Exploring Trends in Research on LIS Competencies through published articles

Dr. Jyoti Bhabal*

* Assistant Professor
SHPT School of Library Science, SNDT Women's University, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India

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Abstract: - *The study analyses the content of journal articles to identify thetrends in research done in competencies among LIS professionals. The articles are analysed according to 1) journal titles, 2) research methods used, 3) scope of the competencies, 4) region of the studies, and 5) the contribution by LIS professionals with respect to their designations. Most of the articles were research articles in which surveys with questionnaire were most commonly chosen research type.*

Keywords: LIS Competencies, Skills, Content analysis, Library professionals Skills

Introduction

In simple words, competence is the capability to do anything effectively or proficiently. Competencies can be divided into different categories such as technical, managerial skills and personal capabilities

Technology application skill set forms the foundation of LIS (Library and Information Science) field. The second one is about information architecture and structure, third is information mastery, and fourth is information and knowledge management skills (Gorman & Corbitt, 2002).

Special Committee on Competencies for Special Librarians for the Special Libraries Association Board of Directors (SLA, 2017)has divided the competencies into three groups:

(1) Professional competencies that are relevant to the professional's knowledge, capabilities, and skills required to:

- manage information institutions (organizations);
- manage information resources;
- manage information services; and
- apply information tools and technologies.

(2) Personal competencies that represent the professionals' attitudes, values, and skills to effectively work and positively contribute to their institution, users, and the profession.

(3) Core competencies that cover the Information Provider's contribution to the knowledge base of the profession and their commitment to the profession excellence and ethics.

Evaluating professional competencies has been done for many years at regular intervals as the trends of skills keep evolving due to the situations. There are many studies done for assessing the skills possessed by the LIS professionals. Some of them are discussed below.

Literature Review

Studies done by Loughridge (1999),Bede Mitchell (2000), Jabr(2010), Martin & Zaghloul (2011),Martin & Zaghloul (2011),Fakkirappa and Naik (2013), (Baro, Eze, & Nkanu, 2013), (Asogwa, 2014)), Wickramanayake(2014)Khan & Masrek (2017), Kvenild, Tumbleson, Burke, & Calkins (2016), Farooq, Ullah, Iqbal & Hussain, (2016),Oyieke & Dick (2017),(Fraser-Arnott, 2017)tried to assess the skills of academic librarians with different perspectives of the work.

Some authors such as Melchionda (2007) have done the literature reviews on different competencies required by the LIS professionals that provide a review of discussions and perceptions of librarians' roles in the literature of

the last ten years within the context of the impact of the internet on their working life.

Public librarians have given preference to advocacy skills; communication skills; conflict resolution; flexibility; and interpersonal skills(Jordan, 2015).

The study done by Khan & Bhatti (2017)showed that digital competencies for developing and managing digital libraries fall into three main categories: digital competencies for developing digital libraries; digital competenciesformanagingdigitallibraries;anddigit alcompetenciestoprotectdigitalcontents.Toszegi (2009), Summey (2017), Liu & Cai (2013) had also identified the skills required by the professionals to manage digital libraries and digital services.

Mahmood, K. (2003) has done a comparison between needed competencies of academic librarians and LIS curricula in Pakistan.

Objectives of the study

This small study was conducted to understand the trends in research done in competencies among LIS professionals. The articles are analysed according to 1) journal titles, 2) research methods used, 3) scope of the competencies, 4) region of the studies, and 5) the contribution by LIS professionals with respect to their designations.

Research Method

The study has used Emerald database to find the relevant articles on current competencies in LIS profession. It includes articles that were published in the past decade, i.e. from 2008-20017. The search was done with combination of keywords such as 'Skills', 'Competencies', 'Professional Skills', 'Librarians', 'LIS professionals', 'Library professionals'. The search was done with the criteria of 'relevancy'. The first 50 articles displayed were chosen, out of which four were book reviews that were not considered for the study, seven were either of old publications or irrelevant for the topic of study. Therefore, 39 journal articles were included for this study. Each article was studied with respective of above mentioned objective of the study and descriptive statistics method is used for data analysis.

Data Analysis and findings

The study covers 39 journal articles on current competencies among LIS professionals from Emerald database

1. Journal Titles

Thousands of journals are published in LIS field giving wide choices for author to choose from. however sometimes authors do choose particular journal title as the chances of acceptance is high and less time interval between acceptance and publication of the article. Thus the study tried to analyze the trend of publications.

Table 1 Number of articles published on competencies among LIS professionals in different journals

Name of the Journal	No. of articles published
Electronic Library	10
Library Management	9
New Library World	4
Library Hi Tech	3
Reference Services Review	3
Collection Building	2
Library Review	2
OCLC System and Services	2
Information and Learning Science	1
Journal of Documentation	1
Program: Electronic Library and Information System	1
Record Management Journal	1
Total	**39**

Table 1 shows that most of the articles were published in the title ' Electronic Library' and 'Library Management'

Articles published in 'Electronic Library' were focusing more on ICT skills, Digital skills that includes digital archiving, whereas in 'Library Management' journal, most of the articles were on all types of competencies required by the LIS professionals; two were on collection management skills. Further the publications followed by 'New Library World', 'Library Hi Tech', 'Reference Service Review' and so on.

