Emerging challenges in academic librarianship and role of library associations in professional updating

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to discuss the challenges posed by the contemporary library environment, which are the results of ICT and the digital revolution, and call for developing new competencies and skills as well as a new set of proficiencies. It also seeks to analyse the role of professional bodies, especially in India, in preparing librarians to meet these challenges.

Design/methodology/approach – Part I of this paper on emerging trends in academic librarianship at the global level has been consolidated from the literature that has discussed this problem in various forums, and from personal experience. Part II principally assesses the role played by library associations in preparing professionals to face the challenges offered by trends that emerge from time to time. This is done with the aid of a case study of the Indian Association of Special Libraries & Information Centres (IASLIC), Kolkata (India). A questionnaire and personal interviews were utilised to gather information and opinions.

Findings – It is found that the modern academic librarian, besides the common attributes, should be technology-savvy and eager to learn and adopt any technology development for the benefit of users. Regular updating of professionals is sine qua non. In the Indian context, it is found that professional bodies like IASLIC did play a yeoman’s role in bringing India to the forefront of global librarianship. It is concluded that India does need a well-laid out policy and programmes of updating and equipping its librarians continuously and can benefit from the experiences of ALA and CILIP.

Originality/value – This is the first time a study of IASLIC has been conducted from the angle of its role in meeting the new challenges posed by ICT. This study should benefit all professional bodies in India in their education programme.

Keywords Academic libraries, Librarianship, Professional education, Continuing professional development, India, Communication technologies

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

The paradigm shift triggered by application of ICT appears to be a common phenomenon in the twenty-first century in respect of service sectors like banking, insurance, railways, and airways. It has helped to improve and expand their operations. This us all the more true in the case of library and information services.
The emerging challenges posed by the contemporary environment are great in number. These challenges are posed by the application of ICT, manifested in many forms or notions, such as digital repositories, open access, user centric services (e-learning, e-teaching, information literacy, orientation programmes), web-based library services, the application of social networking, library cooperation (including consortia), and legal issues. The scholarly community tries hard to adopt the existing forms and catch up with the newer forms to facilitate their business of learning/teaching. Librarianship, not to be left behind, as is the tradition, strives to achieve new competencies and skills as well as exploring how these can be put into use to further library and information services.

Besides the need to catch up with and exploit the facilities extended by the latest technology for offering high quality service, there other is another compulsion, and one of a fundamental nature: that of the constant cutting of costs (i.e. serving more with less finance and fewer staff).

Academic librarians, as they are more exposed to the ever-vibrant scholarly community, should be and are of necessity the torchbearers of the paradigm shift. The following paragraphs will discuss the challenges posed by emerging trends and technologies and examine their implications for academic librarianship.

2. Trends in the transformation of libraries
   The transformation of libraries from storehouses to information institutions and later to knowledge centres started with the Second World War. The world, especially the Western part, was in a hurry to rebuild the devastated economy. The setting up of massive number of new industries and the new discoveries attributed to that period demanded a sudden thrust in publications in science and technology, which eventually led to the so called “information explosion”. Libraries, quick to respond to these sweeping demands, took a new avatar/birth in the form of information institutions, drifting away from the traditional job of the servicing of books and documents to supplying the information contained in them.

   Initially, this service was confined to controlling and locating information, paving the way for bibliographical services, abstracting services and indexing services, whereby chaos in organisations and dissemination of the “flood of information” could be overcome. Eventually, responding to the exponential growth and complexities of information service, a shift from controlling tools to processed (condensed) information took place, leading to the supply of information in ready-to-use form, known by various names such as “evaluated information”, “analysed information”, “consolidated information”, and “repackaged information”. Some of the products of this development were reviews, trend reports, technical digests, and state-of-the-art reports. In short, information workers sifted through large masses of data, collected relevant data, reviewed each field and distilled information in such a manner that it could be used by scientists/engineers without further analysis or evaluation.

   This evolution led to the emergence of three trends:

   (1) Information workers turning into information creators: information workers, while collecting and analysing data, came across opportunities to deepen their knowledge and create information as a by-product of their everyday work.
A focus on individual-oriented customised information: catering, as the term implies, to an individual’s specific information needs rather than the general needs of users.

