

Reading Service Courses in Indian Library and Information Science Education Featured Post-print

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] India possesses a relatively complete library service network and talent cultivation system. Its experience and practices in reading service curriculum construction can serve as a valuable reference for China's efforts in this domain. [Method/Process] This study first employed a web-based literature survey method to investigate Indian institutions engaged in library and information science education, and subsequently utilized case analysis method to conduct an in-depth examination of reading service courses offered. [Result/Conclusion] The findings reveal that two universities in India systematically offer three reading service courses, with target audiences covering two representative groups: children and adults. The curriculum is comprehensive, enabling students to receive systematic training in library reading service theory and methods. India's reading service courses are characterized by three features: strong pertinence, emphasis on cultivating students' practical abilities, and provision of flexible online education, which effectively addresses India's substantial demand for reading service professionals. Three insights can be drawn from India's experience: designing a curriculum system that covers both reading service librarians and their target audiences; designing and implementing effective modular internship programs; and offering certificate courses through online platforms.

Full Text

The Characteristics of Reading Service Courses in Indian Library and Information Science Education

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] India possesses a relatively complete library service network and talent cultivation system, and its experience and practices in constructing reading service courses hold significant reference value for China's efforts in this domain. **[Method/Process]** This study first employed web-based documentary investigation to survey Indian institutions engaged in library and information science education, then utilized case analysis to conduct in-depth examination of reading service courses offered. **[Result/Conclusion]** The investigation revealed that two Indian universities systematically offer three reading service courses covering two representative service populations: children and adults. With comprehensive content, these courses provide students with systematic training in library reading service theory and methods. India's reading service courses feature three distinct characteristics: strong targeting, emphasis on cultivating students' practical abilities, and provision of flexible online education—effectively addressing India's substantial demand for reading service professionals. Three key insights emerge from India's experience: designing a curriculum system covering primary reading service librarians and target audiences; designing and implementing effective modular internship programs; and offering certificate courses via online platforms.

Keywords: reading service talent cultivation; reading service courses; international experience; India

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1 Introduction

Public libraries, academic libraries, and school libraries bear the important responsibility of conducting reading services such as reading promotion and guidance. China's Public Library Law stipulates that public libraries "shall regard promoting, guiding, and serving universal reading as an important task"[1]; the Regulations for Regular Institutions of Higher Education Libraries require libraries to actively carry out reading promotion and other cultural activities[2]; and the Regulations for Primary and Secondary School Libraries (Rooms) identify "organizing student reading activities and cultivating students' reading interest and habits" as one of the library's primary missions[3]. The deepening development of reading services requires a considerable number of trained professionals; however, China's severe shortage of specialized education in reading services has created a prominent supply-demand contradiction for reading service talent[4]. To address this contradiction, scholars have summarized advanced experiences from Spain[5], the United States[6], Canada[7], and Finland[8] to

provide references for establishing China's own professional education system, though Asian experiences remain unexplored.

India and China are both populous developing nations facing the enormous challenge of comprehensively improving population quality. While India is often perceived as impoverished and underdeveloped with low population quality, its software industry is remarkably advanced. India's information industry, particularly its software sector, has developed rapidly, making it the world's second-largest software nation after the United States[9], indicating that India has cultivated a substantial pool of high-quality talent. For a poor, populous nation to develop a large cohort of high-quality professionals requires certain social conditions, including a complete basic and higher education system, as well as social institutions and support systems that facilitate talent development. In fact, India has a long history of library development and has established a public library service network covering urban and rural areas, playing an important role in promoting social equity and self-education. As a former British colony, India opened its first public library, the Calcutta Public Library, in 1836 with British assistance[10]. American librarian William Alanson Borden came to India in 1910 and established a public library system in Baroda State following the American model[11]. Indian librarian S.R. Ranganathan gained international fame for his work *The Five Laws of Library Science*, and his draft Public Library Act became an important foundation for Indian states in formulating their own public library legislation[12-13]. India comprises 29 states and 6 union territories, of which 19 states have enacted public library laws[14]. These laws emphasize the extension of library services, with public libraries under the central-branch system committed to providing quality services to ordinary citizens, playing important roles in literacy campaigns and reading promotion activities[15]. India has 46,746 public libraries, including 12,714 village libraries[16], forming a central-branch public library service network covering grassroots populations[17]. By contrast, as of the end of 2019, China had only 3,196 district-level and above public libraries[18], without a public library network covering both urban and rural areas.

