

## Undergraduate LIS Education in Pakistan: an Overview

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### Abstract

The paper gives an account of undergraduate level library and information science education in Pakistan including independent certificate courses, an optional subject at intermediate and bachelor level, and bachelor program of Allama Iqbal Open University. The paper is based on the literature review and personal communications with selected professionals. There appeared gap in local literature regarding contemporary state of undergrad level education. The review of literature and senior professionals suggested that radical changes are necessary in policies, programs and curricula of different programs at undergraduate level to raise the quality of education.

*Keywords: Library education-Undergraduate; Library and information science education; Training of paraprofessional library staff; Allama Iqbal Open University; Pakistan*

### Introduction

For centuries librarianship was considered an apprenticeship requiring some practical training within the library and formal education was not considered necessary. The invention of printing press in the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century resulted in mass book production. Collection size of libraries began to grow rapidly. Hence, the need for more trained librarians was felt.

However, the emergence of library education as a distinct discipline at university level started in 1886 at the University of Gottingen in Germany. Columbia College, now known as Columbia University, was second to start library education program which was designed by Melvil Dewey in 1887. The University of the Punjab, Lahore has the distinction

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to be the third university in the world and trend setter in subcontinent that started library education and training in 1915 (Qarshi, 2006).

LIS education is now offered at all levels from undergraduate to PhD in the world. While graduate and post graduate education aims to prepare library professionals and experts, undergraduate LIS education trains the paraprofessional staff. It also provides basic education for the future library professionals.

Based on the literature review and personal communications with experts, this paper aims to review the development of LIS education at undergraduate level after 1947, and to explore the present scenario. It also identifies weaknesses of the system in order to furnish suggestions for improvement of the quality.

### **Development of LIS Education at Undergraduate Level**

Pakistan came into existence in 1947. Government had gross challenges ahead, so education sector could not get due attention of the authorities. Despite certain constraints, library educators and professionals made commendable efforts for the promotion of library education at postgraduate level. Little attention was paid to the library education at undergraduate level. Following is a preview of the undergraduate LIS education status in Pakistan. It comprised of following three forms.

1. Certificate courses in library science
2. Library science as an optional subject
3. AIOU's Bachelor of Library and Information Science

#### *1. Certificate courses*

Certificate courses are generally offered by regional professional associations. These courses of three to six months duration are designed for paraprofessional staff working in libraries and usually consist of the core subjects which are taught by part-time teachers. The medium of instruction is Urdu which is the national language of Pakistan. Students of these courses mostly depend upon lectures, notes or some elementary textbooks in Urdu language (Haider, 1981).

Punjab Library Association introduced certificate course at undergraduate level in 1948. This was the correspondence course

started at Lahore. The pattern of this course was the same as conducted by British Library Association (Khurshid, 1992). This course continued till March 1951 and there were no facilities for library education and training in Pakistan until 1952 (Siddiqui, 1976). Haider (1996) narrates the situation of libraries and library education, when Pakistan came into existence in the following words:

The migration of Hindu library workers to India made the situation worse leaving no alternative for the existing libraries except to close their doors. Contrary to this only few Indian Muslim librarians opted for Pakistan. There existed an acute shortage of qualified manpower. This was most seriously felt at Karachi, then the seat of the Government, where the various ministries had build up libraries. To meet this deficiency Karachi Library Association, formed in 1949 at the initiative of some migrant librarians, started in 1952, a certificate course of four months duration. (p.213)

L.C. Key came in 1955 as a Colombo Plan consultant to the Government of Pakistan. He also recommended to initiate certificate courses for the training of sub-professionals with the assistance of University of the Punjab (Khurshid, 1992), but his recommendations were never implemented.

Pakistan Bibliographical Working Group (PBWG) in Karachi started a six month duration undergraduate course titled as "Diploma in Special Librarianship and Bibliography" in 1960. Confusion was created due to its title as it was declared diploma course. At that time three universities (University of the Punjab, University of Karachi and University of Peshawar) were also conducting a one year Post Graduate Diploma Course in Library Science. The diploma holders of PBWG joining the profession demanded same pay scales which were granted to the librarians having diploma from universities. This confusion prevailed till 1973. Pakistan Library Association (PLA) formulated standards in 1972 for granting accreditation and pressurized PBWG to change the name of this course. PBWG then changed the name of the course to Higher Certificate in Librarianship (Khurshid, 1992).

