About Us: http://www.the-criterion.com/about/

Archive: http://www.the-criterion.com/archive/

Contact Us: http://www.the-criterion.com/contact/

Editorial Board: http://www.the-criterion.com/editorial-board/

Submission: http://www.the-criterion.com/submission/

FAQ: http://www.the-criterion.com/fa/

Apathy of Present Age Library & Information Science Education and Professionals

Dr. Shantashree Sengupta
Librarian & Head,
Department of Library & Information Science
Chandmal Tarachand Bora College,
Shirur, Dist.Pune

Abstract:

Library & Information Science Education has completed its 100 years in India. It has witnessed golden years of development, growth and recognition as a subject due to Father of Library Science in India Dr. S.R. Ranganathan, Documentation Research & Training Centre (DRTC) etc. The traditional librarianship witnessed a major makeover at the onset of 21st Century due to the technological revolution which paved the challenges not only in library and information science education but also in the working style of the library professionals. The present article is an attempt to overview the depressing situations through which the discipline is going in this age due to variety of reasons.

Keyword: LIS education, LIS professional, 21st century librarianship, UGC guidelines.

Introduction:

The library education started with training till a formal course in library science was started in the United States by Melvil Dewey. Training and education in LIS India dates back to 1911 and has developed in the same pace with the developed countries of the world. Borden started a training course in 1911 at the Central Library, Baroda, followed by Dickinson in 1915 at the Punjab University, Lahore. Both Borden and Dickinson were students of Melvil Dewey. In the following years, other universities and library associations also started setting up library schools.

A Certificate Course for Librarians was started by Madras Library Association in 1928 and Bengal Library Association in 1935. Madras University under Dr.S.R.Ranganathan's leadership in 1937 developed the Certificate Course into a Postgraduate Diploma in Library Science. This transformation became a trend with Andhra University in 1935, Banaras Hindu University in 1941, and the University of Delhi in 1947 starting the Diploma Course in Library Science. As a further development, University of Delhi under the guidance of Dr.Ranganathan started a Master's Degree Course in library science in 1948 and also provided facilities for research leading to Ph.D. It was the first university to start the M.Phil course in 1977.

Presently Library Science education is being provided by a variety of institutions such as traditional universities, open universities, deemed universities, polytechnics, affiliated colleges, professional associations and documentation centres etc. LIS education is provided at Bachelor's and Master's Levels, M.Phil, Ph.D Degree. Also, National Institute of Science Communication and Information Resources (NISCAIR), New Delhi and Documentation Research & Training Centre (DRTC), Bangalore offer two-year Associateship in Information Science.

After independence, University Grants Commission (UGC) has played a pivotal role in developing the discipline in India. UGC has constituted three committees i.e. Ranganathan Committee, Kaula Committee and Karissidappa Committee that put forward their recommendations for improving the quality of LIS education. These committees brought out curriculum for teaching LIS discipline. The conditions of LIS departments improved in terms of infrastructure, faculty members, research facilities etc. However, present system of LIS education and profession in India is facing some depressive things that are overviewed in this paper.

LIS Education Framework in India:

There are a variety of Certificate Courses/ Degrees awarded by LIS Schools in India. They are mentioned below-

- Certificate (CLISc) Course: It is a six months course financed by State Library Associations, State and Central Libraries.
- Diploma in Library & Information Science (DLISc): A one-year course offered by polytechnics.
- Bachelor's Degree in Library & Information Science (BLISc): One year course run in several universities.
- Master's Degree in Library & Information Science (MLISc): Postgraduate Program of one year after BLIsc/BLiS
- Master's Degree in Library & Information Science: Postgraduate program of two years after Bachelor degree.
- Master's Degree (MSc) in Information Science of two years offered by Madras University and Baba Saheb Bhimrao Ambedkar Central University, Lucknow.
- Master's Degree in Library & Information Science (MLISc): A five-year course conducted in Annamalai University
- M.Phil: One year/ two years duration full-time or part-time course.
- Ph.D: A full-time programme.
- Postgraduate Diploma in Library Automation and Networking (PGDLAN)
- Postgraduate Diploma in Digital Library Management.
- Postgraduate Diploma in Manuscriptology.
- Advanced Training Course in Information Systems Management and technology: One year advanced training course in Information Systems Management and technology is provided by the National Centre for Science Information (NCSI), located at Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore.

