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Directory of Library and Information Science Professionals in Assam

By

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of the work is to develop a directory of Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals working within the geographic location of Assam in print (book) and VCard (mobile) format.

Design/methodology/approach: Email and Mobile Numbers of LIS professionals in Assam are collected from existing associations, online platforms, educational institutes and employers. Later on, individuals were contacted through different means to collect their details for inclusion of their name in the directory.

Findings: The "Directory of LIS Professionals in Assam" with 399 entries is published in the print form in the year 2017 and also made available in the VCard format. It helps all LIS professionals in connecting with each others.

Research Limitations: The "Directory of LIS Professionals in Assam" only covers LIS degree holders who are working on full time basis in the LIS field of any institute / organization within the geographic location of Assam.

Practical Implications: The output of the present work is a ready-to-use directory in multiple format i.e. print and mobile compatible form.

Originality/value: The method which is used in developing the Directory of LIS Professionals in Assam is a unique one and can be reproduced in any other subject.

Keywords: Librarians' Directory, Mobile Directory, Librarians' Database, VCard, Librarians of Assam

Paper Type: Survey

1. Introduction: According to Oxford English Dictionary, directory means "something that directs" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2018). The word "directory" origin from the Latin word "directorium" and it can be defined as a book, CD, DVD or website listing individuals or organizations alphabetically or in some preferred order with details such as names, addresses, mobile or telephone, Email and so on. The main purpose of directory is to allow the details of a person or organization or any entity identified by name or such other fields and to be found. To ease of use and distribution many directories now-a-days are released in digital version.

The need for traditional phone directories is still there especially when people are not connected by other means. The Librarians are always treated as the gateway to information and knowledge. They deal with books and different sources of documentary information. If their contact addresses especially postal address, mobile phone number and Email address can be made found, information seeker from all over the World can contact them for the required information with ease. However, the contact details of a Librarian are hardly available in the institutional website or in other sources. The availability of contact information about the librarians in the form of a directory will also help the general people to request information from a particular library or area by just making a phone calls or sending an Email to the librarians.

There are thousands of people who are working in different kinds of libraries in Assam without knowing much about each others. Availability of information about them in

the form of directory will help to bring them together, to make connections, to share their knowledgebase with each others, problem solving and so on.

Libraries are the gateways to information and in many cases librarian is responsible in dissemination of the information. So, a directory in the print and mobile compatible form will help for easy dissemination of any kinds of knowledge products by the government and similar agencies by routing it through librarian and libraries.

2. Literature review: A few directories are published at Regional, National and State level by different organizations. “Directory of Training Facilities in Library and Information Science in SAARC Countries” is a regional level directory compiled by the SAARC Documentation Centre in 2013 (SAARC Documentation Centre, 2013).

In case of India, LIS Links is considered as the largest database of the LIS professionals designed and developed by Badan Barman way back in February, 2008 as part of the Centrally funded Doctoral Fellowship of Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi (LIS Links, 2008). As on 4th January, 2018, LIS Links (<http://lislinks.com/profiles/members/>) listed 23,512 LIS professionals working in India and a few from abroad which can be searched from: <http://www.lislinks.com/profiles/members/advancedSearch>. Another “Directory of Libraries in India” is compiled by Documentation Centre for Women and Children (DCWC), National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development in 2011 (National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development, 2011). Dr. K. P. Singh of University of Delhi in the year 2013 has listed 346 LIS teachers in the LIS Edu Gateway Portal (<http://www.liseducation.in>) which is at present defunct (LIS Edu Gateway Portal, 2013; Singh, 2010). Another web directory “Vidwan Database” was originated in the same year. It was designed and developed by Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET) Centre that include 242 LIS professionals (as on 4th January, 2018) (INFLIBNET, 2013). A “Directory of Library and Information Science Teachers in India” compiled by Badan Barman in 2016 include the contact details, mobile number and Email address of 286 LIS teachers (Barman, 2016). This is the only printed directory of LIS teachers in India.

In case of Assam, Sadau Asom Gramya Puthibharal Santha compiled the “Directory of Village Library” in 2010 (Sadau Asom Gramya Puthibharal Santha, 2010; & Sadau Asom Gramya Puthibharal Santha, 2018).

