



ISSN: 2454-9940



**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF APPLIED
SCIENCE ENGINEERING AND MANAGEMENT**

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www.ijasem.org

HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT IN INDIAN LIBRARIES: PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract:

Human Resource Development (HRD) is an important aspect of the development and modernization of libraries, as it allows them to address technological advancements and changing user expectations. HRD practices under Indian libraries can be stated in the absence of a variety of challenges hindering their development, such as poor training infrastructure, scarcity of institutional support, financial limits, and a lack of strategic policy frameworks. The paper is a study on the current HRD practice in Indian libraries—academic, public, and special—regarding activities that have been taken up by government agencies, professional associations, and library schools. It also brings out the most important challenges, such as skill obsolescence, change resistance, and differences in development opportunities. Based on case studies and institutional experiences, the paper emphasizes the need to establish a national HRD strategy that integrates continuous professional development, digital literacy, and organizational support systems. These results imply that to enhance the quality of the services and make them more sustainable, even in the long-term perspective, the library professionals have to be empowered with well-organized HRD programs.

Keywords: *Human Resource Development (HRD), Indian Libraries, Library Staff Training, Professional Development, Library Workforce, Skill Gaps*

Introduction:

Traditionally, the Indian libraries have played a key role in accruing sources of knowledge that enable learning and research and place a cultural safeguard. In this respect, libraries (public, academic, and special) have played a crucial role in encouraging literacy, maintaining research, and enhancing development in the country. Their capability, however, depends on how their human resources can modify themselves according to user demands and changes in technology. Consequently, Human Resource Development (HRD) in libraries refers to the deliberate training, education, and professional advancement of library personnel aimed at meeting user expectations and capitalizing on technological innovations.

The library field was experiencing dramatic changes associated with these issues, which include the spread of Information and Communication Technology, the expansion of digital sources, and the rising anticipation of responsive, user-responsive libraries. In such circumstances, the skillful, technologically literate, and service-responsive personnel were made essential. However, this era was characterized by the mixed tracks of advancement initiatives and persistent insurmountable issues of HRD in the Indian libraries.

Notwithstanding a multiplicity of efforts, several impediments remained. One such impediment was the lack of adequate infrastructure. Moreover, the training opportunities were unevenly distributed across the territories, personnel lacked motivation and stimulation, and

the policy frameworks were inadequate. Specifically, the staff at the poorly funded and rural institutions had less access to up-to-date information about library practices and digital tools, which meant they had to focus more on adapting to their situation.

The current research paper explores practices and limits involved in HRD in Indian libraries prior to the year 2015. It evaluates the initiatives that have been taken, measures their effectiveness, and defines the gaps that have limited professional development. By probing this historical instance, the research aims to offer information on how to create better and greener models of HRD in the future.

Objectives of the Research:

- 1) The research aims to analyze the HRD policies and initiatives implemented by government bodies, professional organizations, and library institutions in India before 2015.
- 2) To identify the key training programs and professional development efforts aimed at library staff across academic, public, and special libraries.
- 3) To explore the challenges and barriers faced in implementing effective HRD strategies, including infrastructural, financial, and policy-related issues.
- 4) To evaluate the impact of ICT and digital transformation on the skill requirements and development needs of library professionals during the period.

Literature Review:

The researchers have been sensitive to the changes in the human resource development of Indian libraries before the year 2015. Kumar (2004) observed that conventional LIS curricula were inadequate for orienting librarians toward digital environments and thus advocated for HRD initiatives embedded with information and communication technologies. Kaul (2005) foregrounded institutional and fiscal constraints on HRD and urged the development of structured policy frameworks. Satija (2006) cited the threat of skill obsolescence and proposed regular in-service training. Ramesh and Nagarajan (2007) identified significant skills deficiencies—particularly in automation and digital resource management—among engineering college libraries. Pujar and Satyanarayana (2008) highlighted the capacity of e-learning to strengthen HRD, particularly in geographically dispersed regions. Patil and Rajgoli (2010) noted that, although library professionals were aware of ICT tools, practical implementation was limited by insufficient training infrastructure. Verma and Sharma (2011) assessed INFLIBNET's HRD initiatives, evidencing positive outcomes yet revealing disparities in reach across institutions. Thanuskodi (2012) reported that administrative indifference and financial constraints obstructed HRD in Tamil Nadu libraries. Chandrashekara and Ramasesh (2013) criticized the misalignment between LIS curricula and professional skill demands and called for curriculum reforms. Finally, Meera and Mulla (2014) identified low motivation and constrained career progression as critical HRD challenges, particularly in rural public libraries.

Research Methodology:

This study uses a mixed-methods approach to explore human resource development (HRD) practices and challenges in Indian libraries. It uses a survey, interviews, and a literature review to gather data. The sample size is around 100 professionals across five Indian states. The study's limitations include its focus on HRD practices before 2015 and its limited generalizability to all Indian libraries.

