**Reimagining Librarianship: Policy Frameworks for Integrating Library Professionals into Teaching and Digital Literacy Initiatives**

**Abstract:**

The digital transformation of higher education has expanded the role of librarians from resource managers to educators and digital literacy advocates. However, Library and Information Science (LIS) education in India lacks structured pathways for librarians to assume formal teaching roles, limiting their impact on student learning and institutional innovation. This study examines the feasibility of integrating librarians into academic teaching frameworks under India’s National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Using a mixed-method approach—comprising surveys, interviews, policy analysis, and international case studies—the research explores institutional barriers, policy gaps, and global best practices. Findings reveal that while librarians possess the expertise to lead digital literacy initiatives, systemic reforms in accreditation, curriculum design, and institutional recognition are essential. The study proposes a policy roadmap and instructional framework to support librarian-teacher integration. By embedding librarians into teaching structures, academic institutions can enhance digital fluency, foster interdisciplinary learning, and advance inclusive, future-ready education.

***Keywords:*** *Librarian-teacher integration, Digital literacy, LIS education reform, NEP 2020, Academic libraries, Policy frameworks, Interdisciplinary learning.*

1. **Introduction**

The role of librarians in higher education has significantly evolved in response to the digitalization of knowledge systems, the rise of online learning platforms, and the growing complexity of information ecosystems. Once viewed primarily as custodians of physical collections, librarians are now expected to contribute directly to teaching and learning. Their responsibilities increasingly include digital resource curation, research data management, scholarly communication, and—most critically—information and digital literacy instruction. Academic libraries have become hybrid learning environments, positioning librarians as essential partners in the academic enterprise.

Despite these expanded roles, Library and Information Science (LIS) education in many countries, including India, remains rooted in traditional paradigms. Curricula often emphasize cataloguing and information retrieval, offering limited exposure to pedagogy, instructional design, or interdisciplinary collaboration. This disconnect leaves LIS graduates underprepared for teaching roles and limits their recognition as academic contributors. The absence of formal teaching credentials and policy support further marginalizes librarians from curriculum development and instructional delivery.

In an era of misinformation, algorithmic bias, and data-driven decision-making, digital literacy has become a foundational academic and civic competency. Librarians, with their expertise in information evaluation and access, are uniquely positioned to lead digital literacy education. Embedding them into formal teaching structures is not only a professional necessity but a strategic imperative for institutions seeking to foster critical thinking and digital fluency.

This study explores the feasibility of integrating librarians into teaching roles under India’s National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. It aims to (1) assess institutional and curricular barriers, (2) examine policy frameworks supporting librarian-led digital literacy initiatives, and (3) analyze global best practices to inform LIS education reform. The research contributes to the broader discourse on digital equity, interdisciplinary learning, and the redefinition of librarianship in the 21st century.

1. **Literature Review**

The literature on Library and Information Science (LIS) education, digital literacy, and librarian-teacher integration reflects a growing recognition of the evolving instructional role of librarians in higher education. Traditionally viewed as custodians of information, librarians are increasingly expected to serve as educators, particularly in digital literacy—a competency critical for navigating misinformation, algorithmic bias, and information overload (Mackey & Jacobson, 2011; Martzoukou, 2021; Johnston, 2020).

However, LIS education frameworks often fall short in preparing professionals for teaching roles. Corrall (2010), Raju (2017), and Hensley (2013) argue that most LIS curricula lack pedagogical training, instructional design, and assessment literacy. Julien and Genuis (2011) and Saunders (2015) further emphasize the need for integrating educational theory and reflective teaching practices into LIS programs. Yukawa (2010) and Bruce (2008) propose blended learning and informed learning models to bridge this gap.

Digital literacy initiatives led by academic libraries have gained prominence globally. The ACRL Framework (2014) and the concept of meta literacy (Mackey & Jacobson, 2011) have redefined information literacy as participatory and reflective. Studies by Lloyd (2010), Head (2013), and Jaeger et al. (2012) highlight the strategic role of librarians in fostering digital inclusion. Secker and Coonan (2013), Beetham and Sharpe (2010), and Virkus (2012) explore how digital literacy instruction enhances student engagement and research skills.

