



Information Literacy of Library Professionals in the Effective Functioning of Libraries

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Abstract: In the digital era, the role of library professionals has evolved significantly—from the traditional management of physical collections to the dynamic facilitation of digital knowledge access and user education. This paper explores the critical role that information literacy (IL) plays in empowering library professionals to contribute effectively to the functioning of modern academic libraries, specifically within central universities in India. The study is grounded in a comprehensive empirical investigation involving survey-based responses from 250 library professionals and in-depth interviews conducted with subject matter experts in the field. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire and an interview schedule administered across seven central universities in Delhi. The research examines multiple dimensions of IL, including the current proficiency levels of library staff, the methods they adopt for skill enhancement, the frequency and accessibility of IL training programs, and the perceived importance of IL in their day-to-day responsibilities. The findings reveal a strong consensus on the value of IL among professionals, yet point to a gap in regular, structured training opportunities. The study underscores the urgent need for continuous professional development, institutional commitment to IL integration, and strategic planning to ensure that library services remain adaptive, user-focused, and future-ready in a rapidly changing information landscape.

Keywords

Information literacy, Library professionals, Digital skills, Library functioning, User satisfaction, Academic libraries

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's digitally connected and information-abundant world, libraries have evolved from being static storehouses of books to becoming dynamic hubs for knowledge creation, access, and sharing. This shift has significantly redefined the roles and expectations placed on library professionals, pushing them beyond conventional duties to adopt a wider range of skills—particularly in the area of information literacy (IL). As

more users depend on digital content, the quality and relevance of library services are now deeply tied to the professionals' ability to curate, navigate, and assist users through vast and often overwhelming information ecosystems (Julien & Genuis, 2011).

Information literacy, understood as the ability to identify information needs and to find, assess, and apply information effectively, has become a fundamental competency within academic and research libraries (Association of College and Research Libraries [ACRL], 2016). It is vital not only for users but equally for the professionals who support them. Librarians are now expected to engage in instruction, assist users in navigating extensive digital databases, provide support in research efforts, and contribute to scholarly communication—all of which require a strong command of information fluency (Saunders, 2012). Eisenberg, Lowe, and Spitzer (2004) describe IL as a “survival skill” in today’s digital environment, emphasizing the need for it to be fully integrated into librarians’ professional routines.

In the context of academic institutions, mainly in India, the demand for highly skilled library professionals is on the upsurge, given the surge in digital content and institutional stress on innovation and research. However, studies indicate that though there is a general awareness about IL among Indian library professionals, the depth of understanding and practical application remains inconsistent (Ramesh & Nagaraju, 2020). In many instances, gaps in performance arise due to the lack of formal training in information literacy, minimal engagement with international best practices, and insufficient opportunities for ongoing professional development.

The success of academic libraries in the present day largely depends on the ability of librarians to evaluate, structure, and present information in ways that prioritize user needs. Their proficiency in information literacy influences not only conventional roles like cataloguing and circulation, but also newer responsibilities including managing digital repositories, conducting virtual user training, promoting data literacy, and supporting academic research (Webber & Johnston, 2000). A librarian's ability to critically evaluate sources, identify credible information, and facilitate its use among students and faculty directly contributes to academic productivity and institutional reputation.

This study seeks to explore the relationship between the information literacy of library professionals and the operational effectiveness of academic libraries, with a specific focus on central universities in India. Based on survey responses from 250 library professionals and qualitative interviews with domain experts across seven central universities in Delhi, this research investigates IL proficiency levels, the nature and frequency of training, methods of skill acquisition, and perceived significance of IL in professional practice. The study further examines structural and strategic gaps, aiming to offer recommendations for embedding IL into library development plans and professional growth frameworks.

In doing so, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of how IL can serve as a cornerstone in building responsive, efficient, and future-ready academic libraries that align with the knowledge needs of 21st-century learners and researchers.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Bruce (1997) conceptualized information literacy as a set of understandings necessary for individuals to engage effectively with the information environment. Lloyd (2017) emphasized workplace information literacy as essential for professional roles. Julien (2005) and Webber & Johnston (2000) noted that librarians must model information literacy to help users navigate digital environments.

Earlier research (Webber & Johnston, 2017; Bruce, 2004) emphasize the pivotal role that information literacy plays in the functioning of library services. Researchers have argued that library professionals with robust information literacy capabilities are better in supporting digital reference services, guiding users, facilitating research, and aiding information retrieval. Despite these findings and outcomes, many libraries face persistent challenges in areas such as awareness, training, and practical implementation.

In a study by Bilwar and Pujar (2016), the impact of electronic information literacy on the information-seeking leanings of university faculty in Maharashtra was examined. Their research summarized that such literacy programs considerably enhanced the ability of educators to analytically assess and make productive use of digital information sources. Similarly, Kingori, Njiraine, and Maina (2016) observed the challenges linked with implementing information literacy initiatives in public libraries across Kenya. Their investigation identified several pressing needs, including better user training, enhanced staff expertise, stronger collaboration with stakeholders, and sustainable funding. The study emphasized that integrating information

literacy into public library services, particularly in contexts where print resources remain prevalent despite an increasing shift toward digital content.