Knowledge management: the present librarian, on shifting from collection management to knowledge management, exploits not only collections held internally, as expected, but also designs and develops innovative process services and products through the effective use of ICT. ICT today provides a challenge as well as an opportunity to librarians to cope up with the unstoppable paradigm shift.

2.1 Technology-triggered paradigm shift
This paper will dwell upon the third trend, viz. the emerging trends and challenges triggered by technology, and thereby the paradigm shift in the delivering of goods. The technology-triggered paradigm shift is a phenomenon of the past one to two decades. The thrust has been so intense that, if one is unprepared or uninitiated, one is left flabbergasted and helpless and can be swept off one’s feet. These developments are principally digitisation and related issues like metadata standards, copyright issues, preservation, networking, storage solutions, knowledge management, multimedia technology, automation and standardisation, institutional repositories, consortia approach and cooperation/sharing, online journals and their management, communication skills including technical writing, e-publishing, webpage hosting, and the like. The latest arrival has been the use of Web 2.0. Thus the demand on librarians for continuous lifelong education and updating is tremendous. Similarly the demand on librarians’ time, longer and lonely hours, is also tremendous.

2.2 Emerging newer trends and the academic librarian
We have mentioned in the immediately preceding paragraph the emergence of a technology-triggered paradigm shift. One may say applications like automation, the web, the internet, institutional repositories, etc., are old stories. Hence we do not intend to go into these. The scene has advanced much more. Newer trends have set in. We shall discuss below emerging newer trends and their implications for academic librarianship.

2.2.1 The end of digital information as an additional format and its emergence as the only format. We are entering a decade where publishers start talking in terms of online journals only, online books only, and online music only. It is a situation where information is not being visualized in physical form but as data streams. This shift in the outlook of publishers is nothing but a complementary response to the increasingly changing shift of the user from the physical form to the online form of resources. The recent decision of the Indian National Digital Library in Engineering Science & Technology (INDEST) to subscribe to online journals only from 2010 for consortium members is a case in focus on the changing choices of the academic fraternity. The development of JStor (the retrospective digitising of core journals) in the late 1990s and the later efforts of Google, and Microsoft, towards the massive digitisation of books heralded this shift, ably helped by the fast development of high-density storage facilities and communication. The consequences are two-fold:

(1) bypassing the library as a middleman consequent to web access to information held on the sites of the producer of information; and
(2) loss of identity of the library as a store of information as the trend is towards holding only a small archive of important print materials as well as institutional publications.

The library is, in short, emerging as a guide and a facilitator.

2.2.2 Ownership versus holding. Though libraries do own information (digital) that they purchase, they no longer store it. Information is accessed locally by connecting to remote servers like publishers’ websites or database suppliers’ servers. The days of downloading content or receiving it in the form of discs for preservation no longer exist.

2.2.3 Prominence of open content. The open content movement started a decade ago and is expected to enter the mainstream. As examples, we cite two cases from India. The Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) has today made all its course materials accessible through the web to anyone, free. Similarly, the National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning (Ministry of HRD, Government of India) has made curriculum-based videos and web courses freely available to all technical schools in India. Besides saving on education costs and providing access to unreachable regions, this points to the changing choices of people in terms of when, what and how to learn. The academic librarian should be recognizing this new trend and promoting open learning.

2.2.3.1 Emergence of informal learning. As in the case of other social sectors like banking or railway booking, which facilitate operations by patrons from anywhere, at any time, the new expectation about learning is that one should be able to study wherever and whenever one wants to. People want faster access to information in the context of increasing demands on their time by their home life, the workplace, and their social networks. Hence there is an emerging demand for informal learning, and the academic library needs to take note of it.

2.2.3.2 Sense-making. Another issue connected with internet resources is the challenge offered by the abundance of resources available through the internet and sense-making and credentialing. Sense-making is the ability to assess the credibility of information or judge the value of information found online. Here educators as well as academic librarians are placed on an equal footing in guiding users.

2.2.3.3 Cloud-based technology. Yet another notion the librarian should take into account is the growing model of browser-based software that is device-independent. This cost saving system (while some challenges still remain), facilitated by cloud-based technology, is here to stay. The significance of this development to the academic librarian is a total shift to computers and the internet by everyone in the user community.

