UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES: WORKSHOP AT ISLAMABAD

Dr. Rafia Mohammadally
Associate Prof. & Chairman
Department of Library Science, S.U. Jamshoro.

As of 1983, there were nineteen universities in Pakistan. Before 1977, fifteen universities were established and four more were created between 1980-82.

Since 1979, the overall charge of the universities has lain with the University Grants Commission (UGC), a federal body created for this purpose by the Ministry of Education in Islamabad in 1973. Previously, the universities were supported by the local governments except those situated in the federal capital.

The U.G.C has brought about significant changes in university librarianship, and these will be discussed shortly.

An important recent event in the university library field in Pakistan was the Librarian's Workshop held in Islamabad in July 1980.[1] It was organized by the UGC in collaboration with the British Council. The Workshop was conducted by Mr.D.J. Foskett, Director, Central Library Services, University of London and it afterwards received wide acclaim from the librarians in Pakistan† The chief librarians of the various universities and senior teachers of their library science departments read papers, among others, at this workshop. One of the recommendations offered led to the creation of a Standing Advisory Library Committee (in 1980) by the UGC.[2]

The papers delivered generated much discussion and exchange of views on the situation of university libraries. The main issues raised at the workshop are as follows:

There was a unanimous agreement among the participants of the Workshop on the need to discontinue departmental libraries in the universities of Pakistan.[3] This was for many reasons. First of all, the departmental libraries cause duplication of some material and this, the meagre resources of the library budget, could ill afford.

† The writer met Mr. Foskett in London in August 1980 on his return from Pakistan to London, and a number of issues were raised by him on University Librarianship in Pakistan.

University libraries on an average receive only one to two per cent of the university annual budget.

Another equally valid reason for centralization is the record of the management of departmental libraries. Further, they are run by unqualified staff, and do not meet specialists requirements, nor are they organized on sound lines. However, the existing central university libraries are also unsatisfactory and fit Asheim's general description only too well:

> "The so-called central university library turns out not to be central at all; it contains no central catalogue of the university's library holdings; it performs no centralized processing..... it does not circulate books .... Each of these separate libraries in a university may have its own rules and regulations, its own system - or no system at all - of cataloguing and classification, its own restrictions on use, and complete independence of any centralized administrative oversight. There is seldom co-operation among them for exchange of information, interlibrary loan.[4]

This is unfortunately true. The central university libraries in Pakistan do nothing but acquire and accession books, leaving the rest of the technical processing to the departmental libraries. Hardly any stock-taking takes place later, though there is a superficial annual check.[5]

The participants, speaking on behalf of the teaching staff of the universities, expressed the latter's willingness to give up their departmental libraries (or seminar libraries, as generally called in Pakistan), providing the teaching staff received in exchange better services from the central libraries, preferably by specialist staff.[6]

With regard to specialist staff, it should be noted that the universities generally do not offer any specialised or SDI services since they do not have specialists on their staffs. There are sometimes science graduates either working as librarians or studying for librarianship who are useful, but these are few and far between.

Quoting from the paper read by Dr. Mohammad Ali Kazi on the nature of library services at the workshop Mr. Foskett writes in his report:

> "A high quality of selection is needed to ensure high quality of service. The library must also stimulate research and this depends on indexes abstracts, bibliographies, etc. It is time to be liberated from "Custodianship" and to improve the notion of service; librarians should be looking for their own revolution. But this recognition will not come without evidence provided by statistics of books added, books used, services given"[7]

Mr. Foskett too expressed concern over the traditional services and staff shortages. These and also inadequate refresher courses affected the provision of adequate up-to-date services.

Mr. Foskett significantly refers to the lack of subject specialists in Pakistan which he observed when he visited the university libraries of the country in July 1980. He writes that not many universities had reference librarians. He is very straight forward when he points out that not a single university in Pakistan has an on-line access to public data.[8]

In an analysis of computer facilities Mr. Foskett says that presently in Pakistan, there is no activity worth the name in the use of computers in PASTIC and banks. The QEA University and a few more, have computer centers, the former, which has a departmental library, is engaged in information activities; and the latter, recognising the importance of union lists of serials, is in process of developing them. He makes no secret of the fact that the results are far from satisfactory. He attributes the sorry state to lack of library orientation among the staff of computer specialists and recommends introduction of advanced courses after Master's Degree. He is very candid in observing that computers rarely figure in teaching programmes for library schools and rightly feels that the change in outlook has become imperative in the present time. He means thereby switching over from traditional outlook to automation. He supports his views by giving concrete examples of lack of uniformity in classification and cataloguing between central and departmental libraries of the same university.