Singh & Meera (2015) found that information literacy among Indian library professionals was uneven, with significant gaps in ICT application. Sharma (2020) concluded that libraries with highly literate staff in digital tools showed better performance indicators, such as higher user satisfaction and improved knowledge services. Despite numerous studies highlighting the importance of user information literacy, limited research exists on how library professionals' own information literacy impacts the overall functioning of libraries.

Mansour carried out a study to assess the Digital Information Literacy (DIL) among library personnel at South Valley University (SVU) in Egypt. Through a structured quantitative survey with 101 participants across three campuses, the study found that while most professionals demonstrated a strong grasp of mobile and computing technologies and of various application software, their awareness about the system software and ICT integration was not adequate. The outcomes also revealed that features such as age, academic background, and professional designation significantly influenced DIL levels. Key challenges highlighted include limited access to training, internet connectivity issues, funding constraints, and outdated educational content. The study emphasized a renewed focus on periodic and regular ICT training and curriculum upgrades—particularly in developing nations—where research on digital information literacy remains underdeveloped but vital for reinforcing library services.

Israel and Nsibirwa (2018) examined the link between information literacy skills and the effective use of electronic information facilities among postgraduates. Their research highlighted that competencies in tool, critical, social-structural, emerging technology, and publishing literacies are indispensable, recommending targeted university programs to enhance these skills.

Thanuskodi (2019) examined information literacy skills among Library and Information Science professionals in India, emphasizing its growing importance in a technologically advancing society. The study revealed that most librarians understand and value information literacy, viewing themselves as capable of teaching it. It recommended making IL programs regular in academic and research institutions, highlighting the need for library staff to guide users effectively and promote lifelong learning and critical thinking.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a mixed-method research design incorporating both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative component is based on a structured survey administered to library professionals, while the qualitative component draws on expert interviews to provide deeper insights into perceptions and institutional practices surrounding information literacy (IL). The primary aim is to examine the extent to which IL competencies among library professionals affect the effective functioning of academic libraries in Indian central universities. The study also explores the impact of factors such as educational background, professional experience, and training exposure on IL proficiency and its application.

3.2 Research Questions

- (i) What is the current level of information literacy among library professionals in central universities?
- (ii) Is there a significant association between demographic factors (e.g., gender, age, designation) and information literacy proficiency?
- (iii) Does participation in IL-related training programs significantly impact IL competency levels?
- (iv) Are there significant differences in perceived library effectiveness based on levels of information literacy among staff?

3.3 Survey Design

The target population includes library professionals working in seven central universities located in Delhi, covering a range of designations such as librarians, assistant librarians, library assistants, and information officers. A total of 250 library professionals from seven central universities participated in the survey.

A purposive sampling method was used to ensure representation across universities and hierarchical roles. Additionally, expert interviews were conducted with 10 senior professionals and academic experts in the field of library science using a snowball sampling technique to gain nuanced insights.

Structured Questionnaire was divided into five sections: demographic profile, IL skill assessment, training exposure, application of IL in daily tasks, and perceptions of library effectiveness. Responses captured on a mix of Likert scales (e.g., 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) and categorical variables.

Semi-structured Interview Schedule format was designed focusing on challenges, institutional practices, and strategic importance of IL. Interview transcripts were thematically analyzed to supplement quantitative findings.

3.4 Data Analysis Techniques

Quantitative data were processed and analyzed using IBM SPSS (version 26). Descriptive Statistics was used to summarize data (means, standard deviation, frequencies). Chi-square Test of Independence was used to explore the association between categorical variables such as demographic characteristics and IL competency (e.g., gender vs. IL level). One-Way ANOVA was applied to examine differences in IL proficiency and perceptions of library effectiveness across different groups (e.g., trained vs. untrained professionals). Post-hoc tests (Tukey's HSD) were conducted to identify where significant differences occurred among multiple groups.

IV. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This section presents the findings derived from the field survey of 250 library professionals and expert interviews across seven central universities in Delhi. The data analysis is structured to align with the research objectives and hypotheses, supported by both descriptive and inferential statistics. Specifically, Chi-square and ANOVA tests were applied to examine associations and differences across key variables, ensuring the robustness of findings.

4.1 Information Literacy Skills and Proficiency Areas

Respondents self-reported their proficiency across five core IL domains (Fig 1). The results indicated a relatively balanced distribution of confidence among professionals, with highest confidence (21%) in “identifying user information needs” and “accessing appropriate resources,” followed closely by 20% in “evaluating information,” and 19% in both “ethical use” and “use of digital tools.”

