

University Libraries in Pakistan

Muhammad Zulqarnain Akhtar*

Abstract

The paper aims to examine the development and growth of the university libraries in Pakistan. It also examines the obstacles in the provision of better library services in the universities of the country. The study is based on an extensive review of the available literature, personal observations of the author and discussions with the senior library professionals. It was found that the situation of university libraries in Pakistan is a satisfactory compared to other types of libraries, but they are not meeting the required standards and are not participating in the universities' educational and research programs satisfactorily.

Keywords: *University libraries, Pakistan, Universities, Organizational models, Library users*

Introduction

Pakistan, officially the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, located in South Asia, is a developing country that was born on 14 August, 1947, as a result of the partition of the British India. Pakistan is the sixth most populous country in the world and is the second most populous country with a Muslim majority. According to the 1998 Census, the total population of Pakistan was 132.35 million (which is estimated to have reached 159.48 million in 2007), and increasing at an alarming rate of 2.69 percent per annum. Pakistan's 796,095 square kilometers of territory include a wide variety of landscapes, from arid deserts to lush, green valleys to stark mountain peaks.

As regards higher education institutions, there are 114 universities and degree awarding institutes (DAIs) in Pakistan as (Higher Education Commission, 2006):

* Librarian., International Islamic University, e-mail: akhtarzulqarnain@gmail.com

(Table 1): Number of Higher Education Institutions in Pakistan

<i>Cities</i>	<i>Higher Education Institutions</i>
Islamabad:	13
Punjab:	37
Sindh:	35
NWFP:	20
Balochistan:	06
AJK:	03
Total:	114

Note: 55 in Private Sector; 59 (50 Universities+ 09 DAIs) in Public Sector

There are 12 universities (09 public+03 private) in Pakistan which have LIS programs at PG level.

Importance of University Libraries

The reconstruction and prosperity of nations depends upon the number of educated people. It is the reason that at all stages around the world, education enjoys top priority. University education, which is the source of the production of intelligent and capable minds to shoulder the responsibilities of national reconstruction, receive continues to great attention and emphasis.

University libraries play a vital role in the life welfare and strength of the nation. They shoulder the responsibility for producing not only human resources, but also "to produce creative thinkers" who can solve the problems faced by the nation (Memon, 1983).

This is one of the main objectives of university education today. The quality of education and research depends to a large extent upon the quality of library services. University libraries today play a very important role in making university programs successful and meaningful. The services which a university library is expected to provide to its patrons and the role it is to play in higher education and research is now well known.

The role of university libraries has changed due to the increase in free online databases available on the internet, digital libraries, and search engines like Google etc. They now have to compete with the digital sources of knowledge available on the internet. Due to this competition university libraries

continuously need to improve their services and to meet the changing information needs of their academic communities.

History of University Libraries in Pakistan

The history of university libraries in Pakistan goes back 99 years when the University of the Punjab was established by a Special Act of Incorporation by the Government of India in 1882. In fact, this was the fourth university established in the subcontinent after Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras which established in 1857. Until had been 1904, these universities remained only affiliating and examining bodies. They did not direct teaching work but contented themselves by testing the educated in affiliated colleges.

The Indian Universities Act of 1904 made an important change and enlarged the function of the universities from merely examining bodies to teaching institutions. It laid down "the provision for the instruction of the students, with power to appoint university professors and lecturers, to hold and manage educational endowments, to erect, equip and maintain university libraries, laboratories and museums".

This enabled the establishment of the first university library in this part of the sub-continent in Lahore at Punjab University in 1908. The Punjab University remained the only university up to 1947 when Sindh University was established on 14 April, 1947 at Karachi, and shifted to Hyderabad in 1951 (Hanif, 1981). The Punjab University Library was headed by an honorary librarian. Abdul Moid was appointed first librarian of the Sindh University Library in 1948 and remained there until 1952. The first university established following the birth of Pakistan was the University of Peshawar in 1950, but its library was not established until 1951. Maulana Abdul Sabuh Qasmi joined Peshawar University and did M.L.Sc. degree from Western Reserve University, Ohio (USA) in 1956. The University of Karachi was established in 1951, but its library was established in the next year.

Most of the university libraries in Pakistan were established in the same year as the relevant university. Whenever a university is planned to be established, development of the library is undertaken before anything else. However, in 33% of Pakistani universities, importance of the library was not perceived by the academic planners, which has been quite a serious shortcoming (Ali, 1990).

The public sector universities in Pakistan are financed and supported by the Government through Higher Education Commission (HEC), while private universities are managed and supported by private organizations and individuals. However HEC also provides funds to private universities.

