



Professional Skills for LIS Professionals for Providing Qualitative Library Services

Dr. Yuvraj G. Jadhav¹ & Rutuja B. Parit²

¹Associate Professor, Department of LIS, Shivaji University, Kolhapur.

²MLISc, Department of LIS, Shivaji University, Kolhapur.

Corresponding Author – Dr. Yuvraj G. Jadhav

DOI - 10.5281/zenodo.17265412

Abstract:

In the digital knowledge era, libraries are evolving from traditional repositories to dynamic information and learning hubs. To meet the increasing expectations of diverse user communities, Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals must possess a number of technical, managerial, and interpersonal skills. This article examines the essential professional skills necessary for delivering high-quality library services, encompassing information retrieval, ICT proficiency, communication, research support, and information literacy instruction. Emphasis is placed on managerial competencies, ethical awareness, and continuous professional development as key factors in enhancing service quality. The discussion also highlights challenges such as rapid technological changes, inadequate training opportunities, and infrastructural limitations that hinder the development of skills. The study concludes that LIS professionals, equipped with a holistic skill set, can transform libraries into effective knowledge centers, thereby contributing significantly to education, research, and societal development.

Keywords: Professional Skills, Library Services Quality, ICT Competencies, Information Literacy, Communication Skills, Managerial Skills, Continuous Professional Development, Information Retrieval Skills etc.

Introduction:

A) Concept of Quality in Library Services:

Quality is the basic philosophy and requirement of library service, and all libraries strive to deliver the highest quality of service. A quality service is one that fully meets the expectations and requirements of the users. ISO (1986) defined “Quality is the totality of characteristics of an entity that bear on its ability to satisfy stated and implied needs.” If a library provides appropriate information to the right user at the right time and in the required format, then it can be argued that it is maintaining quality. Quality library services mean satisfying the query of each and every user accurately, exhaustively and

expeditiously. There are various methods, tools and techniques to measure, control and improve the quality of library services such as TQM (Total Quality Management), SERVQUAL etc. (Reddy, 2017).

B) Role of Library and Information Science (LIS) Professionals in the Knowledge Society:

Human beings understood the power of knowledge, hence, they invented the mechanism of writing to record and document the information and knowledge they acquired. Further, they invented paper and printing technology which proved to be a milestone in human history. Growth in information and knowledge, and birth of several institutions in

the society created an institution called a library. Initially, a library had the role of preserving the knowledge of the society but gradually it became a service agency and started to serve the society with its resources namely books, periodicals, etc. The role of library and information centers grew manifold as society developed educationally, socially, economically, culturally and politically. Library and information centers have become the backbone of the modern society as it provides the means to the development process of each and every segment of the society. Over the past few decades, with the advancement in information and communication technologies (ICTs), the nature of the library and information environment and the mode of services have changed drastically in a dynamic way. The library has shifted from the traditional library to an automated library, then to a hybrid library and then to a digital library and virtual library, and presently, it is shifted to Library 2.0 and Library 3.0. Whatever be the structure of the library, its philosophy is the same, but the actions are changing (Kumar, 2016).

C) Changing Expectations of Users in Digital and Hybrid Library Environments:

Users' information needs have indeed changed and continue to evolve as a result of the emergence and expansion of electronic forms, through which information content is made available for users' access and use. The basic feature of prevailing needs is that users require the information content of electronic information sources to be more accessible for use in their specific setting. And this is determined by the prevailing capabilities of users in relation to the ideal requirements of electronic information sources for their proper exploitation. One of the most significant implications of this situation is the direction of potential strategies to address the prevailing

information needs of users in electronic environments.

Core Professional Skills required for LIS Professionals:

Libraries play a vital role in society. In any academic institution, it is the heart of the institution. The user is the central part of the library. The primary objective of the library is to provide the right information to the right user at the right time in the most effective manner. Librarians play an important role in the generation and dissemination of information to their users based on the storage and retrieval of information in libraries. According to Kumar (2022) "Professional skills are abilities and career competencies used in the workplace and are advantageous for almost every employment." LIS Professional skills are a set of specific abilities that a LIS professional needs to perform their job duties and responsibilities in a disciplined manner. Some of the professional skills for LIS professionals are given below

