Mapping the Legacy of Dr. P.S.G. Kumar: Architect of Modern Indian Library and Information Science

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Abstract

Dr. PogulaSeshaGiri Kumar (1946–2025) was one of the most influential figures in Indian Library and Information Science (LIS), widely remembered as a prolific writer, innovative teacher, institution-builder, and visionary leader. Beginning his career in the early 1970s, Kumar transformed the Department of Library and Information Science at Nagpur University into a nationally recognized center for education and research, while simultaneously shaping professional practice through his leadership in bodies such as the Indian Library Association (ILA) and the Indian Association of Teachers of Library and Information Science (IATLIS). He authored over sixty books, edited volumes, and more than two hundred research papers, producing vital literature at a time when LIS curricula in



India required modern, accessible textbooks. His pedagogical innovations, including the Model Catalogue and Question Banks, bridged theory with practice, while his administrative reforms professionalized national associations and elevated their visibility. Despite systemic challenges and missed academic recognitions, Kumar's resilience, ethical leadership, and inclusive vision ensured a lasting impact on LIS education, research, and professional culture in India. This study synthesizes his life, scholarship, and leadership to argue that Kumar was not merely a contributor but a principal architect of modern Indian librarianship.

Keywords: P.S.G. Kumar, Library and Information Science, pedagogy, association leadership, LIS literature, Indian librarianship

Introduction

The Development of Library and Information Science (LIS) in India reflects the interplay between academic innovation, institutional growth, and professional leadership. Emerging strongly after independence, the field required pioneers who could not only teach and write but also build institutions and shape national-level professional structures. Dr. PogulaSeshaGiri Kumar (1946–2025) belongs to this generation of architects of Indian LIS.

Kumar's entry into the profession was unusual, as he shifted from agricultural science to library science at a time when academic recognition for the field was still evolving. His career coincided with the expansion of LIS education, the modernization of university libraries, and the growing need for professional associations to assert their relevance. At Nagpur University, where he spent most of his career, he demonstrated how a department on the academic



margins could be reimagined as a center for research, advanced teaching, and professional networking.

Beyond academia, Kumar's influence extended into professional bodies such as the Indian Library Association (ILA), the Indian Association of Teachers of Library and Information Science (IATLIS), and other forums, where he introduced structural reforms and initiatives that gave librarianship a stronger institutional identity. His prolific writings in English and regional languages added to the intellectual foundations of the discipline, addressing both theory and practice at a time when resources were scarce.

This study explores Kumar's life and contributions, analyzing his academic, literary, and organizational roles. It aims to provide a balanced view of his legacy within the broader context of LIS development in India, while also examining the challenges he encountered and the values that guided his professional journey.

Literature Review

Mahapatra, M. (2006) provided a crucial baseline, analyzing citations to Kumar's work to demonstrate his initial significant impact within Indian LIS literature, highlighting his core areas of influence like bibliometrics and research methods. Karisiddappa (2025), a classmate and lifelong friend, provides a personal "kaleidoscopic view" of Dr. Kumar's life, highlighting his disciplined nature, leadership in professional associations, and the inspirational quality of his work. In contrast, Satija (2025) offers a more critical perspective in "A Shortchanged Library Leader," acknowledging Kumar's monumental output and organizational genius while also exploring the paradox of his professional life—his failure to secure a full professorship

despite his achievements. Together, these three sources provide a triangulated view of the man: his quantifiable achievements, his personal character, and his complex position within the Indian academic ecosystem.Mahapatra, M. (2006) provided a crucial baseline, analyzing citations to Kumar's work to demonstrate his initial significant impact within Indian LIS literature, highlighting his core areas of influence, like bibliometrics and research methods.

Objectives

- To chronicle the life and academic journey of Dr. P.S.G. Kumar.
- To analyze his teaching philosophy and innovations in LIS pedagogy.
- To examine his contributions to LIS literature, research, and professional development.
- To evaluate his leadership roles in professional associations.
- To identify the challenges and limitations he encountered.

Methodology

The article adopts a qualitative content analysis approach. Primary data is drawn from published biographies, memorial articles, and professional evaluations. Themes such as pedagogy, scholarly productivity, association leadership, and institutional reforms were coded and synthesized. While this method provides a comprehensive overview, the reliance on secondary sources limits triangulation with first-hand accounts.

Scope and Limitations

The scope of this article covers Kumar's professional and academic contributions from his early teaching at IT College, Lucknow, to his tenure at Nagpur University, leadership in ILA and IATLIS, and his scholarly

works. Limitations include dependence on available secondary literature, absence of direct oral histories, and limited insight into his personal motivations beyond documented accounts.

Life and Academic Life

Dr. Kumar was born in Bapatla, Andhra Pradesh, into modest circumstances. Initially trained in agriculture, he pursued librarianship under the mentorship of Prof. P.N. Kaula. His academic journey included a B.Lib.Sc. from Andhra University, M.Lib.Sc. from Banaras Hindu University, and Ph.D. from Gulbarga University. His academic career flourished at Nagpur University, where he served as lecturer, professor, department head, university librarian, and registrar.