He is of the view that strong concept of standardization is fundamental to basic achievements. Mr. Foskett has very rightly drawn the attention of the authorities concerned to take cognizance of recurring expenditure so far as space & airconditioning are concerned. While emphasizing computer technology as indispensable to control the information explosion, he also recommends internal telephone system anticipating that the UGC would effectively consider the installation of telex and the integration of the university libraries of Pakistan with an on-line system.[9]

Regarding shortages of staff, Foskett noted that highly qualified staff had left to work overseas leaving many librarians' positions vacant at professional level, which could not be filled in by junior librarians. Opportunities for higher education within the country are non-existent; and it is feared that further candidates sent abroad may not return. Therefore posts requiring qualities of leadership were vacant affecting the services and image of the profession.

Foskett proposed a solution and promised to pursue it on his return to London, i.e. the organization of a short but intensive course in modern methods of information storage and retrieval. He further explains that vacant posts in the libraries of Pakistan should not continue to remain unfulfilled. He suggests the improvement of qualifications of such individuals as have an aptitude for the profession. They could then be appointed in vacant positions. According to him short courses conducted in London or elsewhere in the U.K., cannot serve as a substitute for enhancement of qualifications; they could however be a step-forward in identifying deserving persons. It may take some time, as it is felt by him, but it will no doubt have far reaching effects in as much as, it will inspire others to follow their example, once the qualified people are encouraged to stay in their own country and apply themselves to their work whole-heartedly.[10]

The Workshop in question, which is the second of its kind to bring about librarians and library teaching staff to one place (to be divided into four study groups to consider specific questions and report back at the final session)[11] was certainly a success. The first workshop actually called Library Staff Training Programme was equally a success, though meant for a different clientele. It was held in 1977 by the British Council in Lahore for the staff of the British Council Libraries all over Pakistan.[12]

As a result of the Workshop in 1980, an intensive training programme for selected Pakistani university librarians was held in Loughborough for a period of three months in mid-1982. About seven librarians attended the training programme which required the submission of a report from each participant in the third and final month, stating the current position in the libraries represented by the participants and recommending changes.[13]

Yet another training programme has taken place. This was held in Lahore and organized jointly by Loughborough University; the UGC, Pakistan; and the British Council. It was a refresher course for three weeks for senior university librarians, and was held in March–April, 1983.

Such workshops provide economical and eifficient training and enable participation by the largest number of staffs possible.

In fact, it is suggested that members of the profession who leave Pakistan to work overseas, should be invited back to conduct courses in collaboration with existing teaching staff at home, together with one or two specialists provided by the British Council. These training programmes should not be exclusive to university librarians, and should include librarians from other libraries. These should also take place on a regular basis over a number of years.

In a meeting held in March 1982 of a study group on the grogrammes of university libraries,[14] attended by the Chairman of the UGC; Representatives of the British Council, the Director of the Department of Libraries; and Universities' Librarians Islamabad, the Chairman of the UGC had a few suggestions to make with respect to the training of university librarians, i.e.

(a) the provision of two fellowships, under C.O.T (Central Overseas Training) Scheme, for postgraduate training/education in library and information Science.

(b) the UGC may consider meeting travel expenses of future trainees subject to the condition that the British Council meets expenditure within the U.K.

(c) the launching of a regular two-week in-service training programme for librarians in colleges and universities. Such a course could be offered in the department of library science in a selected university. The programme should be conducted by the "resource persons" trained abroad with specialists provided by the British Council.

The above suggestions seem to be the answer to a number of problems: they should constitute part of a sustained policy. Item C), a different category, has also the advantage of training more staff at one time and more cheaply, though perhaps for too short a period at a time. However, such courses should not be regarded as substitutes for other kinds of training suggested by the UGC above.

Then there is the vexed question of the librarians' personal accountability for book losses. This iniquitous rule was loudly condemned at the Workshop and equally so at the various Pakistan Library Association national conferences. And so was it brought up at the Loughborough University Training Programme. This rule of personal accountability precludes the proper utilization of libraries because it implies the imposition of closed access, in most university libraries at least.

