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sarika sawant

sarika.sawant@libraryinfosc.sndt.ac.in

Prachi Sawant

IGIDR, prachi1303.ps@gmail.com

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Indian LIS schools: Status of Job placement and Internship

Corresponding Author: Dr. Sarika Sawant

Affiliation: Assistant Professor
SHPT School of Library Science
SNDT Women's University
1 # N.T. Road, Marine Lines
Mumbai 400 020

M. No 09969608906

E mail: sarikashpt@gmail.com

Ms. Prachi Sawant

Library Assistant, IGIDR, Mumbai

Abstract

The present study attempted to know the status of job placement & internship activity held in LIS schools /colleges in Maharashtra state of India. The survey found to be most suitable method for present study. The LIS teachers of all universities and affiliated colleges that offer library science course in Maharashtra were considered as a population of the study. It was observed that half of the universities/colleges responded to the questionnaire have separate job placement cell. It was revealed that all dept/colleges receive job requests for students through telephone. It was observed that nearly all (14) respondents receives job request from their Ex-students who are working at higher positions in various libraries. It was revealed that only 5 respondents arrange campus interview if there is such demand by the employer. It was generally observed that IT skills were most in demand as mentioned in almost all job descriptions of job requests received by respondents. It was observed that all respondents recommended their students to join mailing forum/lists to get informed about job advertisements. Half of the respondents (8) mentioned that they offer internship activity for the students. Half of the respondents (8) mentioned that they offer internship activity for the students. But out of 8 only 6 respondents have certain credits allotted for internship in their course.

Keywords: LIS education, LIS jobs, job placement, job opportunities, internship, India

Introduction

Library & Information Science (LIS) courses have lot of potential to develop the knowledge and skills required to sustain and survive in the present day knowledge society. Globalization, liberalization and technology have helped the LIS profession to grow become multidisciplinary, as a byproduct opened up multiple career options. As traditional roles of LIS have changed according to Saroja (n.d.) the LIS education should impart the learners, the necessary skills to gain employment upon graduation and to develop the vision and understanding to help them

cope better with the rapidly changing world.

Jaiswal (2016) pointed out that Librarianship as a profession offers a variety of employment opportunities. Today there are a number of career prospects in the field of Library and Information Science. A career in the field of LIS is multidimensional, ever growing, bright and significantly enriching the knowledge base of the society for prosperity and progress.

As the LIS profession has become more dynamic due to technology, job description and designation both has changed. Now they are identified as web technologists, digital asset manager, digital archivist, records management specialist, taxonomy manager, risk management consultant, archives and collection Manager, Metadata Librarian and so on.

Entrepreneurial Librarians/Information professionals also start their own consulting practices, acting as freelance librarians or information brokers and providing services to other libraries, businesses or government agencies (Karn & Das, 2008).

LIS graduates and Employability

Tenopir (2000) said that employer expectations are more demanding and the ability to move seamlessly from graduation to employment greatly concerns employers. Developments in ICT, interdisciplinary research, and users' expectations have raised debate amongst LIS educators.

Employers are expecting that the academic curricula should keep pace with changing competencies. Employability skills are those basic necessary skills for getting, keeping, and doing well on a job. Employability skills, while categorized in many different ways, are generally divided into three skill sets: Academic skills, Higher-order thinking skills and Personal qualities.

Internship activity helps students to gain these basic employability skills. LIS schools by adopting internship in their curriculum provide glimpse of their capabilities, testing their knowledge by practical exposure, allowing them to prepare for future jobs. Most of the Indian universities send students to other libraries to gain the actual on the job training as part of the curriculum for 2 weeks to 2 months depending on the credits allotted to it.

Hillage & Pollar (2008) referred employability as person's capability of gaining initial employment, maintaining employment, and obtaining new employment if required. In simple terms, employability is about being capable of getting and keeping fulfilling work. More comprehensively, employability is the capability to move self-sufficiently within the market to realize potential through sustainable employment.

Review of Literature

The opportunities in library science are ample but unrecognized. Academic libraries can open the door to the profession by offering internships and mentoring to graduates. The interns leave with a real understanding of librarianship and practical skills that will allow them to excel as they proceed into graduate school and the professional workforce (Asher & Alexander, 2006).

