schools should extensively use technology in imparting education and also use active learning methodologies, where students, individually or in groups, take care of their own learning under the guidance of teachers. Technology will certainly enable greater student's participation in the learning process. Provision of multicultural classrooms in LIS Departments will further provide opportunities to the students to seamlessly develop soft skills and learn technological applications.

It has been observed that research in LIS departments is revolving around 10-12 topics only. Departments in the country need to cooperate to carry out high quality, multidisciplinary, scholarly research on a variety of local, national and global topics.

It is high time that LIS departments should collaborate with other non-LIS departments like Philosophy, Psychology, Computer, Management, etc to give opportunity to attend lectures of other disciplines to understand assumptions and methods of those disciplines. This will also help students to understand and work on multidisciplinary projects collectively or individually.

To give better students exposure to contemporary library and information systems and services, LIS Departments should collaborate with other LIS

schools at national and international level. It has been observed that many LIS schools in USA, Germany, and Australia are keen to collaborate with Indian schools.

Libraries are the laboratories for LIS students, departments must develop strategic alliance with Special, public, academic and corporate libraries to provide opportunities to the students to understand their procedures and functioning. This will also help departments to revise their syllabus time to time and remain tuned to modern LIS practices.

LIS Departments should further collaborate with LIS software developers, database publishers, information service providers, management consultants to give better exposure to the students. Possibilities to collaborate with other stake holders like active users of libraries, editors, media persons and corporate should also be explored to initiate modernization of LIS education in the nation. LIS departments should explore the possibility of PPP mode to improve infrastructural facilities in the departments.

In the present highly dynamic, continuously evolving environment, collaboration with various stake holders within open innovation ecosystems is probably the most suited way to guarantee that each and every one remains relevant for the others.

5. Conclusion

LIS Departments need to constantly fine-tune their syllabus to incorporate new modules and contemporary information handling skills to prepare the young professionals for the emerging areas of librarianship. The core subjects of library science education should be sustained and a layer of specialized skills and competencies of modern

practices of information handling should be added over these. Emphasis should also be given on social and ethical aspects of library profession. The young professionals should not only be facilitators and propagators of knowledge, but also defenders of intellectual freedom, IPR regulations and open access movement.

There is sometimes common discussion that “technology will replace LIS teachers”. In fact, my experience from around the world shows that, over time, role of teachers will become more central and not peripheral with the usage of modern technologies. I would rather say technology will not replace the teachers but the teachers who will use the technology will replace them who don't. LIS teachers have to undertake additional responsibility of imparting skills to prepare students to handle more

sophisticated information services. Government is currently promoting use of MOOCs in Indian education system. The academic librarians should proactively undertake this responsibility in this and take lead in implementation of MOOCs in their institutions.

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