



Empowering Libraries through Professional Competencies: A Study on LIS Skills for Quality Service Delivery

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DOI - 10.5281/zenodo.17267610

Abstract:

Libraries play an essential role in the constantly changing world of information and knowledge management by facilitating access to information, supporting academic and research activities, and encouraging lifelong learning. The usefulness of library services is deeply conditional on the professional skills of Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals. This study looks into the professional competencies needed by LIS practitioners to provide qualitative, user-centered, and sustainable library services. The study focuses on both traditional competencies (cataloguing, classification, reference services, and collection development) and modern digital skills (knowledge of library automation systems, digital repositories, metadata standards, and emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and data analytics). The study also underlines the need of research and analytical ability, communication and interpersonal skills, leadership and managerial competencies, and ethical awareness in ensuring effective library operations. This study contributes to the area by establishing a complete framework of skills required for qualitative library service delivery. It also makes recommendations for policymakers, educators, and library administrators to encourage professional growth and long-term library development.

Keywords: *Library And Information Science (LIS), Professional Competencies, Library Skills Development, Digital Literacy in Libraries, Research Support Services, Ethical Practices in Librarianship, Quality Service Delivery.*

Introduction:

Libraries are evolving rapidly in response to the growing demands of the information society. No longer limited to the storage and lending of books, have modern libraries functioned as comprehensive knowledge hubs that support education, research, and lifelong learning. They provide access to a variety of resources, including printed materials, electronic journals, databases, multimedia content, and digital repositories. The usefulness and relevance of these services are heavily reliant on the skills of Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals who manage, organize, and

enable information access. In contemporary libraries, LIS professionals play a multifaceted role. Beyond traditional tasks like cataloguing, classification, and reference services, they are increasingly responsible for managing digital collections, implementing metadata standards, supporting research activities, guiding users in information literacy, and integrating emerging technologies into library operations. These roles demand a combination of technical expertise, analytical abilities, managerial skills, and interpersonal competencies.

The dynamic nature of information resources and user expectations makes continuous professional development a

necessity for librarians to provide services that are both effective and user-centered. Quality library services are characterized by accessibility, responsiveness, relevance, and reliability. LIS professionals contribute to service quality by understanding the specific needs of users, offering personalized assistance, and ensuring that resources are organized, discoverable, and up-to-date. They also play a crucial role in promoting ethical information use, protecting intellectual property rights, and guiding users in navigating the increasingly complex information landscape. Despite the importance of these skills, challenges such as rapidly changing technologies, resource constraints, and limited training opportunities can impact the ability of librarians to deliver high-quality services. This study aims to explore the essential professional competencies that enable LIS professionals to provide qualitative library services. By examining both traditional and modern skill sets and analyzing practical examples from different types of libraries, the research highlights how professional expertise empowers librarians to meet diverse user needs effectively.

Statement of the Problem:

In the current era of information explosion and rapid technological advancements, libraries face increasing pressure to provide high-quality, user-centered services. While libraries have transitioned from traditional book repositories to dynamic information centers, the effectiveness of these services is mainly dependent on the abilities and competencies of Library and Information Science (LIS) personnel. Despite the critical role of professional skills, many libraries struggle to maintain consistent service quality due to challenges such as rapidly evolving technologies, limited training opportunities,

resource constraints, and varying user expectations. LIS professionals must possess a broad range of competencies including technical, managerial, research, communication, and ethical skills to manage both traditional and digital resources effectively. However, gaps in skill development, inadequate institutional support, and lack of continuous professional training often hinder librarians from delivering services that fully meet user needs. This research seeks to identify the essential professional competencies required by LIS professionals to provide qualitative library services and explore how these competencies can be strengthened to empower libraries in meeting contemporary challenges.

Objectives of the Study:

The primary objective of this study is to examine the professional competencies necessary for LIS professionals to deliver qualitative, user-focused library services. Specific objectives include:

1. **To identify the core professional skills** (technical, managerial, research, and communication skills) required by LIS professionals in modern library environments.
2. **To examine how digital and technology skills impact the quality of library services.**
3. **To examine the problems LIS professionals encounter when acquiring and using competencies.**

Review of Literature:

The evolving landscape of Library and Information Science (LIS) necessitates that professionals continually adapt to meet the dynamic needs of users and institutions. The provision of qualitative library services hinges significantly on the competencies of LIS

professionals. This literature review synthesizes existing research on the essential skills and competencies required for delivering high-quality library services.

