

# Proficiency Building of Non-Academic Libraries in the Context of Present LIS Education in India: A Study

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**Abstract** - The study reveals that non-academic libraries are gradually becoming more important with specialized needs of the users. It also makes a call for library professionals to nurture the skillful activities with concern and commitments. However innovative ventures of professionalism could be effective to satisfy greater demands in a better way. Unfortunately professional courses don't have any reflection in their curricula to cope with the services of non-academic libraries. LIS schools are not that much aware of designing of their syllabi at per with the demand of non-academic libraries. Enough scope is there to introduce specialized courses for multi-modal service generation via corporate librarianship, digital scholarship, technical writings, and cooperative information delivery - thus make the relevance of the study. An attempt has been made to evaluate the present scenario of non-academic libraries and to understand the professional requirements; so as to build-up the proficiency (competency, skill, expertise) in this sector by revitalizing the LIS courses in an Indian context.

**Keywords:** Proficiency Building, Non-Academic Libraries, LIS Education, Formal Education, Informal Education

## I. INTRODUCTION

India has a glorious history of generation & propagation of knowledge since time immemorial. This phenomenon was directly contributed by the rich tradition of skill & expertise of LIS community. Progress in developing skill & expertise has been initiated by the pioneers of modern librarianship. To cope with the ever changing needs of users, proficiency and competency have become an integral part of library professionals [1]. Library schools & statutory bodies are continuously upgrading the curriculum to make it contemporary. It implies the course curriculum has to be designed perfectly for the present requirements of skill and proficiency in different sector of the libraries – raising the issue of this paper.

Although, no well-defined and broadly accepted classification of libraries of the contemporary period exists, the present day libraries may be classified in the following categories: Academic Library, Public Library, Special Library & Non-Academic Library. While academic libraries cater to the needs of academic institutions toward satisfying the teaching-learning process, in academic, the public libraries are social institutions, generally funded by a

government, be it central, state or local or by a trust, that offer dissemination of knowledge & information services to various public groups. The Special Libraries generally cater to the needs of various Research and Development (R&D) activities [2]. Special Libraries often include Non-Academic Libraries. Non-Academic libraries generally cater to the relevant and advanced needs of a particular group of users, who are professionals working in the frontiers of contemporary knowledge in the specific field [3].

In the absence of any authentic definition of Non-Academic Libraries, it may be called a special type of library which is neither an academic nor a public library. In this study Non-Academic Library is meant as a library which is an inseparable component of an industry/business/professional body/ R&D organization etc. Therefore, throughout this paper Non-Academic Library is considered as a library which is captive to particular business/industry/group of industries/ industrial agglomeration/ commercial associations/ professionals bodies/ consultants etc. In India, the developments of Non-Academic Libraries have been found before independence but fundamentally differ from all the other types of libraries in terms of ownership, purpose, functions & missions. In short, the mission of any Non-Academic Library is to provide all necessary information for the transformation of an idea to reality [4]. Hence, library professionals in Non-Academic Libraries have to provide special types of services which are generally not applicable for the library professionals in other libraries. Each Non-Academic Libraries has one or a few specific fields of knowledge/ information and their nature of collections, functions and services depend upon the vision and mission of parent organisations.

## II. PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

In general, the LIS curricula of the Indian Universities are primarily oriented towards the professional needs of major two types of libraries i.e. Academic & Public libraries. This could be attributed to i) these being major sources of placement & ii) some proximity in their professional needs. Nevertheless, the professional needs for Non-academic libraries are quite advanced & stringent as the users of these libraries are the researchers, scientists, managers,

technologists, & other professionals who are working at the frontier of knowledge in the specific fields. Moreover, the librarian has to provide all the required information on a time-bound basis, as in most of the cases the output of the users' work has got enormous commercial value. Loss of time may be proportional to the loss of commercial value.

Another important professional need of the LIS professionals in these libraries are proper knowledge of the nature of business of the parent organisation & also a comprehensive understanding of the work being pursued by each individual user/researcher, in order to provide the required services on time & reduce the workload of the user to access the desired information.

Hence, the librarian has to be technically equipped, broadly knowledgeable about the core business of the parent organisation & also about the need of individual users. The librarian has to be proactive in order to provide the services proficiently. As these special professional needs of Non-academic librarians are yet to gain the desired level of importance, neither the academics nor the organisational management are geared-up for the required proficiency development processes. Proficiency building process on the basis of the professional needs of Library Professionals (in the non-academic Sectors) requires immediate attention.

