

CAREER OPPORTUNITY AND EMPLOYABILITY OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE PROFESSIONALS IN INDIA

Srabani Karak* (Corresponding Author)

Parnab Chatterjee**

*** Librarian**

Ramananda College,
Bishnupur, West Bengal,
India

**** Librarian**

Ramananda College,
Bishnupur, West Bengal,
India

QR Code



Abstract: - *The aim of this paper is to provide a glimpse of the present scenario of LIS education, career opportunity and employability of LIS professionals in India. This paper shows the level/category, functions, responsibilities and educational qualifications of lis professionals. This paper also discusses about the employability skills such as hard skills and soft skills. This paper finds out that the number of student is increasing per year but number of vacancies is decreasing per year. The universities/colleges/distance education centres are producing skilled unemployed students; they do nothing in the job market.*

Keywords: LIS education, Job opportunity, employability skills....

1. INTRODUCTION

Library science (or Library and Information science) is an interdisciplinary field that applies the practices, perspectives, and tools of management, information technology, education, and other areas to libraries; the collection, organization, preservation, and dissemination of information resources; and the political economy of information. In India, LIS profession is now a recognized professional education. Library education has reached its glorious existence of

100 years in the year 2011. In this course of time, the demand for qualified Library professionals is found to be in ascending graph and subsequently, the employment prospect. In this era of information highway, successful librarians have to deal with both print and electronic resources. The basic duties of the Librarians are to identify, select, organize and disseminate resource materials effectively to the user community. Bright future is ahead for the upcoming Librarians if they perceive and dedicate themselves in cultivating LIS. The qualified Library

professionals are employed not only in the libraries and information centers but also in other areas too. Print and Electronic media are the pivotal information source for the job-seekers. Print as well as electronic version of newspapers, journals and professional newsletters publish various vacancies.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Babu (2007) [1] in his study on — *Trends, Challenges and Future of Library and Information Science Education in India* found that the technological revolution paved the challenges for the library and information science (LIS) schools not only in India but also in the west. Responsibilities of LIS departments and teachers are increasing to produce best LIS professionals to lead the 21st century librarianship. The major responsibility of the LIS departments in India is to groom LIS students in the philosophy, knowledge, and professional values of librarianship, as practiced in libraries and in other contexts, and as guided by the vision of the 21st century librarianship. LIS education and training facilities in India are undergoing rapid changes. During the past 10 years, the number of library schools/departments has grown substantially, both for regular and distance education programmes. Reorientation has been common in most LIS departments and review and revision in curriculum has also been noticed. The quality of LIS educators has also improved and

research output is experiencing new dimensions. Increase in the use and access to information and communication technologies (ICT) for LIS education is now more evident. This paper discusses the challenges LIS education faces in the 21st century and how to make LIS education more relevant and effective. **Jeevan (2003) [4]** has undertaken a research on —*Job Prospects in Library & Information Science: A Study of Vacancies Notified in the Employment News from 1998 to 2001*. He consulted printed version of employment news to assess the job opportunities in Library and Information science profession. He presented the data gathered in 25 tables and analysed to reflect the major employers- the central/state govt. and/or its allied institutions and private sectors; nature of job whether permanent or temporary; reservation trends; essential and desirable qualifications; prior experience; and the prominent employers and categories of jobs etc. Assumptions are countered in his paper by making few suggestions regarding what is to be done by all concerned, be it the student, employer or professional bodies. **Joshi (2010) [5]** carried out a study on —*Library and Information Science Education in India: Some Government Initiatives and discussed the various initiatives taken by different Government Agencies like Radhakrishnan Commission; Kothari Commission; National Policy on Education-1968, 1986, 1992; National Knowledge Commission and functioning of institutions such as UGC, NAAC, DEC have influenced the entire higher education sector. Moreover, The Government of*

