

# Library & Information Science Education and Competency Management

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## Abstract

*The Library & information science (LIS) curriculum that are followed in Indian Universities do not have all the facets to make the young LIS graduates a competent one in the present job market. Only inclusion of the ICT application in the syllabus cannot help them to encounter with challenges in the working environment in the library and information centres. Here two approaches i.e. interdisciplinary and inter-institutional have been put forwarded which can be considered to develop the skills of the LIS professionals. Also the efforts of some the organizations and institutes related to LIS in India are highlighted.*

**Keywords:** Curriculum, Interdisciplinary, Skill, CBCS, Training, LIS Graduates

## 1. Introduction

After completing formal education in library and information science when fresh LIS graduates join a library or information centre encounters the real working environment. In such situation, they face problems in executing the job assigned to them. The job may be the basic traditional job like classifying a document, preparing catalogue, preparing an index on a topic or preparing a bibliography. Besides they may be assigned to do some works related to ICT application in LIS like preparation of databases, website maintenance, web OPAC maintenance, creation and management of digital library, institutional repository, *etc.* They have to be both quick and accurate in doing those jobs. For this they need the skills in those areas, which are gathered after working in those areas. Though diverse skills are required for the LIS students, but it is expected that the student should be competent

in a few of the basic skills related to his area of interest.

It is not possible to develop all the skills related to LIS profession due to different reasons. Therefore, an interdisciplinary and inter-institutional approach are very much essential in LIS education to prepare the LIS graduates..

## 2. Literature Review

Lots of academic discussions on this emerging area of LIS have already been published in the form of papers, articles, conference proceedings, *etc* at recent times. Some selected literature related to this area has been reviewed here.

Bansode and Viswe (2015) explained the need of training and orientation for the library professional using the ICT-based resources, services and tools. Emphasizing on in-house training, they stated that in-house training programmes and regular attendance of relevant Conferences, Workshops are prerequisite for library professionals to enhance their ICT skills/ ICT knowledge and effective use of ICT-based resources services and tools.



Edonkumoh, Nwachukwu & Emmanuel (2015) stated that practical skills development in Library and Information Science is related to performing high powered tasks in other to master the arts and craft of the diverse areas of librarianship and information science. The students' internship programme in library and information science course is specially empathized in this paper .

Management of information is a basic business of a library professional. Information management skill is very much essential. Kayal, Bandopadhyay and Banerjee (2015) discussed that, the modern library and information skills play an important part in facilitating desktop delivery of information, and in managing mediated information services, their utilisation across the range of information within the organisation, increasing the value derived from their employment.

Kattimani and Naik (2013) made a study on both the Managerial and ICT Skills of the Library Professionals of the engineering college libraries in Karnataka. They emphasised on deputation of library staff for skill development and recommended to the management of the engineering colleges to depute their library professionals to suitable ICT-based training courses periodically, that is, at least once in 2 years.

Dasgupta (2009) discussed about higher education and the library schools in pre-independence and post-independence era in the Indian Universities. The current trends in LIS education in India specially how the application of IT has drastically changed the whole scenario of library and information science education in India is discussed. The problems of LIS education like non existence of accreditation bodies, insufficient faculty strength, and non updating curriculum are highlighted along with some solutions.

Mazumdar (2007) discussed about different skills required for the library professionals working in IT environment and also highlighted on different programmes to enhance these skills among the professionals.

Internship programme in LIS is one of the ways to develop skills among the LIS students. Devi & Singh (2006) discussed regarding the role of UGC in skill development of in the field of LIS. The authors emphasised on compulsory internship programme at all levels of LIS education.

Mahapatra (2006) discussed that to work in the network environment the library professionals should have the necessary skills like leadership; exploiting information handling; communication, crisis management, team building and decision making. Besides these skills the library professionals also should acquire the skills to work to use and handle the resources in digital environment.

From these literature, it is revealed that different types of skills are required for LIS students to prepare themselves a successful professional. In most of the literature, the training and internship programme are suggested for skill development.

### **3. Skill for Library Professional**

Library professionals should have the skill which is required for the basic activities of libraries like acquisition process, classification of documents, cataloguing process, preparation of index and abstract for users, preparation of bibliography, *etc.* Preservation of library materials is also another area whether the professionals need the minimum skill.

Some managerial skills like human resource management, financial management, time management, *etc.* are also vital for the library professionals for smooth running of library.

The whole scenario of library and information services have changed after the application of ICT in different areas of library like library automation, digitization of resources, creating and managing digital library, library security, use of social media, access and use of e-resources, preservation of e-resources, *etc.*

The library professionals have to communicate to the users about the resources and the services available so that the useful resources can fulfil their information need. Therefore, they should develop communication skill in traditional way and by using different tools using ICT.

