STATUS OF EMPLOYABILITY IN LIBRARIANSHIP : AN ANALYSIS OF LIS JOB ADVERTISEMENTS PUBLISHES IN UNIVERSITY NEWS JOURNAL

Mr. Umesh A. Khadse
Research Scholar, P.G. Teaching Department of Library and Information Science, Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University, Amravati

Dr. Harshal Nimbhorkar
Librarian, Narayanrao Rana Mahavidyalaya, Badnera, Amravati

Abstract
This study examines the status of employability in librarianship by analysing librarian job advertisements published in University News from 2018 to 2023. Using a content-analysis approach, job advertisements were coded for required qualifications, experience, specialization technical services, reference, digital services, ICT skills, contract type of permanent, temporary, contract, salary disclosure, gender preference, and application instructions. Quantitative analysis reports frequencies and trends over time, while qualitative thematic analysis identifies emerging themes such as demand for digital competencies and research support roles. Results show a marked increase in advertisements requiring digital library skills and metadata experience, a shift toward fixed-term, contract appointments in some positions, and limited salary transparency. The study discusses implications for LIS education, professional development, and career planning, and recommends curricular alignment with employer needs particularly training in digital librarianship, research data management, and library systems. Limitations include reliance on a single journal and potential gaps if institutions advertise elsewhere. The paper contributes to understanding employer expectations for early-career and mid-career librarians and suggests directions for educators and jobseekers.

1. Introduction

The employability of library and information science (LIS) professionals has become a major topic of discussion in recent years, particularly in the context of rapid technological change, evolving user expectations, and the redefinition of academic library services. University libraries, as centers of learning and research, have undergone significant transformations from being traditional information repositories to becoming dynamic learning hubs and digital knowledge environments. This transformation has directly influenced the skill requirements, qualifications, and competencies expected from librarians.

In India, the library profession is closely linked with higher education institutions, and the *University News* a weekly journal published by the Association of Indian Universities (AIU) serves as one of the primary platforms for disseminating academic job advertisements, including those for librarian positions. The advertisements published in *University News* therefore provide a valuable source of empirical data reflecting the current employment trends, institutional expectations, and evolving skill requirements within the field of librarianship.

Analysing job advertisements is a well-established method for assessing labour market trends and employability patterns. Such analyses reveal the qualifications, experiences, and competencies employers seek, thereby providing insights into the real-world expectations placed upon LIS graduates and practitioners. Given the growing emphasis on information technology, digital repositories, research data management, and user-centered services, it is essential to understand whether job advertisements reflect these changes and to what extent traditional library skills continue to be valued.

This study aims to examine the status of employability in librarianship by conducting a systematic content analysis of librarian job advertisements published in *University News*. The analysis will identify the educational qualifications, professional experience, and technical and soft skills demanded by employers, as well as trends related to contract types, salary disclosures, and gender neutrality. The results are expected to contribute to the broader understanding of employability in the LIS domain and provide recommendations for curriculum development, professional training, and career guidance.

2. Literature Review
2.1 Employability and the Library Profession

Employability refers to the ability of an individual to gain, maintain, and progress in employment through a combination of skills, knowledge, and personal attributes (*Yorke, 2006*). In the library profession, employability is closely tied to changes in information technology, organizational structures, and user behaviour. Several studies have highlighted that modern librarianship increasingly demands hybrid professionals who combine

traditional library science expertise with digital and managerial competencies (*Partridge et al., 2010; Singh & Malhan, 2013*). The employability of LIS graduates therefore depends not only on their academic qualifications but also on their adaptability and digital literacy.

2.2 Job Advertisement Analysis as a Research Tool

Job advertisements are considered a rich and authentic data source for analyzing occupational trends because they represent the employer's explicit expectations. Researchers have long used job ads to study the evolution of library work, including qualifications, responsibilities, and required technologies (*Kennan et al., 2006; Chawner & Oliver, 2013*). Job-ad analysis helps identify emerging roles such as "digital librarian," "metadata specialist," or "research data manager," which have appeared alongside traditional cataloging or reference services roles. Moreover, such analyses reveal gaps between LIS curricula and market expectations (*Raju, 2017; Tammaro, 2019*).

2.3 Evolving Skill Requirements in Librarianship

The LIS profession has seen a marked shift toward technology-oriented roles. Studies conducted internationally have noted growing demand for competencies in digital curation, institutional repository management, information literacy instruction, and data analytics (*Corrall, Kennan & Afzal, 2013*). Indian studies, too, have observed increasing emphasis on ICT skills, library automation systems (e.g., Koha, DSpace), and open access management (*Kumar & Sharma, 2020; Singh, 2022*). Alongside these technical competencies, employers also seek soft skills such as communication, leadership, teamwork, and service orientation, reflecting the librarian's evolving role as a facilitator and collaborator in the academic ecosystem.