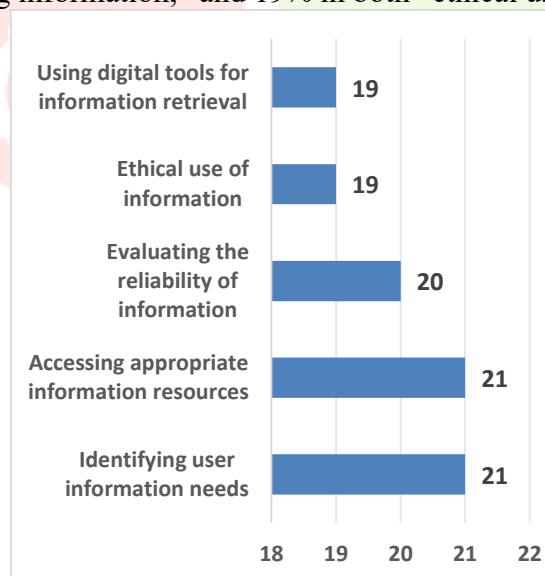


Fig1: Proficiency by Type of Information

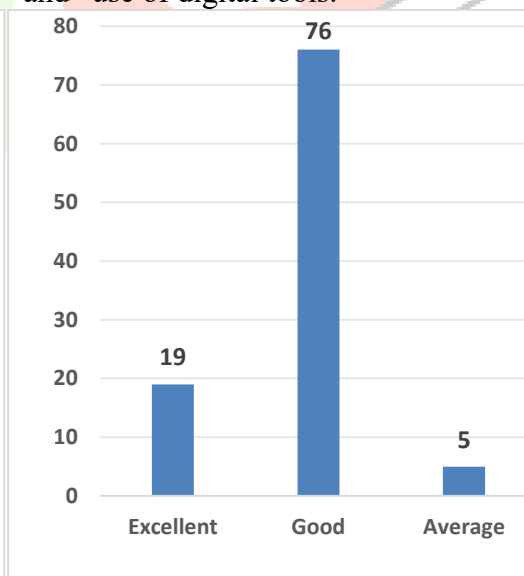


Fig 2: Understanding of IL concepts by

Professionals

Data analysis divulges that library professionals reveal a balanced confidence across several aspects of information literacy skills. The highest percentage of professionals (21 per cent) feel confident in identifying user information needs and accessing suitable information resources, which underlines their ability to comprehend user requirements and trace relevant materials efficiently. About, 20 per cent of respondents express confidence in assessing the reliability of information, demonstrating a strong awareness of information credibility and quality. Meanwhile, 19 per cent feel confident in both ethical use of information and using digital tools for information retrieval, suggesting a solid foundation in responsible information handling and technological expertise. The distribution of responses suggests that while core information literacy competencies are well-represented, there is still room to enhance skills—particularly in digital tool

usage and ethical considerations. These findings highlight the need for ongoing professional development to ensure comprehensive mastery of all critical information literacy domains among library professionals. This reflects foundational competence among professionals, but relatively lower scores in technology use and ethical information practices suggest areas where targeted training could improve service quality. Figure 2 generated from the survey reflects that a large number professional considers themselves to be good at understanding the various concepts of information literacy.

The methods adopted to enhance professional skills by the sample respondent is important to assess, as it can contribute to the policy suggestion of the study. The data analysis pertaining to this aspect shows a diverse approach among library professionals in enhancing their professional skills (Figure 3). Workshops and seminars are the most preferred method, with 29 per cent of respondents actively participating in them, reflecting the importance of interactive and structured learning environments. Online courses follow at 23 per cent, highlighting the growing acceptance of flexible, technology-driven education. Self-study accounts for 19 per cent, indicating that many professionals are self-motivated learners who take personal initiatives to update their knowledge. Professional associations, used by 16 per cent, provide networking and development opportunities, although their usage is comparatively moderate. Peer learning stands at 12 per cent, suggesting that while collaborative learning exists, it is less common. Overall, the data shows that library professionals are employing a mix of formal, informal, and collaborative strategies to continuously upgrade their skills, which is essential for maintaining their relevance and effectiveness in an ever-evolving information landscape. The emphasis on continuous learning is a positive trend.

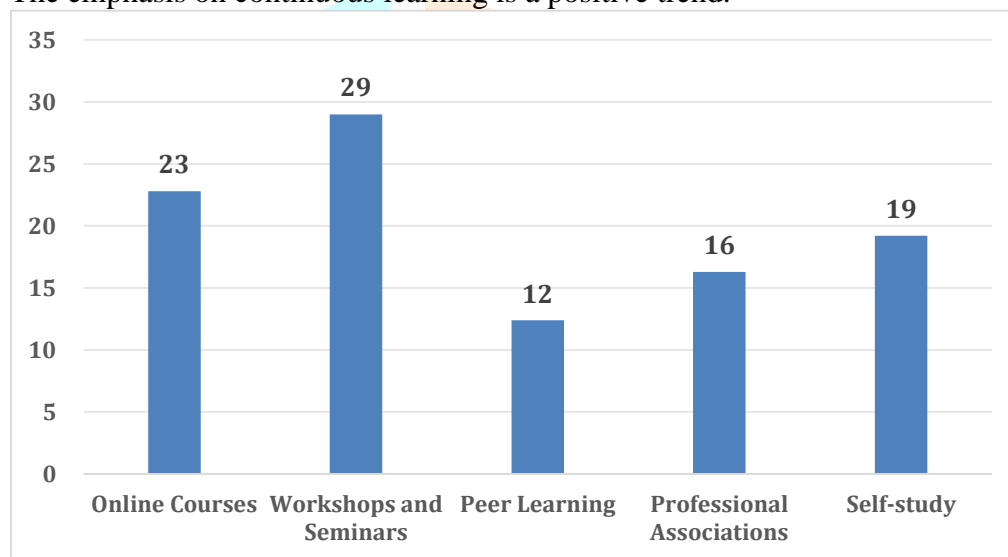


Figure 3: Methods adopted to enhance professional skill

Thus, it appears that the workshops and seminars, and online courses are the most popular method to enhance professional skill by the library staffs.