Jamia Institute of Education started a training program for teacher librarians at Karachi in 1961. The duration of this course was six weeks. PLA sponsored this course for one year. It started again in 1966

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in collaboration with the Department of Library Science, University of Karachi and continued till 1972. The duration of this program was changed from six weeks to two months and then to three months in 1969. PLA authorized the Central Public Library Bahawalpur in 1961 to conduct a certificate course to meet the needs of libraries. The course, designed for junior librarians, could not survive longer. Only 10 people were awarded certificates (Khurshid, 1979).

PLA planned to initiate a certificate course in Lahore through Punjab Library Association in 1962 for undergraduates. The Certificate in Library Science (CLS) was started in Lahore. Mian Altaf Shaukat was the Director of this course and devoted his whole life for successfully running it for more than 35 years. Initially the class was held once a year but due to increased demand of trained paraprofessional staff, Punjab Library Association decided, in 1973, to start two sessions of six month duration each (Punjab Library Association, 2003).

Federal Library Association started a certificate course of six month duration in the city of Rawalpindi to meet the needs of paraprofessionals for the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The course was started in cooperation with Pakistan National Centre in 1972 and was provisionally accredited by Pakistan Library Association (Khurshid, 1979). An Institute of Library Science was established in Karachi in 1973 to conduct undergraduate courses. It offered courses at two levels i.e. Certificate and Junior Diploma in Library Science but it failed to complete even one session. Pakistan-American Cultural Centre started three month Library Science course in 1974. This was an adult education program and only 11 students were admitted (Khurshid, 1979).

Professional commitment and dedication of Mian Altaf Shaukat influenced librarians like Mr. Ahad Siddiqui, Mr. Muhammad Rafique Chaudhry and Mr. Mahboob Hussain Khan. They motivated Mian Altaf Shaukat to start CLS training class at Rawalpindi also to meet the demand of trained paraprofessional staff in libraries. This course was started in 1983. It was recognized by the Department of Libraries, Ministry of Education, Government of Pakistan in 1986 (Punjab Library Association, 2003). Both CLS courses in Lahore and Rawalpindi are being conducted on regular basis twice in a year and are identical regarding curriculum, admissions, commencement of classes and examinations. Professional librarians teach these courses on honorary basis. Mr. Maqsood Ali Kazmi is the Director of these certificate

programs. (M. A. Kazmi, personal communication, May 23, 2009).

The Department of Libraries also recognized and approved the certificate course conducted by PBWG in 1986 and provided space for the class room and an office in Liaquat Memorial Library Building at Karachi. Mr. Rais Ahmad Samdani is the present Director of this program (Pakistan Bibliographical Working Group, 2008). This program is also being conducted regularly.

The Education Policy announced by the Government of Pakistan in 1972 included the establishment of People's Open University in Islamabad. The university was established in 1974 and was renamed as Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) to pay homage to national poet Allama Muhammad Iqbal on his hundredth anniversary in 1977. AIOU is based on distance learning education system. This university introduced a program of "Certificate in Librarianship" in 1985. The purpose was to provide trained paraprofessional staff to perform different supporting tasks in libraries. The program is of six months (one semester) duration. Two sessions are held each year. The students who pass higher secondary (Intermediate) are eligible for the admission (Allama Iqbal Open University, 2009c). This course is being conducted on regular basis since its inception.

## *2. Library science as optional subject*

Library Science has been introduced as an optional subject in colleges in all four provinces of Pakistan. Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (2009) has described the objectives of introducing Library Science as an optional subject as follows:

1. To develop interest in reading materials and their use in libraries and to promote reading habit among the students.
2. To create among students a better understanding of the usefulness of libraries in their studies and their dynamic role in a fast changing society.
3. To develop among the students the skill to make effective use of library resources and services including library equipments so that irrespective of the career that they may later on choose for themselves, they can derive maximum benefit out of the library.

