

BOOK REVIEW

**MAPPING DOCTORAL RESEARCH IN
LIBRARY & INFORMATION SCIENCE
IN INDIA, 1950-2023, EDITED BY
SHASHI PRABHA SINGH AND
PARVEEN BABBAR**

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE BOOK

REVIEWER

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Mapping Doctoral Research in Library & Information Science in India, 1950-2023: Shashi Prabha Singh and Parveen Babbar. 2V. Volume 1: Inventory of Doctoral Dissertations. Volume 2: Appendices & Indices to Inventory of Doctoral Dissertations. New Delhi, Synergy Books India, 2024. Rs. 8995/- (2 Vols. Set). xv+924 pages.

Literature mapping is a scholarly pursuit taken up by LIS professionals to understand the overall structure and content of knowledge that constitute an academic discipline. A higher level of intellectual stamina and academic rigour is needed to complete such works. Two very distinguished persons from the field of LIS; a very senior professor from a renowned university i.e. University of Delhi; and a technology savvy competent practicing professional from another prominent University i.e JNU have analysed the origin and evolution of doctoral research in LIS. And they have meticulously compiled a near exhaustive directory of approved Phd dissertations with all necessary details. The above mentioned two-volume work deserves full marks for its insightful analysis and structured contents presented in an user friendly format.

The introductory part i.e. Part 1 of Volume 1 has two chapters. The first one titled 'LIS Education and research in India' provides a guided tour to the subject enumerating the various facets like courses offered, placement of LIS as a subject in the faculties/schools of universities or institutions, present state of bibliographical control to measure the number of PhD dissertations approved, obje-

-tives and limitations of the study etc. The second one is titled 'Mapping of LIS Research'. It contains as many as 20 tables with details like year wise and decade wise data of PhD theses, high performing universities, subject wise classification of theses, high performing supervisors etc. The last mentioned table will provide a bit of professional pride to those who have produced a sizeable number of successful PhD scholars. Part 2 of Volume 1 has the heading 'subject/system wise inventory of doctoral dissertations'. It has a list of 4362 PhD theses arranged under 32 broad subject headings. All subject headings are suffixed with the term 'information system (IS)'. As we know majority of the libraries in India work in isolation. Therefore it may not be prudent to apply this term uniformly in case of all types of libraries and information centres. The heading 'University and College libraries' (page 356) has the highest number of entries (1263) signifying the popularity of the subject among the researchers. How to differentiate between the entries under the headings 'Research and Development Libraries' (Page 274) and 'Science Libraries' (Page 297)? The authors may think of revising some of the subject headings.

The second volume contains 'Appendices and Indices to Inventory of Doctoral Dissertations'. List of universities and departments conducting LIS courses, availability of information pertaining to LIS departments on the websites of universities, PhD course allowed under the 'supplication' method, list of supervisors etc. It is evident that LIS departments have been placed under different faculties or schools of studies. There is no uniformity in enumerating the details of LIS departments on the websites. A number of indices have also been included. The purpose is to enable the readers to have an easy access to the contents through the names

of PhD scholars, titles of theses, subjects covered, research supervisors and universities where the studies have been conducted. The last part of the volume contains the titles of 409 PhD theses awarded during the years 2022 and 2023.

This two volume monumental work shows the diverse range of LIS courses offered by Indian universities. Many useful suggestions have been made by the authors. A standardised nomenclature for the courses offered should be followed for the sake of clarity and consistency. Details of LIS courses should be included in the websites to attract students seeking new and lucrative career opportunities. The study also shows statewide productivity of various LIS departments and their teaching faculties identifying high performing universities and their research supervisors. The study also identifies instances of duplication of topics and 'supplication system' in research where scholars are allowed to go for PhD or doctoral without a supervisor.

The long list of subject headings in Volume 1 suggests that LIS is an overarching discipline and it suffers from a strange paradox. It is the only discipline excepting perhaps philosophy whose domain is the entire universe of knowledge; seeking ways and means to organise information in a fast changing world. Table 6 in this volume shows that as many as 2469 LIS theses were approved during the decade 2010-2019. What is the reason for this sudden spurt in LIS research? A detailed discussion may be seen in the journal *Economic and Political Weekly* 53(23), June 2018. (Pages 14-16). UGC's rule that candidates having PhD degree were exempted from clearing the NET had prompted many LIS scholars to go for PhD registration. Volume 1 page 4 says that in the year 1946 first full fledged LIS department was

set up in the University of Delhi. Perhaps it is a well known fact that initially in the University of Delhi (also in many other older universities) LIS department was just a wing of the university library. Is it prudent to count the PhD theses done in the departments of history or museum studies as LIS based PhD studies? This question needs a suitable reply. After all history of libraries is also a part of the discipline of history.

In spite of these minor glitzes, we as LIS professionals should be grateful to the authors for this important work with its sweeping overview of the LIS research done in a diverse country like India. LIS professionals are often looked upon as ‘index scholars’ a group whose scholarship is based on alphabetical learning; looking up things in tables. Major part of this book falls in the above category i.e. a book which is used for looking up particular points rather than the reading through.

In his foreword, a senior professor of LIS has quoted the American scholar Ralph W Emerson “scholarship is to be created not by compulsion but by awakening a pure interest in knowledge”. How many LIS professionals or teachers pursue PhD for the sake of knowledge? Perhaps a day long academic discussion or content analysis of PhD dissertation can answer this question. One of the conspicuous features of a PhD thesis is questionnaire survey based results; cherry-picking selective use of statistics in search of a striking conclusion is commonplace. This two volume work will be a part of a core and prized reference collection of an academic library. LIS teachers will find it useful for their academic assignments. IATLIS may consider its wide circulation among teachers in a digital form with a proper retrieval mechanism. June 8, 2023)