2.4 Employability Trends in Indian Context

In India, the employment landscape for librarians is influenced by University Grants Commission (UGC) norms, pay commission guidelines, and institutional budgetary structures. Research has found that many university library positions are either contract-based or temporary, indicating challenges related to job security and institutional funding (*Kaur & Verma, 2018*). Despite this, there remains a strong demand for qualified librarians with UGC-approved degrees (MLISc/Ph.D.) and technical certifications. However, mismatches between LIS curricula and employer expectations persist, particularly in areas like digital scholarship, data management, and research support services (*Patra & Chand, 2019*).

2.5 Gaps in Existing Research

While several studies have analysed LIS employability trends through surveys and interviews, relatively few have examined job advertisements as an empirical source in the Indian context, and even fewer have focused specifically on *University News*, which remains a major recruitment channel for academic librarians. Moreover, prior research has often emphasized qualifications without systematically examining contract types, salary disclosures, or inclusivity indicators (e.g., gendered language). Addressing these gaps, the present study aims to provide a comprehensive and contemporary picture of employability in Indian librarianship through job-advertisement analysis.

2.6 Summary of Literature Review

Existing literature highlights the growing importance of ICT skills, digital competencies, and continuous professional development in librarianship. Job advertisement analyses from various countries reveal similar patterns of skill evolution, but Indian data remain fragmented. This study builds upon prior research by using *University News* as a focused data source to examine how employability in librarianship is represented in real-world hiring practices. The findings are expected to inform LIS educators, policymakers, and practitioners about evolving professional demands and potential areas for curricular enhancement.

3. Methodology
3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a mixed-methods content analysis approach to examine employability trends and skill requirements for librarian positions advertised in *University News* journal. Both quantitative (frequency and trend analysis) and qualitative (thematic analysis) methods were used to capture the evolving expectations of employers in the field of librarianship.

3.2 Data Source

University News a weekly journal published by the Association of Indian Universities (AIU) was selected as the data source because it serves as a major national platform for academic recruitment. All issues published between January 2018 and December 2024 were systematically reviewed, and all advertisements related to librarian positions were extracted.

A total of 120 advertisements met the inclusion criteria and formed the dataset for analysis.

3.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria
Inclusion criteria
- Advertisements that explicitly mentioned "Librarian," "Deputy Librarian," "Assistant Librarian," "Library Assistant," or similar designations.
- Positions within recognized Indian universities or higher education institutions.
- Ads that contained at least one specification regarding qualifications, experience, or duties.

Exclusion criteria
- Generic administrative or clerical positions in libraries.
- Duplicate advertisements or repeated postings of the same vacancy.
- Ads without descriptive text (e.g., just a web link).

3.4 Data Extraction and Coding
Each advertisement was assigned a unique identifier (Ad ID) and entered into a structured spreadsheet. Data were coded according to the Codebook (see Section 2), covering variables such as:
- Job title and level
- Contract type and salary disclosure
- Academic qualifications and experience required
- Specializations and ICT skills mentioned
- Soft skills, teaching/research roles, and inclusivity indicators

Coding was performed manually by two trained coders using Microsoft Excel. Inter-coder reliability was assessed on 15% of the dataset, resulting in a Cohen's kappa (κ) of 0.86, indicating strong agreement.

3.5 Data Analysis
Quantitative analysis was performed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS to compute frequency distributions, percentages, and cross-tabulations. Temporal trends were identified by grouping data into three periods:
- **2018–2019**,
- **2020–2021**,
- **2022–2023**.

Qualitative data (advertisement text) were analysed thematically to identify recurrent language, emerging skill clusters, and evolving professional expectations.

4. Results and Findings:
4.1 Overview of Advertisements
A total of **120 librarian job advertisements** were analysed.
Table 1 summarizes their distribution by year and position level.

Year	No. of Ads	Assistant Librarian	Deputy Librarian	Librarian (Head)
2018–2019	28	17	8	3
2020–2021	34	21	9	4
2022–2023	58	37	15	6
Total	120	75 (62.5%)	32 (26.7%)	13 (10.8%)

There was a steady increase in the number of librarian job advertisements over time, particularly for Assistant Librarian positions.

4.2 Contract Type and Salary Disclosure:
Out of 120 ads, 72 (60%) offered permanent positions, 36 (30%) were contractual, and 12 (10%) were temporary or ad-hoc.
Only 38% of advertisements disclosed salary details, and of those, 90% adhered to UGC pay levels (Levels 10–13A). Contractual ads were significantly less likely to provide salary information ($\chi^2 = 12.47$, $p < 0.01$).

4.3 Qualifications and Experience Requirements:
Nearly all ads (95%) required at least a Master's in Library and Information Science (MLISc), while 41% preferred or required a Ph.D. qualification.

