EMPLOYABILITY OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION STUDIES GRADUATES IN MYANMAR

Sanda Oo[1], Ohn Mar Oo[2], Nu Nu Yi[3], Khin San Oo[4], San San Aye[5],

Khin Thida Latt[6]

Abstract

This paper studied the employability of library and information studies graduates in Myanmar and explores the competences needed to improve employability. It aims to analyze the opinions of library professionals in Myanmar. A social survey method was adopted for the study. A structured questionnaire was designed to do the survey among the librarians working at different libraries and faculty members of the three Library and Information Studies Departments. The collected data were analyzed to reflect the different aspects of LIS Profession. The findings show that English language professional skills and IT skills are the essential skills for employability that the LIS graduates should possess. This research devotes the regular review of LIS curriculum in order to to meet the requirement of the libraries.

Keywords: employability, LIS education, LIS graduates, LIS curriculum, library professionals, essential skills

Introduction

Nowadays, libraries are responding to the changes especially with regard to ICT applications. The field of library and information studies (LIS) is multi-disciplinary in nature as a result of which tremendous changes can be traced in the discipline (Dasgupta 2009, 1-15). The library career covers the areas like library and information management, organization of knowledge: cataloguing and classification, bibliography and indexing service, preservation and conservation of library materials, collection development, information retrieval system, research methodology, library automation, information processing, library quality services, etc. With the advancement of ICT, the role of library as well as the librarianship have changed. There are many opportunities for library and information professionals in traditional and non-traditional jobs which have been influenced by digital environment. This environment demands new job titles, new roles and skills from the profession to provide various library and information services (Weech and Pluzhenskaia 2005, 154-164).

Education of library and information studies emphasizes on providing LIS graduates the necessary employability skills in library professions. In addition, along with the rapid development of Information and communication technology, the information needs of the users are transformed. Therefore, the LIS education should fulfil the needs of the changing environment of library profession. New competencies of LIS graduates are demanded for increasing employability depending on the users' demands and rapid development of information and communication technology. It becomes essential for future graduates to be aware of necessary competencies and skills for engaging a library profession (Shivaraj and Suresha 2017, 299).

[1] Department of Library and Information Studies, Yadanabon University
[2] Department of Library and Information Studies, Yadanabon University
[3] Department of Library and Information Studies, Yadanabon University
[4] Department of Library and Information Studies, Yadanabon University
[5] Department of Library and Information Studies, Yadanabon University
[6] Department of Library and Information Studies, Yadanabon University

This study explored employability skills needed by graduates of library and information studies covering information technology skills, information literacy skills, knowledge management skills, managerial skills, personal entrepreneurial skills and technical skills.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

This paper mainly aims to explore the opinion of LIS professionals and library leaders/employers about employability skills of LIS graduates in Myanmar. The followings are some allied objectives of the study:

- To investigate the perception and expectations of professional librarians on existing LIS courses.
- To identify essential and desirable competencies and skills that employers required in their jobs.
- To assess and examine the demand for the LIS professionals in the job market
- To suggest the possible ways to enhance the employability of LIS graduates in Myanmar

Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is limited to observe the needs of employability skills of LIS graduates who will work at LIS career. In Myanmar, LIS graduates have been produced mostly by three universities: University of Yangon, East Yangon University and Yadanabon University. This study mainly focused on these graduates to reveal their professional skills and positions in the field.

Materials and Methods

This research was conducted using a survey methodology. The survey instrument is a structured questionnaire adopted as a research tool for data collection. The survey was composed of 35 statements in 5-point Likert scale to collect data for perception and expectations of library professionals on skills of LIS graduates. The Likert scale range was strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree at all. The quantitative data analysis provided strong evidence of the employability skills of LIS graduates. The survey questionnaires were distributed among the library professionals who are working at libraries and LIS departments. Respondents were randomly selected from the different types of libraries, such as university libraries, national libraries, public libraries and faculty members of LIS departments in three universities. Total population of 60 LIS professionals were the participants of the study. The data were organized and analysed using simple percentage to produce the result. In order to get background and related information, literature survey was also conducted.

Research Questions

This study focused on the following research questions.

i. What are the perceptions of LIS graduates and employers on the job requirements of the library sector?
ii. What are the perceptions of LIS graduates and employers about the LIS curriculum?
iii. What are the skills that the employers expect from LIS graduates?
iv. What are the ways to enhance the employability of LIS graduates?

Literature Review

There are various research studies highlighting the competencies needed for employability, compliment of LIS education and employability, prospects of library professionals, employability movement and so on. This type of analysis enables the researcher to identify research gaps in previous studies.

Theoretical Review

The literature reviews clearly highlighted the presence of several main theoretical frameworks that attempted to identify the concept of employability of university graduates and its underlying factors.

What is Employability?

Employability can be defined as 'a set of achievements-skills, understandings and personal attributes-that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy' (Yorke 2004, 8).