### III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Harhai & Krueger (2016) [5] reported that LIS professionals can face a real challenge for professional development when they enter the professional life. Hamid (2015) [6] has identified the present trends of Continuing Education Programs (CEPs) in Library and Information Science (LIS) profession in the Pakistan. The results clearly indicated that mainly software based workshops, seminars and other training sessions are very much essential. Based on these research outcomes & suggestions enlisted, CEPs need to be arranged according to the users' needs. O'Brien *et al.*, (2014)[7] in their paper, have made qualitative analysis of the shift notes.

These have provided evidence that peer tutoring has important steps for the professional development and identities. They have explored the processes like learning and socialization that occurred as part of tutoring, & suggested that peer tutoring is a viable mode for informal LIS education. Mahesh *et al.*, (2010) [8] have highlighted that short-term courses have been the pre-cursor to the LIS education programmes. Crockett (2007)[9] opined that Continuing Professional Development (CPD) considered as a necessary part of our working professional's. This article narrates how CPD fits into a greater framework of education, training, competency standards, registration and accreditation. Tammaro (2005) [10] in his article has vouched for combining formal, informal and non-formal education and training, for a comprehensive professional recognition and quality assurance processes. The paper demonstrates the need of

cooperation in quality assurance and recognition between higher education institutions and vocational education and training accreditors, with particular focus on exchange & adoption of models and methods of accreditation, which have been a part of LIS, as well as common criteria and principles.

### IV. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study may briefly be described as the following, with respect to the LIS professionals working in non-academic sectors

1. To assess the information needs of non-academic libraries.
2. To analyze the professional needs in non-academic sector.
3. To enable proficiency building process of LIS education.

### V. PROFICIENCY BUILDING PROCESS (PBP)

The whole spectrum of library professionals in India undergoes any one or both the two major processes, say, formal education i.e. academic study & informal education like short term courses, professional training, seminars/conferences & symposia etc. Before starting the career as a library professional, one starts the learning process through academic study. Subsequently, it is further advanced through professional training programmes or short term theoretical courses, generally conducted by Institutes or Universities from time to time or through participation in seminars/conferences/symposia on relevant areas of specialization. It is a process of proficiency building [11]. Indian universities have been offering LIS education at different levels (BLISc, MLISc, M.Phil, Ph.D. levels). Presently India can boast of the existence of Universities & Institutes of National Importance which offer diplomas /degrees/ post-graduations in LIS education.

#### A. Formal Education

It is accepted, worldwide, that academics, (primarily theoretical knowledge) creates the bottom most foundation stone of any profession. Hence, Universities/ Institutes play a vital role in building proficiency in the future Library Professionals. Nevertheless, equipped with the basic LIS knowledge, the foundation stone for any Library Professional, a person joins the profession of LIS with or without exposure to proper special/ practical training programme.

If viewed from the standpoint of the professional needs of Library Professionals working with Non-Academic Libraries in India, the need for exposure to Computer and Information Technology at the undergraduate level cannot be over emphasized. In order to boost the knowledge level in this area, incorporation of specialization in the post-graduate level curricula will enhance the competency of the emerging Library Professionals.

## B. Informal Education

Informal Education, like short term courses, training programme / workshop (hands- on), conference/ seminar/ symposium, Refresher Course, Orientation Programme etc. may be defined as a general term for imparting education that can occur outside the ambit of a structured curriculum

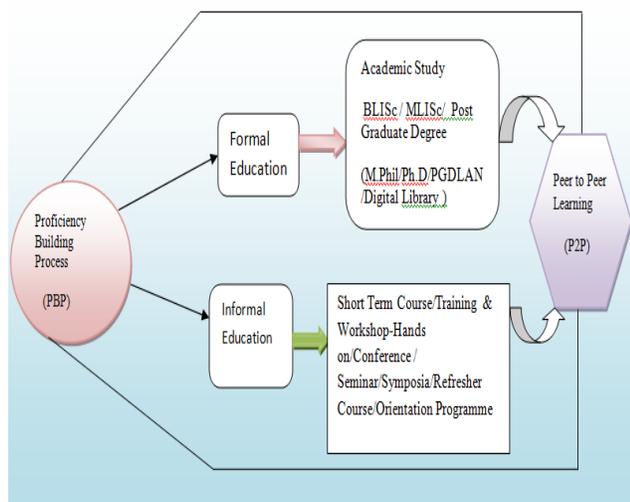


Fig. 1 Workflow of proficiency building process

### 1. Short Term Courses (STC)

Short term courses, covering both the theoretical & practical aspects of the functions, responsibilities and services of different spectrum of libraries, are immensely beneficial to library professionals. This not only boosts the job-specific knowledge of the library professionals, but also their proficiency in providing the library services. This is especially very important for the LIS professionals working in Non-academic libraries with wide & varied range of requirements.