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4. To acquaint students with the literature of Islam and Pakistan.
5. To promote interest among students for lifelong education and help them to develop into good citizens.

*2.1. Library Science at Intermediate level.* Introduction of Library Science as an optional subject at intermediate level in all four provinces of Pakistan was an important development in Pakistani librarianship. It was aimed at preparing more dedicated and devoted professionals and paraprofessionals in future. The efforts to achieve this goal were started in 1974. Anwar (1992) writes about this development in the following words:

During the Pakistan Library Association's term at Lahore (1974-75), a different approach was decided upon. It was felt that the introduction to library science as an additional subject (100/75 marks as against 200/150 marks for elective subjects) designed to teach the use of information and libraries at both intermediate and bachelor's level will result in:

- Creating lecturer positions in colleges
- Educating users of information
- Exposing the general student body to the profession
- Motivating potential recruits to the profession. (p. xiii)

PLA approached the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE), Lahore for inclusion of Library Science as optional subject. The Board accepted the proposal in 1974 and constituted a committee to design the syllabus with Dr. Mumtaz A. Anwar as its Chairperson. The committee proposed that the Board will not allow colleges to offer the course before the appointment of lecturers and publication of textbook for the course (Anwar, 1992). Once the inclusion of Library Science at undergraduate level was approved in Lahore, there was a need to go further with mutual cooperation to avail this opportunity for other provinces. Anwar (1992) writes about this development in Sindh as under:

The proposal was later on misused in Sindh and pressure was exerted on authorities to introduce library science as an elective subject at both intermediate and degree level. The proposals were hastily approved and teaching begun without any planning.

Working college librarians, who were happy to label themselves as lecturer started teaching. No new jobs were created. No textbook at that time was available. Graduate of these ill-planned courses were to join the profession with weak subject background. (p. xiv)

Due to lack of planning, it took several years to start teaching of Library Science as an optional subject in Punjab despite the approval by BISE Lahore in 1974. Mrs. Farkhanda Lodhi, librarian and a well-known literary person, started teaching Library Science at Intermediate level in Government College for Women, Lahore in 1987, but Education Department stopped the program. Later on, Inter Board Committee of Chairman (IBCC) allowed for teaching Library Science at Intermediate level. The committee also allowed conducting the examination for the same from session 1991-92 and all BISEs of the Punjab circulated the notification. Consequently, a number of colleges in Punjab started teaching Library Science. However, Department of Public Instructions (DPI) Colleges stopped Principals of these colleges to teach Library Science at intermediate level with the objection that if librarians started teaching, the library services in colleges would suffer (Nazir, 1992). PLA and Punjab College Library Association (PCLA) continued their efforts which rewarded in 1995 when Government of the Punjab allowed all BISEs to teach Library Science at Intermediate level. The teaching work was assigned to librarians working in college libraries till the availability of lecturers.

Library Science as an optional subject at Intermediate level was started in Sindh. Karachi Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education allowed teaching library science as an optional subject in 1976. (R. A. Samdani, personal communication, October 4, 2009). In NWFP, it was introduced in 1994. However, it is being taught in Higher Secondary Schools only in contrast with Punjab and Sindh (H. Rehman, personal communication, November 5, 2008). In 2002, Balochistan Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BBISE) allowed Intermediate and Degree Colleges to introduce Library Science as an elective subject at intermediate level from academic year 2003. (Balochistan Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, 2002). Late Mir Hassan Jamali, the then Chairman, Department of Library and Information Science, University of Balochistan, performed a fundamental role regarding this achievement (A. R. Qaisarani, personal communication, November 27, 2007). The library science as an optional

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subject at intermediate level is being offered to the regular students in all four provinces of Pakistan. However, one of the fundamental aims, i.e., creating lecturer positions in colleges could not be achieved.