It also enables students to acquire the knowledge, personal and professional skills and encourage the attitudes that will support their future development and employment (Sheffield Hallam University 2008).

Generally, employability is capability of getting and keeping fulfilling work. More deeply employability is the capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market to realize potential through sustainable employment (Shivaraja and Suresha 2017, 304).

Employability Skills

Employability skills are transferrable skills that are useful in nearly every job. They involve the development of an expertise, knowledge base or mindset that makes you more attractive to employers. There are 10 common employability skills which can make more attractive to prospective employers. These are communication, teamwork, reliability, problem-solving, organization and planning, initiative, self-management, leadership, learning, and technology.

Review of Related Literature

Akhilesh K. S. Yadav & S.N. Singh conducted a study on employability skills of a new generation of LIS professionals. The study analyzed employability skills through a survey method of LIS alumni/recent graduate in library and information science professionals and research scholars who wish to work in libraries. The result shows that the current practicing and working professionals were unsatisfied with the outcomes of different Library and Information Science schools/departments because they were inadequate to provide better services to the users/customers due to a lack of knowledge and skills in different domains and areas (Yadav and Singh 2012, 111-136).

Arjun Dasgupta discussed about developing the employability of library professionals in this new era of information and communication technology and also in this globalized educational environment. The study pointed out that the libraries all over the world are now responding with adaptability, creativity and flexibility. In this paper, he discussed different aspects of library profession, role of universities in the development of LIS professionals, Library

schools of Indian Universities during pre and post-independence era, current trends and problems of LIS education in India and further made suggestions/recommendations to build and develop better professionals in the field of library and information science (Dasgupta 2009, 1-15).

Library and Information Studies Education in Myanmar

Library education and training in Myanmar is mostly conducted by three universities, University of Yangon, East Yangon University and Yadanabon University. A look at the courses offered by the universities shows practically the same courses, the same curriculum and syllabus approved by the Board of Study in library and information studies. Mostly all education at university level for degree programme is accredited by the Departments of Higher Education under the Ministry of Education. But, diploma programme is also offered by University of National Culture and Art (Yagon/Mandalay) cooperation with National Libraries in Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon under the Ministry of Culture. While in-service training and continuing education are being carried out by libraries, formal courses are conducted by the Department of Library and Information Studies at three universities. In addition, Myanmar Library Association, either on its own or work jointly with other bodies, local or foreign, organize more of short courses and workshop.

In Myanmar, the library education and training programmes are offered at five levels, such as, Certificate Programme, Diploma Programme, Under-Graduate Programme, Post-Graduate Programme and Doctoral Programme.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

This study analyzed the data collected through the questionnaire responded by the library professionals in various library field. Data were collected from the target groups through google form.
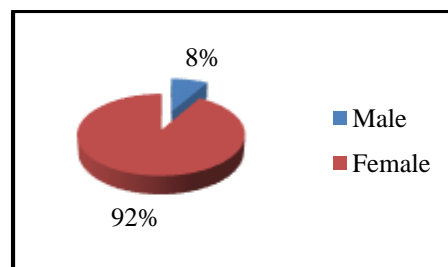
Gender-wise Distribution

The research categorized the participants by gender. The data obtained are shown in the following figure.

Table 1. Gender-wise Distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	5	8
Female	55	92
Total	60	100

Source: Survey

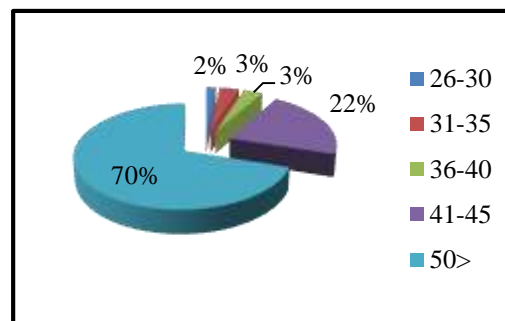**Figure 1.** Gender-wise Distribution

This survey points out that 92% of respondents are female while 8% of them are male. According to the result, female is more participated than male in the survey. It is worth mentioning that the ratio of female and male is very different.

Age-wise Distribution

The respondents were asked to identify their age. They were divided into six groups by age, such as <25, 26-30, 31-35, 36-40, 41-45 and 50>. The following figure shows the age-wise distribution of the respondents.

Table 2. Age-wise Distribution

Age	Frequency	Percent
<25	0	0
26-30	1	2
31-35	2	3
36-40	2	3
41-45	13	22
50>	42	70
Total	**60**	**100**

**Figure 2.** Age-Wise Distribution

Source*:* Survey Data

The result shows that most of the respondents are above 50 years old. The age between 26 and 30 is the lowest number. It can be seen that the respondents are not under the age of 25.

Respondents by Designation

The survey inquired respondents' designation. Figure 3 shows the designations of the respondents.

