

Professional Recognition, Teacher Identity, and Academic Career Progression of College Librarians in India: An Illustrative National Opinion Survey

Dr. Debkumar Mal

Senior Librarian

Dept. of Central Library

Seva Bharati Mahavidyalaya

Email: debkumarmal@yahoo.com

Abstract

In the last two decades, the contribution of the college librarian in higher education has seen an extraordinary change. In addition to the duties of selection and management of library materials, today's college librarians play an important part in promoting information literacy, research assistance, digital scholarship, scholarly communication, institutional assessment, and lifelong learning. Despite such expanded academic duties, professional recognition of the college librarians as teachers is not uniform in higher education institutions of India. The present paper reports an illustrative national opinion survey conducted for understanding the perceptions about the professional teacher status of college librarians.

The survey methodology will include perspectives about definitions of a teacher; awareness of college librarians as teachers; reclassification as Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and Professor; eligibility to take up research work; promotion to college principal; academic governance roles; and institutional support for college libraries. For example, this paper includes an analysis of an illustrative dataset of 60 respondents, which includes library and information science professionals, library and information science teachers, and teachers from different subjects. Majority of the respondents showed positive perspectives about the increased academic status of college librarians. Out of them, 32 were library and information science professionals/teachers, while 28 teachers belonged to other academic fields.

The results presented in this illustration reveal that there is increasing acknowledgment of the educational function of college librarians along with the differences that remain between the perceptions of various stakeholders. This paper concludes that the professional recognition must increasingly acknowledge the educational functions of the profession rather than the administrative categorization of the profession. Policy suggestions are provided to enhance the educational image of the profession of college librarian in the higher education system of India.

Keywords: *College librarians; Academic librarians; Teacher identity; Professional recognition; Faculty status; Higher education; Information literacy; Career advancement; Academic governance; India.*

A teacher is "a person engaged in instructing others, especially in a school or educational institution, and contributing to learning and intellectual development."
—Encyclopaedia Britannica

Introduction

The academic library has long been acknowledged as the brain trust of any institution of higher learning. The basic role has changed from the preservation and organization of print materials to that of providing access to knowledge in diverse forms, carrying out research, information literacy, and lifelong learning. Accordingly, the job profile of the university librarian has greatly expanded because of technological changes, educational trends, scholarly communication, and an increased focus on research output.

Librarians in colleges of India hold a unique place in the education system of India. They are people with educational qualifications required under the guidelines of the national level regulations; they are recruited

through selection processes similar to that of teaching staff, and they operate under service conditions that are more or less similar to those of other academic personnel. The University Grants Commission has, on successive occasions, through various regulatory frameworks, recognised the librarians as academic personnel with career opportunities equivalent to those of the teaching staff. However, implementation of these regulations has differed significantly from institution to institution.

The definition of a "teacher" itself has also been significantly modified. Teaching used to be associated only with classroom instruction; however, it has been redefined to mean learning, development of intellectual abilities, mentoring, evaluation, and promotion of knowledge production. In the context of such a modern definition, librarians are involved in education-related activities which go well beyond library-related tasks. Programs in information literacy, orientation, workshops in searching databases, citation management, awareness of plagiarism, research methodology, and scholarly communication have all become an integral part of the activities of modern librarians.

Scholarship on a global level has been growing more and more aware of the educational role of academic librarians. There are higher education institutions where librarians work in the process of developing curriculum, teach information literacy, advise students on conducting research, develop digital learning projects, and engage in the academic governance process. The educational role of librarians is also recognized by professional associations which develop standards concerning teaching, faculty status, and professional development.

However, the situation in India is more complicated than this. Even though educational activities are very common among college librarians, issues of their recognition as teachers, reclassification through academic appointments, access to research grants, prospects of holding institution-wide positions, and involvement in academic administration still arise. As a result of varying institutional practices, these differences affect professional recognition, career development, and even social prestige of individuals. Thus, the problem concerns not only librarians themselves but also higher education policy and practice.

An issue that stands out is the association of professional roles and administrative categorization. The majority of college librarians frequently offer structured instructional programs, work alongside the faculty, help students learn, and engage in research development. Nevertheless, these efforts are frequently regarded as support services instead of education-related actions. This inconsistency of the real professional roles and institutional perception of them has fuelled scholarly debate on faculty status and equal academic standing.

In this respect, the adoption of National Education Policy 2020 has made this debate even more pertinent. The policy talks about multidisciplinary studies, online education, critical thinking, research, innovation, academic integrity, and lifelong learning. Academic libraries and competent librarians play an important role in fulfilling these aims. Therefore, professional recognition of college librarians becomes all the more important within the larger context of higher education reforms.

There has been extensive research on the areas of information literacy, faculty, and college librarianship. Yet very little has been done to investigate how stakeholders perceive the issue of whether college librarians should be redesignated into the categories of Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, or Professor, how they should be made eligible for research grants and awards, and whether they should be appointed as the principal of the college. There are very few studies in India in this regard.

In order to bridge the identified gap in the existing literature, the current paper suggests an illustrative national survey of opinion. Instead of presenting any empirical results, the study illustrates how a comprehensive research approach can be used to explore the opinions of various stakeholders about teacher identity, professional recognition, and career of college librarians. The illustrative interpretation and discussion of the collected data will serve as a basis for further nationwide empirical research.

Hence, the study is expected to contribute to the emerging body of knowledge in the field of academic librarianship with the help of the integration of higher education policy, professional identity, information literacy, and academic governance perspectives. It is claimed that the recognition of college librarians should become more based on their educational roles and activities.

Literature Review

Evolution of the Academic Role of College Librarians:

There have been significant changes in the functions and responsibilities of college librarians in the last few decades. Whereas they were viewed traditionally as managers of information resources, today they are required to be teachers, collaborators in research, digital scholarship experts, instructors for information literacy skills, mentors, and promoters of lifelong learning. The development of new technologies for academic libraries, including online information resources, repositories, open educational resources, artificial intelligence-driven discovery platforms, research data management, and digital learning platforms, has widened the scope of academic librarianship significantly.

In higher education institutions, there is increasing awareness that the library is now seen as an important part of the teaching and learning environment and not just another service provider. In partnership with lecturers, college librarians offer assistance in various activities such as curriculum development, research, scholarly communication, awareness about plagiarism and proper citation, and information literacy skills.