1. **Communication Skill:** The word 'communication' comes from the Latin word communis, which means common. According to Koontz and O'Donnell (2005) Communication is important to all phases of management by every individual within the system and is particularly important in directing and leading any system. Effective communication plays an important role in Libraries and Information Centers. In libraries and information centres worldwide, communication is used to modify behaviour and achieve productivity, and meet goals. The success of any library or information centre depends not only on having qualified personnel but also on the interaction among them. To be successful in

professional life as a librarian or information officer, it is not enough to have knowledge of the specific area that we are dealing with, it is also important to have social skills so that we can communicate with ease and sensitivity at work place. Remember, each language has its own set of rules of etiquette that can only be acquired through practice and experience. The rules may be quite different from mother tongue. To achieve its objectives, libraries and information centres must have effective communication systems. The core communication skills recognised for effectiveness in library or information centres management, which include verbal communication, non-verbal communication, internal and external correspondence, presenting and explaining information, negotiating and public relation skills (Dutta, 2020).

2. **Teamwork:** A teamwork has distinct roles such as one is the team leader and another is the team member. A librarian should have the quality of the team leader. LIS professionals should be open to form new networks as well as new connections with the users also. They have a close working relationship with IT and other fields. Wherever it is necessary, a librarian must be able to form connections, alliances, and networks with people and organizations. They must be able to collaborate across disciplines and be a team player (Kumar and R, 2022).
3. **User Focus:** User is the central part of the Library and Information Centers. Libraries and Information Centers provide services to satisfy the users needs and queries. Librarians are needed to develop beneficial and equal partnerships and collaborations with their users. A librarian

who enjoys interacting with people, values the variety of user experiences, sees things from the user's point of view, and actively uses developing technology to give their users a voice now has the capacity and duty to provide content (Kumar and R, 2022).

4. **Problem Solving:** The problem-solving skill is necessary for librarians and LIS professionals. The ability to solve problems should be a trait of the librarian. Confusion or issues of the user's research or library should be solved by librarians and library staff. The ability to assess problems, make wise decisions, and solve them is something that the librarian aspires to have (Kumar and R, 2022).
5. **Organization:** Most of a librarian's time is spent arranging the library's books, journals, reference materials, CDs/DVDs, electronic resources, periodicals, and newspapers. An organized librarian can update the library's catalogue as new materials are received or a user utilizes the medium. Patience, critical thought, and attention to detail are necessary for the organization (Kumar and R, 2022).
6. **Cataloguing:** Since organizing information is a daily task for a librarian, cataloguing is an essential ability. A library typically employs software to catalogue its inventory, which can help save time and maintain the library's media collection's organization. The capacity to order items by date, name, or alphabetical order, as well as the ability to gather information, are all talents that librarians offer to the cataloguing process (Kumar and R, 2022).
7. **Self-Evaluation of Service:** LIS professionals working in libraries should assess and analyse the services they offer to the community of users. This method

of self-evaluation will help in identifying weak points in the services and result in their modification to provide better services to the user community and achieving optimum efficiency and effectiveness (Kumar and R, 2022).

8. **Learn and Use Innovative Technologies:** This is currently one of the most crucial professional skills for librarians. In addition to all the technological developments, everyday actions produce more data than before. Because librarians have the necessary skills and knowledge to make the most effective use of these vast sources of information, new revolutionary technologies are advantageous to them (Kumar and R, 2022).
9. **Social Skills:** Social skills are the most important set of abilities a person can have. These skills make life easier and happier. Social skills combined with good communication skills can make one want. On the other hand, lack of these skills can lead to a lonely life, contributing to anxiety and depression. Good social skills help to meet interesting people, get the job, progress further in career and relationships, and finally achieve success in life. Libraries and Information Centers are the most important part of the society. The librarian must have good social skills (Dutta,2020).
10. **Writing Skill:** In library and information centres, internal correspondence is required for letters, office orders, notices, agendas, minutes, circulars, memos, etc and external correspondence is required for letters of enquiry, complaint letters and quotation letters, etc. Any written communication should be clear, courteous, concise, concrete, considerate, complete, correct, gender sensitive and

natural. It is important to realize that once something is written, it cannot be taken back. Communicating in written form is more concrete than verbal communication (Dutta,2020).

