

# In Side Out and Outside In: Future Legend of Library and Information Science

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**[Abstract:** The framework, “Inside Out and Outside In” has been applied in an attempt to reveal the prospects in the future forefront of the Library and Information Science (LIS) profession. Since the very concept of originating LIS is founded on the interdisciplinary edifice, the said analysis would be worthwhile to confirm the fulfillment of innate objectives and aspirations of the diversified stakeholders. There are several underlying issues for the aptness of the LIS with reference to curriculum, research, industry interaction, mobility of the researchers and so on, Out of these, the present article deals only with the curricular aspects and demeanor of research. Interestingly, during the past 49 years, the LIS, soaring at the dawn of its golden jubilee is all set to pose ever interesting propositions. An independent assessment therefore, is being made by the professionals within and at the peripheral of LIS. The present article is expected to reveal plausible transformations which craft the roadmap for the platinum era, conceivably possible by resonating around the academic and pedagogic world.]

**Keywords:** LIS Education, Inside out and Outside in

## 1. Introduction

In the scholastic world of Higher Education, few academic disciplines enjoy the privilege of being the core subjects while few others get deprived of such an ecstatic precedence. Such a scenario of small majorities Vs large minorities may be seen in many occurrences. Instances can be had from Science subjects such as Physics and Chemistry in Engineering faculty or the academic programmes like Electronic Science in the Science faculty. Though the imperative role these subjects are not denied and despite the fact that they have been playing a key role in their respective domain of knowledge; they are not been looked upon as the core discipline in the respective branch of the faculty. Unfortunately or

providentially Library and Information Science (LIS) a discipline which has been playing an pivotal role in the Social Sciences arena is hitherto struggling to prove itself as a purely academic discipline. Nevertheless taking this scenario as ‘blessings in disguise’ the LIS professionals have strived hard to establish themselves as a purely academic as well as one of the most promising upcoming and germane branch of the faculty of Social Sciences. The disciplines such as LIS have the inherent confrontations between the purely academic Vs applied ones; this is naturally due to the amalgamation of two subsistence kindling knowledge sub domains, viz. the practices of the Library and the rapid progress in Information Science.

In fact the basic doctrine of merging of the Library with Information Science can be traced way back in 1960s and 70s, when the University of Pittsburgh coined this term in 1964 and renamed its Library as Library and Information Science (Galvin, 1977). Later the suite was followed in 1980s and 90s by almost all the overseas institutes of higher learning without much speculating about the future influence of the Information Science on the core discipline, as it is being more of a Technology rather than science. However a mere assimilation of these two disciplines posed several issues which are questioning the cognitive and physical sense of this academic branch itself. Even amongst the LIS professionals there seems to be difference of opinion regarding this matter. For instance Michael Buckland (2004) opines that "Educational programs in library, information and documentation are concerned with what people know, are not limited to technology, and require wide-ranging expertise. They differ fundamentally and importantly from computer science programs and from the information systems programs found in business schools." Much earlier to this, Tefko Saracevic (1992) too argued that library science and information science are separate fields. Thus in the backdrop of the various issues and concerns posed by the LIS professionals as well as the other elite researchers from the Social Sciences faculty, LIS seems different for different people. Traditional professionals perceive LIS as the natural extension of the archeology or musicology. Social Science researchers view at it, as if it is an academic programme with ample practical skills but less scope for conduct of research. While the

librarians with the customary skill and handling the day to day public libraries prevent them in digesting the challenges posed by the Information Science and thus they try to be content alone with the traditional expertise. Thus the overall picture of LIS seems to be poles apart for different people from within the profession and some have yet gone to the extent of claiming that the field even has no theory of its own (Konrad, 2007). In a nutshell, the views or pretense from various walks of the academics exhibit LIS as more interdisciplinary than ‘much of the muchness’ pluridisciplinary, multidisciplinary or a transdisciplinary province which has had its impact on other disciplines, nonetheless the vice-versa needs to be reaffirmed.

