E-Learning in LIS Education: Case Study of SHPT School of Library Science

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Abstract

The article discusses briefly e-learning in LIS and focuses on e-learning at SHPT School of Library Science. It discusses the syllabus, teaching and assessment practices used to train library science students. The school's aim is to make aware and train the students in latest technologies useful for library science profession, so that they can enter in the today's job market confidently and apply their professional and technological knowledge effectively and efficiently.

Keywords: E-learning, Case Study, Library School, SNDT University, LIS Profession

1. Introduction

E-learning now a days has become essential and it is implemented in every field from Space to Government. There is need capacity building, which can help the users in utilising e-resources. The librarians have the ability and skills to act as an information intermediaries as they are trained specially to know the resources available offline and online, and how to make efficient use of them.

The new trend of communication technology has also impacted e-learning in education including Library and Information Science field. Today, library readers need the information quickly, at their desk, preferably in electronic format so that modification, re-use could be done easily and fast. In the library science profession, the aim is to make student a IT savvy and students need to be aware of the recent trends in IT. It is important to teach them how to use these technologies effectively and efficiently in library administration. In India, several universities and institutes have started using e-learning model.

The scope of e-learning is wide and can be defined in different context. The term e-learning is used in a variety of ways such as online learning, Computer Based Learning (CBL), Web Based Training (WBT), Online Resource-Based Learning (ORBL), Networked Collaborative Learning (NCL), Computer Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL). [1]

Basically e-learning is the online delivery of information, communication, education, and training. E-learning can be in offline form also like CD, DVD, etc. E-Learning provides new set of tools that can add value to all the traditional learning modes- classroom experiences, textbook study, CD-ROM, and traditional computer based training. It is characterized by speed, technological transformation, and mediated human interaction.[2]

Sahu and Singhal[2] believe that E-learning will not replace the classroom setting, but enhance it, taking advantage of new content and delivery technologies to enable learning.

They have formed the aims and objectives of e-learning as: old –world learning models don't scale to meet the new world learning challenges such as quick and up to date information, geographically scattered information. E-learning provides the tool to meet these challenges.

Twigg and Miloff envisage a global learning infrastructure. One might envisage learning environments of the future as:

- being student-centered
- being interactive and dynamic
- enabling group work on real world problems
- enabling students to determine their own learning routes
- emphasizing competencies like information literacy to support lifelong learning [3]

There are number of tools and technologies that can be used in e-learning. Parker [4] has discussed that Serdiukov [5] divided these technologies into two parts. The first being computer technology, which offers computer-based courses, computerized tests, word processors, graphics software, spreadsheets, databases, and presentation software to the learning process. The second part is telecommunications technology, which offers distance courses, distributed educational resources, e-mails, and videoconferencing, bulletin boards, whiteboards and chat rooms. Some of these technologies such as e-mails and e-mail based discussion forum (such as LIS-forum, moderated discussion forum available at http://www.ncsi.iisc.ernet.in/ncsi/services/lisforum.html), real time conferencing (such as yahoo messenger, MSN messenger, Google talk, etc), Pod casting are well acknowledged by the learner.

The SNDT Women's University started SHPT School of Library Science in 1961 with diploma course in library science. Over the time the course was updated and now the school offers full time regular courses in library science at Bachelor and Master level. The SHPT School of Library Science started using ICT in the curriculum in the early 90's. The school has always considered the demand from the industry and then accordingly the changes have been included in the curricula to meet the challenges in the job market. Currently computer applications used in the curricula are Ms-office, Photoshop, Flash, Dream weaver, WINISIS-library software, and Greenstone-digital library software. Presently the school is offering Computer Supported Collaborative Learning.[6]

Teachers of the school insist students to use communication technologies and services available on the Internet. To train the students of library science, teachers effectively use e- learning materials, e-mails, online journals, online articles, web pages. The school has semester system, which distributes content of the syllabus throughout the course balancing theory and practical knowledge. The school offers BLISc and MLISc courses of one year each. Following section will discuss the paper pattern and implementation of ICT at BLISc and MLISc course.

The SHPT School of Library Science follows the major components of the figure 1, where each paper defines the objectives and outcomes. The content is then divided in to different units mentioning depth of coverage. Under the course various learning material is designed using text, visual, and other multimedia. Content is taught using blackboard as well as multimedia. The learning material repositories are available through secure server. The assignments and project are tested and evaluated which further added to repositories. The feedback from the students helps to make necessary changes in the instructional design and assessments.