2.2.4 Emerging predominance of e-books. E-books have been around for some time, and it was believed that they would have a limited impact, that they would not replace print books at any cost. Now e-books have been conceded more space, by way of apportioning a substantial budget vis à vis print books. Today the trend seems to be reversed as one talks of not going all out for e-books because of the risk of leaving some patrons behind! This indicates a dramatic swing in the acceptance of e-books, especially by the student community. Aided by convenient electronic reading devices, which are easy to store and carry in hundreds, they promise to reduce costs and be more environmentally friendly (as opposed against paper). Hence, this is a field the academic librarian should be sensitive about.
2.2.5 Strong surfacing of resource sharing.

2.2.5.1 Consortia movement. A result of the emergence of the digital environment and connectivity, the consortia movement has provided a happy situation for all involved – i.e. libraries (economies of scale and bargaining power leading to access to an unimaginable number of resources), users (vast number of resources at the click of the mouse, accessible beyond the constraints of time and space), and publishers (increased visibility, and relatively inexpensive operation). Libraries that have remained principally a local unit so far, except for the limited sharing of resources through inter-library loan services, have suddenly become part of a network, confident of meeting users’ demands for information or documents at high speed. An academic librarian should be proficient in the intricacies of the operations of various consortia in order to crop the best advantage.

2.2.5.2 Interdisciplinary nature of studies/works. An emerging trend is the interdisciplinary nature of studies/works and cross-campus collaborations aided by emergence of new tools (often free). Such collaborations have become commonplace, paving the way for more publications. It is seen now that even first-year college students venture into research and publication.

2.2.6 Application of Web 2.0 and 3.0. Web 2.0, also known as Library 2.0, is the user-centred web, where blogs, wikis, social networks, multimedia applications and dynamic programming scripts are being used for collection, contribution and collaboration on the web. The underlying principle is “share the resources collectively”. The application of Web 2.0 in libraries has taken libraries into a new generation. It is important for librarians to experience Web 2.0 tools from a user’s perspective and use these tools in modernising library services.

Alas, if you have not yet used Web 2.0 tools, because Web 3.0 is knocking at the door! Web 3.0, also known as the semantic web, is smarter and can understand what you want. The searcher no longer needs to wade through or filter out search results but can the target information straight away by working on a combination of information based on requirements as he understands them and the preferences he wants. In other words, one can be less specific and more natural with queries. This obviously takes away the human factor that we once thought could not be replaced in the library. However, this technology should aid academic librarians in answering queries faster and accurately.

2.2.7 Virtual reference. Virtual reference is a situation where users communicate with reference librarians electronically, often in real time, over computers and the internet without being physically present. This is yet another situation where the physical presence of the patron is diminishing. Reference librarians and patrons communicate via e-mail, instant messaging, video conferencing, chatting, etc. The increasing disappearance of patrons from the library (the reference requirement used to be one strong reason for the to come to the library) does hurt librarians. However, this is another instance of doing one’s daily business in a better way, but a very different way.

2.2.8 New form of scholarly corroboration. Lest they wish to be left behind academic librarians should understand and recognise the emerging form of scholarly corroboration. This new form of authoring/publishing/researching recognises reader ratings, the inclusion of influential blogs, tagging, incoming links, and re-tweeting. These forms of scholarly corroboration (like giving links to blogs in research papers) are being considered for incorporation by important science publishers today.
2.2.9 Growing importance of mobile technology and simple augmented reality. Mobile learning implies participating in learning activities anywhere, at anytime. It has been announced recently that school children in the USA were on the way towards using mobile technology for learning. In India, the Indira Gandhi National Open University has facilitated the downloading of course materials onto mobiles. Mobile technology offers vast potential as it allows instruction not only in the classroom but also extra-murally, in all types of pedagogy like face-to-face, online and blended.

Simple augmented reality once required specialised equipment, and hence used to be expensive. Today it is becoming portable on laptops and smart phones, and hence is becoming cheap. It is getting widespread use in campuses. It is going to replace the great videos of yesterday and the way they were made.

2.2.10 New technologies. The 2010 Horizon Report (Johnson et al., 2010) singled out two technologies to watch in the near future. They are:

1. gesture-based computing; and
2. visual data analysis.

Gesture-based computing (already much talked about) can recognise and interpret body motions – i.e. one need not learn to work with computers, but the devices can work reacting to one’s gestures. Visual data analysis is an emerging field, a blend of statistics, data mining and visualisation. It makes it possible for anyone to sift through and display and understand complex concepts and relationships. Presently it is used in scientific analysis in complex processes in laboratories by scientists/engineers. Modern development will hand it over to anyone to delve into this field, which once was unimaginable.

