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Library and Information Science Schools in Northern India: Present Status

Shabir Ahmad Ganaie*

Abstract

Purpose: *The aim of the present study is to investigate the prevalent scenario of Library and Information Science (LIS) education system in Northern Indian states to focus about the courses offered, intake capacity, faculty and other ingredients essential for imparting qualitative education in the discipline of library and information science.*

Design/Methodology/Approach: *Questionnaire tool is employed to obtain data from the institutions imparting education at different levels in Northern India.*

Findings: *The study reveals that the schools are having appropriate infrastructure; however have a scope for further improvement in areas like knowledge resources available in libraries, computer labs, faculty strength, teaching methodologies and teaching aids.*

Limitations: *The research restricted to a limited number of institutions highlights different facets of library and information science education in Northern India only.*

Research Implications: *Findings of the study will facilitate the concerned authorities at the national and local level to take appropriate measures in improving the standard of Library and Information Science education.*

Keywords: *Library Science, Information Science, Library Science Education, India.*

Paper type: *Survey cum Research*

Introduction

Libraries as social institutions are playing a very important role in building a strong nation by providing access to information sources available in different formats to those who are in need of information. Librarianship in the sense of collecting and preserving books and manuscripts has existed in India since time immemorial, but only in the early part of the twentieth century it began to be treated as a distinct field of specialization with its own principles, techniques, theories and practices (**Dutta & Das, 2001**). Importance of LIS professionals in India was realized before independence and different efforts were made for providing training to librarians. Seeds of LIS education were sown in India as early as 1911 by William Borden, a disciple of Melvil Dewey who was invited by the Sayaji Gaikword ruler of Baroda state **(Aman & Sharma, 2005).** With the passage of time new departments were established in different parts of India to develop human resource for managing different

* Senior Assistant Professor, Department of Library & Information Science, University of Kashmir, Srinagar-190006, India .e-mail: shabir311@rediffmail.com

libraries. In Northern India LIS education originated from the Punjab province of undivided India when Dickenson started a course in the University of Punjab (Now in Pakistan) in 1915.This school has the pride to be the first school of library science in (undivided India), patronized under university system. The training school at Punjab university was considered to be the second known library school in the world, the first being the Columbia School **(Agarwal, 2004).**Banaras Hindu University has the credit to become the second Indian university to start a Post graduate Diploma in the year 1941**(Kumar & Sharma, 2008).**The progress of library education was very slow, especially during British rule. In 1947, only five universities offered diploma programmes in library science. After independence, education was given top priority and it certainly helped the establishment of many library schools. Sir Maurice Gwyer, the then Vice-chancellor, University of Delhi invited Dr. S.R Ranganathan to organize a department of Library Science. The department was established in 1947 to conduct Post-Graduate Diploma Course. University of Delhi was the first university to start a doctoral programme in library science in the entire British Commonwealth in 1949.Indian National Scientific Documentation Centre (INSDOC), now rechristened NISCAIR started a course in Associateship in Documentation in 1964 and this course is now labelled as Associateship in Information Science (AIS). Now many other universities in Northern India like Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), Banaras Hindu University (BHU), Punjab University (Chandigarh), Panjabi University (Patiala), Guru NanakDev University, (Amritsar), University of Kashmir, (Srinagar) and University of Jammu (Jammu) are offering different courses in LIS, besides recently established central universities. Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi, introduced BLIS in 1989. It has played a pioneering role in LIS education, and conducts BLIS, MLIS, PhD and PGDLAN (one-year postgraduate diploma) like courses through correspondence mode. Today there are about 22 LIS schools in Northern India offering courses of different levels.