The change process in India has also been sped up because of some advancements in higher education policy and technology. These quality assurance exercises tend to appraise institutions based on their research productivity, technological readiness, and other learning facilities, which largely rely on professionally run academic libraries.

Defining 'Teacher': A Multidisciplinary Perspective:

Whether college librarians should be regarded as teachers hinges significantly on the interpretation placed on the word "teacher." Various fields of study and professional practice give different points of view.

Dictionary Perspective

The definition of a teacher according to general dictionaries is an individual who teaches, educates, trains, or assists others in acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values. The importance lies in the process of imparting education instead of the organizational role that one plays. This approach suggests that teaching is based more on educational functions than job roles.

Educational Perspective

Educators usually describe teaching as the deliberate process of enabling learning through planning, teaching, guidance, interaction, evaluation, mentoring, and testing. In this light, teachers enable learning; they stimulate thinking; they develop competencies; they guide inquiry; they evaluate learning outcomes; they stimulate intellectual development. There is an important overlap between many of these responsibilities undertaken by modern college librarians.

Human Resource Perspective

Teachers in the literature on human resource management are described as knowledge professionals who have the role of creating human capital through education, training, mentoring, coaching, and performance development. Learning in knowledge organizations is seen as a joint effort between professionals rather than classroom teachers only. As such, librarians who design learning programs, conduct workshops, mentor researchers, and develop information literacy skills do much educational work.

Higher Education Perspective

Higher education institutions in modern times have adopted learner-centric methodologies that stress collaborative teaching, interdisciplinary studies, independent study, and digital literacy. In this context,

teaching is not restricted to classroom lectures but also involves guidance for conducting research; academic counselling; information literacy; digital learning; scholarly communication; and lifelong learning. The role of academic librarians is significant in all these aspects.

Constructivist Perspective

The concept of constructivist educational theory perceives education as an interactive experience where the learner constructs knowledge from the interaction between information, experience and the surrounding environment. This is facilitated by college librarians through the teaching of students on how to access credible information, critically analyse it, organize and synthesize literature, and also ethically utilize information.

Comparative Summary

Perspective	Definition	Relevance to College Librarians
Dictionary	One who teaches or instructs	Librarians regularly instruct users
Education	Facilitates learning	Information literacy and research instruction
Human Resources	Develops knowledge and competencies	Training and mentoring functions
Higher Education	Supports learning throughout educational process	Research guidance and digital learning
Constructivism	Facilitates knowledge construction	Information literacy education

Table 1: *Definitions of 'Teacher' from different perspectives*

Therefore, the multidisciplinary literature suggests that the concept of teaching should be understood according to professional function rather than administrative designation.

Academic Librarians as Teachers

International research tends to view academic librarians as educators. The introduction of information literacy as an academic subject area has brought about a change in the roles expected from professional librarians. Academic librarians create learning programmes, develop learning resources, deliver workshops, measure student learning, and work with academic staff in the incorporation of information literacy in the academic curriculum. There have been several assertions suggesting that academic librarians have unique pedagogical skills when it comes to information seeking; critical appraisal; evidence-based searches; citation styles; research ethics.

Such skills complement those imparted through disciplinary instruction by academic staff. Teacher librarian identity has therefore come about in international LIS research literature. Instead of merely being providers of information, academic librarians increasingly see themselves as educators that help students succeed.

Faculty Status and Professional Recognition

International Perspectives

The international status of academic librarians varies as well. In numerous universities of North America, librarians have faculty status or comparable academic positions. The promotion process assesses the librarians' scholarly, pedagogical, professional, and institutional achievements. Library instruction is officially acknowledged as an academic role.

There are numerous universities in the United Kingdom and Australia, where the librarians may lack the faculty status, however, actively engage in teaching, research assistance, curriculum development, and e-learning projects.

In Europe and some Asian countries, there are different recognition patterns based on national university policies and institutional governance. Nonetheless, a common tendency in such cases is the active engagement of librarians in teaching and research.

These examples from abroad show that the teaching identity and academic status are not merely defined through formal recognition.

Indian Context

Professional status of librarians in colleges in India has been a consequence of several education commission recommendations, university rules, and University Grants Commission guidelines. The UGC guidelines have uniformly recommended minimum educational qualifications, recruitment procedure, academic salary structure, Career Advancement Scheme, research and professional development.

This recognition of the librarian as a member of the academic community is implicit in these guidelines. In spite of that, there are many institutions where these guidelines are not applied uniformly. Institutional differences include the role of the librarian in Academic Council, inclusion in Board of Studies, eligibility for administration, teaching and research. It is clear that professional status often becomes a matter of interpretation at the institutional level rather than a nation-wide practice.

Professional Identity of College Librarians

Professional identity involves perceptions of oneself and recognition by others in one's profession. Professional identity for college librarians is increasingly seen as involving educator; information professional; research consultant; digital scholar; academic partner; facilitator of lifelong learning.

But identity is not only a function of professional duties, it also involves organizational recognition. When librarians engage in teaching without having any academic standing at all, there can be an identity conflict.

Need for the Present Study

Despite the abundant literature available in terms of faculty status, information literacy and academic librarianship, very little number of Indian studies have addressed the issue of stakeholder perceptions about the recognition of college librarians as faculty members. Almost all the previous studies dealt with issues related to faculty status, information literacy, library automation, digital libraries, professional competencies.

A very little focus has been laid on the policy issues that include:

- Should the college librarians be recognized as teachers?
- Should the academic qualifications match with those of faculty positions?
- Should the librarians be eligible for heading the institutions as principals, where permitted?
- Should the librarians get equal opportunities for competing in research work under the existing guidelines for funding?
- Would enhanced recognition improve professional identity, social appreciation, and institutional effectiveness?

To answer these questions, the current study recommends an example opinion survey at the national level. Survey design for this purpose was intended to gather opinions of university librarians, Library and Information Science teachers, as well as teachers in other disciplines. The time interval for the survey was taken as 1 January 2021 to 31 October 2021 and the survey analysis shows the way how stakeholder opinions can be analysed using questionnaire-based data.