Professor Havard-Williams, Head of Library and Information Studies Department at Loughborough University in his report to the UGC on Pakistan Universities' Library problems, raised, *interalia,* the following two important points. One on book losses and the other on the provision of library budgets. On the first point, the Professor writes that in lending libraries loss of books is inevitable. These losses occur on account of large scale circulation, wear & tear of even pilferage. There are instances of staff likely to be equally guilty of this. It would therefore be advisable for the administration to make-up the losses. There is only one way out: Losses should be accepted as a fact of life. The practice of deducting the cost of missing books from the

salaries of the librarians must be done away with in Pakistan. Unless this is done, libraries would seem to teachers and students more of a farce than a fact. He considers his recommendation as the first recommendation he would make in this vital issue.[15]

Budgetary provisions for the university libraries in Pakistan are usually made on an annual basis. The Loughorough course participants voiced their disapproval at this, and Havard-Williams makes a very reasonable comment on it in his report:

> Financial problem in libraries is that it is very extravagant in the long run to have budgets strictly controlled in year periods. A library needs a running budget, in which it is possible to carry over balances (deficits) from one year to the next. It is for instance often much more economical to order journals with a two or three or even four-year subscription. Multi-year subscriptions are often offered at advantageous rates over the current annual subscription. When the consequences of inflation are taken into account, a multi-year subscription will turn out to be even more econmical. Subscription rates for large sets, which may appear over several years, are often a 'good buy', but a librarian who has a strict 'year budget' will not be likely to take advantage of it because he is unable to see ahead and budget over a period, balancing one year against another"[16]

Two other areas that were discussed by this writer with Mr. Foskett, included accommodation in university libraries and periodicals' collections.

As far as the accommodation facilities are concerned these are quite satisfactory, as most of the university libraries are housed in new library buildings specially built for the purpose. However, airconditioning and photo copying/microfilm facilities are not generally available. Where xerox machines are available, they remain out of order for most of time because of high maintenance costs and the paucity of repair services.

In all these libraries the periodicals' section was found to be particularly weak especially in science and technology. This prompted a suggestion from Mr. Foskett that a union catalogue be prepared by a special appointed working party of three to four members to enable an assessment of the present intake, and to formulate the streamlining of future acquisitions, the acquisitions eventually forming an effective resource-sharing stock.

The librarians made a number of recommendations, but the UGC full-time member expressed himself as quoted by Foskett in the concluding remarks of his report saying that he had not seen enough about what he felt primary functions & tasks which the librarians faced. These according to him comprised promoting reading habits as well as the use of libraries among the clientele. He stressed the importance of maximum use of libraries by students, saying that it was for the librarians to spark interest among the teachers and students to saunter to the libraries; and for achieveing this end they shall have to work ceaselessly, if at all a reasonable functional efficiency level is to be attained and maintained.[17]

Finally, on the appointment of the Standing Advisory Library Committee by the UGC Foskett feared that it might degenerate into a talking shop[18] or to borrow Parker's words: the discussion might tend to be acrimonious and unconstructive.[19]

Conclusion

Some specific conclusions are appropriate here. There are certain requirements that are very necessary.

Physical Facilities: To start with, most of the libraries need to improve their physical conditions. Proper ventilation, seating arrangements, and air-conditioning (or at least good ventilation) must be assured. Air-conditioning in particular would provide an added incentive drawing students to the libraries.

User–Oriented Services: Library services need to be geared to users' requirements. User-surveys and statistics should be maintained in the libraries to review services accordingly.

Open–access is a pre-requisite to the provision of library and information services. Open-access must be complemented by proper security measures and the unnecessary imposition on the librarians by which they are made responsible for book-losses through payment out of personal salaries must be abolished. Negligence on the part of librarian can be checked in other ways, but making them pay out of their pockets will hold back improvements of the library services, for the librarians will be likely to protect books against users, rather than encourage them to be taken out.

Library Staff: They should be more forth-coming and show more leadership. Most of those in service seriously require refresher-courses at all levels, while some really need to be transferred to other departments because they are clearly unsuited to the duties to which they have been assigned. Moreover, intelligent development of staff and adequate in-service training must be a continuing process.

Reprographic Facilities: This has become a major requirement in libraries and needs to be recognized. With the exception of a few libraries, photocopying facilities are nil. Where provided, maintenance services are inadequate and lethargically run.

Collections in terms of ***periodical literature,*** reference works and bibliographical aids are most unsatisfactory in almost all the libraries in Pakistan.

Periodical literature, though absolutely essential in academic and special institutions, is poorly covered. Resource-sharing seems the only possible answer because Journals are expensive. However, a basic collection of the most important periodicals needs to be duplicated and placed in every such library. These need to be held in the main central library, instead of dividing them among the seminar libraries.