It is not known how these technologies are going to affect the library service and the way it is organized. But to be aware of them is important as they are going to enter the classroom tomorrow.

Ultimately it should be stated that the developments discussed above are not a continuation or a better way of doing the things in the library that have been done traditionally so far. They are basically a different way of doing the business of running a library and information service. Hence the challenge demands a radical change in one’s outlook as well as one’s knowledge of technology.

3. Role of library associations in updating the professionals

Having said that librarians should undergo a radical change in their outlook as well as their knowledge of technology, we need to examine how one achieves all that – by self-education, self-motivation or with external help? It is but true that the former is not a feasible proposition for all. External assistance is required in respect of the vast majority of professionals. In the following paragraphs we shall examine the role of library associations in preparing professionals to face such challenges from time to time. This is done with the aid of a case study of the Indian Association of Special Libraries & Information Centres (IASLIC), Kolkata (India).

Before we take up the case study, it is deemed fit to have a review of efforts by library associations at the global as well as international level. Hence, this study, in the following paragraphs, will discuss the activities of IFLA, ALA and CILIP in the education and training of professionals.
3.1 International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA)

IFLA has been actively involved in the promotion of training and continuing education for library professionals. The Section on Education and Training (SET; established in 1986) aims to improve Library and Information Science (LIS) education and to strengthen the links between foundational education and continuing professional development for professional and paraprofessional library staff. Prior to the establishment of SET, this function was carried out by either committees or sections known by other names. Traditionally IFLA placed weighting on formal library education until the aspect of training/continuing education gaining focus led to renaming the Section as the Section on Library Schools and Other Training Aspects in 1977.

The following are the most important contributions of IFLA (through its Section/Division on Education) towards the updating of working professionals, in the form of papers published:

- “Developing and providing information about continuing education programmes for library educators and library practitioners”, and “Assisting in the development of international cooperation in the two fields of professional basic and continuing education”, formulations of the Medium Term Program of the Section for Education and Training, IFLA Conference, Manila, 1980.
- Joint Workshop with the RT on Continuing Professional Education on Continuing Education in Developing and Industrialised Countries, IFLA Conference, Stockholm, 1990.


The contribution and keenness of IFLA to finding relevant themes and the problems connected with LIS education at the global level, and resolving them have been exemplary.

3.2 American Library Association (ALA)
The ALA was created to provide leadership for the development, promotion, and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all.

Education and continuous learning is one of five key action areas adopted by the Association to fulfil its mission of promoting the highest quality library and information services for all people. Providing librarians, library staff and trustees with opportunities for professional development and promoting continuous, lifelong learning for all people is integral to that mission.

ALA believes that continuous learning is critical to renewing the expertise and skills needed to assist patrons in this information age. Library workers must continually expand their knowledge in order to keep up with the rate of change. Whether one is an entry-level professional, a mid-career librarian, a member of support staff, senior management staff or a trustee, the ALA has continuing education resources for their development or their development of their staff.

The Association chalks out two ways to promote education and continuous learning. They are:

1. Membership of ALA – To connect with continuing education, peer networking, and leadership development through many initiatives.

2. Continuing education – ALA and its divisions provide continuing education in a variety of venues and formats, and also develop competency statements for various specialisations and provide a broad range of publications.

ALA’s continuing education activities are guided by the Action Goal that by 2005, ALA would be a leader in continuing education for librarians and library personnel. The goal reads:

ALA will have the allied professional association structure essential for certification, as well as the ALA policy framework, and have launched one or more certification programs.

ALA will use computer/communications technologies effectively to provide a variety of continuing education programs for members. ALA will have an effective structure for coordinating continuing education across the breadth and diversity of the Association and its units.
The resources/activities offered by ALA for professional development are:

1. ALA Conferences & Events. These consist of ALA Midwinter Meetings, Annual Conferences, Affiliates’ Conferences, Divisions’ Conferences (AASL, ACRL, VRT, PLA), Open Meetings (other than Annual Conferences, or Midwinter Meetings by various units like Divisions, Sections, Round Tables), and Symposiums like the PLA Spring Symposium.