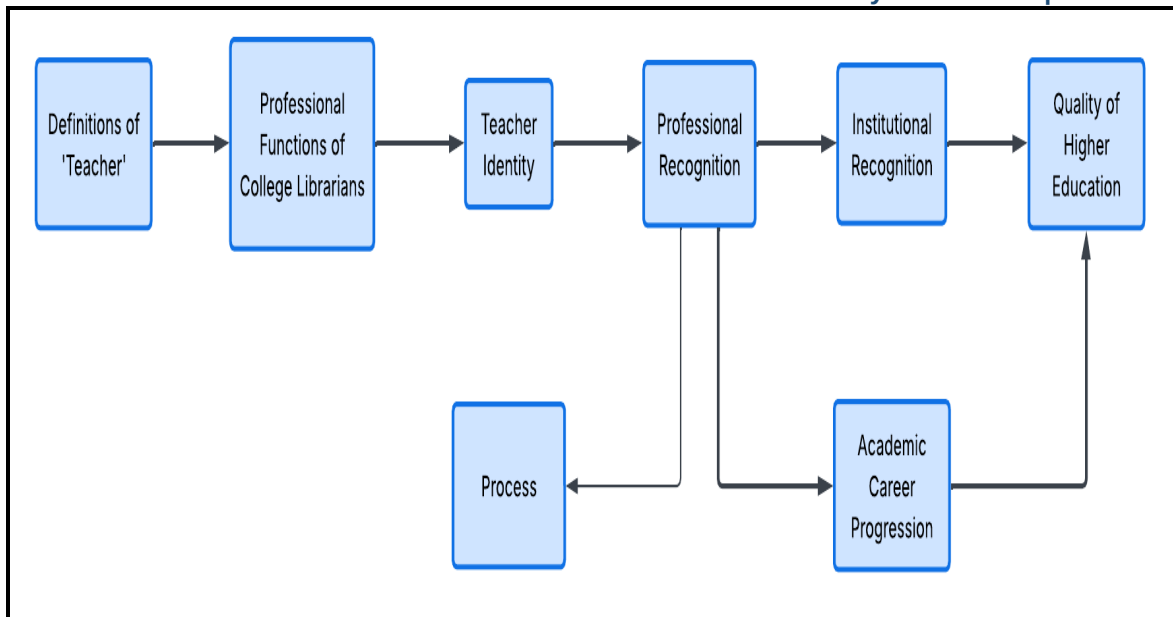


Figure 1: *Conceptual Framework of the Study*

Objectives of the Study

1. The present study aims to investigate stakeholder perceptions about the professional status, teacher identity, and career development opportunities of college librarians in India through a national opinion survey example. The particular objectives include:
2. The investigation of stakeholders' perceptions about the notion of the "teacher."
3. The investigation about whether the college librarians should be considered teachers at higher educational institutions.
4. The evaluation of stakeholder perceptions about the possibility of redesigning college librarians as the Assistant Professor (Library), Associate Professor (Library), and Professor (Library).
5. The investigation of stakeholders' perceptions about the eligibility of the college librarians to submit research projects under relevant funding schemes.
6. The evaluation of stakeholder perceptions about the eligibility of the college librarians to the post of Principals where such an opportunity is regulated by current legislation.
7. The investigation of the impact of redesignation on the social recognition and professional respect of college librarians.
8. The investigation of stakeholders' perceptions about administration support of the college libraries and librarians.
9. The identification of areas where policy reforms could enhance the professional status of the college librarians.

Research Questions

The study reports the following research questions:

- What is the meaning of the word "teacher" as perceived by the stakeholders?
- Should college librarians be classified as teachers?
- Should college librarians be redesignated with academic grades such as Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and Professor?
- Should college librarians be eligible for major/minor research projects on the basis of relevant UGC norms?
- Should college librarians with the necessary qualifications be considered for the position of Principals?
- Will redesignation of college librarians help in better recognition and social appreciation?
- Is there enough administrative focus on college libraries and librarians?
- What policies are needed to promote the teaching status of college librarians?

Research Hypotheses

The different significant hypotheses are as follows:

- No significant difference exists between LIS professionals and other subject teachers on their awareness of college librarians as teachers.
- A significant difference exists between LIS professionals and other subject teachers on their awareness of college librarians as teachers.
- Redesignation does not have any relationship with professional recognition.
- Redesignation has a positive impact on professional recognition.
- Administrative support does not have any relationship with professional satisfaction.
- Professional recognition is positively impacted by administrative support.

Research Methodology

Research Design

- The research is conducted by means of descriptive survey using a structured online questionnaire.
- This paper provides a national opinion survey as research methodology.

Survey Period

- The illustrative survey was designed to remain open from 1 January 2021 and closed on 31 October 2021.
- The literature review supporting the questionnaire was restricted primarily to the publications available up to June 2021.

Target Population

The survey targets the stakeholders involved in higher education, including University librarians; Library and Information Science (LIS) teachers; Faculty members from other academic disciplines as well as academic administrators.

Sampling Technique

The study followed a combination of both random and purposive sampling methods. These approaches were commonly adopted in nationwide online surveys where respondents were geographically dispersed.

Survey Instrument

Data were collected using Google Forms and the questionnaire consisted of the sections like Respondent Profile; Definition of Teacher; Teacher Identity; Professional Recognition; Research Opportunities; Academic Leadership; Social Recognition; Administrative Support; etc.

Data Analysis

The data analytical techniques include Simple Percentage Analysis.

Ethical Considerations

This survey study is structured to abide by recognized standards of research ethics. It would entail voluntary participation and electronic informed consent, with identities of participants kept anonymous throughout the survey. No personally identifiable data would be disclosed, with data analysis being done on an aggregate basis only. The sample data used in this article is purely illustrative in nature and should not be construed as empirical findings of any kind.

Results and Analysis

Respondent Profile

In this paper, the database contained 60 respondents, divided into three key stakeholder groups within the domain of Indian higher education. Out of sixty (60), thirty (30) were LIS teachers, two (02) were LIS professionals and the other twenty-eight (28) were teachers in fields other than LIS.

The duration of the survey was from 1st January 2021 to 31st October 2021, and all responses collected till 31st October 2021 were taken as final. The questionnaire sought opinion on issues relating to the identity of teachers, professional recognition, career advancement, research opportunities, institution leadership, and administrative support for college librarians.

