IMPORTANCE OF SOFT SKILLS IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE PROFESSION: A REVIEW

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Abstract :

Soft skills, with their multifactor impact on the efficiency of professionals along with technical expertise, has become increasingly significant. This review explores the necessity of interpersonal, communication, leadership, and problem-solving skills for LIS professionals in a technologically advancing environment. Various studies highlight the impact of soft skills on workplace relationships, user engagement, and service efficiency. Despite their importance, there is a lack of structured training in LIS curricula. This paper examines existing literature on soft skills in LIS professions, identifies skill gaps, and provides suggestions for integrating these competencies into professional development programs.

Keywords : Soft skills, Library profession, importance of soft skills,

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Introduction :

With the evolution of library services from traditional information management to digital and interactive user experiences, soft skills have become indispensable for LIS professionals. While technical proficiency in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is essential, competencies such as communication, adaptability, teamwork, and leadership play a crucial role in ensuring effective library services. (Nair 2016) emphasized that LIS professionals in university and college libraries require soft skills to enhance workplace performance and user satisfaction. Similarly, (Sharma, 2013) found that in the service sector, including libraries, employability is influenced significantly by behavioral competencies.

Soft skills play a crucial role in the library profession, complementing technical expertise and enhancing service quality. As libraries evolve into dynamic knowledge hubs, professionals must possess strong communication, interpersonal, and problem-solving skills to effectively engage with users. Effective communication helps librarians understand user needs, provide guidance, and facilitate information access. Teamwork and leadership skills are essential for collaboration within the library and across institutions. Adaptability and emotional

Published in Collaboration with
Central Library, Dhanwate National College, Nagpur
Department of Library & Information Science, R. T. M. Nagpur University, Nagpur
Volume-11 (2025) : Issue-1 (October-2025)

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UPA NATIONAL E-JOURNAL
Interdisciplinary Peer-Reviewed Indexed Journal

IMPACT FACTOR
5.473(SJIF)

ISSN
2455-4375

intelligence enable professionals to navigate technological advancements and user expectations.

Research Objectives :

The primary objectives of soft skills in the library profession is to enhance communication, leadership, teamwork, and customer service abilities among LIS professionals, ensuring effective user engagement, efficient library management, and improved service delivery in evolving digital and traditional library environments. This review article in intended to incorporate the following objectives.

i. To analyze the significance of soft skills in the professional development of Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals.
ii. To examine the impact of soft skills on workplace performance, user satisfaction, and service quality in libraries.
iii. To explore challenges and gaps in the development and application of soft skills among LIS professionals.
iv. To recommend strategies for enhancing soft skills training through curriculum updates, on-the-job training, and policy initiatives.

Research Methodology :

This review article follows a systematic literature review approach to analyze existing research on the soft skills in the Library and Information Science (LIS) profession. Data is collected from summarizing objectives and findings of seven research theses of India on "Soft skills in LIS profession." The study includes literature published in the last 20–30 years, focusing on soft skills relevant to LIS professionals, and studies focusing solely on technical skills. A thematic and comparative analysis is conducted to identify key trends, importance, impact and challenges, and emerging patterns, highlighting research gaps and future opportunities. Ethical considerations are maintained by ensuring proper citations, and limitations include language constraints and reliance on secondary data. This methodology ensures a structured and comprehensive understanding of soft skills in LIS, offering valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and professionals.

Literature survey :

For the present study the best seven thesis base on soft skills and library profession selected and these are given as under.

i. **(Nair, 2016)** This study assesses the role of soft skills among Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals in university and college libraries in Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar. It highlights the growing importance of soft skills alongside technical expertise due to advancements in ICT. The research, based on extensive data collection, examines the impact of soft skills on workplace performance, interpersonal relationships, and user satisfaction. It underscores the need for integrating soft skills

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Central Library, Dhanwate National College, Nagpur
Department of Library & Information Science, R. T. M. Nagpur University, Nagpur
Volume-11 (2025) : Issue-1 (October-2025)

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into LIS curricula and recommends on-job training to bridge skill gaps. The study provides valuable insights into the evolving professional landscape of LIS and workforce development.