11. **Presentation Skill:** Presentations are a way of communicating ideas and information to a group. To make effective presentations is essential for librarians or information professionals. Presentation is needed for orienting a new batch of users, introducing a new service – which happens quite often with new and updated e-resources being acquired quite frequently and of course, to present well at seminars and conferences. Visual aids help to present figures, to make comparisons and contrasts, to project future trends, etc., thus enabling the presenter to deal with such information and data easily and effectively (Dutta,2020).
12. **Creativity Skills:** To think creatively is to use your imagination to come up with fresh concepts or approach a subject or issue from a new or different angle. People that are creative thinkers view things from an original perspective that is hidden from others. They can identify patterns and linkages in complicated systems that lead to opportunities. If you have a creative mind, it will help you solve challenging puzzles or develop novel approaches to assignments (Kumar and R, 2022).
13. **Personal Skills:** The personal skills required for a new generation of LIS professionals include being analytical, creative, flexible, reflective, able to deal with a range of users, detective-like, adaptable, responsive to others' needs, enthusiastic and self-motivated. Being analytical and able to use management

tools such as PESTLE (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, Environmental) and SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) are paramount (Nonthacumjane,2011).

14. **Generic Skills:** Generic skills can be defined as the general skills which cut through disciplines, for example communication, critical thinking, information literacy, team work, etc. (Khoo 2005, p. 6). The generic skills that have been identified as being critical for LIS professionals are as follows: information literacy, communication, critical thinking, teamwork, ethics and social responsibility, problem solving and leadership (Nonthacumjane,2011).

15. **Information Retrieval & Reference Skills:** Library Reference Service is an important component of library services. It involves assisting library users in locating, accessing, and organising resources effectively. Information Retrieval possesses activities such as collecting, organising and storing information resources and retrieving who needed it. In web-based libraries, the librarians must have technical skill to retrieve the right information from the right user. The success of a library depends on the quality of reference service and information retrieval. In web-based libraries effective information retrieval activities include effective search strategies such as boolean searching, fulltext searching, advanced search, basic search etc. and effective reference services goes beyond answering the questions; it involves understanding the users needs, guiding and teaching them to access resources quickly and easily.

16. **ICT and Digital Competency:** Information and Communication

Technology (ICT) has made changes in libraries. It has changed traditional library services into modern, digital library services. It has changed the traditional role of librarians into modern, technically competent information scientists. Due to advancement in technology, the role of the librarians has changed apart from basic skills to ICT skills. Digital literacy involves understanding, creating, accessing and storing digital content by using digital tools. It encompasses technical skills, critical thinking, problem solving abilities and ethical considerations.

17. **Research and Analytical Skills:** Research and analytical skills play pivotal roles in provision of services in Libraries and Information Centres. Research and analytical skills involve defining research questions, evaluating sources critically, problem solving skills and so on. Librarians use this skill to help the users to locate rare books, documents and to find information on complex subjects. They also use these skills to educate the community as well as provide added value to their patrons. To acquire research and analytical skills the librarians must have up-to-date and continuous learners in their field.

18. **Information Literacy and Teaching Skills:** According to ALA Information literacy is a set of abilities requiring individuals to “recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information.” Librarians must have the ability to find, evaluate, and use information ethically and effectively. Librarians should utilize models like the Big6 or SCONUL 7 Pillars, implement various teaching strategies such as

tutorials and workshops, and continuously assess their programs.

19. Management and Leadership Skills:

Effective management and leadership skills are necessary for library professionals. It includes strategic planning, resource management, communication, teamwork, visionary thinking and integrity. Motivation, fairness, vision and good communication are major components of leadership. Librarians can develop leadership skills through training programmes and mentorship programmes.

20. Artificial Intelligence Automation Proficiency:

A 21st century librarian must have the AI (Artificial Intelligence) competency and automation skills. These skills help librarians how AI such as chatbots, machine learning increases efficiency in provision of library services and meets users needs.

Challenges in Skill Development:

With the increasing expectations of diverse user communities, Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals must possess a number of technical, managerial, and interpersonal skills. But there are various challenges faced by LIS Professionals while adapting various skills which are given below.

1. Lack of funding and Inadequate Infrastructure:

Lack of funding and Inadequate Infrastructure is the major challenge faced by LIS professionals while implementing new technology and digital services in libraries. Limited budget for libraries affects the library infrastructure, staff as well as library services.