4.1.2 Frequency of Participation in Training Program/Workshops

Undoubtedly, participation in training program and workshop is essential for improving skills. Keeping this in perspective, in the survey, the library professionals were asked about the frequency of their participation in training program and workshop to improve their information literacy skills. In particular, the survey question was; how frequently do you participate in training programs or workshops to enhance your information literacy skills? The response of the respondents is presented in Fig. 5. A significant portion, 43 per cent, reported attending such programs occasionally, indicating moderate engagement with professional development activities. This suggests that while library professionals recognize the importance of training, consistent participation may be influenced by factors such as availability, institutional support, or workload. Another 25 per cent of respondents attend training frequently, reflecting a proactive approach towards skill enhancement. Only 15 per cent of professionals reported always participating in training programs, showing a smaller yet committed group dedicated to continuous learning. Conversely, 17 per cent seldom engage in such opportunities, which may point to barriers like limited access or lack of institutional encouragement. Overall, the data implies that while a majority of library professionals are involved in training to some extent, there remains a need to promote regular participation to ensure up-to-date knowledge and better user services in the evolving library landscape.

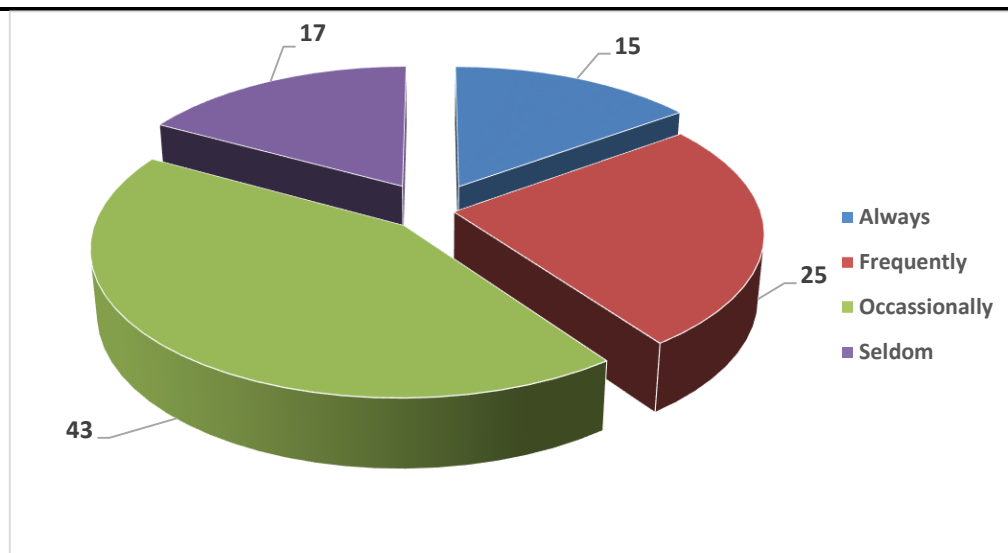


Figure 4: Frequency of Participation in Training Program/Workshops

Thus, figure 4 clearly states that only 40 per cent of the professional participate in the information literacy training programme. Then obviously the question arises why the participation percentage is very less. For this purpose, the survey tried to trace the frequency of conducting information literacy sessions.

4.1.3 Frequency of Updating Information Literacy Skills

As far as assessing the frequency in the conducting of information library sessions are concerned, the survey question was; how frequently do you conduct/participate information in the organized literacy sessions? Their response is presented in Figure 5

A significant proportion, 44 per cent, indicated they hold such sessions quarterly, suggesting that while efforts are being made to educate users, these are not very frequent. Another 27 per cent conduct sessions rarely, highlighting a gap in the regular promotion of information literacy. Monthly sessions are conducted by 21 per cent of respondents, reflecting a moderate commitment to continuous user education. Only 3 per cent of library professionals conduct weekly sessions, which points to limited ongoing engagement. Additionally, 5 per cent reported never organizing any information literacy sessions, indicating a complete absence of such initiatives in a small number of libraries. Overall, while quarterly and monthly efforts show a fair level of awareness about the importance of information literacy, the relatively low percentage of frequent sessions underscores the need for more consistent and proactive measures to empower users in navigating and utilizing information resources effectively.