For the skill development of the LIS students, some apex bodies in international as well as in national level have been involved.

#### **4. Skill development for LIS students: The IFLA Guideline**

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), a leading international professional body established in 1927, published a 'Guidelines for Professional Library/Information Educational Programs'. The latest edition of this publication was released in 2012 which was lastly revised in 22 September, 2015.

"The aim of these Guidelines is to provide library and information studies/science (LIS) schools around the world with a set of guiding principles of preferred practice to use when establishing and running their educational programmes." (IFLA, 2012)

In this latest Guideline, the skills for LIS students have been focused. In the Guideline, it is stated as "Methods of teaching and assessment should be designed to develop or enhance students' interpersonal communication skills, ability to work in teams, and time and task management skills. At

the professional level, emphasis should be placed on developing students' analytical and problem-solving skills." Moreover, this Guideline mentions the need of leadership skill of the Teaching and research staff also.

#### **5. UGC's approach toward Skill development for LIS students:**

In India, the University Grants Commission (UGC) which is the highest authority to regulate the higher education system has focussed on various facets to bring efficiency and excellence in higher educational system as a whole.

In the year 1957 'Ranganathan Committee on Development of University and College Libraries' was formed under the chairmanship of Dr. S R Ranganathan, the report of which was published in 1965. Again in early 60's UGC constituted a committee to review the standards of teaching and research in Indian Universities under the chairmanship of Dr. S R Ranganathan. This Committee submitted its report to the UGC in 1965 and the curriculum of most of the Indian Universities where Library Science education was prepared accordingly. In early 90's UGC constituted Curriculum Development Committee (CDC) under the chairmanship of Prof. P N Kaula to redesign the LIS curriculum in the Indian Universities. The report of Kaula committee was published in 1993 as Report of the Curriculum Development Committee on Library & Information Science. Due to rapid development in ICT sector and its application on the Library and Information Science UGC again formed another CDC under the chairmanship of Prof. C R Karisidappa, the Report of which was published in 2001. This Report stressed on inclusion of ICT in the LIS curriculum for skill development of the students.

The latest UGC guidelines on Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) has directed the higher educational institutions of India to give the option of selection of paper from elective or minor or soft skill courses from the prescribed course. This system gives flexibility to the students to select the courses of their choice and accept an interdisciplinary approach of learning.

On the basis of these guideline and recommendations of these bodies, two approaches have been proposed for the skill development of LIS students. The approaches *i.e.* interdisciplinary approach and inter-institutional approach may be the right way to build up skills among them.

#### 6. Skill development for LIS students: A Plan

To meet the challenges faced by the library professionals, the LIS students should have to be prepared in the areas where the basic skill is required which can be identified and included in LIS syllabus. As diverse skills are required by the LIS professionals, involvement of other departments and institutions may be a solution in this regard besides their parent department. Here, a plan has been proposed to train the students by interdisciplinary and inter institutional approach.

##### 6.1 Skill development for LIS students: An Interdisciplinary Approach

Interdisciplinary approach means the way to develop skill among the students by exchanging them with other teaching departments. The basic characteristics of this approach are:

- ❖ Regular course/ curriculum based;
- ❖ Regular students;
- ❖ Examination based;
- ❖ Long term programme;

- ❖ Interdepartmental in nature; and
- ❖ Theoretical/ Practical oriented.

For the LIS course, this Interdisciplinary approach is very much essential as the following technical and professional skills can be developed among the LIS students in the line of UGC proposed CBCS. This type of approach may help a student to serve any type of library.

**Table 1: Interdisciplinary Skill Development Programme**

SI N.	Technical skill/ Competency	Department
1	Budgetary	Economics
2	Conflict management	Business Administration
3	Copyright / Licensing	Law
4	Cost Effective Analysis	Commerce
5	Customer Relationship	Business Administration
6	Data Analysis & Statistical presentation	Statistics
7	ICT	Computer science
8	Interpersonal communication Skill	Business Administration
9	Leadership skill	Business Administration
10	Managerial skill	Business Administration
11	Marketing/ Advertising / Promotion	Commerce
12	Negotiation skill	Commerce
13	Preservation & Conservation	Archival studies
14	Soft skill	Mass Communication & Journalism
15	Stress management	Applied Psychology
16	Technical/ Report writing	Mass Communication & Journalism
17	User/ Behavioural study	Psychology

This above mentioned table shows the basic skill and competency required for the LIS professionals which are interdisciplinary in nature.