Methods of imparting LIS Education:

The institutions offer LIS Education in the following ways-

1) Providing printed course materials.
2) Conducting Seminars/ Workshops/ Conferences
3) Assignments & Tutorials
4) Imparting education through OHP, LCD Projectors etc.

Barriers in imparting LIS Education through ICT:

The following barriers are creating hindrance in the use of ICT in education and training of LIS in India:

1) Lack of infrastructure facilities
2) Lack of ICT trained faculties and students
3) Lack of financial resources
4) Lack of policy making decisions
5) Lack of digital information literacy
6) Lack of willingness to accept modern technologies

Reframing LIS Courses:

LIS courses have witnessed various changes in the curriculum depending upon the changing conditions, demands, and trends in the information environment. The following factors have influenced the revising of LIS courses:

1) Increase in the number and variety of available information resources
2) Increasing demand of digital libraries
3) Presence of obsolete items in LIS Curricula
4) Lacking of training/internship programs
5) Use of traditional teaching methods
6) Changing curricula of NET/ SLET/SET and changing examination pattern

The need for restructuring the LIS Programs has become important because of the fierce competition at institutions and in the profession.

Present Age Apathy of LIS Education and Profession:

The depressive moments/condition can be discussed in the following manner-

A) Status & Nomenclature of Librarians:

Even after more than thirty years of UGC Notification mentioning that librarians are at par with teachers, still in majority of institutions Librarians just work as some other non-teaching staff member. A librarians post requires similar qualifications of NET/ SLET/SET along with postgraduate degree in library science, Graduation in some traditional subject as their basic qualification and computer skills. After acquiring all this, still they need to prove themselves, their qualifications, and professional skills in each and every step. Various librarians are treated as Class-III staff who are just supposed to type letters, display notifications etc. Why librarians have to prove/ remind their fellow colleagues and/or Heads of the Institution of their eligibility to be treated equally as other teaching faculty members?

Although the name of a librarian is required to be included in the teaching faculty attendance muster but many professionals name are either not included in the teaching faculty muster or their name gets shifted at the end of the muster with the inclusion of other newly recruited faculties before their name. Also, in the seniority list, librarian is placed at the end of the list with many college authorities stating that it is the (unknown) rule of the government/UGC that a librarian's name is supposed to be written at the end only. We mostly can never know which is this rule and in which Rule Book does this exist?

As per the type of the library viz. University/College/Corporate, the nomenclature of the LIS professional changes like director of knowledge centre, librarian, information scientist, technical information professional, head of the information resource centre etc. Especially it is found that the College Librarians are mostly arguing on changing their designation/nomenclature as per the changing times. But, will this change the way they are treated in their institution? Will displaying the high profile terms of 'Scientist', 'Director', 'Head' etc. in their Desk Name Plates change the actual work responsibilities which are sometimes regrettable? More than changing the nomenclature in National Level it is important for the Central/State Government/UGC to give the Librarians their due recognition and bring out a circular/notification which will declare once and for all that 'Librarians are equivalent to teaching faculty members.' Why during the commencement of each pay commission, we librarians have to worry whether UGC will consider increase in pay scales even for librarians as they do for teachers? Why so many debates, agitations have to be organized so that government/UGC listens to our demands? When the All India Survey for Higher Education (AISHE) was introduced on 2012-13, MHRD did not include librarians post in teaching faculty. This gave fuel to several posts, discussions among LIS groups and finally after continuous follow up with the MHRD, the required correction was made in the AISHE 2013-14 data collection sheet.