ii. (Sharma, 2013) The research explores the impact of soft skills on employment in Jaipur's service sector. The study highlights how interpersonal and behavioral competencies influence job acquisition, retention, and career growth, alongside academic qualifications and technical skills. It emphasizes the growing demand for soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and leadership, which directly affect productivity and business expansion. With Rajasthan's service sector contributing significantly to GDP, the research underscores the need for structured training and government initiatives to enhance employability. The study provides valuable insights into bridging the skill gap, making it relevant for policymakers, educators, and industry professionals.

iii. (Vachhani K P, 2024) This study evaluates the ICT skills of library professionals at S.G.G. University, highlighting their proficiency in hardware and software but identifying gaps in electronic library software installation. The research emphasizes the growing necessity of ICT skills in modern libraries, particularly in handling e-resources, web technologies, and automation. Professionals primarily acquire skills through web searches and higher studies, suggesting the need for structured training. The study recommends curriculum enhancements, seminars, and hands-on training in emerging technologies like RFID and digital library software to boost efficiency. This research is valuable for improving ICT literacy among library professionals.

iv. (Kemparaju, 1993) T.D. The research explores the development of professional skills for LIS personnel in special libraries across India. The study identifies essential knowledge and skills required by employers, emphasizing the importance of information sources, bibliographical tools, collection management, and specialized reference materials. Findings highlight the growing need for skills like information retrieval, indexing, abstracting, and information modeling in LIS education. The research stresses curriculum enhancements to meet current and future demands, ensuring LIS professionals stay relevant in evolving library environments. Overall, it provides valuable insights for redesigning LIS education to better equip professionals for modern information services.

v. (Chandrashekhar D, 2018) The researcher examined the ICT skills of library professionals in health science college libraries of Dakshina Kannada and Udupi. The research highlights the need for enhanced infrastructure, structured training programs, and policy reforms to improve ICT proficiency. Findings reveal that professionals actively engage with ICT but require further training in digital tools, e-journals, and MOOCs. The study recommends restructuring LIS curricula, encouraging participation in workshops, and ensuring adequate staffing in libraries. Overall, it emphasizes continuous professional development, technological adaptation, and institutional support to enhance library services, ultimately improving employability and service efficiency in health science libraries.

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Department of Library & Information Science, R. T. M. Nagpur University, Nagpur
Volume-11 (2025) : Issue-1 (October-2025)

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UPA NATIONAL E-JOURNAL
Interdisciplinary Peer-Reviewed Indexed Journal

IMPACT FACTOR
5.473(SJIF)

ISSN
2455-4375

vi.   (Shingh, 2010) This study explores the curriculum requirements for improving IT skills among library professionals in India. It examines LIS education, fundamental ICT competencies, and employer expectations to assess the relevance of current programs. The research highlights the need for curriculum updates to align with evolving technological demands and labor market expectations. It also evaluates student and employer satisfaction with LIS courses. The study recommends integrating essential ICT components, enhancing employability skills, and implementing reforms to address existing gaps. Overall, it underscores the necessity of modernizing LIS education to equip professionals with the skills required in a dynamic digital environment.

vii. (Seena, 2016) Seena S.T.'s study evaluates ICT skills among library professionals in Kerala's university libraries, highlighting their awareness, usage, and training needs. While professionals exhibit proficiency in ICT tools like Koha, DSpace, and online resources, gaps exist in cloud computing and advanced web 2.0 applications. The study underscores a positive attitude towards ICT integration but identifies a lack of formal training as a key barrier. It recommends regular in-house training on emerging technologies like e-publishing and content management systems. The research affirms the evolving role of libraries as dynamic information hubs and stresses the need for continuous skill enhancement to remain relevan.

Discussion :

Upon analyzing the seven theses, several aspects of soft skills and their importance for LIS professional come to thefore LIS professionals can improve their effectiveness, enhance user experiences, and contribute to the evolving role of libraries as dynamic information hubs. Therefore, major findings are enlisted as under:

Importance of soft skills :

i.   Growing Importance of Soft Skills – Research highlights that soft skills, alongside technical expertise, are crucial for Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals in enhancing workplace performance, interpersonal relationships, and user satisfaction.

ii.   Impact on Employability – Studies reveal that soft skills such as communication, teamwork, leadership, and adaptability significantly influence job acquisition, career growth, and retention, especially in service-oriented professions like LIS.

iii. Workplace Efficiency and User Engagement – Effective interpersonal and behavioral skills improve librarian-user interactions, enhance service quality, and contribute to higher user satisfaction in university and public libraries.

iv.   Need for Curriculum Enhancement – Research underscores the necessity of integrating structured soft skills training in LIS curricula to better prepare professionals for evolving workplace demands.

v.   On-the-Job Training Gaps – Findings suggest that while professionals recognize the importance of soft skills, there is a lack of formal training, requiring workshops, mentorship programs, and continuous professional development initiatives.