Internationally, models of librarian-teacher integration offer valuable insights. Shank et al. (2011) introduced “blended librarianship,” advocating for librarians as co-instructors. Wang (2010) proposed a curricular integration model, while Hallam et al. (2018) documented institutional strategies at the University of Queensland. Julien and Given (2003), Oakleaf (2010), and Maybee (2006) examined faculty-librarian collaboration in North America. Klebansky and Fraser (2013) and Johnston (2020) explored curriculum co-design in Australia. Studies from South Africa (Raju, 2017), Singapore (Foo et al., 2011), and the UK (Bent et al., 2007) further illustrate diverse approaches to embedding librarians into teaching roles.

Despite these advancements, several gaps persist. Many institutions lack formal policies recognizing librarians as educators (Johnston, 2020; Martzoukou, 2021). LIS programs remain slow to adopt pedagogical training (Corrall, 2010; Raju, 2017), and empirical studies on the long-term impact of librarian-led instruction are limited (Julien & Genuis, 2011; Oakleaf, 2010). These challenges underscore the need for interdisciplinary approaches that integrate LIS, education policy, and digital pedagogy.

Frameworks such as TPACK (Mishra & Koehler, 2006), connectivism (Siemens, 2005), and communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) support the integration of librarians into digital learning environments. Gersch et al. (2016) demonstrated how the ACRL Framework and TPACK converge in online instruction. Lewis (2019) and Bruce (2008) emphasized the importance of open infrastructure and informed learning in shaping the future of academic libraries.

In sum, the literature supports a reimagining of librarianship—one that positions LIS professionals as educators, curriculum collaborators, and digital literacy leaders. Realizing this vision requires systemic reforms in LIS education, institutional policy, and professional recognition.

1. **Research Objectives and Questions**
	1. **Research Objectives**

The overarching aim of this study is to explore the evolving role of Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals as educators in the context of India’s National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The study is guided by three interrelated objectives:

**3.1.1. Assessing the Feasibility of Librarian-Teacher Integration under NEP 2020**

NEP 2020 emphasizes multidisciplinary education, digital empowerment, and faculty development—principles that align closely with the emerging instructional roles of academic librarians. This objective seeks to evaluate the structural, curricular, and institutional conditions that either facilitate or hinder the formal integration of librarians into teaching roles. It also examines the extent to which current LIS education equips professionals with the pedagogical competencies required to function as educators in higher education institutions.

**3.1.2. Investigating Policy Frameworks Supporting Digital Literacy in Academic Libraries**

As digital literacy becomes a foundational academic and civic skill, libraries are increasingly expected to lead structured initiatives that promote critical information use, ethical digital behavior, and research fluency. This objective explores existing national and institutional policy frameworks that define, support, or limit the role of librarians in digital literacy education. It also identifies gaps in policy implementation and proposes strategies for embedding librarianship into broader digital inclusion agendas.

**3.1.3. Analysing Global Best Practices in LIS Professional Integration**

To contextualize the Indian experience, this objective examines international models where librarians have successfully assumed dual roles as educators and information professionals. By analysing case studies from countries such as Australia, the United States, South Africa, and the UK, the study identifies transferable strategies, accreditation mechanisms, and collaborative teaching models that can inform LIS education reform and institutional policy in India.

* 1. **Research Questions**

To address the above objectives, the study is guided by the following research questions:

**3.2.1. How can LIS professionals be formally incorporated into academic teaching structures?**

* What institutional reforms, accreditation mechanisms, and curricular changes are necessary to enable librarians to function as educators?
* How can co-teaching models, embedded instruction, and librarian-led courses be institutionalized within higher education frameworks?