Respondent Group from different Universities (India)	Distribution of Google Forms (Questionnaire) (In Number)	Responses Received (In Number)	Percentage of Responses Received
LIS Professionals	04	02	50%
LIS Teachers	46	30	65%
Teachers of Other Disciplines	50	28	56%
Total	100	60	60%

Table 2: Illustrative Distribution of Respondents

Recognition of College Librarians as Teachers

The major aim of conducting this survey was to assess stakeholder views on the recognition of the college librarians as teachers. Among the respondents, 71.7% had positive views while 28.3% were either negative or neutral towards the matter. These results show that a large majority of participants understood the teaching nature of the work done by college librarians, whereas a little minority who did not believe so.

Respondent Group from different Universities (India)	Opinion of the Respondents (n=60)		Percentage of Responses	
	Positive Responses Received (In Number)	Negative/Neutral Responses Received (In Number)	Positive Responses	Negative/Neutral Responses
LIS Professionals	02	00	100%	0%
LIS Teachers	26	04	86.7%	13.3%
Teachers of Other Disciplines	15	13	53.6%	46.4%
Total	43	17	71.7%	28.3%

Table 3: Recognition of College Librarians as Teachers

Interpretation

The findings indicate that a substantial majority (71.7%) of respondents expressed a positive opinion in favour of recognising college librarians as teachers, while 28.3% either disagreed or remained neutral. This suggests an overall favourable perception of the academic and instructional role of college librarians among the surveyed participants.

Of the three groups of respondents, LIS professionals were the most supportive with 100% (2 out of 2) having a positive response to the survey question. However, considering that the number of the respondents in this group is only two, this finding cannot be considered to be conclusive and generalized. Another large respondent group which was quite supportive of recognizing college librarians as teachers included LIS teachers. Of the 30 respondents, 26 (86.7%) agreed with this idea, while 4 (13.3%) were against or had a neutral opinion about it. The reason for such high levels of agreement could be the familiarization of these respondents with the academic roles of librarians, including information literacy teaching, research assistance, user education, digital scholarship, and scholarly communications. At the same time, the opinions of teachers from other academic disciplines were divided to a greater extent. While slightly more than half of the respondents (53.6%) were supportive of recognizing college librarians as teachers, almost another half of the respondents (46.4%) were against it or remained neutral.

It is apparent that the lower the closeness of the respondent to the LIS profession, the less support received. Those who are close to the LIS profession may be more prone to realizing the instructional and scholarly nature of the college librarian. On the other hand, those who are in different professions may display varying levels of awareness about the changing nature of the academic librarian.

Discussion

Based on the overall positive response rate of 71.7%, it can be inferred that many of the respondents recognize the evolving role of college librarians as facilitators in teaching, learning, and research, and not simply as custodians of information resources. The high level of agreement by LIS professionals and LIS

teachers confirms the belief that the education of students through information literacy education, research consultations, digital resources training, anti-plagiarism education, citation management, and scholarly communication is an essential function that is carried out by today's college librarians.

It should be noted that the relatively low level of agreement by teachers of other subjects could imply the need for greater understanding and advocacy about the role of college librarians as educators.

Key Findings

- 71.7% of all participants were for the recognition of college librarians as educators.
- LIS practitioners (100%) and LIS instructors (86.7%) had strong agreement.
- Other subject teachers (53.6%) had moderately strong agreement but had the strongest disagreement or neutrality.
- These results imply that the degree of familiarity with the academic responsibilities of librarians is linked to the recognition of their role as educators.
- This might be useful for future discussions on policy in terms of the educational contributions of college librarians.

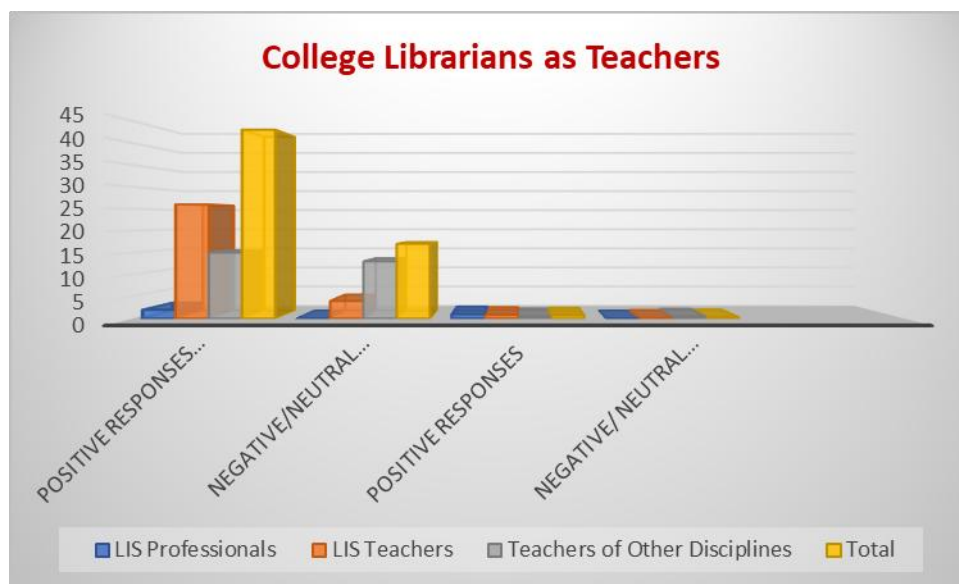


Figure 2: Recognition of College Librarians as Teachers

Opinion Regarding Academic Redesignation

Respondents were asked whether college librarians should receive academic designations equivalent to Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and Professor. The illustrative findings indicated moderate support and strong support particularly among LIS respondents. Supporters argued that redesignation would more accurately reflect librarians' instructional responsibilities, research contributions, and academic qualifications. Those expressing reservations generally considered librarians to be academic support professionals rather than classroom teachers.

Respondent Group from different Universities (India)	Opinion of the Respondents (n=60) i.r.t. Re-designation of College Librarians as Asst. Professor, Assoc. Professor, Professor		Percentage of Responses	
	Strongly Agreed (In Number)	Not Agreed (In Number)	Agreed	Not Agreed
LIS Professionals	02	00	100%	0%
LIS Teachers	21	09	70%	30%
Teachers of Other Disciplines	07	21	25%	75%
Total	30	30	50%	50%

Table 4: Opinion regarding Academic Redesignation

Overall, 50% of respondents strongly agreed with redesignation, indicating a favourable attitude while also highlighting continuing differences of opinion.