### 2. Training Programme/ Workshop (Hands-On)

This is especially relevant for the working library professionals. Library professionals in Non-Academic Libraries have to work mostly in a commercial/economy-oriented environment, where time is a very important component of their services. They have to be proactive in providing services to their users, who are generally established & reputed professionals in their respective field of activities. Here services primarily include means for significant reduction in the quest time of the users. Training programme, specifically related to any particular type of Non-Academic Libraries, conducted by the University, jointly with experts from that particular field to which the library(s) caters are highly beneficial in proficiency building. This enables the relevant Library Professionals with proper understanding of the core business activities of the parent organization & in turn improved services to the users. The same may be organized by the parent organization/ consortium in association with Universities.

### 3. Conference / Seminar / Symposium

These are the forums where state-of-the art knowledge, recent advancements & on-going research work in the specific fields of LIS are discussed. Exposure to these deliberations gives birth to new ideas/innovations, which further advance the quality, instantaneity, efficiency & also the efficacy of the information services.

### 4. Refresher Course

A refresher course generally comprises practical aspects of the profession, to specifically suit the working professionals of any field, sometimes also contemporary advanced theoretical knowledge suitable for the proficiency building of the LIS professionals.

### 5. Orientation Programme

This programme is primarily designed for the new professionals entering either a new field or a new workplace. This is essential for proper functioning of LIS professionals, especially for the Non-academic sector because of its wide diversity.

### 6. Peer to Peer Learning

Broadly speaking, peer-to-peer (P2P) learning in the workplace occurs when expertise & skills are developed through dissipation of knowledge from fellow employees. Peer learning in the workplace can be both formal and informal. And the combination of both is key to successful learning and development. Peer-to-peer learning is about sharing & learning from each other's knowledge.

## VI. REAL TIME DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION

Modern real-time 'dissemination of information' services dynamically generate data and process the requests for data/information according to users' demand. Only trained librarian is capable of disseminating the right information for the right person or user at the right time at the right cost, so that busy information users (researchers/ specialists/ professional experts) are not burdened with irrelevant information & waste their valuable time. The management of Non-Academic Libraries usually demands & provides timely and effective access to information for users. The primary objective is to provide a need based, value-added, customized information services. It works on the principle of 'just in time' and 'just for you' [12].

These types of libraries are generally devoted in providing the following services:

1. Anticipation – Libraries know very well the clientele and the probable need / diverse need of users.
2. Benchmarking against the best in Industry.
3. Building comprehensive pool of resources.

4. Building network any or all the brands, divisions, sectors etc.
5. Building global catalogue.
6. Building association through electronic information services.
7. Building internal mechanism based on company's need.
8. Performing SWOT and brain-storming continually
9. Pioneering strategic development by
  - Branding and marketing
  - Competency management
  - Effective knowledge infrastructure
  - Technology based solution
10. Capturing customer requirements
  - Opinion polls
  - Induction
  - Project start-up meets
  - Business review meets
  - Interactions
  - Feedback surveys
  - Trend analysis
11. Fulfilling customer expectations
  - Current literature on domains technologies
  - Information on competitors
  - Current awareness, business opportunity alters
  - Download of analyst reports, white papers, articles
  - Creating client profiles, prospects
12. Focusing on Customer
  - Patron of library award
  - Library week
  - World book and copyright day
  - Exhibition/Subscription drives
13. Analysis of performance measurement by using
  - Metric Collection
  - Information management/ content management
14. Maintenance of Global Reference Desk to provide globally accessible virtual reference library to efficiently and quickly handle reference queries like information search, download etc.

Eventually Non-Academic Libraries should be equipped with professionally trained & techno-savvy persons having adequate competence in communication, report writing, content management, marketing of information, attending online reference desk, organizing net meeting, delivering weekly digests, providing informational support, extending technical skills to fulfill their functional requirements.

## VII. CONCLUSION

From the earlier discussions it may concluded that many industries, business sectors are yet to realize the importance of captive libraries to cater to the specific needs (information/ knowledge) related to the particular business or industry. LIS schools are not that much aware of

designing their syllabi at par with the demand of Non-Academic sectors. Specialized courses may be introduced for multi modal service generation, corporate librarianship, digital scholarship, technical writings, managing non-conventional resources, cooperative information delivery.

Hence, LIS education is in constant need of developing more user- friendly approaches against rapid obsolescence of existing technologies. The unprecedented expansion of the Non-academic Sector has further intensified the challenges of LIS education. This sector has necessitated broadening of LIS curricula, incorporating specialized modules & imparting role-specific post-academic trainings.

Proficiency building may also be initiated by business or industry based associations like ASSOCHAM, CII etc. Various continuing education centers viz. NISCAIR, INFLIBNET, NASSDOC, ILA etc.

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