



An Introduction to Library and information science (LIS)

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Abstract:

Library and information science (LIS) (sometimes given as the plural library and information sciences) or as "library and information studies") is a merging of the two fields library science and information science. The phrase "library and information science" is associated with schools of library and information science (abbreviated to "SLIS"), which generally developed from professional training programs (not academic disciplines) to university institutions during the second half of the 20th century. In the last part of 1960s schools of librarianship began to add the term "information science" to their names. The first school to do this was at the University of Pittsburgh in 1964. More schools followed during the 1970s and 1980s, and by the 1990s almost all library schools in the USA had added information science to their names. The trend was more for the adoption of information technology rather than the concept of a science. Library and information science (LIS). The study and practice of professional methods in the use and exploitation of information, whether from an institutional base or not, for the benefit of users. An umbrella term and used to cover terms such as library science, librarianship, information science, information work etc.

Keywords: Information, Library and information science (LIS)

1. Relations between library science, information science and LIS

"The common ground between library science and information science, which is a strong one, is in the sharing of their social role and in their general concern with the problems of effective utilization of graphic records. But there are also very significant differences in several critical respects, among them in: (1) selection of problems addressed and in the way they were defined; (2) theoretical questions asked and frameworks established; (3) the nature and degree of experimentation and empirical development and the resulting practical knowledge/competencies derived; (4) tools and approaches used; and (5) the nature and strength of interdisciplinary relations established and the dependence of the progress and evolution of interdisciplinary approaches. All of these differences warrant the conclusion that librarianship and information science are two different fields in a strong interdisciplinary relation, rather than one and the same field, or one being a special case of the other."

Another indication of the different uses of the two terms is the indexing in UMI's Dissertations Abstracts. In *Dissertations Abstracts Online* on November 2011 were 4888 dissertations indexed with the descriptor LIBRARY SCIENCE and 9053 with the descriptor INFORMATION SCIENCE. For the year 2009 the numbers were 104 LIBRARY SCIENCE and 514 INFORMATION SCIENCE. 891 dissertations were indexed with both terms (36 in 2009).

It should be considered that information science grew out of documentation science and therefore has a tradition for considering scientific and scholarly communication, bibliographic, subject knowledge and

terminology etc. Library science, on the other hand has mostly concentrated on libraries and their internal processes and best practices. It is also relevant to consider that information science used to be done by scientists, while librarianship has been split between public libraries and scholarly research libraries. Library schools have mainly educated librarians for public libraries and not shown much interest in scientific communication and documentation. When information scientists from 1964 entered library schools, they brought with them competencies in relation to information retrieval in subject databases, including concepts such as recall and precision, boolean search techniques, query formulation and related issues. Subject bibliographic databases and citation indexes provided a major step forward in information dissemination - and also in the curriculum at library schools.

Julian Warner (2010) suggests that the information and computer science tradition in information retrieval may broadly be characterized as **query transformation**, with the query articulated verbally by the user in advance of searching and then transformed by a system into a set of records. From librarianship and indexing, on the other hand, has been an implicit stress on **selection power** enabling the user to make relevant selections.

2. Difficulties defining LIS

"The question, 'What is library and information science?' does not elicit responses of the same internal conceptual coherence as similar inquiries as to the nature of other fields, e.g., 'What is chemistry?', 'What is economics?', 'What is medicine?' Each of those fields, though broad in scope, has clear ties to basic concerns of their field. Neither LIS theory nor practice is perceived to be neither monolithic nor unified by a common literature or set of professional skills. Occasionally, LIS scholars (many of whom do not self-identify as members of an interreading LIS community, or prefer names other than LIS), attempt, but are unable, to find core concepts in common. Some believe that computing and internetworking concepts and skills underlie virtually every important aspect of LIS, indeed see LIS as a sub-field of computer science! [Footnote III.1] Others claim that LIS is principally a social science accompanied by practical skills such as ethnography and interviewing. Historically, traditions of public service, bibliography, documentalism, and information science have viewed their mission, their philosophical toolsets, and their domain of research differently. Still others deny the existence of a greater metropolitan LIS, viewing LIS instead as a loosely organized collection of specialized interests often unified by nothing more than their shared (and fought-over) use of the descriptor information. Indeed, claims occasionally arise to the effect that the field even has no theory of its own." (Konrad, 2007, p. 652-653).

3. The unique concern of library and information science

"Concern for people becoming informed is not unique to LIS, and thus is insufficient to differentiate LIS from other fields. LIS are a part of a larger enterprise." (Konrad, 2007, p. 655).

"The unique concern of LIS is recognized as: Statement of the core concern of LIS: Humans becoming informed (constructing meaning) via intermediation between inquirers and instrumented records. No other field has this as its concern. " (Konrad, 2007, p. 660)

"Note that the promiscuous term *information* does not appear in the above statement circumscribing the field's central concerns: The detrimental effects of the ambiguity this term provokes are discussed above (Part III). Furner [Furner 2004, 427] has shown that discourse in the field is improved where specific terms are utilized in place of the i-word for specific senses of that term." (Konrad, 2007, p. 661).

Michael Buckland wrote: "Educational programs in library, information and documentation are concerned with what people know, are not limited to technology, and require wide-ranging expertise.

They differ fundamentally and importantly from computer science programs and from the information systems programs found in business schools."

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