

LEADERSHIP IN INTEGRATING INDIAN KNOWLEDGE WITH LIS

Dr. Mohan S. Ratkanthiwar

Librarian (Professor)

Yadaorao Poshattiwar Arts College

Talodhi (Balapur), Dist. Chandrapur

Email - mohanratkanthiwar@gmail.com

Mob.No.- 9371461267

Abstract :

Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) represent centuries of community based wisdom that covers areas such as agriculture, medicine, folklore, and cultural practices. Modern Library and Information Science (LIS), on the other hand, emphasizes the systematic organization, preservation, and dissemination of information using standardized methods and digital technologies. Integrating IKS with LIS is essential for safeguarding cultural heritage and promoting inclusivity so that diverse forms of knowledge remain accessible to future generations. However, this integration presents challenges related to misrepresentation, intellectual property rights, technical limitations, and institutional resistance. Leadership plays a critical role in addressing these challenges by providing vision. This paper explores the various leadership roles ranging from institutional and technical leaders to community elders and policymakers in integrating IKS with modern LIS practices. It also highlights the importance of community led protocols, participatory metadata development, and decentralized control in preserving cultural integrity. Finally, the study offers recommendations such as advisory boards, traditional knowledge labels, and curriculum reforms to strengthen IKS and LIS integration. The findings emphasize that effective leadership is not only about management but also about ethical stewardship, cultural respect, and empowerment of Indian communities.

Keywords: Indian Knowledge Systems, Library and Information Science, Leadership, Modern Libraries, Leadership Role in IKS and LIS.

Introduction :

Modern libraries have traditionally been built around documented knowledge such as books, journals, and digital records. However, knowledge is not only what is written in texts, much of it is oral, performative, or experiential. This type of knowledge, called Indian Knowledge Systems, is equally important for human development (Agrawal, 1995).

IKS includes farming practices, healing methods, folk tales, cultural rituals, and community decision-making processes (Berkes, 1999). For example, tribal farmers in India preserve seed varieties suited to their climate; such practices are rarely documented in formal agricultural books but are crucial for sustainability. Similarly, many communities use

traditional medicines that modern science is now beginning to validate (Government of India, 2003).

LIS professionals now recognize that ignoring IKS means ignoring a rich part of human heritage. Therefore, integrating IKS into modern LIS practices is important not only for preservation but also for cultural respect, educational enrichment, and social justice (Smith, 2012).

This integration requires leadership because leaders set the vision, build trust with communities, and ensure ethical handling of knowledge.

Objectives :

The objectives of this paper are:

1. To explain why leadership is necessary in integrating IKS with LIS.
2. To describe the roles of different leaders.
3. To identify major challenges
4. To suggest practical recommendations for LIS professionals and policymakers.

Understanding IKS and LIS :

- **Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) :**

IKS refers to knowledge developed by local communities, based on their long experience with environment, culture, and social life (UNESCO, 2003). Unlike modern scientific knowledge, IKS is often collective, oral, and context-based. For instance:

- **Agriculture :** Indian seed preservation and seasonal farming practices.
- **Medicine :** Use of herbs and minerals for healing.
- **Culture :** Folklore, songs, and rituals.
- **Library and Information Science (LIS) :**

LIS deals with information organization, cataloguing, digitization, metadata creation, and access systems (IFLA, 2019). Modern LIS uses tools such as MARC21 cataloguing, Dublin Core metadata, and digital repositories.

When IKS and LIS combine, libraries can serve as bridges between modern research and traditional wisdom, benefiting both communities and scholars.

Importance of Leadership in IKS and LIS Integration :

Leadership is about more than administration, it involves vision, strategy, ethics, and empowerment. In IKS and LIS integration, leadership is essential because:

- Communities must trust institutions before sharing their knowledge.

- Libraries need policies that protect ownership and prevent misuse.
 - Staff require training to handle non-traditional materials.
 - Technology must be adapted to cultural contexts.
- Thus, leaders act as bridges between communities and institutions.

