

# **CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION OF LIBRARIANS WORKING IN THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES OF PAKISTAN AND AZAD JAMMU AND KASHMIR\***

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## **Introduction**

Every profession in this modern age must continuously adapt itself to the rapidly evolving technological society. Keeping up with the today's constant change and innovation is a challenging task, but one must undertake it to operate successfully in the world. The task is formidable because new information is appearing at an overwhelming rate. The proliferation of knowledge, referred to earlier as the "information explosion" and recently as the "information revolution," is affecting all professionals; but none more than the librarian. As they are located at the center of the blast, they must hasten to implement the advancements in library science in order to handle the mass of new information in all the areas of knowledge. This means that library personnel have a special responsibility to keep themselves up-to-date with developments in their field.

The factors that have promoted discussions of continuing education for librarianship have been: 1) the vast growth of new knowledge; 2) introduction of new technology in libraries; 3) social needs of an increasing highly educated populace; 4) outreach programs to attract new groups of patrons; and 5) changing trends in library services.

Academic libraries have special characteristics and functions of their own, which give the academic librarian a special responsibility for professional growth. The basic purpose of an academic library is to support academic programs. Gates cites that "The primary characteristic of a good academic library is its complete identification with its own institution. The measure of its excellence is the extent to which its resources and services support the institution's objectives."<sup>2</sup> About thirty years later Buckland (1989) echoed this opinion that "The foundations of academic

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Means, "A Study of the Continuing Education Interests of Illinois Community College Library and Learning Center Personnel," *Illinois Libraries* 60 (May 1978).

<sup>2</sup> Jean Key Gates, *Introduction to Librarianship* (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, c1968).

librarianship have two basic elements: (1) the role of library service is to facilitate access to documents; and (2) the mission of an academic library is to support the mission of the academic institution served.”<sup>3</sup>

The academic library should and does promote the necessary means to support the institution’s objectives. These methods require that academic librarians must be willing to go beyond acquiring and making available the usual library materials in establishing innovative library services, such services that may vary from one library to another and from one librarian to another for the basic purpose of translating the institution’s objectives into meaningful services.

Today, academic libraries are heavily influenced by modern technologies. We see changes from the traditional paper materials to electronic media. Moreover, library operations have changed extensively from manual to online practices. Book or card catalogs have been replaced by the more advanced Online Public Access Catalogs (OPACs). The same is true when dealing with indexes and other information retrieving tools. The drastic changes in the information technology are forcing library and information scientists to adopt futuristic approaches. The role of future academic libraries will be decided largely by the dedication and proficiency of their personnel or work force. Thus, academic librarians need to be prepared to face forthcoming changes and unforeseeable future situations.

Since the 1970s, however, CET [Continuing Education and Training] activities have assumed a more urgent priority in the affairs of LIS professional bodies. Accountants, engineers, solicitors, surveyors, midwives, pharmacists, doctors, architects, those in the construction industry, nurses - all have elevated CET into a matter of primary professional concern.

Continuing Education is essential for all library personnel, professional as well as supportive, whether they remain within a position category or are preparing to move into a higher one. Continuing education opportunities include both formal and informal learning situations, and need not be limited to library subjects or the offerings of library schools.

The "continuing education" which leads to eligibility for Senior Librarian or Specialist positions may take any of the forms suggested directly above, so long as the additional education and experience are relevant to the responsibilities of the assignment. To encourage CET library administrators must be supportive and provide opportunities (in the form of leaves, sabbaticals, and released time) for continuing education of their staff.

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<sup>3</sup> Michael K. Buckland, "Foundations of Academic Librarianship," *College and Research Libraries* 50 (July 1989).

A further sign of the growing interest in continuing education for librarians was the July 1971 issue of *Library Trends*, which was entirely devoted to this subject. Margaret Steig wrote in 1980 that "Continuing education become Continuing Education (CE) with capital letters. Articles began to appear in every journal; continuing education achieved the dignity of a subject heading in library literature. We acquired an organization CLENE (Continuing Library Education Network), dedicated to it. Continuing education opportunities proliferated. A multitude of courses, workshops, institutes, seminars, and other formal education experiences have been offered in the last decade."<sup>4</sup>

Continuing professional education is a lifelong learning and is indispensable for professional growth and instrumental for sustaining one's competence. Publication explosion, evolution of new sophisticated information technologies, and highly educated population require special training and education on the part of the librarians to cope with the specialized needs of the growing information society.

Our population is increasingly becoming better educated. It is obvious that corresponding to the quality of education, demand for library services also increases. In an educated society library users demand high level personalized services. All these goals can only be achieved while we keep ourselves up-to-date in information providing techniques, which could be achieved through continuing professional education.

Continuing education can be had through both formal and informal means and it enables a professional to perform his/her role effectively and efficiently. The continuing professional education of librarians is a vital issue throughout the library world; because immense technological developments are causing rapid shifts and changes in the library profession. As well as traditional ways of acquiring, processing, storing and retrieving information have been changed by computers and telecommunication systems. The outcome of these changes has started resulting occupational obsolescence, which is not affordable in librarianship.

