

The Evolution and development of Library and Information Science in Pakistan: A Historical Study

Aamir Shahzad

Ph.D. Scholar, Department of History & Pakistan Studies, International Islamic University, Islamabad.

Email: aamir.phdhis50@student.iiu.edu.pk

Dr. Muhammad Sarwar

Assistant Professor, Department of Social Sciences, University of Veterinary & Animal Sciences, Lahore.

Email: sarwarsiddique@uvas.edu.pk

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Abstract

Library education or library science as an academic discipline is not an old term compared to education in other disciplines or fields of knowledge. It has a history of almost 130 years, from when this discipline was first introduced at the University of Germany and later on to the United States of America (USA) and other European countries. Until the nineteenth century, academic librarians were usually university professors with a keen interest in libraries. Library and Information Science (LIS) in Pakistan has undergone significant transformations since the country's inception in 1947. From establishing foundational libraries to embracing digital advancements, the LIS sector in Pakistan plays a crucial role in education, research, and the dissemination of information. After the creation of Pakistan in 1947, Universities have also started offering Ph.D. programs in LIS, enhancing research and academic contributions. Today, the LIS has evolved into an advanced academic discipline in Pakistan. It has been passed through a historical process, bringing a paradigm shift in LIS as an academic discipline worldwide. The historical journey of library and information science in Pakistan was a testament to its resilience and adaptability in response to the evolving information landscape. The researcher will be trying to fulfill the gaps by analyzing these studies, in the historical context; one can trace the evolution of LIS as an academic discipline in Pakistan, recognizing the achievements while acknowledging the ongoing challenges. The historical trajectory also reflects broader societal changes, such as the increasing role of technology and the paradigm shift from traditional information LIS systems to more dynamic, digital frameworks as well as International Standards.

Keywords: Evolution, Library, Information Science, Pakistan, Historical Study

Introduction

Background of the Study

Library education or library science as an academic discipline is not an old terminology as compared to education in other disciplines or fields of knowledge. It has a history of almost 130 years when this discipline was first introduced at the University of Germany and later onto the United States of America (USA) and other European countries. Till the nineteenth century, academic librarians were usually professors in universities having a keen interest in libraries. No formal training was provided to them, besides; the juniors had to get informal guidance from their services in this regard: with time, the term library school was started to be used for an academic institution imparting professional education and training in the field of librarianship. The first formal Library and Information Sciences School (LISS) was established in the USA by Melville Dewey in 1887 at Columbia University.¹

The library and information sciences as an academic discipline in united India and Pakistan has a rich history. Through the struggles of Maharaja Sayajrao III, Gaekwar of Baroda (1862-1939) library schools were introduced. He was a library support and promoter, a civilized and educational ruler.² Dr. Khurshid (1970) wrote “Some of the developments emanating from British rule significantly differed from the practice then existing in Great Britain itself”.³ Dickinson also wrote a book on library science “The Punjab Library Primer” in 1916 in which he described the expansions of Dewey numbers to meet local needs in India.⁴ Over the years, Library and Information Science has grown as a distinct academic discipline in Pakistan.

Library and Information Science (LIS) in Pakistan has undergone significant transformations since the country's inception in 1947. From establishing foundational libraries to embracing digital advancements, the LIS sector in Pakistan plays a crucial role in education, research, and the dissemination of information. After the creation of Pakistan in 1947, there was an immediate need to develop a national library infrastructure to support academic discipline in the new country. During this period, the government and various educational institutions recognized the importance of formal library education. The establishment of the Pakistan Library Association (PLA) in marked a significant milestone. The PLA played a pivotal role in advocating for library development and professional education in the country. The University of Karachi became the first institution to offer a certificate course in Library Sciences, laying the groundwork for academic programs in this discipline. The 1970s and 1980s saw substantial growth in LIS and its professional development in Pakistan. The University of the Punjab launched the first Bachelor's degree program in LIS, elevating the discipline to an academic level. The University of Karachi introduced a Master's degree program in LIS, further professionalizing the field and attracting a high number of students. The advent of computer technology began to influence the LIS, with curricula increasingly Incorporating Information Technology (IT) and management in this discipline. Since the 1990s onwards, LIS has undergone a significant transformation in Pakistan. LIS programs have been started to integrate courses on IT, databases, and digital libraries, which reflects global trends in this discipline. Distance education and online learning platforms began to emerge making LIS more accessible across the country. The focus has shifted towards specialized areas such as information management, knowledge management, and digital curation. Universities have also started offering Ph.D. programs in LIS, enhancing research and academic contributions.