**3.2.2. What policy frameworks currently exist to support librarians in digital literacy initiatives?**

* How do national education policies, such as NEP 2020, define the instructional role of librarians?
* What institutional mandates or funding mechanisms support librarian-led digital literacy programs?
* What are the barriers to policy implementation at the institutional level?

**3.2.3. How do international LIS education models address librarian-teacher dual identities?**

* What pedagogical competencies are embedded in LIS curricula globally to prepare librarians for teaching roles?
* How do universities in other countries recognize and support librarians as academic instructors?
* What lessons can Indian LIS institutions and policymakers draw from these global practices?

**4. Methodology**

***4.1 Research Design: Mixed-Method Approach***

This study adopts a mixed-method research design, integrating both qualitative and comparative approaches to explore the evolving instructional role of librarians. The rationale for this design lies in its ability to capture the complexity of policy, institutional culture, and professional identity formation across diverse educational contexts. The qualitative component provides in-depth insights into stakeholder perspectives, while the comparative policy analysis enables the identification of transferable global practices. This triangulation enhances the validity and applicability of the findings, particularly in the context of India’s National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

***4.2 Data Collection***

***4.2.1 Surveys and Interviews***

Primary data is collected through structured surveys and semi-structured interviews with three key stakeholder groups:

* Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals working in academic institutions
* Faculty members and academic administrators
* Policymakers and education planners involved in NEP 2020 implementation

The survey instrument includes both closed- and open-ended questions designed to assess perceptions of librarian-teacher integration, digital literacy responsibilities, and institutional support mechanisms. Interviews are conducted to explore nuanced perspectives on policy gaps, professional development needs, and collaborative teaching experiences. Participants are selected using purposive sampling to ensure representation across public and private institutions, geographic regions, and levels of seniority.

***4.2.2 Case Studies of International Academic Institutions***

To contextualize the Indian experience, the study includes case studies from academic libraries in Australia, the United States, South Africa, and the United Kingdom. These cases are selected based on documented success in integrating librarians into teaching roles and implementing digital literacy programs. Institutional reports, strategic plans, and published evaluations are analysed to extract best practices, accreditation models, and curricular innovations.

***4.3 Data Analysis***

***4.3.1 Thematic Coding***

Interview transcripts and open-ended survey responses are analyzed using thematic coding. Codes are developed both inductively (emerging from the data) and deductively (based on the research questions and literature review). Themes include: perceptions of librarian identity, barriers to instructional integration, digital literacy leadership, and policy awareness. NVivo software is used to manage and visualize coding patterns.

***4.3.2 Content and Policy Analysis***

Institutional policies, LIS curricula, and national education documents (including NEP 2020) are subjected to content analysis. The goal is to identify explicit and implicit references to librarians’ instructional roles, digital literacy mandates, and professional development pathways. This analysis helps map the alignment—or lack thereof—between policy intent and institutional practice.

***4.3.3 Comparative Evaluation of Global LIS Models***

A cross-case comparative framework is used to evaluate international LIS education models. Criteria includes; presence of pedagogical training in LIS curricula, formal recognition of librarians as educators, integration into faculty structures, and institutional support for digital literacy initiatives. Findings are synthesized to identify adaptable strategies for the Indian context.

This methodological framework ensures a comprehensive understanding of the structural, curricular, and policy dimensions of librarian-teacher integration. It also provides a robust foundation for generating evidence-based recommendations that are both contextually grounded and globally informed.

* 1. **Significance and Expected Outcomes**

This study addresses a critical gap in the evolving landscape of higher education: the underutilization of librarians as educators in digital literacy and information instruction. By aligning its inquiry with the priorities of India’s National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and drawing from global best practices, the research offers both immediate and long-term contributions to policy, practice, and scholarship.