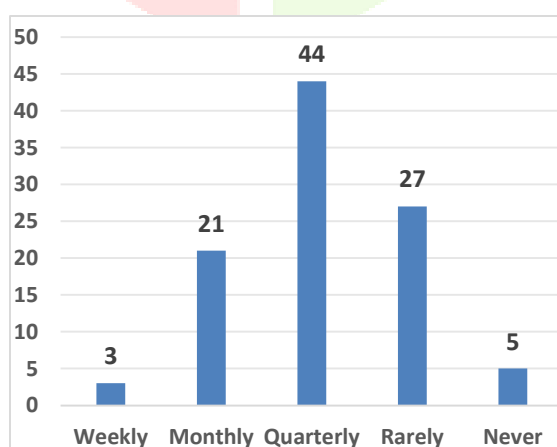


Fig 5: Updating IS through organized session

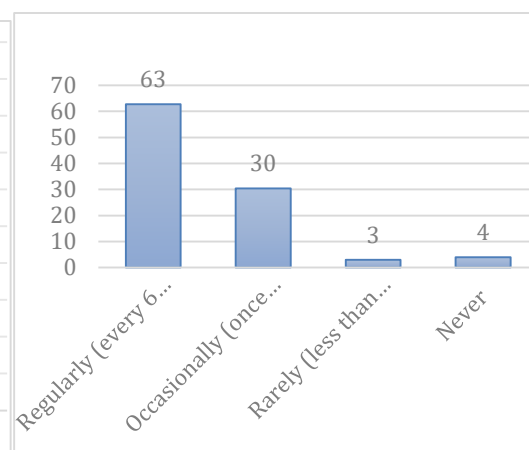


Fig6: Updating IS through other sources

However, figure 6 also reveals that even if people did not attend the workshops frequently, a majority of them regularly update their information skills, through various means such as online sources, self-study, interaction with the peers, etc ensuring they remain effective and responsive to user needs.

4.2 Inferential Analysis Based on Research Hypotheses

H1: There is a significant association between the demographic profile of library professionals and their information literacy skills.

To test this, Chi-square analyses were performed between IL proficiency levels and demographic variables such as age, gender, and designation. Results showed a statistically significant association, particularly between designation and IL proficiency ($\chi^2 = 18.63$, $df = 6$, $p = 0.004$). Senior librarians and assistant librarians demonstrated higher IL proficiency compared to junior staff.

H2: Library professionals who have undergone formal IL training demonstrate significantly higher levels of IL competence compared to those who have not.

ANOVA results confirmed that IL proficiency varies significantly with training participation frequency ($F = 8.64$, $p = 0.0003$). Respondents who “always” or “frequently” attend training programs had a mean IL score of 4.5 and 4.1 respectively (on a 5-point scale), compared to 3.7 for occasional participants and 3.1 for those seldom involved. These results support the hypothesis and highlight the impact of consistent professional development in enhancing IL competence (Table 2).

H3: *There is a statistically significant difference in the perceived effectiveness of library services based on varying levels of IL proficiency among staff.*

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to evaluate differences in perceived library effectiveness across IL proficiency levels. The analysis showed a significant effect ($F = 6.93$, $p = 0.0017$), indicating that libraries with highly IL-competent staff are perceived as more effective in delivering services such as user education, digital access support, and research assistance. Post-hoc tests revealed that the difference was most pronounced between professionals with “high” and “low” IL scores. This validates the belief that IL competence contributes directly to operational efficiency and user satisfaction.

H4: There is a significant association between years of professional experience and the perceived relevance of IL in day-to-day library functions.

Chi-square analysis established a statistically significant relationship between experience and perception of IL relevance ($\chi^2 = 21.22$, $df = 4$, $p = 0.0002$). Respondents with over 10 years of experience overwhelmingly rated IL as “extremely important,” suggesting that seasoned professionals are more attuned to the evolving demands of information services. However, even early-career staff recognized IL’s importance, showing a positive trend across experience levels. This suggests that both experience and role responsibilities contribute to IL awareness and usage. No significant difference was observed across gender, indicating that IL skills are uniformly perceived across male and female respondents. (Table 1).

Table 1: Chi Square Test Results

Variables Tested	Chi-square Value (χ^2)	Degrees of Freedom	p-value	Significance ($p < 0.05$)
Designation vs IL Proficiency	18.63	6	0.004	Significant
Gender vs IL Proficiency	3.12	2	0.21	Not Significant
Experience vs Perceived IL Relevance	21.22	4	0.0002	Significant

Table 2: ANOVA Test Results

Test	F-value	Degrees of Freedom (Between Groups)	Degrees of Freedom (Within Groups)	p-value	Significance (p<0.05)
Training Frequency vs IL Competence	8.64	3	246	0.0003	Significant
IL Proficiency vs Perceived Library Effectiveness	6.93	2	247	0.0017	Significant

Post-hoc Tukey HSD Results

Group Comparison	Mean Difference	p-value	Significance (p<0.05)
Always vs Occasionally	0.8	0.004	Significant
Always vs Seldom	1.4	0.0001	Significant
Frequently vs Seldom	1.0	0.001	Significant
High IL vs Low IL	1.2	0.002	Significant
High IL vs Moderate IL	0.5	0.03	Significant
Moderate IL vs Low IL	0.7	0.01	Significant

The post-hoc analysis using the Tukey HSD test was conducted to identify specific group differences following significant ANOVA results related to training participation frequency (H2) and IL proficiency levels (H3). The findings revealed that professionals who reported always participating in training programs demonstrated significantly higher information literacy proficiency than those who participated occasionally (mean difference = 0.8, $p = 0.004$) or seldom (mean difference = 1.4, $p = 0.0001$). A similar statistically significant difference was found between professionals who attended training frequently and those who participated seldom (mean difference = 1.0, $p = 0.001$). These results affirm the positive impact of consistent training on the development of information literacy competencies among library professionals.