3. Research problem: The revolution in the Information and Communication technology used to keep us well connected in the form of mobile communication, Internet, social network like Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus, WhatsApp and so on. However, we still feel the need of the traditional phone directories in case when people are not connected to each other and their contact information cannot be found in the institutional website or social networking platforms. The need of the present study can be justified from the following angles-

a) People are still not connected: The social networking platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus, WhatsApp, etc are bringing a lot of LIS professionals together. However, in case of LIS professionals in Assam, they are still not connected properly due to lack of connectivity, electricity, infrastructure, interest and so on.

b) Lack of contact information over website: Most of the organizations are managing their own websites and it lists the name of the people who work there, however, they very frequently missed the contact information of the LIS professionals working there especially the Mobile Phone numbers and Email addresses. So, people who want to communicate to the LIS professionals don't found any information to start with.

c) Lack of a directory: All types of directory carries a value in itself. It helps in the easy retrieval of contact details, mobile number and Email address of any professional. However,

in the field of Library and Information Science, there are no such directories of Librarians or LIS professionals in Assam.

4. Objectives of the study: The objectives of the study are as follows-

- a) To collect the contact information of the LIS professionals in Assam.
- b) To publish a printed directory of LIS professionals in Assam.
- c) To develop a mobile phone compatible directory of the LIS professionals in Assam.

5. Coverage: The “Directory of Library and Information Science Professionals in Assam” target to cover LIS degree holders who are working on any positions (permanent / contractual / ad-hoc) on full time basis in the LIS field of any institute / organization within the geographic location of Assam. The retired LIS professionals will also be included under the name of the institute from which they retired. The contact detail will includes the official address and address of residence along with personal mobile number and Email Id. However, LIS students, M.Phil. / Ph.D. research scholars and unemployed degree holders in LIS are excluded from the directory.

6. Methodologies and findings: The “Directory of Library and Information Science Professionals in Assam” starts with merging of existing data available with different associations, online platforms, educational institutes and employers. Later on, an online data capture form was developed by using Google Form. The form was circulated to the target group by Email, WhatsApp message, SMS, Phone calls or through general social networking site like Facebook and subject specific mailing lists in India. The data collected through the form are verified by the students of Department of Library and Information Science, Gauhati University. In the event of any confusion, a clarification was sought through Email and Phone calls to the person who submit his/her details for inclusion in the “Directory of Library and Information Science Professionals in Assam”.

The study as a whole carried out through following ways-

a) Collection of members data from existing library associations: The existing LIS associations / organizations in Assam have their own members data. A drive is carried out to collect such member’s data from the existing associations. This way 47 members data were collected from Assam Library Association (ALA), 167 from Assam College Librarians’ Association (ACLA) and 175 from Library and Information Science Professionals’ Association (LISPA), however, unable to collect any member’s data from Sadau Asom Gramya Puthibharal Santha.

b) Collection of members data from LIS Links website: The LIS Links (www.lislinks.com) is a social networking platform for LIS professionals in India designed and developed by Badan Barman way back in February, 2008. The LIS Links members who are from Assam were exported from its server and it constituted 173 numbers of professionals.

c) Collection of data from educational institutes that impart programmes in Library and Information Science: The Department of Library and Information Science (DLIS), Gauhati University; Centre for Library and Information Science Studies, Dibrugarh University; DLIS, Assam University; DLIS, Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University and DLIS, Assam Women’s University producing the LIS professionals to cater to the need of qualified professionals through their LIS programmes that ranges from Diploma to Ph.D.. Out of all these educational institutes, 78 alumni details were collected from the Department of Library and Information Science (DLIS), Gauhati University.

d) Collection of data from major employer: The Directorate of Library Services Assam used to recruit a number of professionals. They are approached to provide their staff details and accordingly, details about 36 LIS professionals were collected.

e) Merging of the data: The data from all sources were rendered in an MS Excel sheet and they were merged together and duplicate entries were deleted by taking Mobile number and Email address as unique field. This way a near comprehensive list of LIS professionals who are working in Assam were prepared.

f) Data capture form in Google form: A data capture form is designed and developed by using Google Form that contains all essential details that can be incorporated into the directory. In the data capture form all fields except Official Phone number and Official Email were made compulsory and data validations were made for PIN, Mobile and Email Id.

g) Collection of data from individual members: *Firstly*, an Email is sent to all the Email Ids of the MS Excel sheet asking them to submit their details through the online data capture form. After six days another reminder Email was sent. The LIS professionals who have not responded to the Email are obtained manually by deleting the entries from the MS Excel sheet of those who have responded. Their details were converted to a .vcf file and exported to a smart phone.

Secondly, a WhatsApp message was sent to the remaining professionals who have a WhatsApp account to submit their data through the online data capture form. Another reminder message was sent after six days.