***5.1 Practical Implications***

***5.1.1. Policy Recommendations for Librarian-Teacher Integration***

The study is expected to yield actionable policy recommendations that support the formal integration of librarians into academic teaching structures. These may include:

* Establishing national certification pathways for librarians to qualify as instructors in digital literacy, research methodology, and scholarly communication.
* Revising institutional policies to recognize librarians as academic staff eligible for co-teaching roles and curriculum development.
* Encouraging regulatory bodies such as the University Grants Commission (UGC) and National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) to include librarian-led instruction as a quality indicator in institutional evaluations.

***5.1.2. Framework for Librarians as Digital Literacy Educators***

The research will propose a structured framework that positions librarians as central actors in digital literacy education. This framework will:

* Define core competencies required for librarian-led instruction in digital environments.
* Recommend models for embedding digital literacy modules into undergraduate and postgraduate curricula.
* Outline institutional support mechanisms, including funding, training, and cross-departmental collaboration, to sustain librarian-led initiatives.

***5.2 Academic Contributions***

***5.2.1. Expansion of LIS Education Discourse***

The study contributes to the ongoing reform of LIS education by advocating for the inclusion of pedagogical training, interdisciplinary collaboration, and policy literacy in LIS curricula. It challenges traditional notions of librarianship and repositions LIS professionals as educators, curriculum designers, and digital literacy advocates. This reconceptualization has the potential to influence curriculum development in LIS schools across India and beyond.

***5.2.2. Addressing Institutional Challenges in Librarian Identity Formation***

By examining the structural and cultural barriers that hinder librarian-teacher integration, the study sheds light on the identity tensions experienced by LIS professionals. It explores how librarians navigate dual roles—as service providers and educators—and how institutional recognition (or lack thereof) shapes their professional trajectories. The findings will inform strategies for identity affirmation, role clarity, and professional advancement within academic institutions.

In sum, this research not only addresses a pressing educational and policy challenge but also contributes to the broader transformation of academic librarianship in the digital age. It offers a roadmap for institutions seeking to harness the full potential of librarians as educators and change agents in a rapidly evolving knowledge ecosystem.

**6. Policy Recommendations**

To enable the formal integration of librarians into teaching roles and digital literacy leadership, this study proposes a two-pronged strategy: (1) institutional reforms that align LIS education and professional recognition with national education priorities, and (2) a phased roadmap to guide the transition from current practice to full implementation.

***6.1 Institutional Reforms***

***6.1.1. Accreditation and Certification Pathways***

To legitimize the instructional role of librarians, national and institutional accreditation bodies must establish clear certification mechanisms. These may include:

* National-level teaching certification programs for LIS professionals, endorsed by regulatory bodies such as the University Grants Commission (UGC) or National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE).
* Micro-credentialing or postgraduate diplomas in digital pedagogy, instructional design, and educational technology tailored for librarians.
* Institutional policies that recognize certified librarians as eligible for academic teaching roles, including co-teaching, guest lecturing, and curriculum development.

***6.1.2. LIS Curriculum Enhancement***

LIS education must be restructured to reflect the pedagogical and interdisciplinary demands of modern academic librarianship. Key reforms include:

* Integration of core courses on teaching and learning theories, curriculum design, assessment strategies, and digital pedagogy into LIS degree programs.
* Inclusion of practicum components where LIS students co-develop and deliver digital literacy workshops or modules in collaboration with faculty.
* Development of elective tracks or specializations in instructional librarianship, aligned with NEP 2020’s emphasis on multidisciplinary education.

***6.1.3. Institutional Recognition and Role Expansion***

Academic institutions must formally acknowledge the evolving instructional role of librarians through structural and cultural reforms:

* Redefining librarian job descriptions to include teaching responsibilities, curriculum collaboration, and digital literacy leadership.
* Including librarians in academic planning committees, curriculum boards, and faculty development programs.
* Creating dedicated positions such as “Instructional Librarian” or “Digital Literacy Coordinator” within university libraries to institutionalize their teaching contributions.

***6.2 Roadmap for Transition***

To ensure sustainable and scalable implementation, the study proposes a three-phase roadmap that guides institutions and policymakers through the transformation process.