Situation of University Libraries in Pakistan

Modern library services in the territories now constituting Pakistan began in 1915 with the arrival of Asa Don Dickinson, an American librarian and a pupil of Melvil Dewey. His goal at the University of the Punjab was "to organize the university library and to teach modern library methods to the librarians of the Punjab. He thus established the first library school in Asia at Punjab University, Lahore in 1915. The impact of this school was tremendous on subsequent library developments throughout British India. From 1915 onwards the city of Lahore from became the centre of library activities. Following independence, however, library development was largely neglected due to other, more pressing problems. The twenty-three universities existing in 1989 have expanded to 90 by the present day (HEC, 2007).

Pakistani university libraries are among the most advanced libraries in the country. The ten universities existing in 1981 grew to 23 by 1989; and their more than 140 libraries held almost 2,900,000 volumes, accounting for over a fifth of all books in Pakistani libraries. They grew at more than 60,000 volumes a year in the 1980s, keeping pace with the growth of the student population. The government's University Grants Commission funds libraries at all public universities. Notable central university collections are at the University of the Punjab Library (opened 1906; 769,000 volumes); the Mahmud Hussain Library, Karachi University (founded 1952; 255,000 volumes); Peshawar University (1951; 200,000 volumes); Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad (1965; 150,000 volumes); and Sindh University (opened 1949; 137,800 volumes). The Lahore University of Management Sciences (8,000 volumes) and Shah Abdul Latif University, Khairpur (19,200 volumes) opened in 1985; and Hamdard University (80,000 volumes) opened at Madinat al-Hikmat in 1989 (Khalid, Mahmood & Willson, 1997).

Khurshid (1993) estimates total collection of university libraries as 29,00,000 volumes, more than a fifth of all of the books in Pakistani libraries.

According to Khan (1995 & 1996) total collection of the university libraries was 3,296,517 volumes of books, 4505 periodical titles, 32,360 manuscripts and 23,182 items in microform. He points out that university libraries maintain this material to meet the study and research requirements of 56,402 students and 8,708 faculty members and research scholars. In 1994 there were fifty books per reader, compared with 112 books per student in the U.K. "Inadequacy of materials in Pakistani university libraries can further be elaborated by the fact that the total collection of all the twenty government-funded university libraries is one-third of the collections of a single library of Yale University in the USA, which alone contains as many as 9,937,751 volumes". The ratio of professional to non-professional library staff ranges from 25:82 to 2:19.

Based upon a financial survey of fourteen libraries, Khan (1995) found that the average amount assigned to a university library is hardly 3% of the overall budget of the university. Moreover, indexing and abstracting services are almost non-existent in the university libraries in Pakistan. Even catalogues are not up-to-date. This is perhaps due to lack of interest among library administrators and also due to a lack of funding.

According to a survey of fifteen Pakistani university libraries conducted by Ali in 1990, there are thirty-nine volumes per user. According to Ali (1992) the financial position of university libraries is very poor. Except of the Karachi University, the universities allocate less than 5% of their total budgets for libraries.

Qureshi (1990) points out that several university libraries in Pakistan have their own buildings, but the maintenance of these buildings has been neglected. In some buildings there is no proper arrangement for lighting and ventilation.

Punjab University, the oldest in the country, has thirty-eight libraries, including 37 departmental libraries and one central library, which is the best repository of manuscripts. Punjab University Central Library is the largest library in the country, having more than 769,000 volumes items in its collection.

According to survey by Khalid, Mahmood & Willson in 1997, out of 19 libraries, 16 (84 %) use a single cataloguing code while 3 (16 %) use combined codes. All 16 using a single code have adopted the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR). The 3 using combined codes have adopted AACR as one of them. All libraries use AACR either alone or in combination (4 still use AACRI). 2 libraries use the International Standard Bibliographic Description (ISBD) only in combination, while 17 (89%) use a single classification scheme and 2 (11%) use combined schemes. Of the 17 using a single scheme, 16 use Dewey Decimal Classification while 1 uses another. The 2 using combined schemes have adopted DDC as one of them.

Organizational Models

Presently there are four organizational models of library service in Pakistani universities.

These are as follows:

a) **A Strong Central Library:** In this system a strong central library solely operates in the university. Examples of this type of organization are to be found at professional universities, such as University of Agriculture, Faisalabad; University of Engineering and Technology, Lahore; Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad; and Mehran University of Science & Technology, Jamshoro, Sindh.

b) **Central Library with Branch/Campus Libraries:** In this model, a central library along with branch/campus libraries operate in a university. Example of this model can be found at the Islamia University of Bahawalpur, where one strong central library along with two campus libraries operate in the university. The central library acquires and processes all material and maintains some material with itself and distributes some material to the campus libraries. The transfer and posting of staff are also administered by the central library. The central library operates in the New Campus and caters to the needs of all departments in the Campus, while two campus/branch libraries operate in the Old Campus and the Railway Road Campus and fulfill the educational and research needs of the students, teachers and researchers at those campuses.