Significance of the Study

Today, the LIS has evolved into an advanced academic discipline in Pakistan. It has been passed through a historical process, bringing a paradigm shift in LIS as an academic discipline worldwide. There is an obvious realization of the importance of this discipline in Pakistan as a historical context and assess the many challenges, and weaknesses faced by the LIS. It is taught as an academic program in different universities and degree-awarding institutions. A review of the literature has revealed that no comprehensive study regarding LIS as an academic discipline in Pakistan: A Historical Analysis has been conducted previously. An investigation of LIS as an academic discipline is needed to appraise the emergence and evolution challenges, strengths and weaknesses of the responses faced by the LIS, and the compatibility of LIS in Pakistan with international standards. Hence, this research would be a significant addition to the LIS in Pakistan.

The outcome of the study can serve as a framework for redesigning LIS as an academic discipline to meet the current challenges in the country. It would provide basic and detailed knowledge about LIS in Pakistan for the common readers, students, and researchers. As no extensive research has been conducted in this area in Pakistan, the current study also makes a solid contribution to the existing literature. It would be also a source material for the librarians and other technical and para-professional staff of libraries. The findings may carry value for other sister countries as well.

Objectives

- 1- To explore the emergence and evolution of LIS in Pakistan.
- 2- To assess the challenges, strengths and weaknesses faced by LIS Discipline in Pakistan.

Review of Related Literature

A lot of research has been carried out in the form of research articles, books and dissertations on different topics of the library and information science in Pakistan as well as developing world. Hence review of such material is described separately in the next few paragraphs.

In his book Asa Don Dickinson, *"The Punjab Library Primer"* published in 1916 discussed study of German and French was made compulsory in 1936. Admission to the undergraduate working librarians of affiliated colleges was also granted with the approval of the Vice-Chancellor during the years 1944-46. In 1946, the responsibility for holding examinations and signing certificates was transferred to the appropriate authorities of the University which earlier rested with the University Librarians.⁵

UNESCO, in his report, (1950) *"Final Report"* Suzanne Briet discussed that the famous Melvil Dewey course, established at the Columbia University of the United States in 1887, was purely a trade course in the beginning. It was not until 1935 that this course attained international acceptance as a professional subject.⁶

Vann, in his Training Report (1961) for *Librarianship before 1923: Education for Librarianship Prior to the Publication of Williamson's Report on Training for Library Services*, William F. Poole said "Practical Work in a library, based on a good education in schools, was the only way to train good librarians. The information cannot be imparted by lecturers, and who that is competent has the time to do the lecturing".⁷ Vann (1961) further described a very long

time, much of a continued struggle, and a movement of unusual vitality to introduce library and information science as a subject taught at the Master's level in American universities.⁸

Qazi Mohammad, (1961) In his article "*Pakistan Library Review*" Qazi Mohammad also explored the professional field of study as programme of Master's Degree in Library Science was making the planners and educators in the country reluctant to grant degree status to library science as a professional field of study. They considered a certificate or diploma as a sufficient requirement to perform library work. Even a library supporter like Qazi Mohammad Aslam would comment on librarian's task in "...bibliographical assistance is very little in demand. Those in need of it can have it out of other resources. Library staff with some exceptions will find it hard to acquaint themselves with the different study subjects to assist with all sorts of researchers".⁹

