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Evaluation of LIS education in Saudi Arabia: Information science undergraduate program at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University as a case study

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Abstract

The paper aims to briefly examine the history and development of the Information Science Undergraduate Program offered by Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University to enrich LIS literature in Saudi Arabia. It also aims to assess this LIS program according to the LIS Foundational Knowledge Areas (FKAs) Model provided by the IFLA Guidelines for Professional Library and Information Science (LIS) Education Programmes. In a qualitative study, a case study design was followed to formulate the research steps and answer the questions. For data collection, document analysis was conducted, followed by a focus group with the head of the school and the key members of the program development team. The results of the document analysis and the focus group demonstrated that the courses taught in the LIS program at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University were distributed across the IFLA's eight Foundational Knowledge Areas (FKAs). However, the distribution across the eight FKAs was not even, as some areas were heavily covered while others were only slightly recognized by the current LIS curricula. In addition, several FKAs were combined into one or more LIS courses, and a given FKA was covered within or by one course or distributed over several courses. The present study is one of the very few research efforts focusing on the LIS programs in Saudi Arabia; it is also the only known study that examines the LIS program at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University. Therefore, it has recommendations and implications not only for the examined program but also for researchers and academics interested in LIS education in Saudi Arabia.

Keywords: IFLA foundational knowledge areas, Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University, information science LIS education, Saudi Arabia.

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1. Introduction

"Library and information science/studies (LIS) is a field of study, research and application. In education and scholarship, it is concerned with information in all its formats and processes, the technologies that process it, and human interaction with information and associated technologies. As a professional practice, LIS engages all aspects of the information life cycle, utilises appropriate technologies in order to connect people anywhere to information, and is carried out in cultural heritage institutions and a wide range of information environments" [1]. Depending on the nation, LIS education may be provided at the undergraduate or graduate levels. Formal LIS education and continuing education are critical for information specialists to stay current in this field. Nonetheless, the formal LIS education to prepare professionals of today and tomorrow is interdisciplinary, changing, and expansive since it is a dynamic field influenced by evolving information landscapes, technological advancements, and societal needs [2].

Globally, the LIS field of study has evolved to encompass a wide array of disciplines. This evolving nature reflects broader societal shifts towards digital transformation and open access to information [3]. LIS graduates are prepared not only to manage traditional library collections but also to harness big data and leverage advanced information technologies to address contemporary information challenges [4]. Furthermore, modern LIS curricula emphasize interdisciplinary learning, incorporating theories and practices from computer science, sociology, and psychology [5]. This holistic approach ensures that graduates not only understand traditional library management principles but also possess proficiency in cutting-edge technologies like artificial intelligence and data analytics, as noted by Bates [6]. These skills are crucial as information professionals play pivotal roles in preserving cultural heritage, promoting digital literacy, and supporting evidence-based decision-making across diverse sectors, Case and O'Connor [7]. According to Olubiyo [8], information handling abilities, such as cataloguing, classification, indexing, and inquiry work, as well as user education training skills with facilitating and evaluation skills, are the core competencies typically associated with library/information science. Many of these abilities can be possessed by an information professional, depending on the area of the library where they work. IT skills, including word processing and spreadsheets, digitization, and internet searching, along with knowledge of digitization, loan systems, databases, content management systems, and specifically created programmes and packages, are some of the crucial cross-sector skills for the LIS professionals in the twenty-first century. Additionally, there are necessary soft skills, such as time management, negotiation, and dispute resolution, which are helpful in all business encounters. Librarians must have the skills essential to operate in a specialized job where clients' needs and equipment are always changing in the cutting-edge field of information science and technology. Because of this, new information processing abilities should be incorporated into the LIS curriculum to ensure the profession's viability in the rapidly evolving 21st-century environment [8].

Saudi Arabia, the focus of this paper, is not exempt from the above-discussed shift in LIS formal education. Saudi Arabia's dedication to enhancing its knowledge infrastructure and information management capabilities is shown in the notable advancements made in LIS education in recent years [9]. Strong educational programs that can fulfill the demand for educated workers are becoming increasingly important in libraries, archives, and information centers. It is a historical fact that few institutions were offering specialized programs when LIS education first started in Saudi Arabia. However, Saudi higher education has increased the number of LIS programs it offers as a result of the growing significance of information management in the digital age. To accommodate this demand, six universities in the kingdom currently provide undergraduate and postgraduate programs in LIS and related subjects. According to Daniel et al. [9], the majority of LIS programs are offered by very large universities, such as King Abdulaziz University (which established the program in 1973), Imam Muhammed ibn Saud Islamic University (which established the program in 1974), Princess Noura bint Abdulrahman University (which established the program in 1984), King Saud University (which established the program in 1986), and Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University (which established the program in 2010).

Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University in Dammam is one of the eminent establishments advocating for LIS education. With the goal of "preparing and qualifying professional cadres in information sciences and knowledge management and achieving leadership in scientific research along with [the] commitment to values and pride of identity within community partnership," it provides a Bachelor of Information Science [10]. It is one of the few LIS programs in Saudi Arabia that is still designing its curricula to cover both traditional library sciences and emerging technologies in data, information, and knowledge management.

The 2030 Saudi Vision's initiatives have given top priority to strengthening the nation's educational system and fostering the growth of a knowledge-based economy. This vision includes initiatives to support research and innovation in information sciences, which directly benefits LIS education. Local universities are encouraged to collaborate with international partners and adopt best practices to ensure their programs remain competitive and relevant on a global scale (Ministry of Culture, 2020; See also "Saudi Vision 2030, n.d." for more about the Saudi 2030 Vision). In addition to academic programs, professional development opportunities for LIS practitioners are also expanding in Saudi Arabia. Organizations such as the Saudi Library Association (available at https://x.com/sliaksa?lang=ar) play a crucial role in advancing the profession through conferences, workshops, and networking events that promote continuous learning and skill enhancement among professionals in the LIS field. However, LIS education in Saudi Arabia is not exempt from the challenges facing it worldwide in the digital age (See, for example, [8, 9, 11]). As emphasized in the *Report on the State of Culture in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2019: Facts and Figures*,

The foundation for any progress in the library sub-sector and the realisation of the ambitious projects outlined in this report is the presence of professionals who possess the necessary skillset to work in modernized libraries. In Saudi universities, many departments equip graduates with the necessary skills to manage the technologies and technical systems of modern libraries. Many departments in Saudi universities train information science majors who go on to work in the library sub-sector. Given that these specializations must keep pace with the continuous technological advancements in information

science and management, the library sub-sector remains in need of professionals, such as graduates of computer science and information science departments, with computer skills. Additionally, professionals with a high degree of technological capability are required for digital content management, automation, electronic provision of data, and information services in libraries and elsewhere [12].

The need for professionals with high computer skills and technological capability, as expressed in the above quote, was not ignored by LIS schools in Saudi Arabia. LIS schools in Saudi Arabia have progressively changed their curriculum to satisfy the demands of an increasingly digital world and respond to demands such as the above-quoted one. For example, the Library Department at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University changed its name to the Department of Information Science in 2022 for a variety of reasons, including national, regional, and international developments and changes in the LIS field that prompted many academic departments to adapt by introducing new curricula, enhancing the skills of their graduates, and changing their titles [10]. The changes carried out by the Library School at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University placed the needs of the digital age at the heart of its development. Therefore, Saudi universities are well-positioned to develop a new generation of talented information professionals who can contribute to the nation's knowledge economy and the global information landscape, thanks to strong governmental backing and expanding academic and professional opportunities. Even with these improvements, problems still exist. One such difficulty is the requirement for constant curriculum revision and modification to keep up with global information management trends and technological breakthroughs. As emphasized by the IFLA, "outside … (the) formal periodic program reviews guided by national and/or institutional policies and practices, LIS programs, their curricula content, and delivery modes should be, on an ongoing basis, reflected on by members of the teaching team and revised where necessary, taking into account input (formal or informal) from faculty members, students, employers, and national professional bodies" [13].

Furthermore, as Daniel et al. [9] emphasized, there are few and relatively out-of-date sources of information regarding the status of LIS education in Saudi Arabia; the most recent piece I could find was a quick synopsis from the nineties (such as Alsereihy [14] and Siddiqui [15]). Therefore, because of space constraints and considering my extensive experience and exposure to the LIS program at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University, this paper only focuses on the LIS program offered by it. The paper aims to offer a brief look at the history and development of the LIS undergraduate program offered by Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University to enrich LIS literature in Saudi Arabia, contributing to the gap of knowledge highlighted earlier. Additionally, it adds to the body of literature by providing a precise assessment of the LIS programme by the LIS Foundational Knowledge Areas (FKAs) Model offered by the IFLA Guidelines for Professional Library and Information Science (LIS) Education Programmes. IFLA Guidelines provide a framework for creating and developing LIS education programmes. They outline eight essential LIS foundational knowledge areas (FKAs) and the components needed for a strong LIS education program. The eight FKAs consist of Information in Society, Foundations of the LIS Profession, Information and Communication Technologies, Research and Innovation, Information Resources Management, Management for Information Professionals, Information Needs and User Services, and Literacies and Learning. It enhances the quality of LIS education programs at different levels, preparing LIS professionals for a changing global information landscape. It can be referenced when designing and implementing a new program or when evaluating an ongoing program to confirm that it satisfies local quality standards and institutional objectives while also aligning with these global quality benchmarks. The Guidelines appeal to individuals involved with the knowledge and skills anticipated of LIS professionals [13]. The present paper aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the key components of LIS education offered by Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University, and how has it progressed over the years?
2. How does the LIS education offered by Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University compare with global standards?