Core Competencies in LIS:

The American Library Association (ALA) outlines a comprehensive framework of core competencies for librarianship, emphasizing areas such as information resources, organization of knowledge, reference and user services, and information technology. These competencies serve as foundational guidelines for LIS professionals, ensuring they possess the requisite knowledge and skills to perform effectively in various library settings.

Similarly, the Reference and User Services Association (RUSA) has developed specific competencies for reference and user services librarians. These competencies focus on the abilities, skills, and knowledge that distinguish reference and user services librarians from other professionals. They highlight the importance of communication, information technologies, digital literacy, and an understanding of diverse user needs.

Technological Competencies:

The digital age has transformed library services, making technological proficiency indispensable for LIS professionals. A study by Yadav (2024) identifies computing skills, library automation, and digitization as essential competencies for LIS professionals. The research underscores the necessity for professionals to be adept in managing digital resources and utilizing technology to enhance service delivery.

Furthermore, Nonthacumjane (2011) discusses the key skills and competencies of LIS professionals in the digital era, categorizing them into personal skills, generic skills, and discipline-specific knowledge. The study emphasizes the importance of

adaptability and continuous learning to keep pace with technological advancements and changing user expectations.

Soft Skills and User-Centered Services:

Beyond technical expertise, soft skills play a crucial role in delivering qualitative library services. A study by Lowry (2013) examines the importance of soft skills in the academic library technical services workplace. The research highlights that effective communication, collaboration, and interpersonal skills are vital for LIS professionals to interact with colleagues and users, thereby enhancing service quality.

Additionally, Ahmad (2012) discusses the competencies of library and information science professionals, emphasizing the need for skills such as critical thinking, information literacy, and the ability to adapt to changing information environments. These competencies enable professionals to provide user-centered services that meet the diverse needs of library patrons.

Comprehensive Skill Requirements:

An extensive analysis by Yadav (2024) identifies 54 distinct skills across five broad areas: traditional library skills, research skills, computing skills, data management skills, and soft skills. The study indicates that while traditional skills remain important, there is a growing emphasis on technological and soft skills to meet the demands of modern library services. Moreover, a recent study by Yadav (2024) reveals that LIS professionals require a wide range of competencies, with over 160 distinct professional skill requirements identified across various job categories. The findings suggest that academic and public libraries demand a broader range of professional skill themes compared to other types of libraries, highlighting the need for comprehensive training and development programs.

Challenges and Implications:

Despite the recognition of these competencies, LIS professionals often face challenges in acquiring and applying them effectively. A study by Subaveerapandiyan and Sindhu (2022) investigates knowledge management skills for 21st-century library professionals in India, highlighting the importance of data literacy and continuous professional development to meet the evolving demands of the information landscape. These challenges underscore the need for targeted training programs, curriculum enhancements, and institutional support to empower LIS professionals in delivering high-quality, user-centered library services.

Research Methodology:

This study adopts a **descriptive and analytical research design** to examine the professional competencies required by LIS professionals for providing qualitative library services. The research includes both **primary and secondary data sources**:

1. **Primary Data: Questionnaires** were distributed to LIS professionals working in academic, public, and special libraries.
2. **Secondary Data:** Academic journals, conference papers, books, and online resources on library competencies, digital literacy, and user-centered services.

The study focuses on analyzing the core, technical, managerial, and soft skills of LIS professionals. Data were coded and analyzed using **qualitative content analysis** and simple **statistical measures** to identify patterns and trends in professional skill requirements.

Data Analysis and Discussion:

The analysis of the questionnaire reveals that LIS professionals possess strong foundations in traditional skills such as cataloguing, classification, and reference services, but show comparatively lower proficiency in areas like metadata standards, digital repository management, and emerging technologies. Communication skills and ethical awareness were rated highly, reflecting a user-focused and responsible professional culture. However, challenges such as limited funding, lack of training opportunities, and rapid technological changes hinder continuous growth. Overall, the findings indicate that while LIS professionals are well-prepared in core library practices, there is a pressing need for regular training and professional development in digital, research, and managerial skills to ensure quality library service delivery.

