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Library and information science profession in Indian perspective

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Abstract

The present study provides a conceptual overview on library and information science profession in India its history, development, growth and present status which has been studied by many authors, scholars and educators. The LIS profession as “Librarianship” over the period of time has become an established discipline of study and changed over to “Library Science”, to “Library and Information Science” in India. The paper introduces the professional perspective and history of library and information science profession at international and national level including Pre-independence period and Post-independence period. This paper also describes the role of UGC and library associations in the promotion of LIS profession.

Keywords: Library and Information science, LIS, perspective

Introduction

Library and information science as a discipline is concerned with knowledge acquisition, organization, preservation and dissemination in information society. It is playing a crucial role in the growth and development of the nation by fulfilling the information needs of the society and this cannot be achieved without LIS teachers. In 21st century Library and Information Science (LIS) profession is experiencing both excitement and flourishing as sweeping social, economical and technical affect to educational institutions and transform of knowledge. In present scenario a sophisticated information and knowledge infrastructure like; information creation, acquisition, organization, storage, dissemination and use are rapidly growing and creating new professional avenues and challenges in the world (Rubin, 2017) ^[18].

Presently LIS profession is based on the newest and cutting edge of information technology, and is expanding its coverage of subject in process of developmental. The LIS profession continues to grow and expand in complexity and challenges due to transformation in various aspects like; i). Development of digital devices and social networking, ii). Impact of digital publishing (e-Books and e-Journals), iii) Evolution of library services including embedded librarianship, virtual references, digital preservation and access, digital repositories, and vi). Increase in users needs and demands (Drake, 2003) ^[6]. Contemporary LIS profession is changing very fast and facing increasing pressures to achieve advanced level of performance in a competitive global environment.

History of LIS profession

The library concept was developed when people started reading and writing. Since 19th century libraries are serving as a tool of educational, informational, recreational and cultural needs of their users. The need of librarianship/profession was felt because of growth in literature, classification, cataloguing and proper arrangement of the reading materials in the libraries. There are many components of LIS profession such as i). LIS schools including curriculum, teachers, research scholars and students, ii). Library practitioners, and iii). Libraries. These components play a tremendous role in the growth and development of the profession. All the stakeholders of profession like educators, practitioners, research scholars and students are the beneficiaries from the growth of LIS profession.

International level

The library training schools and educators were established in 19th century in the USA., U.K. and some other European countries. After the establishment of the American Library Association (ALA) in 1876, in 1877 the library association of the United Kingdom, and in 1876 the beginning of Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC), in 1901 the selling of LC

printed cards and the library education flourished in the USA, UK, USSR, Germany, Scandinavian countries and other parts of the world (Feather & Sturges, 2003; Abdullahi & Kajberg, 2004; Chu & Thelwall, 2002)^[8, 1, 5]. The world's first library school - the School of Library Economy, was established on 5th January, 1887 at Columbia by Melvil Dewey in United States of America (USA). The American Library Association (ALA) contributed a lot to the growth and development of library education in the country (Buckland, 1996; Rubin, 2017; Drake, 2003)^[4, 6, 18].

The United Kingdom (UK) is the second country in the world where library education flourished on a large scale. Library Association (LA) was setup in 1877 and from the beginning; it was playing an important role in library training. Special Committee of the Association was setup in 1881, to draft syllabus which was approved in 1884. The library school was first setup in 1919 at London University. This library school offered full time courses of study, and it had professional staff and director (MacDougall & Brittain, 1993; Enser, 2002; Johnson, 2000)^[14, 7, 10]. Education for librarianship/profession was recognized as an academic activity when the postgraduate librarianship was established at the LIS schools in various countries in the world.

National level

The administrative and educational systems in India are inheritance of British models. One of the main reason of introducing education was to train people for the government services and with this view in 1857 the British Government established three universities at Calcutta, Madras and Bombay along with granted teaching authority. The increasing number of new universities were followed by the establishment of academic libraries such as university and college libraries. The establishment of new libraries required trained librarians. So, the professional education for librarians has been closely linked with the growth and development of universities in India during the early 20th century (Kumar & Sharma, 2009)^[13].

Pre-independence period

The professional training for library staff started basically as an in-service programme in Calcutta. The national library (previously recognized as Imperial Library) organized an in-service training in library routines with the help of John Macfarlane, between 1901-1906. Several requests were received from people desirous of receiving training in library work at the Imperial Library. In 1911, the Maharaja of Baroda Sayajirao Gaekwad invited Mr. W.A. Borden, an American librarian, who was a student of Melvil Dewey, started a library training course in order to support the library development programme of the state with trained personnel. The first batch of library training course started in the central library, Baroda, for 11 working librarians (Aman & Sharma, 2005; Joshi, 2010)^[2, 11].