A recent study by Yadav & Bankar(2016) surveyed job advertisement trends in library and information science in India. They found that libraries and library profession require qualified candidates with proficiency in English, information technology and communication skills. The findings showed that LIS schools need to revise their curriculum on the basis of current job market demands. Similarly Sawant & Sawant (2016) explored how marketing of LIS jobs is done through Mailing list/Portal. They applied content analysis method considering job advertisements for Library and Information professionals that appeared in mailing lists & Portals.

Bonnice (1999) recommended a compulsory internship for MLIS students. In a survey of the course contents of 44 MLIS programmes accredited by ALA, Beheshti (1999) found that the main knowledge and skill based competencies taught were: technology management; organisation of information; searching and database development; collection development; mathematical methods and research; sociocultural aspects; non-print media; rare materials and conservation; sources of information; reference materials; archives; children's literature and services; and professional issues.

Rehman (2008) analysed the needs of the corporate job market of Kuwaiti corporate sector for the areas of information and knowledge management. He recommended strategies for developing appropriate competencies in this regard.

The transition from physical resources to digital resources has affected professionals' roles and activities due to new required skills. Choi & Rasmussen (2009) in their research study, examined qualifications and skills required of professional positions involved in digital resources, services, and technologies as changing aspects in academic libraries.

In survey research, data was collected about the opinions of young and experienced professionals in India on existing LIS courses, and its ability to meet the demand and increase employability. Varalakshmi (2006) found that the credentials that LIS courses offer suit lower and middle strata positions but do not match the rigorous requirements of the plum positions. It is a fact that the practicing profession were not happy with the graduates of LIS department in the country. Similar study was carried out in Pakistan by Nosheen & Kanwal (2011). They analysed the opinion of young and senior library and information science (LIS) professionals in Pakistan on LIS curricula and its relevance to market needs to enhance employability.

Objectives of the study

- ☐ to know about LIS internship activity offered by LIS schools /colleges in Maharashtra state of India as part of their curriculum
- ☐ to know the status of LIS job placement cell/activities for LIS students

Research Methodology

The survey found to be most suitable method for present study and structured questionnaire as a tool for data collection. For the study one senior LIS teacher of all universities and affiliated colleges offering library science course in Maharashtra were considered as a sample of the study.

The published literature & university/colleges websites helped to identify 11 universities and 7 colleges in Maharashtra that offer library science course. Out of 7, one college affiliated to Mumbai University, one college affiliated to Swami Ramanand Tirth Marathwada University and another 5 colleges affiliated to Pune University offers library science courses. It was observed that librarians of these colleges offer LIS courses approved by their respective universities. Out of 7 colleges, only 4 colleges had appointed full time teacher at the time of data collection. Otherwise librarians work as contributory teacher in case where teachers are not appointed.

Online structured questionnaire using Google forms was prepared. As the study was related to general questions about job placement, internship activity, so the sample population was consisted of only one senior teacher from each department or college where library science course is taught. The link of questionnaire was emailed to all 15 teachers and 3 librarians wherever faculty members were not appointed.

Total 16 teachers (6 college teachers and 10 university teachers) responded to the questionnaire making total response rate of 89%.

After closing the survey in Google form, researcher exported data from Google form into Microsoft Excel which helped researcher in data analysis and making charts, graphs etc.

Findings

General information

In the first part of questionnaire, respondent were asked about details such as Name of Department, Name of University/College, Courses offered, Intake capacity etc. The data is presented in Table no. 1. It has been observed that out of 10 universities 6 universities have integrated 2 year Mater of Library and Information Science (MLISc) course rest was offering one year Bachelor of Library and Information Science (BLISc) and one year MLISc course. Also it has been observed that all colleges offer one year BLISc and one year MLISc course. MLISc integrated course capacity varies from 22 to 40 whereas intake capacity varies for one year BLISc and one year MLISc course in case of colleges.

