

LIS PROFESSIONALS AND THE GIG ECONOMY: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT OF MEDICAL COLLEGE LIBRARIES

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Introduction:

The gig economy has significantly transformed various industries, including library and information science (LIS). As freelance, contract-based, and temporary work arrangements become more prevalent, LIS professionals are increasingly engaging in gig-based roles, particularly in specialized domains such as collection development in medical college libraries (Tian and Chen, 2024). This shift presents both opportunities and challenges in collection development, a crucial aspect of library management that ensures access to relevant, high-quality resources for medical education and research

(Senthurvelmurugan, 2011). In the context of medical college libraries, the gig economy offers LIS professionals the flexibility to work on short-term projects such as digital curation, metadata management, and subscription negotiations (Gusseck and Wiesche, 2023). Freelancers and contract librarians can contribute to resource acquisition, licensing, and the integration of digital tools without being tied to traditional full-time employment (Gaikwad and Bilawar, 2023). However, these opportunities also come with challenges, including job insecurity, inconsistent professional development, and difficulties in coordinating long-term collection strategies (Goswami and Biswas, 2011).

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Medical college libraries often face budget constraints while trying to maintain comprehensive and current collections (Morgan, 2019). Traditional collection development involves long-term hiring, subscriptions, and purchasing, which can be expensive. The gig economy allows libraries to hire freelance librarians, researchers, and subject experts on a project basis to curate and update collections. Moreover, they can utilize pay-per-use or short-term subscription models for digital resources rather than committing to costly annual licenses (Roy and Shrivastava, 2020). In addition to above the libraries can significantly reduce overhead costs associated with permanent staff while still accessing high-quality expertise when needed. This flexibility ensures that limited funds are allocated

more effectively, allowing libraries to acquire the most relevant materials without unnecessary expenditures (Husain and Nazim, 2015; Agrawal and Bhukya, 2022). In the backdrop of the above this study explores how LIS professionals can navigate the gig economy in the context of medical college libraries, analyzing both the benefits and limitations of their roles in collection development (Jain, 2017). By examining trends, experiences, and institutional responses, this research aims to provide insights into how medical libraries can effectively integrate gig workers into their operational frameworks while ensuring the sustainability of their collections. This study has been conducted in the Maharashtra State of India and the medical colleges

affiliated to Maharashtra University of Health Sciences Nashik were specifically considered for data collection.

Research Methodology:

In this investigation a focused group survey was adopted to collect primary data from the librarians working in the medical colleges affiliated to Maharashtra University of Health Sciences Nashik. Also, the study was carried out using a “Descriptive (Cross Sectional)” research design. All the medical colleges situated in Maharashtra State of India formed the universe of the study. Prior to data collection a reconnaissance survey was conducted that showed that there are 163 medical colleges that are affiliated to Maharashtra University of Health Sciences, Nashik. Subsequently a preliminary survey was conducted to

check whether the librarians are aware of the concept of gig economy or not. It was observed that 56 librarians were somewhat aware of the concept of gig economy. All these librarians were contacted for their feedback, however, only 43 librarians responded to the request making the response rate to be 76.7%. The data was collected using a structured questionnaire that was designed by keeping the study objectives in mind. Online survey method (Google Form) was used to collect the primary data. The data generated during the study was analyzed with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 24.0 software. The Chi-Square Test was used as an inferential statistics test and the significance level was chosen to be 0.05 (or equivalently, 5%).

Results and Discussion:

1. Opportunities for Gig based LIS professional for Specialized Subject Curation

Table 1:

Opportunities for Gig based LIS professionals to carry out specialized subject curation process as part of collection development

Response	Nos.	Per
Very High	29	67.4
Somewhat	9	20.9
Not at all	5	11.6
Total	43	100.0

$$\chi^2 = 23.075; \text{df: } 2; \chi^2_{\text{crit}} = 5.99; p < 0.05$$

Above Table 1 shows opinion of the respondents about opportunities for Gig based LIS professional to carry out specialized subject curation process. Data shows that 67.4% respondents feel that opportunities for Gig based LIS professional to carry out specialized subject curation are very high while 20.9% respondents feel that the LIS professionals have somewhat opportunities. Furthermore 11.6% stated there are no opportunities for Gig based LIS professional to carry out specialized subject curation.

2. Opportunities for Gig based LIS professional for Specialized eBook Curation via Freelance Medical Librarians

Table 2: Opportunities for Gig based LIS professional for Specialized eBook Curation via Freelance Medical Librarians

Response	Nos.	Per
Very High	7	16.3
Somewhat	31	72.1
Not at all	5	11.6
Total	43	100.0

$$\chi^2 = 34.148; \text{df: } 2; \chi^2_{\text{crit}} = 5.99; p < 0.05$$

Above Table 2 shows opinion of the respondents about opportunities for Gig based LIS professional for specialized eBook curation via Freelance Medical Librarians. Data shows that 16.3% respondents feel that opportunities for Gig based LIS professional for specialized eBook curation via Freelance Medical Librarians are very high while 72.1% respondents feel that the LIS professionals have somewhat opportunities. Furthermore 11.6% stated there are no opportunities for Gig based LIS professional for specialized eBook curation via Freelance Medical Librarians.