2. Academics' Perception of LIS Education

A topic of interest in various parts of the world has been the status of Library and Information Science (LIS) education. In Alsereihy [14] discussed the LIS education landscape in Saudi Arabia, stressing the importance of understanding the country's educational landscape. Taniguchi [16] provided an overview of the current status of cataloguing and classification (C&C) education in Japan, emphasising the issues and developments in LIS schools and programs. Similarly, Yusuf [17] focused on Library and Information Science education in Uttar Pradesh, India, pointing out variations and suggesting measures for growth and development. Ocholla and Bothma [11] examined trends, challenges, and opportunities in the field of library and information science education and training in Eastern and Southern Africa. They discussed curriculum revision as well as the need to keep up with the latest developments in the field of information. Mammo [18] examined the status of LIS education in Ethiopia, highlighting the closure of programs and the dissatisfaction of employers and professionals. Collaboration in LIS education and training in Africa was explored by Ocholla [19], who identified challenges such as the regulation of student numbers and funding of LIS schools. In North India, Bhatt and Walia [20] conducted a content analysis of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) components in Master's Level Library and Information Science (MLIS) courses. Shafack [21] focused on the LIS profession in Cameroon and its alignment with development goals. Abubakar and Auyo [22] reported on the current status of LIS education in universities in the North-West Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria, tracing the progress of LIS education in the country since its inception in 1960. Overall, the literature review of the status of LIS education based on the provided documents reveals a global interest in understanding and improving LIS programs to meet the evolving needs of the information world. Collaboration, curriculum review, and addressing challenges such as funding and diversification of job markets are key themes in the discussions surrounding LIS education.

The literature on the state or evaluation of LIS education in Saudi Arabia is scarce. One of the few that could be found dates back to Alsereihy [14]. It sheds light on the current situation and the difficulties and opportunities in LIS education in

Saudi Arabia. The article describes the obstacles encountered by LIS education, such as limited resources, inadequate faculty credentials, and the necessity for curriculum revisions to address contemporary information demands. Alsereihy [14] highlights the necessity of improving LIS education to address the increasing information management needs in Saudi Arabia. The article ends with suggestions for enhancing LIS programs, such as greater investment in faculty training and updating the curriculum to better equip graduates for the changing environment of library and information services. LIS is a significant field of research since the education sector in Saudi Arabia has been a source of interest, with studies such as AlMunajjed [23] focusing on women's education in the kingdom and Alebaikan and Troudi's [24] study of blended learning in Saudi institutions. These studies shed light on the country's broader educational scene, potentially providing comparisons or insights applicable to LIS education. Likewise, Almalki et al. [25] emphasised a chronic lack of Saudi nurses, which may also reflect bigger challenges in Saudi Arabia's healthcare and education sectors, which may have an impact on LIS education. While the literature review on the status of LIS education in Saudi Arabia is found to be limited, drawing parallels with related studies such as women's education, healthcare professions, and blended learning could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the field's challenges and opportunities. More research in this area, however, is needed to fill gaps in the existing literature and guide policy and practice in LIS education in Saudi Arabia.

3. LIS Education in Saudi Arabia

Given the growing development, LIS education in Saudi Arabia has reached its peak, with many universities offering different programmes at bachelor's, master's, and PhD levels in LIS, although operating under different faculties. At the moment, LIS schools in Saudi Arabian universities are housed under the faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Computer Science, or Arts. The names and nomenclature of the programmes vary. For instance, King Saud University offers a Bachelor and Master of Information Science; Princess Nourah Bint Abdul Rahman University offers a Bachelor of Arts in Information Science; Ummul Al Qura University offers a Bachelor of Information Science; King Abdulaziz University offers a Bachelor of Science in Information Science, Master of Science in Information Management, and PhD in Knowledge Management; and Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University offers a Bachelor of Information Science. In the beginning, most departments were simply named Departments of Library Science or Library Studies. Lately, however, all of the departments have changed their names to the Department of Library and Information Science/Sciences, Department of Information Science/Sciences, or Department of Information Studies. This is the same worldwide since LIS schools have been responding to the developments and changes occurring in the field nationally, regionally, and internationally, which led many academic departments to keep up with such change by introducing their curricula, developing their graduates' skills, and changing their titles [9, 11, 13].