Human Resource Development in Indian Libraries: Practices and Challenges

Human Resource Development (HRD) in Indian libraries was conditioned by traditional librarianship, intensifying demands for technological adaptation, and the broader educational and administrative systems prevailing across the country. Although the library stakeholders recognized the importance of HRD, this process lacked a visionary, holistic, inclusive, comprehensive, and integrated strategic plan.

Formal training through Library and Information Science (LIS) programs constituted a foundational element of HRD. However, a good number of these programs continued to focus on conventional elements of curricula, including classification, cataloguing, and the administration of libraries, with little exposure to the current information technologies, digital librarianship, and data management skills. In-service initiatives and continuing education were organized by national bodies—including INFLIBNET, RRRLF, NISCAIR, and UGC-Human Resource Development Centres (HRDCs)—but their coverage tended to be confined to academic environments or metropolitan regions.

At the same time, the on-the-job training and informal learning, especially in public and semi-urban environments, have produced mixed outcomes and provided insufficient training in digital literacy and new library services. Although professional conferences and networking forums were essential, they tended to be constrained by cost restrictions, geographical distance, and institutional unwillingness to cover the expenses of sending participants to the events.

Technological challenges further constrained HRD efforts. Poor integration of ICT, aging infrastructure, poor access to the internet, and a lack of digital readiness on a broad front, together with financial and organizational barriers to HRD practice. Recruitment processes were protracted and perceived as unattractive. The problem was further exacerbated by the curriculum-practice gap and even dissonance between LIS education output and the needs of contemporary library services.

Various institutional and national initiatives, notably the National Knowledge Commission (2005–2009), stressed modern library transformation and the professional development of ICT expertise, underscoring the necessity of policy-level intervention, a reorientation toward continuous learning, systematic digital integration, and strategic investment in human capital.

Concept and Importance of HRD in Libraries

The field of Human Resource Development (HRD) in libraries represents a strategic initiative dedicated to cultivating the competencies, attitudes, and performance of personnel so as to satisfy the continual shifts within the information environment. It covers a wide range of practices, including recruitment, orientation, ongoing professional development, formal and informal training, skills instigation, performance management, several incentive strategies, leadership training, and career growth planning. After all, as a final point, HRD will strive to create a committed, competent, and dynamic workforce that can help the library achieve its mission and vision.

In the digital age, libraries have moved beyond book depositories with digital collections, electronic periodicals, online catalogs available to the general populace, institutional repositories, and knowledge management systems, as well as other media. In this

context, HRD plays a central role in organizational learning, improving service quality, providing information services effectively and promptly, maintaining proper records, and addressing the needs of various user groups. Besides, HRD initiatives encourage innovation and imagination in service provision, thereby enabling libraries to embrace emerging technology applications and improve in-house communication.

HRD in an Indian setting is gaining added significance due to the diversity of library systems and the differences between urban and rural information infrastructure. HRD enables the harmonization of professional skills and capacities, facilitates access to high-quality information services for all, and acts on such challenges as poor manpower planning, low usage of new technologies, and obsolete training techniques. In doing this, HRD positively contributes to job contentment and personal identity, leading to the retention of skilled people in the LIS field.

HRD Practices in Indian Libraries :

Human Resource Development (HRD) within Indian library institutions was fragmented and largely evolving, combining conventional learning pathways with emerging pedagogical models. The primary channel for HRD remained Library and Information Science (LIS) education, which offered foundational degree programs—the Bachelor of Library Science (B.Lib.Sc), Master of Library Science (M.Lib.Sc), and doctoral studies (Ph.D). However, numerous LIS curricula focused on traditional topics like cataloging, classification, and library law, allowing for little access to emerging areas like digital librarianship, database management, and design of user experience.

On-the-job training was a crucial component of HRD at that time since the majority of library professionals had developed practical skills taking part in hands-on practice, peer mentorship, and informal learning in their respective institutions. A series of national and regional bodies contributed decisively to this professional development, including the National Library of India (Kolkata), INFLIBNET (Information and Library Network Centre), DELNET (Developing Library Network), Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation (RRRLF), NISCAIR (National Institute of Science Communication and Information Resources), and the Documentation Research and Training Centre (DRTC) in Bangalore.

In spite of the efforts of these organizations, there was no coordination amongst them, and this, along with a non-existent national HRD framework, resulted in piecemeal and unstructured implementation. Limited provision for continuing professional education (CPE) represented another significant shortcoming, with participation frequently restricted to librarians employed in well-funded academic institutions. Such gaps underline the need to have in place a holistic national policy on HRD where formal education, in-service training, digital literacy, and structured career development are all embedded at the national policy level so as to develop a library workforce that is ready to meet the future.