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Volume-11 (2025) : Issue-1 (October-2025)

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vi.   Skill Gaps and Challenges – Many LIS professionals struggle with negotiation, conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, and public speaking, which can impact service delivery and institutional efficiency.

vii.   Institutional and Policy Support Required – Studies emphasize the need for library management and policymakers to invest in structured training programs, professional development courses, and mentorship to strengthen soft skills in LIS professionals.

viii. Influence on Career Advancement – Findings suggest that professionals with well-developed soft skills are more likely to take on leadership roles, collaborate effectively, and adapt to technological changes in the LIS field.

Impact of Soft Skills in the LIS Profession:

Based on the reviews of mentioned studies related to soft skills of library profession, the following recommendations can be made. These outcomes, LIS professionals can enhance their effectiveness, improve library services, and adapt to the changing demands of the profession.

i.   Recognition of Soft Skills as Essential: Soft skills are increasingly recognized as crucial for LIS professionals, complementing technical expertise and improving workplace efficiency, user interactions, and overall service quality.

ii.   Impact on Employability and Career Growth: Studies confirm that professionals with strong communication, teamwork, leadership, and adaptability skills have better job prospects, career advancement opportunities, and job retention rates.

iii.   Improved User Satisfaction and Service Delivery: Effective interpersonal skills enhance user engagement, customer satisfaction, and the overall effectiveness of library services, making libraries more dynamic and user-friendly.

iv.   Need for Curriculum Integration: Research highlights a gap in LIS education concerning soft skills training. Integrating structured soft skills modules into LIS curricula is necessary to prepare professionals for modern workplace challenges.

v.   Training and Development Gaps: Despite recognizing the importance of soft skills, LIS professionals lack structured training, leading to challenges in public speaking, conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, and negotiation skills.

vi.   Institutional Support for Professional Development: The studies emphasize the need for libraries and academic institutions to provide continuous professional development programs, mentorship, and on-the-job training to enhance soft skills.

vii.   Influence on Leadership and Management Roles: LIS professionals with well-developed soft skills are more likely to take on leadership roles, contribute to decision-making, and effectively manage library resources and personnel.

viii. Policy Recommendations for Skill Enhancement: The findings stress the need for government and institutional policies to promote structured training programs,

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Volume-11 (2025) : Issue-1 (October-2025)

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5.473(SJIF)

UPA NATIONAL E-JOURNAL
Interdisciplinary Peer-Reviewed Indexed Journal

ISSN
2455-4375

workshops, and industry collaborations to bridge the soft skills gap in the LIS profession.

ix.   Bridging the Skill Gap for Future Readiness: The studies conclude that a well-rounded LIS professional requires a combination of technical and soft skills to stay relevant in a rapidly evolving digital and information-driven environment.

5.3 Challenges:

Several problems have been found that restrict and limit the use of soft skills in the field of library and information science profession.

I.   Limited Empirical Studies on Soft Skills in LIS: While research acknowledges the importance of soft skills, empirical studies focusing on their direct impact on LIS professionals' job performance and user satisfaction remain limited.

II.   Lack of Standardized Soft Skills Training Modules: Existing LIS curricula primarily emphasize technical skills, with minimal structured frameworks for soft skills development, leading to inconsistencies in training and application.

III.   Assessment and Measurement of Soft Skills: There is a lack of standardized tools and methodologies to assess soft skills proficiency among LIS professionals, making it difficult to quantify their influence on service quality and career growth.

IV.   Integration of Soft Skills with Emerging Technologies: Research has not sufficiently explored how soft skills integrate with technological advancements such as AI-driven library services, digital libraries, and virtual reference systems.

V.   Institutional Support and Policy Gaps: Studies indicate the need for institutional policies promoting soft skills development, but little research has been conducted on how organizations can systematically implement and sustain such initiatives.

VI.   Cross-Cultural and Global Perspectives: Most studies focus on specific regions or institutions, lacking a comparative analysis of soft skills requirements across different cultural, academic, and professional settings in LIS.