Table 3. Respondents by Designation

Designation	Frequency	Percent
Professor/Associate Professor/Lecturer	11	18
Chief Librarian/ Deputy Chief Librarian	7	12
Librarian	22	37
Assistant Librarian	18	30
Other Positions	2	3
Total	60	100
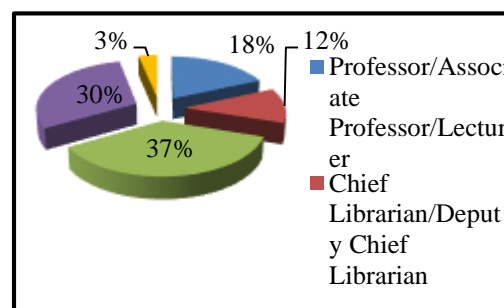
Figure 3. Respondents by Designation

Source*:* Survey Data

According to the result**,** it can be seen that 37% of respondents are librarians, followed by assistant librarian 30%, Professor/Associate Professor/Lecturer 18%, Chief Librarian/Deputy Chief Librarian 12% and others 3% respectively.

Working Sector

Regarding working sector, the respondents were asked to identify the department they are working. LIS graduates are working at four types of libraries and Department of Library and Information Studies. The following following figure provides their working sectors.

Table 4. Working Sector

Working Sector	Frequency	Percent
Special Library	0	0
Academic Library	46	77
Public Library	1	2
National Library	2	3
Department of Library and Information Studies	9	15
Other Sector	2	3
Total	60	100

Figure 4. Working

Source*:* Survey Data
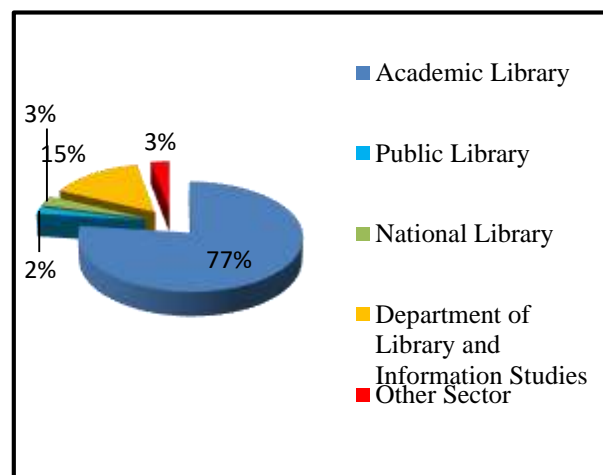
The result shows that the majority of the participants, 77% are working at the academic library, 15% working at teaching departments, 3% working at national library and the smallest number 2% are working at special library. 3% of them are working at other departments that are not concerned with LIS field.
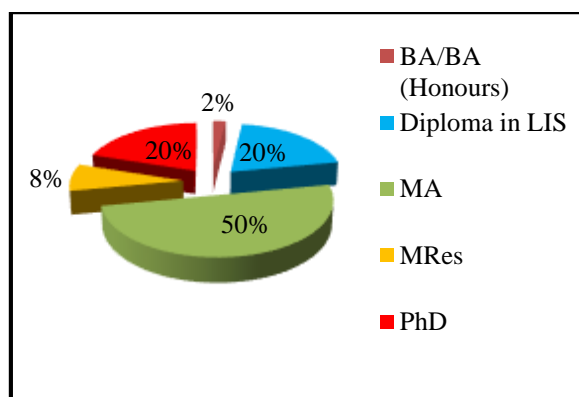
LIS Qualification

To know educational qualification, participants were asked to choose the degree of qualification such as BA/BA (Honours) (LIS), Diploma in LIS, MA, MRes, and PhD in LIS. Participants' educational level are shown in figure 5.

Table 5. LIS Qualification

Qualification	Frequency	Percent
BA/BA (Honours)	1	2
Diploma in LIS	12	20
MA	30	50
MRes	5	8
PhD	12	20
Total	60	100

Figure 5. LIS Qualification

Source*:* Survey Data

Concerning qualification of participants, the result identifies that most of the participants (50%) are MA degree holders, followed by Diploma and PhD holders 20%, MRes 8% and BA, BA (Honours) 2%. Thus, it can be said that MA degree holders are the largest group of participants.
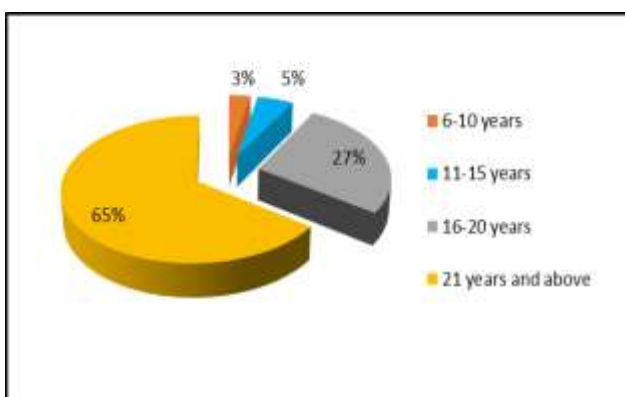
Working Experience

Working experience gives an understanding of the work environment and what employers expect from their workers. Figure 6 provides work experience of the respondents.