The Information Science Department at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University was the last LIS school to be established in Saudi Arabia in the academic year 2009/2010. It is one of the LIS schools in the Eastern Province that qualifies scientifically and technically women to practice the profession and serve the community to meet the needs of the different sectors of the information labour market in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia [10]. When it was established, it was named the Department of Library Studies, but by 2022, the title of the department was the last to changed to the Department of Information Science following the changes happening in the rest of LIS schools in the country. This LIS school has undergone three rounds of crucial development and revision. Preparing for the department establishment in the academic year 2009/2010, the program was developed by a team of LIS professionals and then reviewed by internal and external experts in the LIS field before approving it and starting to accept students. In the academic year 2015/2016, the program was reviewed again, so it's crucial to reflect its new name (i.e., the Department of Information Science). At the time of writing this paper, the program had just undergone its third round of revision and had obtained the conditional accreditation of programs from the Education and Training Evaluation Commission in 2024 [26]. The Education and Training Evaluation Commission is "a government organisation responsible for planning, evaluation, assessment, and accreditation of educational and training systems in Saudi Arabia in coordination with the Ministry of Education" [27].

Since the obtained accreditation was conditional, the LIS program at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University is of highest needs to undergo ongoing review by its staff in line with the guidance of the Education and Training Evaluation Commission as well as the national and international guidance, such as IFLA Guidelines for Professional Library and Information Science (LIS) Education Programmes. As established in the IFLA Guidelines, "Periodic programme review provides an opportunity for an academic programme to reflect on the relevance and currency of the programme. Using the Guidelines [i.e., IFLA Guidelines], a programme ... should have a clearly defined, periodic review process.... [and] LIS educators, practitioners, and stakeholders should be involved in the review as a process of innovation and revisioning of a programme" [13]. Therefore, this paper aims to offer the first evaluation of the LIS undergraduate program offered by Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University in line with the IFLA Guidelines to assess the department in the ongoing development of the program. This evaluation is unique as it is carried out by a faculty member who has taught in the department since its establishment and has graduated from the same department. Therefore, the author has the advantage of her insider positionality. In the present research, I inhabit insider characteristics on the professional and educational level, as my self-image is that of a library and information specialist. As an insider, I benefited from a more genuine and authentic understanding of the subject under investigation. It also provided ease of access and the ability to ask more meaningful questions [28-31]. This study is also unique as it is the only evaluation conducted in the light of an established international guideline. Previously, the program was evaluated by internal and external experts, but those experts relied heavily on their judgments and LIS experience rather than IFLA Guidelines or other similar international guidelines.

4. Methodology

This study broadly followed a qualitative interpretivism approach, which is seen as "an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" [32]. It also followed the case study design to formulate the research steps for answering the research questions and approaching its objectives. Although many of the characteristics of the case study approach are not unique to it, "when brought together, they form a broad approach to social research, with an underlying rationale for the direction and planning of an investigation that separates it from the rationale for survey research or the rationale for experimental research" [33]. The case study approach was also selected since the researcher used various methods to explore "a real-life, contemporary bounded system ... through detailed, in-depth data collection" [34]. A case study was also a practical approach for this research since the inquirer has an identifiable case with boundaries and desires to understand the case in depth [34].

In terms of data collection methods, I conducted a document analysis, which is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents _both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material. The social sciences and humanities make substantial use of this research methodology to collect relevant data, comprehend context, and provide insights. Through the examination of many document formats, such as official records, personal diaries, newspapers, and web information, scholars can identify relevant trends, patterns, and themes for their research. To evaluate findings and triangulate data, document analysis is frequently used in conjunction with other qualitative research methodologies. It offers a wealth of information. Because it enables a thorough grasp of the subject matter through the contextual and content analysis of pertinent documents, this method is especially useful for historical research, policy analysis, and organisational studies [35, 36]. Therefore, I started by analysing the LIS Foundational Knowledge Areas (FKAs) Model provided in the IFLA Guidelines for Professional Library and Information Science (LIS) Education Programmes (See Appendix 1). Then, the brief descriptions of the LIS program curriculum were analysed in light of the FKAs Model.