Such an extensive library service network requires a substantial number of professionals, and India's library and information science education provides the necessary talent supply. India has 920 universities[19], of which 130 offer library and information science education[20]. This scale of professional education ensures a supply of trained librarians who apply their knowledge to develop reference services and reading promotion, providing professional library services to ordinary citizens[21]. Public library acts in various Indian states also clearly define librarians' rights and responsibilities, which both protects their interests and helps ensure service quality[13].

Thus, India's library service system and library and information science education both exceed China in scale and have a long history with sound legal protection. Investigating and summarizing India's experience in cultivating librarians' reading service capabilities can provide valuable references for China.

By visiting Indian university websites, we found that course information is relatively comprehensive, enabling us to focus our examination on reading service courses in Indian library and information science education.

2 Reading Services in Indian Library and Information Science Education

Indian library and information science education began in 1911. Currently, 128 institutions offer bachelor's programs, 93 offer master's programs, 21 departments offer two-year integrated programs, 16 universities are qualified to award Master of Philosophy degrees, and 82 universities are qualified to award doctoral degrees in library and information science, with the first PhD awarded as early as 1950[22]. The Indian Library Association provides a list and website links for 130 institutions offering library and information science education (actually 126, as 4 school names are duplicated)[20]. Visiting these websites and browsing departmental information reveals complete talent cultivation programs, including training objectives, admission requirements, teaching language, required and elective courses, internships, and thesis requirements. Most schools provide syllabi for each course. The survey shows that none of these institutions have established a reading service major, though some courses contain substantial reading service content. Two institutions systematically offer reading service courses, with three representative courses totaling 4 credits and 60 hours each, divided into 4 units .

**** Indian Institutions Offering Reading Service Courses****

Institution	Course Name
SNDT Women's University, School of Library Science[23]	School and Children's Library Services
University of Pune, Interdisciplinary Studies[24]	School and Media Library Services; Reading Guidance Services

Other courses also include reading service content. SNDT Women's University's Master of Library and Information Science course "Health Librarianship" includes alternative therapies, information therapy, and bibliotherapy in its Unit 4 on "Development Trends in Health Librarianship"[25]. The University of Pune's Master of Library and Information Science course "Foundations of Library and Information Science" includes a sub-unit on reading habits in its Unit 4 on "Types of Libraries and Services," covering definitions, importance, types, and the role of different libraries in promoting and cultivating reading habits, along with examples[26].

Below we introduce India's three representative reading service courses in detail.

2.1 School and Children's Library Services

SNDT Women's University in Mumbai established its School of Library Science in 1961 and currently focuses on graduate and doctoral-level education in library and information science, while also offering certificate courses in archives management, classification, and cataloging. Its two-year Master of Library and Information Science program enrolls 25 female students annually, with English as the medium of instruction. The program employs small-class teaching methods including lectures, discussions, projects, seminars, and practicums. Students must complete 16 professional courses, a thesis, and 120 hours of internship. Required courses include: Foundations of Library and Information Science, Classification and Cataloging, Library Management, Information Organization and Retrieval, Reference Services and Information Sources, Information and Communication Technology, Information, Knowledge and Society, and Introduction to Research and Statistics, as well as Digital Libraries. Some courses are offered in two stages across two semesters, such as Classification and Cataloging, Library Management, Information Organization and Retrieval, and Reference Services and Information Sources, with each course actually worth 8 credits and 120 hours[25].

"School and Children's Library Services" is a required specialization course for the two-year Master of Library and Information Science program, with two alternative specialization courses: Health Librarianship and Archives Management. The main course content is shown in .

** Main Content of "School and Children's Library Services" at SNDT Women's University**

Theme and Content

(a) School and children's libraries: definitions, objectives, role in personality development(b) Planning and design of school libraries: design and layout; service standards for school and children's libraries (IFLA Guidelines for Children's Library Services)

Collection development: resource types (books, audiovisual materials, multimedia resources, electronic resources); children's websites and digital libraries; genres of children's literature; role of children's authors and publishers; young adult literature; selection and acquisition processes; storage and maintenance of resources; classification, cataloging, and other technical processes

Libraries and the reading/learning process: reading process; reading theories; readability criteria; types of reading; library's role in reading/learning; storytelling; computer use in libraries; children's literature reviews

