

SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES FOR NEW GENERATION OF LIBRARY & INFORMATION SCIENCE PROFESSIONALS IN INDIA: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

Ramesh Salve*

Dr. Subhash P. Chavan **

***Officer on Special Duty,**
State Minister of Social
Justice and Special
Assistant,
Government of
Maharashtra,
Mumbai, Maharashtra,
India

**** University Librarian &
Head,**
SHPT School of Library
Science
SNDT Women’s
University,
Mumbai, Maharashtra,
India

Abstract: - *Innovations in technology & its subsequent adaptation to life style force the society to change gradually. Library as an information dispensing social institution has to cope with the changes in society. The quality of library services is always dependant on the professional & managerial competencies of the personnel working in the library. With so many technological innovations taking place around us, now it has become imperative for new generation library professional to adopt new skills or adapt existing skills & competencies in their subject fields to discharge their duties smoothly. This paper tries to determine the skills that are expected from modern LIS Professionals by the employers while recruiting library and information professionals. The paper focuses only on LIS job in India in recent post.*

Keywords: Skills & Competencies, LIS professionals, ICT skills, LIS qualification, Job advertisements analysis

QR Code



INTRODUCTION

Phenomenon growths in the field of Information & Communication Technology have brought a great change in the present society in general. Applications of ICT in divergent fields of life have changed even the life style of an

ordinary village man. The current spread of new technologies, especially the emergence of the Internet as a public network seems to bring radical change in the Knowledge society. It has opened up the fresh opportunities to widen and enhance the public knowledge. Simultaneously it has

caused problems to manage the scholarly content properly due to its diversity. Libraries being the store houses of information & knowledge have undergone a series of changes in modern age to cope with the changes in the knowledge society.

Libraries, across world have been trying to cope up with the paradigm shift from the printed era to the digital era. Present age seems to be a phase of transition where there is coexistence of print materials as well as digital information in the libraries. Librarians, being the information manager cannot stay aloof to such developments around them. It is expected that the librarians now have to acquire new skills & techniques to ensure the role of efficient manager in the ever changing information environment.

LIBRARY PHILOSOPHY IN THE CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

Libraries have been social organizations since the inception. The only agenda of these institutions for ages has been information storage & dissemination with a humane face. This situation changed due to exponential growth of research in science & technology especially in the field of ICT. The present day needs demand changes in the services of these information providing agencies. Whatever change Libraries adopt it should not abandon the human touch in pursuit of modernization. Change is inevitable. But the fundamental Philosophies, Principles, and Services of Libraries' should remain same. However new methods, ways and tools can be

supplemented or complemented to the existing mechanism to enhance quality of services.

Library Science as a subject of study is concerned about creation of trained manpower to manage different types of libraries. By principle it covers all the relevant topics that are essential for overall development of library professionals. Application of ICT has revolutionized the whole concept of libraries, its products, process & services. Therefore Library science as a subject must include the latest skills & techniques in own field as well as other related subjects in its purview. This approach has become essential for overall developments of the subject in the present age.

ROLES OF LIBRARIANS IN MODERN ERA

In a paper Erlendsdóttir (1998) wrote “We are no longer just the guardians of books. We are information providers in an environment that is constantly changing and where the information needs to be gathered quickly and effectively. Today, our mission is to promote services for the ever increasing amount of information. And even if we don't like it, information technology has changed our jobs.”

“ACRL Research Planning and Review Committee” enunciated 2010 Top Ten trends in Academic Libraries in their review of current literature. Though enunciated for Academic Libraries, these trends are applicable for all types of libraries & library professionals. Out of 10 trends I would like to bring forth the extract of following TWO trends.

“TECHNOLOGY WILL CONTINUE TO CHANGE SERVICES AND REQUIRED SKILLS.”

Cloud computing, augmented and virtual reality, discovery tools, open content, open source software, and new social networking tools are some of the most important technological changes affecting academic libraries. As with mobile applications, these developments will affect nearly all library operations. While social networking tools can help libraries go where their users are, many librarians see challenges in determining which tools to use, how many resources to devote, and how to assess effectiveness. Librarians also will be monitoring the success of open source integrated library systems software and the RDA: Resource Description and Access standard.

“CHANGES IN HIGHER EDUCATION WILL REQUIRE THAT LIBRARIANS POSSESS DIVERSE SKILL SETS.”

As technological changes continue to impact not only the way libraries are used but also the nature of collections, librarians need to broaden their portfolio of skills to provide services to users. Academic librarians will need ongoing formal training to continue in the profession. We may see an increasing number of non-MLS professionals in academic libraries with the skills needed to work in this changing environment. Graduate LIS programs and professional organizations will be challenged to provide new and relevant professional

development while individual librarians and their institutions will struggle to fund such development. The profession may need to consider whether the terminal degree required for librarians should be changed or broadened.

A recent OCLC report calls for academic libraries to “reassess all library job descriptions and qualifications to ensure that training and hiring encompass the skills, education, and experience needed to support new modes of research.”