VII.   Workplace Challenges and Soft Skills Deficiencies: Limited research is available on the real-world challenges LIS professionals face due to inadequate soft skills, such as conflict resolution, negotiation, and adaptability in diverse work environments.

Suggestions:

LIS professionals can enhance their effectiveness, improve service quality, and adapt to the evolving demands of modern library environments with effective use of soft skills. To bridge the soft skills among LIS professionals, the following suggestions are recommended:

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Volume-11 (2025) : Issue-1 (October-2025)

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I.   Integration into LIS Curricula – Soft skills training should be incorporated into Library and Information Science (LIS) education to ensure professionals develop communication, leadership, teamwork, and problem-solving abilities alongside technical expertise.

II.   On-the-Job Training and Workshops – Libraries should conduct regular training sessions, seminars, and workshops to enhance soft skills, focusing on user engagement, conflict resolution, and adaptability.

III.   Mentorship and Peer Learning – Establishing mentorship programs where experienced professionals guide junior staff can help in the practical application of soft skills in real-world scenarios.

IV.   User-Centric Approach – Librarians should be encouraged to interact with users actively, improving their interpersonal and customer service skills to enhance user satisfaction.

V.   Assessment and Feedback Mechanisms – Institutions should develop evaluation tools to assess soft skills development and provide constructive feedback for continuous improvement.

VI.   Encouraging Collaboration – Promoting teamwork within library environments fosters communication and problem-solving skills, enhancing overall service efficiency.

VII.   Use of Technology – E-learning platforms, webinars, and online courses should be utilized to provide flexible and accessible soft skills training for LIS professionals.

VIII. Institutional Support – Library management should recognize the importance of soft skills and allocate resources for structured professional development programs.

IX.   Integration of Soft Skills into LIS Curricula: Future research should focus on developing standardized soft skills training programs tailored to LIS professionals, ensuring their inclusion in formal education and certification courses.

X.   Development of Soft Skills Assessment Tools: Designing validated assessment models to measure the effectiveness of soft skills training programs and their impact on job performance can provide valuable insights for LIS education and professional development.

XI.   Role of Soft Skills in Digital Library Services: Investigating how communication, teamwork, and adaptability contribute to managing digital libraries, virtual reference services, and AI-assisted library environments will be crucial.

XII.   Workplace Training and Continuous Professional Development: Future research should explore best practices for incorporating on-the-job soft skills training,

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Central Library, Dhanwate National College, Nagpur
Department of Library & Information Science, R. T. M. Nagpur University, Nagpur
Volume-11 (2025) : Issue-1 (October-2025)

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5.473(SJIF)
UPA NATIONAL E-JOURNAL
Interdisciplinary Peer-Reviewed Indexed Journal
ISSN
2455-4375

mentorship programs, and workshops to enhance career growth and user engagement.

XIII. Cross-Sectorial Analysis of Soft Skills in LIS: Comparing soft skills requirements in different LIS settings (academic, public, special, and corporate libraries) can provide insights into sector-specific training needs and best practices.

XIV. Impact of Soft Skills on Library Leadership and Management: Studies should examine how soft skills influence leadership roles, decision-making, and strategic management within library institutions.

XV. Soft Skills in Remote and Hybrid Work Environments: With increasing digitalization and remote work trends, research should explore the evolving soft skills needs of LIS professionals in virtual and hybrid work settings.

XVI. Policy Development for Soft Skills Enhancement: Investigating the role of policymakers, educational institutions, and library associations in formulating guidelines for soft skills training and continuous learning initiatives.

Conclusion

Soft skills play a crucial role in the professional success of Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals, complementing technical expertise in an evolving digital landscape. Effective communication, teamwork, leadership, adaptability, and problem-solving abilities enhance workplace efficiency, user satisfaction, and overall service quality. Despite their significance, soft skills are often overlooked in LIS education and training, leading to gaps in professional preparedness. To bridge this gap, integrating structured soft skills training into LIS curricula, offering continuous professional development programs, and adopting standardized assessment methods are essential. The dynamic nature of library services, especially with advancements in ICT and digital resources, further underscores the need for interpersonal and behavioral competencies. Future research should focus on developing comprehensive training models, exploring soft skills in digital environments, and promoting institutional policies for skill enhancement. Strengthening soft skills among LIS professionals will ensure their adaptability, efficiency, and long-term career growth in the information age.

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Volume-11 (2025) : Issue-1 (October-2025)

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