In Assam University, a central university of the state, there is a provision of an 'open paper' in the 3<sup>rd</sup> semester of master degree course, where a student from any department can choose a specific paper for the whole semester. The LIS students of the University mainly prefer to join in the departments like Mass Communication, Computer science, *etc.*

Gauhati University also introduces some value added courses from the academic session 2016-17 for the regular PG students. For example, the department of Economics announced the course on statistical software for data analysis and presentation. This type of course may be helpful for the LIS students for competency development in that area.

### 6.2 Skill development programme for LIS Students: An Inter Institutional Approach

Inter institutional approach supports the engagement of students of a particular institution in other institutions for learning the advancement of some core skills which are more practice oriented in nature. It is a form of exchange of students for a new learning experience in a new environment.

To give a practical exposure to the theories and practical learnt at the LIS academic departments, the students may be deputed to the different academic, public and the special libraries.

It is also important to train the student in different types of libraries and academic LIS department of other universities. The students may be allowed to visit the advanced libraries attached with different organizations in India to acquaint with the latest technology and the best practices adopted by them.

The basic characteristics of this approach are:

- ❖ Programme based;
- ❖ Regular/ passed out students;
- ❖ Practice based/ oriented; and
- ❖ Different learning environment.

Department of Library and Information Science, Gauhati University is organizing field studies for the MLISc 3<sup>rd</sup> Semester students to make them aware about the latest technology adopted and the best practices in selected libraries in the metropolitan cities in India. Moreover, the students are assigned to prepare a Job Diary, on the basis of their one week long working experiences in the selected libraries.

The following table shows some of the programmes which are inter institutional in nature.

**Table 2: Inter Institutional Skill Development Programme**

S1 No	Type	Types of Institution
1	Field studies	Academic library, Public library, Special library
2	Job Diary Preparation	Academic library, Public library, Special library
3	Internship/ Apprenticeship	Academic library, Public library, Special library/ Special Institution/ Research & Development Institution
4	Student exchange programme	Academic department (DLIS)
5	Summer School	Research & Development Institution/ Universities

## 7. Training for Library Professionals by Different Centres: Indian Scenario

In India, some organizations are working for the betterment of the professionals and the profession as a whole. These organizations are conducting different programmes in term of training, workshop, seminar, internship programme, etc.

INFLIBNET (Information and Library Network Centre) which is an Inter University Centre (IUC) of UGC is one of such organizations which involves in research and development in the core areas of LIS. It conducts training programme for the library professionals throughout the year. The training programme is related to library automation, digital library, bibliometrics, content management system, e-learning, e-resource management, research methodology and academic writing, etc.

NISCAIR (National Institute of Science Communication and Information Resources), New Delhi, another organization under Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India which is also conducting short term training programme for library professionals regularly. The course duration is five to seven days.. NISCAIR also provides on-site training programme according to client requirement subject to minimum and maximum participants 10 and 25 respectively.

DELNET (Developing Library Network) is a Delhi based library network is also involved in conducting tutorials, workshops, lectures, and training programmes every year for the library professionals.

National Research Laboratory for Conservation of Cultural Property, Lucknow which is under Ministry of Culture, Government of India also used to conduct training on preventive and curative preservation is conducted for professionals working in museums,

archives, are conducted regularly. The courses on conservation of cultural property, care of artefact, conservation of library materials are conducted for the fresher and the in-service personnel.

. National Library, Ministry of Culture, Government of India, Kolkata is conducting internship programme for the LIS students.

Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO), Ministry of Defence, Government of India, New Delhi is also organizing various seminars and workshops for library professionals. The objective of such programmes are to provide an interactive forum to discuss key skills and competencies for LIS professionals and helping them to get acquire the necessary tips and techniques to succeed in their professional life.

Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation (RRRLF) was established to support public library services and systems and promote public library movement in India. It is a central autonomous organization established and fully financed by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India. RRRLF also provides support in conducting seminars, conferences and workshops for library professionals.

## 8. Conclusion

Library and information science is an interdisciplinary subject in nature. The basic idea and concept of different disciplines are incorporated with this subject. Though application of computer science or ICT is one of the dominant areas in LIS, the importance of other subjects like management, commerce, economics, Law, psychology, *etc* cannot be ignored. The role of LIS Departments in India is very crucial in preparing the LIS graduates to sustain in the competitive environment. Unless we revise our curriculum and include the latest development,

it will be a tough time for the LIS graduates in the job market. The CBCS suggested by the UGC may be an option which we can introduce without much delay either by interdisciplinary or Interdepartmental approach. Different library associations like Indian Library Association (ILA), Indian Association of Special Libraries and Information Centre (IASLIC), Indian Association of Teachers of Library and Information Science (IATLIS) *etc* can take active role in skill development of the LIS graduates.

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