### **Analysis of the Need Assessment**

There are three areas of analysis for Continuing Education, which need assessment:

- 1) the information providing environment, rapidly changing with the tremendous advancement of knowledge; development of sophisticated information

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<sup>4</sup> Margaret F. Steig, "Continuing Education and the Reference Librarian in the Academic and Research Library," *Library Journal* 105 (December 15, 1980).

technology for information storage and retrieval; and multifarious users' demands;

- 2) information consumer's needs and his/her desire to update himself/herself; and
- 3) information provider's ability and command in providing cost-effective, accurate and timely information by knowing the exact requirement(s) of learners.

### **University Education**

It has been said that Marx tried to reform society by changing social institutions, and Jesus tried to reform society by changing the hearts of people. In Quran (Holy book of Muslims) the first revelation from God to Prophet Mohammad was an order of *Iqra*..... means read.<sup>5</sup> It indicates the importance of education in Islam. In our age education plays a pivotal role in transforming the society. It is the key to the social, economic, and technological development of a nation. Education is fundamental to social progress and reforms. Education leads society to formulate its own purposes, and directs to organize means and sources to achieve its objectives. The role of university in transforming the society is particularly critical because it educates virtually all the people who are destined for leadership in our society from all walks of life. Its main duty is to prepare leadership through sound liberal learning not only during the period of formal education but also throughout their lives. So university is responsible to turnout well-educated population for the leadership of the nation. Information technology policy of Government of Pakistan says that, "Education determines, more than anything else, a country's prospect for human development and competitiveness. Fortunately, the information revolution offers some extra ordinary opportunities in education".<sup>6</sup>

All universities are associated with three basic objectives:

- a) *Teaching*
- b) *Research*
- c) *Public services*

Teaching passes world's knowledge from generation to generation. It prepares people for different occupations and adds to the human knowledge through research and development. It Research means creating new knowledge and new ideas. In Pakistan, university teachers don't take research seriously. The teachers spend almost all the time in teaching, leaving little or no time for research.

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<sup>5</sup> The Holy Quran: A translation by A.J. Arberry, Surach No. 96.

<sup>6</sup> IT policy of Pakistan 2000, Information Technology Commission, Government of Pakistan. URL [http://www.itcomm.gov.pk/itpolicy\\_august2K/31\\_32.htm](http://www.itcomm.gov.pk/itpolicy_august2K/31_32.htm)

Inadequate budgets and research tools are the major obstacles to research. The third objective of the university is to provide services to community. They are expected to provide assistance in solving community problems like pollution, malnutrition, shelter, etc.

A university library functions to achieve these objectives. It provides print and non-print material to support instructional programs, and to encourage and develop reading habits among its community. The university library also provides material for faculty to prepare their courses of instructions and for research purposes.

In order to know the opinions of the university practicing librarians regarding their post formal professional education activities, a questionnaire will be developed for the librarians. Following are the important questions to be explored through this questionnaire:

**a) Age groups:**

Age groups are very important for two reasons: 1) those illustrate the range of possible nature, behavior, and potential at various points in life; 2) the age groups have an impact on learning and receptivity.

**b) Job Satisfaction:**

It is quite natural that a professional with a satisfied job will be more interested in his/her professional growth. If a professional is not satisfied with the job, employer must take care of it to avoid deterioration in productivity.

**c) Keeping up to date with Literature:**

It is commonly assumed that one of the most effective ways to remain professionally updated is reading professional literature. Respondents will be asked to describe about their reading professional literature in one year, e.g., number of articles, number of books, etc., on library and information science.

**d) Perceived Importance of Continuing Education:**

A list of activities like attending workshops, writing research papers, attending professional meetings, etc., will be provided to the population and they will be asked that how much importance they attach to each activity in their professional development.

**e) Incentives for Continuing Education:**

The interaction between an employee's expectations on the job and what does a supervisor expect of him constitutes the factors which effect the job motivation and productivity. The respondents will be asked to mark factors, which encourage or might encourage them for continuing education.

**f) Obstacles to Continuing Education:**

Respondents will be asked to mention factors, which discourage or might discourage them in future in taking part in continuing education programs.

**g) Providers of Continuing Education:**

Although individuals assume primary responsibility for their own professional growth, continuing education is the result of shared responsibility as well as cooperation and interaction among library education institutions, employers and a wide variety of professional and educational associations. Respondents will be asked to rank the providers of continuing education in order of their perceived importance.

**Significance of the Study**

This study will explore the needs of university librarians in Pakistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and the ways and means to meet the continuing education needs of these librarians. It is expected that the results of this study will be of practical importance to design continuing education programs for the university librarians.

- The study will contribute to the general knowledge of university librarians with special reference to professional development.
- It will define the current practices about continuing education activities in Pakistani and Azad Jammu and Kashmir's library environment.
- It will determine the librarians' needs and preferences for continuing education activities.
- It will identify the obstacles to the continuing education programs.
- It will identify different methods to motivate librarians toward continuing education programs.
- The findings will be important for university administration to take necessary steps for the promotion of continuing education programs among librarians

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