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**CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMMES OF LIBRARY
& INFORMATION SCIENCE (LIS) PROFESSIONALS
IN THE UNIVERSITIES OF WEST BENGAL (INDIA)
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA**

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Abstract. The paper starts with the need of Continuing Education for the LIS professionals in this modern era of information and technology. It narrates the activities of Continuing Education and Professional Development (CEPD) in different developed and developing countries of the world. It enumerates the role of various associations and institutions of India such as ILA, IASLIC, BLA IIMS, ICSSR, AIIMS, which are actively connected with programmes of continuing education. The authors highlight some of the universities and academic institutions of our country which have centres and departments of continuing education & critically analyze the work and activities of eight universities of West Bengal based on survey work. The paper suggests some measures to improve the existing conditions and status of continuing education programmes for the university-library professionals of West Bengal.

Needs of Continuing Education for LIS professionals

Every profession in the modern era has to adapt itself to the rapidly growing knowledge society. Each and every profession must keep in mind and be aware of the constant change and innovations that are taking place in our modern society.

As a learning process, continuing education builds on and updates previously acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes of a professional. We know that primary responsibility for learning always rests with the individual. At the same time, the profession also has a collective responsibility to encourage continuing education programmes. It has to take adequate measures and provide scope for each and every professional in carrying out his/her study in a specific field. Continuing education programmers, on one hand refresh and update the specialized knowledge of the professionals, and on the other, broadens their horizons in related fields, which actually leads to better jobs satisfaction. It also encourages creativity and provides a stimulus to keep the professionals intellectually alive.

Senior professionals, particularly the librarians and information scientists of the university libraries should always be eager to improve their knowledge in their subject area and also update themselves with the latest management skills. Other professionals at the junior level must be aware of the changing information and communication technology needs and demands of the users. They must avail themselves of the opportunity of joining various short/long courses/training programmes, which automatically helps them to improve the quality and sustainability of their services.

Activities of Continuing Education and Professional Development in Countries other than India

By the late 1970s continuing and professional education was considered not only desirable but also essential and critical in most of the advanced countries of the world. The United States National Commission on Libraries and Information Sciences (NCLIS) highlighted it. A 1973 survey sponsored by NCLIS found that in the field of librarianship there was concern about the need of continuing education, not only for the professionals, but also for all levels of personnel, including para-professionals, semi-professionals and even those who are more tangentially associated with libraries.

At the beginning of the 1980s continuing and professional education was identified as the number one priority at the Special Libraries Association's (SLA) annual meeting. In June 1984 the ALA Council voted to incorporate the Continuing Library Education Network and Exchange (CLENE) pro-

gramme within the structure of the American Library Association (ALA). Library education programmes in colleges and universities soon emerged as one of the important providers of this education.

As the overall progress towards a global economy was developing, international meetings and international associations became more important. As a result, the World Conference on Continuing Library and Information Science Education took place in August 1985 at the Moraine Valley Community College, near Chicago, under the auspices of ALA and International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA). Such conferences helped in the development of communications networks and the continuing exchange of ideas.

UNESCO through its General Information Programme (PGI) and the International Federation for Documentation (FID) were very active and had a great impact in the field of CE. PGI activities included short courses, visiting lectures, guidelines for faculty development and evaluation of library and information science CE programmes. FID's Education and Training Committee (FID/ET) was also active, organizing international meetings and publishing proceedings, plans and proposals. FID/ET also brought out the Newsletter on Education and Training Programmes for Information Personnel.

Many experts expressed their wish that IFLA should increase its presence in developing countries by highlighting relevant issues. The Fourth World Conference on Continuing Professional Education for Library and Information Professions was arranged at Boston, Massachusetts during August 2001. The IFLA/OCLC Early Career Development Fellowship programme which started recently provides early career development and continuing education for library and information science professionals from countries with developing economies.

A major emphasis in Europe according to one scholar was "to develop a perspective for continuing education which helps people to live in a computerized world without transferring technical terms of thinking and categories of technical efficiency to their personal life..."