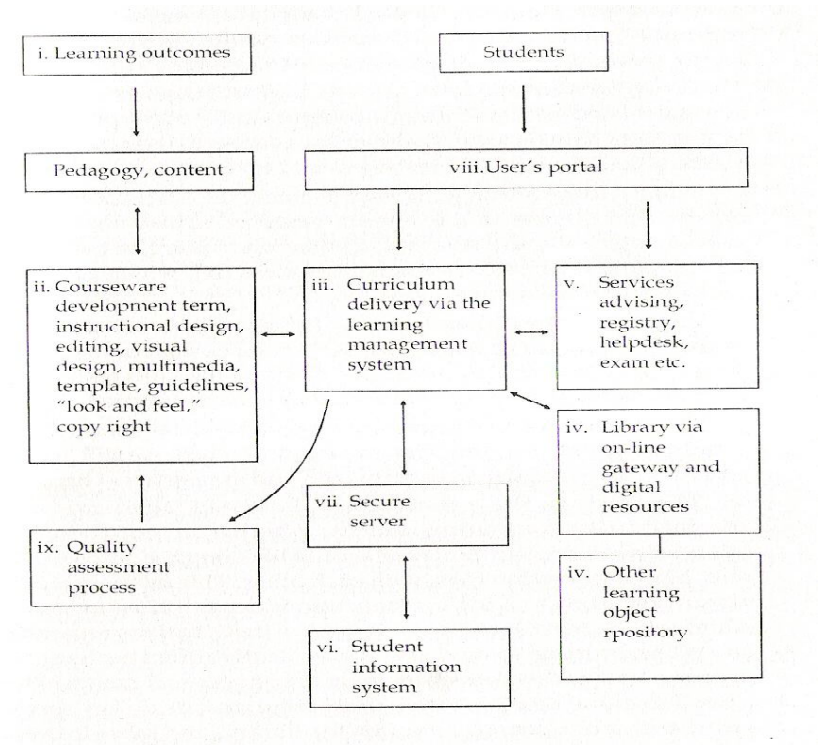

Figure 1: Structure of E-learning [5]

2. Bachelor of Library and Information Science.

BLISc. Theory paper on Computer Technology (100 marks) is continuously revised and updated. In the year 2000, the title of the paper has been revised from 'Computers and Libraries' to 'Information Technology'.

The aim of the paper is

- To understand fundamental concepts relating to Information technology
- To identify the ways in which information technology may be used in the libraries
- To develop basic information technology handling skills.

Major content covered in the IT syllabus is as follows.

Table 1 Paper C6: Information Technology – part I

Unit 1	Introduction to Information Technology Definition and scope of IT
Unit 2	Computer Hardware Historical overview, generations, components and functions of computer systems, memory, storage media(including CD-ROMs), input and output devices
Unit 3	Digital Data Representation and Storage. Binary system, character codes, records and files, directories.
Unit 4	Software Concepts Systems software – operating systems, programs and programming languages, interpreters, compilers
Unit 5	Common Application Programs Word processing, database management systems, spreadsheets, etc.

Table 2 Paper C11: Information Technology - Part II

Unit 1	Networks Components and their functions; topologies and their types
Unit 2	Internet Historical overview and development, services
Unit 3	Computer Applications in Library & Information Work Use of computers for housekeeping and bibliographic activities.
Unit 4	Application and Use of Networks in Library & Information Work Use of networks for library activities

According to the above Table 1 and 2, BLISc, students are taught with the theory of computer hardware and software, digital data representation and storage, common application programs such as MS-Word, EXCEL, and library application software such as WINISIS. To give hands-on practice there is a separate 40 hours practical paper on Information Technology, which gives familiarity with document creation, editing, printing in Word, Excel, and Power Point. WINISIS application is taught in details where student creates small database, and do editing, searching, sorting, indexing, printing. In addition, students are taught how to create an e-mail account, how to search online, how to consolidate and represent the information.

This hands-on experience helps student to work on assignment and also on small group projects in other papers such as Reference and Information Service, Library Management, Subject Access to Documents.

BLISc. Students get the regular assignments, where they have to access information in print, through Internet and several offline/CD-databases. The information retrieved is then condensed, organized and presented to the respective class in the form of PPT slides. The print copy of the assignment is then submitted to the department as a record. Recently few assignments given were

- Implementing PODSCOB at different departments of the university library.
- Comparison of DDC, UDC, CC in terms of Standard Subdivisions, Space Isolate, Time Isolate, Literature Class, Language Class, Biography, Law Class, etc.
- Topic wise retrieval of names of online journals, databases, sites, etc.
- Preparation of Indexing and Abstracting Bulletin
- Organising Display of Books and Articles on a specific topics.

There are several PPTs prepared by the teachers, which enhances teaching. These PPTs are accessible to students on the server to copy, study or debate/discuss in the class. The PPTs prepared by the students as a part of the assignments are also kept accessible to the students for reference in future.

As a part of the course, BLISc. students prepare the projects on various current issues in the form of bibliography, information product, or pathfinder. During the project work students access several print and non-print materials. Information gathered form several offline and online sources is reorganized and compiled using various technologies. Since 2000, the school maintains small institutional repositories that consist of Learning materials developed by teachers, Assignments, seminar papers, and Projects submitted by BLISc and MLISc students.