Also, the apex body of higher education, UGC in the XIIth Plan Guidelines for Minor Research Project 2012-2017 have barred the librarians from applying for minor research Project. Only the teaching faculty in Library Science is allowed to apply for Minor Research Projects. Even after several letters to UGC from library professionals/associations, no changes were made regarding this eligibility condition of faculties to apply for new projects. In a way UGC is contradicting its own notification wherein it has given equivalence to Librarians as teachers. Library science is not a traditional course to be run in each and every College/Institution. Being a professional course there are few colleges all over india who are running the course in bachelor & master degree level. majority of the colleges conduct these course in completely non-grantable/self-financing manner wherein there is teaching staff problem who are dedicated only to the teaching department of Library & Information Science. Most of the times the librarian is given the additional duty of running the science department. The departments mostly strive to survive with non-qualified teaching faculty members or they don't get separate faculties because after qualifying NET/SLET/SET the candidates don't want to work in self-financing departments paying meager salary. Due to these problems there are very few teaching faculty members in Library and Information Departments. Even if they are there with full qualifications, they don't apply for UGC Minor Research Projects since they are working in self-financed departments. In such situations,

how does the University Grants Commission put such eligibility conditions which separates librarians from their own teaching counterparts?

B) Conducting Library & Information Science Courses:

The self-financed Library & Information Science departments is on a rise with various colleges applying for the course without even thinking about the future of the course in that particular area, whether admissions will take place or not, faculty appointments, availability of reading materials etc. After getting positive nod from the Government & University, the College gives all the responsibility of starting the course to the Librarian. With reference to the discussions with professional colleagues, in most of the colleges the librarians are burdened with the teaching department responsibilities along with their regular library work, counseling the students for taking admission in Bachelor of Library & Information Science (B.Lib-I.Sc), getting faculties from nearby colleges or affiliating universities etc. Most of the times, in order to increase the number of students, the quality of students admitted is diluted to a horrifying level wherein the student is not even interested in the subject, doesn't attend theory or practical lectures, will never ever read the course related books, reference sources, will depend only on the teachers to provide readymade notes etc. The medium of answer opted by the student also has a major impact in the results as very few sources are available in vernacular languages e.g. Marathi and the students are least interested in referring English Books. Many of the faculties don't even want to teach library science in regional languages. In such a dearth of faculty, most of the syllabus remains untouched and the students perform badly in the examinations. Sometimes the Librarian does try to cover all the syllabus single handedly. The most depressing thing is after doing everything for the department, incase at the end of the year the students don't secure good marks, then again the Librarian is only blamed. No one gives a mere recognition to all the hardships the Librarian took in running the department for a year. Is it the fault of the Librarian that the incompetent, careless students couldn't do well in the examinations? No, definitely not.

It is also seen that there is no similarity in the intake capacity of students taking admission in B.Lib-I.Sc/ M.Lib-I.Sc courses. It varies from 10-120 depending upon the area. In one hand there are departments who do not get any student whereas in other hand there are institutions running full-fledged colleges of library science. The affiliating universities are least bothered with the situations of the departments conducting the courses. There are such Universities who have closed down the department in the University at Bachelor and Master Degree level but the colleges affiliated to them are running the courses successfully.

Many a times, we the professionals ask this question to ourselves or discuss the point amongst peers that are we doing justice to our profession by bringing out products (passing students) who are not at all compatible to the changing scenario of the profession? Or Just for the sake of satisfying our college authorities we are qualifying the students!!

C) Qualities Required in a Present Age Library & Information Science Professional:

Any Institution expects to have a librarian with qualifications required for the post, good knowledge about the subject, good communication (good English speaking skills) and

professional skills, capacity to absorb and implement new technologies/new developments in the institutional library etc.

Whereas, variety of times it is found that even if the candidates are fully qualified technically for the post of librarian, they lack communication skills, cannot respond/respond well in English, have got a shallow personality, are not well aware about the recent developments in the profession, don't have the ethics, mannerisms required etc. English is a universal language but just in order to increase the number of students, they are allowed to write the answers in regional language of that area (state). As mentioned earlier, the books and reference sources available in library and information science are majorly in English language. Few hardworking students do study well and refer reading material available in English language and do well in degree and other competitive examinations. But conversing in English still remains a big question. This definitely raises an alarm for the LIS fraternity to think. Should lack in capability of communicating in English really question a candidate's eligibility to get a job? Or Should the LIS professionals take some special efforts to learn the universally accepted language?

