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Library and Information Science Courses in India: Issues and Suggestions

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Abstract

Library and information science courses are professional and job oriented. Due to this, these courses are much popular in India and neighbored developing countries. This paper discussed the various library and information science courses offered by different institutes in India. The paper also highlighted some core issues related to library and information science education with some vital suggestion. The paper is comprehensive sketch of library and information science education in India.

Keywords: Library, Information Science, Education, Courses, India

Libraries are metaphor of the memory of mankind to preserve the past, serve the present and build the future of nations. Libraries, indeed, are critical link between our sure past and uncertain future. Therefore, there should be zero tolerance as far as the excellence of library and information science (LIS) education and quality of library and information resources and services is concerned. The heart of the matter is that LIS courses must be consistent with the existing and emerging needs of the job market. Otherwise we are going to suffer the destiny of dinosaurs. If we want to reborn time and again like a phoenix, then we will have to learn to change with the changing times. But this does not mean that we must forget our moorings. Therefore, it is high time to make analysis of the changing context and fine-tune the LIS Courses accordingly. We have no choice but to make the LIS courses consistent with the job market

History of LIS Education

LIS education in India has come a long way since W. Borden initiated training in 1911 at Baroda. The pioneer step was followed by Asa Don Dickenson, who started such training programme at Panjab University, Lahore in 1915. Then Dr. S. R. Ranganathan contributed for the upliftment of LIS education and profession in India. By the time India got independent, only six departments offered Diploma courses in library science. Presently there are more than 300 institutes providing various LIS courses.

Existing Courses of LIS

Certificate Course in Library Science

There is a provision of One Year Course in several institutes. The candidates can join this course after matriculation; however 10+2 is also considered as the minimum eligibility in some other institutions. There

are some institutes, which acknowledge the One Year Course as a Diploma in Library Science (D. Lib.) The course provides a brief overview of the subject.

Diploma in Library Science

It is a 3 Year diploma course which is generally initiated by the polytechnic colleges. Matriculation is the minimum eligibility criteria to join the course. The course provides an in-depth theoretical knowledge about the subject, which is further followed by an interim training.

B. Lib. / BLIS

It is a one year bachelor degree course, which provides the knowledge of the basic skills of the subject. Graduation in any trait is the eligibility criteria to join this course. Traditionally, it has been recognized as Bachelor of Library Science; however some universities have added some relevant amount of Information Science in its curriculum, and have designated it as Bachelor of Library and Information Science.

M. Lib. / MLIS

It is a one year Masters level course after B. Lib. or BLIS. The course endow with the knowledge of advance skills and techniques of the subject. The course has been named Masters of Library Science. But, the institutes, which provide the information of significant amount of Information Science in its syllabus, designate the course as Masters of Library and Information Science.

M. Sc. / MLIS (Integrated)

It is a two years integrated course after graduation. There are some institutes which have unified both Bachelor level and Masters level degree courses of Library and Information Science into one integrated course. Some institutes recognize it as Masters in Library Science, on the

other hand, the institutes, which offer the knowledge of relevant amount of Information Science, have designated it as Masters of Library and Information Science.

M. Phil (LIS)

It is a one or one and half year research oriented course after MLISc. Theoretical and practical aspects and techniques of the research are trained to the students.

Ph. D.

It is full fledge research work, which enhances the skills of the researchers to analyse any issue related with the subject empirically and give all suitable findings and solutions.

PGDLAN

It is a one-year Post Graduate Diploma course in Library Automation and Networking. It develops the advance and scientific skills to use the computer applications in routine house-keeping operations of Library.

Besides these courses, some other courses like Digital library, Intellectual Property Right (IPR), etc. are also available which are relevant to the profession of Library and Information Science.

Core Issues

Awareness

There is a huge dearth of knowledge among the common masses regarding the education and profession in library and information. Therefore, a campaign should be launched to inform the people about the implications and advantages of joining the subject as a profession.

Advertisement

There should be a proper advertisement regarding the general information, admission schedule, duration and procedure of the relevant courses. The advance advertisement methods like, websites, e-mails, mobile SMS, etc. should be used for disseminating accurate and fast information. However, the traditional methods of circulating information, if used in the remote areas can be more effective.

Fee concession and Scholarships

More than 260 million people in India have been living Below Poverty Line (BPL). The majority of middle class has not been in the condition to bear the bulk of fees charges. Therefore, it is necessary to reduce the fee amount of the courses to facilitate the poor and lower middle class.

Placement

More job opportunities should be created to encourage the students towards the profession. Permanent placement cells should be available in the teaching departments to develop the interview skills, communication skills and to provide guidance regarding post-recruitment issues.

There is huge need to motivate the students towards unexplored markets, where the skills and training of students can be utilized in best manner. They should be made aware about creating new software, should be guided to get expertise in publishing, record management in offices and jobs in archives, museums and art galleries. The students can be appreciated to be self-entrepreneurs also.

Status

At present the library officials do not possess the expected and deserved status. Their administrative authorities as well as the laymen do not acknowledge the expected dignity of the library staff. Although,

the rule making authorities including UGC, AICTE, NCERT, MHRD etc. have recognized the various ranks and posts of library staff as equal to other prestigious professions. But in reality, the concerned administrative authorities do not consider the same and acknowledge the library staff including the librarian, as the surplus staff without much work and hence, try to indulge them into other irrelevant assignments. It is sturdily required to improve the status and dignity of the library staff and officials by changing the mind-set of the concerned people and by amending the traditional pattern of the role and status of the library staff, which is centuries old.

