LIS Education and Careers

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Abstract

Career in our life and the choice of a career is one of the most important decisions of our lives. It shapes our future and determines our lifestyle. Due to multiplicity of choices, selecting a career is not an easy decision in the current environment. Due to inadequate knowledge and unrealistic professional aspirations, a large percentage of students after schooling seek traditional careers such as civil services, engineering, medicine and education etc., where there are limited options and there are numerous alternative career options for those who are made aware of their aptitudes and strengths and provided the appropriate information.

Libraries are repositories of knowledge, information and entertainment. The basic aim of library is to disseminate knowledge. With the upsurge in the number of institutes in the field of learning and the intensification of research activities, the importance of libraries is also growing. This has made the librarianship attain the status of a separate discipline in the universe of knowledge. Librarianship is the profession which concerns with organising, maintenance and storage of books in a library. Librarians are the custodians of library. Librarians assist people in finding information and using it effectively in their personal and professional lives. This paper discusses the LIS education in India and its career opportunities.

Keywords: Library, Librarianship, Profession, Career

1. Introduction

The modern society is passing through the phase of information explosion. Information is available in print media such as books, periodicals, newspapers, maps etc. as well as in non-print media such as CDs and online resources etc. It was the need to manage the information
explosion and hence the library and information centers emerged. That was followed by the emergence of Library and Information Science. With increase in micro-literature such as scientific periodicals, patents, theses etc., the new array of techniques emerged which was termed “Documentation”. Next to that, the society is facing the exponential growth of scientific literature, automation and new media of communication. This brought sea change in the outlook of Librarians and Documentalists and more so in the users of information. Thus emerged “Information Science” where “Information” is at the center. We can depict the phase of Library & information science” as follows:

*Books - Library Science
*Documents (Books + Micro-literatures) - Documentation
*Informations (Documents + Non-Print Media + Automation + ICT, etc) - Information Science

Library and Information Centers are repositories of knowledge and information and entertainment. They contain books, periodicals, microfilms, CDs i.e. print and non-print media for education, research and entertainment etc. Those who scientifically and systematically organize and disseminate these information sources through vivid processes such as acquisition, cataloguing, classification, reference works and dissemination of information etc., are called ‘Librarians/Information Managers’. This profession is among top ten most coveted professions in developed countries [(http://www.competitionmaster.com) - careers in Library Science, p.1]

2. Courses in LIS

The different courses in LIS given below are available in selective colleges and Universities around the country.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No</th>
<th>Name of Course</th>
<th>Eligibility</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Certificate in Library &amp; Information Sc. (CLISc) / Certificate in Library Sc. (CLSc).</td>
<td>Matric/10+2 or equivalent</td>
<td>3 to 6 Months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Certificate in Information, Communication &amp; Technology (ICT) Application in Library (CICTAL)</td>
<td>10+2 with CLISc/DLSc</td>
<td>6 Months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Diploma in Library &amp; Information Science (DLISc)</td>
<td>10+2 or equivalent</td>
<td>1 Yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course</td>
<td>Eligibility</td>
<td>Duration</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma in Library Sc (DLSc)</td>
<td>Graduation or equivalent</td>
<td>1 Yr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Bachelor of Library &amp; Information Sc (BLSc)/Bachelor of Library Sc (BLSc)</td>
<td>10+2 or equivalent</td>
<td>3 Yrs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Post Graduate Diploma in Library Automation &amp; Networking (PGDLAN)</td>
<td>BLIS / BLSc</td>
<td>1 Yr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Master of Library &amp; Information Sc. (MLISc)/Master of Library Sc. (MLSc)</td>
<td>BLISc / BLSc</td>
<td>1 Yr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 MLISc / MLSc (Integrated Course)</td>
<td>Graduation or equivalent</td>
<td>2 Yrs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Associateship in Documentation and Information Science (ADIS) [Equivalent to MLISc / MLSc.]</td>
<td>BLISc / BLSc / BE or equivalent</td>
<td>2 Yrs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Associateship of Information Science (ALS) [Equivalent to MLISc / MLSc]</td>
<td>BLISc / BLSc / BE or equivalent</td>
<td>2 Yrs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 MSc (Information Science) [equivalent to MLISc / MLSc]</td>
<td>Graduation / BE / B.Pharma or equivalent</td>
<td>2 Yr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Master of Philosophy (M.Phil.)</td>
<td>MLISc / MLSc or equivalent</td>
<td>1 Yr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D)</td>
<td>Same as above with or without M.Phil.</td>
<td>2 to 5 Yrs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Doctor of Literature (D. Litt)</td>
<td>Ph.D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