India has also taken keen interest in library matters through Advisory Committee for Libraries; Working Group of Planning Commission; National Policy on Library and Information System, etc. UGC has shown keen interest in LIS education through its various committees and subject panels. The Library Committee; Review Committee and the two CDCs constituted in 1990 and 2000 have been largely responsible for the present state of LIS education in India. **Kumar and Sharma (2010) [6]** present a historical perspective of Library and Information Science (LIS) education in India, and trace the growth and development of the subject. LIS education began under the patronage of the erstwhile Maharaja of Baroda when he invited an American librarian to set up public libraries in the state. After independence, Library Associations in the country continued with the efforts of developing LIS education in India. The discipline got recognition with the introduction of various courses at the university level. It has seen periods of growth and maturation. The recommendations of National Knowledge Commission provide an opportunity for reforms and changes in the educational system that needs to be grabbed. **Mahapatra (2006) [9]** in his paper —*LIS Education in India: Emerging Paradigms, Challenges and Propositions in the Digital Era* found that libraries all over the world are moving beyond the conventional framework and giving the footprints of radical changes in the skeletal concept of LIS profession. Thus he concluded that the librarians of 21st century have to prepare

themselves suitable for working in network environment and should also acquire necessary skills such as leadership; exploiting information handling; communication, crisis management, team building and decision making, etc. So, the library professionals are in dire need to acquire the relevant skills and expertise to track the world of information and become competent enough to serve in a digital culture. An attempt is made here to project issues related to the LIS education in India and suggests some proposals in this respect based on routine features and experiences. The study also proposes the core elements of the LIS curriculum and the vision of LIS education in India for coming decade. The paper also stresses the needs of revised course contents and allied challenges for readiness of Indian LIS education in digital era. **Sarkhel (2006) [12]** carried out a study on —Quality Assurance and Accreditation of LIS Education in Indian Universities: Issues and Perspectives which provides a brief overview of the present status and problems of Library and Information Science (LIS) education in Indian universities with an emphasis on the need for its internal quality assurance and accreditation by an external agency. The University Grants Commission's (UGC) efforts for the improvement of quality of LIS education have also been highlighted. A set of objective indicators has been developed on the basis of an understanding of the global developments in the activities and services of libraries and information centres, the national environment, the outcome of National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and the

observations and recommendations arising from different national level seminars and workshops to facilitate the assessment and accreditation of LIS education.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE WORK

- To identify the various levels of Job positions for LIS professionals.
- To identify the skills required for LIS Professionals.
- To examine whether LIS output is having parity with job market.

4. NUMBER OF UNIVERSITIES OFFERING LIS EDUCATION

- 126 Universities/Institutions are offering Bachelors degree.
- 90 are offering Master’s Degree.
- 16 are offering M.Phil degree.
- 59 are offering Ph.D degree.
- 31Universities are conducting courses though correspondence or distance mode.

5. OBJECTIVE OF LIS PROGRAM

- 1) To teach the students knowledge about basic principles and fundamentals of LIS;
- 2) To train the learners about various methodology and techniques of librarianship and information handling;

- 3) To make students understand the purpose and function of the Library/Information center in the changing scenario of the society;
- 4) To acquaint the learners of the application of different management techniques in managing the Information systems and services;
- 5) To familiarize the students with fundamentals and methodology of planning, designing and developing the Library and Information centers and their services at local, national, regional and global level;
- 6) To make the students aware of application of Information Technology/ICT to LIS;
- 7) To familiarize the learners about the basic knowledge of the quantitative and qualitative techniques in LIS such as statistical methods, quality management, Informetrics and Scientometrics etc.
- 8) To provide the students the basic knowledge of preservation and maintenance of the collections in Library/Information Centers, technical writings etc.

6. Level / Category, Functions, Responsibilities & Educational Qualifications of LIS Professionals

Level/ Category	Functions	Responsibilities	Educational Qualifications
Semi-Professional	To do routine jobs	To function	Certificate/ Diploma

Assistant/Technical Assistant	e.g. filing of cards & circulation work	as filing assistants, circulation assistants	in Library Science
Professional Level III/Professional Assistant	Routine/Operational technical work	To function in different sections of Lib & doc. Centres	BLIS
Professional Level II	Routine/Operational technical work, administrative at lower level	To function as sections in charge	MLIS
Professional Level I	Planning, designing, developing and managing library & Info. System	To hold positions as heads of division	Ph.D with Published work.
Senior Professional Level	Planning, designing, developing and managing Lib & Info Systems and , services	To hold positions as Chief Librarian/ Director in different types of libs, Info centres and doc centers	Same as above with difference in experience and publications etc.

