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Mapping of Library Classification Research in India: A septuagennial study (1954-2024)

[1]Kritika Agarwal*, [2]Prof. Babita Jaiswal

[1]Junior Research Fellow (JRF), Department of Library and Information Science, University of Lucknow, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh 226007, India. E-mail: kritikaa0210@gmail.com

[2]Professor, Department of Library and Information Science, University of Lucknow, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh 226007, India. E-mail: drbabitajaiswal@gmail.com

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Abstract: The present study examines trends in library classification research in India for over a period of seventy years, from 1954 to 2024. It aims to analyze publications chronologically, identifying authorship patterns, prolific contributors, and thematic focus. The study uses a bibliometric and content analysis approach to analyse data gathered from 414 relevant articles sourced from major LIS journals. Results show peak research activity during 1954–1974, followed by a steady decline. Single-authored works dominated, with major contributions by S. R. Ranganathan and peers. Thematically, colon classification and depth classification received most attention, while modern areas like automatic classification remained underexplored. The findings highlight the need to revive classification research to align with evolving information environments and technological advancements.

Keywords: Library Classification; Classification Research; Research Trends; Bibliometrics

1. Introduction

Library Classification is a fundamental aspect of knowledge organisation. Classification can be defined as grouping of documents according to their subject matter as determined by library professionals. (Jaiswal, 1999) It plays a vital role in access and retrieval of information. In India, classification studies hold great historical significance, owing to the invaluable contributions made by Dr. S. R. Ranganathan, whose Colon Classification laid the foundation for general theory of classification itself. Over the years, scholars in India have continued to carry on the legacy by contributing to the field by exploring and expanding on both theoretical and practical aspects.

Despite the long-standing tradition of scholarship in classification, there has been a noticeable gap in comprehensive analysis that trace the evolution of classification research in India. Most existing studies focus on specific classification schemes or theoretical issues without examining broader publication trends or thematic developments over time. Understanding these patterns is essential not only for historical insight but also for guiding future research, curriculum development, and policy decisions in library and information science.

2. Review of Literature

Several studies have been conducted that analyse literature published on LIS in India. Chatterjee (1995) examined trends in PhD research work in LIS in India and Karnataka University was found to be the most productive school in the field. Later, Mittal (2011) attempted to trace the research trends during 1990-2010 through scholarly journals using LISA database revealing emerging areas of research including open access,

Web 2.0, World Wide Web, Internet. A recent study by Gupta and Gul (2024) tracked research trends using bibliometric visualization tool highlighting a shift of research from traditional concepts towards novel ones involving big data, machine learning, altmetrics, etc.

Journals in the field of LIS have also been assessed, including *Library Management* (Singh & Chander, 2014), *SRELS Journal of Information Management* (Bisaria & Jaiswal, 2018; Prabhu, 2021), *Annals of Library and Information Studies* (Prieto-Gutiér & Segado-Boj, 2019; Das & Verma, 2021), *Herald of Library Science* (Patil, 2010), *DESIDOC Journal of Library and Information Technology* (Negi, 2021), *Library Herald* (Singh & Rai, 2023) more. However, studies that analyse classification literature in India remain rare. Notatble exceptions include Kaula and Prasad (1981) and Kumbhar (2012), while Satija (1985) worked on literature on colon classification in particular, and Sewa (1986) assessed contributions to library classification in Indian LIS journals and books.

There is an abundance of literature available on research and publication trend analysis in the field of Library and Information Science (LIS) in India and globally, but analysis of classification literature remains limited. While some work may exist, there was no study found that analyzed literature published on library classification of multiple decades in a comprehensive manner. This gap highlights the need for a study that focuses on trends and pattern of classification research to determine its future discourse. The present study aims to fulfil that gap by examining the publishing trends and thematic focus in classification research in India, thereby contributing a fresh perspective to the LIS landscape.

3. Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to review the existing literature on classification research in India and analyze trends over time. To achieve this, the following sub-objectives are outlined:

1. To analyze the chronological distribution of articles.
2. To study the authorship pattern in classification literature.
3. To determine the most prolific authors contributing to classification research in India.
4. To trace the thematic trends in classification research.

4. Methodology

This study adopts a bibliometric and content analysis approach to examine the trends in library classification research in India over a seventy-year period, from 1954 to 2024.

Sources of Data Collection: The data was collected from various sources including databases such as Google Scholar as well as archives of journals such as *SRELS Journal of Information and Knowledge*, *Annals of Library and Information Studies*, *Herald of Library Science and DESIDOC Journal of Library & Information Technology.*

Data Selection: As the title might or might not contain the term "*library classification*" explicitly, titles were carefully selected by perusing the archives of various journals. Additionally, articles sourced from Google Scholar were discovered with the use of multiple keywords related to library classification to ensure comprehensive coverage. Finally, a total of **414 articles** were identified and selected for the study.

Data Recording and Analysis: Bibliographical details including title, year of publication, journal, author and thematic focus of each article were recorded using Microsoft Excel. Thematic categories were developed tentatively through initial readings of the literature and refined during the analysis. The data was further sorted and filtered according to different objectives of the study.

5. Data Analysis

5.1 Journal-wise distribution of publications

Table 1 illustrates the Journal-wise distribution of publications. It reveals *SRELS Journal of Information and Knowledge* leads with 173 articles (41.79%), followed by *Annals of Library and Information Studies* with 131 articles (31.64%) and *Herald of Library Science* contributing 85 articles (20.53%). Only 6.04% of articles appeared in other journals such as *DESIDOC Journal of Library and Information Technology, IASLIC Bulletin*, and more, highlighting the dominance of these three platforms in the field.

Table 1: Journal-wise distribution of publications

Journal	Number of Articles	
	Frequency	Percentage
SRELS Journal of Information and Knowledge, *1964 - present*	173	41.79%
Annals of Library and Information Studies, *1954 - present*	131	31.64%
Herald of Library Science, *1962 - 2006*	85	20.53%
Others	25	6.04%
Grand Total	**414**	**100.00%**

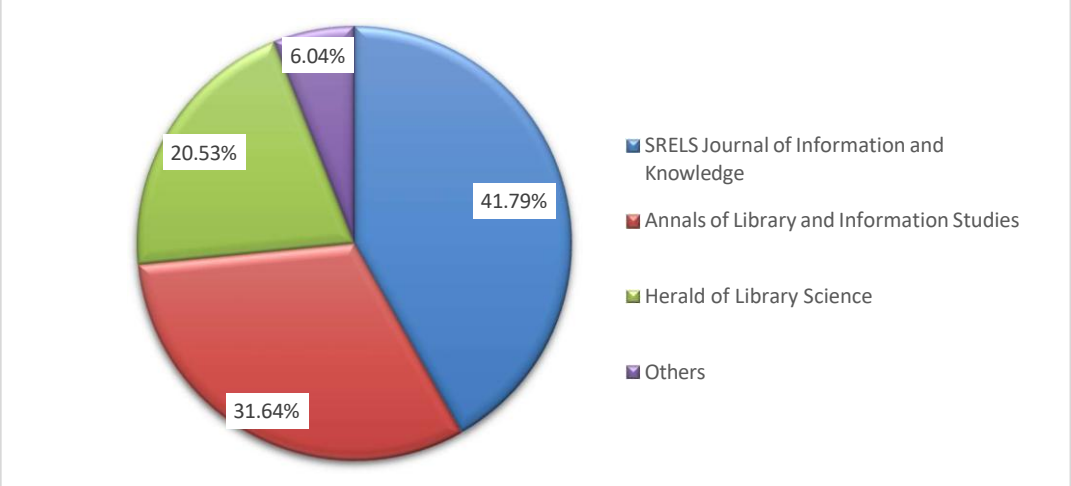

Figure 1: Journal-wise distribution of publications

5.2 Chronological distribution of publications

Table 2 represents the decade-wise distribution of articles. It is observed, that the highest publication activity occurred during 1964–1974, which alone accounts for 32.84% of all research output. The initial decade (1954–1964) also saw significant contributions (21.23%). However, there has been a marked decline since then, with the lowest output between 2014 -2024 (6.67%), indicating a shift in research focus or declining interest in classification topics in recent years.