The next step towards the library education and training was taken up by the Punjab University in 1915. The main subjects of study were cataloguing, classification, bibliography and book selection, library administration and viva voce. In 1928, Madras Library Association was founded. a new turn to library education in the country was given by Ranganathan, who started a certificate course in library science in 1929. In 1935, Andhra University also started a training course on the pattern of Madras University. The Imperial Library Calcutta started training in

1935 which was a full-time regular diploma course in librarianship. In same year the Bengal Library Association arranged a 'Library Training Camp'. Later in 1941, the Banaras Hindu University instituted a certificate course. Universities of Bombay and Calcutta started a Diploma course of six months in 1944. These courses and trainings were imparted the knowledge in classification, cataloguing, book selection, reference work, routine and organisation, bibliography and handwriting (Varalakshmi, 1995; Mangla, 1994; Pradhan, 2014)^[22, 15, 17].

Post independent period

A rapid growth and development of libraries, library education and educators in India was seen after independence period. With the progress and expansion of education, scientific research and programmes of socio-economic development, a vast expansion in education at the university and pre-university level has occurred. This created a great demand for libraries of all types such as academic, special and public, managed by scientifically qualified and trained library personnel. To fulfill this demand, an increase in the number of library schools has been started by Indian Universities during the post-independence period.

Inspired by the writings of Dr. Ranganathan, in 1947, the vice-chancellor of Delhi University invited him to start the library courses along with the Department of Library Science. Dr. Ranganathan accepted the invitation and joined the University as Professor of Library Science in 1947. Through the effort of Ranganathan, Delhi University, has been the pioneer in starting the first M.Lib.Sc. programme in 1948, not only in the country but also in the entire Common Wealth of Nation. Delhi University was also the first Indian University to have started Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Library Science in 1951. Later on, it also started Master of Philosophy (M.Phil.) in the year 1980 (Singh, 2003; Kaur, 2015)^[12, 19].

Recently, the scope of librarianship and library education has undergone many changes with the rapid expansion of knowledge and development of research activities. The introduction of information technology in libraries has introduced a new era in library housekeeping operations, in acquisition, processing and circulation. Another important development is the expansion of bibliographical services (Asundi & Karisiddappa, 2007)^[3]. Database of abstracts of all published material in most of the important subjects are made available. Hence, a large number of LIS schools were setup in different parts of the country to feed the manpower needs of the libraries, information centres and other organisations through qualified LIS teachers (Mahapatra, 2006)^[16].

U.G.C role in the promotion of LIS profession in India

In 1953 the University Grants Commission (UGC) came into existence and became a statutory organization by an act of parliament in 1956 and appointed a Library Committee in 1957 under the Chairmanship of Dr. S.R. Ranganathan to setup the standards and guiding principles for the design of library buildings, recruitment of library staff and their qualifications, pay scales, procedure of release of grants by the commission, promoting reading habits, facilities for the training of librarians (University Grants Commission, 1965).

As soon as the UGC realized the importance of LIS schools and libraries in higher education, it gave full attention

towards library manpower development as well as appointment of a team of well trained and qualified LIS teachers. With a view to further improve the standard of library education, the UGC set up a Review Committee on library science in 1961. UGC constituted a CDC in Library and Information Science in 1990 under the Chairmanship of Prof. P.N Kaula. This committee is mainly focused on various aspects of LIS education in India like curriculum, staff-student ratio, professional competence, teaching methods and medium of instruction etc. (University Grants Commission, 1992) ^[21].

Role of library associations in the growth of LIS profession

A library association is a professional organization, which is the backbone of library movement in a country. When the library associations participated in the educational curriculum, the scope of LIS education widened. The LIS associations played a major role in organizing conferences, seminars and workshops for knowledge and skills updating among library science professionals. It also played an important role in curriculum design for library science schools. Indian Library association (ILA) was established in 1933. Indian Association of special libraries and Information centers (IASLIC) was established in 1955 and Indian Association of teachers in Library and Information Science (IATLIS) was established in 1969 (Gupta, 2013) ^[9].

Conclusion

Thus it may be concluded that LIS profession is changing very fast and facing increasing pressures to achieve advanced level of performance in a competitive global environment. A rapid growth and development of libraries, library education and educators in India was seen after independence period. There is a great demand for libraries of all types such as academic, special and public, managed by scientifically qualified and trained library personnel. To fulfill this demand, an increased number of library schools should be established by Indian Universities.

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