CAREER IN LIS

Librarian ship as a profession provides a variety of employment opportunities. Today there are a number of career prospects in library and information science. The qualified professionals are employed in various libraries and information centers. Trained library professionals can find opportunities for employment both as teacher and

librarian. In fact it is possible to choose the kind of library to suit one’s interest and background.

7. JOB POSITION

- 1) In School, College, Universities.
- 2) In central Government Libraries.
- 3) In the training centers of Banks.
- 4) In National Museums and Archives.
- 5) In NGOs working in different areas.
- 6) In R & D Organizations.
- 7) In Business Houses.
- 8) In Foreign Embassies and High Commissions.
- 9) In Internationals centers.
- 10) In the Libraries of Ministries and other Government Departments.
- 11) In National level Documentation Centers.
- 12) In library networks.
- 13) In News Channels.
- 14) In the libraries of Radio Channels.
- 15) In the database provider Firms.
- 16) In Publishing Companies for preparing Index, Abstracts, bibliographies etc.
- 17) In various Digital Library Projects like Digital Library of India.
- 18) In Training Academies.

8. EMPLOYABILITY OF LIS STUDENTS

- Employability refers to a person’s capability of gaining initial employment, maintaining employment, and obtaining new employment if required.

- Employability is about being capable of getting and keeping fulfilling work.
- Employability is the capability to move self-sufficiently within the LIS job market to realise potential through sustainable employment.

For individuals, employability depends on the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) they possess, the way they use those KSAs and present them to employers, and the context (e.g. personal circumstances and job market environment) within which they seek work.

9. EMPLOYABILITY SKILL

Employability is confluence of several skills, abilities, knowledge, competencies and capabilities that enable individuals to get employment and be successful in their professional careers.

The difference between the skills needed on the job and those possessed by applicants, sometimes called the skills-gap, is of real concern to human resource managers and business owners looking to hire competent employees

Basic Academic Skills	Higher-Order Thinking Skills	Personal Qualities	
Reading	Learning	Responsible	Team Spirit
Writing	Reasoning	Self Confidence	Punctual and
Science	Thinking	Self Control	Efficient

	Creatively		
Math	Decisions Making	Social Skills	Self Directed
Oral	Problem Solving	Honest	Good Work
Communication		Have Integrity	Attitude
Listening		Adaptable and	Well Groomed
		Flexible	Cooperative
			Self Motivated
			Self Management

10. A) HARD SKILLS — MEANING

“Hard skills” are technical or administrative procedures related to an organization’s core business.

In LIS, “Hard skills” refer to the skills associated with multidimensional aptitude in the areas of technical work, administrative work and also in providing user oriented services. These skills are developed by the continuous applications and practice of the different domains of LIS.

Hard skills are specific, teachable abilities that may be required in a given context, such as a job or university application. Examples of hard skills include:

- Knowledge of book selection tools
- Knowledge of the methodology of studying subject and users
- Knowledge of different sources of information

- Proficiency with classification, cataloguing, abstracting, indexing, etc.
- Knowledge of the methodology of designing vocabulary control devices
- Knowledge about the system approach to library operation
- Proficiency with library software applications
- Working in network environment
Content development

10. B) SOFT SKILLS — MEANING

The cluster of personality traits, social graces, communication, language, personal habits friendliness, and optimism that characterize relationships with other people.

Good communication skills are typically connected to all areas of soft skills training, such as providing good customer service.

Soft skills (also called People skills) complement hard skills (part of a person’s IQ), which are the occupational requirements of a job and many other activities.

Importance

Soft skills are needed for everyday life as much as they’re needed for work.

They have to do with how people relate to each other: communicating, listening, engaging in dialogue, giving feedback, cooperating as a team member, solving problems, contributing in meetings and resolving conflict.

