E-LEARNING: A NEW WAY OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE EDUCATION THROUGH DISTANCE MODE*

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Abstract

This study explored that the e-learning mechanism is required to provide for quality of Library and Information Science education at university level through the distance learning. This paper is divided into three sections. The first section deals with the LIS education in distance mode. Second section examines the developments of E-learning and LIS education in India. Third Section spells out the universities are forced to face the following major challenges to adopt e-learning mechanisms, which are to design LIS programmes to fit into the e-learning environment, to provide quality education, the teachers aswellas students are to be trained the information technology advancement, to enhance LIS education e-learning consortium, collaboration, quality assurance with accreditation and cost effective were discussed in details to strengthening the LIS education.

Introduction

Library and Information Science educational activities are associated with mankind from time immemorial; many revolutions have progressed with the growth in LIS. However, LIS as a field of discipline is almost a century old. Objectives of LIS educations are:

✓ To educate future information scientist in LIS through e-learning

✓ To train faculties and research workers to fit into digital environment

✓ To engage in research activities using ICT

✓ To perform a variety of library services, researches, and library administrations for Librarians, educational programmes for teachers and students, consulting services for information providing agencies.

The post independent India witnessed an era of nation building through the process of digital libraries. This necessitated the skilled manpower, so as to manage the impact of IT and rapidly growing technology in information processing and retrieval system. However over the years, there has been a fundamental shift in the very approach of LIS education with a quantum jump in IT scenario. There is a need to redefine the LIS education in the changed scenario like web technology based learning, online learning etc. to strengthens it further against the traditional background.

LIS education through Distance mode in India

Library and Information Science education in the 21st century will be an extremely diverse industry. It has been available in India for the more than 50 years. The traditional mix of on the job, training and part time courses conducted and examined by professional associations to Bachelor's, Master's and M.Phil degree programmes offered by universities and other institutions of higher education and learning on regular basis.

In 1983, the Advisory Council for Adult and Continuing Education (ACACE) has reviewed the recent development and suggested the pros and cons of choosing distance education for the students' perspectives. The opportunities also presented by information

explosion and the digital technologies on one hand and the emerging concerns for long term sustainability of information management systems on the other substantially to force to start LIS programme in distance mode. The experiment was a great success. However, it was only available very few universities like Andhra Pradhesh Open University, Madras University, Madurai Kamaraj University etc. these were only available to persons who were employed in libraries through out the country demanded that they be given similar opportunities. As a result the Directorate of Distance Education, Annamalai University launched its BLIS, MLIS and M. Phil degrees with justification for starting this programme in distance mode were the courses conducted by other universities are mostly full time and not accessible to a majority of unemployed as well as employed people. Later the IGNOU also join to offer LIS education through distance learning. At present more than 40 universities are offering LIS education through distance education.

Development of E-Learning in India

In the 70's after the emergence of Computer Aided Instructions (CAI) and Computer Based Training (CBT) were used for teaching purpose. Televisions entered in India on September 15, 1959 as a pilot project funded by Ford Foundation, with the transmission of one hour educational programmes twice a week. In 1975 Satellite Instructional Television Experiment is an example of extensive application of satellite for "Education and Development". After launching INSAT Series it has become possible to reach remote areas and for flung areas of the country.

Presently with launch of 'EduSat' worldwide LIS education system can be created through distance education. The teachers and students will now use more powerful

Broad Bonded Internet but less expensive multimedia for enhancing learning. It is needed to visualize how about the departments of the library and information science of the 40 universities would be networked?. To achieve this goal all universities need to be implemented the e-learning facilities and to adopt the contemporary technology to fulfill the requirements of the students.

The National Task Force on Information Technology and Software Development constituted by the Prime Minister of India in 1998, based on this Task Force recommendations, some of the institutions responded and taken such initiatives to establish online learning facilities.

In 1996, the National Institute of Information Technology started, as the first Netvarsity and it become a separate subsidiary as NIIT Online Learning Limited (NOLL) in 2000 and the areas covered IT related and soft skills.

In 1999, the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) started Video Conferencing and Interactive (VCI) with two programmes on IT- the Bachelor of Information Technology (BIT) and Advanced Diploma in Information Technology (ADIT) in collaboration with Edexcel, United Kingdom and the Ministry of Information Technology, Government of India respectively.

The Department of Library and Information Science (IGNOU) and Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR), Government of India was taken initiation and developed Web-enhanced Training package using UNESCO's popular database WINISIS. It has resulted in the development of a e-learning management with large scale for the university.

The Tamil Virtual University, Yashwantrao Maharashtra Open University and Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore has been using e-college learning management system for online distance learning.