With respect to Hypothesis 3, the post-hoc comparisons further revealed that professionals with high IL proficiency perceived their libraries as significantly more effective than those with low IL proficiency (mean difference = 1.2, $p = 0.002$). The difference in perception was also significant between professionals with high and moderate IL proficiency (mean difference = 0.5, $p = 0.03$), and between moderate and low IL proficiency groups (mean difference = 0.7, $p = 0.01$). These findings suggest a clear trend: higher levels of IL proficiency are associated with more favorable assessments of library service quality. In essence, the post-hoc results underscore the importance of both regular professional training and elevated IL competence in fostering a more efficient, responsive, and confident library workforce.

4.3 Thematic Analysis: Expert Perspectives on Information Competencies of Library Professionals in Academic Libraries

(i) Changing Dynamics of Library Staff Roles

Over the past ten years, there has been a noticeable transformation in the roles undertaken by library professionals. Their work is no longer confined to overseeing printed collections; instead, they are increasingly involved in helping users explore intricate digital databases, organizing web-based content, and offering support in assessing the trustworthiness of information. Many respondents emphasized that this evolution calls for enhanced skill sets, particularly in digital literacy and resource management.

(ii) Understanding and Perception of Information Skills

Respondents emphasized that the concept of information literacy is understood in different ways across institutions. Some professionals equate it with basic database usage, while others include user education, copyright awareness, and data ethics. This dissimilarity in comprehension, according to several experts, results in inconsistencies in practice and training across libraries, even within the similar university system.

(iii) Skill Gaps and Uneven Exposure

The uneven distribution of skills among library staff creates a frequent concern among the experts. The senior professionals exhibit hesitance in adopting newer technologies, while younger staff may lack foundational knowledge in cataloging and reference services. An outdated curriculum in LIS education and sporadic in-service training is the cause for this lacunae as per several respondents. They also exhibited consensus that these gaps hinder the delivery of responsive library services.

(iv) Obstacles to Effective Skill Development

Although some organizations hold workshops or seminars from time to time, many experts observed that such initiatives are sporadic and frequently influenced by budget constraints or the personal initiative of certain faculty members. There appears to be a lack of consistent institutional support for ongoing professional development, which is often treated as a voluntary activity rather than a strategic necessity. Without formal policies or incentives in place, these training opportunities tend to be overlooked and underused.

(v) Information Skills and Library Performance

A notable theme across interviews was the direct correlation between a professional's information skills and the overall effectiveness of library services. Professionals with high digital awareness and user engagement strategies were seen to enhance resource utilization, improve user satisfaction, and contribute actively to academic support services. Conversely, low skill levels led to underutilization of digital resources and increased user frustration.

(vi) Need for Structural and Strategic Reforms

Embedding skill enhancement programs into the professional development frameworks of universities is proposed by many experts. Some suggest mandatory training modules during annual refreshers and probation period. Others stressed integrating IL-focused performance metrics into appraisal systems to ensure accountability. The inclusion of IL within long-term strategic plans was cited as a necessary move to future-proof academic libraries.

V. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study underscore the centrality of information literacy (IL) in shaping the quality and responsiveness of library services in academic institutions. The high levels of self-assessed competence in identifying user needs and locating appropriate resources (each at 21%) reflect a fundamental strength among professionals in engaging with patrons effectively. These are encouraging trends that resonate with Bruce's (1997) idea of IL as an evolving understanding that professionals build over time. However, the relatively lower confidence in using digital tools and applying ethical principles (each at 19%) raises important concerns.

As Julien (2005) noted, librarians must model IL to users—gaps in digital or ethical literacy can diminish their effectiveness in this role.

The Chi-square analysis provided empirical support for the hypothesis that professional designation and years of experience are significantly associated with IL competence and its perceived relevance. Senior librarians scored significantly higher, aligning with Lloyd's (2005) suggestion that information literacy becomes more nuanced with experience. The absence of significant differences by gender suggests parity in access to IL skills, which is a positive sign of equitable training opportunities across genders.

The ANOVA findings further establish that frequency of participation in IL training programs significantly affects IL competence levels. Professionals who regularly engage in training scored higher than those who seldom do, reinforcing the arguments by Singh and Meera (2015), who found that digital competencies among Indian library professionals remain uneven largely due to inconsistent exposure to formal training. The impact of training is also echoed in Baro et al. (2019) findings that libraries with digitally literate staff report higher user satisfaction.

The post-hoc results clarified that the differences between training groups are statistically meaningful, particularly between those who 'always' participate and those who 'seldom' do. These findings validate the call by Webber and Johnston (2000) for structured and recurring professional development frameworks to ensure consistent IL growth.

Additionally, the observed correlation between IL proficiency and perceptions of library effectiveness supports the argument by Fagan et al., (2019) that skilled librarians are not merely custodians of information but facilitators of research, education, and institutional success. Libraries with highly competent staff are seen as more effective in delivering services such as digital access support, research consultation, and user training.