According to J.C. Harrison, (1963) "*Education for Librarianship: United Kingdom Library Trends*", in his research article as not due to any difference between the British and the Americans on what should constitute the proper courses of study ... but rather to the difference to the facilities available and in the means by which control was to be exercised over the system.¹⁰

J.H. Shera, (1972) *The Foundations of Education for Librarianship*, in their book discussed the early period of librarianship. This Williamson report entitled, "Training for Library Services" found everything wrong with the schools. It proposed that library schools should be placed in university settings and accredited.¹¹

Gerald Bramley, (1975) wrote the book "*World Trends in Library Education*., Libraries in Lahore were also badly affected due to the outbreak of riots and looting in the city. The leading librarians had opted to migrate to India. Those who likewise migrated from India to Pakistan included a few with a Diploma in Librarianship from London University and a Fellowship (FLA) of the Library Association, London. A few others were the students of Ranganathan at Delhi University where India's first pre-partition degree course had been introduced in 1947. The most notable among these migrating librarians was Asadullah, the founder Secretary of the Indian Library Association (ILA) and Librarian of the Imperial Library School in 1915. It was in 1954 when the first Pakistani Librarian (Abdul Rahim Khan, Librarian of the Punjab University) received a BLS degree from McGill University, Canada. Before that the Punjab University program had already been revived in 1950, offering the same certificate course. Many library managers and administrators believe that the purpose of library education is "to produce qualified staff for their libraries that will be competent to step into a professional post and perform the duties assigned to them with only the minimum amount of in-service training being necessary".¹²

Robert Wedgeworth, (1986) in his book, *Library Education, in Encyclopedia of Library and Information Services*", further discussed its temporary closure in 1939, due to the outbreak of the World War, the experience had proved that a full-time course in a university setting could also work well in the United Kingdom. India then was under British control and the same educational system was in vogue in the sub-continent. Libraries were no exception to that.¹³

Bansal and Tikku, (1988) "*Library Science Education in Punjab, International Library Review*" in his research article described the beginning of library science education as an academic discipline in Punjab and wrote, "Outside the USA, Punjab University (at Lahore) was the first in the world that introduced a regular training course for librarians at the degree

level from as early as 1915".¹⁴

Syed Jalaluddin Haider's, (1988) research article "*Library Literature in Pakistan*" discussed the earliest phases of library development in British India, emphasizing how administrative and academic needs shaped early library structures.¹⁵

Syed J. Haider, (1991) in the article "*American Academic Library Pioneer in British India*" Although Dickinson worked in Lahore only for a year, his students and the alumni of his library school established themselves all over India and became leaders in their respective regions some achieving all India fame. For example, Khan Bahadur K.M. Asadullah was an able student of Dickinson. He worked in Punjab for some years and then served as the Librarian of the Imperial Library in Calcutta from 1930-1947. He contributed significantly to the cause of the library movement in India".¹⁶

Syed J. Haider, (1998) described in research article "*Asian Libraries*" comprehensive study focuses on transitioning from colonial-era libraries to the independent state of Pakistan's efforts to create an information infrastructure.¹⁷

G. Edward Evans, (2004) *Developing Library and Information Center Collections*, in his book described the Collection development is an exciting and challenging area in which to work and selecting the right materials for the library's community is as intellectually demanding an activity as a librarian will encounter. The selection of library materials is a highly personal process something that takes a lifetime to learn and the rewards are great. Any textbook that attempts to cover all aspects of collection development must give coverage to many topics. This text provides practical information on materials producers and distributors, community survey techniques, policies, materials selection, acquisition, weeding, and evaluation in order to minimize the variables involved in the selection process. Thus, *Developing Library Collections* also delves into library cooperation, copyright (reflecting the changed statues), and censorship as they affect process in its entirety.¹⁸

