

Chapter 1

Overview of Theory and Practice in Library and Information Science Research in Asia–Oceania

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ABSTRACT

This chapter provides a concise overview dealing with the theory and practice in Library and Information Science (LIS) research development in Asia-Oceania. It also provides the reader with an introduction to the sections and the individual chapters of the book. The field of LIS has experienced significant growth, both in the number of LIS schools and research outputs, in recent years in the region. As a professional field, both theory and practice are viewed as equally important for the development of the LIS discipline. In this book, both theoretical as well as practical work in LIS research in Asia-Oceania region is presented.

THEORY AND PRACTICE IN LIS RESEARCH IN ASIA-OCEANIA

The field of Library and Information Science (LIS) in the Asia-Oceania region is experiencing prominent growth in recent years in terms of the number of schools and expansion of programs as

well as a growth in research outputs. LIS schools generally evolved from professional librarian training programs to university institutions during the second half of the twentieth century. According to *the Directory of Library & Information Science Programs in Asia* (data accessed in October 2013), India (85) and China (67) have the most LIS programs in Asia. The numbers of universities offering LIS programs in Thailand, Taiwan, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, and Singapore

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are 17, 12, 11, 8, 5, and 1, respectively. Australia and New Zealand have been relatively stable in LIS education growth. Some 27 of 39 universities in Australia have produced LIS-related PhD graduates (Macauley, Evans, & Pearson, 2010).

Accompanying the growth of the Asia-Oceania universities, LIS programs, and information industries, LIS research being published in the Asia-Oceania region is increasing rapidly. Park's (2008) study of bibliometric characteristics of authorship in the top twenty LIS journals ranked by ISI (Institute for Scientific Information) Journal Citation Reports impact factor suggested that, from year 1967 to year 2005, the most productive countries and districts in the region were, in order (having research article numbers from the highest to the lowest), Australia, China, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Japan, New Zealand, Malaysia, Thailand, and Philippines. Among them, Australia and China were found to contribute most to the research work in LIS during the study period. In addition, the strongest collaborations were also identified to take place between Australia and China, China and Singapore, and Australia and New Zealand. Up to 2012, according to the literature records in the database *Web of Science*, there have been around 380,752 records of LIS literature, and approximately 14,458 of them were written by Asia-Oceania region authors. A simple analysis of these literature records found that the countries and districts in the region which have actively contributed to the LIS research include (but may not be limited to) Australia, New Zealand, China, India, Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Singapore, Vietnam, Thailand, Taiwan, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Pakistan, and Maldives. This book brings together research work from various countries. We have made endeavours to collect the research outputs from as many countries as possible to represent the LIS in the region.

LIS scholars have studied a variety of research topics in the field; also the researchers from different countries have worked together (Foo, Khoo, Chaudhry, & Majid, 2006). At the same time, they

tend to investigate and analyse their own countries' research development and performance in this discipline. For instance, Jeong and Kim (2005) analysed the knowledge structure of LIS in South Korea based on the theories presented in scholarly research articles. Laksmi (2006) studied the development of LIS through books published in Indonesia from 1952 to 2005. Lin (2012) initiated a bibliometric study to demonstrate the change of LIS research in Taiwan. In mainland China, Hu, Hu, Deng, and Liu (2013) used co-word analysis to reveal the intellectual structure of LIS during 2008–2012. According to the automatic analysis results from the database *Web of Science*, some leading LIS journals in which Asia-Oceania authors have most articles get published include *Scientometrics*, *Electronic Library*, *Journal of The American Society for Information Science and Technology*, *Online Information Review*, *Information Processing & Management*, *Australian Library Journal*, *Journal of Information Science*, *Australian Academic Research Libraries*, and *Malaysian Journal of Library and Information Science*.

There is a continuing demand calling for more research in the field of LIS (Macauley, Evans, & Pearson, 2010; Powell, Baker, & Mika, 2002). In addition to fundamental theory construction, it is also important for LIS researchers to keep attention to its practical aim which was defined by Belkin (1977, p. 22), "Facilitating the effective communication of desired information between human generator and human user." The practical library and information work may include information retrieval, classification and indexing, management and provision of information services, and teaching or training information professionals, etc. (Hjørland, 2000). On the other hand, more and more LIS practitioners have performed or been involved in research recently, which is somehow related to their jobs or to the LIS profession (Powell, Baker, & Mika, 2002). Relevance to practice is deemed as an important consideration for practitioners'

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