The qualitative expert insights also enrich the discussion. Experts unanimously emphasized that evolving job roles now demand a broader understanding of IL beyond database navigation, including ethical use, digital repository management, and data literacy. Notably, concerns around uneven skill distribution and outdated curricula reflect those raised by Mansour (2017), who found significant variance in digital IL levels due to institutional and infrastructural limitations. The irregularity of training initiatives, often dependent on funding or individual initiative, mirrors findings from Okeji et al. (2020) in Nigeria and further strengthens the case for institutionalizing IL within performance frameworks.

The thematic analysis showed that while library professionals generally recognize IL's importance, consistent updating and institutional support are lacking. Therefore, the study calls for systemic reforms in how IL training is integrated into library operations, human resource development, and performance appraisals. Without such frameworks, individual motivation, while commendable, may not be sufficient to bridge gaps.

VI. CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

This study confirms that information literacy is not just a desirable attribute but a critical competency that directly influences the functioning of academic libraries. Professionals who are well-versed in identifying, evaluating, and ethically using information contribute significantly to enhancing user experience, guiding research, and supporting institutional goals. These findings reflect a consensus in prior research that IL among library staff is foundational to responsive, future-oriented libraries (Eisenberg et al., 2008; Webber & Johnston, 2000).

The association between IL proficiency and designation, years of experience, and participation in training programs suggests that both structural and behavioral factors play a role in shaping IL skills. However, the study also highlights areas for improvement: gaps in digital literacy, underutilized peer learning, and inconsistent training participation. The challenge is not a lack of recognition of IL's importance, but the lack of sustained and institutionalized support for professional development.

Nonetheless, this study is not without limitations. First, while the sample of 250 professionals from seven central universities in Delhi offers valuable insights, the results may not generalize to all academic libraries across India. Second, self-reported data may introduce biases in assessing IL proficiency. Third, the study

primarily measured perceived competence rather than objectively testing IL skills. Future studies could incorporate objective assessments or peer evaluations to provide a more nuanced picture.

Moreover, the qualitative interviews, though insightful, were limited to ten participants. A broader sample might have uncovered additional themes or regional variations in IL practice and perception. Despite these limitations, the triangulation of survey and expert data enhances the reliability of findings and offers a multidimensional understanding of IL's role in academic library settings.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and insights gathered, the study proposes the following actionable recommendations:

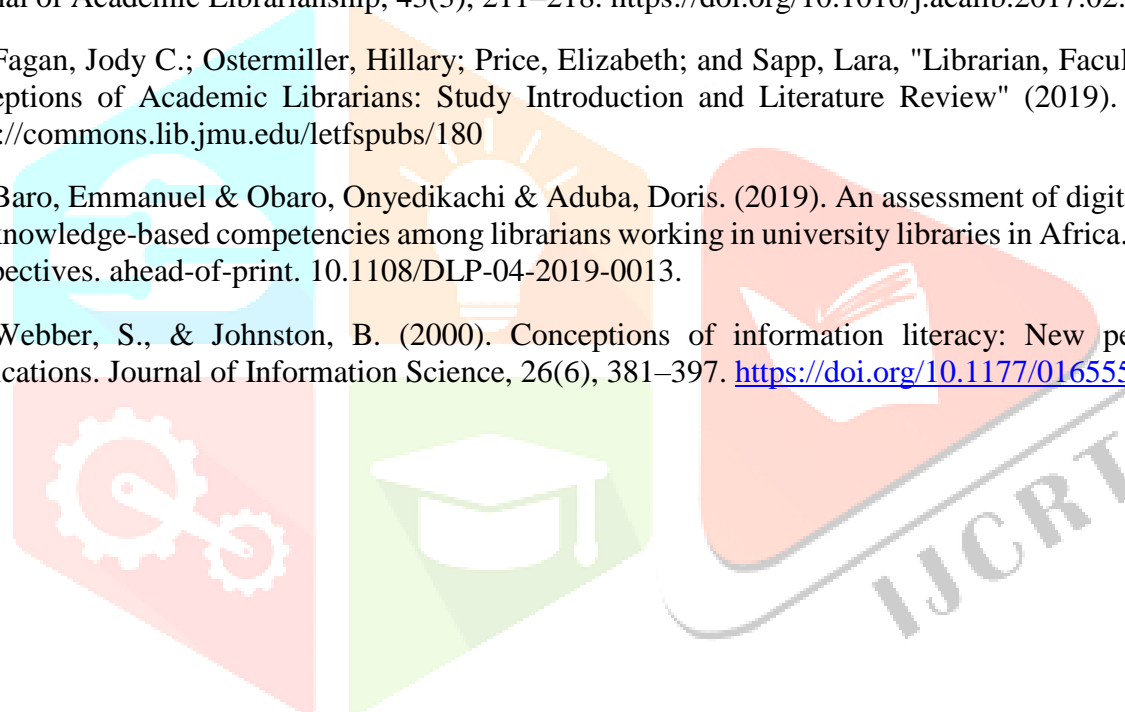
1. **Institutionalize IL Training:** Regular, mandatory training workshops on digital tools, ethical use of information, and user engagement strategies should be embedded into the professional development plans of universities.
2. **Revamp LIS Curriculum:** Information literacy should be thoroughly integrated into library science education, with emphasis on hands-on digital competencies, data ethics, and emerging technologies.
3. **Incentivize Continuous Learning:** Performance appraisal systems should include KPIs linked to IL participation and competencies, thereby rewarding proactive skill enhancement.
4. **Expand Access to Training:** Institutions should offer a blend of online and offline modules to ensure flexible learning options for staff with varied schedules or access constraints.
5. **Mentorship and Peer Learning:** Libraries can develop mentorship programs where senior staff guide junior colleagues in developing IL-related capabilities, fostering intergenerational knowledge transfer.
6. **Create a Centralized IL Resource Hub:** Universities may collaborate to develop a shared portal offering curated IL training materials, webinars, case studies, and certification opportunities.
7. **Research and Evaluation:** Continuous evaluation through IL audits and user feedback should be encouraged to measure the actual impact of IL training on library performance.

