

# Paradigm Shift of LIS Education in the North East Region India

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## Abstract

This paper traces the emergence of library and information science education in North East India. Describe the current status, the different patterns, levels and modules of LIS education. Provide an overview of the programmes being offered by various universities in North East India. Discuss the needs for maintaining uniform model curriculum and standards in LIS education. Also discuss the trends, problems and challenges face by the LIS professionals. Discuss the approaches to prepare the LIS professionals to face the challenges of the future.

*Keywords:* LIS education, North East India, curricula, faculty strength, educational institution

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## Introduction

North-Eastern region of India commonly known as the “Seven Sister” includes the states. The region covering an area of 1,010,493.8 sq km with a total population of 35,623,086 is located at the corner most part of country with Assam the only state which links with the rest of the country by a narrow strip of land. This brings them closer to the world of Library and Information Science Education. North-Eastern region known for its geographical isolation, the region lends out a distinctive quality of life style and cultural to the rest of the country. Manipur for instance is popular for its dance and folk culture around the world.

## Geography

North-Eastern part of India is a sensitive border zone where India meets for international countries – Bhutan, China, Myanmar and Bangladesh. Geographically even this remote section of the Indian land masses has elements of all three major physical features of sub-continent. The western mountains are a part of the Himalayas and the south of the Brahmaputra valley is part of the same fertile plains that make up the Ganges basin. The Khasi Hills, which lie further south an outcrop of the ancient peninsular rock of southern India.

## Educational Institutions

Due to geographically constraints the region expect for Assam is of a recent phenomena in the field of education. Because of poor economical background the region had to depend more on central packages for setting up educational institution and its infrastructure. Despite the poor educational background the state governments are not giving top priority to education and its related field in budgetary allocation. Following are the institution/ universities selected for the proposed study. There are four universities selected on the basis of data that are collected during the course of study.

## Political and Population of North East Region India

**Assam:** Assam has an area of 78,438 sq km, with its state capital at Dispur. The population of the state in 2001 is 2,66,38,407 with 23 districts. **Manipur:** Manipur has an area of 22,327 sq km with its state capital located at Imphal Comparising of 2,230 sq km surrounding by hills on all sides. In 2001, the population of the state stood at 23,88,634.

**Meghalaya:** Meghalaya has an area of 22,284 sq km with a total of 7 districts is habited by a total population of 2,306,069 according to the 2001 census. **Mizoram:** Mizoram cover an area of 21,081 sq km with a total of 8 districts with its State capital at Aizawl is habited by a total population of 8, 91,058 according to the 2001 census.

### **Educational Institution of North East India**

**Assam:** Assam has well established universities and Institution of good records for Library Educational point of view. There are five Universities. They are Gauhati, Jorhat, Silchar, Dibrugarh and Tezpur Universities. **Gauhati University** conducts the course of Library and Information Science. The department was started as evening course in the year 1966 with University Librarian **Dr Jogeswar Sarma** as Head of the Department leading to Bachelor of Library Science (B.Lib.Sc.) degree and in the year 1979 Master of Library Science (M.Lib.Sc.) course was introduced. In 1983 both B.Lib.Sc. and M.Lib.Sc. Courses become one year full time day courses, and in the year 1985 the course is restructured as Bachelor of Library and Information Science (B.L.I.Sc.) & Master of Library and Information Science (MLISc) course with some changes in the syllabus. Since 1987 the Ph.D. programme is introduced in the department. From the academic session 2001-02, as per UGC guide lines two years integrated MLISc course with four semesters has been introduced. Keeping in mind about the changing trend of the society the courses are again revised from this academic session 2007-08 more importance has been given to the use of IT in libraries. Candidate seeking admission to the course must posses the Bachelor's degree in any discipline recognized by the Gauhati University provided that such a candidate obtained a minimum of 45% marks in aggregate in Major subjects or 50% marks in aggregate in general course. The students are required to appear in an Admission Test conducted by the department and must have obtained a minimum 50% mark in the test and students are required to appear in a viva-voce Examination Test. Presently the department has three regular faculty full time and one guest faculty.