Review of literature

A number of studies have been carried out on different facets of LIS education in India and abroad. Growth and development of LIS education in India has been discussed in detail whereby contributions made by kings, scholars and personalities associated with the discipline of LIS are highlighted in full length (**Kumar & Sharma, 2010**). Importance of well equipped institutions for imparting training in LIS has been realized by government agencies like UGC, NAAC or even by National Knowledge commission (**Joshi, 2010**). Taking into consideration the factors affecting the profession **Mangla (2005)** has commented that LIS courses should take into consideration the national and international standards of

education and training programmes and at the same time local considerations and constraints cannot be overlooked. Infrastructure is the important component for providing qualitative education. A number of studies reveal that many LIS schools in India do not have good infrastructure. These schools do not have separate building, class rooms, IT laboratory, adequate furniture, teaching equipment, tools for cataloguing and classification, over head and LCD projectors and even well maintained black and white boards along with chalks and dusters **(Kanjilal, 1997; Kumar & Sharma, 2008).** Regarding library facilities available in the departments, results of a study reveal that most of the LIS departments in India do not have an adequate library facility in the departments **(Dasgupta, 2009).** Students selected for different courses in LIS courses also have impact on the quality of LIS education. Students with good qualification sometimes join the course but many of them are not enthusiastic in continuing it and leave it when they get any other choice. Therefore "more attention towards selection criteria is needed to attract the best brains" **(Singh, 2003)**. Faculty teaching students in the departments play an important role in determining the quality of education. Any nation, that engages weak teachers will, sooner or later, destroy itself. In India, LIS education is marred by burning problem of insufficient faculty strength **(Jagtar & Begum, 2009).** Information and communication technology has penetrated deeply in every facet of libraries and information centers. Use of Information and communication Technology in the libraries has a direct impact on the LIS education. Departments concerned with teaching of LIS must be equipped with latest technologies like computers, internet etc. In the opinion of Jagtar and Malhan, LIS professionals are supposed to play new roles in the 21st century. However, several Indian LIS schools by and large are not preparing their students for such roles. Therefore they require revamping their facilities, reviewing their educational programs, preparing their faculty, and building a curriculum with a difference that may match the needs of knowledge society **(Jagtar & Malhan, 2010).**Quality of LIS education in the opinion of **Sarkhel (2006)** is dependent upon a) curriculum design, content and organization b) teaching, learning and assessment c) student support and progression d) infrastructure) e)research f) organization and management for governance of LIS departments. These parameters can provide us an insight in studying the current scenario of LIS education in India which is also the theme of the present study.

Objective

The study is conducted with an aim to unfold the strengths and weaknesses of the schools in imparting LIS education using parameters listed below:

a) Courses offered; b) the infrastructure facilities available; c) Selection procedure employed for different programmes; and d) teaching methodology and teaching adopted.

Scope

The data collected from different sources like Association of Indian Universities (AIU) handbook on LIS, Directories on internet etc., reveal that there are 22 reputed institutions in Northern India responsible for imparting LIS education. However, thirteen LIS schools responded to the questionnaire and hence study is confined to them (Table 1).

Methodology / Data collection

In order to achieve the objectives, a questionnaire was designed and used besides relevant data is extracted from the websites of these schools. Data related to present study was collected up to December 2010.

Analysis and Discussion

Courses offered

Table 1: Courses offered

Institution	BLISc	MLISc	MLISc (2 Year)	M.Phil	Ph.D	Other
University of Kashmir (UoK)	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	-
Jammu University (JU)	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	-
Guru NanakDev University (GNDU)	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	-
Punjab University (PU)	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	-
Punjabi University (PiU)	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	-
Kurukshetra University (KU)	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	-
Delhi University (DU)	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	-
Aligarh Muslim University (AMU)	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	-
Lucknow University (LU)	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	-
Banaras Hindu University (BHU)	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	PGDLAN
IGNOU	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	PGDM
NISCAIR	No	No	Yes	No	No	-
BBAU Central University	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	-
Total	**8**	**8**	**5**	**3**	**12**	**2**

It is evident that five institutions (38.46%) are conducting 2-year integrated MLISc programme whereas eight departments (61.53%) are still imparting truncated programmes of BLISc and MLISc. M. Phil imparted by three and Ph.D programme by twelve departments. Two universities are conducting specialized programmes. While IGNOU

conducts Post-Graduate Diploma in Library Automation and Networking (PGDLAN), Banaras Hindu University (BHU) offers Post Graduate Diploma in Manuscriptology (PGDM).(Table 1)

These findings reveal a trend of shifting to integrate 2-year integrated MLIS course prevailing in Northern India which is more dominate in Southern states.