c) **Decentralized Library Service, with no Co-ordination:** This is the most popular organizational pattern found in Pakistan. In this model, all teaching departments have their own departmental libraries, totally independent of the central library. All such libraries are under the jurisdiction of their respective departments and even the technical operations are carried out in each library separately from the central library. Examples of this type of organization are to be found at the University of the Punjab, Lahore; Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad; and the International Islamic University, Islamabad.

d) **A Central Library along with the Departmental/Seminar Libraries:** In this system, central library is responsible for acquisition, technical processing, and servicing of the materials to meet the instructional and research needs of entire academic community on the campus. However, a certain number of books are lent to various teaching departments on the request of the Chairman of the teaching department to meet the immediate need of relevant student and teachers. The universities of Karachi and Sindh follow this pattern.

At some places, various seminar/departmental units of the university libraries have been grouped into three major divisions, that is, administrative services, technical services, and readers' services.

Services Extended by University Libraries

The services extended by most of the university libraries in Pakistan are:

1. Bibliographic and reader services
2. Microfilming of rare materials
3. Lending services
4. Internet services
5. Maintenance of clipping files
6. Photocopy and microfilming services
7. Digital library services
8. Inter-library cooperation on personal basis

9. Organization of seminars, lectures and book exhibitions etc.
10. Publication of accession lists, select and special bibliographies, indexes etc.
11. Participation in professional and academic activities

Problems Faced by University Libraries in Pakistan

University libraries in Pakistan are facing a lot of problems. The following are most significant:

Inadequate library Collections: Most of the University libraries in Pakistan have inadequate library collections. Majority of university libraries in the country have less than 2,00,000 volumes each. Public sector university libraries have better collections than private sector university libraries. Most of the private sector university libraries have collections of less than 50,000 volumes.

This reveals that most of our university libraries have inadequate collections and are poorly stocked as compared to libraries not only in the West but even in some other developing countries.

However, the Higher Education Commission National Digital Library Program has made it easier for university libraries to provide researchers with access to international scholarly literature based on electronic (online) delivery, providing access to more than 20,000 high quality, peer-reviewed international journals, databases and articles across a wide range of disciplines. Most of the university libraries in Pakistan benefit fully from this facility and provide free digital library services to their users.

Problems in Acquisition of Material: The university libraries require scholarly books of research value, most of which are published abroad. These books are not generally available in the local market and orders must be placed with booksellers. The booksellers are not interested in procuring one or two copies of a book and books published by little publishers, research institutions and professional associations because they offer less commission.

The problem in the acquisition of periodicals is even more severe. We receive only 70 to 75% of the periodicals ordered. In the acquisition of local publications, the main problem is the complete absence of book-selection aids and book reviewing journals as well as the current national bibliography. We cannot know what has been published and by whom (Hanif, 1981).

Lack of Funds: This is the most serious problem of the present time because of the country's economic problems during recent years. The lack of funds has badly affected the quality of the resources, particularly in the procurement of reference and serial literature from abroad.

Mahmood (as cited in Haider, 2004) in a literature review of twenty-seven references on the subject concluded that "there has never been any accepted

formula for library funding in Pakistan". "Formulas mostly used for allocation of funds in academic libraries", he reports, "include a fixed percentage of the total budget of the institution; according to size and age of the library collection; and an allocation according to the number and academic level of students, teachers and research fellows in an institution".

The proportion and the means of determining of funding vary from university to university. A review of the acquisitions budget shows a downward trend. In brief, the history of university libraries has always been characterized by financial stringency.

Lack of Competent Staff: The lack of competent staff is another problem faced by university libraries in Pakistan. Each year, the country's twelve library schools (Nine Public and Three Private) turn out about 300-400 fresh graduates with Master's degrees. M.Phil. leading to Ph.D. Programs in Library and Information Science have also been started at some universities of Pakistan, since 2005. But the recruitment of the competent individuals to hold top managerial positions is a major problem faced by university libraries. The reason is the migration of many of our best librarians to the Middle East, Singapore and Africa. University libraries in Pakistan have suffered more than other type of library from this migration of senior professionals.

Many of our university libraries are managed without chief librarians, and are headed by deputy librarians, and some university libraries are even managed by the heads of the LIS departments. The main reason behind this situation is the lack of qualified staff. There is an acute shortage of Ph.D. degree holders in the Pakistani library community.

Lack of Cooperation: The importance of inter-library cooperation cannot be overemphasized. This is the age of international librarianship and information networks. There is no concept of resource sharing in most of the university libraries in Pakistan. Most of the librarians in our universities are reluctant to share their library resources with other libraries. They consider it a difficult job. As a result university libraries are to fulfill the needs of their users. The fear of loss of books is another reason for non-cooperation among libraries.