The Continuing Professional Education Centre is an innovative and progressive unit within the Oxford University Department for Continuing Education. The Centre offers qualitative courses. It conducts a variety of workshops, seminars, and short courses in the field of CE. The Department of Continuing Education of Oxford University also organizes International Programmes where hundreds of students participate from different countries. Universities of Bristol and Manchester in the UK also run various CE programmes for outreach and resident participants.

In Germany, there are various types of CE courses, which range from long-term full time courses (of up to two years duration) to just two-hour lectures. There are also one to two week intensive courses. The University of Hamburg offers specific courses on CE. Universities in France, Spain, Italy, Poland, Sweden and many other countries in the continent are also offering standard courses on CE.

Australia has made increasing use of distance learning for CE. In Japan, CE and training programmes are available to those engaged in library and information work. On the job training and continuing education particularly in the cataloguing and classification domain are very common in Japan. CE is regarded as "in-service training". In China CE is viewed as supplementary or spare-time education that helps both the young and middle aged from other specialties to obtain new knowledge

Singapore started as providers of CE at the National Library, Library Association, development agencies and so on. Singapore is at present offering CE courses for librarians at the Centre for Library Arts and Publishing.

United Nations Development Program (UNDP) advised the Brazilian Ministry of Education in setting up a distance education system to design and deliver training to 27,000 teachers in thirteen states between 1995 and 2003. Makerere University Library, Kampala, (Uganda) now has an End-user Training On-line Tutorial. The university community, including the library personnel can now benefit from the on-line tutorial to keep themselves up to date about library activities. In Egypt, the Arab Network on Staff Development in Higher Education was established in 1994 at Alexandria University.

The Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA) has a well-organized system of continuing education and professional development (CEPD). CEPD incorporates and gives emphasis on "Learning to know" and "Learning to do". LIASA has adopted CEPD as strategic objectives within its overall business plan and has embarked upon creating the Centre for Information Career Development (CICD).

Continuing Education Programme for Library Professionals in India

In India, several Information Centres and academic bodies are doing commendable work in the field of continuing professional education. These institutions include the National Social Science Documentation Centre (NASDOC), All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Indian Institute of Technology (IITs), Indian Institute of Management (IIMs) and so on. The three well established library associa-

tions (Indian Library Association (ILA), Indian Association of Special Libraries and Information Centres (IASLIC) and Medical Library Association of India (MALAI)) regularly conduct several short time courses in the field of library classification, library cataloguing, indexing, computer applications, digital library, multimedia, information and knowledge-management, collection management, content management, preservation and conservation and industrial information system and management.

The Indian Institute of Management, Lucknow has started a course in Management Development Programme (MDP) for Library and Information Managers. The programme is designed to equip the Library & Information Managers (LIMs) with adequate know how.

During the late 60s and all through the 70s of the last century, various library associations, institutions and even the Advisory Committee for Libraries, Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, Govt. of India (1969) strongly recommended specialized training of the professional and semi-professional staff in different types of libraries and information centres. During the early 70s (1970-71) the Indian National Scientific Documentation Centre (INSDOC), New Delhi, made a study of Manpower and Educational Programme in library science in India and it was followed by two important papers on 'Continuing Education of Librarians' published in the Annual Seminar volume (1972) of Documentation & Research Training Centre (DRTC) Bangalore, written by three eminent experts in the field of Library and Information Science.

The National Social Science Documentation Centre (NASSDOC) offers forty courses of two weeks duration for LIS professionals. The Medical Library Association of India has twelve such courses. The National Medical Libraries also offer a dozen courses usually of five weeks duration.

The Indian Association of Academic Libraries (INDAL) in 1980 resolved that library science departments of different library schools should reserve seats for working librarians to attend the courses of the BLISc, MLISc and M.Phil degrees which enable working librarians to improve their qualifications.

The report of the Working Group of the Planning Commission on Libraries & Informatics for Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) recommended that emphasis should be placed on the use and application of information technology and modern management theories. It is also recommended that the training of working library professionals in information science and technology be undertaken on a regular basis.