Table No. 1 Courses offered and intake capacity

Sr. No.	Name of the Department / college	Name of University	Total No. of LIS students intake	
			MLISc	BLISc
1	Jaykar Library,Pune	Savitribai Phule Pune University	30 (2 Year)	
2	*C. T. Bora College, Shirur	Savitribai Phule Pune University	20	20 (1 Year)

			(1 Year)	
3	Centre for Library and Information Management Studies (CLIMS)	Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai	15 (2 Year)	
4	SHPT School of Library Science	SNDT Women's University	25 (2 Year)	
5	Department of Library & Information Science	Mumbai University	40 (2 Year)	
6	Department of Library & Information Science	Shivaji University, Kolhapur	20 (1 Year)	40 (1 Year)
7	Department of Library & Information Science	SGB Amravati University	20 (1 Year)	30 (1 Year)
8	Department of Library & Information Science	Rashtrasant Tukadoji Maharaj Nagpur University	40 (2 Year)	
9	Department of Library & Information Science	Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, Aurangabad	22 (2 Year)	
10	Department of Library & Information Science	TMV, Pune	30 (1 Year)	30 (1 Year)
11	*H.P.T. Arts & R.Y.K. Science College Library, Nashik	Savitribai Phule Pune University	10	30
12	*Joshi Bedekar College Thane	Mumbai University	20 (1 Year)	30 (1 Year)
13	Center coordinator: LJNJ Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Mumbai	Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University	20 (1 Year)	40 (1 Year)
14	*M.E.S. Abasaheb Garware College , Pune	Savitribai Phule Pune University	20 (1 Year)	60 (1 Year)
15	*The M.G.M 's College of Library and Information Science, Nanded	Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University	20 (1 Year)	60 (1 Year)
16	*Tuljaram Chaturchand college Baramati	Savitribai Phule Pune University	24 (1 Year)	30

				(1 Year)
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***Colleges offer LIS courses**

Job Placement Cell

It was observed that half of the universities/colleges responded to the questionnaire have job placement cell. There were two respondents commented in 'Others' that they have informal job placement cell. But none of the dept/colleges receive job request through job placement cell. This means LIS teachers play significant role in job placement of students.

The engineering, management, pharmaceuticals etc. are the major disciplines where job placement cell and placement officers play important role in bringing job offers to the institutions. Such functional placement cells enhance profile of the institution. If institutions especially government run offers such services to all faculties then it will help to attract good number of students especially in LIS course.

The medium of receiving job requests, positions offered in different types of libraries

It was revealed that all respondents receive job requests for students through telephone. There were two respondents mentioned in 'Others' that they also receive job request in personal meetings or through social networking sites like Facebook. Further it was revealed that respondents (12) receive maximum job request for various positions in academic libraries. Whereas 6 respondents mentioned that they receive maximum request for corporate library and special library. One respondent in 'Others' mentioned that we receive job request from NGO libraries too.

It was observed that 13 respondents mentioned that they receive entry-level position. Equal number of respondents mentioned that they receives mid-level position and leave vacancies as well.

Ex-students who are at higher positions in various libraries send job request for LIS students if there is any vacancy in their organisation

It was observed that nearly all (14) respondents receives job request from their Ex-students who are working at higher positions in various libraries. Sometimes alumni network helps not only in placement but also in case of organizing any seminar/conference etc. It is also of great help if students do internship under these alumni members in the libraries where they work. It drives a flawless communication among students, teacher and librarian to work out internship in best possible way.

Arrangement of campus interview in the department / college

It was revealed that only 5 respondents arrange campus interview if there is such demand by the employer. One respondent mentioned in 'Others' that mostly human resource department

representative of schools demand for campus interview otherwise corporate & academic libraries ask for resume of students, after screening and call for interview directly in their library.

Job description and package

It was observed that all requests they receives includes job description but not package except two respondent mentioned in 'Others' that sometimes only salary is mentioned, sometimes depending upon students interview they decides salary.

Skills included in job descriptions

Respondents were asked which skills those are mostly included in the job description. The skills are ranked as per the response received in a Likert scale. .

- ☐ IT Skills -1
- ☐ Communication skills / Fluent English - 2
- ☐ Managing / Searching E-resources - 3
- ☐ Reference work e.g. solving queries - 4
- ☐ Indexing / Abstracting skills - 5
- ☐ Correspondence skills - 5
- ☐ Marketing skills - 6
- ☐ Shelving - 6
- ☐ Classification Skills - 7
- ☐ Data entry of books - 8
- ☐ Cataloging skills - 9

It was generally observed that IT skills were most in demand as mentioned in almost all job descriptions of job requests received by respondents.

