

NEED FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE (LIS) EDUCATION: AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract:

This study highlights the importance of entrepreneurial skills and competencies for Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals. These skills are essential due to developments in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) along with Mobile applications. Shrinking job opportunities in the library sector is another cause to embrace entrepreneurship. Traditionally, LIS professionals were largely employed in academic, public and special libraries. To be relevant, competitive and sustain in this disruptive technological era, diversification and expansion of the job market is very essential. In this context, Entrepreneurship skills plays a vital role in accelerating this diversification. As information becomes a valuable commodity, LIS professionals have the opportunity to create innovative services, products and enterprises which will eventually lead to entrepreneurial culture among LIS Professionals. The paper aims to identify entrepreneurial abilities and examine whether current LIS education prepares students for self-employment, innovation and business opportunities in the information field.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurs, Entrepreneurial skills and competencies, Entrepreneurship Education, Entrepreneurship in Library and Information Science*

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Introduction:

The field of Library and Information Science (LIS) is going through a phase where roles are expanding, expectations are changing and technology is reshaping how services are delivered. The profession now needs individuals who can think beyond routine work and explore new possibilities. LIS professionals must be able to innovate, adapt and even create their own platforms and business opportunities for employment. In this situation, entrepreneurship becomes important not only for generating alternative career opportunities but also for broadening the purpose and reach of libraries in society. Recent examples are evident that the LIS-trained individuals have successfully started consultancies, digital services and information enterprises, showing the possibilities of business ventures in the field of LIS and offering alternative career paths for future LIS graduates beyond salaried employment (Batthini, 2012).

Entrepreneurial skills are essential for strengthening the future of the LIS profession. Skills such as creativity and Innovation, problem-solving, risk-taking, financial planning, and networking enable professionals to design new information products, develop consultancy services and cater to emerging user needs. Lack of entrepreneurial skills may lead to unemployment, skill redundancy and the profession may continue to rely heavily on limited salaried positions. Therefore, entrepreneurial skills/competencies are not only beneficial but necessary for the growth, sustainability and diversification of the LIS profession in the digital era.

Meaning and Definitions: The concept of entrepreneurship was first established in the early 1700's. The word "entrepreneurship" originates from the French verb "*entreprendre*" and the German word "*unternehmen*" both means "To undertake".

Entrepreneurship is the professional application of knowledge, skills and competencies and/or of monetizing a new idea, by an individual or a set of people by launching an enterprise *de novo* or diversifying from an existing one (distinct from seeking self-employment as in a profession or trade), thus to pursue growth while generating wealth, employment and social good (National Knowledge Commission, 2008).

An entrepreneur is a person who sets up a business or businesses, taking on financial risks in the hope of profit (Oxford Dictionary, 2005).

Need for Entrepreneurial Skills and Competencies:

Library and Information Science (LIS) Education in India celebrated a Centenary Year in 2011. During these hundred years of time, it has been emerged as one of the important professional courses to produce the skilled and competent manpower to manage various types of libraries and information centers (Raju, 2014). However, the recent developments in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), particularly Mobile Technologies, are posing serious challenges to the relevance of libraries and information centers (Hotsonyame, 2023).

There are other reasons, like an overcrowded job market where the number of LIS graduates has increased while job availability has not grown at the same pace. Many qualified professionals are competing for limited positions in academic, public and special libraries. This situation makes it difficult for new LIS professionals to secure employment (Pachauri, 2023). There is an increasing unemployment among LIS graduates, part-time appointments and decreased recruitments from government agencies etc. are also creating instability in the profession. Lack of funding and restructuring of existing positions have contributed to unemployment (Pachauri, 2023).

Another challenge is that professionals from other disciplines, especially IT professionals getting library positions because some positions require strong technological skills such as database management, digital archiving, software handling etc. IT professionals often possess these technical abilities and therefore compete successfully for positions. As a result, LIS professionals face challenges in getting positions in these job markets. (Kumar & Sharma, 2009; Pradhan, 2015).

In response to these inevitable challenges, some library and information professionals are seriously thinking the way the young are educated by infusing creative thinking and innovation in their educational curriculum. Barman

& Baishya (2015), opined that these are series of challenges at one end and at the same time the same technologies are added new dimensions by creating a lot of opportunities to identify the untapped Information Business Markets, to tap the information needs of new generation, to create employment and contribute to the society and economy for the LIS professions by embracing the entrepreneurship instead of opting for employment in LIS field.

