LIS Education and Research in India: Some issues from the practitioners' perspective

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Introduction

- Formal library training **completes 100 years** (2011)

- Last half a century had **unchecked growth**

- Most of today's librarians have started their **career as library professionals** (not converted or migrated)

- LIS professionals are **VCs, Registrars and Directors** of national centers

Why status is perceived so low ?

- In a study of prestige hierarchy, Library Scientist stood at 22nd rank after Ayurveda, Secretary and Accounts Clerk

- The only occupations ranking after library scientist are Artisan, Chef, Cook, Farmer, Shop keeper and Carpenter

- Mean ratings of (i) Prestige, (ii) Interest and (iii) Parental Approval respectively are 2.34, 2.01 and 2.37

Is identity crises (extinction threat) real?

1. Assumed that ICT is causing
2. Are functions and missions being successfully taken over by new substituting agencies?
3. Is there migration of people (users and professionals) away from the profession?

OR is it a creation of those who talk about IT among LIS and LIS among IT?

- 'L*ife is not about limitations, but about options'*
- Exploring other options and diversification is natural process
- No one aspired to become librarian from childhood

Repositioning options explored within ICT

1. *Invisible Intermediary*
2. *Pro-active Librarian*
3. *Embedded Librarian*
4. *Aligning with Information provider*

➢ With no added value become change of nomenclature

➢ Less explored better non-IT options: Archivist, Museum Curator, Historian, Publishing Industry, etc.

Example of Library of Birmingham

- a huge mall-like marvelous building
- a cultural centre
- a tourist place
- a combination of library, museum and archive

Imagine Karnataka State Public Library having

- Planetarium
- Science Museum
- Kaveri Craft Emporium
- Digital Auditorium (Balbhavan)

- Coffee house
- Local History Library (similar to Mythic Society Library)
- State Archive
- Film Archive
- Art Gallery
- Museum of Literary Giants

Ground truth about the status

- Libraries are used by a minority
- Individual priorities have changed drastically
- Libraries are non-esoteric and non-essential
- Ask some one to rank Canteen, Transport, Accounts and Library of your Institute and see
  - ➢ The Non-users group is too large
  - ➢ Whether libraries are required or not – let real users answer (not the non-users)
  - ➢ Status-ranking may improve if only users rate

Non-users/ population detached from libraries in US (2012)

- 20% never saw a family member using a library when they were growing up

- 16% have never visited a library

- 23% didn't read a book for last 12 months

  (Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project)

➢ **In India**, nonmembers of public libraries may be as high as 98%

Successful non-IT repositioning !

- "Library Usage Soars as Libraries Get Madly Innovative" (New York Times, March 8, 2014)
- Physical visits increased from 500,000 in 2012 to 1.72 million in 2013 in Boston Public Library

Reasons:

➢ Very inviting and innovative ways that go beyond digital

➢ Spaces designed to create more room for collaborative and creative intellectual activity

➢ Libraries made more attractive and "sticky" community centers

The 'mad innovativeness' is Non-ICT!

➢ Lending musical instruments (Washington State's Lopez Island Library)

➢ Patrons interested in organic gardening can borrow plots of land (The Library Farm in Cicero, New York)

➢ Seeds distribution in Public Libraries

➢ Free "Maker Lab" with 3-D printers, laser cutters, and milling machines (The Chicago Public Library)

LIS Education – a synoptic view

- **Input** – number, admission criteria – aptitude, normalisation
- **Training** – Faculty, curriculum, duration, practical, apprenticeship
- **Output/ Evaluation** – pass percentage, grading, problems of normalisation
- **Knowledge and skills** imparted
- **Values** imbibed
- **Aptitude and attitude** developed and nurtured

Hierarchy of courses Offered

1. *Certificate*
2. *Undergraduate Diploma*
3. PG Diploma
4. BLIS
5. MLIS (one-year)
6. MLIS (Integrated two-year)
7. Associateship (DRTC & INSDOC now NISCAIR) and Advanced Training Course in Information Systems Management and Technology (NCSI)
8. Post Graduate Diploma in Library Automation and Networking (PGDLAN) of IGNOU & Post Graduate Diploma in Manuscriptology (PGDM) of BHU
9. M. Phil.
10. Ph.D.