The Indian Library Association (ILA), one of the leading library associations of India, is conducting continuing education programme and at present offering twenty such courses.

In the special library field, the Indian Association of Special Libraries Information Centres (IASLIC) is also offering different types of short-range courses, workshops, and annual conferences in different areas of library & information science. Workshops on professional development for LIS professionals during last five years (2000-05) included the following themes:

- Workshop on 'WINISIS'-2000
- Workshop on the 'use of audio-visual materials for Library & Information services and their promotion' – 2001
- A course on 'Web design and basic internet concept'-2003
- Workshop on 'Conservation of library materials'.

IASLIC, which was established in 1955 in Calcutta regularly organizes study circles, workshops, short-range courses/training as well as conference seminars every year. Twenty conferences and twenty-one seminars were organized in different parts of the country during the last fifty years.

In addition to these national bodies, various state library associations of India are also offering different types of programmes on continuing education, particularly in the field of automation and information technology. In this connection special mention may be made of the Bengal Library Association, Kolkata. The association is organizing workshop-cum-services in different districts of West Bengal to refresh the existing library professionals with modern concepts of library and information science. The association has offered a course on Computer Application in Library and Information Science every year since 1995.

Continuing Professional Education in University Libraries of India

Today university libraries of India are very much influenced by modern technologies. These libraries are switching over from traditional paper materials to electronic media. The drastic changes in the field of information technology are creating pressure on library and information scientists to adopt the latest techniques and practices in modernizing the university libraries.

Universities of Calcutta, Bombay (now Mumbai) and Madras came into being in the year 1857 to fulfill the higher educational needs of British India. In 1881, the University of Punjab (now in Pakistan)

was established, followed by University of Allahabad in 1887 to cater to the needs of North and Central India. During the 1920s several residential universities came into existence, including Aligarh Muslim University (1920), Lucknow University (1921), Dacca University (now in Bangladesh)(1921), Delhi University (1922), Nagpur University (1923), Andhra University (1926) and Agra University (1927). Libraries and information centres also developed gradually in the premises of these universities.

There is hardly any set policy for continuing education programme for LIS professionals in these universities or anywhere in the country. In spite of the fact that the Curriculum Development Committee (CDC) of the University Grants Commission (UGC) recommended short-term refresher courses for LIS teachers, orientation programmes in library automation and ICT application, nothing much has come out as yet.

LIS courses are offered at different levels in Indian universities including BLIS, MLIS, MPhil and PhD degrees. The distance education system is developing gradually in the country and is looked upon as a viable model for keeping pace with the rising demand for LIS courses. Most of the courses offered by Indian universities are mainly conventional in nature, emphasizing classification, cataloguing, reference, bibliography, library management and libraries and society. Some of the schools have now started courses on library automation but they are not so much conversant with hands on practice. A few universities have started introducing instructions on multimedia packages, knowledge management, decision support systems, digital library systems, use of electronic format of classification schemes, packaging and repackaging information in different formats, and online reference and information services.

Continuing education has become essential for each and every type of library professionals. It includes both formal and informal learning situations.

In 1962 Delhi University started the first ever undergraduate correspondence course, which helped many young people to develop professionally in spite of their busy schedule and office work. Forty-one distance education centres were attached to different universities and courses offered by them cater to a large population. Many libraries also served as Continuing Mass Education Centres. A separate department called Department of Adult, Continuing Education and Extension was started in 1976 when the University of Delhi was examining the question of setting up a full fledged department in this area for offering degree level teaching courses and research programme. The University Grants Commission (UGC) in their "Policy Frame of Higher Education" recognized "extension as the third dimension of the university system". The introduction of Adult and Continuing Education under the Adult Education of Government of India offered a concrete opportunity to the university system for extension activities. In 1980 a regular centre for Adult and Continuing Education and Extension plan was sanctioned with a department opening under the Faculty of Social Sciences in 1985.

University of Mumbai and University of Madras are conducting Adult and Continuing Education Programmes. Different types of short courses or training programmes for library professionals have also been introduced in these universities.