In the above context an attempt is made at the present paper to put forth a realistic analysis as regards to the future of LIS profession by applying the “Inside Out and Outside In” framework. The leading motivations of the paper are the following visionary quotes which inspire the futuristic thinking:

“If things are changing faster Outside than in you will fail” - Steve Towers (Towers, 2013)

“We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them” Albert Einstein (BrainyQuotes, 2013)

As mooted in the opening paragraphs of this very section, LIS has emerged as a multidisciplinary domain of academic endeavor wherein the mobility of the knowledge in and out to various disciplines is expected to be at vigorous level. Obviously the range and heterogeneity of the stakeholders of LIS is also branching out and diversified so much so that the professionals are now invading the domains which were not thought of previously, such as industries, patent attorneys and intellectual property rights. Moreover in the milieu of the information and knowledge explosion the emblematic feature of the 21st century, it is worthwhile to evaluate whether the LIS profession responds really to the call of the stakeholders and the outside world- a feature that is changing at a brisk pace. The paper is structured on the following lines. At the outset, the basic notion of ‘Inside Out and Outside In’ (referred as IOOI hereafter) is put across, through the section immediately following the present

one. Thereafter the framework is applied to the curricular and research aspects pertaining to LIS. The waxing and waning of the LIS influenced by the extraneous academic disciplines and subsequent ever ascending expectations of the stakeholders forms the focal theme of the paper. The entire edifying deliberations, argument, debate and assessment entailed in the paper has been summarized in the concluding section that substantiating that the traditional Library Science blended with Information Science is not at all a semantic paradox.

## **2. The IOOI Framework**

The IOOI framework has been used at countless junctures for the organizational transformation in the backdrop of the 21st century prioritizing the customers. As pointed out by Hughes and Stricker (n.d), it is not the case that changes in organizational structure, systems, or processes are unimportant, it is that they are rarely sufficient. If true organizational transformation is needed, then complementary approaches are called for involving what might be described as both “outside-in” and “inside-out” efforts. Outside-in efforts are changes in structure, systems, and processes that essentially involve conforming behavior to new external (to the person) demands. Inside-out efforts, in contrast, involve changing values, assumptions, and beliefs about how best to achieve effective direction, alignment, and commitment throughout the organization. The IOOI strategy has been used in many industrial applications. Rob Tarkoff (2010) in his book ‘Strategy from Outside In, Profiting from Customer Value’, extends advice about utilizing customer insights to turn a company around. The premise is that consistently successful companies start with an external market orientation and vigilantly study customer trends in order to design their strategy.

An extensive literature survey nevertheless reveals application of IOOI framework in diversified domains. Wachtel and Paul (2009) illuminate how the “inner world” of wishes, fantasies, affects, and self- and object-representations and the “outer world” of overt behavior and social reality continuously and reciprocally co-create each other. Teo (2008) explores its applications for bridging the gap in literary education and Rothrock (2008) described its medical

applications. The present paper for the first time applies the IOOI framework for analyzing the futuristic trends in LIS.

### **3. Less is More and More is Less: Curricular Aspects**

Curriculum is believed to be the mirror of the aspirations of the world exterior the academics. In this context there is a immense debate as regards to the blending the LIS curriculum in view of the technological advances taking place all over the world (Lorring, 2007; Fónyad, Gerely, Cserneky, Molnár, & Matolcsy, 2010; MISA, 2013; Park, 2002; Pawley, 2006).

The rapid progress in the Information and Communication Technology [ICT] ushering the entire higher education arena has made the changes in the LIS curriculum obligatory; and many institutes of higher learning have seem to respond to this call. Same notion is being reflected in the UGC model curriculum of LIS [UGC, 2001], which however has been treated only as a sort of advisory by most of the institutes of higher learning. The main concern as one looks at the LIS curriculum from 'outside in' is the 'One Size Fits All' approach. This is naturally due to the fact that the students enrolling for the graduate and postgraduate degrees in LIS come from diverse academic backgrounds. However, when it comes to the placement, the professional world expects the students to have different skill sets. For instance a student intended to be placed in an institute with engineering background is anticipated to have the skills and techniques more prone for the Engineering professionals. Same is the case with the students being placed in the Law libraries or the Libraries of medical sciences. A few LIS departments send students for 15 or 30 days on job training to various libraries to make them understand practical librarianship in addition to some work assigned in university library where department exists before completing of their degree course. None-the-less unfortunately there is nothing like a finishing school kind of platform for training the passing out LIS graduates so as to acquaint them effectively with the work profile of the respective domains. This also leads to immense stress for the LIS graduates while preparing for the requirements and expectations of the workplace. There are also increasing owes regarding the soft skills

of the LIS graduates, the provision of which in the curriculum is need of an hour. Besides acquiring the vocabulary and terminology of the diversified and heterogeneous work profiles, the LIS graduates are expected to speak the language of the experts in the domain where they are placed and thus ensure the compatibility with the profession. However, when one looks at this from the 'inside-out' point of view there is altogether different scenario. Typically many of the LIS academic programmes suffer from the crunch of the expert faculty which is not unusual since other disciplines of the tertiary education also have the same scenario. Besides the yearning for different skill sets by diversified professions wherein the LIS graduates are likely to be placed are on the higher side, the same can't be simply fulfilled by the faculty not specialized in these domains. Nevertheless there are many possible solutions to address these problems as outlined below.