Thirdly, an SMS is sent to the remaining professionals or to those who don't have an Email account or WhatsApp account asking them to submit their details online. A reminder SMS followed after six days.

Fourthly, those who are left out or have not submitted their data are contacted individually by making a phone call.

A few entries were also collected by attending a few events like seminars / conferences related to LIS organized in Assam. In the event itself, people were requested to submit the data through the online data capture form the access of which was made available through Smart Phone or when needed they were supplied with a printed hard copy of the form.

The data capture form was also circulated through LIS Links Broadcast Message (<http://www.lislinks.com>), general social networking site like Facebook, WhatsApp Groups and subject specific mailing lists in India.

Later on, all the information supplied by the LIS professionals through the online data capture form or entered manually in the online data capture form are converted into MS Excel sheet. The data thus collected are verified by the students of Department of Library and Information Science, Gauhati University. In the event of any confusion, a clarification was sought through Email and Phone calls to the person who submit his/her details for inclusion in the "Directory of Library and Information Science Professionals in Assam".

The data thus collected are used for publication of a draft printed directory of LIS professionals in Assam. The draft was circulated by Email among all the LIS professionals whose names were there in the directory to provide a way for addition / modification / deletion before it goes into the print. They were given another six days to submit their comments on their entries. The draft directory is made available at: <https://goo.gl/QNBf51> (web address is case sensitive) and the online data capture form at: <https://goo.gl/CgLJjG> (web address is case sensitive).

The directory is printed in such a way so that when needed, people can just make a photocopy of the directory and paste the office address or residential address at the top of a regular letter envelop.

	Office Address	Residential Address
Sl. No.: 055	Dr. Badan Barman Assistant Professor Department of Library & Information Science Gauhati University Gopinath Bordoloi Nagar P.O.: Gauhati University Dist.: Kamrup (Metro), Assam, PIN: 781014	Dr. Badan Barman House No. 8, Taranga Path Krishnanagar P.O.: Japorigog Dist.: Kamrup (Metro), Assam, PIN: 781005 Mobile: 9864205166 Email: badanbarman@gmail.com

Fig. 1: A Single Entry from the Print Copy of the Directory

The data of the directory is also used to create a .csv (comma delimited) file and this file is used to create .vcf file by using the software *CSV to vCard* software (<http://www.csvtovcard.com>). The .vcf file contains details like Name, Designation, Name of the Institute, Mobile Number and Email Id. All the contacts details of the directory can be imported to the mobile phone by just copying the file or downloading it from the server and importing it to the contact list of the mobile phone. However, considering the probable misuse of the data, this file was not made available to all.

7. Addressing the issues: The success of the directory largely depend on the association of the compiler to the Assam Library Association (ALA), Assam College Librarians' Association and Library and Information Science Professional Association (LISPA). The compiler was responsible for developing the website of all these associations and it has made the job of data collection from these associations very easy. Further, the researcher was administering the LIS Links (<http://www.lislinks.com>) - a social networking platform for LIS professionals in India. So, its 173 unstructured member's data of LIS professionals in Assam were at his reach. Further, his association with the Department of Library and Information Science, Gauhati University has made it very easy to get its alumni data.

Address of communication of a person is constantly changing and so the directory to remain usable needs to be revised periodically. Considering this point, the online data capture form will always be available and the directory will be revised accordingly at the end of each year based on the new data received.

8. Conclusion: The "Directory of Library and Information Science Professionals in Assam" with 399 entries is published in the print form in the year 2017. All the entries in the directory are arranged in the alphabetical order considering the forename first. As far as possible, full forenames were given but when it was not available, it was listed in the abbreviated form. To ease the retrieval process, the institute-wise index was provided in the last portion of the directory that will direct the user to the serial number in the alphabetical list of "Directory of Library and Information Science Professionals in Assam". The VCard format of the Directory will be made available on demand to only those who qualify to receive such data, the criteria for which will be determined by the compiler. The directory will help the LIS professionals working in Assam to remain in touch with each others.

The Directory was developed based on voluntary participation of the LIS professionals. So, if anyone is missing in the list, it simply means that person have not submitted his/her data. However, at any moment of time if they fell interested, they can submit their data for inclusion of their name in the next edition of the directory by submitting details through the online data capture form which will always be open.

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cost of the directory and to all his M.L.I.Sc. Students of 2015-2017, 2016-2018, 2017-2019 batch who took the trouble to verify the data included in the directory.

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