Inadequate Physical Facilities: The importance of proper and adequate physical facilities within which all the functions of a library are carried out cannot be overemphasized. Unfortunately, this has been a problem in Pakistan. No work has been done systematically in Pakistan on the architectural aspects of libraries. No survey has been done so far to evaluate the functional efficiency of library buildings. Most of the university libraries in Pakistan have old furniture and fixtures with the result that library users are not comfortable when working in the library.

No Weeding Policy: The university libraries in Pakistan mostly contain out-dated materials. There is no weeding policy followed by university libraries

in Pakistan so that out-dated material is not replaced by newer material. Hence readers' needs are not completely fulfilled due to out-dated materials.

Limited Use of Information and Communication Technologies: Limited use of information and communication technologies by the university libraries of Pakistan is another problem. Computerized information processing is still in its early stages in university libraries.

According to a survey conducted by Ramzan in 2001, only 23% of the 244 respondents have computers in their work place. At present, computers are used in our university libraries only for a few information activities. A few university libraries have made use of computers for certain tasks, such as indexing,

periodical holding, administrative correspondence etc. Some university libraries are making use of computers for SDI and Current Awareness Services.

Low Morale among Library Staff: The lack of devotion to work on the part of library staff is also a problem faced by university libraries in Pakistan. This results in the poor library services and creates an environment of dissatisfaction. Patrons' needs are not fulfilled and they became reluctant to go into the library and benefit from its resources.

Absence of Reference and Information Services: The absence of reference and information services in the most of our university libraries is another problem. Reading room and lending services are also not satisfactorily supplied by our university libraries. A few libraries have succeeded in organizing some kind of reference section.

Users not Conversant with the Use of Library: There are no library orientation programs in most of the university libraries in Pakistan. As a result users do not become conversant with the use of library. Instructing new entrants in the use of library is one of the most important problems faced by the university libraries in Pakistan.

Non-availability of Standards: Non-availability of library standards is another problem faced by the university libraries in Pakistan. There are no university library standards formulated by any professional association or other organization in Pakistan. As a result there is no uniformity in the processes and services of the university libraries in Pakistan.

Recommendations

If we want to educate for the future we must change our environments. Our universities should become research-oriented. The climate of our university libraries must be improved. We need better buildings, increases in library budgets, regular funding and more qualified staff. Also we have to put things in a proper perspective. The most careful attention is to be paid to book selection

(Haq, 1999).

Following are the recommendations for the improvement of the university libraries services in Pakistan:

1. A union catalogue should be compiled by the university libraries in Pakistan. This would record the resources of university libraries within the country and will help in sharing of resources when required. This catalogue should be maintained by the HEC library at Islamabad or at any other university library.

2. Out-dated material should be replaced by newer material. A weeding policy for out-dated material should be formulated by the Pakistan Library Association or any other organization and it must be followed by the university libraries in Pakistan.

6. Instead of the acquisition of all material, the libraries may be assigned to specialize in areas, subjects and languages and made 'Centres of Excellence'. Other libraries could share the resources by Inter-library Loan (Hanif, 1981).

7. To deal successfully with the financial problems, there is an urgent need to create the culture of cooperation. A beginning towards this could be made through the formation of committees, groups, and project teams for creation of practical cooperation among libraries at the local level (Haider, 2004).

8. The educational curricula in our universities should be changed and improved. We must rethink our educational philosophy.

9. University library standards should be formulated by Pakistan Library Association or a similar organization.

10. Staff exchange programs should be introduced within the university libraries so that these may be able to get benefit from the expertise of competent professionals of other universities.

11. To attract suitably qualified and talented persons, the status of the university library staff should be raised.

12. University libraries in Pakistan should be made pleasant and comfortable attractive so that the students and researchers can make full use of their resources and services.

13. There should be an arrangement for the marketing of library services within the universities.

14. In-service refresher courses, continuing education programs, lectures and seminars should be conducted in the university libraries.

15. Library professionals should be sent abroad for training so that they may become familiar with library systems prevailing in other countries of the world.

Conclusion

The investigation of university libraries in Pakistan presents a gloomy picture. University libraries in Pakistan face a lot of problems. As a result, the needs of the users are not fulfilled efficiently. However, the situation of university libraries is better than other types of libraries in Pakistan. There are also some good university libraries in the country which are comparable to libraries in developed countries.

The Higher Education Commission (HEC) is playing effective role in the improvement of university libraries in Pakistan. Presently, the HEC has launched many schemes for funding university libraries. As a result, the situation of university libraries in Pakistan has improved to some extent

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