3. Opportunities for Gig based LIS professional for Metadata Cleanup by Freelance Catalogers

Table 3:

Opportunities for Gig based LIS professional for Metadata Clean-up by Freelance Catalogers

Response	Nos.	Per
Very High	30	69.8
Somewhat	4	9.3
Not at all	9	20.9
Total	43	100.0

$$\chi^2 = 26.564; \text{df: } 2; \chi^2_{\text{crit}} = 5.99; p < 0.05$$

Above Table 3 shows opinion of the respondents about opportunities for Gig based LIS professional for Metadata Clean-up by Freelance Catalogers. Data shows that 69.8% respondents feel that opportunities for Gig based LIS professional for Metadata Clean-up by Freelance Catalogers are very high while 9.3% respondents feel that the LIS professionals have somewhat opportunities. Furthermore 20.9% stated there are no opportunities for Gig based LIS professional for Metadata Clean-up by Freelance Catalogers.

4. Opportunities for LIS professional in Gig-Based Weeding Project

Table 4:

Opportunities for LIS professional in Gig-Based Weeding Project

Response	Nos.	Per
Very High	38	88.4
Somewhat	5	11.6
Not at all	0	0.0
Total	43	100.0

$$\chi^2 = 59.502; \text{df: } 2; \chi^2_{\text{crit}} = 5.99; p < 0.05$$

Above Table 4 shows opinion of the respondents about opportunities for LIS professional in Gig based weeding project. Data shows that 88.4% respondents feel that opportunities for LIS professional in Gig-based weeding project are very high while 11.6% respondents feel that they have somewhat opportunities.

5. Role of Gig-Based On-Demand Purchasing Models in Collection Development

Table 5:

Role of Gig-Based On-Demand Purchasing Models in Collection Development

Response	Nos.	Per
Very High	31	72.1
Somewhat	4	9.3
Not at all	8	18.6
Total	43	100.0

$$\chi^2 = 29.635; \text{df: } 2; \chi^2_{\text{crit}} = 5.99; p < 0.05$$

Above Table 5 shows opinion of the respondents about role of Gig-Based On-Demand Purchasing Models in Collection Development. Data shows that 72.1% respondents feel that role of Gig-Based On-Demand Purchasing models in Collection Development is very high while 9.3% respondents feel that Gig-Based On-Demand Purchasing models are somewhat effective in Collection Development. Furthermore 18.6% respondents feel that Gig-Based On-Demand Purchasing models are not effective in Collection Development.

6. Opportunities for LIS professional in Gig-Based Collection Development Project

Table 6:

Opportunities for LIS professional in Gig-Based Collection Development Project

Response	Nos.	Per
Very High	33	76.7
Somewhat	7	16.3
Not at all	3	7.0
Total	43	100.0

$$\chi^2 = 37.032; \text{df: } 2; \chi^2_{\text{crit}} = 5.99; p < 0.05$$

Above Table 6 shows opinion of the respondents about opportunities for LIS professionals in Gig-Based Collection Development Project. Data shows that 76.7% respondents feel that opportunities for LIS professionals in Gig-Based Collection Development Project are very high while 16.3% respondents feel that LIS professionals have somewhat opportunities. Furthermore 7.0% respondents feel that there are no opportunities for LIS professionals in Gig-Based Collection Development Project.

Conclusions:

1. Opportunities for Gig based LIS professional for Specialized Subject Curation

- In view of the study results it is evident that most of the LIS professionals of study area feel that opportunities for Gig based LIS professional to carry out specialized subject curation are very

high.

2. Opportunities for Gig based LIS professional for Specialized eBook Curation via Freelance Medical Librarians

- In view of the study results it is evident that most of the LIS professionals of study area feel that opportunities for Gig based LIS professional for

specialized eBook curation via Freelance Medical Librarians are of somewhat level.

3. Opportunities for Gig based LIS professional for Metadata Cleanup by Freelance Catalogers

- In view of the study results it is evident that most of the LIS professionals of study area feel that opportunities for Gig based LIS professional for Metadata Clean-up by Freelance Catalogers are very high.

4. Opportunities for LIS professional in Gig-Based Weeding Project

- In view of the study results it is evident that most of the LIS professionals of study area feel that opportunities for LIS professional in Gig based weeding project are very high.

5. Role of Gig-Based On-Demand Purchasing Models in Collection Development

- In view of the study results it is evident that most of the LIS professionals of study area feel that Gig-Based On-Demand Purchasing models are highly effective in Collection Development.

6. Opportunities for LIS professional in Gig-Based Collection Development Project

- In view of the study results it is evident that most of the LIS professionals of study area feel that opportunities for LIS professional in Gig based collection development project are very high.

Thus, the gig economy presents a transformative opportunity for medical college libraries to revolutionize their collection development strategies. By embracing freelance expertise, flexible resource acquisition, and technology-driven solutions, libraries can enhance cost efficiency, access specialized knowledge, adapt to rapid advancements, and improve user satisfaction. While challenges exist, proactive management can ensure that gig economy-based collection development becomes a sustainable and

effective model for medical libraries, ultimately supporting the academic and research missions of medical institutions.

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