3. Objectives of LIS Programme

- To teach the students about the basic principles and fundamentals of LIS;
- To train the learners about various methodology and techniques of librarianship and information handling;
- To make students understand the purpose and function of the Library/Information center in the changing scenario of the society;
• To acquaint the learners of the application of different management techniques in managing the Information systems and services;

• To familiarize the students with fundamentals and methodology of planning, designing and developing the Library and Information centers and their services at local, national, regional and global level;

• To make the students aware of application of Information Technology/ICT to LIS;

• To provide the students the basic knowledge of preservation and maintenance of the collections in Library/Information Centres, technical writings etc.

4. Personal Attributes Career Options

One can become a librarian if he/she has a basic interest in books as well as a variety of topics, good communication skills, customer service attitude, methodical approach, organising ability, ability to anticipate user's needs, a wide general knowledge and ability to cope with frequent interruptions when doing jobs requiring concentration.

They must have knowledge of a wide variety of scholarly and public information sources, and follow trends related to publishing, computers, and the media to effectively oversee the selection and organization of library materials.

Librarians are information managers. Librarians assist people in finding information and using it effectively. A librarian's work would involve acquiring, organising and dissemination of information. Besides these, the planning and coordination of the library's financial operations are also important and essential tasks to be performed. Specific duties depend on the type of library and position held.

Acquisition of knowledge/information involves selection, ordering and purchasing materials within the budget limits. For this one must have to take into consideration users interest and latest developments in various subjects to be able to maintain a balanced collection.
Organising information involves classification, cataloguing, storage, record keeping, shelving and maintenance of books and materials in a manner so as to make it easily accessible to users.

Dissemination of information is the most important work of the librarian, one that is very much directly related to users. A librarian thus disseminates information by answering queries, issuing and receiving books as well as planning and organising activities to encourage use of the library.

The career for a librarian may begin at the level of library attendant and though the promotions may differ from organization to organization.

5. Levels of Posts and Tasks

In the LIS field, there are numerous paths and opportunities to find a career. A common path for library science graduates entering the profession is to work as a graduate trainee in a library for a year, and then complete a postgraduate degree in library science before starting their first professional post. But, this is not the only way to becoming a librarian or information professional.

5.1. Library Trainee

The trainee posts (usually lasting for one year) are available at various different libraries across the country and are aimed at graduates who want to pursue a career in library or information work. The posts differ from place to place, but most combine ‘hands-on’ experience in an individual library with a broader programme of training, to give the trainee as comprehensive an overview of the different aspects of the job as possible.

Note that a graduate trainee position is not a mandatory requirement to a career in librarianship. Universities tend to regard library work experience highly when considering application for postgraduate courses in library and information management, but it does not necessarily have to be a graduate trainee post. Indeed experience is not always a strict prerequisite and some universities offer work experience placements as part of their courses.
5.2. **Library Attendant:** Duties include shelving books, rectification and maintenance of sections.

5.3. **Library Assistant:** Main duties involve accession, shelf arrangements, levying of fines, binding of books and other materials, location of missing books, and related technical work.

5.4. **Semi-Professional Assistant:** Works at the counter to receive and issue books, sends out reminders on overdue loans, new membership and looks after accessioning.

5.5. **Professional Assistant:** Is responsible for accessioning, classification, cataloguing, ordering books, inter-library loans, subscription renewals, processing bills as well as handling computer data.