From above it is apparent that the skill sets of librarians are changing or need to be changed for the betterment of library services in modern era. LIS professionals are the managers of libraries. The LIS professionals need to change their roles and have to add new techniques to cope with the need arising out of the rapid changes in IT & its applications to Library.

In this study we have tried to analyze the skill sets of librarians required by the employers when recruiting library and information professionals through job advertisements in India in recent times.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1) To study the LIS job Portals applying various study criteria .
- 2) To facilitate the LIS job Portals for LIS Professionals.
- 3) To analyze the trends of job opportunities for Library and Information Science Professionals on most diversified online environment.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The data were collected for National LIS job portals i.e. Infolibrarian.com and International LIS job Portals i.e. LIS jobs.com and GSLIS Gateway and the data were taken for study was from 1st January to 30th November 2016. The infolibrarian.com job Portal have major job sites i.e. naukri.com, timesjob.com, the Hindu Recruitment and Employment News. The study was selected only times job com from these 4 sites.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. In order to carry out the study, survey is made from various general job Portals like naukri.com. jobs.com. jobstreet.com etc.
2. The Infolibrarian.com. GSLIS Gateway and LISjobs.com were browsed everyday during the month of 1st January to 30th November 2016 as noted down the listing the jobs with advertisement data using Microsoft excel spreadsheet.

The jobs advertised in Infolibrarian.com, LISjobs.com. GSLIS Gateway were further analyzed on the basis of countrywide advertisement of jobs, designation wise, qualification skill required, experience and apply through online and same were reported in the subsequent section.

FINDINGS –

While analyzing the job advertisements it was found that most of the employers desire Librarians with professional experience. The experience can be of professional skills and or any such experience of using professional & technical skills related to LIS & allied subjects. In most of the advertisements, the desired experience is expressed in term of number of years of professional experiences.

Total of 845 Job advertisements were analyzed for this study. 42 numbers of different skills & attributes were identified from the essential qualifications, desired qualifications & personal attributes given in the advertisements. Though those skills & attributes are not mutually exclusive in nature, yet can be divided into 3 broad categories.

1. LIS Professional skills
2. Other Professional skills
3. Personal Attributes

1. **LIS PROFESSIONAL SKILLS/ KNOWLEDGE** – This category skill set includes traditional skills such as classification, cataloguing, indexing, user educations etc. This group also includes some other skills which are expected from a modern a librarian. From a practical point of view these skills librarians basically acquire during the academic curriculum or through professional experience.

1. Acquisitions, Cataloguing /Classification, Circulation Skills
2. Archives & Manuscript maintenance skills

3. Information retrieval skills
4. Library management skills
5. Collection Development skills
6. Library Automation software handling skills
7. User education and training skills
8. Knowledge on Applications of IT in the library
9. Understanding of Patrons & Publishers needs
10. Knowledge in Electronic resources management
11. Good knowledge of Current topics
12. Internet based Payment system
13. Published works related to LIS
14. Awareness of Law & Legislation

2. OTHER PROFESSIONAL SKILLS – The skills other than librarianship are grouped under this. These skills can be covered under 3 sub-categories

2.A. ICT SKILLS

1. Excellent computing skills (Programming skills)
2. Networking skills
3. Skill in Latest library Automation software
4. Setting up Digital Library
5. Web design and development skills
6. Specific computing skills

2.B. MANAGERIAL SKILLS

1. Team-working skills
2. Managing people/HR skills
3. General management skills
4. Marketing and promotion skills for library services
5. Financial and budgeting skills
6. Leadership skills

2.C. OTHER SKILLS

1. Written communication skills
2. Specific Subject knowledge
3. Excellent command over English
4. Knowledge in Foreign Languages

3. PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES –

Besides core LIS skills & other professional skills the employers also expect specific personal attributes in their librarians in modern time. These attributes are essential for librarian because he/ she has to act as facilitator/ intermediary agent for information transmission.

1. Interpersonal/communication skills
2. Enthusiasm
3. Professional approach/ commitment
4. Passion to chat with children (for Children Library)
5. Innovative/creative
6. Self-motivation
7. Flexibility (to work in shifts)
8. Self Disciplined (Expected to impose discipline)
9. Initiative

10. Independent minded
11. Work as a Team member
12. Keen to develop

OTHER OBSERVATIONS & THEIR IMPLICATIONS

1. The advertised posts were for different types of libraries with different designations. The designations include Librarian, Senior Librarian, Asst. Librarian, Deputy Librarian, Library Assistant, Professional Assistant, Library Information Assistant, Principal Library & Information Officer, Senior Library & Information Officer etc. Required and Desired Educational Qualification for the posts vary significantly. It includes degree with C.Lib, B.Lib, M.Lib., M.Phil. & Ph. D in LIS. Few posts also demanded SET, NET, PGDLAN qualifications.
2. It was observed that for same post (same Designation & Pay scale) different set of qualifications are desired by different employers. It indicates that no uniformity is maintained in the essential & desired qualification for LIS job.
3. The identification of 43 different requirements suggests that a wide variety of skills, qualities and attributes are expected from modern library and information professionals.
4. The analysis of the job advertisements revealed that –A Degree in LIS with few years of working experience- were found to be the most frequently advertised ones. One or

maximum two professional skills along with few personal attributes are desired by most of the employers.