The advent of digital technologies enabled Indian universities to implement distance education to reach out to a diverse population and keep them aware of the teaching and learning environment twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week. Courses are being provided through the web and have a great impact on the recipients. Course materials including course outlines, calendar, reading materials, assignments and so on are easily available on the Internet. Interaction between teacher and learner is provided through e-mail, bulletin boards, chat sessions, and web-conferencing. The Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), which is a national level university established by an Act of Parliament in India, is doing commendable work in this area, particularly for LIS professionals. IGNOU has also several Tele-Learning Centres (TLC) specifically for the delivery of a Bachelor's Degree in Information technology (BIT) programme.

Such courses are very helpful for library and information professionals to develop themselves without a taking a single day's leave or undue advantage from their authorities. There are about a dozen such Open Universities in India which are conducting short time professional courses regularly. Moreover, there are a few universities in India which have a Directorate or a separate Department/Centre of distance education and conduct various types of adult education and continuing education programmes. For example, School of Correspondence Courses & Continuing Education, University of Delhi; Institute of Correspondence Courses and Continuing Education, Utkal University, Bhubaneswar; Department of Adult & Continuing Education and Extension Work, Kholapur and Jawharlal Nehru Technological University, Hyderabad. In West Bengal, most of the Universities have academic staff colleges, directorates of distance education and adult continuing education and extension centres.

In this study we emphasized the status of the continuing education programmes of the university libraries in the State of West Bengal and sent questionnaires to eight universities of the state and dis-

cussed personally with professionals, including the Librarian/Deputy Librarian/Library-in-charge as well as a few assistant librarians. These eight universities include:

- University of Calcutta
- Jadavpur University
- University of Burdwan
- Viswabharti University
- Ribindrabharati University
- Vidyasagar University
- University of North Bengal
- University of Kalyani .

The first and foremost university in the state of West Bengal and one of the oldest in India is the University of Calcutta, which was established in 1857 along with Bombay and Madras Universities. There are different opinions regarding the year of the establishment of the university library. From a study we find that the credit for opening the first university library goes to Calcutta University (CU), which opened a library in 1873 with a total budget of 6,000.00. The Central Library, CU is at present housed in a nine–storied building. At present the university library system consists of the central library in apex together with campus and departmental libraries spread over seven campuses of the university. The university library provides the following services:

- Reference Service
- Referral Service
- Bibliographic Service
- Internet Service
- Documentation Service
- Reprographic Service
- E-mail Service
- UGC-NET and Career Guidance Service
- Circulation
- Reading Room Service
- Inter-Library Loan Service
- On-line Public Access Catalogue Service.

The library is now approaching total automation by using the SOUL package. The library has its own local network connected with a server with terminals inside the library. The library has databases of books, journals, theses and so on in addition to the OPAC. As far as the total collection of the library is concerned, it has more than eight lakh books and subscribes to 795 journal titles of which 549 are foreign. There are ninety professionals working in the library and out of them fifty-eight are male and thirty two female. Now the continuing education programme is in full swing. The library has different categories of awareness programmes. A few are of thirty days duration and a few others are of seven days duration.

The library staff are regularly deputed to attend refresher courses, workshops, seminars and conferences. Study leave facilities are provided to the staff. The university library has a grant for purchasing books and periodicals. At present they are getting Rs. 2,00,00,000.00 (2 crore) for purchasing books and periodicals. As stated by the University Librarian, the reading habits of the library professionals are satisfactory. From the statement of the librarian we came to know that most of the library professionals are fully aware of the development of information technology in the field of library and information science.

There are more than sufficient numbers of computers in the library. From our survey we have seen that most of the professional staff are using the computers and many of them are for their professional development.