Reading promotion: promotion methods, information literacy, bibliographic instruction, exhibitions; planning and organization of promotion programs

The two-year Master of Library and Information Science program primarily trains personnel for school and children's libraries, children's service areas in public libraries, health information centers, and archives. The specialization course in the fourth semester enables personalized cultivation to meet the specific needs of different employment sectors and positions. A core function of school and children's libraries is cultivating young people's reading habits and abilities, which is well reflected in the course design. The course comprises four units: Unit 1 covers concepts, functions, layout, and service standards for school and children's libraries, with standards based on IFLA's Guidelines for Children's Library Services; the subsequent three units focus on reading resources, reading theories, and reading promotion methods and practices. Through this course, students gain a thorough understanding of school libraries' role and the reading/learning process, enabling them to select appropriate collections, plan and manage school and children's libraries, and design and implement reading promotion programs after graduation.

In the first semester, students take 5 required courses and 1 professional elective, all worth 4 credits. Required courses include: Foundations of Library and Information Science, Library Management, Information Sources, Information Systems and Services, Knowledge Organization - Classification Theory, and Knowledge Organization - Cataloging Theory. The professional elective is chosen from two options: School and Media Library Services or Public Library Systems. The "Public Library Systems" elective also includes reading guidance service content.

In the second semester, students complete 4 required courses (4 credits each), 1 general elective (2 credits), and 1 competency and skills development course (2 credits). Required courses include: Knowledge Organization - Classification Practice, Knowledge Organization - Cataloging Practice, Information and Communication Technology - Theory, and Information and Communication Technology - Practice. General electives offer two choices: Soft Skills for Library Professionals or Technical Writing, with students selecting one. "Soft Skills for Library Professionals" covers communication skills (reading, listening, speaking, writing, note-taking) and personal skills (resume preparation, SWOC analysis, interview and group discussion preparation, telephone communication, time management, interpersonal relationships, presentation skills). "Technical Writing" focuses on academic writing methods, norms, and techniques. The "Competency and Skills Development" course includes management practices, bibliography compilation, reference services, catalog record preparation, study tour reports, internship reports, oral presentations, and internships. The internship requires 15 working days in a library under a librarian's guidance, with an internship report to be completed.

2.2 School and Media Library Services

The University of Pune offers "School and Media Library Services" in two degree programs.

The university's latest two-year Master of Library and Information Science curriculum was implemented in the 2020-2021 academic year. Students must complete 16 professional courses, an internship, and a thesis or project. The third semester offers three professional electives: "School and Media Library Services," "Information Literacy," and "Bibliometrics," from which students choose one.

This course is also a professional elective in the university's one-year Bachelor of Library and Information Science program. Applicants must be university graduates, similar to China's double-degree programs. This one-year program is distinctive and worthy of reference, so we briefly introduce its curriculum. The program spans two semesters, with students taking 6 courses each semester, including theory and practice courses; internships are included, but no thesis is required.

The main content of "School and Media Library Services" is shown in .

** Main Content of "School and Media Library Services" at University of Pune[26-27]**

Theme and Content

Foundations of school and media library services: different types of children and their needs; importance of reading in children's lives; methods and means of cultivating children's reading habits; significance, functions, and types of children's libraries; children's sections in school and public libraries
Collections in school and media libraries: wordless books (picture books), various storybooks, graphic novels (comics), children's magazines, audiovisual materials, internet resources, children's digital libraries
Services in school and media libraries: read-aloud; reference services; book and library literacy; reading guidance services; story time; book discussion groups; book talks; summer reading programs; family reading programs and family literacy
Management of school and media libraries: collection development (acquisition and weeding), processing (classification and cataloging), collection management

This course trains school librarians, children's librarians, and children's service librarians in public libraries, for whom providing reading services to children is daily work. The curriculum therefore focuses on reading theory, reading materials, and reading services, with library management as a secondary component—the former occupies three units, while the latter occupies only one. The collection development theme specifically introduces appropriate reading materials for different age groups.

Comparing and , the two courses share many similarities in content proportion, unit themes, and arrangements. However, they differ in organizational structure

and collection emphases, reflecting different design philosophies and providing mutual complementarity.

2.3 Reading Guidance Services

“Reading Guidance Services” is a required course in the fourth semester of the University of Pune’s two-year Master of Library and Information Science program. The main content is shown in .

Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

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