**Manipur:** The state has two Universities well established and catering the need of higher education. Manipur University was founded on 5<sup>th</sup> June 1980. It is located a Canchipur in the southern part of Imphal, the Capital. The state also has a reputation of having good Medical Institute like Regional Institute of Medical Science, having a well establish library with good collection handled by qualified professional. Another feature about the state is that the Central Agricultural University came in being in 1992. This university has a wider jurisdiction covering Sikkim. Manipur is one of the states in the region that came under library legislation. The department of Library and information science Education was established on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1986 by **Professor M.R. Khumbhar**, the University librarian of Manipur University as its head of the department. The Bachelor of Library and Information Science was started since 1996. The department has started Master in Library and Information Science program for one academic in two semesters was started in the year 2004-05. Currently Master in Library and Information Science (Integrated Course), two year integrated course program for two academic years in four semester was started in the year 2005-06. The department has been providing facilities for Ph.D program since 1987. The department has so far produced 12 Ph.D degree holders.

**Meghalaya:** The State Meghalaya has many libraries of regional importance. Meghalaya has North East Hill University namely; one such is Regional Documentation and Information Centre (RDIC) catering the needs of users in the entire North-East region India. The Department of Library and Information Sciences was established in 1985 with a new approach to Library and Information Science education in the country. The Department introduced for the first time a two-year integrated programme leading to Master's degree in Library and Information Sciences in the country. The same pattern of education has now been recommended by the UGC under Model Curriculum in Library & Information Science in 2002. The University Library is being used as a laboratory for the students for practical training under the guidance of faculty members and practicing librarians. Thus, the theory and practice are given equal emphasis through this integrated approach. The Department has been regularly revising and updating the syllabus keeping with the rapid developments of information technology (IT) and its crucial role in the library and information profession. The last revision of the syllabus was made in 2003. Since 1986 nearly 350 students have already got MLI.Sc degree from the Department and seven students have been awarded Ph.D. The department is offering the following courses: M. Lib Sc, M. Phil and Ph. D. The department has five regular faculties and one visiting fellow professor. Intake capacity of the department MLISc: 25 Students, PhD: 15 but it takes 3 PhD Scholars.

**Mizoram:** Many institutions for higher education were affiliated to North East Hill University (NEHU) at Shillong in Meghalaya. Mizoram has One University. The Department of Library & Information Science was established during the academic session 2002-03 and it was formally inaugurated by Prof. A.K.Sharma, Vice Chancellor of Mizoram University on 20.8.2002 at the Central Library of the University. The first intakes of the students were for the B.L.I.Sc. Course and which was later changed over to the Two Years Integrated M.L.I.Sc Course. The Department is also offering M.Phil program. Student intake capacity of the department MLISc: 15 students.

**Assam University:** The Department of Library Science has been established in the year 2009. The Masters of Library and Information Science programme at Assam University, Silchar educates students in the principles, practices and ethics of library and information science, imbues them with a sense of service to diverse populations, and prepares them to be lifelong learners and active leaders in a rapidly changing information and knowledge society. The intake capacity of MLISc is 25 students.

Library Education is in a great state of change now as any time since its introduction as part of higher education. Today library school are faced with two grave problems, one an internal one within the university and other a need to redefine their role vis-à-vis society as a whole in North East region India. In the last two decades new communication and computer-based technologies have produced profound changes in library education. These technologies has been felt in day-to-day internal library operation, in interlibrary network arrangement, in context of education for librarianship and finally, in the profession's self-perception.

According to Bell, *"where industrial society is based on machine technology, post-industrial society is shaped by an intellectual technology. . . . if capital and labour are the major structural features of industrial society, information and knowledge are those of post-industrial society"*.

## Academic Programmes

The education for librarianship in India has evolved against the complex background. It has, therefore taken much of its own character from the divergent nature of Indian education. Library education exhibits its own picture of diversity with courses in librarianship offered at a variety of levels and standards. Opportunities are better now, and have increased due to the facts that many states in the country implemented the library legislation. There is also a growth of special and industrial libraries and many more openings are available to the librarians in the multinational organization. Beside, the status improvements are also seen in the university and they are treated as par with other departments. Ranganathan Committee Report enumerated the following courses in Library Science (CDC Report, 2001).

- Certificate Course
- Diploma
- Post Graduate Course
- Bachelor's Degree Course
- Master Degree Course
- Doctorate Course

Presently six levels of course are conducted in India for LIS Course starting from certificate to Doctorate Degree. There is also change in nomenclature as well mode and schemes particularly at the Master Degree levels. Table below present the level of course conducted at India.

## Teaching Faculty of North East Region India

The need for full time teachers was recognized by UGC Review Committee (1965) which said: *"While we welcome a close association between the departments of library science and the library in a manner to be determined by the universities, we are not in favour of the present practice of employing part-time teacher in the departments of library science drawn from university libraries. This in our view is not conducive to efficiency. . . . therefore it is not proper to continue any longer the practice of engaging university library staff to be part-time teachers in the departments of library science"*.