Intake Capacity

Number of students admitted for different courses in the departments is indicated in Table 2.

Table 2: Intake Capacity

Institution	Intake Capacity		
	BLISc	MLISc	MLISc (2 year)
UoK	-	-	42
J U	30	15	-
GNDU	30	16	-
P U	-	-	45
PiU	28	16	-
K U	35	35	-
D U	54	40	-
A M U	60	25	-
L U	20	20	-
B H U	-	-	25
IGNOU	-	-	-
NISCAIR	-	-	25*
BBAU	-	-	34
Total	**237**	**147**	**181**

*AIS

The student intake capacity for truncated and integrated programs varies among the departments. Highest number of students admitted by a single department for BLISc is 60 while the lowest number for the same course is 20. Similarly the highest number of students for truncated MLISc course is 40 and the lowest number is 15.Number of students enrolled for 2-Year integrated MLISc course varies from 25 to 45. In aggregate highest number of student enrolment is in Delhi University and the lowest number is in NISCAIR. Number of students enrolled by IGNOU also varies. Average annual turnout of regular/ formal students is about 565 comprising of 237 at graduate level and 328 at Master's level {(147 at MLISc (1-Year) and 181 at MLISc (2-Year) level}(Table 2). It seems that no standard or norm is followed when IFLA has realized that In order to produce competent and capable professionals, it is essential that number of students admitted for different courses should be decided keeping in view the existing physical infrastructure, faculty and other related resources **(IFLA, 2000)**.

Procedure for selection of students

Different criteria and procedures are adopted for selecting suitable candidates in different courses (Table 3).

Table 3: Procedure for Selection of students

N = 13 (100)

Institution	Merit of Qualifying Examination	Entrance test-cum Interview	Entrance test & Merit of qualifying exam.	Entrance test only
UoK	No	No	Yes	No
J U	Yes	No	No	No
GNDU	Yes	No	No	No
P U	Yes	No	No	No
PiU	Yes	No	No	No
K U	No	No	Yes	No
D U	Yes	No	No	No
A M U	No	No	No	Yes
L U	Yes	No	No	No
B H U	No	No	No	Yes
IGNOU	Yes	No	No	No
NISCAIR	No	Yes	No	No
BBAU	No	No	No	Yes
	7 (53.84)	**1 (7.69)**	**2 (15.38)**	**3 (23.07)**

Data in parentheses indicate percentage

The entrance test is adopted by three (23.07%) departments, seven institutions (53.84%) admit students on merit of qualifying examination where as two departments (15.38%) take into consideration both written test as well as merit of qualifying examination as criteria for selecting candidates. One department (7.69%) has adopted written test –cum – interview for selecting suitable candidates for different courses in LIS (Table 3).

These findings reveal that different procedures are adopted by LIS schools in India for selecting suitable students for different courses. It is the obligation of LIS experts in India to devise a mechanism that will enable the entrance of most capable, interested and enthusiastic students to be given opportunity to enroll themselves in LIS schools. It is then the possibility that pass outs from LIS departments will be competent professionals.

Physical Infrastructure

Availability of infrastructure plays a very important role in providing qualitative education in any academic institution. LIS departments also need proper infrastructure in order to import quality education. IFLA also realized the importance of infrastructure and states that institutions imparting LIS education should provide adequate space for faculty, staff

and students to accomplish its objectives **(IFLA, 2000)**. Besides space, there should be sufficient number of computer hardware and software for students and teachers. Adequate connections to the internet should allow ready access to Internet resources for faculty and students.