2. Training/workshops/institutes. These are varied and many in number.
   - PLA provides Certified Public Library Administrator (CPLA) courses. This series of continuing education programs is designed to meet both the requirements for CPLA certification and the needs of library managers wanting to enhance their skills outside of the CPLA framework.
   - ACRL e-learning offers a number of online learning opportunities to meet the demand on one’s schedule and budget, like online seminars (on introduction to website usability, copyright, etc.); live webcasts, interactive, online classroom environment (on subjects like “Influencing without authority” and “Making ideas that work in academic libraries”), and institutes such as the Virtual Institute, Leadership Institute, ACRL Institute of Scholarly Communication, etc. The ACRL Institute conducts an eight-part webinar to develop scholarly communication capabilities, while OnPoint Chat is a series of informal monthly chat sessions organised by ACRL.

3. Member-volunteer ITTS training during ALA Annual Conferences.

4. Workshops/seminars/webcasts on various topics organised by Divisions like ALSC, LITA, ACRL and PLA.

5. PLA’s online learning. The Public Library Association’s online learning opportunities are designed to help users learn more efficiently at their own speed, where and when they choose. The topics are based on the management concepts delineated in PLA’s bestselling Results publications, and will help library managers and staff manage more effectively. It is interactive, available on demand, and reasonably priced. In addition, the one-time fee includes unlimited access to the course materials, wikis, and forums.

In short, three divisions offer biennial national conferences including intensive continuing education (ACRL, AASL, PLA); three divisions offer a joint national institute (RUSA, ALSC, ALTA), one division offers an annual national forum (LITA) and one offers a biennial national symposium (PLA). Two divisions offer a broad, continuing array of institutes (LAMA, ALCTS). ALA’s activities in professional updating is highly comprehensive and widespread.

3.3 Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP)
CILIP was formed in 2002 following the unification of the Institute of Information Scientists and the Library Association, London. It is the leading professional body for librarians, information specialists and knowledge managers in the UK.

CILIP provides varying avenues for professional development, such as:

- conferences (Libraries Change Lives Conference, Health Libraries Group Conference and Digital Information, are a few organised for 2010);
• executive briefings/masterclasses (such as Library as Place, eCopyright, Becoming Upwardly Mobile – Can Libraries Rise to the Challenge?); and
• training programmes conducted by CILIP Training & Development.

The training programme spans over 80 courses across nine specialised categories:

1. Cataloguing & Classification.
2. Children & Young People.
3. Copyright & Licensing.
4. Library & Information Management Skills.
5. Management & Personal Development.
8. Teaching & Learning.
9. Web & Internet Skills (e.g. Writing for the Web, Using Social Networking and UGC Websites, Using the Internet to Find Legal Information, Improving Your Website: A Practical Guide, Using Blogs, Wikis and RSS Feeds, Getting the Most out of Google, Going Beyond Google).

Some of the more interesting programmes are given below:
• Beyond Disaster Management: Introduction to Service Continuity Planning.
• Developing a Taxonomy.
• Emotional Intelligence for LIS Staff.
• Homework Help.
• Influencing the Design of New Library Buildings.
• Institutional Repositories and Metadata.
• Managing the Library Budget.
• Moving on in MARC 21: Potential Impact of RDA.
• Stakeholder Management.
• Summarising from Websites.
• Strategic School Librarian.
• Using Multimedia to Promote your Service.
• Working with Teachers in Secondary Schools.
• Generic Social Outcomes in Public Libraries.
• Internal Marketing for Workplace Library Staff.

Some courses run onsite are:
• Essential Skills for Library and Information Staff.
• Copyright Compliance.
• Going Beyond Google.
• Introduction to MARC 21.
CILIP Training & Development provides the widest range of training for the LIS community in the UK. A common theme emerging from all of these is the continuing need for library and information staff to demonstrate how their service adds value either to the business, the university or to the community. The emphasis is on learning through interaction, discussion and participation.

3.4 The Indian scene
India, a vast country nurturing thousands of librarians, lacks formal establishments offering regular refresher programmes to create opportunities for updating professional competencies and skills. It is true that the University Grants Commission (UGC) does conduct regular refresher courses for university and affiliated college library staff. But that is only a fraction of the population. The requirements of the rest are generally met by library associations (national and regional) and learned librarians through their parent institutions (mostly through personal initiative). Amongst them, IASLIC has rendered a commendable service.