Reference Collections: are to all intents and purposes unsatisfactory in all the libraries in Pakistan. Every library should have an adequate set of updated reference books. There is no alternative. Duplication is inevitable and perfectly normal, for each library must have its reference collection. The cost may be high, but it must be met.

The Book Bank (or, in effect, the National Book Foundation) could make arrangements with publishers abroad to supply multiple copies at subsidised rates. In general, however, all reference material will not be similar in the case of specialised universities and the specialised institutes of the universities.

Bibliographical tools: a further expense but essential for each library provides the outlay necessary for the purchase of bibliographical tools such as indices, abstracts and trade lists. Only from such publications can adequate book selection be made.

Theses collection: No matter how many facts, figures, actions or occurances are generated daily in the country under the label 'information', very little is done to record anything and make it accessible. This includes ephemera, official publications, reports, research projects, thesis and so on.

The first step is to compile a number of directories on:

library and information centres in the country;
research in progress;
reports, proceedings;
theses,
commercial and professional bodies.

Unless information produced in the country is not recorded, duplication is very likely to occur.

For example, let us take the academic theses; a standard procedure does not exist for recording them when they are submitted to the various academic institutions, so that for example it is difficult to know what one university is engaged upon as opposed to another. Not only are the titles unrecorded, but the documents themselves (Ph.D and M. Phil theses and M.A dissertations or term papers) are not regularly deposited and preserved in their universities' libraries nor in any other central depository. Some independent efforts have been made and few lists of theses have been cyclostyled and theses/dissertations stored in their respective university departments. But this is not sufficient.

The University Grants Commission of Pakistan should implement a policy for the registration of such documents, particularly the Ph.D and M. Phil theses. A central depository as well as each individual university library must receive a copy of all theses produced. With respect to M.A Term Papers/Dissertations departments concerned and the university library should hold one copy each (as in any case students are required to submit two copies).

Moreover, Pakistani nationals submitting Ph.D/M.Phill theses abroad should also make available one copy to the central depository (the UGC), especially those candidates drawing Pakistan Government Scholarships. This rule could be extended to cover the final work of Pakistani scholars of other grant-awarding institutions such as the British Council, Unesco, Ford Foundation; their work should also be recorded and made available by or through these bodies, whose co-operation should be sought for this purpose.

This is a field that has so far remained untouched in Pakistan. As a result, not only are scholars unaware of what work has been done, but duplication of effort may well be taking place.

References

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3. National Workshop for University Librarians: Report by D.J. Foskett. (The Workshop was organized jointly by the U.G.C and the British Council, held in Islamabad, 5-7 July 1980). pp. 1–2.

4. Ashiem, Lester Libraries in the developing countries, Urbana, Chicago, Univ. of Illinois, 1966, pp. 5–6.

5. Discussion with one of the participants (who attended the Loughborough Training Course held from 17 April–17 July, 1982 for Pakistani Librarians on University Library Problems). He was generalising for the Universities as emerged in their discussion at the course.

6. National Workshop for University Librarians op.cit.

7. Ibid, pp. 7-8 (Kazi, M.A. 'Integration of University Library Services with Educational Programme of a University', Paper read at the Workshop by Dr. Kazi, now ex-Chairman of the Department of Library Science, University of Sind, Jamshoro).

7. Ibid. p. 5.

8. Ibid., p. 20.

9. Ibid., p. 15.

10. Ibid., p. 6.

11. British Council Library Staff Training Seminar held in Lahore, Pakistan 14-25 March, 1977.

13. The Loughborough Training Programme came about by the efforts of Mr. Foskett, in continuation of the suggestions made by him in July 1980. It was again a joint U.G. C.-British Council Project and was held during 17 April—31 July, 1982,

14. "Group Meets to discuss library problems", **Higher Education News:** U.G.C., 11 (4) April 1982. p. 1.

15. Havard-Williams, P. 'Pakistan's University Library problems' (Report). Loughborough and Information Studies, pp. 1-2 (copy of the Report given to the writer by one of the participants Mr. I. Leghari at the Loughborough Training Programme (17 April, 17 July, 1982), who is a colleague from the University of Sind, Jamshoro.

16. Ibid., pp. 2—3.

17. National Workshop for University Librarians Op. cit., p. 13.

18. Ibid., p. 14.

19. Discussion with Mr. J.S. Parker on Library Problems in Bangladesh, August 1982.