LIS Schools in India

- 146 library schools (UGC recognized) offer
  - ➢ Bachelor's degree, by 120
  - ➢ Master's degree, by 101
  - ➢ M Phil, by 17
  - ➢ Ph D degree, by 95
  - ➢ Distance education/ correspondence, by 27
  - **+** Diploma courses, by 37
    - Certificate courses, by 69

Variety of Master's degrees (from 92 Library Schools)

➤ 70 offer one-year MLIS

➤ 15 offer two-year integrated MLIS

➤ 2 offer two-year MSc in IS

➤ 1 offers two-year Master of Information Science (MISc)

➤ 2 offer Associate ship in Information Science (AISc)

➤ 1 offer two-year MIM (Master of Information Management)

Distance education

- 27 schools with unlimited intake
- Liberal evaluation - too good grading/ percentage of questionable quality/ caliber

  Justification: Societal obligation of providing opportunity for higher education to everyone

- E-learning widely discussed but yet to be evolved

➢ Should professional courses be out of distance education?

LIS education insensitive to market needs

- Hierarchy of courses has no target market
- No assessment of quality and quantity required
- No norms for intake capacity of schools
- Selection is based on any combination of merit, entrance test and interview, but **not on aptitude**
➢ 277 posts were advertised as against 1574 passed out during 2011– hardly 20% can get job

Every year 17 schools produce over 800 graduates

BLIS	786
MLIS	724
M Phil/ PhD	64
TOTAL	*1574*

Recruitment issues/ dilemmas

- Normalising across schools due to wide variation in grading/ marks
- Certificate/ Diploma holder to Doctorates apply for even to lowest level opening
- Appropriately placing specialized with electives and doctorates difficult
- Those with vernacular language as medium of instruction and as specialisation have limited scope
- ➢Unemployment, under-employment, and inappropriate employment is rampant

Variety of Electives/ Specialisations leading to inappropriate placement

➢Information Sources and Systems in Natural Sciences/ Social Sciences/ Arts and Humanities

➢Health/ Agricultural Sciences, etc. LIS

➢Engineering and Technological Library

➢Planning and Management of Academic/ National/ Public/ Special Library System

➢Bibliography, Literature & Organization of Publications in Punjabi **Language**

Compare with electives taught in UK

- Electronic publishing
- Historical bibliography
- Manuscript studies
- Publishing today
- Records management
- Archives and Records Management
- Business Intelligence
- Audiences and Marketing
- Information Architecture
- Digital Age/Cultures

Poor Quality of LIS Education

- Generally poor and far from satisfactory
- Aptitude & attitude are not inculcated and nurtured
- Core skills are neglected
- Lack values
- Excited with ICT Knowledge without matching skills
- Internship is name-sake
- International standard is far away; Global market is out of reach

Justification:

- Education is less bothered about aptitude than placement
- Aim is to provide opportunity for higher education and research to as many people as possible

Core skills constitutes prfesionalism

- *LIS is Multidisciplinary* with wide variety of subjects

- Where the boundary of other subjects begin and where they should end?

- Traditional core skills are substantially replaced by ICT and management science

- Archivist, Curatorship, Historian and Content creator/ Publisher are closer to LIS: they deserve to be auxiliary subjects and are suitable for repositioning the profession

Core Values (ALA)

Essential set of core values that define, inform, and guide our professional practice

- Access
- Confidentiality/Privacy
- Democracy
- Diversity
- Education and Lifelong Learning
- Intellectual Freedom
- Preservation
- The Public Good
- Professionalism
- Service
- Social Responsibility

Grand Curriculum is an achievement !

- Plenty of studies/ research on 'LIS Education'
- Compare and evaluate curriculums, but not the process and products
- Frequent changes without consideration to practicality of training and implementation
- More imitated than based on local need and indigenous thought and input
- Curriculum must have more of basic issues, theories and techniques of common library practices
- We cannot ignore labour intensive mundane functions and services, probably till robots arrive and replace!