Following the completion of the document analysis, the head of the LIS school and the two key members of the curriculum development team participated in a focus group. The choice of focus groups was made because it is a type of qualitative research in which a small, varied group of individuals are brought together to discuss and offer feedback on a particular subject, good, or service. Focus group talks, guided by an experienced moderator, are intended to extract a broad spectrum of viewpoints, thoughts, and attitudes through interactive dialogue and open-ended questions. This technique is especially useful for investigating intricate perceptions that are difficult to capture via surveys or other quantitative methods. By fostering a dynamic and interactive environment, focus groups can uncover deep, nuanced understandings of participants' experiences and viewpoints. The insights gained from focus groups are widely used in social science studies to inform decision-making and strategy development [37, 38]. The focus group was provided with the initial result from the document analysis ahead of our meeting. On the day of the meeting, I started by explaining very briefly the aim of the study and the initial results. Then, we openly started discussing each component of the FKAs and whether they agreed or disagreed with the initial results concerning whether the LIS program under study responds to all the FKAs. The group interview was recorded by the researcher using recording equipment that she owned. After I transcribed the meeting, I analysed it using the thematic analysis method. Since the framework resulting from the document analysis was used to guide the interview with the focus group, it was also used to analyse the case study data. Therefore, a 'Codebook' TA was used, and themes were typically initially developed early on but were also refined through inductive data engagement and the analytic process [39].

5. Results and Discussion

As shown in Figure 1 below, the results of the document analysis and the focus group demonstrated that the courses taught at the LIS program at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University were distributed across the IFLA's eight Foundational Knowledge Areas (FKAs). Yet, the distribution across the eight FKAs was not even, as some areas were heavily covered while others were slightly recognized by the current LIS curricula. In addition to that, several FKAs were combined into one or more LIS courses, and a given FKA was covered within or by one course or distributed over several courses. These findings are no surprise. As demonstrated by Chu et al. [13], the FKAs should be incorporated into the LIS curriculum still, the way they are translated into a programme can vary in depth and coverage.

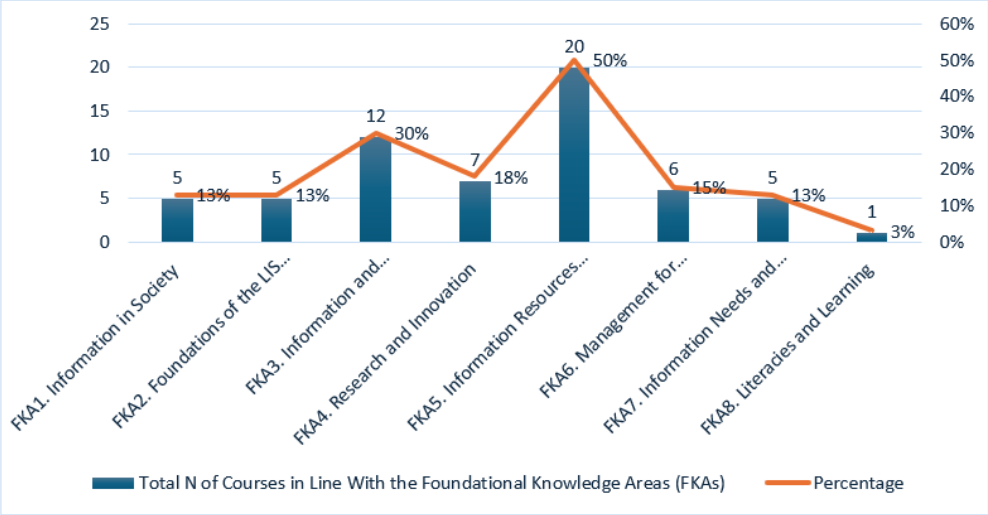

Figure 1.
The disruption of LIS courses on the FKAs.