Table 6. Working Experience

Period	Frequency	Percent
1-5 years	0	0
6-10 years	2	3
11-15 years	3	5
16-20 years	16	27
21 years and above	39	65
Total	**60**	**100**

Source*:* Survey Data

Figure 6. Working Experience

The survey points out that most of the respondents, 65%, have 21 years and above working experience. It was followed by 27% having 16-20 years, 5% having 11-15 and at least, 3% of them having 6-10 years of experience.
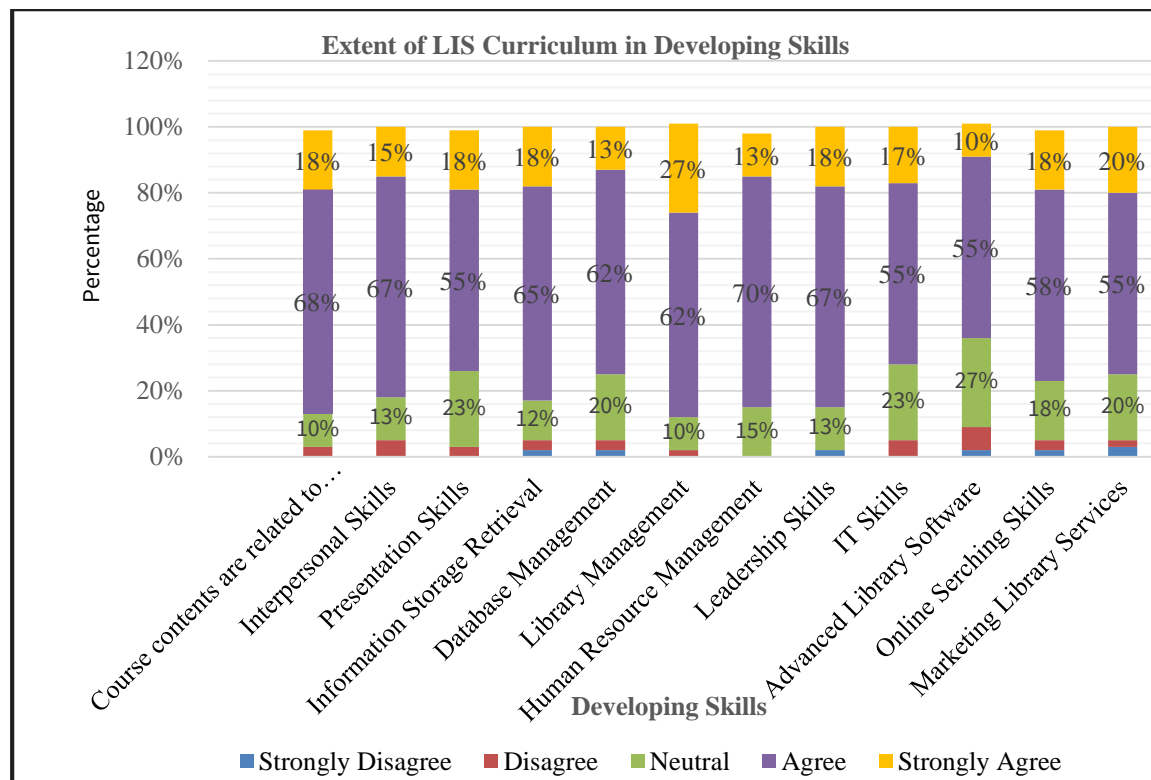
Extent of LIS Curriculum

The respondents were requested to give their opinions on the extent of LIS curriculum. It has played the significant role in enhancing the competencies and skills. The following figure shows the level of respondents' opinions such as strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree.

Table 7. Extent of LIS Curriculum

Developing Skills	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	F	Percent (%)	F	Percent (%)	F	Percent (%)	F	Percent (%)	F	Percent (%)
Course contents are related to practical approach	1	1	2	3	6	10	41	68	11	18
Interpersonal Skills	0	0	3	5	8	13	40	67	9	15
Presentation Skills	0	0	2	3	14	23	33	55	11	18
Information Storage Retrieval	1	2	2	3	7	12	39	65	11	18
Database Management	1	2	2	3	12	20	37	62	8	13
Library Management	0	0	1	2	6	10	37	62	16	27
Human Resource Management	1	2	0	0	9	15	42	70	8	13
Leadership Skills	1	2	0	0	8	13	40	67	11	18
IT Skills	0	0	3	5	14	23	33	55	10	17
Advanced Library Software	1	2	4	7	16	27	33	55	6	10
Online Searching Skills	1	2	2	3	11	18	35	58	11	18
Marketing Library Services	2	3	1	2	12	20	33	55	12	20

Source: Survey Data

Figure 7. Extent of LIS Curriculum

The majority of the respondents reported that LIS curriculum has played efficient role on library management (89%), followed by information storage retrieval (83%), human resource management (83%), database management (75%), advanced library software (65%), and marketing library services (75%).