Library science students are sometimes found to restrict themselves to the Information Communication & Technology (ICT) skills they learned in the Bachelor & Master Degree Level. It is required for them to harness this by self-exploring current trends of ICT application in libraries. They must go for a continuing education wherein they will be able to gather knowledge about new developments in the subject.

Librarians must have working knowledge about all the subjects in the universe of knowledge. This will prove to be very helpful for daily library working. It is not required for a librarian to have all the information sources available at his institution or to be able to provide all the required information on his own but he/she should know the source/place from where a user can get the required information in least possible time.

Library professional is required to keep himself updated with the latest trends in the subjects by attending Workshops/Seminars/Conferences at State/National/International level. They must try to attend the Seminars/ Conferences and present their research papers. This will definitely help them in grooming up their personality and improving their communication and intellectual skills.

D) Working Conditions of Library Professional:

The working space provided to a librarian depends on the type of institution he/she is working. A well-established institution most of the times provide ample space for the librarian's cabin and other sections of the library. But, there are such examples too where a librarian is made to sit on the circulation counter with no or only one peon in the library. The staffing pattern is hardly followed by the institutions and libraries have one librarian and quantity of rest of the staff depends on the mercy of the college authorities. Even if staff is provided in the library, they will be least competent staff with mere qualification and no experience of working. Again it becomes the responsibility of the librarian to impart professional education to the newly appointed staff. Also, most of the times the library staff is

absorbed into other college sections/duties like administrative section, examination work etc. The library is left to function only with the librarian and a peon!

Nowadays every institution wants a digital library, Automated library etc. But most of the times it is seen that the librarian is not even consulted while purchasing a software for the library. The librarians knowledge about an appropriate library software is not even considered. Institution expects that the librarian is supposed to convert the traditional library into an automated library in the least possible time with the least available staff/incompetent staff. Most of the faculty members with no knowledge of library automation keep on showering their suggestions at the poor librarian. It is required for the institution to understand that it is the librarian and the library staff who are going to work using the software and it's important to consider the hardware and software requirements of the library staff. Also, if required extra staff should be provided to speed up the automation work.

The present age librarian should not confine himself/herself only to the library. He/she should project the professional, ICT skills whenever required to get noticed by the college authorities. Confinement eventually leads to stagnation and isolation. He/she should make most out of the available human and information resources. With the help of various activities like book exhibitions; book review competitions; celebrating special events, days; posting about news, events etc. in social media like Facebook, What's app, College Website; being a helping hand in searching information for research work the librarian can definitely make the presence felt of the library and information centre amongst other departments.

Librarian should try to help out the students during their project work, assignments, and seminar presentations by providing them with print and e-resources. In order to increase the use of E-resources available in the library or freely on the World Wide Web, workshops should be conducted for the teachers as well as for the students. Not only can the librarian educate them about the e-resources but can also make them aware of several 'Apps', 'Tools' available on the web which teachers can use to impart effective education.

Conclusion:

The present paper is a medium through which the author intends to overview the working conditions, realities faced and experienced by working library professionals in their everyday life. It is always said that there is a huge difference between the library and information science taught in the four walls of the classroom and the practical librarianship on field. We definitely want to give the best to our institution but the only thing that we expect is bit consideration from our colleagues of our work, understanding and equivalent status along with teachers.

Works Cited:

Ganie, Shabir Ahmed. "Library & Information Science Education in India: A Critical Assessment." *LIS Links Newsletter*, vol.1, no.2, 2015, pp.2-9.

Ramesha and Babu, B. Ramesh. "Trends, challenges and future of library and information science education in India". *DESIDOC Bulletin of Information Technology*, vol.27, no.5, 2007, pp.17-26.

University Grants Commission. www.ugc.ac.in