The problems pertaining to the inculcating the mixed skills sets to the students having diversified academic background in a typical LIS curriculum, can be addressed by effective implementation of the 'Choice Based Credit System' thereby ensuring the horizontal progression of the students. The LIS departments in the institutes of higher learning can collaborate with the other departments and offer programs jointly so as to strengthen the academic background of the students in the peripheral subjects. For instance the LIS students wannabe placed in the Medical Sciences can take up a two to three credit course from the Faculty of Biological Sciences which will help them to be more jobs ready. Similarly, all LIS students can take a credit course in 'English' language from the Faculty/ School of Languages to improve their linguistic skills. Further there is scope to add more electives pertaining to Information and Communication Technology [ICT] which will reinforce the overall skills of the graduates. In today's scenario even the much talked issues such as 'plagiarism' or 'information oligarchy' are not seen to find a place in the curriculum. In receipt of appropriate themes from other academic disciplines for the budding graduates, the profession will be enriched and the same is required to be placed on the immediate agenda of the institutes offering the LIS programs. A seemingly difficult quandary of getting the services of different domain experts for teaching the diversified subjects may perhaps be

sorted out by inviting them as an adjunct faculty. Thus the mantra of building stronger ties with other professions will certainly help the LIS growing, however still the same is pressing issue. Totting up, intensification of the laboratory component needs to be accentuated in order to ensure the hands on training which will help the graduates in long run in their profession. The help from practicing LIS professionals at this point may come handy owing to their vast experience in practical librarianship. The project component can also be innovated by deputing the students in the work domains where they are desirous of being placed.

#### **4. Research in LIS: cut off from the practitioners?**

Given the fact that LIS to the greater extent a laboratory oriented academic program in the Social Sciences faculty, it is worth meditative to establish its linkage with the practitioner community. McNicol (2003) has explored the interdisciplinary landscape of the LIS research which however yet to be explored in its fullest extent. Most of the LIS research at least in the Indian scenario seems to be highly survey oriented which is not a bloomy picture for an application oriented field. Further in addition to having the academic services orientation the LIS community should forge in the applied research by joining hands with the other academic domains. For instance the conception of 'Big data' arising out of the Web 2.0 can possibly tackled by synergizing the competencies of the LIS and Computer Science professionals. Yet another interesting area for the joint work could be data mining and communication protocol design as the protocols used in LIS such as Z39.50, OAI-PMH have come a long way and needs redesign in view of the unmanageable data required to be handled. Developments such as 'Kindle Books' and mobile laboratories have opened additional vistas for the LIS professionals with other disciplines such as Electronics and Telecommunication Engineering. Even the patterns of interaction and the communication flow over the social networking tools such as Facebook, Twitter may possibly throw some light on the knowledge reuse issues. The challenges arising out of the under Gross Enrollment Ratio and Distance Education can only be addressed by well thought of research by the LIS professionals. Even the upcoming MOOCs have posed altogether different challenges and

opportunities for the LIS which are discussed in depth by the authors elsewhere (Kamat et al, 2013).

#### **5. Epilogue**

Since conceiving the conception of LIS exactly 49 years back by the University of Pittsburgh in 1964, the professionals within are striving their best and have proved themselves indisputably for the benefit of other disciplines. As far as the global LIS 'Hall of Fame' is concerned a professional of Indian origin like late Dr S.R. Rangnathan stands tall with his uniqueness and inventiveness. It has been unarguable that both the professionals within and outside have had a mammoth impact on this profession which has taken it to the greater strides. Though there are many dimensions of the LIS which needs to be analyzed in light of its subsistence over the past half of the century, the article has taken into account only curricular and research aspects - both being the most fundamental and vital. Rest of the issues is dealt separately in their other articles (Kamat, Pujar & Bansode, 2013). The analysis is clearly indicative of the fact that no doubt the last 50 years were golden but next half century could be surely platinum, provided the LIS community foresees, brainstorm and adopts the "In Side Out and Outside In" modus operandi to pave its path while marching towards the platinum era.

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