Research methods used

Generally the studies are done using questionnaire to survey large population as this is easier than

conducting in depth interview or experiments. The study tried to identify the research technique used by the authors to study competencies among LIS professionals (refer Table 2 and Table 3).

Table 2 : Research methods used in the studies on competencies among LIS professionals

	Research Method	No of articles	%
1	Action Research	1	2
2	case study	2	5
3	conceptual	7	18
4	Content Analysis	3	8
5	experimental	3	8
6	Interview for delphi	1	2
7	literature Review	3	8
8	survey	19	49
	Total	39	100

Table 3 : Research Tools used in the studies on competencies among LIS professionals

Research Tool	No of articles	%
Questionnaire only	11	37
Questionnaire and Interview	7	23
Experiment	2	7
Interviews	1	3
Job advertisements	1	3
Reports	1	3
Total research papers	30	100

The Table 2 shows that about 49% of the studies i.e. 19 studies were surveys that included range of 30 to 737 respondents. Out of these 19 studies, 11 studies were done with questionnaire tool only, seven studies were done using questionnaire as tool and further interviews, discussions were done

with the professionals to get insight on the subject. One study was done using interviews with 30 professionals. The studies that were done with less than 100 participants have also done interviews with the respondents for more and better details. As shown in Table 3, Studies with action research, content analysis, experiments were very few.

3. Scope of the competencies

Table4 : Number of articles covering LIS competencies according to type of libraries

Type of Library	No. of articles	%
Academic library	28	72
General	4	10
LIS education	3	8
Special library	3	8
Public library	1	3
Total	39	100

Table 5: Number of articles covering different competencies of LIS field

Type of Skills	No. of articles	%
Overall / General	15	38
ICT skills	6	15
Information and Knowledge Management Skills	5	13
Digital skills	4	10
Research skills	2	5
Collection management skills	1	3
Embedded librarianship skills	1	3
Library instruction skills	1	3
Management skills	1	3
Online LIS education	1	3
Personal skills	1	3
Scholarly communication skills	1	3
Total	**39**	**100**

Table 4 shows that 72 % of the studies were on academic libraries especially on university libraries. These might be because they serve larger users with diverse needs. The sample is also easilyavailable. very few studies were on special libraries and public libraries. Amongst three articles on LIS Education there are two conceptual papers on how the LIS department should enhance their curriculum to meet current competencies, the third article was an experiment done in Canada where team of librarians were invited to collaborate to design a course to develop research and writing skills among the LIS students and the results were discussed. Under the special library category, two papers were conceptual where one was about skills required in hospital library. The other paper was survey done on personal skills amongst information providers in Oman.

Articles published before 2011 were more on knowledge management skills, information skills and collection management skills whereas articles published in last six years were more on digital skills, Web 2 skills, and some were trying to showcase overall needed competencies in today's time in LIS field.

There were 15 articles (38%) covering different skills required in LIS field out of which four were conceptual paper and other were researches. This followed by ICT skills (15%), information and knowledge management skills (13%) and Digital skills (10%). Amongst the remaining, one article

on research skills, collection management skills, embedded librarianship skills, management skills, personal skills, communication skills each were published.

4. Region of the studies

Table 6: Number of articles country wise

Country	No. of articles	%
Canada	1	3
India	2	7
Italy	1	3
Nigeria	4	13
Oman	2	7
Pakistan	5	17
Qatar	1	3
Shri lanka	1	3
South Africa	2	7
UK	1	3
USA	10	33
Total	**30**	**100**

Excluding the conceptual papers and literature review papers, there were about 30 research articles. These studies were done in USA, Pakistan, Nigeria, India, Oman, South Africa (according to number of articles published). There was one article each from Canada, Italy, Qatar, Shri lanka, and UK individually (refer Table 6).

5. Research contribution by LIS professionals with respect to their designations

Table 7: Number of articles published by LIS professionals

LIS professionals	No. of articles	%
Librarians/ Asst. Librarians	18	46
Professors	17	44
Collaborative with Professors and Librarians	4	10
Total	**39**	**100**

As shown in Table 7,the study found that more than 40% of the articles are published by either professors or by librarians individually. Whereas collaborative articles from both these fraternities are very few. Actually there is lot of connection between working in thelibrary and teaching LIS subjects. Unless it is taught one cannot work. Librarians are the ones who know what latest new trends in library and information profession and they do update themselves going to trainings and workshops, etc. as that is the continuous demand from users, whereas professors who trains future librarians are generally know the trends however they are not practising. However the research outcomes of professors' papers would help to update their curriculum according to the latest trends in the field. It would be fruitful if librarians and professors collaborate for research and create a network that would help all professionals to enhance their skills. The scope of skills is vast and ever changing with time. It seems, in this study

more than 50 % articles are written by solo author, about 15 % articles were by 3-4 authors. It was found that most of the researches were done with less than 100 participants, there might be several factors for that but in contrast one possibility could be that if more collaborators involve then more sample and bigger areas of study can be covered in stipulated time. Comparative studies would be possible with collaboration of authors.

Conclusion

The study was done on the latest and relevant articles to identify the trends in research on the topic 'competencies among LIS professionals'. The study showed that the latest studies and more on digital skills, major studies are done with university libraries, and these researches were carried out by solo professionals. As this study included articles only from Emerald database, further study can be extended on wider scale from more databases and from print journals

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