"Reaching the Unreached"

Design, Development and Delivery of Library and Information Science Programs through Distance Mode: IGNOU Experience.

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Abstract. The paper describes the need for library and information science programs being offered by Indira Gandhi National Open university (IGNOU) through distance mode. The programs include BLIS, MLIS, Ph.D. and PGDLAN. The paper further explains the scientific approach adopted by IGNOU in design, development and delivery of these programs to meet the special requirements of the distance learners .Finally the paper concludes with the various quality assurance measures undertaken by the faculty to maintain standards and develop professional competencies in a changing environment. Special efforts are always made to design, develop and deliver these programs in such a way so that the teaching learning process becomes more interactive, effective and efficient.

1.1 Introduction

Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) was established in 1985 to democratize higher education. The aim was to provide cost-effective, quality education to large sections of our population including those living in remote and far flung areas. A mere eighteen years since its inception IGNOU has carved a niche for itself among the premier educational institutions in the country. The University has been a pioneer in Distance Education and the recipient of the Centre of Excellence in Distance Education award conferred by the Commonwealth of Learning in 1993.

IGNOU has about 10, 00,000 students with extremely varied profiles, spread throughout the length and breadth of the country. The University has an efficient and effective networking of 48 Regional Centres (22 are IGNOU Regional Centres, 8 are IGNOU North-East Regional Centres, 5 are Army Command Centres, 8 are IAF Command Centres, 4 are Navy Command Centres and 1 are Assam Rifles Command Centre) and over 1156 Study Centres, all over India. As an Open University, IGNOU has come a long way since 1985, having crossed national boundaries providing higher education as well as assisting other developing countries in this regard. State-of-the-art telecommunication systems have further helped

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in reaching out to the hitherto unreached sections of the society. Quality and equity have been the guiding principles behind all our endeavours.

1.2 Objectives

The University's Act states that, the University shall:

* impart education and knowledge through various means suited to the Open and Distance Education Mode.

* provide not only higher education to large sections of the population, but particularly disadvantaged segments of society.

* encourage, coordinate and assist Open Universities and Distance Education systems while determining standards in such systems in the country.

* provide national integration and strengthen the natural and human resources of the country through the medium of education.

1.3 Functions

IGNOU has two main functions:

(I) It offers various academic programmes that lead to Certificates, Diplomas and Degrees. It develops and produces courses for delivery through open learning and distance education mode.

IGNOU is also actively involved in research, training and extension education activities.

(II) In its capacity as an Apex Body, it coordinates and monitors distance education system throughout the country. IGNOU has also constituted the Distance

Education Council and has provided expertise and assistance to other Open and Distance Learning Institutions in the country.

1.4 Features of IGNOU

IGNOU stands significantly apart from other universities because of:

* national jurisdiction.

* flexible admission rules.

* individualised study: flexibility, in terms of place, pace and duration of study.

* use of latest educational and communication technologies.

* student support services.

* cost-effective programmes.

* modular programmes.

* resource sharing, collaboration and networking between other Open Universities.

1.5 Library and Information Science programs in IGNOU

The need for offering Library and Information Science Education through distance mode is due to a number of reasons. These are primarily to:

* Increase the number of professionals required to run the different types of libraries such as academic, public, national, special libraries as well as information and documentation centers.

* Develop the existing knowledge and skills of the professionals already working in different Libraries and Information Centers.

* Remove geographical barriers and time constraints.

* Allow flexibility in learning and to proceed at one's own pace of study.

* Eliminates social, economic and official problems faced by the learners.

* Benefit students as the most useful and cost effective means of enhancing or updating Library and Information skills by acquiring the professional degree.

* Provide opportunity to carrier advancements and ability to integrate diverse skills and professional background, and

* Create opportunities in **"Reaching the Unreached"**.

1.5.1 Bachelor's Degree in Library and Information Science (BLIS)

In response to the demand for a large number of trained personnel in libraries, documentation and information centres, for various positions particularly medium and junior level positions, the University launched its **Bachelor's Degree in Library and Information Science Programme** (BLIS) in 1989. To keep pace with the changing dimension of the subject, particularly in relation to the application of information technology (IT), the programme has been completely revised in 2000. The Hindi version of the Programme has been launched in 2003.

Medium of Instruction

The programme is being offered in English as well as in Hindi language.

Eligibility

The programme is open to either of the following:

* Graduates with at least 50% marks.