Employability Skills for LIS Graduates

All respondents answered the question on the employability skills for LIS graduates in the transformation of library environment. Under these skills, employability skills, technical skills, managerial skills and generic skills are questioned. The results are shown as follow:
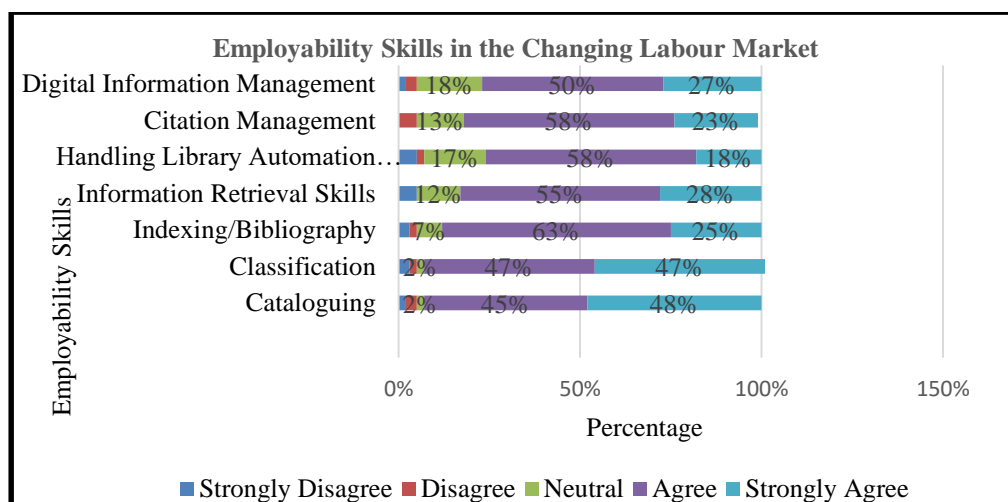
Employability Skills

For better employment, specific skills are expected from the LIS graduates. Therefore, respondents were asked to identify their expectation on employability skills. Employability skills include cataloguing, classification, indexing/ bibliography, information retrieval skills, handling library automation software, citation management and digital information management.

Table 8. Employability Skills

Employability Skills	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	F	Percent (%)	F	Percent (%)	F	Percent (%)	F	Percent (%)	F	Percent (%)
Cataloguing	1	2	2	3	1	2	27	45	29	48
Classification	2	3	1	2	1	2	28	47	28	47
Indexing/Bibliography	2	3	1	2	4	7	38	63	16	27
Information Retrieval Skills	3	5	0	0	7	12	33	55	17	28
Handling Library Automation Software	3	5	1	2	10	17	35	58	11	18
Citation Management	0	0	3	5	8	13	35	58	14	23
Digital Information Management	1	2	2	3	11	18	30	50	16	27

Source: *Survey Data*

Figure 8. Employability Skills

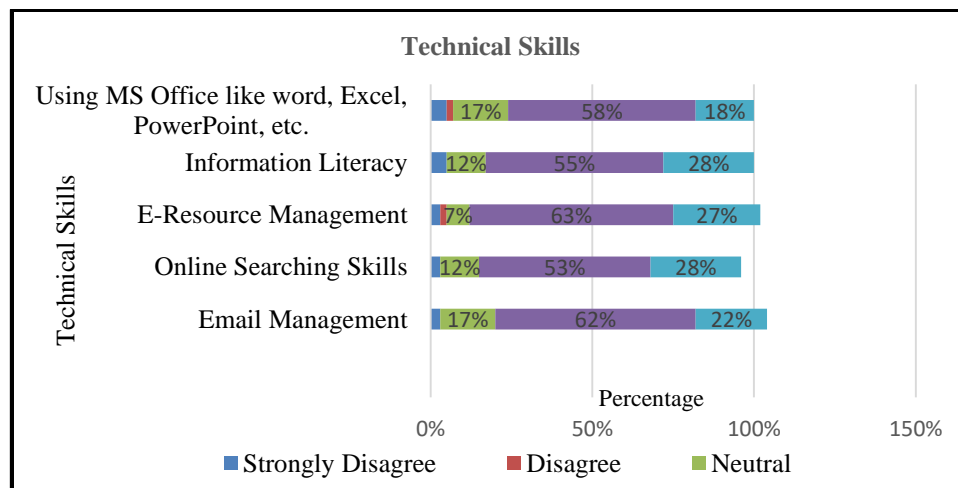The survey identified that all of respondents have strongly agreed with employability skills.