5.6. **Assistant Librarian:** Selects and acquires books and material, takes care of reference services and computer programming as well as supervision of semi-professional assistants.

5.7. **Deputy Librarian:** Oversees administration, supervision, classification, cataloguing and computer programming.

5.8. **Librarian:** Is overall in charge of technical, administrative, and financial matters. Responsibilities include delegation of duties, library supervision and management, personnel administration, budgeting, and recommendation of new acquisitions.

5.9. **Director / Head of the LIS Department:** Works at the policy and planning level, and is responsible for the center’s organization, coordination, control, leadership, external relations, supervision and administration.

**In information services, designations could be:**

5.10. **Senior Information Analyst:** Activities include processing of information, indexing, documentation etc.

5.11. **Junior Information Analyst:** Assists senior analyst in all aspects of work.
5.12. **Information Assistant:** Information transfers, processing, storage and dissemination of information under supervision of senior staff are the main tasks in this position.

6. **Facing the Interview**

Don't be daunted by the prospect of being interviewed; most places just want to know why you are interested in working in libraries, and why you've chosen to apply that one in particular. Normally you will be interviewed by two to three people, usually including the Librarian and the Deputy Librarian, and it is quite common to be given a tour of the institute as well. You may also have the chance to talk with the working staff and to ask them a few informal questions, so make the most of the opportunity to get some first-hand information. Although the interviews will vary from place to place, there are some standard questions that you can reasonably expect to be asked, so it's best to prepare yourself before hand.

For example...

1) Why do you want to be a librarian?
2) Tell me about yourself/your previous work experience.
3) What did you like or dislike about your own library?
4) Why are you interested in working in this Institute in particular?
5) How would you deal with a difficult enquiry/reader?

If you are going to work in a specialist library that is relevant to your subject area, do expect some questions about your academic experience. However, don't be put off applying for a post that you have no background. As for work experience, always be ready to expand on the information you will have given on your CV. Don't worry if you haven't had much library experience, as you can relate skills you have used in other jobs to the trainee position. Interviewers will also be interested in your experience as a library user, so think of any issues that you may have come across as a student whilst using library services. Remember to follow all the standard interview rules (dress smartly, arrive on time etc), and most importantly don't be nervous! On the whole interviewers are friendly and aren't trying to catch you out. Remember that the interview is for your benefit as well as your employer's, so do ask about training opportunities, possibility of visiting other libraries, and further skills training etc.
7. Different Areas of Librarianship

Today there are bright career prospects in Library and information Science. There are many different specialised areas within the library and information profession. The specialization may relate to the particular subject(s) being covered by the service, or to the particular group of users being served. Some of the specialised areas are as follows:

7.1. Academic Libraries (School, College and University Libraries)

The librarians and information professionals are needed for various academic libraries, which are established in order to satisfy the informational needs of the parent bodies. Academic libraries/Information centers include School libraries, College Libraries, University Libraries, Institutional Libraries/Information centers etc. As per UGC norms, Colleges and universities must have a good library. Moreover CBSE affiliated Schools have an organized Library.

However, academic libraries include both large-scale, multi-disciplinary university learning resource centres and much smaller and more specialised libraries serving research institutions, policy studies centres, museums and galleries. As well as requiring specialist librarians with a strong background in their own subject area, who collaborate with teaching staff in the development of collections. Academic libraries also offer opportunities to become involved in reader services, in the development and delivery of electronic scholarly resources, and in rare book collections and conservation work.

7.2. Special Libraries

Various Technical institutes have special libraries/Information centers which include Specialized Institutes / Organizations such as Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), Industrial Companies like Reliance etc. There is vast scope of career for qualified library/Information Professionals in these libraries/information centers.
7.3. Government Libraries

Government libraries include libraries within government departments and other official agencies as well as the libraries within the Parliamentary buildings. Many departments have their own information services. Work within this sector ranges from traditional librarianship and the management of rare book and archival collections, through the provision of intensive enquiry services, to high-tech desk-top delivery of electronic documents.