The Jadavpur University was established in 1955. The University Central Library is housed in a three-storied building. The university comprises of Central Library, Saltlake Campus Library, Departmental Libraries and also the libraries attached to schools and centres for studies. There are in total sixty-eight professionals, (thirty-nine male and twenty-nine female). The library is conducting continuing education programmes for library professionals, which include an Awareness Programme (one day), Training- cum-Workshop (three days). Library staff are regularly deputed for workshops, seminars, conferences and various training programmes and they get study leave for attending such programmes. The library has received rupees 3000000.00 (three crores) for books and periodicals and rupees 200000 (two lakhs) for furniture and equipment during the current financial year. Reading hab-

its of the professionals in the library are satisfactory and around sixty of them are fully up-to-date with the developments in information and technology in the field of LIS. Around sixty are using computers for continuing education programmes. The Central Library at present has over 5,09,800 (approximately) volumes on record.

The University of Burdwan was established in 1960 and the library also started in the same year. There are thirty-five professionals in the library and out of them twenty three are male and twelve are female. Training for library professional is conducted in the library. Information Library Network (INFLIBNET) had already conducted three categories of training ranging from one day to two weeks. Library professionals are occasionally sent to attend workshops, seminars, conferences and so on. Study leave is also given to these professionals. The university library, does not get a sufficient amount for purchasing books and periodicals, or any other costly materials.

Visva Bharati University was established in 1951 by an Act of Indian Parliament. This is a Central University situated in the State of West Bengal. It has today 3,93,999 volumes of books and around four thousand users. There are fifty-two professionals out of which forty are male and twelve are female. The University Library does not have any Continuing Education Programme for its library staff. Library professionals are deputed to attend seminars, conference, workshops and so on. Study leave is also given to them; the university library receives Rs.55, 00,000.00 for books and periodicals, Rs. 2,30,000.00 furniture and equipment and 2,45,000.00 for providing various types of services. Reading habits of the professionals is satisfactory. Out of fifty- two professional staff fifteen are fully aware, twenty five are partially aware and twelve are hardly aware of the development of Information Technology in the field of library and information science. Forty professionals are using computers for Continuing Education Programme.

Rabindra Bharati University situated in Kolkata was established in 1962 and the library was also founded in the same year. This library does not have any continuing education programme for their library professionals. They carry on self-education. If the library staff are eager to attend workshops and seminars conferences, they are deputed and given study leave. The library gets sufficient grant for purchasing books and periodicals. Reading habits of the library professions is satisfactory and most are fully aware of the developments concerning information technology in the field of library and information science.

Vidyasagar University situated in Midnapore in the West-Midnapore district was established in the year 1981. It took five years to start its library in 1986. The Central Library is housed in a “three storied building with an total area of 15000 sq.ft. (approximately). Apart from the Central Library, there are several departments, which have separate departmental libraries. There are eight professional staff in the library of which one is female. Training is provided to library professionals in computer – aided Library and Information Systems and use of CDS/ISIS retrieval systems. Library professionals are also sent to different workshops, seminars and conferences. Leave with pay is available for this purpose. Rupees Fifteen lakhs (15,000,00.00) are received for books and periodicals and two lakhs (2,00,000.00) for furniture, and equipment. The reading habits of the library staff is not up to the mark. All the professional staff are aware of the development in Information Technology in the LIS field. Most of the library staff use computers for continuing education. The Deputy Librarian who is in charge of the library feels that Continuing Education Programme “should be conducted on regular basis to acquaint the library staff with the modern technology used in the library field”.

The University of North Bengal, which is situated in Siliguri in the District of Dargeeling, was established in the year 1962. The University library, which is known as “Grantha Bhavan”, was established in the same year. The library presently houses (15147.24 sq feet) nearly 1,80,000 books and 35,000 back volumes of periodicals. The library is working as an information bank subscribing to nearly 688 periodicals including about 200 foreign publications. There are nine professional staff in the library. Continuing education has been conducted by INFLIBNET of which the UGC-INFONET programme was for one day and library software training for seven days. Library staff do attend workshops, seminars, and conferences. Library offices get full benefit of study leave whereas other professionals can avoid partially. For books and periodicals a UGC grant is available and Rs.55, 00,000 are available from the university fund. The Deputy Librarian and Librarian in-charge states that the reading habits of the library staffs are satisfactory. Library staff, on the other hand, are not so aware of the development of information technology in LIS. About ninety percent of the staff use computers in the library.