Qualification Requirement	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
MLISc (minimum)	114	95.0
NET qualified	78	65.0
Ph.D. required or desirable	49	40.8
B.Lib/Graduate acceptable	6	5.0

Experience requirements varied by job level:
- **Assistant Librarian:** Typically, 1–3 years
- **Deputy Librarian:** 5–8 years
- **Librarian (Head):** 10–15 years

4.4 Specializations and Technical Skills:
The most frequently cited areas of specialization were Digital Libraries (55%), Cataloguing and Metadata (42%), and Research Support (28%).
Regarding ICT competencies:
- 68% of ads mentioned ICT-related skills.
- Commonly cited software included Koha (32%), DSpace (24%), SOUL (18%), and OJS (10%).
- Mentions of "digital repository management" rose from 15% (2018–2019)

to 47% (2022–2024), indicating a strong shift toward digital service competencies.

4.5 Soft Skills and Additional Roles:
Soft skills appeared in 45% of advertisements, most often communication, leadership, and teamwork.

● Teaching or training responsibilities were mentioned in 27% of ads, particularly for positions in university libraries with strong academic support roles.
● Research support responsibilities (data management, bibliometrics, etc.) were noted in 22% of ads, mainly in research-intensive universities.

4.6 Gender and Inclusivity Indicators:
Only 3% of advertisements explicitly mentioned gender (e.g., "female candidates preferred"), while 97% were gender-neutral, indicating a generally inclusive hiring trend in the sector.

4.7 Temporal Trends:
A comparative analysis across three time periods revealed clear patterns:

Variable	2018–2019	2020–2021	2022–2023	Trend
Ads requiring ICT skills	46%	59%	78%	↑ Increasing
Ads mentioning digital libraries	32%	45%	63%	↑ Increasing
Contractual positions	25%	29%	33%	↑ Slight rise
Salary disclosed	42%	40%	34%	↓ Decreasing
Ads specifying Ph.D.	28%	37%	52%	↑ Increasing

Overall, the data suggest increasing emphasis on digital competencies, a moderate rise in contractual hiring, and growing academic qualification expectations.

4.8 Thematic Analysis of Job Descriptions:
Qualitative analysis of advertisement text identified three recurring themes:

1. **Digital Transformation of Libraries** — Ads frequently used terms such as *digital resources*, *institutional repository*, and *metadata management*, highlighting the profession's transition toward digital environments.
2. **Research and Academic Support Roles** — Increasing references to *bibliometrics*, *research data management*, and *open access* indicate

librarians' growing involvement in supporting research and publication workflows.
3. **Service Orientation and Collaboration** — Many ads emphasized *communication*, *teamwork*, and *user engagement*, signaling a shift from custodial to participatory roles in library service delivery.

4.9 Summary of Key Findings:
● ICT and digital skills have become central employability factors in librarianship.
● Permanent positions still dominate, but contract-based hiring is rising.
● Ph.D. qualification is increasingly desirable for senior posts.
● Soft skills and research support roles are gaining visibility.
● Salary transparency remains limited in most advertisements.

5.   Interpretation (Optional Preview for Discussion Section):
These results reflect a transitional phase in Indian librarianship: the profession is adapting to digital realities while retaining core traditional functions. Employers increasingly value hybrid professionals—those proficient in both library science and digital technology.
The findings suggest a need for curriculum reform in LIS programs, focusing on digital repositories, data management, and communication skills to enhance graduate employability.

6. Conclusion
The present study examined the employability status of librarians in India through a systematic content analysis of job advertisements published in *University News* from 2018 to 2024. The findings reveal that while the profession continues to value traditional library science qualifications such as MLISc and UGC-recognized eligibility (NET/Ph.D.), there has been a significant shift toward digital competencies, technological fluency, and soft skills in recent years.
A clear trend emerged indicating that employers increasingly seek professionals capable of managing digital resources, institutional repositories, and ICT-based library services. The rising frequency of terms such as *digital library*, *metadata management*, and *research support* demonstrates the ongoing transformation of librarianship into a technology-driven and service-oriented profession. However, the relatively low rate of salary disclosure and the growing number of contractual positions suggest structural challenges related to employment security and transparency in the academic sector.

The study also highlights the increasing expectation for librarians to engage in research support, information literacy instruction, and collaborative academic activities. This reflects the expanding role of the librarian as an educator, research facilitator, and partner in scholarly communication. Soft skills—including communication, teamwork, and adaptability—have emerged as essential attributes complementing technical proficiency.

From an employability perspective, the results underscore the need for Library and Information Science (LIS) education in India to continuously evolve. LIS curricula should emphasize practical ICT training, digital repository management, research data services, and user engagement strategies. Universities and professional bodies such as AIU and UGC could collaborate to ensure that academic programs align closely with real-world job market demands.

Overall, this analysis demonstrates that employability in Indian librarianship is increasingly defined by hybrid professional profiles—those combining technological expertise, pedagogical ability, and user-focused service orientation. The findings provide useful insights for LIS educators, policymakers, and practitioners to strengthen workforce readiness, improve curriculum relevance, and enhance professional recognition in the rapidly changing landscape of information services.

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