Table 4: Physical Infrastructure

Institution	Adequate Class-room Facility	Computer Labs	Computers	Internet Connectivity
UoK	Yes	2	30	Yes
J U	Yes	1	15	Yes
GNDU	Yes	1	10	Yes
P U	Yes	1	10	Yes
PiU	No	1	15	Yes
K U	Yes	1	15	Yes
D U	Yes	2	31	Yes
A M U	Yes	1	18	Yes
L U	Yes	1	15	Yes
B H U	Yes	1	30	Yes
IGNOU	NA	NA	NA	No
NISCAIR	Yes	1	80	Yes
BBAU	Yes	1	20	Yes

NA- Not Available

Table 4 depicts that twelve departments are having adequate classroom facilities and one department (Panjabi University) gave response in negative. As students enrolled by IGNOU are taking counselling at their respective study centers that are usually located in the departments of LIS imparting regular courses, there was no comment by IGNOU authorities on physical infrastructure.

Computer Laboratories

Data collected from the departments under the scope of present study reveal that there are two departments having two computer laboratories each and ten departments are equipped with one computer laboratory (Table 4). Number of computer terminals varies from department to department. Six departments (50%) are having 10 to 15 computer systems, two departments (16.66%) possess 16 to 20 systems, two departments (16.66%) has acquired 26 to 30 computer systems, one department (8.33%) possess 30 to 35 computer systems and one department (8.33%) is having above 35 computer systems (Table 5).

Data collected reveals that all departments have responded positively to the challenges posed by Information and communication technology. NISCAIR is equipped with highest number of computer terminals (Table 4).

Table 5: Computers in Departments
N=12(100) **

Computers	Institutions
10-15	6 (50)
16-20	2 (16.66)
21-25	Nil
26-30	2 (16.66)
31-35	1(8.33)
Above 35	1 (8.33)

Data in parentheses indicate percentage
***Data not available from IGNOU*

Teaching Tools and Aids

The data regarding availability of different gadgets used by the LIS departments under survey in teaching and other related activities is indicated in Table 6. After analyzing the available data it is evident that twelve departments (92.30%) are having LCD, OHP like equipments, seven departments (53.84%) are having Slide Projector, and three departments (23.07%) have acquired TV/VCR like equipments.

These findings indicate that State-of-the-art equipments like LCD, OHP etc., are available in most of the departments for classroom teaching and for exposure of the students in learning application of Information and communication Technology. However, IGNOU has adopted latest techniques for providing instructions to the students like e-gayankosh, gyanwani etc. Mass media channels (Radio-Counselling etc.,) are also used by IGNOU.

Table 6: Teaching Aids

Institution	LCD	OHP	Slide Projector	TV/VCR
UoK	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
J U	Yes	Yes	No	No
GNDU	Yes	Yes	No	No
P U	Yes	No	No	No
PiU	No	Yes	Yes	No
K U	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
D U	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
A M U	No	Yes	Yes	No
L U	Yes	No	No	No
B H U	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
IGNOU	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
NISCAIR	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
BBAU	Yes	Yes	No	No

Library Facility

In order to gain sufficient knowledge about different facets of subject, LIS departments must be equipped with well established libraries. Wide

reading makes the budding professional perfect and ignites their creative and innovative thinking. Further, maintenance of reference collection provides an opportunity to student to study and evaluate them. Departments are supposed to maintain a library with focus on latest collections and within the proximity of the students as university library collections may not be adequate **(Varalaxshmi, 2010**). Data collected from departments regarding library facilities reveal that ten departments (76.92%) are equipped with departmental libraries having collection above 1000 documents and rest three departments (23.07%) are not having any departmental library. Departmental library at LIS department, Delhi University with collection of 18,500 documents is at the top rank in terms of collection number while as departmental library at LIS department, Punjab university posses only 1000 documents. Electronic journals and other e-resources provided by UGC- Infonet through Inflibnet are available to the students, scholars and faculty members in almost all the university LIS departments (Table 7).