7.4. Public Libraries

Public libraries are libraries funded by public money via local authorities which are open to all members of the public. They provide open access to information for everyone and thus have a key role to play in the 'information age'. Public library provision is increasingly being integrated with other local community services and even mobile libraries touring rural areas from the central libraries of large cities.

There is large network of public libraries at Administrative levels of governments such as Villages, Panchayats, Taluks, Districts and State etc. Some NGOs are also running various public libraries.

In India we have a large number of Public Libraries as shown in the following table:

7.4.1. Penetration of Public Libraries in India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demography</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Public Libraries</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% Covered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State &amp; UTs</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>State Central Libraries</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Districts</td>
<td>592</td>
<td>District Libraries</td>
<td>451</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#Taluks</td>
<td>3987</td>
<td>Taluka Libraries</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>##Villages</td>
<td>5,87,226</td>
<td>Rural Libraries</td>
<td>28,820</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: # Census of India, 1991, ## Ghosh, 2005)

Work in this sector accordingly becomes more differentiated with increasing size of library; in a small library like village library there may be one librarian undertaking all library tasks, in a large city library like district central libraries and branch libraries there will be
specialised staff fulfilling different functions. Public libraries serve users from a wide range of
groups, ranging from children to the elderly, from those with special educational needs to those
undertaking advanced level study, and stock material which ranges from traditional books to
CDs and DVDs.

7.5. Commercial Libraries

The spectrum of areas that are included under this category is huge: Financial, publishing, pharmaceutical, engineering, transportation, scientific research etc., many sectors have vast amounts of information that has to be sorted and made readily available for its users.

The nature of the information professional within these specialised fields can be varied
and perhaps the most dissimilar to the traditional librarianship. The work is challenging - the
private sector is driven by targets and profits, specialised knowledge or experience may be
required to work in some fields. Research often requires familiarity with specific tools and
software that you are unlikely to come into contact with outside of these areas. There is also
the opportunity of freelancing if this appeals and becoming an information consultant or
suchlike.

7.6. Media Libraries

Media librarianship is a dynamic and busy field where it's often necessary to work to
tight deadlines. Newspapers, magazines and broadcasting companies employ librarians not
only to develop and maintain collections of material for use by producers and journalists, but
also to compile fact sheets, check details and do the specialised background research needed
for a particular programme or article. Media librarians also produce in-house directories of
relevant online information resources and make these available to the company. From the
librarian, they need a wide range of skills including a sense of what is newsworthy to their
particular organization, and a high degree of aptitude at using Internet search tools.

7.7. Music Libraries

Music librarians deal with a range of stock including books, scores, sound recordings,
manuscripts and archives. Music librarians undertake a range of specialised duties depending
on their own subject interests and on the nature of the institution where they work. In public
libraries they handle a wide variety of material, serving the needs of many different users
including professional and amateur musicians, armchair listeners and schoolchildren. In academic libraries, librarians are unlikely to focus solely on music, but also involve liaising with the music department and ordering copies of scores for student performances. Broadcasting companies maintain libraries of music material to support programmes or to facilitate programme research. Librarians who work for music publishers manage collections of scores for hire, while those employed by orchestras and opera companies will obtain copies of scores for performances and maintain an in-house collection. Knowledge of the nature of music publishing and familiarity with relevant information resources enables librarians to answer enquiries efficiently.

7.8. Prison Libraries

Libraries within prisons usually serve a dual function: firstly, to provide for prisoners' private use a range of information resources and reading and listening materials and secondly, to provide resources to support prison education, training and rehabilitation programmes. Some prison libraries also provide access to distance learning courses, run basic skills classes and reading or creative writing programmes, and offer information and guidance services. Prison libraries are usually staffed by a combination of professional librarians, prison officers, library assistants employed by local authorities and prison authorities.

7.9. Health Services and Medical Libraries

The category of health libraries includes ‘all those working or interested in libraries and information services for medical, nursing pharmaceuticals and other allied health professions, for people with disabilities and health problems, for those who are housebound or in residential care, and for curers and patients in hospital.' (CILIP). The sector includes specialised information service provision for medical professionals as well as health information services for specific interest groups or the general public.