Table 2: Chronological distribution of publications

Decade	Frequency	Percentage
1954-1964	86	21.23%
1964-1974	133	32.84%
1974-1984	51	12.59%
1984-1994	34	8.40%
1994-2004	39	9.63%
2004-2014	35	8.64%
2014-2024	27	6.67%
Grand Total	**405**	**100.00%**

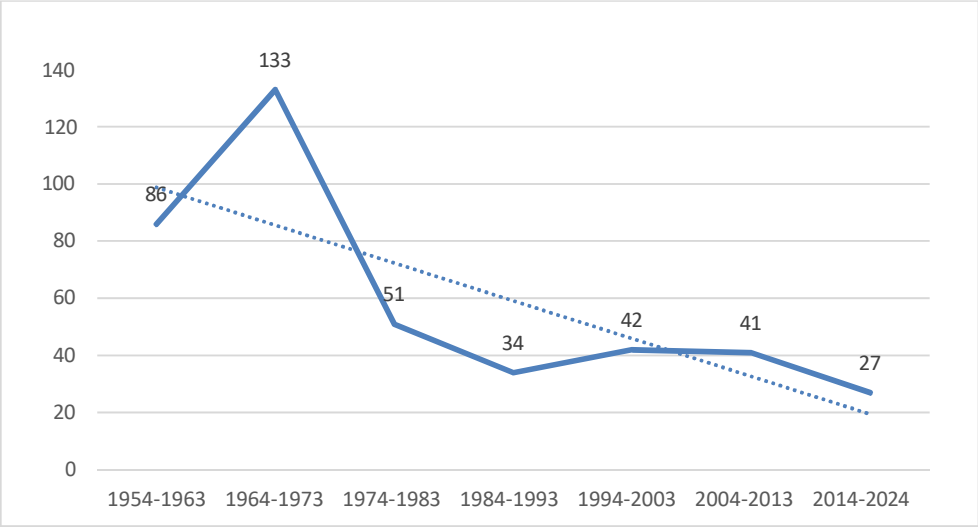

Figure 2: Chronological distribution of publications

5.3 Authorship-pattern across decades

Table 3 categorizes authorship of articles into single-authored, two-authored and three or more-authored publications. It reveals a predominance of single-author contributions, comprising 70.05% (290 articles) of the total publications, followed by two-author collaborations accounted for 21.5% (89 articles), while publications with three or more authors constituted a mere 6.28% (26 articles). The high incidence of single-authored works, especially in earlier decades, reflects a tradition of individual scholarship as a foundational phase of classification research in India.

Table 3: Authorship-pattern across decades

Number of Authors	1954-1963	1964-1973	1974-1983	1984-1993	1994-2003	2004-2013	2014-2024	Grand Total
Single Author	70	96	41	24	26	23	16	**290**
Two Authors	14	28	7	8	14	13	8	**89**
Three or more Authors	2	9	3	2	2	5	3	**26**
Grand Total	**86**	**133**	**51**	**34**	**42**	**41**	**27**	**414**

5.4 Most prolific author

A rank wise list of most prolific author based on the number of publications has been represented in Table 4. The 414 articles were authored and co-authored by 244 individual authors. Among them, S. R. Ranganathan tops the list with 68 articles, followed closely by A. Neelameghan (65) and M. A. Gopinath (49). Their foundational work continues to influence classification research in India, with other contributors like M. P. Satija and T. Ranganathan also play notable roles.