Table7: Library Facilities

Institution	Collection
UoK	6500
J U	3200
GNDU	1000
P U	3400
PiU	1600
K U	×
D U	18,500
A M U	4500
L U	1500
B H U	2000
NISCAIR	Whole collection
IGNOU	×
BBAU	×

Faculty Status

Faculty members in the departments play a very important role in providing quality education. Data collected from departments regarding faculty strength reveal that there is much disparity among departments. Some have relatively adequate staff and others are not adequately staffed. Number of full-time faculty members in the departments under the scope of present study is in the range of one to eight. LIS department, University of Delhi is having maximum number of faculty members and minimum number of faculty members is in University of Lucknow. While in University of Delhi there are eight faculty members, University of Lucknow is having only one permanent faculty member (Table 8). However, some LIS departments are having contractual

lecturers who are assisting in the teaching of different courses. Total teaching staff strength of surveyed LIS departments is 64 and it includes 15 professors, 16 Associate Professors and 32 Assistant Professors. The category-wise distribution shows highest percentage of Assistant Professors and almost equal number of senior faculty positions (Table 8).

Table 8: Faculty Status

Institution	Faculty				Faculty with PhD
	Professors	Associate Professors	Assistant Professors	Total	
UoK	1	-	5	6	3
J U	2	-	2	4	3
GNDU	-	1	2	3	3
P U	1	1	1	3	2
PiU	2	1	1	4	4
K U	1	2	3	6	5
D U	1	3	4	8	7
A M U	1	4	2	7	4
L U	-	-	1	1	1
B H U	1	1	3	5	5
IGNOU	2	1	3	6	6
NISCAIR	2	1	2	5	2
BBAU	1	1	3	5	2
Total	**15 (23.43)**	**16 (25)**	**32 (51.56)**	**63**	**44 (68.75)**

Data in parentheses indicate percentage

Discussion

Providing quality education to the students of higher education depends on so many factors. Some factors have been identified as: the faculty, the curriculum, the learning resources, and the students. Each of these areas needs to be developed, cared for, and brought to a level where their synergy results in high quality education.

For imparting quality education and training in LIS profession in India to produce competent and capable manpower for managing the LIS sector, LIS departments in Northern India have taken appropriate measures. However, findings of the study reveal that LIS schools under study adopt different procedures for selecting the students for different courses. It is appropriate to mention here that target of the selection procedure must be to select students having enthusiasm and love for the Profession of Librarianship. In order to attract the high talented students towards the profession, LIS schools should:

- organize counseling session either individually or in collaboration with any other organization for students.
- LIS schools can use their own websites or the websites of their respective universities for the purpose.

- Mass Media Channels can also be utilized for this purpose in order to sensitize the aspirants to join the LIS Profession.

Number of students admitted for different courses in LIS departments varies from department to department. However, number of students admitted for different courses in LIS need to be decided keeping in view the infrastructure and faculty strengths of the LIS School. This will ensure that qualitative education is imported by concerned schools to the students and this will lead to the production of competent and capable professionals for managing the library and library like institutions of today and tomorrow.

Regarding physical infrastructure findings reveal that almost all the schools under study are having sufficient classrooms and teaching tools. However, Departments need to be equipped with the State-of-Art technological gadgets in order to provide effective and efficient learning environments in their premises.

Reputation of any course depends on the teaching standard which presupposes the adequate faculty strength with good academic record, up-to-date knowledge of the subject and adequate teaching experience. A few LIS schools in Northern India are poorly staffed and thus need to be strengthened as per the norms of UGC. While selecting the faculty members, latest trends in LIS sector particularly the multidisciplinary nature of the subject need to be given due consideration. Existing faculty members should be given an opportunity to attend the capacity building programmes being conducted by Academic Staff Colleges of Universities, national institutes of reputation like NISCAIR, DESIDOC, and DRTC etc.