3. Masters of Library and Information Science

At MLISc level, Automation and Networking paper was recently revised in 2005 and updated as Digital Libraries. The objective of this paper is to provide an understanding of the concept of digital libraries, their resources and organization, their services and the technologies involved. Content of the paper is listed in Table 3.

Table 3 Paper 3: Digital Libraries

Unit 1	Introduction Definition, Characteristics, types, need and components of digital libraries; models of digital libraries (federated, harvested etc); Major Digital Libraries in UK and USA; Digital resources – types and formats
Unit 2	Collection Development Digitization – benchmarking, selection criteria, process and work flow management; File formats; Born-digital Materials – types, acquisition and access; licensing agreements, consortia, open-source materials, gateways and portals

Unit 3	Collection Organization File-naming conventions, mark-up languages - HTML and XML; identification of digital documents; Metadata including Dublin core; Taxonomies, Ontologies and their use; Databases, DBMS and other systems
Unit 4	Access and services Browse, Search, User Interfaces. Digital reference services.Search Engines, Boolean operators, fuzzy logic, personalization, authentication.Preservation and archiving. Data refreshing, migration, backup, security.
Unit 5	Technology Basics of Hardware – types, characteristics, requirements; Software – types and examples; Basics of Networks, Protocols.
Unit 6	Management Planning, evaluation, feedback and modification, manpower training, user training, social and legal issues including IPR

The paper carries 100 marks where definition, characteristics, need of digital libraries, models of digital libraries, major digital libraries is covered. In addition to this, several issues of digital libraries such as collection development, collection organization, access and services, technology are taught in detail along with practical work. The practical work in digital libraries paper include hands-on scanning, OCR, image management, file formats and conversion, identifying and locating open-source resources, HTML, digital library software – Greenstone, Web–page creation using Dream weaver, Flash, Photoshop, Word, etc. The extensive practical in digital libraries paper help students to understand the components of digital Libraries familiarises different resource types and formats; develops conceptual skills for organizing digital resources; develops planning and managerial skill for digital libraries.

Students need to submit a group project report on WINISIS where small database is created using text, photos, audio- video, and hyperlinks. Some excellent project done by MLISc students using WINISIS are database on Asanas, database on Indian musical instruments, database on monuments in UP and Rajasthan, database on LIC policies etc.

The Major project work of designing web page carried out by MLISc. Students were:

- Web pages on Musical instruments of India
- Web pages on Chocolate
- Web pages on Florist
- Web pages on College Library
- Web pages on University Library
- Web pages on School Library

In addition, the MLISc students also present papers on current issues of library science field. The seminar paper carries 75 Marks. In the year 2006-2007 the seminar was held for students on 'Digital Libraries'. Several issues of digital libraries were discussed in the seminar. Some of the topics were LIS Curriculum and Digital Libraries, Copy Right and Legal Issues in Digital Libraries, Digital Divide and Digital Libraries, Digital Librarianship, Access in Digital Libraries, Metadata as Resource Description Tool, Preservation of Digital Materials, Personalisation in Digital Libraries, E-books and E-journals, Digital Reference Services, Blogs, Pod casting and RSS, Digitisation of Multi Media Information, Digitisation of Textual Information, Role of Digital Libraries in Distance Learning. In current academic year 2007-2008, some of the MLISc students are working on seminar paper on managerial issues in Digital Library Architecture, Evaluation of Digital Libraries, Conservation and Preservation of Paper Based Materials, E-Journals, Resource Sharing, Disaster Management, etc.

4. Infrastructure

The school has a small computer lab consisting one separate server for the school, six terminals, 2 OCR scanners, and one printer along with Internet facility. In addition to the lab, the school has one computer at BLISc and MLISc classroom separately. Three computers (two computers with CD-writer) having Internet connection, two printers (one inkjet printer and another 3-in-one printer) are provided to the teachers which assist them in developing e-learning materials. E-mails and messengers are regularly used to share the learning materials, and for other communication. These technologies are highly useful during the project submission, seminar paper submission, and examination.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the SHPT School of Library Science is always ahead to implement the changes in the syllabus to train the students to meet job requirements of the industry. Regular workshops and seminars are conducted with experts from the industries to discuss the new trends and contents in the curricula. Teachers as well as students make optimum use of ICT facilities provided in the school. Parker [4] has mentioned the learning model designed by Serdiukov in the year 2001. The model consists of some of the components of e-learning and mentioned that, Student, teacher and computer are the three pillars of technology-enhanced e-learning. The school strongly believes in this model.

Undoubtedly, there are profound changes going on in the educational system. These changes are needed because of ever growing pressure in the school systems themselves, partly because society itself is changing into one in which knowledge work becomes ever more important, and partly because of the very information and communication technologies which are transforming our economies. Both of these factors evoke change and offer a solution to the problems with which the educational system struggles. [3]

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