Technical Skills

Under technical skills, email management, online searching skills, e-resource management, information literacy, using MS Office like Word, Excel, PowerPoint skills etc. are identified.

Table 9. Technical Skills

Technical Skills	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	F	Percent (%)	F	Percent (%)	F	Percent (%)	F	Percent (%)	F	Percent (%)
Email Management	2	3	0	0	10	17	37	62	13	22
Online Searching Skills	2	3	0	0	7	12	32	53	17	28
E-Resource Management	2	3	1	2	4	7	38	63	16	27
Information Literacy	3	5	0	0	7	12	33	55	17	28
Using MS Office like word, Excel, PowerPoint, etc.	3	5	1	2	10	17	35	58	11	18

Source*: Survey Data*

**Figure 9.** Technical Skills

The survey identified that more than 80% of participants agree and strongly agree with email management, online searching skills, e-resource management, information literacy while 76% of them agree and strongly agree with skill of using MS Office like word, Excel, PowerPoint, etc.

Managerial Skills

Library staff should develop managerial skills to manage the entire library activities in an efficient way. The respondents were asked to identify the levels of the managerial skills they expected from the LIS graduates.

Table 10. Managerial Skills

Managerial Skills	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	F	Percent (%)	F	Percent (%)	F	Percent (%)	F	Percent (%)	F	Percent (%)
Planning and organizational skills	1	2	1	2	13	22	36	60	9	15
Problem Solving Skills	1	2	1	2	11	18	38	63	9	15
Ability to work well	1	2	1	2	6	10	42	70	10	17
Strategic Thinking	1	2	1	2	11	18	35	58	11	18
Leadership Skills	2	3	0	0	7	12	40	67	12	20
Negotiation Skills	2	3	1	2	11	18	37	62	9	15
Resource Management	2	3	0	0	8	13	35	58	16	27
Financial Management	2	3	1	2	15	25	30	50	12	20

Source*: Survey Data*
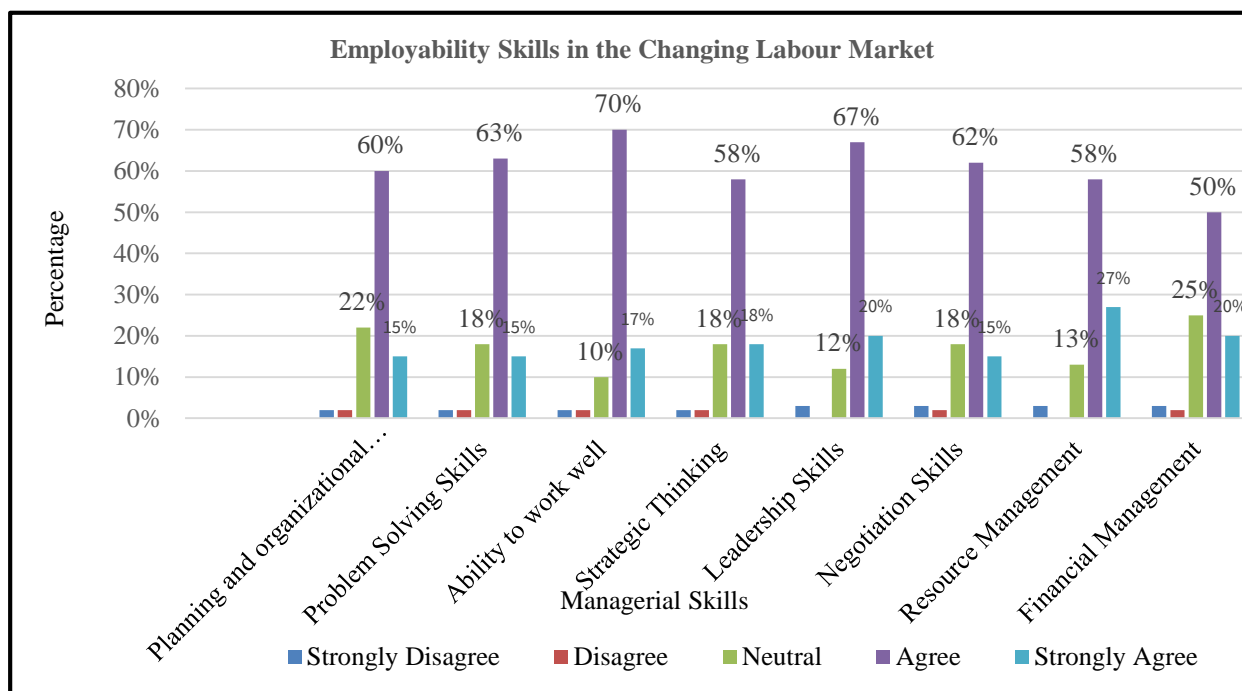
Figure 10. Managerial Skill