3.4.1 IASLIC. The IASLIC, which has been in existence for 59 years, is an all-India national library association that caters to academic librarians. Its birth coincided with the emerging “information explosion” era of the 1950s. In other words, the Association was formed out of the need felt by the founding fathers, who belonged to general library associations, to support and cater to special-type libraries, information centres and professionals working in the background of the information explosion.

One of IASLIC’s objectives, as laid down in its constitution, is “to improve the technical efficiency of professionals”. Towards achieving this, the Association has been involved in a variety of activities such as education, special interest group activities, seminars and conferences, study circles, lectures and publications. Of these, education (training programmes), seminars and conferences, and study circles have a direct bearing on updating professional knowledge and skills.

The case study (in the following paragraphs) intends to:

- list training programmes, seminars and conferences, and study circles, organised by IASLIC;
- examine critically whether IASLIC has succeeded in meeting the skill/competency creation needs of academic librarians at all turns of library and information service development;
- evaluate the relevance of these activities vis à vis the emerging demands through a survey of the cross-section of professionals; and
- point out areas, if any, to be taken up for future consideration.
3.4.1.1 Training/education programmes of IASLIC. A major function of a library association is the promotion of professionalism and standards. Education/training activities are one means of promoting professionalism.

IASLIC upholds educational activity as its apex activity. This educational activity has been carried out in the form of various training programmes. Education or manpower development programmes have a forward and backward thrust. While they train professionals to meet the demands of emerging trends/techniques, they also help with improving on old methods, which tend to become obsolete over time.

The analysis covers 35 years (1974-2009) covering all the education/training programmes undertaken by IASLIC. (It may be pertinent to add that there were no manpower development programmes in the first 20 years of IASLIC’s existence, i.e. 1955-1973.) Altogether 41 programmes were conducting during this period. As befits ISALIC’s objectives, the major part of the programmes were in the application of ICT (19 in number) and Information Processing & Retrieval (eight programmes) (see Table I). The Information Processing & Retrieval programmes were organized mainly in the 1980s and the ICT programmes in the 1990s, so it can be said that the Association was trying to meet contemporary demands. Others (in descending order) were Management (seven in number), and Application of A-V in libraries (four in number). The Association conducted a one-year post-MLibSc Diploma in Special Librarianship & Documentation (its first programme in 1974-1975). However, it was discontinued due to poor response.

A period-wise analysis will show that the number of programmes conducted has been declining of late. There were 11 programmes during 1974-1985, which climbed to...
Looking at the regional breakdown of the programmes, it is found that they have been extremely skewed in favour of East of India. Of the 41 programmes, 35 (85.36 per cent) have been held in that region, which adversely affects the all-India character of the Association.

Looking at the findings, we wonder whether there was any planned and systematic approach on the part of IASLIC in its manpower development programme. It looks more like sponsor-driven and as if it depends on the enthusiasm of a few enterprising people. However the programmes were wholeheartedly facilitated and supported by IASLIC, and were definitely pertinent to the demands of the time.

Had not IASLIC, a few professionals (in their individual initiatives) and some institutions come forward (though sporadically) the case of manpower development in India in the modern age of ICT would have been disastrous. India needs an arrangement for planned, sustained manpower development as in developed countries like the USA and the UK, where the library associations do commendable jobs and thus help the management and personnel of different libraries to do their work systematically.

3.4.1.2 Seminars/conferences. Seminars/conferences provide a forum for the mutual exchange of ideas and sharing each other’s experiences in improving library service. In many cases one can trace the origin of new activities at the micro level to the librarian attending a conference/seminar. This is also true at the macro level. For instance, the setting up of the National Social Science Documentation Centre and the compilation of the Union Catalogue of Periodicals in Social Sciences can be traced to the recommendations of the 3rd IASLIC Seminar at Lucknow in 1964.

IASLIC holds biennial seminars and conferences in alternate years. Contrary to what we found regarding educational/training programmes, IASLIC has been performing excellently well in the area of organizing seminars and conferences in respect of their content, contemporariness and geographical distribution. The reason for this lies in the well-regulated process of the selection of subjects and venues in different parts of India.

As of the end of 2009 IASLIC had conducted 23 seminars and 27 conferences touching over 68 subjects. A breakdown of topics is given in Table II.