In detail, the FKA1 (Information in Society) was covered by 13% (N=5) of the 40 courses taught in the LIS program at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University, including Information Institutions, Information Society, Information Services, Information Ethics, and Security and Safety of Information. Similarly, 13% (N=5) of these courses fall into the FKA2 (Foundations of the LIS Profession), and another 13% (N=5) fit into the FKA7 (Information Needs and User Services). Introduction to Information Science, Information Institutions, English Terms and Texts in Information Science 1, English Terms and Texts in Information Science 2, and Information Ethics all shed light on the foundations of the LIS profession (FKA2), while Collections Development, Learning Resource Centres, Information Society, Information Services, and Users Studies (optional course) highly focus on information needs and user services (FKA7). In a similar range to FKA1 and FKA2, FKA6 (Management for Information Professionals) was covered by 15% (N=6) of classes, including Information Institutions Management, Information Institutions Crises and Risk Management, Marketing of Information Services, the Electronic Government (optional), Knowledge Management, and Creativity and Innovation in Libraries. The skills covered in FKA1, FKA2, and FKA7 fit into what Olubiyo [8] identified as the core skills traditionally associated with LIS, such as information handling and user education training skills, which are essential for any LIS professional. Therefore, it can be acknowledged that the examined LIS undergraduate program covers the core skills required for information specialists.

Compared to the above FKAs, a much higher percentage of courses cover FKA4 (Research and Innovation), FKA3 (Information and Communication Technologies, ICTs), and FKA5 (Information Resources Management), with FKA5 being the most focused on FKAs. Research Skills in Library and Information Science, Creativity and Innovation in Libraries, Information Ethics, Graduation Project, Field Training 1, Field Training 2, and Bibliometric Studies (optional) (i.e., 18% of classes) focus on research and innovation (FKA4). A higher number of courses (N=12, %30) teaches information and communication technologies (ICTs) (FKA3), including Information Networks, Automatic Indexing (1), Automatic Indexing (2), Information Systems Analysis and Design, Electronic archiving, Digital Repositories, Integrated Library Systems, Metadata, Websites Management, Cloud Computing Applications in Libraries (optional), Database Design and Management (optional), and Big Data (optional). Information Resources Management (FKA5) was covered by 50% (N= 20) of the courses taught in this LIS school, including Information Resources, Information Institutions, Publishing and its Institutions, Collections' Development, Learning Resource Centers, Classification Systems and Theories, Automatic Indexing (1), Introduction to Archive Science, Information services, Automatic Indexing (2), Information Institutions Management, Information Institutions Crises and Risk Management, Subject Analysis, Users Studies (optional), Knowledge Management, Metadata, Indexing and Abstracting, Information Ethics, Security and Safety of Information, and Websites Management. The concentration of the modules in these three FKAs (i.e., mostly ICTs and modern information handling skills) can be explained by the shift of name that took place in 1444 H. As explained in earlier sections, similar to the rest of LIS schools in Saudi Arabia, the LIS program at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University changed its name to the Department of Information Science in 2022 for a variety of reasons, including the national, regional, and international developments and changes in the field of libraries and information that prompted many academic departments to adapt by introducing new curricula, enhancing the skills of their graduates and changing their titles [10]. The changes carried out by the LIS school at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University placed the needs of the digital age at the heart of its development. This shift has also been demonstrated internationally and highlighted by authors such as Olubiyo [8]. Olubiyo [8] emphasized that in addition to the core skills traditionally associated with LIS, such as information handling, information professionals should possess the essential competencies in the innovative age of information science and technology, such as IT skills, the modern information-processing skills, as well as soft skills. As Okello-Obura and Kigongo-Bukenya [40] in Abubakar [41] opined, this kind of development in LIS education and requirements has been driven by advancements in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).

Unlike the already discussed FKAs, FKA8 (Literacies and Learning) was the least covered in the examined LIS program, with only one class (3%) fitting into this area of knowledge (i.e., Information Society). According to the explanation of the

participants in the focus group, when the LIS program was first developed in 2013, many classes demonstrated the value of literacy and learning and the role professional librarians can play in literacy and the lifelong pursuit of learning in a variety of contexts. The LIS program used to include Learning Resource Centres, Principles of Education, Principles of Psychology, Use and Maintenance of Education, Building Curriculum, Multimedia Design, and other modules that fit perfectly into FKA8. However, upon renovating the program in the academic years 2015/2016 and 2022/2023, the Department of Information Science at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University conducted a comparative analysis of the LIS programs at the national and international levels. The result of their analysis and the consultation with LIS experts resulted in the elimination of these modules, leaving FKA8 mostly unrecognized by the program. Although the focus group could explain the poor focus on FKA8, they regretted that choice and admitted that the IFLA's FKAs could have benefited them at the points of renovating the program and aided them in justifying the benefit and essentiality of the eliminated modules that fit into FKA8.