Leaders at all levels rely heavily on soft skills: setting an example, teambuilding, facilitating meetings, encouraging innovation, solving problems, making decisions, planning, delegating, observing, instructing, coaching, encouraging and motivating.

Soft skills play a vital role for professional success in LIS.

For young professionals having the soft skills would be added advantage if such skills are listed in CV and not doubt it will attract the prospective employers.

Soft Skills for LIS Professionals

For today’s librarians having professional degrees in LIS is not sufficient unlike in the past.

There is demand for librarians having multidimensional aptitude in the areas of technical work, administrative work and also in providing user oriented services along with soft skills.

Soft skills are required in day-to-day working for carrying out routine jobs more effectively.

Soft Skills constitute of communication in professional life, interpersonal skills, behavioural

skills with internal staff of the library and its users,, professional and social etiquette, service excellence, leadership, etc.

A technical skill in the LIS profession will find it difficult to communicate his knowledge base and ability with lack of soft skills. They have a significant role to play in the current Information environment.

Soft skills equipped LIS professionals turn out to be good relationship managers.

Following are soft skills required to become a successful library professionals:

- Communication skills
- Listening skill
- Interpersonal skills
- Negotiating skills
- Public relations
- Customer service
- Leadership skills & team work
- Writing skills
- Project management skills
- Presentation skills
- Teaching skills

11. DEVELOPMENT OF COMPETENCIES

The term ‘Competency’ is defined in various ways. A decade ago, competency was considered in terms of personal characteristics and was

judged in terms of character, virtue, innate abilities. In the present day, competence is considered more in terms of skill oriented behaviour and observable actions. Competency is defined by Council of Europe as “the set of knowledge and skills that enable an employee to orient easily in a working field and to solve problems that are linked with their professional role.

The traditional skills such as classification, cataloguing, indexing, user education are relevant and important even today, but the LIS professionals should acquire skills to deal with information in the new electronic and technological environment. In addition to the technical skills, librarians should also possess good interpersonal communication and management skills to become more effective managers. To fulfil the key information role, the new era librarians require professional as well as personal competencies.

Professional competencies relate to librarian’s knowledge of various information sources, technology, management and research and the ability to use these areas of knowledge for providing library and information services. Personal competencies represent a set of skills, attitudes and values that enable librarians to work efficiently; be good communicators, demonstrate the value-added nature and survive in the new world of work. The LIS educators have a greater

responsibility to incorporate these various competencies into the LIS curriculum.

In today's competitive world, the theoretical knowledge of academic subject is not enough for LIS graduate to survive. The graduates will have to develop competencies to meet the challenging

as well as changing needs of employers/users. They will have to improve their communication skills, problem solving attitude, good knowledge of IT, presentation skills, and will have to provide services to customers with motivation and commitment. These features will enhance their employability skills.

But the question is now arrives that can every student of LIS get job after passing out?

If we take into consideration the number of passing student per year, and the advertisement posted in Employment news per year, the answer will be 'no', because the number of passing student per year is nearly about 5000 (Quality Assurance and Accreditation of LIS Education in Indian Universities: Issues and Perspectives/Juran Krishna Sarkhel, 2010) and number of vacancies decreasing from 200 to 40, so there is a lot of discrimination.

If we take the statistics, the number of student is increasing per year but number of vacancies is decreasing per year. If we studying the intake capacity of universities/colleges/distance education centre the number is much higher than

vacancies posted in Employment news per year. The universities/colleges/distance education centers are producing skilled unemployed students; they do nothing in the job market.

12. FINDINGS

Now the question arrives, what is the need to tap more jobs in library front? The number of students acquiring LIS degree in a year either through regular or via distance mode is approximately 5000. The central Govt. and its ancillary institutions advertise about their positions in Employment News, and the average annual output of such positions roughly varies from 100-200. The exact number of job openings in the LIS field is difficult to collect in the existing circumstances due to non availability of information. If the employment exchanges disclose the number of library degree holders on their roster and our library schools keep live statistics of their students getting placed, only then the unemployment rate among library trained in the country could be assessed. It is a known fact that a considerable number among the library trained are unable to get suitable placements in a reasonable time, due to obvious disadvantages of weak input, existing infrastructure, prevalent curriculum and instruction methodology.