The data collected from LIS schools reveal that besides traditional 'Chalk and Talk' method, other new methodologies of pedagogy like Power Point Presentations, Audio-visual methods etc., with the application of ICT are used by these schools in order to create interest among the students in the classroom and making teaching effective. Modern pedagogical methods like Web-based teaching procedures e.g., web-blogs, wikis, video-conferencing etc. is having a potential to increase the credibility of teaching in LIS departments. Besides these methodologies, a few other suggestions regarding pedagogy for LIS schools are:

- In order to develop soft-skills among the students, it is suggested that LIS faculty members should manage a) Group Discussions b) Brain-storming Sessions c) tutorials etc and provide opportunities to students to express their ideas in a free and open environment. This will definitely boost the morale and confidence among the students and will equip them with the soft-skills necessary for a service oriented profession like librarianship.
- Guest Faculty Lectures delivered by the experts in the fields having some relation with LIS discipline like Computer Sciences;

Management Studies etc., should be encouraged. This will help in facing the challenges posed by interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary nature of LIS discipline.

- Arranging Special Lectures by eminent scholars and practicing librarians- those who are not in the teaching positions, thereby increasing university-(LIS) industry liaison and will boost the morale of LIS students.

Libraries are essential for any educational institution and thus receive full support from the concerned authorities. Although there are existing departmental library facilities in majority of LIS departments in Northern India but information resources available there are mainly printed materials. Departmental Library serves as a reservoir of knowledge for LIS department. This library should be the model library for the LIS students and must be equipped with the latest technological gadgets used in the management of libraries and library services. It's operations and services should be fully computerized. Information sources available in different formats besides print format should be acquired by the departmental library. The person concerned with the handling and managing of departmental library should be a person equipped with the competencies demanded by the LIS profession of today because only an illuminated person can illuminate the budding professionals in the premises of the department. Information sources acquired should be relevant and current.

For developing technological skills among the students, availability of computer laboratories is very essential. Departments imparting LIS education under the scope of present study have established computer laboratories having computer terminals with internet facilities. Practical classes regarding information technology applications in library and information centers are conducted in these laboratories. However, these laboratories should be upgraded with latest electronic devices and gadgets so that students are able to acquire knowledge and skills in handling the ICT component of libraries confidently. In order to produce competent professionals, Terminals available in computer laboratories should be made available in sufficient numbers, so that students get full exposure to the ICT facet. The laboratories should be supported with standard library software packages. Faculty of LIS departments should also be aware and well informed of the technology applicable in libraries and information centers.

Conclusion

LIS Profession being a vibrant and dynamic field is undergoing transformation after transformation with the emergence of new

developments in socio-economic environment, knowledge and scholarship. Although, the basic functions like acquisition, processing, preservation and dissemination of information remains the same, the mode of performing these activities has changed, as machines and electronic gadgets are employed in order to achieve efficiency and effectiveness in library operations and services. Technological changes along with economic and cultural changes have created tsunami like conditions in the information landscape. New information organizations like electronic libraries, digital libraries, virtual libraries etc are being created. Traditional philosophies of preservation are replaced by modern philosophies of access not only limited access but access to every bit of information anywhere and anytime. Libraries are open 24x7 throughout the year. These and other allied developments demand that Library and Information Professionals need to be competent enough to manage libraries and allied institutions in the emerging information environment. Findings of the present study conducted on the selected Library Schools in Northern India revealed that all these schools have realized the need to revamp their programmes in order to educate and train human resources to operate in the emerging information landscape. Though they have travelled quite some distance in this direction, they have long to go to equip themselves to produce competent human resources for libraries and allied institutions of today and tomorrow. They are in need of sufficient and competent faculty, need based curriculum and require sufficient and adequate physical resources in terms of lecture halls, computer laboratories, library support and instructional technology support. However, efforts on the part of the schools offer an optimistic note that these schools shall tweak or transform to face the changes and challenges of the emerging information landscape. All these developments have a great impact on LIS schools having the responsibility to produce competent professionals to man and manage libraries of today and tomorrow. LIS schools are taking appropriate steps in order to face the challenges posed by the revolution brought about by Information and Communication Technologies.

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Corresponding Author

Shabir Ahmad Ganaie can be contacted at: shabir311@rediffmail.com