Finally, participants in the focus group added that although the examined LIS program has undergone various renovations and evaluations, they tweak the current modules on a yearly basis. Each year, all students are required to evaluate the modules, and the faculty members provide the department with a report highlighting the teaching outcomes as well as the weaknesses and strengths of the modules taught and any suggestions for improvement. These types of feedback guide the yearly improvement of the modules. The changes, however, cannot include adding or eliminating modules. The action of adding or eliminating modules takes place every five years, at which point the program is evaluated by internal and external examiners in light of the study outcomes of the most recent graduates who studied the last version of the program. As mentioned by a member of the focus group, by 2029, they will be able to add courses focusing on FKA8 (Literacies and Learning). At the moment, they may include topics related to literacies and learning under related current modules to equip students with the necessary skills without interrupting the flow of the current program.

6. Implications and Recommendations

The present study is one of the very few research studies focusing on the LIS programs in Saudi Arabia; it is also the only known study that examines the undergraduate Information Science Program at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University. Therefore, it has recommendations and implications not only for the examined program but also for researchers and academics interested in LIS education in Saudi Arabia. First, this study can aid researchers who are interested in LIS education in Saudi Arabia as it provides a fresh overview of the current educational status. It is also the first study to evaluate LIS education in light of IFLA's FKAs, providing researchers with a practical example of evaluating LIS education in a standardized way. Additionally, the examined LIS school can also benefit from this study by considering its findings when implementing the yearly or quinquennial renovation. Finally, other LIS schools can follow the steps of the current study to evaluate their own LIS academic programs. Recommendations for the examined LIS program and researchers are as follows:

1. The LIS program at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University can consider more standardized ways when running their yearly or quinquennial examination of the program, such as the IFLA's FKAs. Although they use the results of student and faculty members' evaluations and compare the program with its peers, these information resources can be biased and subjective.
2. The LIS program at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University is recommended to consider adding modules related to FKA8 (Literacies and Learning) or adding literacies and learning as sup-topics in the current modules.
3. Researchers interested in the LIS field are encouraged to focus on countries that are not well-recognised by the already published research. For example, little is written about the LIS education or libraries in Saudi Arabia, which is keeping it hidden.
4. A comparative study to the present research can also enrich the LIS literature and aid LIS programs when evaluating their programs or enhancing them in light of the productive practices of their peers.

7. Conclusion

This paper aims to briefly examine the history and development of the LIS undergraduate program offered by Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University. Additionally, it intends to add to the body of literature by providing a precise assessment of the LIS program taught at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University using the LIS Foundational Knowledge Areas (FKAs) Model offered by the IFLA Guidelines for Professional Library and Information Science (LIS) Education Programmes. In a qualitative study, a case study design was followed to formulate the research steps and answer its questions, and data were collected using document analysis and a focus group with the head of the school and the key members of the program development team. The results of the document analysis and the focus group demonstrated that the courses taught in the LIS program at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University were distributed across the IFLA's eight Foundational Knowledge Areas (FKAs). Yet, the distribution across the eight FKAs was not even, as some areas were heavily covered while others were slightly recognized by the current LIS curricula. In addition to that, several FKAs were combined into one or more LIS courses, and a given FKA was covered within or by one course or distributed over several courses. Since the present study is one of the very few research studies focusing on the LIS programs in Saudi Arabia and the only known study that examines the LIS program at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University, it is hoped that its recommendations and implications extend beyond the examined program and offer insights for researchers and academics interested in LIS education in Saudi Arabia.

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Appendix

Appendix 1.
Analysis of Courses taught by the LIS undergraduate program offered by Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University in line with the IFLA's FKAs.

Foundational Knowledge Areas (FKAs)	Associated skills/ fundamental knowledge	Courses in Line With the Foundational Knowledge Areas (FKAs)	%
FKA1. Information in Society	"foundational knowledge of how the economy, culture, law, globalisation, technology, and politics shape the nature of information and, reciprocally, with the ways information processes, tools, systems, services, and institutions are established, transform society and determine the information that society accesses" (p. 6)	- INFO 203: Information Institutions - INFO 301: Information Society - LIBR 302: Information services - INFO 405: Information Ethics -INFO 406: Security and Safety of Information	13%
FKA2. Foundations of the LIS Profession	This "include the following fundamental knowledge: an introduction to the profession as an interdisciplinary field, the role and history of the discipline, and the essential set of core values that define, inform and guide professional practice" (p. 7).	- INFO201: Introduction to Information Science - INFO 203: Information Institutions - INFO 206: English Terms and Texts in Information science 1 - INFO 312: English Terms and Texts in Information science 2 - INFO 405: Information Ethics	13%
FKA3. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)	"ICT knowledge includes technology standards, models, approaches, requirements and solutions for data capture, storage, management, processing, presentation, publishing, discovery, access, and use. These skills involve the practices of utilising, adapting, innovating, designing, applying, and maintaining existing hardware and software solutions" (p. 7).	- INFO 207: Information Networks - LIBR210: Automatic Indexing (1) - LIBR303: Automatic Indexing (2) - INFO 304: Information Systems Analysis and Design - INFO 305: Electronic archiving - INFO 308: Digital Repositories - LIBR 309: Integrated Library Systems - INFO 402 : Metadata - INFO 407: Websites Management - LIBR 451: Cloud Computing Applications in Libraries (optional)	30%

