Continuing Education Programme and Library and Information Science Professionals: A Survey

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Abstract

The Library and Information Science professionals are affected by IT developments. Hence, the Professional Development or Continuing Education Programmes came into rescue to update themselves in the profession. The present study throws light on the importance of Continuing Education Programmes for the Library and Information Science professionals. A survey was conducted comprising of 22 Degree College Librarians of Hubli-Dharwad region. The response rate received was 90.91%. The results indicate that; out of 20, 17 professionals have completed MLISc; 3 professionals have more than 25 years of experience; 12 professionals are permanent; 13 professionals need CEPs in Library Automation and 13 professionals have completed degrees while doing job

Keywords

Continuing Education; Continuing Education; Programmes; Library and Information Science ; profession; professional development.

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INTRODUCTION

The new technologies and techniques are emerging tremendously in the recent days in Library and Information science field (Park, Tosaka, Maszaros, & Lu, 2010). The Library and Information Science professionals have to face these uncontrolled technological changes. The future of the library science professionals depends upon the contribution they give to the organization they are working in (Barden, 1997). The situation is ripe for the professionals to engage themselves in the various Continuing Education Programmes. To survive in this competitive world they need to update their knowledge, learn new techniques and maintain their basic competencies. In 1980s Computers were introduced in India which impacted a lot on the professionals and to join the courses to learn the basics of computers (Mahesh, Kumar, & Gupta, 2010). The organizations started gathering staff appraisal system to find out the continuing education needs of the professionals (Sinh, Dorner, & Gorman, 2011). Elkin (1994) explains that when the acquired knowledge in formal education becomes outdated, the continuing education programmes becomes necessary. These needs can be achieved through the continuous professional development activities. On various levels efforts are going on to fulfill these needs of the professionals. These efforts help to fulfill the needs of employers, professionals, professional bodies and institutions which are conducting the continuing education programmes (Ramaiah & Moorthy, 2002).

The mere academic qualifications are not sufficient to retain in the competition for a long time. The professionals working in the degree colleges often experience the 'Solo Librarianship' and they may feel themselves undervalued by the organizational staff (Farmer & Campbell, 1997). In such conditions, the professionals cannot provide efficient services to the users of the library where resources are meager. Many universities, agencies and professional bodies offer correspondence courses in Library and Information Science, which facilitates professionals to continue their education and to improve their skills (Jain, Kaur, & Babbar, 2007).

The Library and Information Centers are in need of more competent staff because of the changing culture of the service, i.e. taking libraries to the doorsteps of the users. The international organizations like UNESCO, Council of Europe and IFLA have published so many papers regarding the role of

libraries in the new age of Information overload, Information Explosion, Information burden or Information flood (Horvat, 2004). These organizations mainly focused on the services to be provided by the librarians to the user community. The organizations have mentioned the duties of librarians in the changing environment. The skills required for providing better services to users cannot be learnt at once awhile. This process is continuous to update the professionals' competencies (Adomi & Nwalo, 2003). The main aim of Continuing Education Programmes are to train and educate the LIS professionals, since the LIS professionals are facing the problems arising from the new era of technology (Lynch, 2008). The professionals are trying to cope up with the occurrence of changes in the work environment. The well skilled staff members are the most powerful factor for the organizational success; hence training of the staff members is one of the important functions of all the organizations. The quality training to the professionals results in catering the effective service to the user community. The Continuing Education Programmes help the professionals to achieve the professional qualification and experience (Jain, 1999).

OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the survey is to throw light on the importance of continuing education programmes for the Library and Information Science professionals. The specific objectives of the study are to;

1. know the qualification(s) of the LIS professionals working in Degree Colleges of Hubli-Dharwad;
2. study how many conferences/seminars/workshops attended by the professionals;
3. reveal the areas of training required for professionals;
4. show how professionals keep up-to-date themselves in the profession; and
5. identify the problems with regard to attending continuing education programmes.