*2.2. Library science at Bachelor level.* The efforts for introducing Library Science as an optional subject at Bachelor level were also started in 1974. University of the Punjab took the first step when the Board of Studies in Library Science recommended the inclusion of Library Science as optional subject at Bachelor levels in 1974. It was subsequently approved by the Academic Council in January 1975 but no further progress was made for the preparation of curriculum. After gap of several years, the efforts were restarted in 1990 when Mrs. Farkhandha Lodhi wrote a letter to the then Vice Chancellor, University of the Punjab, to introduce the subject of Library Science at B.A. /B.Sc. level. Vice Chancellor referred the letter to Board of Studies for consideration. Board of studies accepted the proposal and formed a committee for preparation of curriculum. Mr. Afzal Haq Qarshi chaired this committee. The committee prepared the draft of curriculum and submitted to the Board of Studies (Nazir, 1992) but the matter remained pending and no further progress for the approval of curriculum was made.

In February 1991, University Grants Commission (UGC), later renamed as Higher Education Commission (HEC), formed a committee comprising of Dr. Abdul Sattar Chaudhry, Dr. Sajjad ur Rehman, Mr. Mahmood Hassan, Mr. Shaheen Majid and Mr. Ishtiaq Ahmad for reviewing the draft prepared by the committee formed by Board of studies, University of the Punjab. The committee submitted its recommendations in April 1991 which were approved and published by the UGC (Nazir, 1992).

In Sindh, University of Karachi introduced Library Science as an optional subject at B.A. level in 1979 (R.A. Samdani, personal communication, October 04, 2009). University of Balochistan approved the curriculum of Library Science as an optional subject at B.A. level in 2006 and issued the notification in 2007 (University of Balochistan, 2007). Mr. Rehmat Khan Baloch, the then Incharge, Department of Library and Information Science, University of Balochistan was instrumental in getting this approval. This course is being offered to the regular students only. (A. R. Qaisrani, personal communication, November 28, 2007). Library Science as an optional subject at B.A. level has not been offered so far in NWFP. (H. Rehman, personal



communication, November 05, 2008). University of the Punjab has recently approved the launching of Library and Information Science as an elective subject at B.A. Level. Curriculum for the same has also been approved by the Syndicate of the University. However, lecturer positions for teaching LIS at undergraduate level have not been created by Government of the Punjab so far which may actually hinder this positive decision (University of the Punjab, 2009). The library science as an optional subject at B.A. level is also being offered to regular students only.

### *3. AIOU's Bachelor of Library and Information Science*

Allama Iqbal Open University offers Bachelor of Library and Information Science (BLIS) as a distance learning program. This program was started in 1988. The duration of this program is two years. The minimum requirement for admission is Intermediate Certificate in Arts, Science or Commerce. Allama Iqbal Open University (2009a) describes the objective of Library and Information Science as a distance learning program as "to produce skilled manpower in the field of Library and Information Science which may run every kind of library or help professional library staff".

## **Curriculum**

The curricula of different undergraduate programs of Library Science are discussed in the following.

### *Certificate courses*

*Certificate course by Punjab Library Association.* It is of six month duration and held twice a year, in April and November. The admission requirement is Secondary School Certificate (Matriculation). The curriculum of this course is given below.

1. Introduction to classification (Theory and practical)
2. Introduction to cataloguing (Theory and practical)
3. Bibliography, book selection and reference work
4. Library organization and administration

(Punjab Library Association, 2003, p. 11)

*Certificate course by PBWG.* This certificate course was of six month duration and continued till 1986. The curriculum of this course was

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as follows:

1. Role of library in the community
2. Library operation
3. Applied classification
4. Applied cataloguing
5. Reference and information work

(Khurshid, 1992, p. 25)

Khurshid (1992) was of the view that "the textbooks used for the courses were more or less the same which are the recommended readings for Master's program" (p. 25). The new curriculum of the Higher Certificate Course in Library Science includes seven papers. Each paper carries 100 marks. The details are as under:

1. History of book and libraries.
2. Library operation / role of computer in the library
3. Classification (Theory and practical)
4. Cataloguing (Theory and practical)
5. Reference service and information work
6. Bibliography and indexing
7. Viva voce / Library journal viva (50 marks each)

(Pakistan Bibliographical Working Group, 2008, p. 6)