The objective of professional education is different from conventional University education and it has to be need based. If there is no demand of can professionals in a particular area and when

they cannot be accommodate for any related work, the best course of action on the part of Govt. is to prune such education activities or at least contain them to some extent. The reverse is happening on the library education front now. Without any major jump in the demand of library graduates, more university are starting library science courses, some are offering them on the distance mode. Perhaps the UGC through its curriculum development exercises would be able to refine the library courses so that new professionals will be instilled vital skill to perform well in the highly demanding emerging information work place. What is needed is a NCTE/AICTE type of regulatory body to control the existing and emerging institutions offering library science courses, which should essentially look up the number of seats, required infrastructure, and other related matters. Let us hope that the accreditation culture that is of late gaining importance in India may not accredit library course with doubtful motives, and put a brake on the new found interest to offer more library courses in the distance mode.

13. CONCLUSION

As library science is interdisciplinary in nature, chances exists for employment within or outside the profession like working as research assistants to scholars; with booksellers and publishers in locating books and information; preparing catalogues and bibliographies for wholesalers and publishers; preparing commercial indexing periodicals; and compilation of source

books. However it is a matter of concern that there will be not being success stories of library professionals in these areas. Schools affiliated to Central Education Boards have a full-fledged librarian, whereas most of the state government schools are managing their libraries on a part time basis with the help of a teacher of clerical staff.

The Industrial confederations have realized that in the liberalized economy, Indian industries have to be more competitive and better performing in the international market. So in industries there may be more recruitment for library professionals.

Most of the states and union territories have not so far enacted the library legislation to provide effective public library service to its people. Even in places where the public library act was passed, most of the public libraries are now operated either through voluntary service of people or through untrained and in experienced staff. The services of a professionally trained librarian for public library service could be explored and practiced in the right spirit in this country

There may be new job areas for library professionals as digital resource managers, digital right managers, content managers for website creation, internet enabled reference services, resource discovery managers to identify new products, processes or competitors, and etc. most of the LIS professionals have bachelors or masters

degree in other subjects, enabling them to look for avenues in interdisciplinary areas.

□ **Role of Students**

Before venturing any professional education, it is always better to collect statistics about the job prospects and unemployment rate in the field. Most of the career guidance magazines published such features. Understanding one's weakness and strength is the right point to choose a profession. Fresh students must closely observe and assess their suitability and drive to compete with more persons for fewer jobs before enrolling for any library science course.

□ **Role of library schools**

The curriculum needs constant updation to meet the challenges thrown by the emerging information set up where electronic processing is becoming more vital and relevant to effectively collect, process, organize and service the large chunk of information generated. A library professional should be trained on the utility of computers for diverse aspects of information work, and the training should encompass multiple skills desire to handle other jobs that may emerge in related environments.

In the era of automation of library and information activities, much is to be done on the training and requirement of library professionals for effective information work. The categorization

and recruitment formula followed for library staff should undergo appropriate changes to reflect the transition needed in accommodating the emerging information environment. There must be some sort of interaction between prospective employers and the library schools to attune the training programs with potential job skills. Also, there is an urgent need of some organization or a professional group to look into the characteristics of total and annual jobs in the library fields, and to study the emerging human resource trends and requirements. There is also a need for more studies on job opportunities in the profession by collecting data from regional as well as national newspapers and job portals. Only when result from such a large data set is available, conclusions can be drawn on the actual state of affairs regarding job opportunities in the library profession. Also needed is a study and assessment on the vacant position in different libraries that are not being filled-up for a long time for various reasons. This will eventually help the professional forums and authorities concerned to initiate action on recruitment drives to gather imminent new outlets for the professionally qualified. The result of more involved studies on the actual and advertised vacancies, and the rate of un/employment in the profession may further act as a word of caution for student enrolling in the professional courses in library and information science, since such courses are un/fortunately becoming very popular in the country.

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