The number of seminars and conferences organised were more or less the same (23 seminars and 27 conferences) and their spread over the decades has stabilized at ten (one seminar/conference a year). North India hosted the highest number of seminars and conferences (19 in number), the South 15 and the East 12. The West was far behind with four, and the Northeast hosted none. Considering the geographical size and development of libraries in these regions, the pattern appears to be balanced. The weighting assigned to various topics in terms of seminars and conferences were in variance with those of the training programmes. Information service (19) and management (15) dominated the topics historically. However of late these topics have faded and “Application of ICT” has come to the fore (1986 onwards). It is also pertinent that the charm of the old librarianship (Library and Society) maintained its relevance through the decades.

3.4.1.3 Study circles. Apart from the above-mentioned conferences, seminars and workshops, IASLIC used to organise “study circles” on regular basis. Invited eminent speakers would deliberate on different specialised fields related to LIS. The statistics on study circles (vide Table III) prove beyond doubt that IASLIC has placed ample
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<tr>
<th>Period/subjects</th>
<th>Application of ICT</th>
<th>Information processing and retrieval</th>
<th>Information service</th>
<th>Management</th>
<th>Information communication</th>
<th>Library and society</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>2006-2009</td>
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**Notes:** Conferences commenced in 1956 and seminars in 1961. S, seminar; C, conference.
emphasis on manpower development, especially in computer applications in the LIS environment. These meetings provided a forum to discuss problems and new developments and served as a system of harnessing intellectual growth in the profession.

An analysis of the topics of discussion reveals that the study circles were tailored to discuss the most current developments and served to bridge the gap between what had been acquired conventionally by one and what was on the anvil. A close look at the list of lecturers would also reveal that the experts came from other shores too, so the scenario as it existed outside India was also brought up for discussion.

3.4.2. Assessment and suggestions. Of the three activities studied in this paper – i.e. training/education programmes, seminars and conferences, and study circles – we have seen that seminars and conferences have been planned and executed with much thought and consultation and were above the board with respect to relevance or frequency or content. Study circles, by their very nature, could not be subjected to serious control, but automatically related to the most contemporary topics. However, training programmes were found to be wanting. Hence we attempted to make a study of these programmes by the collection and analysis of data through a questionnaire and interview methods. The questionnaire covered respondents from all parts of India, including those who has attended any such programmes at some time in their career or had acted as a resource person.

The general rating the on content, duration and relevance of the programmes was found to be high (i.e. “very good”). Opinions offered included “timely”, “well-organised”, “enhancing the professional skill and relevant to the current environment”. Respondents generally proposed the continuation of programmes like management (different aspects of management, management in new areas, customer satisfaction, MIS), information retrieval, information literacy, access to social science information, resource sharing, e-resources, website design, open source movement, institutional repositories, library software, ICT applications, conservation and preservation, indexing, thesaurus, UDC, and reprography.

New areas that were proposed included continuing information service, continuing education programme, community information service, content management, industrial information, conservation of traditional biomedical knowledge, IPR in the digital era, change management, and self-development.

4. Conclusion
A paradigm shift triggered by ICT has been a common phenomenon in the service sector, but applied to library and information science it has been radical and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main subjects</th>
<th>Number of study circles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Application of IT in LIS</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Processing and Retrieval</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Services</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information &amp; Communication</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library &amp; Society</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table III. study circles
fundamental. It is no longer considered as doing one’s daily business in a better way; it is basically just a different way. The way the users want to learn, research, publish or do work does undergo drastic changes from time to time with the advancement of ICT (many changes are on the way). Librarianship should (as the teaching community does) run along and should not lag behind in supporting scholarship, as this would render the librarian obsolete and the library irrelevant.

In the modern world of self-education and lifelong education, they librarian may be expected to keep abreast of the latest developments on his own. But this may not be case for all librarians. The majority need continuing education support. Library associations all over the world – especially in the USA and Europe – play a crucial role in keeping librarians up to date.

In India, opportunities of this kind have been few and far between. In fact, this crucial issue has not been assigned the seriousness it deserved, and hence, it remained sporadic. India, a vast country nurturing thousands of librarians and catching up with advanced countries of the world, does need a well-laid out policy and programmes of continuously updating and equipping its librarians. It will need formal establishments addressing this requirement.

Reference

Further reading


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