*Certificate in Librarianship by AIOU.* This certificate program is of six month (one semester) duration. Admission is offered twice a year. Two full credit courses are required to pass. The eligibility for admission is Intermediate Certificate (Higher School Certificate). Urdu language is used for the course material but students can use English for assignments / examination. This program is based on distance learning. The curriculum is as under:

1. Organizing library resources (Full credit)
2. Library services (Full credit)

(Allama Iqbal Open University, 2009c)

### *Library science as an optional subject*

*Intermediate.* This course is designed for Intermediate students as an optional course of two years duration consisting of 200 marks. It comprises of two papers each containing 100 marks. Minimum requirement is Matriculation (Secondary School Certificate) in Arts, Science or Commerce. The curriculum of Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education for Library Science as an optional subject at

Intermediate level is given below.

1. Definition and history of libraries with particular reference to Islamic world and Pakistan
2. Role of modern libraries
3. Purpose and functions of various kinds of libraries
4. Art of book binding
5. Documentation of library materials (Books and non-book material)
6. Use of books and libraries and reader services

Practical:

1. Compilation of bibliography on any assigned topic
  2. Indexing of periodicals and newspapers
  3. Practical work in college library (six periods of 45 minutes per week)
  4. Viva voce and journals
- (Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, 2009)

*Bachelor.* Higher Education Commission (HEC) periodically revises the curriculum of different subjects. The last revision was made in 2002 for Library and Information Science at Bachelor level. A National Curriculum Revision Committee for Library and Information Science was constituted with Dr. Naseem Fatima as the Chairperson and Dr. Fazil Khan Baloch as the Secretary. Twelve others from all over the country were also members of this committee. The Committee met at Karachi from 26<sup>th</sup> -28<sup>th</sup> February 2002 and recommended the curriculum of Library Science at Bachelor level (University Grant Commission, 2002).

The course is designed for graduates as an optional course of two years duration consisting of two papers. Each paper contains 100 marks (Theory 80 + Practical 20). Minimum requirement for admission is Intermediate (Higher Secondary School Certificate) in Arts, Science or Commerce. Curriculum of this course is as under:

Paper I.

1. Introduction to libraries
2. History of books and libraries
3. Library material (printed material and non printed material)
4. Bibliographical description of printed material
5. Classification
6. Classification practical

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### Paper II.

1. Acquisition of library material
2. Cataloguing with practical
3. Reference sources
4. Reference services
5. Computer in libraries
6. Use of books and libraries and reader services

(University Grants Commission, 2002)

### *AIOU's Bachelor of Library and Information Science*

This degree course is of two year duration and minimum educational requirement is Intermediate (Higher Secondary School Certificate). Urdu language is used for course material but students can use English for assignments / examination. Correspondence and tutorial support is provided. This course is of eight credits hours and students have to pass six full credit compulsory courses and two full credit or equal optional courses (Allama Iqbal Open University, 2009b). The details of compulsory and elective courses, with credits, are given below:

#### *Compulsory Courses.*

1. Islamic studies (Half)
  2. Pakistan studies (Half)
  3. Ethics (For non Muslim students only) in lieu of 1 (Half)
  4. Organizing library resources (Full)
  5. Library services (Full)
  6. Functional English (Full)
  7. History of libraries with reference to Pakistan (Full)
  8. Classification and cataloguing (Full)
- (4 and 5 are pre-requisite courses for 7 and 8 respectively)

#### *Elective Courses (any two full credits or equal).*

1. Urdu (Full)
2. Education (Full)
3. Pakistani Adab-I (Half)
4. Reporting (Half)
5. Public relations (Half)
6. Mass communication (Half)
7. Book editing (Half)
8. Advertising (Half)

(Allama Iqbal Open University, 2009b)

## **Quality Concerns Regarding Undergraduate Programs**

The LIS experts have shown their concerns regarding quality of different LIS education programs at undergraduate level. These concerns need to be highlighted so that education policy makers should pay attention to these comments to rectify the flaws. For example, Anwar (1992) states while reviewing the certificate programs of different associations, "Training courses conducted by various associations or individuals have never been relevant or up to the standard" (p. xv). Curriculum of a subject demands careful attention of subject specialists, professional associations and institutions responsible for its development. Commenting on the syllabus developed by the Department of Libraries for the certificate programs Khurshid (1992) writes that:

While developing the syllabus for the certificate programme, the Department of Libraries did not take any notice of the standards formulated by the Pakistan Library Association. It did not seek input from any library school in the country in drawing up this syllabus. (p. 25)

Before starting a professional training program, the market need analysis must be made. The programs having professional and paraprofessional status demand more care. If more professionals and paraprofessionals are prepared without measuring the needs then it will create more jobless persons and harm the profession. Rehman (1992) draws the attention about the LIS programs of AIOU in the following words:

The Allama Iqbal Open University is embarking upon certificate as well as Bachelor and Master Degree programmes which target to produce thousands of para-professionals and professionals through distance education methods. Notwithstanding the controversy of appropriateness of distant learning for vocational and professional education, the flow of thousands of certificate holders will have definite bearing on the situation of demand for professional librarians in the country. (p. 39)

Same is true for the induction of library science as an optional subject. Emphasis has been just on introducing rather than on proper planning, creating new posts of lecturers, suitable curriculum and texts

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books etc.

While delivering a lecture on library education in Pakistan in a seminar held at Quaid-e-Azam Library, Lahore in September 2006, Dr. Mumtaz Anwar showed his deep concern about the program of Library Science as an optional subject especially the poor quality of curriculum at Intermediate level. Whereas, analyzing the reading material of BLIS course at AIOU, Khurshid (1992) commented in the following words:

Although the B.A. degree at AIOU defines itself as Library and Information Studies Group, a cursory glance at the reading material of this programme reveals that it does not define 'Information' and for that matter 'Information Science' in the text at all. At certain places, the material on other subjects discussed in the texts appears to be more detailed than would seem necessary for the level of the course. Where a detailed treatment was needed, only a brief description has been provided. (p. 24)

### **Recommendations**

Keeping in view the present status, the following recommendations will most likely bring improvements in LIS education at undergraduate level.

1. Curriculum of different undergraduate programs should be revised following the emerging training needs.
2. Introduction to Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and their practical use must be taught as per needs of the paraprofessional staff.
3. The role of professional associations is fundamental for the betterment of LIS education at undergraduate level. PLA's provincial chapters should work to improve the quality of these programs. Standardization of syllabi may help in improving the quality to the required level.
4. PLA should make efforts to create separate posts of lecturers for teaching library and information science subject in colleges. In this way librarians who are performing additional duties can fulfill their professional responsibilities properly.

## Conclusion

Quality LIS education at undergrad level is important for preparing foundation of library and information professionals as well as for training paraprofessional staff for libraries. The reviewed literature and personal communications with selected professionals establishes that regular LIS programs at Intermediate and Bachelor level could contribute effectively, if suggested pre-requisites were met properly. The present courses at undergraduate level offered by different library associations, colleges and distance learning programs of Allama Iqbal Open University do not meet the desired quality standards, and are not up to the mark. There is a need to streamline all undergraduate programs and their curricula to meet the needs of paraprofessional staff working in libraries.

We can also conclude that in order to run these programs successfully, there is a need to employ full-time faculty members, prepare and provide adequate reading material, update curriculum and establish well-organized libraries which may be used as laboratories or model libraries for teaching of the subject. There is also a need of quality assurance for Certificate and BLIS programs at AIOU because these are usually criticized by LIS experts due to various reasons. These steps can lead to producing better supporting staff. An active role played by all stake holders to overcome the weaknesses will ensure the promotion of undergraduate library education, and will further strengthen the roots of library education in Pakistan.

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List of selected professionals personally communicated:

1. Abdul Rehman Qaisrani, General Secretary, Pakistan Library Association (Headquarters), Quetta.
2. Hamid Rehman, Incharge, Department of Library and Information Science, University of Peshawar.
3. Maqsood Ali Kazmi, Director CLS Training Class, Punjab Library Association, Lahore and Rawalpindi.
4. Rais Ahmad Samdani, Director, CLS Training Class, School of Librarianship, Pakistan Bibliographical Working Group, Karachi.