METHODOLOGY

There are more than 100 different Degree Colleges in Dharwad district in different disciplines like Arts, Commerce, Science, Education, Management, Social work, Fine Arts, Physical Education, etc. Only 22 Degree Colleges with either one or all streams i.e. Arts, Commerce and Science Colleges affiliated to the Karnatak University, Dharwad are considered for the study. For this reason, the authors visited the official website of Karnatak University, Dharwad (www.kud.ac.in) in the Affiliation section to finalize the number of colleges to be considered for the survey. To collect the data from the library professionals a questionnaire was framed comprising of 16 questions. For the above said reason, only 22 degree colleges were considered for the study, out of which only 20 responses were received with a response rate of 90.91%. The collected data were fed into the Computer (MS-Excel) for simple frequency distribution. The survey was conducted during October, 2015 and sufficient time was given to fill up the information.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

Qualifications of LIS professionals

The table 1 reveals the qualification wise distribution of the LIS professionals. Out of 20 LIS professionals studied, 17 professionals have completed Master's Degree (M.L.I.Sc.) and 6 have completed M.Phil, followed by 5 professionals completed Bachelors Degree. Among the professionals, 6 are pursuing for their Ph.D. It is a good sign that the professionals who are heading the degree colleges in Hubballi-Dharwad have a Master's Degree. Some of the professionals have completed both 1 year Bachelor's Degree and 1 year Master's Degree through distance mode. But most of the professionals serving the degree colleges have regular Master's Degree and M.Phil.

Table 1: Qualifications of LIS professionals

Sl. No.	Qualification(s)	No. of respondents
1	Diploma	1(5%)
2	Bachelors	5 (25%)
3	MLIS	17 (85%)
4	M.Phil	6 (5%)
5	Ph.D.	0 (0%)
6	Pursuing Ph.D.	6 (30%)
7	Post-Doctoral	0 (0%)

Note: Multiple answers were permitted.

Years of Experience

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A question was raised to the professionals on the number of years of experience in the profession. The study reveals that 5 professionals have 9 to 12 years of experience and equal numbers of professionals have less than 4 years of experience. There are 3

most senior professionals who have more than 25 years of experience and equal numbers of professionals have 5 to 8 years of experience. The other details are presented in table 2.

Table 2: Years of Experience

Sl. No.	Years of Experience	No. of respondents
1	Less than 4 Years	5 (25%)
2	5 to 8 Years	3 (15%)
3	9 to 12 Years	5 (25%)
4	13 to 16 Years	1 (5%)
5	17 to 22 Years	1 (5%)
6	21 to 24 Years	2 (10%)
7	More than 25 Years	3 (15%)
	Total	**20 (100%)**

Designation wise distribution of respondents

It is evident from the study that there are professionals with different designations. There are 11 professionals who have with Librarian designations; whereas 4 professionals are working as Assistant Librarians and 3 professionals are working as Chief Librarians. Only one professional is working with Library Assistant designation and one professional as Library-In-charge. The details are presented in table 3.

Table 3: Designation wise distribution of respondents

Sl. No.	Designations	No. of respondents
1	Chief Librarian	3 (15%)
2	Librarian	11 (55%)
3	Deputy Librarian	0 (0%)
4	Assistant Librarian	4 (20%)
5	Library Assistant	0 (0%)
6	Library In-charge	1 (5%)
	Total	**20 (100%)**

Type of Job

The table 4 presents the information whether the professionals are permanent or not. The table shows that 12 professionals are permanent and 4 professionals are working as part timers and on ad-hoc basis respectively.

Table 4: Type of Job

Sl. No.	Type of Job	No. of respondents
1	Permanent	12 (60%)
2	Part time	4 (20%)
3	Ad-hoc	4 (20%)
	Total	**20 (100%)**

Conferences/Seminars/Workshops attended

Table 5 shows the data about the total number of Conferences/Seminars/Workshops attended by the professionals. The National and Regional level programmes were attended by 14 professionals and International programmes were attended by 13 professionals.

Table 5: Conferences/Seminars/Workshops attended

Sl. No.	Level of programme	International	National	Regional
1	>5	9 (45%)	5 (25%)	8 (40%)
2	6 to 10	4 (20%)	4 (20%)	4 (20%)
3	11 to 15	0 (0%)	2 (10%)	1 (5%)
4	>16	0 (0%)	3 (15%)	1 (5%)

Orientation Programmes/Refresher courses

The question was asked whether the professionals have attended Orientation programmes and Refresher Courses. More than 16 Orientation Programmes and 9 Refresher Courses were attended by the professionals across India to upgrade their knowledge and fulfill minimum norms for their promotions. Since some of the professionals have recently joined (less than 4 years of experience) only 3 professionals have not attended but for such programmes they have applied.

Table 6: Orientation Programmes/Refresher courses

Sl. No.	Type of programme	No. of respondents
1	Orientation Programme	16 (80%)
2	Refresher Courses	9 (45%)
3	Not attended	3 (15%)
4	Applied	0 (0%)

Note: Multiple answers were permitted.

Training programmes in latest trends in LIS profession

The table 7 reveals that 13 professionals have attended training programmes, whereas, 7

professionals still want to attend. Some of the professionals said that they had applied. This shows that professionals are eager to attend such programmes for their professional development.