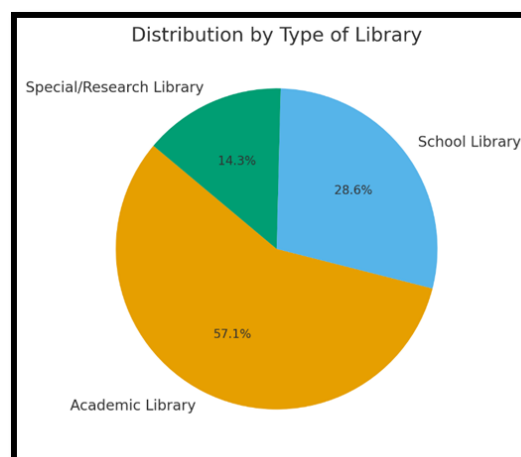


Figure: 1 – Distribution by Types of Library

The distribution of respondents across library types shows that the majority are employed in academic libraries, followed by professionals in special/research and public libraries. Representation from school and other libraries was comparatively smaller. This suggests that academic institutions form the primary context for understanding professional competencies in this study.

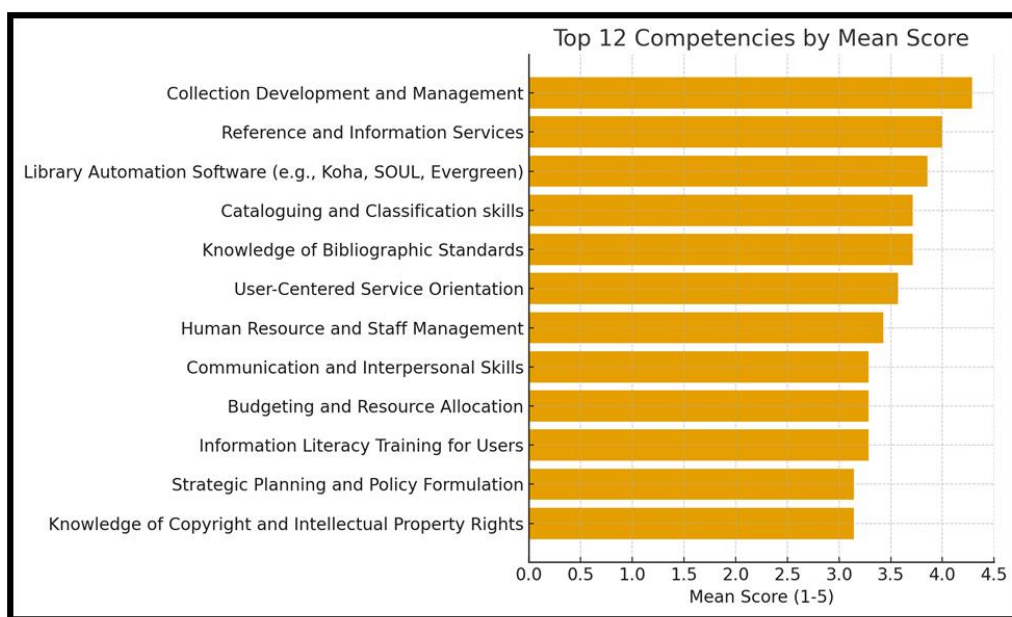


Figure: 2 - Top 12 Competencies of LIS Professionals

The chart highlights the top 12 competencies of LIS professionals ranked by mean score. The highest-rated skills are Collection Development and Management and Reference and Information Services, both reflecting strong traditional library expertise. Digital competencies like Library Automation Software also ranked highly, showing growing adaptation to technology. Mid-level scores were observed in areas such as Human

Resource Management, Communication, and Budgeting, while relatively lower scores were recorded for Strategic Planning, Policy Formulation, and Copyright Knowledge. Overall, the results suggest that LIS professionals are strong in user-focused and traditional roles, but managerial and policy-related competencies need further strengthening.