Therefore, entrepreneurship skills can help LIS professionals think creatively and turn new ideas into useful products and services. With the right skills and confidence, they can start their own ventures. This not only provides them jobs but also helps them create work for others. Such innovation brings fresh opportunities to the LIS field.

Methodology / Approach:

The work is based on a conceptual and descriptive approach. It reviews selected literature, curriculum development committees' reports and the role of professional associations to understand how entrepreneurship is integrated into LIS education. The study discusses different entrepreneurial competencies, examines challenges in the LIS job market and analyses LIS education to determine whether entrepreneurial elements are included in LIS programmes.

Entrepreneurial Skills and Competencies: It's a common notion and many people believe that Entrepreneurs possess innate, genetic talents. But, experts generally agree that most Entrepreneurs were not born; they learnt to become Entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurial competencies indicate the sufficiency of knowledge and skills that enable someone to act in a wide variety of situations. These are set of related abilities, knowledge and skills that enable a person (or an organization) to act effectively in a job or situation. The following some skills and competencies are discussed in brief.

1. **Self-Confidence:** Self-confidence is the feeling of trust in one's abilities, qualities, and judgment. In the LIS field, it helps an individual to take initiative, use new tools and improve services. To become an entrepreneur in LIS, self-confidence is even more important because it gives the courage to take risks and start new ventures. Without self-confidence, professionals may hesitate, fear failure and miss opportunities for growth (Landrum, 2009).
2. **Risk Taking:** Risk-taking is the practice or tendency of doing things that are risky or have uncertain outcomes. Embracing an entrepreneurial journey always involves risks. Starting a venture involves financial and professional uncertainty but also offers the chance for growth and success. A confident professional understands that failures may occur, yet they are part of learning and improvement. Thus, risk-taking ability helps professionals explore new opportunities, expand services and contribute to the progress of LIS (Landrum, 2009).
3. **Innovation:** Innovation means turning new ideas into useful services or products. It helps professionals to improve services and use new technologies. For business ventures, it is more crucial to create unique information services and stay competitive. It also helps professionals to survive and sustain in difficult times. Through innovation, the LIS profession can remain relevant, resilient and progressive. Through

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4. **Decision Making:** Decision making is a choice made between alternative courses of action in a situation of uncertainty. It is the ability of a person to make decisions [quickly](#) and [effectively](#).
5. **Independence:** Independence refers to a person's ability of thinking or acting for oneself and not depending on something else for strength or effectiveness. Independent people are not [influenced](#) or affected by [others](#) nor they are controlled by any outside factors including opinions and regulations.
6. **Technical Knowledge:** Technical knowledge refers to the right skills and understanding of chosen field to work efficiently and effectively. With good technical knowledge, a person can solve problems quickly and complete tasks without any hassles. It also improves the quality of work and supports new ideas and innovations. Lack of technical knowledge one may find it difficult to handle the work, may commit mistakes and may depend on others for help. This can slow down business activities and reduce overall growth and success.
7. **Leadership:** Leadership is the ability to guide and influence a group of people or an organisation towards a common goal. Leadership involves inspiring and motivating team members to work together and perform their best. It is important because it helps in setting a clear direction, building confidence and helps in solving problems effectively. In the absence of good leadership, a team may lack direction, face confusion and struggle to achieve its goals (Kaulgud, 2003).
8. **Communication Skills:** Communication is an important skill for any leader to run an organisation. It helps them share ideas clearly, build strong relationships and run their business smoothly. The leaders having good communication skills can explain their plans, guide their team and solve problems quickly. It also creates trust, reduces misunderstanding and keeps everyone informed and confident. When instructions, expectations and feedback are clear, the team works better, faster and with more unity. This finally helps in achieving organisational goals effectively and ensures the overall growth and success of the organisation.
9. **Critical Thinking:** Critical thinking means using logic, evidence and careful reasoning to understand issues, problems or ideas. In an organisation, critical thinking is important because it helps in better decision-making, planning and solving complex problems effectively. It allows employees and leaders to think beyond assumptions, evaluate different options and choose the best solution. Absence of critical thinking and careful reasoning may lead to poor decisions, fail to notice important details and face difficulties in solving problems (Khanka, 2015).