By implementing these recommendations, academic libraries can better align staff capabilities with the evolving information needs of their users, thereby ensuring their continued relevance and effectiveness in the digital knowledge ecosystem.

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Appendix 1:

Introduction

This questionnaire is part of a study on the role of information literacy among library professionals and its impact on library effectiveness. Your responses will remain confidential and will be used for academic purposes only. Participation is voluntary and should take about 10–15 minutes. Thank you for your time and input.

Section A: Personal and Professional Profile

1. Gender
☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Other ☐ Prefer not to say
2. Age Group
☐ 21–30 ☐ 31–40 ☐ 41–50 ☐ 51+
3. Designation
☐ Junior Library Assistant
☐ Assistant Librarian
☐ Deputy Librarian
☐ Librarian/Chief Librarian
4. Years of Experience in Library Services
☐ Less than 5 years ☐ 5–10 years
☐ 11–15 years ☐ More than 15 years

Section B: Information Literacy Competence

Please rate your proficiency in the following areas on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = Not proficient and 5 = Highly proficient.

5. Identifying user information needs
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
6. Accessing appropriate information resources
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
7. Evaluating the credibility and reliability of information
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
8. Using digital tools to retrieve, store, and organize information
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
9. Applying ethical practices when using and sharing information
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
10. Overall, how would you rate your Information Literacy skills?
☐ Poor ☐ Fair ☐ Good ☐ Very Good ☐ Excellent

Section C: Professional Development and Training

11. How often do you attend formal training programs related to information literacy or digital resources?
☐ Always ☐ Frequently ☐ Occasionally ☐ Seldom ☐ Never
12. Do you feel the training sessions you've attended have improved your professional skills?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Sure
13. Have you received any certification in information literacy, digital resource management, or related areas?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Section D: Library Service Delivery and Performance

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. Use a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree.

14. Our library is effective in supporting the academic and research needs of users.
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
15. The information literacy skills of staff enhance the overall quality of services provided.
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
16. I feel confident in supporting users in digital information environments.
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Section E: Relevance of Information Literacy

17. How relevant do you consider information literacy in your daily library tasks?
☐ Not relevant ☐ Somewhat relevant ☐ Relevant ☐ Extremely relevant
18. Should information literacy skills be included as part of staff development and performance evaluation?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Sure

Appendix 2

Interview Schedule: Expert Perspectives on Information Literacy Among Library Professionals

A. Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. The purpose of this discussion is to understand your expert views on the role of information literacy (IL) among library professionals and its impact on the functioning of academic libraries, especially in central universities. Your responses will be used for academic research only and will remain confidential.

Section I: Background Information

1. Name (Optional):
2. Designation and Institutional Affiliation:
3. Years of Experience in Library and Information Services:
4. Area(s) of Expertise (e.g., digital libraries, user education, library training, academic library administration):

Section II: Perceptions of Information Literacy (IL)

5. How would you define Information Literacy in the context of academic libraries today?
6. In your opinion, how has the role of IL evolved with the digital transformation of libraries?

Section III: IL Skills and Competency among Library Professionals

7. What are the key IL competencies that modern library professionals must possess?
8. Based on your experience, how would you rate the current level of IL among library staff in Indian central universities?
9. What common gaps do you observe in their IL skills or understanding?

Section IV: Training, Development, and Institutional Support

10. What kinds of IL training or skill enhancement initiatives are currently available for library staff in central universities?
11. How frequently do such training sessions occur, and are they effective in your view?

12. What barriers prevent regular or effective IL training in your institution or others you are familiar with?

Section V: IL in Daily Operations and Strategic Planning

13. How does IL proficiency (or lack thereof) impact the delivery of user services in academic libraries?
14. Can you share any examples where strong IL among staff led to improved library services or user satisfaction?
15. In your view, should IL be embedded into the strategic and operational planning of libraries? If yes, how?

Section VI: Recommendations and Future Outlook

16. What institutional or policy-level changes would you recommend to strengthen IL among library professionals?
17. How can LIS education and continuing professional development programs better support IL capacity-building?
18. In what ways can IL training be made more sustainable and integrated into a library's workflow?