S.M. Dhawan, (2004) discussed in his book about current trends of information technology, *Library and Information Studies in Cyber Age*, Information technology is a generic term used to denote activities connected with computer-based processing, storage and transfer of information. It includes microprocessors, cables access television, fiber optics, satellites, teletext, word processing, electronic mail, video, robotics and such others. According to the ALA Glossary, "Information technology is the application of computers and other technologies to the acquisition, organization, storage, retrieval and dissemination of information." The components of information technology are: computers, telecommunications, storage technologies, databases, information systems, micrographics, and expert systems.¹⁹

Ghanuil Akram Sabzwari, (2004) *Library Science A Book for Students of Bachelor Classes*, in their book describe that Library Science is that branch of knowledge, which deals with organization, and services of libraries. It discusses the techniques and methods of organizing library material and services. It teaches how to disseminate information and knowledge and provide reference and research material to the users. Harrod defines it as, "The study and practice of professional methods in the use and exploitation of information, whether from local or international base for benefit of users".²⁰

T.Ashok Babu, L.S. Ramaiah, S.C. Saxena D.S. Bedi, (2007) *Vision of Future Library and Information Systems*, in this book discussed about the future of library and Information

Systems in the Libraries and information centers can hardly function today without computers and information technology. The library and information profession has to change and adopt itself to the developments taking place in information technology. The information technology has acquired the do-or-die prominence; those who go with the advances will survive and other will become obsolete.²¹

Beverly P. Lynch, (2008) in his article "Library Education: Its Past, Its Present, Its Future," *Library Trends* discussed the modern period in the history of education for librarianship began in the mid-nineteenth century.²²

American Library Association, (2015) *American Library Association Standards for Accreditation of Master's Programs in Library and Information Studies*.²³

Mary Carroll, (2016) "The Australian LIS Education Journey," *Educating the Profession: 40 Years of the IFLA Section on Education and Training*, in this article discussed the period about nineteenth century, focus on research in universities increased the need for information and information sources access that increased the demand of trained professionals to provide such services.²⁴

Research Gaps

A lot of research has been carried out on topic of different aspect of Library and Information Science but no studies have been conducted on the topic of "Library and Information Science as an Academic Discipline in Pakistan: A Historical Analysis" in the context of history. The researcher will be trying to fulfill the gaps by analyzing these studies, in the historical context, one can trace the evolution of LIS as an academic discipline in Pakistan, recognizing the achievements while acknowledging the ongoing challenges. The historical trajectory also reflects broader societal changes, such as the increasing role of technology and the paradigm shift from traditional information LIS systems to more dynamic, digital frameworks as well as International Standards. The literature on LIS in Pakistan provides a detailed and multifaceted understanding of how the field has evolved from its colonial roots to the digital era. However, gaps remain in the research, particularly in areas such as the role of LIS schools, the role of leading individuals who contributed to this discipline and the hurdles they have faced during their struggles, for continuous professional development in an evolving digital landscape. The library and information science as an academic discipline not restrict their growth of knowledge in the domain of research but learn to take into account various demands and requirements of users that originate library services. It will help in aspects of library education transforming from the existing physical form of information and organizational structures.

International Trends

Advanced Integrated Library Systems (ILS) such as Koha, Ex Libris Alma, and World Share Management Services are widely used. Strong digital libraries (e.g., Europeana, Digital Public Library of America, HathiTrust). LIS research is highly data-driven with a focus on bibliometrics, knowledge organization, and digital humanities. Strong publication culture in high-impact journals like *Journal of Information Science* and *Library & Information Science Research*. Libraries function as community hubs with services like maker spaces, media labs, and co-working spaces. Emphasis on open access, knowledge sharing, and information

literacy programs. Many libraries still focus on traditional book lending rather than modern community-based services. Lack of funding, digital resources, and trained staff affects service expansion. Need to enhance public awareness and government support for modern library roles. Adoption of international metadata standards (e.g., MARC, Dublin Core, BIBFRAME). Strong adherence to FAIFE (IFLA's Freedom of Access to Information and Freedom of Expression) principles. National library policies support open access and digital inclusion.