***Phase 1: Foundation Building (Short-Term: 1–2 Years)***

* Conduct institutional audits to assess current librarian involvement in teaching and digital literacy programs.
* Organize professional development workshops on pedagogy, digital tools, and curriculum design for LIS professionals.
* Initiate pilot programs where librarians co-teach information literacy modules or lead digital skills workshops in collaboration with faculty.

***Phase 2: Policy Integration (Medium-Term: 3–5 Years)***

* Develop institutional policies that formally recognize librarians as academic contributors and define their instructional roles.
* Establish partnerships between LIS departments and schools of education to co-develop teaching-focused LIS curricula.
* Secure funding for librarian-led digital literacy initiatives through internal grants or national education schemes (e.g., RUSA, PM-USHA).
* Begin integrating librarian-led modules into undergraduate and postgraduate programs across disciplines.

***Phase 3: Full Implementation (Long-Term: 5+ Years)***

* Institutionalize librarian teaching roles through formal appointments, academic ranks, and performance evaluation systems.
* Embed digital literacy instruction as a mandatory component of general education curricula, led or co-led by librarians.
* Align institutional practices with national accreditation standards that recognize librarian contributions to teaching, research, and student success.
* Promote international collaborations to benchmark progress and adopt global best practices in librarian-teacher integration.

By implementing these reforms and following the proposed roadmap, academic institutions can unlock the full potential of librarians as educators, digital literacy advocates, and interdisciplinary collaborators. These policy interventions not only align with NEP 2020’s vision of holistic and inclusive education but also position libraries as central to the academic mission of universities in the digital era.

**7. Conclusion**

***7.1 Summary of Findings***

This study set out to examine the feasibility and policy mechanisms for integrating Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals into formal teaching roles, with a particular focus on digital literacy education under India’s National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Through a mixed-method approach involving stakeholder interviews, policy analysis, and international case studies, the research revealed several key findings.

**First,** while librarians are increasingly engaged in instructional activities, their roles remain informally defined and institutionally underrecognized.

**Second,** LIS education in India lacks structured pedagogical training, limiting the capacity of graduates to assume teaching responsibilities.

**Third,** although NEP 2020 provides a policy window for interdisciplinary and digital learning, there is a disconnect between national policy aspirations and institutional implementation. Finally, global models from countries such as Australia, the United States, and South Africa demonstrate that librarian-teacher integration is both feasible and beneficial when supported by accreditation, curriculum reform, and institutional recognition.

***7.2 Reinforcement of Research Significance***

The significance of this research lies in its timely response to the digital transformation of higher education and the growing demand for critical information literacy. By positioning librarians as educators, the study challenges traditional service-based perceptions of librarianship and advocates for a more integrated, instructional identity. The proposed policy recommendations—including certification pathways, LIS curriculum enhancement, and institutional reforms—offer a roadmap for aligning librarian roles with the pedagogical goals of NEP 2020. Moreover, the study contributes to the global discourse on LIS education reform by highlighting the need for interdisciplinary competencies, policy literacy, and professional identity development among LIS professionals.

***7.3 Call for Continued Study and Policy Evolution***

While this study provides a foundational framework for librarian-teacher integration, further research is essential to evaluate the long-term impact of such reforms. Future studies should explore:

* The effectiveness of librarian-led digital literacy programs on student learning outcomes across disciplines.
* Institutional case studies that track the implementation of librarian teaching roles over time.
* Comparative analyses of accreditation models that formally recognize librarians as academic faculty.
* The role of emerging technologies, such as AI and data analytics, in shaping the instructional responsibilities of librarians.

Additionally, there is a need for continuous policy dialogue among LIS educators, academic administrators, and government bodies to ensure that reforms are contextually grounded, scalable, and inclusive. As higher education systems worldwide grapple with the challenges of misinformation, digital inequality, and interdisciplinary learning, librarians must be empowered—not only as custodians of knowledge but as educators, collaborators, and leaders in the digital age.

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