Hyped / lopsided emphasis on ICT

- LIS education is not all about ICT
- Despite better knowledge of ICT, LIS took decades to computerise as against Banks with less knowledge did in record time
- Core/ foundation subjects are curtailed to accommodate ICT and management
- Topical technology themes come to fore front and vanish: dBase, CDS ISIS, XML, Google, Consortia, Library 2.0, Data mining, Big data, Net neutrality, Mobile apps, etc.
- Are they related to LIS? and How closely?
- Traditional subjects like physical bibliography, physical planning of library, etc dropped/ ignored

Will iSchools replace library schools?

- Specific programs focused on information technology, library science, informatics, information science, etc.

- Share a fundamental interest in the relationships between information, people, and technology [so is LIS]

- Interdisciplinary approach to harness the power of information and technology [so is LIS]

➢ *Or yet another nomenclature?*

Plenty of non-professionals thrive

- New generation non-professionals – a photographer-librarian in a national institute!
- Probably not so successful / productive in their own profession
- Library committees and its chair-persons are already pseudo experts
- May feel degradation, deterioration and demoralization
- This is an indirect challenge to the value addition of LIS education and question the need for prolonged specialised course
- De-emphasising basic subjects of LIS and glorifying ICT and management in LIS education indirectly encourages

Lack two-way permeability between Theory and Practice

Theory

Practice

Research & Evaluation
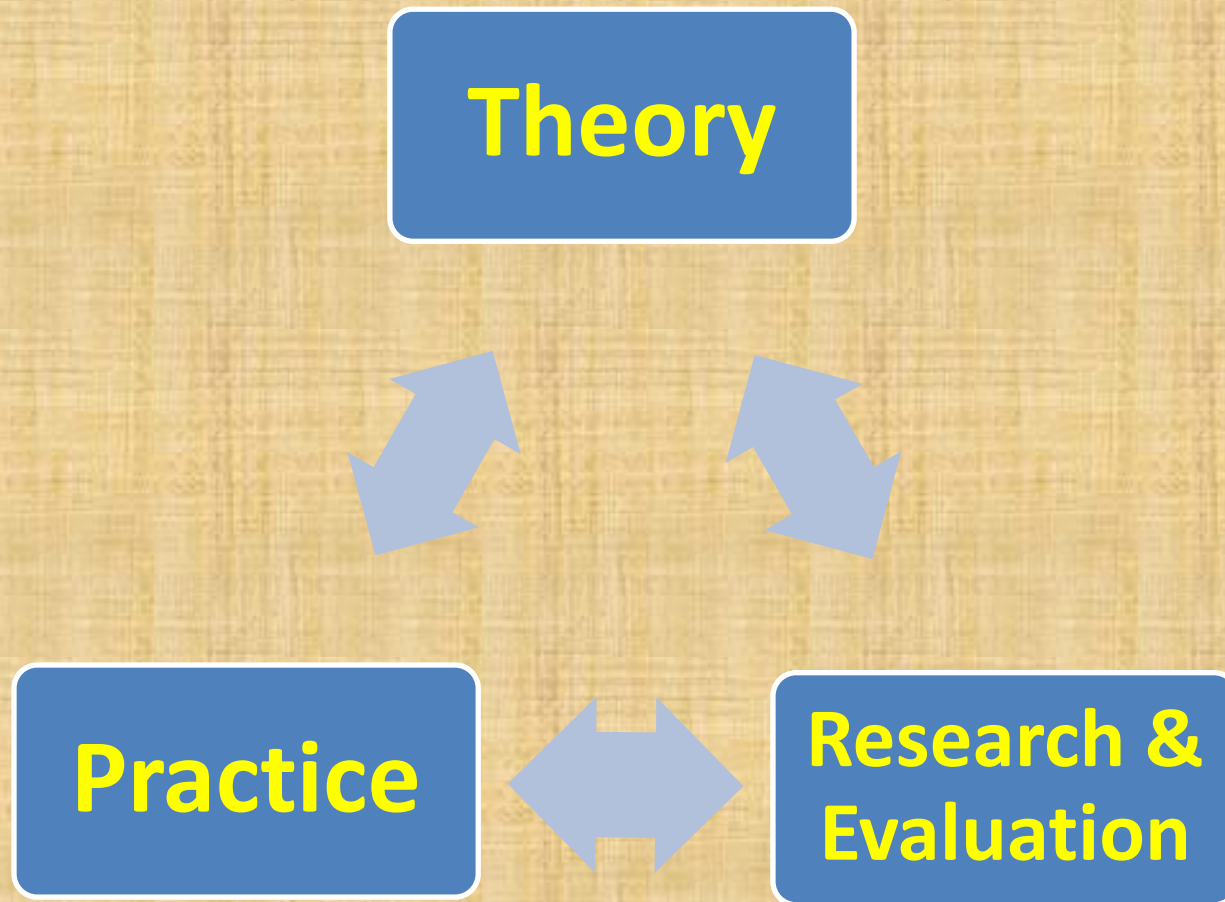
Academia is in water tight compartment