The Role of Professional Associations and Government Bodies:

Professional associations and governmental departments collectively shaped Human Resource Development (HRD) strategies within India's library sector. The Indian Library Association (ILA), in particular, assumed a leading position by convening national conferences, seminars, and workshops for librarians, educators, and researchers. Nevertheless, these initiatives were more in favor of urban professionals, higher learning institutions, and

libraries, with little effect on poorly funded or rural libraries. The Indian Association of Special Libraries and Information Centres (IASLIC) was likewise pivotal, fostering specialized training in scientific information management, technical documentation, and industrial knowledge systems.

Governmental bodies such as the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the Ministry of Culture likewise advanced HRD initiatives through funding allocations and policy support. UGC Human Resource Development Centres (HRDCs) delivered orientation and refresher courses to library professionals, whereas the Ministry of Culture promoted public-library development by financing workshops, reading-promotion campaigns, and automation projects.

Other agencies forming under the governmental patronage also contributed significantly to ICT training, resource sharing, and library automation, including INFLIBNET and DELNET. However, a lack of a unified, nationally standardized policy of HRD in libraries led to an unequal relationship in its adherence at the institutional and regional levels. Also, the inadequate coordination and the poor utilization of resources occurred due to a lack of cooperation between the professional associations and governmental agencies.

Major Challenges in HRD.

The trajectory of Human Resource Development (HRD) in Indian libraries was constrained by systemic, infrastructural, and institutional fault lines. These obstacles dictated the effectiveness of training programs, created inequality among institutions, and denied many professionals the opportunity to develop their careers fully.

Chief among these obstacles was the scarcity of well-structured and ongoing Continuous Professional Development (CPD) schemes. Most library staff members preserved skills gained in early education, which often became outdated in the face of rapidly changing information technologies. This technological obsolescence also widened the gap between emerging technologies and the abilities of personnel to realize them effectively.

One of the ongoing issues in most Indian libraries is the persistent inadequate funding for Human Resource Development (HRD). Most of the budgetary requirements were allocated to the development of infrastructure, development of physical and digital collections, and maintenance of operations, and little was given to in-staff development. As a result, access to prompt training was limited, and professional advancement opportunities were reduced.

At the same time, gaps in policy and institutional disintegration brought bias in the level of qualification, performance evaluation methods, and plans for acquiring skills. This situation, accompanied by a low level of awareness and minimal participation in institutional decision-making, created low morale among librarians.

The urban-rural digital divide also increased the professional competence gap among institutions and disrupted the quest to provide equal library services to institutions in different regions. These problems needed to be alleviated by intensifying resources temporarily, increasing training, and altering the paradigm in the development of policies, organizational culture, and strategic planning, making HRD rest at the center of the library's growth and service quality.

The Way Forward (Reflections before 2015)

Scholarly analyses undertaken in 2015 revealed that the Indian library ecosystem urgently required strategic, systematic, and comprehensive reforms in Human Resource Development (HRD). This need has been triggered by rapid technological change along with the new emerging user expectations. In response, the sector developed a national HRD policy that aimed to provide guidelines for recruitment, training, professional development, and career growth. The policy aimed to reduce the existing gaps between academic, public, and special libraries because they helped to mobilize uniformity in professional standards and facilitated the long-term planning of the workforce.

Continuous upskilling was equally critical. The importance of in-service training, access to internet-based certification programs, and open education resources was given priority. Moreover, the integration of Library and Information Science (LIS) education with emerging information technologies was deemed essential. LIS curricula had therefore to advance quickly, focusing on such topics as digital librarianship, data analytics, artificial intelligence, metadata standards, open-access systems, and research data management.

HRD had to place digital literacy, digital ethics, privacy, cybersecurity, and user support first. Change management and leadership development were also deemed vital. A well-built HRD ecosystem also necessitated well-established systems of performance appraisal, which would connect professional development and performance outcomes.

The need to build sustainable, inclusive HRD frameworks necessitated the collaborative models in the form of LIS schools, professional associations, government agencies, and knowledge networks. Investing in the potential of librarians in terms of skills and knowledge and their leadership ability in Indian libraries would reposition them at the core of knowledge creation, dissemination, and digital literacy.

Conclusion:

Human Resource Development (HRD) in Indian libraries was disjointed, episodic, and chronically under-resourced. The training activities were focused mainly on the normal LIS education and the workshops carried out by organizations like INFLIBNET, DELNET, RRRLF, and LIS departments. The major contribution that was made by professional associations, in particular ILA and IASLIC, could not be as extensive as needed since their scope was limited. Lack of a national HRD policy, the tight budget, outdated pedagogical patterns, and poor integration of ICT skills were daunting challenges in the professional development of librarians, specifically in rural institutions and in public libraries. Enhancing these obstacles was the abiding difference between LIS curricula and the current technological requirements of information services. However, this previous era served as a significant benchmark for our future reforms, promoting the organization of HRD programs, learning models, digital capacity development, and performance assessment. Change in strategic HRD initiatives was considered essential to improve service quality as well as reposition libraries as all-embracing, knowledge-equipped, and digitally relevant establishments.

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