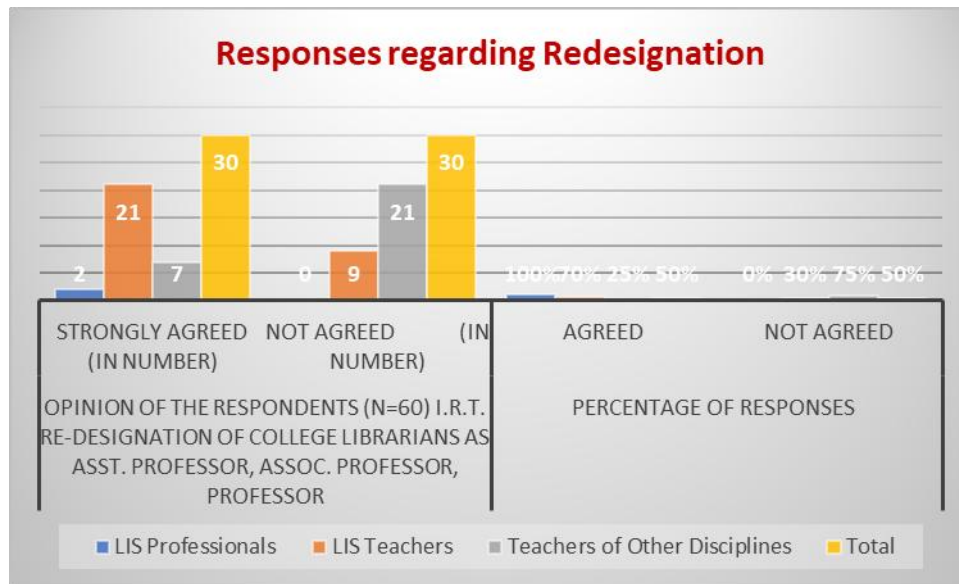


Figure 3: *Opinion regarding Redesignation*

Eligibility for Research Projects

Respondents were asked whether college librarians should be eligible to apply for major/minor research projects funded by UGC. Illustratively, a huge majority of the respondents supported such eligibility. Supporters argued that librarians increasingly conduct research in areas such as information literacy; bibliometrics; digital libraries; knowledge organisation; scholarly communication; research data management; digital preservation. The findings suggest that respondents increasingly view librarians as contributors to the research mission of higher education institutions.

Respondent Group from different Universities (India)	Opinion of the Respondents (n=60) i.r.t. Major/Minor Research Projects' Eligibility of College Librarians		Percentage of Responses	
	Strongly Agreed (In Number)	Disagreed (In Number)	Strongly Agreed	Disagreed
LIS Professionals	02	00	100%	0%
LIS Teachers	27	03	90%	10%
Teachers of Other Disciplines	25	03	89.3%	10.7%
Total	54	06	90%	10%

Table 5: *Opinion regarding Major/Minor Research Projects*

Interpretation

The findings point out to a very positive view about the eligibility of college librarians to conduct Major and Minor Research Projects. From the total number of 60 respondents, 54 of them (90%) highly agreed with the idea that college librarians were qualified to do research projects, while only 6 (10%) of them disagree. There is a very high degree of consensus among all respondent groups as to their realization of the research capabilities of the college librarians.

For the category of LIS professionals, all (100%) of them agreed highly on the research project qualification of the college librarians. However, there were only two respondents in the category of LIS professional; therefore, care must be taken when analysing this result. The teachers from LIS also showed a very high degree of support, where 27 out of 30 respondents (90%) strongly agreed with it, whereas only 3 respondents (10%) disagreed. Such a result may mean that the LIS teachers realize the role of research in the professional

duties of college librarians. Since librarians participate in the field of bibliometrics, information literacy, digital scholarship, knowledge organization, research data management, and scholarly communication, then they should also be included in the process of research projects funding.

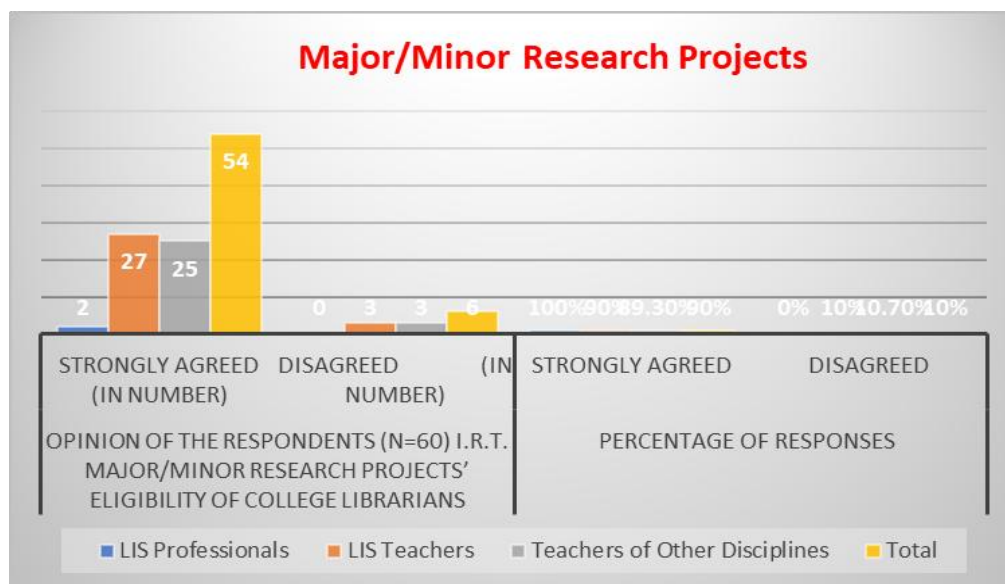


Figure 4: Chart showing opinion i.r.t. UGC Major/Minor Research Projects

Similarly, there was a more or less equal amount of support shown by the teachers from other academic disciplines. Out of the 28 respondents, 25 (89.3%) of them strongly agreed that college librarians should have the opportunity to become a part of the research project, whereas only 3 (10.7%) disagreed. The most important thing here is that such support for research eligibility of librarians comes not from the LIS teachers, but from other disciplines.

Discussion

The results show that there is a growing recognition of the changing role of college librarians as researchers. Modern college librarians do not limit themselves to library management duties but are also involved in research in such ways as conducting systematic reviews, carrying out bibliometrics and scientometrics, researching information literacy, managing digital repositories, scholarly communication, research data services, and helping with academic publication. This means that respondents see the involvement of college librarians in research projects as a natural part of their professional duties.