- Teaching and practice are different streams
- Most borrowed theories have only imaginary applications (change/ disaster/ strategic management)
- Practitioners are unable to relate to bookish theories taught
- Theories are not backed by true research or practice
- Perception of 'practical' and application of theories need change; Case study approach, video games may help
  - ➢ Library management = management science ?
  - ➢ Library automation = library application software ?
  - ➢ Digital library = D L software ?

Lack case study approach

- Case study to change from 'teaching' to 'learning'
- Topics like 'strategic management', 'change management', 'disaster management', HRM are routinely taught in master's courses and even explored for doctoral works without practical cases to record and discuss
- Management theory needs to be supplemented with cases from the experiences of practitioners
- Well articulated true-to-life case studies are rare; One example
- ➢ *Case studies for teaching library management* by N G Sathish and Anil Takalkar is a path-breaking attempt by practitioners to imbibe case studies in library education

LIS Research

- During last 3-4 decades, over 125 library schools started offering Ph D and/ or M Phil

- One or two dedicated research institutions and quite a few funded projects (DST, AIP, etc.)

- 'Research articles' of practitioners and PhD-based papers are substantial

- Indian Institute of LIS to do research – a recommendation of KC not materialised

Research output - a quantitative view

- The number of **PhDs awarded**
  - ➢ 802 by 2008 @35 per year
  - ➢ Highest:
    - ✓ Karnataka 169
    - ✓ Karnatak University 80
    - ✓ Prof. Karisiddappa 33
    - ✓ Bibliometrics 85
  - ➢ 17 on LIS education itself
  - ➢ By now, easily crossed 1000

Total	802
1957-1979	**15**
1980-1989	**117**
1990-1999	**325**
2000-2008	**345**

Number of **scholarly articles**:

400 Indian + 40 International + 40 in e-journals = 480 per year with about 100 citations in Indian journals

Synoptic criteria for qualitative assessment

- Contribution to body of knowledge
- Contribution to research methodology
- Utility of results - more critical for funded research
  - ➢ Application – societal impact, consequent policy changes
  - ➢ Use by others
  - ➢ Papers and books published
  - ➢ Citations received
  - ➢ Derivative works or collateral research
  - ➢ Patents obtained
- Reasons for quality deterioration – selection of problem, abused and over-used methodology, researcher's integrity, commitment & ethics
- Responsibility for quality
- Life after research – increase in scholarship, life-long research

Contribution to the body of knowledge

- Developing knowledge-base and theory a must to remain as a profession (Brick and building analogy)
- Continuous research is the key for growth
- Scholarly researchers remain in the forefront to give new directions and dimensions
- Research should enrich learning/ professional knowledge and increase body of scholarship
- ➢ Too theoretical, contributed little to the body of knowledge despite increase of theses from 1 to over 1000 in 50 years; Coverage in annual reviews (ARIST) testify
- ➢ Extensively taught and researched areas have no contributions to the theory; Bibliometrics with maximum research has not got any new law or measure of scholarly impact from LIS; all that were there, propounded by others, are repeatedly validated

Contribution to research methodology

- Lack of good research designs and innovative methodologies- a major detriment to quality
- Most doctoral works conform to a model defined ages ago
- Overused and reused research designs, abused methodologies cause deterioration
- Voluminous LIS research made no contribution for betterment of research methodology

Examples of abused and over-used methodology

- Opinion-based measures of use of library and library documents
- Bibliometric studies wrongly assume/ equate citations to use of documents (authors do not cite all that they use and cite many even without using)
- Both opinions and citations can hardly substitute for hard 'use data'
- Overgeneralization, biased samples, misreporting, wrong percentage and average, inappropriate scale, etc. are common