7.10. Legal Libraries

Library and information services are vital to the functioning of the legal system. There is a need for legal information professionals across all its different sections, including law firms, barristers' chambers, law courts, government departments, commercial organisations and academic law libraries. It is also possible to work as a freelancer in this field.
7.11. Local Studies Libraries

Local studies libraries collect an enormous variety of material connected with a particular town, village or county, including books, journals, newspapers, photographs, official publications and sources for family history, maps etc. They may include special collections focusing on places or people significant to the history of a region, or on important local industries and amenities. The work of an information professional working in this area often involves interpreting the collection for a wide range of users including visiting specialists, children and the general public. Many libraries provide up-to-date local information and answer enquiries on print and online resources for research on local topics.

7.12. Voluntary Sector Information Services

NGOs, Charities, trusts, think tanks, trades unions and other community bodies maintain libraries, resource centres or archival collections and require both salaried and voluntary staff to keep them running. Moreover, voluntary work in the library or information service of a charitable organisation often provides an ideal ‘way in' to librarianship for those without prior experience.

7.13. Opportunities in Teaching

Library and information Science is also a subject for UGC-NET for determining the eligibility for lectureship in universities and colleges. If somebody likes to join this profession as a teacher, he/she should qualify UGC-NET exam in LIS. Teaching jobs are available in universities, colleges, polytechnics and even in schools.

Thus it is clear that there are great job opportunities, for Library/Information professionals in variety of sectors in India.

8. Remuneration

Salaries of librarians vary according to the individual's qualifications, experience, type, size and the nature of the hiring institutions. Librarians with primarily administrative duties often have greater earnings. In terms of grades- Assistant Librarians are of equal position to
lecturers; Deputy Librarians to Readers; and the Librarian's position is equivalent to that of a Professor's.

9. Conclusion

With the information revolution, qualified Library and Information professionals are diversifying to several new growth areas such as database management, training of database users, systems analysis, documentation works, bibliographical works and organisation & management of information centres. Entrepreneurial Librarians / Information professionals also start their own consulting practices, acting as Freelance Librarians or information brokers and providing services to other libraries, businesses or government agencies. Today career in LIS is multidimensional, ever growing and bright which is significantly enriching the knowledge base of the society for prosperity and progress. There is good news that recently the National Knowledge commission of India has recommended the formation of the National Library commission to strengthen the library networks in India. Thus the scope of librarianship becomes brighter.

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M. Mandhirasalam is currently working as the Deputy Librarian in Kumaraguru College of Technology, Coimbatore. He has nearly a decade of professional experience. He possesses M.A., MLIS and M.Phil degrees. He has cleared the SLET and NET in Library and Information Science in 1999 and 2000 respectively and currently pursuing Ph.D. in LIS in Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli. He has attended several seminars, workshops and conferences. He has presented 12 papers in national conferences and seminars and one paper in international conference. He has 3 journal articles to his credit. His areas of interests are library management and planning, consortia, library automation and e-learning. He has successfully organised the SALIS 2008 National Conference in KCT. He has received the Autolib-Tamilnadu Best Young Librarian Award for the year 2008 from SALIS.

Dr. Srinivasa Ragavan, is presently working as Librarian and Head of the DLIS, Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli. He was heading the libraries of NAAC, NERIST, Engineering and Medical institutes and posses 18 years of professional experience. He has organized 8 workshops and seminars at national level. He has also been teaching library and information Science at P.G. level since 1990 and M. Phil. level since 2003. He has been guided around 40 M. Phil. dissertations and guiding for Ph.D in LIS. He has published 7 research papers in national and international journals. He also presented around 30 papers in national and international conferences. In addition, he is one among the editors and instrumental in bringing out NAAC publications on “Quality Indicators and Best Practices”. He has also been awarded project by MHRD in developing Digital Technical Library.

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