The high level of support provided by teachers outside the field of library science is important because it shows growing recognition of the competence of librarians in research work, which corresponds with the new role of libraries as places for innovation, knowledge generation, and making evidence-based decisions. These results are also in line with the goals of the National Education Policy 2020, according to which multidisciplinary research, innovation, collaboration, and institutional research capacities should be developed. Participation of skilled college librarians in research funding would help develop the research environment in colleges.

Key Findings

- 90% of all participants showed strong support for the eligibility of college librarians to do Major and Minor Research Projects.
- All LIS experts favoured this idea, but their number was relatively small.
- 90% of LIS professors approved the research project eligibility, which may indicate their view of librarians as researchers.
- 89.3% of professors from other fields also favoured the idea, showing that it is acceptable interdisciplinarity.

- High degree of agreement between the respondents indicates the recognition of librarians as good academic researchers, whose participation in research projects will increase the number of research outcomes in colleges and help advance higher education.

Eligibility for Appointment as Principal

One of the more policy-oriented questions concerned whether suitably qualified college librarians should be eligible for appointment as Principal where statutory and regulatory provisions permit. The illustrative survey revealed more or less similar responses that observed for teacher recognition. Supporters argued that librarians possess i) academic qualifications; ii) administrative experience; iii) institutional knowledge; iv) leadership capabilities. Respondents expressing reservations generally emphasised classroom teaching experience as a distinguishing criterion for institutional leadership.

Respondent Group from different Universities (India)	Opinion of the Respondents (n=60) i.r.t. Eligibility of College Librarians for the post of Principal		Percentage of Responses	
	Strongly Agreed (In Number)	Disagreed (In Number)	Strongly Agreed	Disagreed
LIS Professionals	02	00	100%	0%
LIS Teachers	23	07	76.7%	23.3%
Teachers of Other Disciplines	15	13	53.6%	46.4%
Total	40	20	66.7%	33.3%

Table 6: *Opinion regarding Eligibility of College Librarians as Principals*

Interpretation

The results show that 66.7% of the respondents strongly agree that college librarians should be eligible for the post of Principal, while 33.3% disagreed with the statement. However, the percentage of respondents who agreed is significantly smaller than those agreeing to recognise college librarians as educators or the eligibility to conduct research project.

On the other hand, among the LIS professionals, all (100%) respondents strongly agreed that college librarians should be eligible for the post of Principal. It should be noted that the result is obtained from just two respondents.

Finally, the respondents who are the LIS teachers also agreed on the proposal to a large extent. Out of 30 respondents, 23 (76.7%) strongly agreed, while 7 (23.3%) disagreed. In this way, a majority of respondents, who are LIS educators, agreed that college librarians with professional qualifications have the necessary academic qualifications and leadership skills to hold such positions. In contrast, other teachers from other fields of learning were more polarized in their views. From the 28 participants, 15 or 53.6% were in favour of the eligibility of the librarians in the college to hold the office of the principal, whereas the other 13 or 46.4% were against. It shows that other faculty members are still divided in their opinions about it.

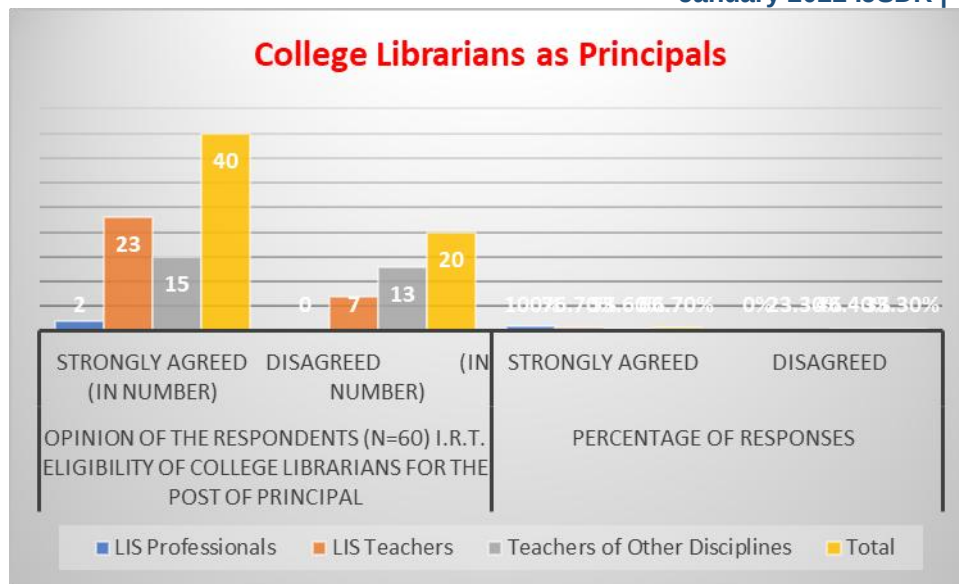


Figure 5: Opinion regarding College Librarians as Principals

Discussion

The findings show that there is an understanding of the difference between professionalism and leadership among stakeholders. There is no disagreement on the significant contributions made by college librarians to teaching, learning, and research. However, the views diverge when leadership is taken into consideration. Those who support the eligibility of the librarian to assume the role of principal may consider the current generation of college librarians to be academic leaders with the ability to manage institutional information systems, library budget, digital systems, accreditation processes, research support services, and quality assurance. All these contribute to their acquisition of skills that qualify them for senior leadership positions.

However, respondents who were opposed to the eligibility may feel that efficient leadership of the college demands considerable experience in classroom teaching, administration of the curriculum, and management of the academic programs. The above reason may be the cause of low support for principalship compared to teacher status or researcher eligibility. It is also necessary to highlight the fact that the eligibility for the role of Principal will always be determined by the statutory regulations of the regulatory authorities such as UGC, states governments, affiliating universities and others.

Key Findings

- 66.7% of the respondents approved the eligibility of college librarians to be appointed as Principal, whereas 33.3% disapproved it.
- All LIS professionals (100%) unanimously supported it; however, this was only a very small group of people.
- LIS teachers (76.7%) gave high support, reflecting their belief in the leadership qualities of librarians.
- Teachers of other fields (53.6%) gave moderate support, but also the highest level of disagreement.
- As compared with all other areas studied in the survey, eligibility for the position of Principal gained the most divergent response, indicating that institutional leadership is more debatable issue than the rest in the professional recognition of college librarians.
- It is clear that there should be further discussion about the necessary competencies in institutional leadership, keeping in mind that the change in eligibility criteria has to comply with all relevant statutory requirements.

