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Editorial Column

Research Activities & Culture of Research in LIS Profession

Siddhartha Shankar Ray

Research, as we understand is an exercise to bring in something new into our notice or attention which summarily paves way to new frontiers of knowledge. Research in Library profession is also no different from this notion. However, as we see today, in virtually every subject, a discourse supporting a previously established issue and/or its mere explanation are passed on as “research”. While the intellectual brain works often takes the backseat. The reason is simple. Research now-a-days has become an ingredient to get a degree which, again, in turn, has become a compelling necessity for career progression. In the year 2001, the ICSSR/NASSDOC has compiled a Directory of Social Science Research Institutes in India. It includes names of 446 organizations from diverse subject fields like CSIR, ICMR, ICAR, DRDO, Diplomatic Mission Libraries, Universities and Banking & Management institutes. As per the list, 93% Librarians didn't have a Ph.D. Degree simply because Ph.D. was neither a mandatory qualification, nor it played any significant role in career advancement in those days. The situation today is drastically different. By the way, it should not to be presumed that the context is meant to discourage attaining Doctoral Degrees but amidst this huge influx of Ph.Ds irrespective of any subject, attaining the degree has become the priority while the actual culture of research has become secondary; as a result, the actual scholars have become a rare species. The culture of research as an intellectual discourse of highest caliber has become an obscure ideology. The fact that the Degree is not meant for all and sundry and is not obtainable with unimportant and repetitive topics or issues seems to be forgotten both by the researchers and their guides. Unfortunately, our profession is no exception as well. I wonder, while we have so many exceptionally talented IT skilled young people who are quite competent to render highly effective service in any library around the globe, but while one observes their professional activities with research, the lack of originality certainly curb their potentials. It is high time to initiate a proper culture of research which also requires an able mentor and a well thought of research agenda. But how can we distinguish a good research from a bad one. The answer is rather complex. However, the one which has wider applicability and reflects a sound academic background underlying it can be identified as a good research issue. Nevertheless a thesis which can produce at least two quality articles in standard journals can be called an acceptable research agenda. The UGC should initiate some befitting rules on urgent basis.