Table 4: Most prolific author

Sr. No.	Author Name	No. of Articles	Rank
1	Ranganathan, S. R.	68	1
2	Neelameghan, A.	65	2
3	Gopinath, M. A.	49	3
4	Satija, M. P.	15	4
5	Ranganathan, T.	11	5
6	Seetharama, S.	11	5
7	Panigrahi, Pijushkanti	9	6
8	Dutta, Bidyarthi	8	7
9	Rahman, Abdul	8	7
10	Kaula, Prithvi N.	7	8
11	Sen, B. K.	7	8
12	Raghavan, K. S.	6	9
13	Parthasarathy, S.	5	10
14	Prasad, A. R. D.	5	10
15	Raizada, A. S.	5	10
16	Rao, D. B. Krishna	5	10

5.5 Subject-wise distribution of articles

Table 5 highlights the subject focus of all the articles. Subject analysis reveals a strong emphasis on depth classification (22.46%), followed closely by general classification (13.53%). Collectively classifications schemes lead the list (27.78%) with a majority of work done on Colon Classification (CC) (11.84%), Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) (10.39%) and Universal Decimal Classification (UDC) (4.59%). Other schemes such as Library of Congress (LCC) and Rider's International Classification (RIC) have little to no representation. Emerging or niche areas such as automatic classification and teaching received less attention comparatively. Overall, the table reflects sustained interest in traditional aspects of classification while emerging areas still remain unexplored.

Table 5: Subject-wise distribution of articles

Subject-focus	Frequency	Percentage
Classification - Automatic	15	3.62%
Classification - Comparative Studies	32	7.73%
Classification - Contribution of Eminent Personality	13	3.14%
Classification - Depth Schedules	93	22.46%
Classification - Design of Schemes/Schedules	7	1.69%
Classification - Faceted	18	4.35%
Classification - General	56	13.53%
Classification - Isolate	9	2.17%
Classification - Notation	5	1.21%
Classification - Research	14	3.38%
Classification - Schemes		
CC	49	11.84%
DDC	43	10.39%
LCC	3	0.72%
RIC	1	0.24%
UDC	19	4.59%
Classification - Teaching	4	0.97%
Classification - Universe of Knowledge	33	7.97%
Grand Total	**414**	**100.00%**

6. Findings and Conclusion

In India, research on library classification has primarily been published in a limited number of journals. Despite its foundational importance to Library and Information Science (LIS), not all journals feature work on classification. Over time, there's been a noticeable decline in such publications as well. While earlier decades saw vibrant scholarly engagement with the topic, recent years reflect a drop in output, possibly due to changing academic interests and the impact of technological developments on the discipline.

Collaboration in this area has traditionally been minimal, suggesting that classification research has often been a solitary scholarly pursuit. However, a modest rise in co-authored papers in recent decades hints at a slow but steady shift toward more collaborative research practices. The field itself has been significantly influenced by a small group of dedicated scholars whose sustained work helped establish both theoretical and practical foundations for others to build upon. Unfortunately, the loss of three of the most influential authors has left a noticeable void, which could partly explain the decline in recent publications. Among the few still active, M. P. Satija continues to contribute significantly and advocate for the relevance of classification research.

Thematic changes in the field are also evident. For instance, the once-consistent "Depth Classification" series has been discontinued. While there is growing interest in newer areas like automatic classification, traditional classification topics now receive considerably less attention. Furthermore, there has been a noticeable decrease in research focused on international classification systems, with more emphasis placed on India’s own Colon Classification (CC), reflecting a national preference. Mapping these thematic shifts is essential not only to understand evolving intellectual trends but also to uncover gaps and underexplored areas that future scholars might address.

Despite the foundational role that classification plays in LIS, the backbone of knowledge organization, it remains significantly under-represented in contemporary research and appears to be on a steady decline. If this trajectory continues, the field itself risks losing touch with one of its most essential intellectual traditions. Therefore, this study serves both as a reflection and a call to action, to revisit, reinvigorate, and reimagine this vital area of study. With renewed focus and commitment, the field can be revitalized to meet the demands of a changing information landscape.

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