Utility of results & Societal impact

- 'Research is immoral if it fails to lead to the betterment of people' - Prof. Scarlettee
- Scholarly interest devoid of practical applications creates a vicious circle
- *Societal impact factor* is an attempt to measure and quantify the impact of findings
  - ✓ the results implemented at all levels
  - ✓ reached a /pilot or permanent status
  - ✓ Reached targeted individual, group and societal levels
- ➢ Despite enormous LIS research, usable quality output is disproportionately small; The quantity never justifies the quality

Exploratory LIS research and data dump

- Easy exploratory/ descriptive/ bibliometric studies/ questionnaire surveys or case studies
- No experimental designs, decisive hypothesis testing and collection of hard-data
- Practitioners also gave descriptive statistics, description of practice of their own libraries with no theoretical framework, methodology, comparison and cumulative growth
- ➢ All these lead to data-dump and could not produce any useful results/ findings to elevate quality

Reasons for Quality Deterioration

- Run-of-the-mill oversimplified process, quick completion using earlier studies as template and/ or rampant copycat technology

- Intelligent reproduction of previously studies and no application of one's own ideas, skills, knowledge

- No post-research evaluation to improve methodology and procedures

- Lack of willingness for prolonged hardship with drive and commitment

- Not believing that the value is more in the research process than in the results

Research problems: Moving from 'known' to 'known'

- Selection of research proposal and researcher is key to control quality - proposals cleared in minutes
- Problems are not unique, mostly borrowed/ or copied
- Lack theoretical background and cohesion
- No depth and continuity on specific problems, No hypothesis
- ➢ Are we moving from the 'unknown' to 'known' or 'known' to 'known' ?

Research problems: Fundamental for deterioration of quality

- Areas of interest or topic is claimed as research problem
- Compilation of bibliographies, citation analysis, design of databases, portals, web sites, depth schedules, thesaurus are hardly problems research works?
- Topics are skin-deep, superficial and bookish and there is hardly any all India survey (Satija)

External factors for quality deterioration

- UGC preconditions for faculty employment/ promotions
- Requirement of PhD-NET equivalence for revised salary scales
- Lead to increase in hasty degree-seeking research - quantity at the cost of quality
- Manipulation of evaluation process
- Other maladies: Ghost writing, outsourcing of data processing or research itself, cooked data, plagiarism, etc.
- Can we call doctorate a scholar now?

Responsibility for upholding quality

- No exclusive research journal; All are claimed as **research journals**
- **Editorial Boards** are too liberal and allow lot of rubbish; So are papers in seminars/ conferences
- **Professional Associations** are preoccupied with 'seminars/ conferences for profit' than research and monitoring and ensuring quality of research
- Need national level **Research Ethics Board**/ Committee

Views of Academicians/ Others

- Library educators seldom produce well-researched literary products; Professionals do not value them; Library schools fail the profession (Steig)
- Results are not used by researchers, nor cited or quoted by writers; Hardly used by the working librarians in solving their professional problems; If we fail the practitioners and the scholars alike whom do we serve then? (Satija)

Views of Academicians/ Others

- Researchers get their topic from teachers or fellow researchers rather than practitioners (Prytherch, 1997)
- Libraries do not invite library schools to do research in problem confronting them; There is inborn **animosity and mistrust** between them (Satija)
- Doctoral research were stringent till 1980's; Later became extended training programs

Life after doctoral research

- Enrich knowledge, teaching and learning
- Increase body of scholarship - competence and excellence
- Provide mastery of the subject
- Trained mind
- Make globally competent
- Lead to career in research/ life-long research
- ➢ Hardly anybody continues research after PhD & after using it for job or promotion
- ➢ No additional skills/ contacts gained

Conclusion

- LIS education & research are *far from satisfactory*
- *Specializations* should be need-based, practice-oriented and market-driven
- *Require **national policy for** coordination, expansion and regulation/controlled production and also agency for **accreditation***
- *Library schools* must exercise self discipline to maintain professional standards with **stringent evaluation**
- *Easy and quick sort-cut to success is marring LIS research*
- *Need National Research **Ethics** Board*
- Root-level rectification and reforms desired

Thank you