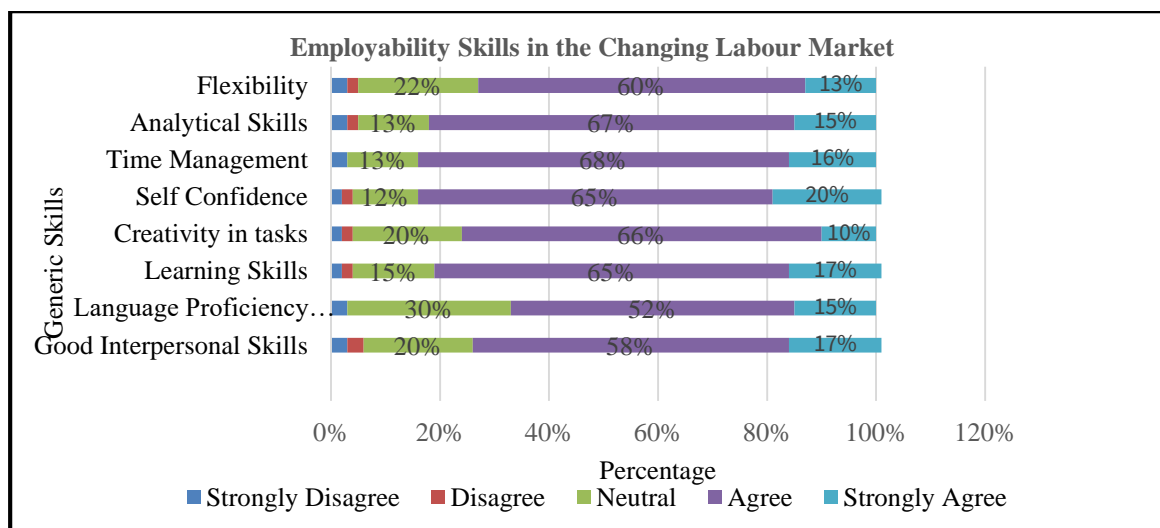According to figure 11, it can be seen that all of them agree with all the managerial skills.

Generic Skills

Generic skills refer to expertise and abilities that are not so dependent on specific subject content, but are more concerned with general intellectual abilities that are trained and developed during study programmes. Good interpersonal skills, language proficiency skills, learning skills, creativity in tasks, self-confidence, time management, analytical skills, and flexibility are included in the generic skills. The results are shown in figure 12.

Table 11. Generic Skills

Generic Skills	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	F	Percent (%)	F	Percent (%)	F	Percent (%)	F	Percent (%)	F	Percent (%)
Good Interpersonal Skills	2	3	1	2	12	20	35	58	10	17
Language Proficiency Skills	2	3	0	0	18	30	31	52	9	15
Learning Skills	1	2	1	2	9	15	39	65	10	17
Creativity in tasks	1	2	1	2	12	20	40	67	6	10
Self Confidence	1	2	1	2	7	12	39	65	12	20
Time Management	2	3	0	0	8	13	41	68	10	17
Analytical Skills	2	3	1	2	8	13	40	67	10	17
Flexibility	2	3	1	2	13	22	36	60	8	13

Source*:* Survey Data

Employability Skills in the Changing Labour Market

Generic Skills	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Flexibility			22%	60%	13%
Analytical Skills			13%	67%	15%
Time Management			13%	68%	16%
Self Confidence			12%	65%	20%
Creativity in tasks			20%	66%	10%
Learning Skills			15%	65%	17%
Language Proficiency…			30%	52%	15%
Good Interpersonal Skills			20%	58%	17%

■Strongly Disagree ■Disagree ■Neutral ■Agree ■Strongly Agree

Figure 11. Generic Skills

The result identifies that most of them agreed the generic skills that the LIS graduates should have.

Findings and Discussion

The above data analysis was based on the employability of LIS graduates. When analyzing the extent of LIS curriculum, 86% of the respondents said that course contents are related to practical approach. By the results, it can be seen that the LIS curriculum contains the necessary skills to be a LIS professional. Regarding employability skills, technical skills, managerial skills, and generic skills, 90% agreed with cataloguing, classification and indexing/ bibliography skills. 80% and above agreed with information retrieval, and citation management skills. 70% and above agreed with handling library automation software and digital information management skills. Thus, it can be remarked that most of the respondents strongly agreed with employability skills.

With regard to generic skills, the findings show that good interpersonal skills, creativity in tasks, and flexibility were agreed by 70% and above respondents. Learning skills, self-confidence, time management and analytical skills were agreed by 80% and above. Language proficiency skills was agreed by 67% respectively. Thus, it is evident that most of them agreed that LIS graduate should have the generic skills.