The trend over the past decades or so has been gradually to employ full-time teachers as well as a department head in the library schools in North East region of India. Currently teaching faculties' strength of the departments in North East region of India is given in the Table below.

**Table 1: Level of Courses**

Levels	Nomenclature	Degree	Minimum Qualification Requirement	Duration
Certificate	i. Certificate in Library Science	CLISc	SSLC, PUC	3-9Months
Diploma	i. Diploma in library Science	DLISc	SSLC, PUC	6M-2 Yrs
	ii. JOC in Diploma in library Science	DLISc	SSLC	2 Years
Bachelor	i. Bachelor in Library and Information Science	BLISc	Degree	1 Year
	ii. Bachelor in Arts (Hons) (Pass) (Optional)	BA	10+2	2-3 Years
PG Diploma	i. P-G Diploma in Information Technology	PGDIT	BLISc	1 Year
	ii. P-G Diploma in Archives and Documentation Management	PGDADM	Degree	
	iii. Post MLISc Diploma in Library Automation	PGDLAN	MLISc	1 Year
Master	i. Master in Library and Information Science	MLISc	BLISc	1 Years
	ii. Master in Library and Information Science( Integrated Course)	MLISc	Degree	1 Years
	iii. Master in Information Science	MISc	Degree	2 Years
	iv. Master in Science ( Integrated Course)	MSc	Degree	2 Years
	v. Master of Science (Library and Information Science)	MSc (LIS)	Degree	2 Years
	vi. Associateship in Information Science	AISc	Degree & BLISc, MBBS	2 Years
Research	i. Master of Philosophy	M. Phil	MLISc	1-2 Years
	ii. Doctor of Philosophy	Ph D	MLISc	2-5 Years

**Table 2: Faculties of the North East Region**

University	Year of Establishment of the department	Professor	Reader/Associate Professor	Lecturer/Assistant Professor	Guest Professor	Guest-/Part-time
Gauhati	1966	2	1	1	1	1
NEHU	1985	1	2	3	1	
Manipur	2 <sup>nd</sup> April 1986	Nil	2	2	Nil	2
Mizoram	2002-2003	2	2	3	Nil	Nil
Assam University	2009	Nil	1	1	Nil	Nil

**Table 3: Current Program**

Department	Under Graduate Diploma	BLISc	MLISc (Integrated Course)	M.Phil	Ph.D
Gauhati University	X	X	√	X	√
NEHU University	X	X	√	X	√
Manipur University	X	X	√	X	√
Mizoram University	X	X	√	√	√
Assam University	X	X	√	X	X

## Problems/Challenges of LIS Education in North East Region India

Information has become a commodity to be brought and sold. The provision of information per se came only with the establishment of special libraries and “*information bureaus*” within government and industry at a much later date. But in North East Region development of industries is very poor due to lack of communication and transportation. The LIS educational function has always remained strong and since most libraries have had limited resources and personnel, the usual pattern has been to guide a user to the sources of the information he or she needs and except in the case of ready-reference fact questions, not to supply that information per se. Many countries education for work in documentation centers has been completely separated from that for positions in traditional university. This is very much true in the North East region India. The library schools in the north east region India are thus finding it very hard to prepare students of special libraries due to lack of infrastructure. Furthermore, the introduction of much new technology has meant the downgrading of many traditional library tasks. As Allen Veaner has indicated, “*The old jobs have gone to the support staff, whose activity covers a wide range of essential work. The work of inputting, coding, and verifying bibliographic data, selecting vendor, maintaining book fund accounts, claiming series, searching, establishing entries, filing, revising filing, proofreading, furnishing a first level of reference service, doing a good deal of cataloguing, and in some libraries, even revision of cataloguing has moved to support staff.*” It is not surprising that library schools in the region have sought to diversify their programs of study to enable their graduates to seek jobs in the “*information*” sector. Today schools have added some phrase including the word “*information*” to their names: at first the term “*information science*,” more recently “*information studies*.”

Lancaster has identified some obvious problems in curriculum development of Information Science in the developing countries. There includes

- Lack of resources;
- Greater bureaucracy;
- Low demand of information service;
- Traditional teaching methods-text bases and lecture method;
- Lack of standardization, co-operation and centralization;
- Significant differences existing among types of libraries;
- Diversity of culture and languages.

From the above reasons there seems that it seems that it is not easy to change from a more traditional curriculum to one that may be radically different. Lancaster, while giving example of India states that rather rigid examination procedure discourages change. But in the North East Region rigid examination procedure is adopting.

