

EDITORIAL

'The role of library associations in India in modern age' was the theme of the IASLIC conference recently organized in Pune in December 2013 at NIV, Pune. I was invited to participate. Initially I was in duality of mind whether to accept the invitation or not. But in view of the concurrent theme of professional interest, I decided to visit Pune and participate in the academic deliberations of the conference. Library and information profession is considered to be a challenging profession because the professionals serve the people with knowledge and information. We still debate on whether the LIS enjoys the same status of a profession as other professions (medical, legal, engineering etc). Whether one considers himself to be a professional or not, but it is true that all occupations strive to establish a distinct identity of their own. What is the role of professional associations like IASLIC, or ILA in India? LIS professionals have to establish distinct identity of their own.

It is an accepted fact that the identity is established either by the people associated with the occupation or the society. When society accepts the claims of the occupational group and assigns the same responsibility, then the identity of the occupational group is established. Thus it is not only the responsibility of each LIS professional but also that of the library associations to convince the authorities and people at large to accept the LIS as a profession and the associated claims. It is high time to introspect the role of library associations in India in this regard.

The knowledge base of the individual professional is of paramount importance. The ability to apply this knowledge for the progress and betterment of the society will be the major factor for the recognition and acceptance of a profession. LIS professionals claim to handle documents and information in terms of acquisition, organization, storage, retrieval and dissemination to people in the form of service. But information handling is not an exclusive province of LIS professional alone. It is an accepted fact that information work is a shared task performed both by other individuals and information professionals.

The LIS professionals should continuously enlarge their knowledge base and adjust to changing needs of the society. We should give more emphasis to professional education and training but at the same time we should not neglect the research activities. Though library association in India have been offering numerous programmes for updating knowledge of the professionals but there are less opportunities to develop skills of different types. One of the important means for maintaining the professional status of LIS in society is through the quality of library service rendered and the people's perception of this quality. The need to translate the LIS profession's service ideology into practice is must for the proper acceptance/recognition of the profession. The professional associations should provide leadership in creating platforms for the LIS professionals to meet, interact and share experiences. There is a need to unite professionals to work together for securing a more clear identity, higher status and acceptance as a profession. The library associations still have a long way to go for achieving these professional objectives.

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