* Graduates with Diploma in Library Science from a recognised institution.

* Graduates with 2 years of working experience in Library and Information Centres.

* Bachelor's Degree in any professional area (viz., Engineering, Medicine, Law, etc.)

Duration

The programme can be completed in a minimum period of 1 year and a maximum of 4 years.

Programme Structure

The BLIS programme comprises 9 courses of which 7 are devoted to theoretical aspects and 2 are meant for practicals.

Credit System

The BLIS programme is of 32 credits spread over 9 courses. One credit involves 30 hours of study by the students. So a student has to devote 120 hours of study in completing a 4 credits for a course. A student may decide how many courses he/she would like to pursue in a year by calculating how much time can be spent in a year. This provides an unique opportunity to the learners to complete the programme according to his/her own convenience.

Course Titles

BLIS-01 - Library and Society.

BLIS-02 - Library Management.

BLIS-03 - Library Classification Theory.

BLIS-03P: Library Classification Practice.

BLIS-04 - Library Cataloguing Theory.

BLIS-04P - Library Cataloguing Practice.

BLIS-05 - Reference and Information Sources.

BLIS-06 - Information Services.

BLIS-07 - Information Technology: Basics.

1.5.2 Master's Degree in Library and Information Science

Keeping in view the need for quality professionals capable of holding senior level positions in Library, Information Institutions, Universities, etc. and also to build up efficient information intermediaries, the University launched its Master's Degree Programme in Library and Information Science (MLIS) in 1994.

Medium of Instruction

The Programme is offered in English.

Eligibility

The programme is available to the candidates who have BLIS Degree or its equivalent from any recognized university and similar institutions.

Duration

The programme can be completed in a minimum period of 1 year and a maximum period of 4 years.

Credit System

The MLIS programme comprises 32 credits. Each course has weightage of 4 credits. One credit involves 30 hours of study by the students. Thus, for completing one course a student has to put in 120 hours of study. He/she can decide how many courses can be pursued in a year, thus providing flexibility in course completion.

Programme Structure

The 32 credit programme comprises 6 core courses and 2 electives (to be selected out of 6 electives being offered now). Students will have option to select any 2 electives out of these 6 elective courses.

Curriculum and Syllabus

The Programme has been designed and developed keeping in view the handling of information rather than library materials as a whole. The programme consists of 6 core courses (Course 1 to 6) and 6 electives (E1 to E6, out of which 2 have to be selected).

Course Titles

MLIS-O 1: Information, Communication and Society.

MLIS-02: Information Sources, Systems and Programmes.

MLIS-03: Information Processing and Retrieval.

MLIS Products and Services -04: Information Institutions,.

MLIS-05: Management of Library and Information Centres.

MLIS-06: Application of Information Technology.

Electives.(*)

MLIS-E1: Preservation and Conservation of Library Materials.

LIS-E2: Research Methodology.

MLIS-E3: Academic Library System.

MLIS-E4: Technical Writing.

MLIS-E5: Scientometrics and Informetrics.

MLIS-E6: Public Library System and Services

(*) Students are allowed to take **any two** electives as listed above.

1.5.3 Ph.D in Library and Information Science

To facilitate the research work in the field of library and information science, particularly in the context of open and distance learning, the Ph.D. in Library and Information Science has been launched in 2002 in response to the demand from the various library and information professionals having strong bent of research interest. At the moment, the programme is available only to M.Phil. Degree holders. It is expected that the programme will be opened to Master's Degree holders shortly.

1.5.4 Post Graduate Diploma in Library Automation and Networking (PGDLAN)

The Post Graduate Diploma in Library Automation and Networking (PGDLAN) aims at developing the professional competencies of the library and information professionals in an automated and networked environment. The programme also provides opportunities for in-depth or intensive practical to enhance technological skills of the learners to independently develop or manage a computerized library and information centre. The Programme is of 32 credits is on offer from January 2004.

Programme Objectives

The objectives of the programme are to:

* imbibe knowledge and skills associated with fundamentals of computer technology;

* understand the basic requirements of library automation and services provided by an automated library;

* acquaint learners about the components of an information system;

* acquire knowledge and skills on networking and Internet technology in general and library and information networks in particular;

* develop Internet skills with special reference to the information resources available in different forms and subject;

* develop web-enabled content development skills;

* make you aware about the legal issues associated with;

* design and develop a programme by enhancing skills on programming based on specific languages such as Java or Visual Basic or C++; and

* undertake a practical based project in or-

der to specialize in one of the thrust areas on library automation and networking.