		- COMP 452: Database Design and Management (optional) - COMP 453: Big Data (optional)	
FKA4. Research and Innovation	"A foundation in research and innovation requires knowledge of research paradigms, theoretical frameworks, design, methods, research ethics, data analysis and presentation, and dissemination of research findings … it also includes knowledge on indigenous research methodologies which assert indigenous voices, worldviews, and ways of conducting research … Innovation in this context refers to the application of knowledge or ideas for the development and critical interrogation of information products, services, or processes" (pp. 7-8)	- RESM 212: Research Skills in Library and Information Science - LIBR404: Creativity and Innovation in Libraries - INFO 405: Information Ethics - INFO 408: Graduation Project - INFO 444: Field Training 1 - INFO 445: Field Training 2 - INFO 454: Bibliometric Studies (optional)	18%
FKA5. Information Resources Management (IRM)	"IRM requires knowledge and understanding of the nature of information resources, information discovery and retrieval, user needs and information seeking behavior. IRM includes the principles of information organisation and interoperability, functional requirements for information resource organisation, exchange and presentation standards, procedures, and tools. It extends to the principles of collection management including acquisition (and related copyright and intellectual property rights aspects), curation, digitisation, preservation, disposal, and usage analysis" (p. 8)	- INFO 202: Information Resources - NFO 203: Information Institutions - INFO 204: Publishing and its Institutions - LIBR 205: Collections' Development - LIBR 208: Learning Resource Centers -LIBR 209: Classification Systems and Theories - LIBR 210: Automatic Indexing (1) - INFO 211: Introduction to Archive Science - LIBR 302: Information services - LIBR 303: Automatic Indexing (2) -INFO 306: Information Institutions Management - INFO 307: Information Institutions Crises and Risk Management - LIBR 310: Subject Analysis - INFO 351: Users Studies (optional) - INFO 401: Knowledge Management - INFO 402 : Metadata - LIBR 403: Indexing and Abstracting - INFO 405: Information Ethics -INFO 406: Security and Safety of Information - INFO 407: Websites Management	50%
FKA6. Management for	"Subjects covered, and the respective skills needed, may include leadership and	- INFO306: Information Institutions Management	15%

Information Professionals	management; decision-making, planning, implementation and evaluation; accountability, trust and delegation; systems thinking; knowledge management; economics; legislation and policies; advocacy, marketing and public relations; communication; customer service; negotiations and mediation; financial management; human resource management, team building; facilities management; information technology management; project management; strategic planning; risk management; quality control; future trends, change management and innovation; organisational culture; and ethics and confidentiality" (p. 8).	- INFO307: Information Institutions Crises and Risk Management - INFO 311: Marketing of Information Services - INFO352: The Electronic Government (optional) - INFO 401: Knowledge Management - LIBR404: Creativity and Innovation in Libraries	
FKA7. Information Needs and User Services	"Information needs and user services include consideration of user communities; their contexts and gaps in services; knowledge of information seeking behaviour and needs of users and communities; engagement with user communities, design and provision of services to all, including targeted and/or underserved user communities; and assessment of the outcomes and impacts of user services" (p. 9)	- LIBR205: Collections' Development - LIBR 208: Learning Resource Centers - INFO 301: Information Society - LIBR302: Information services - INFO 351: Users Studies (optional)	13%
FKA8. Literacies and Learning	"An LIS professional fosters all forms of literacy and supports the lifelong pursuit of learning in a variety of contexts and sociocultural settings, including orality and traditional knowledge … [and should have] …. abilities …., [such as] designing learning materials, assessment, educational technology, instructional design, lesson planning, online instruction, pedagogical and learning theory, and teaching methods. An incumbent should be able to design, organise and deliver learning activities for various communities of users" (p. 9).	- INFO 301: Information Society	3%