2. Rapid Technological Advancement:

With the rapid technological development, there is a growth in the use

of IT (Information Technology) and IT-related services. For these services there is a need for digital literacy, AI competencies which require specific skills. Librarians need to learn about digital literacy, data management, digital preservation and new software to stay up-to-date.

3. Lack of Training: Lack of training in some regions affects the skill development among LIS Professionals. Lack of budget affects the training programmes for the librarians and library staff.

4. Lack of Collaboration: Effective library services require collaboration from government, institutions and nonprofit organisations.

Strategies for Enhancing Professional Skills:

1. Workshops and Seminars: LIS professionals can enhance their skills by attending regular seminars and workshops on emerging technologies, library management, critical evaluation of digital resources and so on.

2. Online Courses: Online platforms such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC), SWAYAM, Coursera, LinkedIn Learning can help to enhance librarians' skills through their courses. These platforms can also cover topics such as Open Science, Open Data, Digital Literacy etc.

3. Digital Literacy Programmes: Digital Literacy contains technical abilities as well as use of Information Communication Technology (ICT). Advancement in technology has increased usage of digital resources. Digital Literacy programmes on online safety, digital citizenship, using advanced

research tools, and critically evaluating online information help LIS professionals in provision of services to their users. This also involves understanding metadata standards and digital preservation techniques.

4. **AI and Data Learning Training:** Training on AI (Artificial Intelligence), machine learning, data analytics can help to librarians in automation of cataloging and offer more personalized user recommendations
5. **Professional Organisations:** National and International Professional Organizations such as IFLA (International Federation of Library Association), ALA (American Library Association) encourage membership and active participation to LIS professionals and offer conferences, forums, and workshops that provide networking and learning opportunities.

Conclusion:

In the digital knowledge era, libraries are evolving from traditional repositories to dynamic information and learning hubs. The discussion highlights challenges such as rapid technological changes, inadequate training opportunities, and infrastructural limitations that hinder the development of skills. The study concludes that LIS professionals, equipped with a holistic skill set, can transform libraries into effective knowledge centers, thereby contributing significantly to education, research, and societal development. Libraries and Information Centers play a dynamic role in the dissemination of information to their users, with the rapid technological change LIS professionals face many challenges. To manage these challenges LIS professionals should have the core skills which are required to satisfy users' needs.

References:

1. American Library Association. (1989). Presidential Committee on Information Literacy: Final Report. <https://www.ala.org/acrl/publications/whitepapers/presidential>
2. Dutta, A. (2020). *Role of Communication Skills in Effective Management of Library and Information Centres*. Personality Development and Communication Skill: Tools for the Present Era, K.D. College of Commerce & General Studies, Midnapore, Paschim Medinipur. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351587761_Role_of_Communication_Skills_in_Effective_Management_of_Library_and_Information_Centres
3. International Federation of Library Association (IFLA). (2019). Code of Ethics for Librarians and Information Professionals. <https://repository.ifla.org/items/6c3d64ed-4eb8-45e4-bb60-9e178aa94cbf>
4. Kumar, P. K. S. (2016). Role of library and information science professionals in the knowledge society. *Journal of Information*, 2(2), 10–17. <https://doi.org/10.18488/journal.104/2016.2.2/104.2.10.17>
5. Kale, D. and Jadhav, Y. G. (2022) LIBRARY SYSTEM AND SERVICES IN ENGINEERING COLLEGES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO GOA STATE *International Journal of Advance and Applied Research*, 10 (1) 681-692.
6. Naik, U., Devaraj, S., & Kumari, U. (2018). Professional skills and soft skills for LIS professional in ICT era. *Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Libraries*, 7(1), 147-160.

7. Nonthacumjane, P. (2011). Key skills and competencies of a new generation of LIS professionals. *IFLA Journal*, 37(4), 280–288.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0340035211430475>
8. P H Salil Kumar & Sathisha R. (2022). *Professional skills for lis professional for providing qualitative library services*.
<https://doi.org/10.5281/ZENODO.7179970>
9. Reddy, P. R. (2017). Measuring of quality services in the libraries. *International Journal of Library and Information Studies*, 7(1), 144-149.