Remuneration

It has been observed that the present status of the remuneration, incentives and salaries has not been much encouraging for the library profession. However, the governmental as well as the semi-government institutes provide the same amount of salaries as decided by the rule making authorities. But in private institutes, the miserable condition has been found, as far as the salaries and other incentives of the library staff are concerned. The library professionals are not provided proper salaries and are helpless enough to negotiate their salaries. There is a need of an immediate action plan to provide the deserved and legally sanctioned salaries and other inducements to the library professionals.

MOU with other countries universities

Due to the globalization and universalization of education in the global era, no institute can isolate itself from the modes and patterns followed by other institutes at international level. It is therefore required that Indian institutes should proceed towards establishing MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) with the institutes of other countries, so that the recourses, technology, methods, faculty and students should be exchanged by the institutes with each other. It will help the students

in getting the education and training of international standards and compete with the students of other countries. It will further help the institutes to adopt the internationally acknowledged curriculum, faculty and methods while disseminating the relevant education.

Suggestions

Revamp the LIS education

There is a huge margin of reforms and amendments in the present scenario of the education in LIS. A nationwide uniform pattern of courses, with same recognition, scope and curriculum should be adopted. The subject should be introduced at graduation level and a B.Tech of LIS course should be launched. The students, who have completed Three Year Diploma in Library Science, should be given a direct and an elite entry in the second year of B.Tech. (LIS), similar to other B.Tech courses. Furthermore, M.Tech courses should be introduced in the universities and other institutes to provide the advance skills to the professionals to develop digital library systems. University of Mysore has already started M. Tech. course, which is a pioneer and an admirable step in this regard.

Regularly updated curriculum

Due to the impact of globalization of education and use of advance technology in various fields, it is strongly required to amend the syllabus of LIS consistently to meet with the demands of the field and to combat with the international standards. The advance topics relevant to the study, which have emerged globally as the worthy tools of efficient working, should be introduced for the learners. The traditional papers like classification, cataloguing, reference service, etc. need to be retooled. The curricula must be consistent with job market.

Accreditation

To achieve academic excellence and marketability of the LIS course, it is of utmost importance that standards and norms for LIS education should be set by an external agency and these after adherence to them should be made mandatory. One of the major inputs are received from the NKC is that these should be accrediting body for LIS courses. The Govt. of India should pass an act for the establishment of external accrediting agency in the line of bar council of India, AICTE, and Nursing Council of India. Indian Association of Teachers of Library and Information Science (IATLIS) or other library association should be associated with this process.

Infrastructure

The institutes which are involved teaching LIS should possess all infrastructures necessary for an advance and ideal teaching. The institutes should be equipped with technical literature, machines and tools.

Library Legislation

There are several legislations passed by the legislatures of various states to enhance the number and status of libraries. But unfortunately there is huge dearth of proper implementation of these legislations. It is thus prerequisite to take initiatives for the proper implementation of these legislations. Moreover, both the central and state governments should make sincere efforts to improve the condition of library and information science education and the libraries.

Practical training

It has been observed that more stress has been given on the theoretical education, rather than developing the practical skills. It is therefore, required to put more emphasis on the practical training along with theoretical education. Because LIS is a professional and technical

course which can be better grasped through practical training. The curriculum and the method of the study should be made more pragmatic by abandoning the traditional pattern and adopting the advance and modern prototype.

Merge the Associations

It has been found that several associations and organizations have emerged in India since long time for the mission of uplifting and developing the LIS education. But unfortunately, these agencies have not yet able to achieve the goals, they have assumed. The root cause of the feeble performance of these agencies is that they do not have any integrity and harmony with each other. All agencies have been working individually and separately, which has made weaken the movement of the development of the LIS education. Hence, it is the need of the hour that all associations and organizations, working for the same cause, should come at a common platform and an integrated and uniform pattern of working should be adopted by them under the banner of a unified association for the LIS education.

Teaching-Learning style

It has been the root-cause limitation of LIS education in India that the education pattern has not changed with the changing circumstances and needs. Still the traditional and one-way educational methods are in practice in the country. There is a burning need of adopting advance, scientific and up-to-date methods such as 'Resource Based Student-Centered Learning' to combat and complement with the changing scenario.

Conclusion

It is high time that we take cognizance of the significance of the situation and take remedial decisions. There should be no compromise on the

quality faculty. Student evaluation of faculty must be encouraged to keep the faculty agile. LIS courses must be based upon the leading edge, feedback from the alumni, and needs of the existing and emerging job markets. The cutting edge concepts, such as knowledge management, knowledge organization, information literacy, open source software, institutional resources, change management, time management, mind management, stress management and evaluation of web based resources and services must be included in the LIS courses. Students must be trained in online searching, information literacy, interpersonal skills, research skills, communication skills and leadership competencies. Concerted efforts are needed to ensure excellence in LIS Courses and also to develop collaboration among developed and developing countries of the world. There must be fair balance between the relics and harbingers of the LIS education. The LIS courses must be regularly fine tuned with the changing times and the LIS students must be equipped with the employable skills. That is the only way to make LIS courses consistent with the existing and emerging job market and develop confidence among the budding LIS professionals.

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