The respondents viewed that the above-mentioned skills are very important for the LIS professionals in today's information environment. This survey points out that 62% of the respondents have satisfied with status of the Internet and facilities. 65% shows that course contents are sufficient. Satisfaction level of 64% is good with availability of internship. Their perceptions about the employment opportunities for LIS graduates are to provide necessary skills, to review curriculum regularly, to support on-job training, to establish modernized libraries, and to appoint LIS professional in libraries.

Conclusion

Library and Information Studies is the academic and professional study of how information and information carriers are produced, disseminated, discovered, evaluated, selected, acquired, used, organized, maintained, and managed. Library and information studies graduates in Myanmar have to be equipped with a curriculum to be competent library professionals.

From this study, it can be concluded that employability of LIS graduates is in good future. Nevertheless, to be employable LIS graduates need to develop certain set of employable skills to meet the changing needs of the library and information job market. (Kumar 2010, LIS curriculum should be reviewed regularly to meet the expectations of changing information job market. It is also crucial that faculty members should know the needs of their students in relation to the job market in order to provide what is needed in terms of training, teaching methods, resources, collaboration, and curriculum revision.

The following recommendations arise from this study.

LIS graduates should acquire skills to deal with information in the new electronic environment. In addition to the technical skills, they should also possess good interpersonal communication and management skills to become more effective managers.

The LIS graduates should have hands-on practice on library automation software being used in libraries. The LIS students should have practical knowledge of digital library software as many institutions are digitizing their publications for preservation.

The LIS departments can provide a platform for their students to improve their knowledge, skills and techniques. It is up to the students to use the opportunity and come up to the expectations.

This survey suggested that theoretical teaching is not enough to equip students with the future needs of the job market. It is suggested that LIS graduates should have IT skills and other skills that are gained through practical training. English language proficiency is also needed to improve students' ability to search information sources on the databases and websites in order to be able to enhance their skills.

Acknowledgements

References

Dasgupta, Arjun. (2009). "Preparing Future Librarians in India: A Vision for LIS Schools of Indian Universities in the 21st Century." *Conference: the World Library and Information Congress*: *75th IFLA General Conference and Council, Mila*. 1-15. Accessed October 23, 2022. http://www.ifla.org/annual-conference/ifla75/index.htm.

Hillage, J. and E Pollard. (1998). "Employability: Developing a Framework for Policy Analysis," *Research Brief*, no.85 (January 1998): 1-5, accessed September 26, 2022, https://www. researchgate.net/ publication/ 225083565.

Kumar, Bharat. (2010). "Employability of Library and Information Science Graduates: Competencies Expected Versus Taught: A Case Study." *DESIDOC Journal of Library & Information Technology* 30, no. 5. Accessed September 23, 2022. https://www. academia.edu/2756955/.

Lorver, Tondo Richard and Lorfa Terungwa. (2019). "Library and Information Science and Graduate Employability." *Conference of Quality Education and Certification: Issues and Challenges of Graduates Employability in the 21st Century*. Accessed November 4, 2022. www.researchgate.net/ publication/343774683.

Lussky, Joan P. (2008). "Employer Demands for Cataloger and Cataloger-like Librarians and Implications for LIS." *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science* 49, no. 2, pp. 116-127. Accessed September 27, 2022. https://www.jstor.org/stable/40323780.

Ocholla, Dennis and Mzwandile Shongwe. (2013). "An Analysis of the Library and Information Science (LIS) Job Market in South Africa." *SA Journal of Libraries & Information Science* 79(1). Accessed September 23, 2022. http://sajlis.journals.ac.za doi: 10.7553/79-1-113.

Sheffield Hallam University. (2008). *CETLView* 10. Accessed November15, 2023. https://extra. shu.ac.uk/cetl/ cetlview/cetlview10.pdf.

Shivaraja, O and GP Suresha. (2017). "A Study on the Employability of LIS Graduates in Karnataka: A Survey." ***Journal of Library and Information Science* 7**, no. 3. Accessed July 23, 2022. https://irjlis.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/8-IR407-62.pdf.

Turabian, Kate L.(2013). *AManual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Weech, Terry and Marina Pluzhenskaia. (2005). "LIS Education and Multi-disciplinarily: An Exploratory Study." *Journal of Education for Library & Information Science* 46, no. 2. Accessed July 12, 2022. https://doi.org/10.2307/40323867.

Yadav, Akhilesh K. S. & S.N. Singh. (2012). "Employability Skills of a New Generation of LIS Professional: An Indian Scenario." *International Journal of Information Research* 2, no. 2, pp.111-136. Accessed September 26, 2022. https://www.researchgate.net/ profile/Akhilesh-Yadav-2/publication/ 306118745.

Yorke, Mantz. (2004). *Learning and Employability Series One: Employability in Higher Education: What it is – What It Is not.* Heslington York: Higher Education Academy. Accessed November 15, 2023. https:// www.researchgate.net/publication/225083582_Employability_in_Higher_Education_What_It_Is_What _It_Is_Not/link/58ef3612458515c4aa52ea15.