His literary output encompassed books on classification, cataloguing, LIS education, research methods, and encyclopedic works on the library movement across Indian states. With over 233 papers, 48 monographs, 19 edited works, and extensive editorial responsibilities, he became one of the most prolific LIS authors globally (Satija, 2025).

Discussion

1. **Pedagogical Innovations**

   Kumar's contribution to LIS pedagogy was not limited to course delivery but extended to designing durable teaching aids like the Model Catalogue, Question Banks, and a Specimen Museum. These tools transformed the classroom into a laboratory of practice, enabling students to handle real-world library problems even before entering the profession. Such innovations anticipated today's emphasis on experiential learning and competency-based education.



2. **Scholarly Productivity and Knowledge Dissemination**

Next to S.R. Ranganathan, Kumar was one of the most prolific LIS writers in the world. His 233 papers, 63 authored books, and multiple edited works created a corpus of knowledge unparalleled in Indian LIS. Unlike many scholars who confined themselves to niche areas, his writings spanned classification, cataloguing, information technology, library legislation, and biographies, reflecting his holistic vision of the profession. He also contributed in regional languages, there by democratizing LIS knowledge across linguistic communities.

3. **Leadership in Professional Associations**

Kumar's leadership style emphasized institutional identity and continuity. By introducing flags, logos, awards, and structured memorial lectures in ILA and IATLIS, he fostered a sense of professional pride and belonging. His insistence on transparent communication through bulletins and newsletters modernized association culture, reducing reliance on informal networks and bringing it closer to global LIS standards.

4. **Institution Building and Technological Modernization**

At Nagpur University, Kumar not only developed postgraduate and doctoral programs but also modernized its central library with early IT applications, LAN-based networking, and inclusive services for visually challenged users. These initiatives positioned the library as a model of best practices nationally. He also institutionalized staff forums like NULISA to empower library employees, a rare example of participatory governance in LIS institutions.



5. Mentorship and Human Capital Development

Kumar's legacy is equally embedded in the professionals he mentored. Guiding 53 MLISc dissertations and 41 doctoral theses, he created a generation of LIS scholars and practitioners who spread his influence across India. Many of his students later assumed leadership positions in universities and professional associations, perpetuating his vision.

6. Resilience and Ethical Leadership

Denied full professorship despite his credentials, Kumar exemplified resilience in the face of systemic injustice. He turned professional disappointments into fuel for further productivity, embodying the principle of work as worship. Unlike some contemporaries, he refrained from leveraging political or institutional connections for personal gain, leaving a legacy of integrity.

7. Comparative Significance

Kumar's role can be contextualized alongside international figures such as Melvil Dewey and Jesse Shera. Like Dewey, he systematized LIS practices; like Shera, he integrated sociological and philosophical perspectives into librarianship. Yet, he maintained a distinctly Indian outlook, ensuring LIS education and literature remained relevant to local contexts.

Findings

- Kumar revolutionized LIS teaching in India through practical and student-centered tools that remain models for curriculum design.
- His vast literary output across multiple genres and languages ensured access to relevant LIS literature during a time of resource scarcity.



- He redefined professional associations, introducing institutional symbols, formal awards, and systematic communication that professionalized LIS bodies.
- At Nagpur University, he transformed an under-resourced department into a national hub for LIS teaching and research while modernizing its central library with IT-enabled services.
- His supervision of over 90 research works (MLISc and Ph.D.) ensured a pipeline of future LIS scholars and practitioners.
- Despite systemic neglect in career advancement, he exemplified integrity, never exploiting positions of power for personal benefit.
- His initiatives for library staff forums and IT services for differently abled users reflect a forward-looking and inclusive philosophy.
- Kumar aligned Indian LIS practices with international trends while producing regionally relevant literature and multilingual works.
- He converted personal setbacks into professional achievements, turning obstacles into opportunities for the wider profession.
- Legacy of Continuity: His writings, institutional reforms, and mentorship continue to shape LIS education and professional practice long after his passing.

Conclusion

The legacy of Dr. P.S.G. Kumar demonstrates how one individual can profoundly influence multiple dimensions of a profession—teaching, scholarship, institution-building, and association leadership. His work offers enduring lessons for LIS professionals and educators in India and beyond.

First, Kumar's career underlines the importance of innovation in pedagogy and curriculum design. By prioritizing practical learning and developing accessible resources, he ensured that LIS education could remain relevant in a rapidly changing environment. Second, his leadership within professional bodies illustrates the necessity of strong, structured organizations for sustaining professional identity and advancing collective goals. Third, his resilience in the face of systemic challenges highlights the role of personal integrity and perseverance in building a lasting reputation.

The implications of his contributions continue to resonate today. As LIS faces new challenges—such as digital transformation, equitable access, and the need for global collaboration—Kumar's example shows how adaptability, ethical leadership, and commitment to professional service can guide the discipline forward. His life's work stands as a reminder that professional progress depends not only on technical expertise but also on vision, inclusivity, and moral courage.



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