Job prospects after course

There were five respondents mentioned that all students get absorbed in job immediately after completion of course. Whereas mentioned by seven respondents, 51-75% students get absorbed generally after completion of the program. One respondent mentioned that not all students go for jobs immediately after completion especially married women's.

Advice to students for joining mailing forum/lists to know more about job advertisements

It was observed that all respondents recommended their students to join mailing forum/lists to get informed about job advertisements.

Number of credits and duration of Internship offered by LIS department/colleges as part of curriculum

Half of the respondents (8) mentioned that they offer internship activity for the students. But out of 8 only 6 respondents have certain credits allotted for internship in their course. It was noted

that the maximum credits were 4 and minimum were 2. On an average 30 days of internship programme mostly arranged for students. It was found that all respondents take feedback from librarians where their student does internship. One respondent mentioned in 'Others' that they provided not only physical but virtual internship for students. Recently they allowed one student to do virtual internship with First Ray Consulting which is not a ideal library but it is a consultancy which provides services related to library software to various academic, corporate libraries.

Library activities advised by respondents to the librarians to be included in the student's internship

Following listed activities were advised by LIS schools/colleges to librarian to be included in the student's internship

- ☐ Acquisition work
- ☐ Circulation work
- ☐ Classification work
- ☐ Cataloging work
- ☐ Correspondence work
- ☐ Data entry of books
- ☐ Indexing / Abstracting work
- ☐ Managing Card catalogue
- ☐ Managing E resources
- ☐ Marketing work
- ☐ Preparation of bibliographies
- ☐ Reference work e.g. solving queries
- ☐ Shelving
- ☐ Technical processing
- ☐ Document Scanning
- ☐ IT related work

In 'Others' one respondent mentioned that she give work related to updation of library website/blog if she feel the student is capable of doing such work. Another mentioned that making minutes of the meeting /little clerical/account work should also be given to the students to get the exposure to the office work.

Conclusion and discussion

LIS curriculum generally gets revised on regular interval by all the universities to accommodate new developments in the field. However theoretical knowledge of academic subjects is not sufficient for the LIS job aspirants to survive; they have to develop certain important employability skills to get jobs and sustain in the profession. Thus the LIS schools have to accept the challenge of how to incorporate these skills into the curriculum and ensure its proper implementation so that those can be transferred in to students. Apart from LIS skills, to impart communication as well as administrative skills among the students specially designed workshop/programs should be conducted not only by LIS departments but it should be conducted at university/college level, to be incorporated in overall academic schedule. For example SNDT Women's University conducts Student Led Seminar every year, organized and conducted jointly with students and teachers where student are involved in all aspects of its organization right from designing brochure, registration procedure, budgeting, writing minutes of the meetings, introduction of guests etc. This helps in overall development of the personality. Even fear factor to speak/communicate at the time of interview will get diluted in students; it will make them more productive to perform better in job. A short term personality development programs will also be sensible to students to gain few perspectives such as grooming, social etiquettes etc.

There should be well planned activities need to be included LIS internship, even virtual internship can be considered as future aspect of such programmes. Such programs can be more intensive and effective if designed by collaborating with different types of librarians. One very good example mentioned by one respondent that they provided virtual internship to one student after rigorous screening & training by the employer to attend the internship. Even internship at international level should be accepted by the LIS schools if student is willing to attend internship at such places if it is funded jointly by both parties or by any other external agency.

The LIS schools rarely make any aggressive attempt for placement of their students unlike other professional courses. Establishment of placement cell and career counseling for LIS students should be considered as an obligation for the LIS schools. Fresh LIS graduates should not only look for the employment possibilities from known sources rather they should also get exposure to explore other profitable and exciting avenues such as big corporate houses, publication houses, research and statistical institutes, multinational organizations, etc.(Pradhan, 2015).

The present study suggested that all LIS graduates get employed upon its completion of course, but the decline in enrollment to the course will lead to shortage of skilled manpower in near future which is of serious concern today. The probable solution to this situation could be development of allied courses with other faculty such as management, computer science etc if LIS need to sustain in future. Functional job placement cells will play vital role in marketing the of LIS course to attract good talent in the LIS stream.

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