Leadership Roles and Responsibilities :

It is in order here to shed light on different types of leadership and their role and responsibilities in integrating IKS with LIS:

Leadership Roles and Responsibilities					
Institutional Leaders	Library Managers and Professionals	Community Leaders and Elders	Technical Leaders	Educators and Trainers	Policy Makers and Legal Leaders

1. **Institutional Leaders (Directors, Deans, Trustees) :** Must declare commitment to IKS preservation in mission statements and allocate funds for community-led documentation projects (IFLA, 2019).
2. **Library Managers and Professionals:** Create collection development policies that include oral traditions, folk songs, and Indian ecological knowledge (Flinn & Stevens, 2011).
3. **Community Leaders and Elders:** Decide what knowledge can be shared, under what conditions, and how it should be described (Smith, 2012).
4. **Technical Leaders (IT Specialists, Metadata Experts):** Develop cataloguing systems that respect **local languages, cultural meanings, and restrictions** (IFLA, 2019).
5. **Educators and Trainers:** Integrate IKS ethics and preservation methods into LIS curricula to prepare future professionals to handle community knowledge (Smith, 2012).
6. **Policy Makers and Legal Leaders:** Collaborate with WIPO and national frameworks to ensure **legal protection for communal rights** (WIPO, 2016).

The Importance of Local Contexts and Community led Protocols

True leadership in IKS and LIS integration requires **shifting from institutional control to community-led protocols**. Standard LIS tools (e.g., MARC21, Dublin Core) cannot capture cultural meaning or enforce access restrictions.

Examples of Leadership in Action :

- **Co-development of Metadata:** Communities should design their own metadata schemes. The concept of **Traditional Knowledge (TK) Labels** helps identify cultural permissions, such as “Only for Educational Use” or “Restricted to Elders” (Christen, 2012).

- **Decentralized Control:** Libraries should act as **custodians** rather than owners and use platforms where communities themselves set terms of access (Cox & Wallace, 2012).

This approach emphasizes **social justice**, as knowledge remains in community hands while still being preserved and respected.

Challenges in IKS and LIS Integration :

- **Misrepresentation and Misuse :** IKS may be taken out of context or commercialized without consent (Agrawal, 1995). For example, many traditional medicinal plants have been patented by pharmaceutical companies without credit to communities.
- **Intellectual Property Rights :** Modern copyright laws are designed for individuals, not communities. But IKS is collective and intergenerational (WIPO, 2016).
- **Technical Barriers :** Standard cataloguing systems like MARC and Dublin Core may not capture cultural meaning (Berkes, 1999). Oral and performance-based traditions are especially difficult.
- **Institutional Resistance :** Some libraries still consider IKS as “non-scientific” and may hesitate to collect it (Smith, 2012).

Recommendations :

In order to strengthen the integration of IKS within modern LIS practices, the following recommendations are proposed. These actions emphasize the vital role of leadership in ensuring ethical preservation, equitable access, and cultural sensitivity in handling Indian knowledge.

1. **Libraries shall establish Indian Advisory Boards** to guide the formulation and implementation of institutional policies related to IKS preservation, documentation, and dissemination.
2. **Governments and policymakers must develop sui generis legal frameworks** specifically designed to protect communal and intergenerational knowledge, ensuring that Indian communities retain ownership and benefit from the use of their traditional knowledge.
3. **Libraries and information centres should adopt Traditional Knowledge Labels** to promote culturally sensitive cataloguing practices that accurately represent community permissions, usage rights, and traditional contexts.
4. **Library professionals must undergo continuous training** in community engagement, ethical documentation, and participatory methods to enhance their ability to manage and preserve Indian knowledge responsibly.
5. **LIS curricula shall incorporate specialized modules on Indian Knowledge Systems** to equip future librarians and information professionals with the

understanding and skills necessary for culturally inclusive and ethical information management (Smith, 2012).

Conclusion :

Indian Knowledge Systems represent a **living heritage** that continues to guide communities in farming, medicine, and culture. Modern LIS practices can help preserve this knowledge for future generations. However, the integration of IKS with LIS is not simply a technical process; it requires **strong, ethical, and community centred leadership**. Leaders in libraries, communities, technology and policy must work together to ensure respectful preservation, equitable access, and legal protection. If done carefully, IKS and LIS integration can promote **cultural justice, sustainable development and inclusive knowledge systems** for the future.

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