CHANGING ROLE OF LIBRARY & INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS

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Introduction

Today the word "Library" itself is being replaced by the term "information center" and the world 'Librarian' is replaced by different terms.

UNESCO guidelines identifies these professionals as[20]

- Information Educator
- Information Researcher
- Information Manager
- Information Analyst
- Information Distributor.
- Information Scientist

It's interesting to observe how these phrases all refer to "Information" when referring to librarians. This is to emphasise that in the future, people will not be interested in digging through published volumes or papers to get knowledge; instead, they will want it to be readily available, ready, or in electronic form. A type of professional education known as library and information science provides students with both theoretical and practical instruction in methods of library organisation, management, and information retrieval.

It is vital to properly evaluate the quality, dependability, and effectiveness of the trained staff as well as the career prospects in the field

before allowing a professional education to operate. Information technology (IT) has since presented a challenge to this course's employment opportunities. Without a question, IT has increased the effectiveness and calibre of library services, attracting even more people to utilise libraries and information centres. However, the value of the skills necessary for conventional librarianship cannot be overlooked.

Due to institutions' liberty in developing curricula, as has already been said, library and information science education in India has recently grown in an unplanned manner. There are differences amongst the schools in terms of educational levels, course length, syllabus material, entrance and assessment standards, and nomenclature of the degrees/schools. The course material is the most crucial factor out of all of them. The researcher has noticed that although IT has been included into libraries as part of the course curriculum in the majority of library and information science education programmes, it still has a decorative appearance.

Most of the teaching departments in Library and Information Science are not able to provide advanced knowledge in the subject. As a result the library professionals find difficulties to manage IT oriented services in the libraries even after completion of the professional education.

According to Tagore, as cited by Patel, U.S & Pancholi S.H "The highest education is that which doesn't merely give us information but makes our life harmonious with all existence."

The features of library and information science suggest that it is a field of disciplines (LIS). Before becoming a scientific field, the issue first had a clinical approach. Later, it developed into a subject with a highly multidisciplinary approach, including a range of theories, philosophies, and practises from a number of other subjects. Applications of the issue under discussion may be found in numerous disciplines, including management science, psychology, statistics, linguistics, and computer and communication technology.

Ever Changing Profile of the Discipline:

All these factors have contributed to the emergence of new areas termed as; Information Science, Information Society and Information Technology, all emphasizing on the common denominator "Information" which has the reckoning of an economic power. Genesis of all these manifested transformation would be attributed to library science and Information Science, which has traditionally carried out the task of collection, and distribution of information held in by the printed documents. The time has changed and the emergence of electronic media have opened up new avenues, and have also made to rethink on manpower development programmes in this and other selected fields.

The schools of LIS education named so in their early infancy have attained the status of independent Departments, incidentally this has not only enhanced their status in the Universities, but has also given them the responsibilities to

prepare human resources for manning libraries in changing environments.

Library and Information professionals have to be educated and trained with a view to the required expectations of the information users. Application of computer and communication technologies to library and information work have opened up new vistas and it is essential to equip the teachers and the taught to the new environment, hence the responsibility of the independent department is very significant. The curriculum that is to be framed has to reflect these aspects in its content. Apart from enriching its content, it is also necessary to keep it flexible to match with the varying infrastructure facilities possessed by the departments. The present work is an attempt to evaluate the course content from this direction.

World Wide Scenario

There has been all-round development round the globe in terms of both library schools and their curriculum. This development is not mere an accident but it is the growing realization of importance of libraries and information centers and accessibility to information. The curriculum has undergone charges over the years depending upon the need of the day due to change in information needs of the users on one hand and information handling and management techniques on the other hand.

In the East Asia and Oceania Region – Japan and China are offering M.Lib. Science Course. There are two main providers of formal librarianship training in New Zealand. Although in New Zealand Library and Information Association has a continuing education officer who co-ordinates, organizes and publicizes other training courses, meetings and initiatives.

Many courses are also offered through distance education to facilitate working librarians and others. While Institutions in Australia are also offering LIS Courses. Education for the Library and Information sector in Australia is continually being improved and some innovative courses are being offered, with emphasis on the provision of continuing professional development courses and education for people in isolated areas of Australia. In the pacific two institutions offer education and training for LIS work – one each in Fiji and Papua New Guinea. The range of problem in the region related to education and training is rather wide. Non-standardized curricular offerings in training institutions leading to the uneven quality of graduates (Japan). The uneven quality of instruction provided by training institutions, and their pressing need for more financial support (China): the acute lack of training institutions and teachers (Papua New Guinea); and the need for more and better distance education programmes to train librarians in far flung areas. (New Zealand and Australia)

Western Europe, North America: - They are at the fore front of development in various spheres, in order to reflect the diversification of their LIS education approach like their course content with respect to the need of the hour arising from the

revolution of Information Technology (IT) occurring in an environment of severe economic constraint. If one have a look at the present scenario of the LIS in various countries of these developed regions, it is found that there has been a tremendous shift in LIS curriculum, thereby changing the nomenclature of the LIS schools as well. This is due to the fact that there is a shift from traditional course to more demand based on market-oriented courses. Although in many cases the changes in the curriculum is a blending of tradition at core programmes with new and emerging demand based programmes. LIS programmes are designed to prepare intellectually curious students for a wide spectrum of careers in all kinds of environments – information management, systems analysis and design, online searching, information brokers, artificial intelligence, research analysis, network management, database development, marketing and the like. The programmes also lay strong emphasis on the social/ behavioral dimensions of IT and also upon a good understanding of information technologies to meet the expectations of Library/ Information managers as well as the information seekers.

Most of the leading schools are taking care of inclusion of the new and upcoming areas with a strong favour for IT. The conventional library courses are also being blended with the demand based ones. The course contents are regularly modified to incorporate the latest and the best to suit the market demand.[23]

South Asia region displays a wide diversity in education and training. If the curriculum of India is compared with our Western counter parts by looking at the general trend of the areas they are covering.

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