Table 7: Training programmes in latest trends in LIS profession

Sl. No.	Response	No. of respondents
1	Yes	13 (65%)
2	No	7 (35%)
	Total	**20 (100%)**

Areas of training

The table 8 reveals the areas of training attended by the professionals. The data reveals that 13 professionals have completed trainings on Library Automation. Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET), NISCAIR, IASLIC, ICSSR are conducting short term and long term training programmes on various aspects. The data indicate that most of the professionals have taken training on IT and its related aspects like, LIS software, applications of IT, Internet and its applications, web based services, etc.

Table 8: Areas of training

Sl. No.	Areas of training	No. of respondents
1	Library Automation	13 (65%)
2	LIS software	10 (50%)
3	Applications of IT	9 (45%)
4	Library management	8 (40%)
5	Internet	7 (35%)
6	Web based services	6 (30%)
7	Database Management	5 25%)
8	Multimedia	4 (2%)
9	Human Resource Development	3 (15%)
10	Information System Management	3 (15%)
11	Marketing	3 (15%)
12	Networking/consortia	3 (15%)
13	Soft skills	3 (15%)
14	Bibliometrics/Scientometrics	2 (10%)

Note: Multiple answers were permitted.

Ways of getting updated in the profession

There are professionals who have not yet attended the training programmes. A question was raised about how they get updated themselves in the profession. The study reveals that 7 professionals discuss with their colleagues and equal number of respondents read professional literature. About 4 respondents use social networking groups and exhibitions respectively and 2 professionals get updated by attending presentations/demonstrations in seminars/conferences.

Table 9: Ways of getting updated in the profession

Sl. No.	Activities	No. of respondents
1	Discussion with colleagues	7 (35%)
2	Reading professional literature	7 (35%)
3	Social Networking groups	4 (20%)
4	Exhibitions	4 (20%)
5	Demonstrations	2 (10%)

Note: Multiple answers were permitted.

Problems in attending Continuing Education Programmes

The study reveals that there are professionals who have faced problems in attending the Orientation Programmes and Refresher Courses and training programmes. More than 14 participants felt that inconvenient time is the major problem, followed by venues which will be too far off the places, lack of funds and lack of time are some of the problems faced by the professionals. The data are presented in table 10.

Table 10: Problems in attending Continuing Education Programmes

Sl. No.	Problems	No. of respondents
1	Inconvenient time	14 (70%)
2	Venue will be too far	6 (30%)
3	Lack of funds	4 (20%)
4	Inappropriate programme	4 (20%)
5	Lack of time	3 (15%)

Degrees completed while in service

Continuing Education Programmes and Lifelong learning go hand in hand in the professional life. A question was asked on the degrees completed while in-service. There are 13 professionals who have completed Masters Degree and M. Phil. while in-

service and 7 professionals have not completed any of the courses/degrees while doing job.

Table 11: Degrees completed while in service

Sl. No.	Response	No. of respondents
1	Yes	13 (65%)
2	No	7 (35%)
	Total	**20 (100%)**

Period of training programme

Most of the professionals face lack of time and inconvenient time in attending training programmes. Hence, a question was asked about the period (number of days) of training programmes. About 6 professionals opine that 1-2 days are ideal, whereas, 5 professionals say that a minimum 3 to 4 days required to learn IT aspects. Only 2 professionals have said that more than 9 days also they are ready to attend the training programmes.

Table 12: Period of training programme

Sl. No.	No. of Days	No. of respondents
1	1 to 2 days	6 (30%)
2	3 to 4 days	5 (25%)
3	5 to 6 days	3 (15%)
4	7 to 8 days	4 (20%)
5	more than 9 days	2 (10%)
	Total	**20 (100%)**

CONCLUSION

The drastic changes in the LIS profession have made professionals to think and to learn new skills and techniques through the continuing professional development programmes. These types of programmes are a joint responsibility of professionals, employers, professional bodies and institutions (Hiok & Abdullah, 2010). The literature available on CEPs prove that Library and Information Science professionals are involving in the continuing education programmes (Attebury, 2015). Most of the professionals working in Degree College libraries do believe that continuing professional education is the need of the hour (Chen, 1976). There is a need of training for the professional on different areas of the Library and Information Science. The professionals and employers do emphasize on the on-the-site training for professional development (Maesaroh & Genoni, 2010). These programmes try to provide the training on the latest technologies for professionals working in Libraries and Information Centers. The time, place and subject of such programmes should be appropriate from the point of view of participants. The status of the profession depends upon the skillfulness of the professionals working in the field.

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