

DISTANCE EDUCATION IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE IN INDIA: CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD

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ABSTRACT: -

Library and information Science (LIS) education through distance education is offered by more than 30 distance education institutions. The programmes offered in LIS education through distance education have been successful in meeting out the demand of learners. The paper discusses the available opportunities in LIS distance education in the state of Rajasthan and proves that distance education is more attractive and preferred system in the state so far as the LIS education is concerned.

Knowledge and capable human resources are the force to propel socio-economic development in a country. Keeping this in view, India has set up a National Knowledge Commission (NKC) in the year 2005 under the chairmanship of Sam Pitroda, who brought telecommunication revolution in India. The NKC has made recommendations in several areas including higher education, libraries, and library and information science education. In the context of higher education, the NKC has focused its attention on expansion, excellence and inclusion. Consequently, the higher education in India is undergoing reforms, and is poised for enormous expansion; with the sole objective of making quality higher education accessible to more number of people. India has the largest pool of young people in the world. To leapfrog its all round development, India is making massive investments in education to convert its young population into globally competent human resource. The government of India intends to set up 1500 universities and a number of other world class institutions, network the existing universities and colleges, and provide a \$10 laptop to students in the near future. Such developments are likely to have a ripple effect on educational institutions in India and would usher an era of educational revolution. LIS education in India would also be influenced by the government policies and plans for expansion, inclusion and quality enhancement of higher education.

INTRODUCTION

Distance education or distance learning is the education of students who are not physically present at a school. Courses that are conducted partly through distance education and partly on-site are referred to as hybrid or blended education. Massive open online courses (MOOCs), offering large-scale interactive participation and open access through the World Wide Web or other network technologies, are recent developments in distance education. A number of other terms (distributed learning, e-learning, online learning, etc.) are used roughly synonymously with distance education. The modern use of electronic educational technology (also called e-learning) facilitates distance learning and independent learning by the extensive use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), replacing traditional content delivery by postal correspondence. Instruction can be synchronous and asynchronous online communication in an interactive learning environment or virtual communities, in lieu of a physical classroom. "The focus is shifted to the education transaction in the form of virtual community of learners sustainable across time."

One of the most significant issues encountered in the mainstream correspondence model of Distance Education is transactional distance. Transactional distance results from the lack of appropriate communication between learner and teacher. This gap has been observed to become wider if there is no communication

between the learner and teacher and has direct implications over the learning process and future endeavors in Distance Education. Distance Education providers began to introduce various strategies, techniques, and procedures to increase the amount of interaction between learner and teacher. These measures e.g. more frequent face-to-face tutorials, increased use of Information and Communication Technologies including teleconferencing and the Internet, were designed to close the gap in transactional distance.

LIST OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN INDIA

Library and information science (LIS) education in the country has a history of a century. LIS education in the country can be traced back to 1911 when W.A Borden initiated a training programme at Baroda to create a cadre of men to manage the libraries in the state library system. Thereafter, many associations, institutions/ libraries conducted training programmes for librarians. A regular certificate course was started by Madras Library Association (MALA) in 1929 which was taken up by the University of Madras in 1931 and continued on a regular basis. It was 1937, when at the initiative of S.R. Ranganathan University of Madras started one Post-graduate Diploma Course of one year duration replacing the certificate course. It was the beginning of the library and information science education at the University level. Thereafter, Banaras Hindu University and University of Bombay started Post-graduate

Diploma in 1942 and 1943, respectively. The University of Delhi started P.G. Diploma in Library Science in 1947 which was later upgraded to Master Degree in Library Science in 1949. Thereafter many Universities came forward to start library and information science courses of different level and the number of institutions and number of courses offered increased gradually. Presently about 150 universities/ associations/ institutions/ libraries are offering courses in library and information science of various levels from certificate level to doctoral level. Upto mid 1980s, LIS education expanded in India in the form of face-to-face stream, but new beginning in the form of correspondence course started taking place in library and information science. Establishment of Andhra Pradesh Open University (APOU) (in 1982) made an important stride forward in offering library and information science with the launch of BLIS course in 1984. Later IGNOU started BLIS in 1989 and MLIS in 1994. VMOU and many other open universities and distance education institutions in the country started courses in library and information science. In 2009(2), there were 33 LIS Schools conducting education through distance mode. 33 were running BLIS; 20 MLIS; 01 PGDLAN; 2 M.Phil; and 01 Ph.D.

LIBRARY SCIENCE COURSES THROUGH DISTANCE UNIVERSITIES.

- **Bharathiar University** offers Certificate
- **Guru Nanak Dev University** offers Diploma
- **Kakatiya University** offers Certificate
- **Krishna Kanta Handique State Open University** offers Diploma
- **Madurai Kamaraj University** offers Certificate
- **Manipal University** offers Certificate
- **Nalanda Open University** offers Certificate
- **Punjabi University** offers Diploma
- **Vardhaman Mahaveer Open University** offers Diploma, M.Phil and PhD

LIBRARY AUTOMATION AND NETWORKING COURSE IS OFFERED BY

- Alagappa University
- Annamalai University
- IGNOU
- Punjab University
- Sambalpur University
- University of Hyderabad

List of Some Distance learning Universities

Name of the University	Contact Details
Vardhaman Mahaveer Open University/Kota Open University	Rawatbhata RoadKota-324010 (Rajasthan) India Ph: 2470971 Fax: 2472525 Email: reg@vmou.ac.in Website: http://www.vmou.ac.in/
Bharathidasan University	Palkalaiperur, Tiruchirappall, Tamil Nadu, India. Ph: 91 431 2407092 Email: reg@bdu.ac.in Website: http://www.bdu.ac.in/
Nalanda Open University	2nd/3rd Floor, Biscomaun Bhawan, Gandhi Maidan, Patna 800 001 (BIHAR). Telephone: 0612-2201013, 0612-2206916 Fax: 0612-2201001 E-mail: nalopuni@sancharnet.in Website: www.nalandaopenuniversity.com
Barkatullah University	Barkatullah Vishwavidyalaya, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh (INDIA) Email: buregistrar@yahoo.co.in Website: http://www.bubhopal.nic.in/
Kurukshetra University	Haryana – 136119, India Ph: 01744-238518. Website: http://www.kuk.ac.in/
Punjabi University	Patiala – 147002, India Phone: +91-175-3046240 Email: ucc@pbi.ac.in Website: http://www.punjabiuniversity.ac.in/

ELIGIBILITY FOR THE COURSE: To apply for the correspondence diploma in Library & Information Science, the applicants have to pass their higher secondary examinations from a recognized board. However, some universities require the applicants to have a work experience of around 5 years in a library. Some institutes also conduct admission tests for the aspirants of this course.

Duration of the Course: Correspondence diploma in Library & Information Science

CONCLUSION

Distance education is gradually emerging as the most viable method of learning overcoming the problems faced in developing competent human resources to manage libraries and information centers in the fast changing environment. It is no longer looked upon as an alternate system of education meant for repairing the shortcoming of the conventional system at a particular stage of development. Distance education programmes with its quality of flexibility have great potentials to adapt to the changing needs of the information society. Through LIS Programmes, the University has been successful in meeting out its social responsibilities through opening up avenues for backward classes, working professionals, housewives, and rural masses.

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