LIS Education and Training in Developing Entrepreneurial Skills and Competencies:

Library and Information Science (LIS) education in the country took roots in the beginning of the 20th Century i.e. 1903, when informal training was launched by John McFarlane, the then first Librarian of the Imperial Library, Calcutta. During the year 1911, The Maharaja of Baroda, Sayaji Rao Gaekwad III appointed W.A.Borden to start the first Library School in 1911.

After the independence in 1947, many universities came forward and introduced LIS courses to meet the emerging needs of trained manpower to manage public, academic and special libraries. The following

committees on curriculum development have recommended and suggested the LIS Schools and Departments in India for framing the syllabus at respective universities.

Curriculum Development Committees and Recommendations:

The development of Library and Information Science (LIS) education in India has been guided by various committees over the years. The first major step came in 1957 when the Committee on University and College Libraries, chaired by Dr. S.R. Ranganathan, emphasised the need for quality library training for professional leadership. In 1958, the Advisory Committee for Libraries under Dr. K.P. Sinha recommended establishing a separate LIS department, introducing postgraduate courses in librarianship and promoting research. In 1965, the UGC Review Committee, under the chairmanship of by Dr. S.R. Ranganathan, proposed course content for C.Lib.Sc., B.Lib.Sc., and M.Lib.Sc. programs (Raju, 2014).

The Curriculum Development Committee was formed in 1990 under the chairmanship of Prof. P.N.Kaula. This committee outlines the structure for B.L.I.Sc., M.L.I.Sc., M.Phil., and Ph.D. in LIS. In 1998 with the UGC Model Curriculum was prepared under Dr. C.R. Karisiddappa, which highlighted information products and services, including information analysis, repackaging and consolidation. In 2005, the National Knowledge Commission (NKC) Working Group on Libraries (an advisory body) recommended public–private partnership to strengthen library systems and LIS education (Raju, 2014).

It is observed that the Curriculum Development Committees have not given much importance in developing entrepreneurial competencies among students.

Role of Professional Associations:

1. ***Indian Association of Teachers of Library and Information Science:*** In its 23rd Indian Association of Teachers of Library and Information Science (IATLIS) National Conference held at Panjabi University, Patiala during 23-25 November, 2006. It has discussed and recommended to promote Self Employment, Entrepreneurship and E-Publishing.
2. ***Management Libraries Network (MANLIBNET):*** This association took initiative to promote entrepreneurship in Library and Information Profession and organized an International Conference on “Entrepreneurial Approaches to Librarianship” during 26-28 December, 2013. In this conference, the recommendations were Industry Collaborations, Entrepreneurship Development, Marketing of Information etc.
3. Professional Associations and other national organisations offering various continuous education programs and during these programs, the experts and resource persons have suggested integrating Entrepreneurship in LIS, but these recommendations remained only on paper and not implemented in LIS curriculum (Satyanarayana, 2013).

Findings:

- ICT and mobile technologies have created both challenges and new business opportunities for LIS professionals.

- There is a disparity between increasing LIS graduates and limited job availability, leading to unemployment.
- The expansion and diversification of job markets for LIS professionals is essential for sustenance and to be competitive in the digital era.
- LIS curricula lack focus on entrepreneurship and do not impart entrepreneurial skills among LIS students.
- Essential entrepreneurial competencies include self-confidence, innovation, risk-taking, leadership, decision-making, technical knowledge, communication, independence and critical thinking.
- Professional associations like IATLIS and MANLIBNET have made recommendations to integrate entrepreneurship, but practical implementation has not been done.

Conclusion:

It is clear that Library and Information Science education still lacks focus on developing entrepreneurial skills and competencies. Very few efforts have been made to promote an entrepreneurial mindset among LIS students. Although LIS education and LIS professionals are rapidly adopting the technology but not realizing the importance of Entrepreneurship and its role in development of LIS field. Therefore, there is an urgent need to develop a practical and action-based program for entrepreneurship. It should help students gain the skills and competencies needed to start their own ventures. Such training will encourage them to think beyond traditional salaried jobs. It will also motivate them to explore new business opportunities in the LIS field.

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Cite This Article:

Mr. Paloti R.G. (2026). *Need for Entrepreneurial Skills and Competencies in Library and Information Science (LIS) Education: An Overview.* **In Educreator Research Journal: Vol. XIII (Issue II), pp. 194-200.**