## Accreditation

Accreditation is considered as cornerstone of self-regulation to achieve better and effective performance. Accreditation assures all the stakeholders, the community, academicians, students, employer and other organizations about the institution’s clearly defined and educationally appropriate objectives and the required conditions for the achievement.

The need for quality assurance, evaluation and sustenance has initiated University Grants Commission (UGC) working towards quality enhancement since its inception. As a result, the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) were established in 1994 to assess and accredit institutions of higher learning in accordance with national & international norms and standards. Quality is emerging as a key value in all educational modes and methods in the processes of globalization of education. India has taken up the quality assurance and accreditation as means for reforming and upgrading standards in Indian system of education (Karisiddappa, 2005).

There are all India accreditation bodies which assess and certify institutions as a whole, individual department are not certified. There are no norms for the library schools except the general ones from the UGC (Satija, 2006). Graduate from North East Region India do not bear any stamp of quality assured. Not having a seal of any outstanding school with a name students, have to fend themselves in the job market. This way we are neither helping the students nor the employer.

## Curriculum Areas

Revising the curriculum of schools of library and information science we need to look at what types of jobs we hope to prepare our students for. Most cite these areas as paramount: design of information system, management and marketing of information systems, creation of data banks and their marketing, and online searching.

**Peter F. Oliva**, in his book, **Developing the Curriculum** (1997), list these curriculum is statements. Curriculum is

- That which is taught in school;
- A set of subjects;
- A program of studies;
- A set of materials;
- A sequence of courses;
- A set of performance objectives;
- A course of study;
- Everything that goes on within the school, including extra-class activities, guidance, and interpersonal relationships;
- That which is taught both inside and outside of school directed by the school;
- Everything that is planned by school personnel;
- A series of experiences undergone by learners in school; and
- That which an individual learner experiences as a result of schooling (Nartarajan, 2006).

One emerging core area is “*information Science*”, “*marketing*” it tends to be a general introduction. The emphasis is on skill development in text processing, use of spreadsheets, electronic mail, and database management. Some assumptions for developing change in the curriculum:

### Basic principles and concepts (i.e. content) can be specified;

- The particular manifestation of the content should be left to individual schools, i.e. whether required courses, series of elective, experiences, competencies, etc;
- The core content applied to all levels of program – undergraduate, postgraduate, doctorate – however, with different levels of emphasis;
- The core content applied with varying to all area of library/information science field.

Robert Taylor has stated, “*The profession must recognize that it has an extraordinary set of skills. These skills, however, can only come to full fruition if they are separated from the library context. They are: the ability to design and to manage information systems in response to real needs; the ability to relate people to information and vice versa; the sense of service. These skills which, when married to a competent knowledge of information technologies, provide a base for the unique and central profession in the information society.*” The core of an information program should cover the fundamental aspects of the basic functions . . . but should not be so extensive as to mitigate against flexibility in curriculum and program design. The content areas were organized into three categories: **Knowledge, tools and skills.**

**Knowledge** areas are philosophy and background, i.e. the foundations of information in society; environmental and contextual knowledge; and management knowledge.

**Tools** were identified as either quantitative/analytical, i.e. system analysis, research methods, logic, bibliographic control, abstracting and indexing, and data structures, collection development, technical services.

**Skills** requirements: communication, technological skills (programming, online searching, database management), and interpersonal skills.

## Conclusion/ Suggestion

The future of LIS education is difficult to encapsulate early in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The departments hold, in common their teaching and research about organization, management, and use of information.

- North East Region LIS school strengths must increasingly reflect the unique composition of faculty and institutional alliance;

- There should be cooperation amongst the professional's faculty staff & amongst the departments of the region;
- LIS educators must trend to be optimistic about their future;
- LIS school of the region greatest challenges are finding new faculty and new administrative leadership for their schools, and particularly leadership able to continue to adapt, take risk and assert leadership within their institutions and across the professions;
- Change is inevitable, but not all changes are equally possible or desirable;
- LIS education in North East Region of India is at the crossroads;
- LIS school of the region should concentrate exclusively on providing quality education and this will necessary in including library automation, networks, retrieval systems, and other information technology related courses.
- Graduates of these schools must be expected to work in libraries & other multinational companies.

The beginnings of this trend are expected to start. It is likely, LIS schools of the region will seek to expand their programs and attract more students by offering undergraduate courses in information technology. The intended trends are not meant to be a blue print for the future: but to stimulate discussion and to aid in planning a more responsive program for training and educating information professionals of the North East Region of India.

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