Pakistan

Slow adoption of automation in public and academic libraries. Some universities use Koha, but many libraries still rely on manual cataloging. LIS education is growing but lacks standardization across universities. Limited integration of AI, big data, and digital library technologies in curricula. Need for more international collaborations and updated syllabi. LIS research output is limited and often lacks funding and institutional support. Few Pakistani LIS journals are indexed in Scopus or Web of Science. Need for more international collaborations to enhance research impact. Limited national-level library policies and regulatory frameworks. Inconsistent adoption of metadata and cataloging standards. Need for policy reforms to align with international best practices.

Methodology

The qualitative research method will be used to provide a more comprehensive understanding of a research problem. By integrating qualitative research method can capture the richness of qualitative insights. The research aims to explore the emergence, challenges, responses, and compatibility of LIS with international standards. These are complex issues that require in-depth insights, making qualitative methods more suitable. Examining the origins, difficulties, solutions, and conformity of LIS with global norms is the goal of the study. Given the complexity of these problems and the need for in-depth knowledge, qualitative approaches are more appropriate. In the context of Library and Information Science (LIS) as an Academic Discipline in Pakistan a historical study.

Population

The population of this study will be faculty members, library professionals, and policymakers, in the Universities of Pakistan specifically where the LIS program taught as an academic discipline, who will quantify the challenges, responses, and alignment with international standards. In-depth interviews or focus groups with faculty members of LIS schools and library professionals to explore their experiences, and perceptions, about the library's differences and its functions once this discipline became science, and the role of leading individuals who contributed to this discipline and the hurdles they faced during their struggle in greater depth.

Sampling

A sample of 30-40 consist of senior library professional, senior faculty members policy makers and educators could be sufficient in the discipline of LIS. A purposive sample (also known as a judgmental or selective sample) is a non-probability sampling technique would be used the researcher deliberately selects specific individuals, groups, or cases based on

certain characteristics or criteria that are relevant to the study. This type of sampling is particularly useful when the researcher wants to gain an in-depth understanding of a specific population or when it is impractical to study a large. The study will be carried out in the discipline of social sciences.²⁵ Data will be collected from the senior faculty members of LIS schools, library professionals.

Data Collection Instrument

Conduct interviews with senior professionals and faculty members who have been involved in the LIS field to gain narrative insights into the historical evolution. Use focus groups to explore why these challenges exist and how professionals experience them. In-depth interviews will be conducted of policymakers, senior faculty members, and librarians to assess the strengths and weaknesses of these responses in a detailed manner. Expert interviews to discuss the practical implications of aligning LIS in Pakistan with international standards, the library's differences and its functions once this discipline became science, and role of leading individuals who contributed to this discipline and the hurdles they faced during their struggle.

Data Analysis

Qualitative Data Analysis

Thematic analysis can be used to identify key themes from interviews and focus groups. Software like NVivo or manual coding can help organize and interpret qualitative data.

Conclusion

Library education or library science as an academic discipline is not an old term compared to education in other disciplines or fields of knowledge. It has a history of almost 130 years, from when this discipline was first introduced at the University of Germany and later on to the United States of America (USA) and other European countries. Until the nineteenth century, academic librarians were usually university professors with a keen interest in libraries. Library and Information Science (LIS) in Pakistan has undergone significant transformations since the country's inception in 1947. The historical trajectory also reflects broader societal changes, such as the increasing role of technology and the paradigm shift from traditional information LIS systems to more dynamic, digital frameworks as well as International Standards. The literature on LIS in Pakistan provides a detailed and multifaceted understanding of how the field has evolved from its colonial roots to the digital era. However, gaps remain in the research, particularly in areas such as the role of LIS schools, the role of leading individuals who contributed to this discipline and the hurdles they have faced during their struggles, for continuous professional development in an evolving digital landscape. The library and information science as an academic discipline not restrict their growth of knowledge in the domain of research but learn to take into account various demands and requirements of users that originate library services. It will help in aspects of library education transforming from the existing physical form of information and organizational structures.

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