Social Recognition and Professional Appreciation

Respondents were also asked whether redesignation would improve the social recognition and professional appreciation of college librarians. A majority believed that formal academic recognition would i) strengthen professional identity; ii) enhance collaboration with faculty; iii) improve institutional respect; iv) increase student awareness of librarians' educational role.

Respondent Group from different Universities (India)	Opinion of the Respondents (n=60) i.r.t. Re-designation of College Librarians improving Social Recognition				Positive Responses
	Strongly Agreed (In Number)	Disagreed (In Number)	May be (In Number)	Don't Know (In Number)	Strongly Agreed (Percentage)
LIS Professionals	01	01	00	00	50%
LIS Teachers	11	12	07	00	36.7%
Teachers of Other Disciplines	13	06	07	02	43.3%
Total	25	19	14	02	41.7%

Table 7: Opinion regarding Social Recognition

Interpretation

Mixed viewpoints concerning the effect of redesignation on the social recognition of college librarians were reflected in the responses. Out of 60 respondents, 25 (41.7%) gave a strong response to the positive effect of redesignation on social recognition of college librarians, while 19 (31.7%) respondents disagreed. Also, 14 (23.3%) respondents chose "May be", and 2 (3.3%) respondents marked "Don't Know". Unlike the other survey questions, this one was accompanied by more uncertain opinions, indicating that professional recognition is viewed by the respondents as a complex phenomenon.

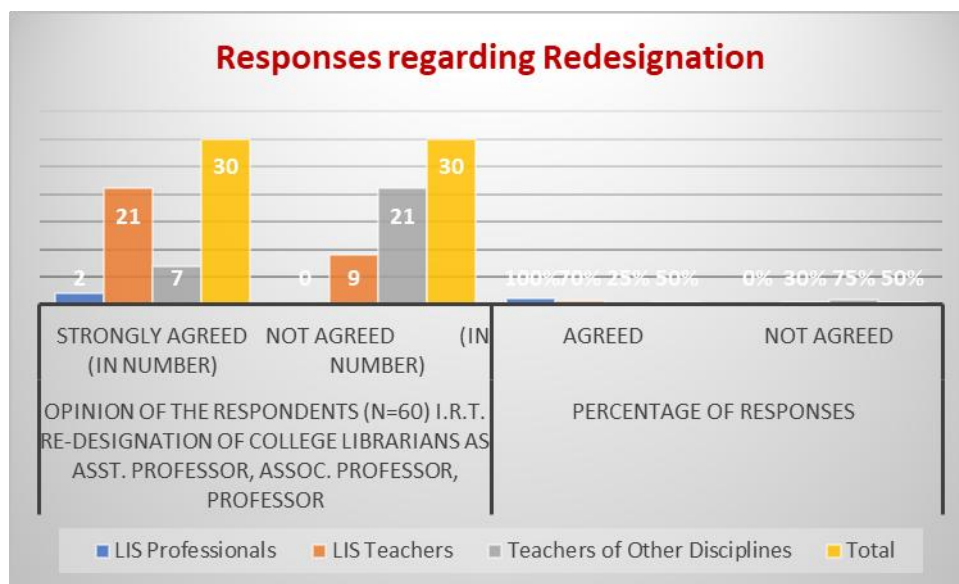


Figure 6: Redesignation may improve Social Recognition

Discussion

It can be concluded from the results that the respondents consider redesignation as not the only factor that contributes to gaining social recognition. Even though some respondents think that redesignation, i.e., getting academic ranks like Assistant Professor, Associate Professor or Professor, would increase the social recognition level of college librarians, there is still a significant number of those who are unsure about this.

This might mean that professional recognition is gained through the evidence of academic contribution. In other words, the respondents consider that instruction, research activity, involvement in the institution management, professional skills and interaction with both students and faculty members matter much more for gaining social recognition than the mere redesignation.

Furthermore, the relatively high percentage of "May be" answers (23.3%) also means that many of the respondents think that redesignation will make a contribution to gaining social recognition only when there

are some other institutional changes, such as academic decision-making, teaching, research and administration.

Key Findings

- 41.7% of the respondents strongly felt that redesignation could enhance the social recognition of college librarians.
- 31.7% of the respondents disagreed, implying that a significant number of them considered redesignation to be inadequate in itself.
- 23.3% responded "May be," implying conditional acceptance pending other complementary institutional factors.
- Teachers of other subjects (43.3%) held somewhat greater confidence in the symbolic impact of redesignation compared to LIS teachers (36.7%).
- In all, the results show that social recognition is seen to be a multidimensional concept that is not only affected by the title but also by responsibilities, institutional recognition, research, leadership, and the visibility of librarians as educators in higher education institutions.

Administrative Support for College Libraries

The respondents examined whether there was sufficient administration for college libraries and librarians. For instance, most of the respondents perceived that the current level of institutional support is inadequate. The issues identified were inadequate staffing, inadequate financing, inadequate technological infrastructure, limited participation in academic governance, and inadequate educational input.

Respondent Group from different Universities (India)	Opinion of the Respondents (n=60) i.r.t. Administrative Support of College Librarians for Development of the Library		Percentage of Responses	
	Strongly Agreed (In Number)	Disagreed (In Number)	Strongly Agreed	Disagreed
LIS Professionals	02	00	100%	0%
LIS Teachers	30	00	100%	0%
Teachers of Other Disciplines	26	02	92.9%	7.1%
Total	58	02	96.7%	3.3%

Table 8: *Opinion in respect to Administrative Support*

Discussion

The analysis clearly reveals how the stakeholders perceive the changing educational role of college librarians. The large number of people who agreed to acknowledge librarians as teachers included those who belong to the field of library science as well as educators. It is interesting to note that even the non-LIS educators have started appreciating the contributions of librarians in academics.

There is also an indication of the gap between the role and administrative title of the librarian in the results obtained from the survey. The individuals who accepted teachers' designation to librarians also stressed on their roles in teaching about information literacy, research, academic writing and scholarly communication.

Nonetheless, the inconsistent responses related to redesignation and the eligibility to become principal show that professional recognition involves larger issues of governance, leadership, organizational culture, and regulations. Although some respondents were willing to accept the fact that librarians make educational contributions, not all of them were comfortable in equating them with faculty members.