Duration

The minimum duration of the Programme is one year. However, maximum period allowed for completion of the programme is four years.

Eligibility

The programme is open to candidate with:

Bachelor's Degree in Library and In-formation Science (BLISc).

Medium of instruction

The medium of instruction of PGDLAN Programme is English only.

Programme Structure

The programme is essentially a judicious mix of theory and practical components to develop technology based knowledge, skills and aptitude of library and information professionals. The programme consists of the following courses:

Course Code	CourseTitle	Credits
MLI-001	Introduction to Computers	4
MLIL-001	Practical	
MLI-002	Library Automation	4
MLIL-002	Practical	
M1:1-003	Information Systems	4
MLIL-003	Practical	
MLI-004	Networking and Internet Technology	4
MLIL-004	Practical	
MLI-005	Internet Resources	4
MLIL-005	Practical	
MLI-006	Content Development	4
MLIL-006	Practical	
MLI-007	Programming Language	4
MLIL-007	Practical	
MLIP-001	Project	4

1.6 Program Design

A new program is always initiated by the faculty keeping in view its viability and potential needs in the market, target group and the level of program to be offered such as Certificate, Diploma, Bachelor, Master, Ph.D. etc. So far all the LIS programs being offered by IGNOU are need based and there is a great demand for these programs. The university follows a scientific method of credit system for each level of program and accordingly the eligibility, duration, and number of courses are decided. After approval of the program from the university statutory bodies the faculty constitutes a program design committee to draft the curriculum and syllabus, which comprises number of Courses. Blocks and Units in each course along with required audio and video components as well. A well designed curriculum in library and information science should always reflect and aim at developing:

a. professional knowledge and skills in a changing scenario,

b. managerial ability in managing physical, human and financial resources.

c. personality in terms of good communication skills while interacting with users and authorities; and.

d. specialization in one of the areas of library and information science to understand and comprehend both the concepts and skills associated with.

1.7 Program Development

Based on the approved syllabus/curriculum, the faculty conducts a course writers meeting to discuss the modalities of developing self instructional course material with the help of the experts. After receipt of the course material from the course writers, the content editor and language editor duly edits them. The concerned coordinator of the course is responsible for its format editing (confirming a set pattern of the university) to make it self instructional for the distance learners. Finally the Camera Ready Copy (CRC) of the course material is prepared for printing.

Besides course material, faculty is also responsible to develop audio /visual programs on a particular topic to supplement the course material or for better clarification on the subject. An academic note and audio/video script is prepared jointly by the faculty member and the producer and if necessary experts are involved in the process. Finally faculty previews the program and approves or makes corrections if any.

1.8 Program Delivery

IGNOU has a wide network of study, work and program centers through which it reaches out to its students located in different parts of the country. Academic counseling is an important instructional component of distance teaching/learning and consists of tutoring and general counseling. Program Centers/ Work centers have been established for programs with practical components, i.e. Laboratory Classes. These centers act as an interface between the students and the universities.

At a study center, the following facilities

are extended to students:

* Subject-specific academic-counseling by part-time academic counselors.

* Audio and Video viewing facilities.

* Library facilities.

* Participation in Teleconferencing.

* Inforrnation services related to rules, regulations, procedures, schedules, etc. of the University.

* Submission of assignment-responses for tutor-comments and grading / marking and.

* Term-end examination.

For Library and Information Science Programs the study centers and program specific centers have been identified keeping in view its infrastructure requirements such as computer laboratory with Internet facility, CD ROM searching, Library software, classification schedules and cataloguing codes, a good collection in Library and Information Science, perspective counselors etc.

1.9 Conclusion

The faculty is constantly facing challenges to maintain the quality of the programs by updating and revising the courses, preparing program guide, assignments each year and adding more practical component to develop the professional competencies of the learners in changing environment. The examination and evaluation system in terms of Tutor Marked Assignments (TMA) and Term-end examination compels a student to evaluate his/her understanding and progress in the program. Strong motivation is the major driving force behind the successful completion of the program of a distance learner. This is a unique feature of distance mode of education which is different from the conventional mode of education. It is worth mentioning that out of the current LIS programs on offer by different universities (both conventional and distance mode), IG-NOU follows the most up to date syllabus followed by course material. Faculty is committed to provide the best possible LIS education to meet the challenges of an information society.

1.10 References

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