5. The analysis also revealed that a combination of profession-related experience, higher professional qualifications, ICT skills related to LIS and interpersonal communication skills are the most in demand skill set amongst the employers. So this can be considered as “de facto” qualification/skill/ experience for LIS professional.
6. In most of the Govt. jobs minimum details of desired qualifications & skills were mentioned in the advertisements as compared to private sector jobs. It was observed that in almost all Govt. Libraries job advertisements professional experiences were given high priority. It was also observed that for higher posts same educational qualifications with higher working professional experiences were desired by the employers in Govt. jobs.
7. PGDLAN qualifications, Knowledge on latest Library Automation software and setting up Digital Library, as the desired qualifications, in some advertisements indicates that modern LIS professional need to know more than general computing skills in the years to come.
8. Development and management of digital collections skill is a new emerging skill required for present day librarians. It includes the setting up Digital Library, Management of electronic resources etc. It implies that the role of librarians is changing in this digital era.

9. Knowledge on specific subject (primary subject for the parent organization) is expected from librarians. A Medical librarian requires professional skills of librarianship but a sound knowledge on health subjects would be an added advantage. It helps in disseminating information properly.
10. The need for organizational skills underlines that a modern librarian should have the ability to manage and organize the library and its sections, personnel and projects.
11. The knowledge of Indian Languages like HINDI, SANSKRIT and other European languages are expected by few employers. It implies that knowledge of multiple languages would be an asset for modern LIS practitioners. .
12. Few advertisements require the skills that the librarian has developed for decades (e.g. experience in Colon Classification). This indicates that the knowledge and use of traditional library skills are still prevalent.

Skill Comparison with Developed countries counterparts

Just for the sake of comparison TWO sets of case studies in the developed countries are given below. The First one- A table of skills of Digital librarians. The second one – Actual Advertisement required by EBSCO; the leading digital Publisher / Aggregator.
Choi, Y. & Rasmussen, E. (2006) - *On Skill of future Digital Librarians*. The summary of the skill sets are as follows

I) Ranking of Skills and Knowledge of Digital Librarians on a 5 point Basis

Technology:	Library-related:	Others:
DL architecture and software (4.52)	The needs of users (4.42)	Communication and interpersonal skills (4.60)
Technical and quality standards (4.33)	Digital archiving and preservati on (4.52)	Project management/ leadership skills (4.56)
Web markup languages (4.04)	Catalogin g, Metadata (4.00)	Legal issues (3.90)
Database development & management systems (3.77)	Indexing (3.71)	Grant/proposal writing skills (3.88)
Web design skills (3.71)	Collectio n developm ent (2.75)	Teaching and group presentation skills (3.52)

II) Typical Job Advertisement for MLIS students at EBSCO Publishing
Calling MLISc candidates for the post of Bibliographic Database Designer

- **BASIC FUNCTION**
Create detailed specifications for

implementing bibliographic databases and associated features for EBSCO's online bibliographic products.

• **REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS**

- Minimum of two years in the field of librarianship or bibliographic database development or design, including demonstrated experience creating or manipulating bibliographic data in a searchable database environment
- Minimum of two years of demonstrated experience with web-based bibliographic database search and retrieval techniques
- Minimum of one year demonstrated experience with indexing methods as applied to bibliographic data
- Minimum of one year demonstrated understanding of MARC21 bibliographic format
- Minimum of one year demonstrated experience reading and understanding documents in XML format
- Minimum of one year demonstrated ability to balance multiple projects concurrently in a fast-paced, deadline-driven environment
- Master of Library Science Degree

Conclusion:-

The desired qualifications, skills and personal attribute of information professional changes not only due to the developments in

technology, it also goes along with the changes in organizational and administrative structure of information service providing agencies. But in general, the value of LIS professional skills, ICT skills & other personal attributes remain important to employers. They may be desire only one or two professional skills relevant to the post advertised, but it must be supported with several generic skills. The desired skill sets & qualifications for a modern Indian librarian are a mix of traditional librarianship and new ones which includes skills/ techniques borrowed from ICT and Management disciplines. But when it is compared with Developed countries counterparts, it can be clearly seen that the trend is more towards ICT & Management skill than traditional librarianship skills. If this is an indication of future then probably the most important aspect of professional development and advancement for any Indian modern librarian is the adaptation of new practices of ICT & Management skills & techniques.

Though not mentioned in the job requirements anywhere, but it is strongly felt that the social skills along with all professional skills are vital not only for professionals working in public library, but important for every modern LIS professional.

It is evident that the modern Library Professionals need to know something about everything. LIS education must include the latest skills & techniques in own field as well as other related subjects in its curriculum. Curricula must

be revised periodically to incorporate the latest trends. Even that may not sufficient. The motivation for Life Long Learning in acquiring new skills is the Mantra for a successful carrier in LIS in the modern era.

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