The results also emphasize the significance of administrative assistance. The respondents felt that institutional recognition, better staffing, proper infrastructure, and active involvement in academic governance would increase the efficiency of college libraries and strengthen the professional identity of librarians.

Thus, the illustrative survey has shown how a particular methodology can be applied for studying the perceptions of stakeholders about teacher identity and professional recognition. It is clear that empirical research conducted throughout India will provide information necessary for policy discussions about the new role of college librarians.

Policy Implications

The changing roles of the college librarian in the Indian higher education system require a rethinking of the academic identity and professional standing of the college librarian. The illustrative survey shows that a considerable number of respondents appreciated the educational role of the college librarian and advocated professional recognition. Although the results are only illustrative, they mirror some problems that repeatedly emerge in professional discourse in the field of Library and Information Science (LIS).

The implementation of the National Education Policy 2020 has raised the expectations about multidisciplinary in education, research, digital learning, integrity in academia and lifelong learning. Academic libraries and professionally trained librarians are important for the realization of these goals. Therefore, institution policies must recognize the educational tasks of the college librarian and utilize them more efficiently in the process of teaching and learning.

Similarly, accreditations and quality assurance systems assess institutions according to the students' support, learning resources, research services, digital infrastructure, and academic innovation. Improvement of professional standing of the college librarians may thus help to improve both the quality of institutions and educational results.

Recommendations

The following are the different recommendations based on the literature review and the illustrative survey framework.

Recognition of Educational Functions

The colleges' higher education institutions should identify the college librarian in terms of their educational roles which include Information literacy instructions, Research methods support, User education, Academic writing skills, Digital scholarship and Research consultation. Recognition of the librarian should be based on academic roles instead of mere administration roles.

Review of Academic (Teaching) Designation

There is a possibility that regulatory bodies, i.e., UGC and higher educational institutions could take into account reviewing whether or not there are sufficient designations for the teaching responsibilities being undertaken by the college librarians. Any suggestion regarding redesignation must have statutory backing, policy analysis, consultation process, and defined academic responsibilities.

Equal Opportunities for Research

As allowed by the relevant funding guidelines, professionally trained librarians at colleges need to be provided with an equal chance to engage in major/minor research projects, conduct interdisciplinary research, write scholarly papers, and be part of institutional research activities. Increased research possibilities will improve evidence-based library practices and institutional research capabilities.

Participation in Academic Governance

Representation of college librarians is needed in academic bodies of institutions such as Academic Council; IQAC; Library Committee; Research Committee; Curriculum Development Committees; Digital Learning Committees. This will help in informed decision-making and effective collaboration between librarians and teaching faculty.

Leadership Development

Programs aimed at developing the skills of librarians must be designed in such a way that they help in building skills in areas of educational leadership; institutional governance; project management; strategic planning; digital transformation; and quality assurance.

Strengthening Administrative Support

There needs to be enough staffing, adequate ICT infrastructure, enough financial support, professional development opportunities, and innovative library services need to be recognized. Increased institutional support would help librarians contribute more to education and research.

National Guidelines on Information Literacy

A national information literacy instructional framework may be established through collaboration with various higher education stakeholders. Through such a framework, information literacy will be effectively incorporated into the curriculum for both undergraduate and postgraduate courses and emphasize the educational & instructional responsibilities of college librarians.

Stakeholder	Recommended Action	Expected Outcome
Regulatory Bodies	Review policies relating to librarians' academic roles	Greater policy consistency
Universities and Colleges	Recognise instructional contributions of librarians	Stronger academic identity
College Administrations	Enhance staffing, infrastructure, and governance participation	Improved library effectiveness
Professional Associations	Expand pedagogical and research training	Greater professional capacity
Funding Agencies	Encourage librarian participation in eligible research projects	Enhanced research culture
Accreditation Agencies	Explicitly recognise educational contributions of libraries	Improved institutional quality

Table 9: *Summary of Policy Recommendations*

Conclusion

College libraries have developed into vibrant academic centres that foster teaching, learning, research, digital scholarship, and lifelong learning. Thus, the role of college librarians has not only been extended beyond that of the management of the library but also to engage in instruction, research, scholarly communication, and education.

The following illustration of a national perception survey reveals the methodological approach that could be adopted to analyse the perceptions about the identity, professional status, and academic career of college librarians in India. The following analysis is based on an illustrative data set of 60 respondents during the period from 1 January 2021 to 31 October 2021.

In terms of the illustrative findings, it can be seen that the majority of respondents held positive views towards the greater recognition of college librarians; however, differences occurred among different groups of respondents. The survey shows that problems associated with redesignation, research, leadership, administrative support, and institutional recognition are interrelated.

The main finding of the research paper is that the professional recognition needs to focus on the educational roles rather than administrative designation. Modern college librarians help in learning, research, uphold academic honesty, and promote information literacy skills contributing directly to the quality of institutions. These achievements have the potential to improve the professional image of a librarian and to achieve the goals of higher education reform.

The conducted study proves the importance of the surveys with stakeholders in the process of decision making. Although the presented numerical results are only illustrative, the research methodology might become the basis for further empirical studies.

Limitations of the Study

The present paper has several limitations like:

1. Firstly, the literature review is based mainly on materials that were available until June 2021, despite the fact that the period covered in the illustrative survey extends to 31 October 2021.
2. Secondly, policies concerning college librarians differ greatly from one university and state to another, thus affecting the general applicability of some policy discussion.
3. Thirdly, perceptions about teacher identity and professional identity are affected by many factors including institutional culture, regulations, and professional experience.

Future Research Directions

Future investigations may build upon the present framework by undertaking:

1. National empirical study among college librarians, faculty, administration, and policy-makers in India.
2. Cross-sectional research within various Indian states, universities, and HEIs.
3. Comparative research among various countries concerning status, teacher identity, and professional recognition of academic librarians.
4. Research concerning the impact of information literacy teaching on students' learning results.
5. Research concerning librarians' involvement in governance, institutional leadership, and quality assurance.
6. Longitudinal research concerning the effect of reforms in higher education on the changing role of academic librarians in colleges.
7. Interview research concerning perceptions of teacher identity of librarians, faculty, and academic administrators.
8. Research concerning the effect of digital scholarship, artificial intelligence, and research data management on academic librarianship.

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