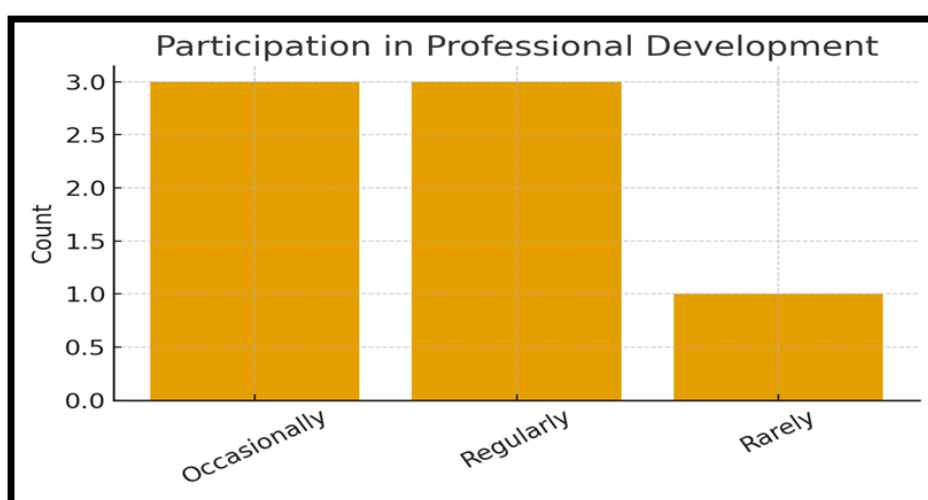


Figure: 3 - Participation in Professional Development

The chart on Participation in Professional Development shows that most LIS professionals engage either occasionally (3 respondents) or regularly (3 respondents) in such activities, while only one respondent

reported rare participation. This indicates that a majority of professionals recognize the importance of continuous learning and skill enhancement, though consistent participation could still be improved.

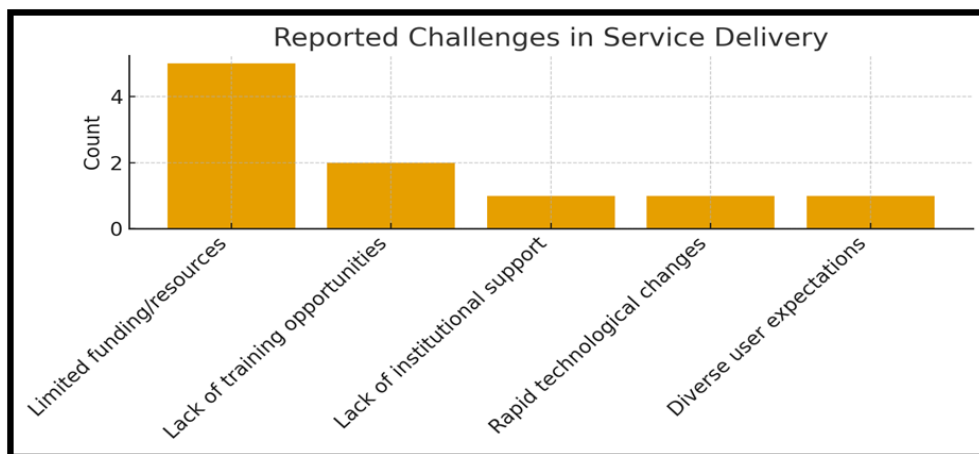


Figure: 4 - Reported Challenges in Service Delivery

The chart on Reported Challenges in Service Delivery highlights that the most significant issue faced by LIS professionals is limited funding/resources (5 respondents). Other challenges include lack of training opportunities (2 respondents) and lack of institutional support, rapid technological changes, and diverse user expectations (1 respondent each). This suggests that financial and resource constraints are the primary barriers to effective service delivery, while skill development and institutional backing also require attention.

Discussion:

The findings suggest that LIS professionals in the study are strong in traditional and service-oriented skills but require significant development in digital literacy, research facilitation, and managerial competencies. Similar to earlier studies in the field, the results confirm that while librarians adapt well to user services, they often struggle with rapidly evolving technologies and

administrative responsibilities. Continuous professional training, workshops, and exposure to global best practices are therefore critical to empowering LIS professionals and enhancing the overall quality of library services.

Key Findings:

- Academic libraries demand a broader range of professional competencies compared to public or special libraries.
- Continuous professional development and training programs are essential to keep pace with technological advancements.
- Librarians with strong communication and problem-solving skills significantly enhance user satisfaction and service quality.

Conclusion:

The study clearly shows that the professional competencies of LIS professionals have a direct influence on the quality of services offered in libraries. While

strengths were observed in **traditional practices such as cataloguing, classification, reference services, and communication skills**, the analysis also exposed **gaps in digital literacy, metadata handling, research support, and managerial functions**. These limitations, coupled with **insufficient training opportunities, financial constraints, and the fast pace of technological change**, restrict the ability of librarians to fully address diverse user needs.

To overcome these barriers, there is a pressing need for **regular training programs, hands-on workshops, and institutional encouragement for skill upgrading**. Equipping professionals with advanced knowledge of **emerging technologies, research tools, and management practices** will not only improve their efficiency but also help libraries evolve into innovative, user-focused learning spaces. In summary, developing and strengthening professional skills is essential for empowering LIS professionals. By fostering continuous learning and adapting to new challenges, libraries can ensure the provision of **reliable, relevant, and high-quality services** in an ever-changing information environment.

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