E-Learning today emphasis is on the qualitative changes in every sphere of Distance Education. The ICT development has progressed from classroom lectures to web-based e-learning programme conducted online where in students can communicate with peers and lecturers. With E-Learning process in LIS education through distance mode is conducted through electronic components like Computers, Internet etc. These also includes CDs, e-books, e-journals, polymedia aids etc. It leads to the formation of Digital Library, which means there are no actual classrooms no teachers or textbooks but it gives the virtual library impressions of studying in a classroom.

Challenges to implement the E-Learning System

The increasing demand of LIS education with the changing global scenario of job market requires to face the challenges with regard to survive in the competitive climate and to provide quality of LIS educational programme are important. The authors were taken the following challenges and discussed here.

- ➢ To design Library and Information Science Programmes which meet E-learning technology

- ➢ To customize training for the teachers aswellas students both in terms of the course and e-learning techniques.

- ➢ To enter into collaboration to ensure accreditation

- ➢ To compete in the global information centre in terms of quality assurance aswellas cost effective basis.

To Design LIS Programme

With the emergence of www, the LIS education has became borderless and also a competitive market. It has emerged that the only quality institutions will survive. This phenomenon could have a dramatic impact on online education. The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) policy directives, the universities should be self reliant and work as "for profit institutions". There fore the universities are to be concentrated on those areas of teaching subjects like biotechnology, bioinformatics, information communication and technology, information science etc. where profits can be made easily and which are more marketable.

At present the following areas of the Library and Information Science field viz. Digitization of documents, knowledge management, IPR, database management, e-publishing etc. is to visualize to competence the global level. This indicates that in next 20 years the LIS education landscape the number of traditional course programmes will be changed into e-learning mechanism. For that reason the existing syllabus will be either deleted or merged or significantly altered. Some of the institutions are beginning to consider E-Learning as a possible solution to this dilemma but the main barrier is the startup expense, which is typically high for distance education.

Technological advancement training

The impact of contemporary technology, equally empower both the ends teachers and learners. In distance learning use of technologies such as wireless, mobile, lab top computing, Personal Digital Assistants (PDA), virtual reality and video conferencing have played remarkable role to enrich LIS education. Internet Technology provides many benefits of F2F instruction.

Due to digital information age the continuous change and advancement of technology as a result to include a new syllabus in their courses then and then is required. To fulfill the job requirements, to catch the promotion avenues life long learning and there is a growing demand of short term or long tem training become important to fit into their immediate environment and interact successfully with each other.

Collaboration to ensure accreditation

The traditional universities were established the department of LIS through distance mode at different regions of the country at different times for the development of the LIS education. Since these departments are under different universities the current collaboration has not gone to the level expected and is still limited to implementing e-learning technologies. The institution's self sufficiency remains only imaginative because of insufficient funds and information explosion. The skyrocketing costs of e-resources, e-books, e-journals etc. standards including instructional design, learning object, metadata, object packaging, IPR management, hardware and software, connectivity, user studies and content related issues which are not able to meet without collaboration.

To avoid such a hurdle in 2003, the University Grant Commission (UGC) organised a dialogue on "enhancing higher education through Common Wealth of Learning (COL). The UGC recommends to promote e-learning, to develop teacher competencies in use of web technologies, especially the use of e-learning platforms that are considered as empowering tools for teachers.

Further, accreditation is the focus of most of the quality assurance efforts. It is an evaluation of whether an LIS programme qualifies for a certain status may have

implications for the programme. In terms of recognition as the course programme are self-reliant and better able to accommodate into the recent environment like digital technology. The universities at large need to collaborate with advanced, specialized and unique R&D institutions to develop networked e-learning training centres and e-learning resources for quality improvements in distance learning.

Quality assurance and cost effective LIS education

The universities attempt to assure the public about the quality of their courses through claims by highlighting their alumni achievements, student success rate, faculty profile and infrastructure. Ranking in LIS education has evolved over a period of more than a century and many experts have shaped its present status. Since the late 1990s India has seen major improvements in quality of LIS education. In recent past various institutions are offering better ICT education through e-learning system with their worldwide network.

The fruitfulness of the distance learning lies in its ability to foster the desired skills in the learners of this stream. Hence, there is a need to evolve suitable teaching pedagogy. A greater focus on video conferencing and interaction with faculty members, experts in library community of the region; preparing success stories of leading local library & information managers, information scientist, field based observations and the simple case studies etc. related to their syllabus through e-learning will go a long way in formulating a skill driven education.

Since learning takes place online, it eliminates many of the expenses of Personal Contact Programmes. The cost effective delivery any time, any where and catering to individual needs are some of the major advantages through e-learning method.

Conclusion

The role of universities will emerge as active linkage for e-learning to facilitate access to information in future. E-Learning supported by ICT is very significant in LIS education as these are free from classroom based education that will create paperless society and paperless libraries and to access information quickly and economically.

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