The University of Kalyani is situated in Kalyani, a city in the Nadia District of West Bengal. The year of establishment of this University is 1960 and the library was started in 1961, housed in the BT college building. Only in 1979 did the central library obtain its own two-storied building. There is a Departmental Library in each academic department, but unfortunately they are manned by non-

professional staff members. There are at present seven professional staff in the library. The library has just conducted a five day INFLIBNET Regional Training Programme for Library Automation (IRTPLA). Library professionals are sent to attend different workshops, seminars, conference and so on. Study leave facility is available. Sufficient grant for purchasing books, periodicals and furniture are not available. As far as reading habits of the professional staff are concerned the Librarian-in-charge is satisfied. There are six library professionals who are using computers for Continuing Education Programme.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Thus from the above study of the eight universities of West Bengal it is clear that five out of seven are actively participating in Continuing Education Programme for increasing the awareness of their library professionals. It is a good sign as this trend was not present before 2000. Even the University of Calcutta, which is observing its one hundred and fifty years of existence, hardly encouraged professional development during the last decade of the twentieth century.

Another observation is that despite inadequate grants in a few libraries they are not hesitating to start with Continuing Education Programmes. The Jadavpur University gets a maximum grant (3 crores) for purchasing books and periodicals, which is even more than University of Calcutta.

One very positive element is that the library professionals in most of their libraries have satisfactory reading habits. This will help these libraries develop their staff professionally and to make them more knowledgeable.

In almost all the libraries (except one), authorities are helping the professionals by allowing study leave for attending different types of courses. This is undoubtedly a very encouraging step, which will definitely motivate the professionals so that more and more personnel will be interested to attend such courses.

It is also praiseworthy that in most of the libraries, professionals are fully aware of the development of information technology in LIS. It is not clear that in spite of having adequate number of staff and good funding why one of their libraries could not start continuing education programme even after its fifty-five years of existence.

In spite of a steady rise in the number of Continuing Education programmes in different universities (as many as ninety universities have set up adult education departments) and also commendable efforts put up by UGC in providing funding support to implement these programmes, some are not yet able to cater satisfactorily to the needs of the LIS professionals. Many programmes are of short duration, informal and not very extensive in nature. Library professionals in these libraries are very much casual. In this connection mention should be made of the remarks made by one librarian that "if the library staffs are eager to attend ..." then only they are deputed for workshops, seminars, and conferences. The approach and attitude of the librarian should be different. As a leader or manager, he/she must encourage his/her staff to attend such programmes

From the survey, it is found that the country has a population of more than a billion but only around four million are Internet users. Therefore according to one scholar, a low percentage of Internet access is creating problems for Continuing Education programme. As far as the university libraries in West Bengal are concerned, we do not feel that there is any problem in Internet access in these libraries. Most of the library professionals are using the Internet.

Librarians and all library professionals should attend professional meetings in different parts of the city and country, which is one of the most popular modes of continuing education for librarians.

Continuing Education programmes for library professionals should be a joint and shared responsibility of the individual, the employer, the library schools and the library associations.

We understand that continuing education is nothing but a set of intellectual activities developed by human beings to modernize and improve themselves during their life. It follows the philosophy of 'life-long education'.

Specific courses should be followed in any programme of professional development which should have a "balanced content, neither over emphasizing the professional's world nor his political performance, but giving priority to the essential basic knowledge that is fundamental to making him a more efficient technician in his field".

Advanced training for continuing education in highly automated libraries should cover the following areas:

- Library software packages;
- AACR II;
- Library of Congress Subject Headings or the use of any standard in terminological thesaurus;

- MARC/UNIMARC formats;
- Online databases;
- E-mail/Internet;
- CAS/SDI using new technology;
- Knowledge Management/Content Management in Digital Environment;
- Electronic Publishing;
- Multimedia;
- Open Source Software;
- Digital Information Management etc.

Continuous education is not only a systematic and continuous schooling, but also a process of development and human consciousness in all its aspects. It is very correctly said by a scholar that 'the university would be helping continuing education by helping people to give a deeper meaning to their lives'.

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