

## **Women's Contribution to Libraries and Library Science in India**

**Dr. Laxmikant Balaji Pensalwar** Librarian, Department of Library and Information Science,  
Maharashtra Udayagiri Mahavidyalaya, Udgir District: Latur E-mail: [laxmikantudg@gmail.com](mailto:laxmikantudg@gmail.com)

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### **1. Abstract**

Women have played a crucial yet often underrepresented role in the development of libraries and library science in India. From pioneering efforts in library establishment and administration to significant contributions in library education, research, and digital transformation, women have shaped the field in multiple ways. This paper explores the historical and contemporary contributions of women in Indian librarianship, highlighting their roles as educators, researchers, administrators, and innovators. It also examines the challenges they face in professional growth and leadership, along with policy measures and initiatives that promote gender inclusivity in the field. The study aims to provide a comprehensive overview of women's impact on library science in India while suggesting future directions for research and professional development.

### **2. Keywords**

Women in librarianship, Library science in India, Women library professionals, Gender and LIS, Women in digital libraries, Indian library history, Library leadership, Women educators in LIS.

### **3. Introduction**

The involvement of women in Indian librarianship can be traced back to the early 20th century, when they began to actively participate in library services and education. Over the years, women have emerged as leaders in library administration, research, and digital library initiatives, significantly shaping the profession. Organizations such as the Indian Library Association (ILA), Indian Association of Special Libraries and Information Centres (IASLIC), and various academic institutions have witnessed increasing participation of women in leadership roles. However, despite these advancements, women in the field continue to face challenges such as gender bias, limited leadership opportunities, and work-life balance constraints. The need for gender-inclusive policies and initiatives to support women's professional growth in LIS (Library and Information Science) remains critical.

This paper aims to examine the historical and contemporary contributions of women in Indian librarianship, highlighting their impact on library education, research and administration. It also explores the challenges faced by women in this profession and discusses strategies for fostering greater gender equity in LIS. Through this study, the paper seeks to acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of women in shaping the landscape of libraries and information services in India.

### **4. Women's Contributions to Library and Library Science in India (Chronological Overview)**

There is a long list of women who have made significant contributions to the field of librarianship in India, shaping its growth and development over the years. However, the following are a few notable pioneers who have left a lasting impact: In the 1930s, Anandibai Prabhudesai became the first woman to hold a key position in Indian librarianship, serving as the superintendent at the Children's Library in Baroda. Her leadership marked an early milestone for women in the profession. In 1940, the Bengal Library Association, Calcutta, admitted its first group of students into a formal library training course, a significant step in professionalizing the field. Two years later, in 1942, the first qualified female librarian secured a job at the Bengal Legislative Assembly, setting a precedent for women in governmental library services. Moving forward to 2004, Anjana Chattopadhyay made history by becoming the first woman to serve as the Director of the National Medical Library in India. Around the same time, Kalpana Dasgupta became a prominent figure in the field, recognized as the first woman to work as a librarian at both the National Library of India and the Central Secretariat Library. She also

held senior positions in the Ministry of Culture, further solidifying women's roles in library leadership. Beyond these milestones, Professor P. B. Mangla emerged as a highly influential figure in Library and Information Science, serving for nearly thirty years as a distinguished professor at the University of Delhi. Meanwhile, Ashwini Vaishnav, former head of the Library and Information Science Department at Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, received the prestigious UGC Emeritus Fellowship, recognizing his contributions to LIS education and research.

### **5. Women's Rising Contribution to LIS Research**

In the modern era, the doors for women in LIS research are wide open, with increasing participation in doctoral studies. Around 35% of doctoral theses in the field are submitted by women, reflecting the growing inclusivity. This trend is also evident in BLIS and MLIS programs, where a significant number of women are enrolling and excelling. The supportive academic environment, growing mentorship opportunities, and the breaking down of traditional gender barriers are all contributing factors. These positive changes have empowered women to pursue leadership positions and contribute meaningfully to research. As more women enter LIS fields, they are enhancing the diversity and innovation in library science. This shift signals that the future of LIS research is inclusive and progressive. Women are now actively shaping the academic discourse, introducing new perspectives, and inspiring the next generation of researchers. Their increasing involvement in academic conferences, publications, and professional associations is testament to the expanding opportunities for women in the LIS domain. This progress is not only beneficial for women but also enriches the field as a whole.

### **6. Challenges and Future Scope**

Despite the growing presence of women in the field of Library and Information Science (LIS) in India, several challenges persist, limiting their professional growth and leadership opportunities. Addressing these issues is crucial for fostering a more inclusive and equitable LIS profession.

#### **6.1 Gender Disparities in the Profession**

One of the major challenges is gender disparities in the profession. While women form a significant portion of the workforce in libraries, they remain underrepresented in senior positions such as university librarians, directors of national libraries, and heads of LIS departments. Societal expectations and traditional gender roles often add to their responsibilities at home, affecting career progression. Additionally, the lack of mentorship and professional networking opportunities further hinders their advancement, limiting their ability to access higher positions in the field.

#### **6.2 limited policy support for women's leadership in LIS**

Another critical issue is the limited policy support for women's leadership in LIS. Unlike other academic and professional fields where structured policies encourage gender diversity, LIS in India lacks strong institutional frameworks to actively promote women into leadership roles. Workplace policies in many institutions do not adequately support work-life balance, making it difficult for women to take on senior management responsibilities. Moreover, opportunities for professional development, such as leadership training programs and research fellowships, are often less accessible to women, reducing their chances of career growth.

#### **6.3 Overcome these Challenges**

To overcome these challenges, there is an urgent need to encourage women's leadership in LIS. Gender-sensitive policies should be implemented to ensure equal opportunities for women in leadership positions across libraries and LIS education institutions. Establishing mentorship and networking programs can help guide and support women professionals, enabling them to navigate career challenges more effectively. Additionally, greater participation of women in LIS organizations

such as the Indian Library Association (ILA) and IASLIC can enhance their professional visibility and impact.

#### **6.4 Future Trends and Research in LIS**

Looking ahead, future trends and research in LIS must focus on addressing gender disparities and fostering inclusivity. The increasing digital transformation of libraries offers new opportunities for women to lead in areas such as digital librarianship, data management, and AI-driven library services. More research on gender dynamics in LIS, particularly on barriers to leadership and strategies for empowerment, is necessary to develop effective policies. Comparative studies between India and other countries can provide insights into best practices for ensuring gender inclusivity in LIS. By addressing these challenges and leveraging future opportunities, the LIS profession in India can evolve into a more inclusive and diverse field, ensuring that women play a more active and recognized role in shaping its future.

#### **6. Conclusion**

In conclusion, the study highlights the growing presence and contributions of women in LIS research, particularly in doctoral studies, BLIS, and MLIS programs. The positive shift towards inclusivity is fostering greater opportunities for women to lead and shape the field. Despite challenges, advancements in mentorship, institutional support, and changing societal norms are key factors enabling women to overcome barriers and thrive in LIS academia. The future of LIS research looks promising with continued gender inclusivity and diversity.

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