Session: One

Theme: The Librarian and the

Information Scientist

THE ROLE OF THE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
IN PREPARING MEMBERS FOR NEW TRENDS

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INTRODUCTION

The significance of having members equipped to cope with
new challenges has far-reaching effects on any profession and shows
the direction towards which the profession is moving. Usually
when one talks of the path that a profession treads, one usually
means the path of professionalism. To a great extent, the process
of professionalisation that a profession undergoes is facilitated
by the existance of a professional association. Whether or not
the occupation can become a full-fledged profession or merely
assume the mantle of professionalism depends a great deal on the
role the association plays in this process of professionalisation.

It is in this context that I feel the topic should be
discussed. Underlying this topic are 3 main issues which will be
the main areas of discussion in this paper, namely:

(1) The role of the library association as a professional
     association.

(2) Current trends in librarianship.

(3) Strategies and activities of the library association
     in preparing its members.

These areas of discussion will be dealt with in general. I do
not think there is anything that will not be applicable to all
library associations. In cases where activities of a library
association need to be specified in order to highlight any point
I make, I shall have to resort to information about the Library
Association of Malaysia, the association I know best.

1. ROLE OF THE ASSOCIATION AS A PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION

It is essential that the role of the library association
be seen in the context of the profession as a whole because unless
the significance of this role within the profession is understood,
the extent of its responsibility to its members cannot be fully
appreciated. Concentrating on one particular aspect of its role —
its responsibility to its members — would given an unbalanced
picture of its commitment to the library profession and make it
seem like any other interest group like the Brownies or Girl
Guides.

1.1.   The library association is a professional association and
like professional associations in most professions, it has a
specific role to play — that as a pressure group. It is not,
however, a trade union, because 'terms and conditions of service'
is not its prime concern. It is supposed to advance the loftier
ideals of the library profession — not involve itself with issues
of $ and cents. In reality, very few professional associations can
actually "deliver" what is expected of them. At this juncture,
what a professional association can be and what its limitations
are, are succinctly expressed by Shaffer and Shera below:

In order to accomplish it's fullest mission
any profession must have some nationally
recognized organization which can and will
speak for profession as a whole. Its
authority is derived from its members and
to speak with authority it must include a
sufficiently large number of members with
a common set of standards, a code of ethics,
and a sincere desire to improve the profession
in its serve to the public. [1]

Most library association are by nature of
their membership, promotional. [2]

1.2.　　　A professional association has specific aims and functions.

Its aims determine its nature and distinguishes it from
other types of associations. In the case of the library
association, its aims are geared towards the promotion of the
library profession, especially in the following areas:

(i) The corpus of professional knowledge: This
body of knowledge distinguishes one profession
from another and the professional from the
non-professional. It is exclusive and enables
the profession to have an identity of its own.

(ii) Education and training of members. It must be
of sufficient duration to enable one to master
the knowledge and skills and of sufficient
quality to ensure competency. Continuing
education should from an integral part of the
education and training.

(iii) Standards

Control over entry into profession, accredition
of courses and examinations formulation of code
of professional conduct, etc. to ensure competency
are essential in the promotion of professional
status and influence.

(iv) Autonomy and authority

The ability to set your own standards and to have
the power to enforce them are hallmarks of a profession.

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1. SHAFFER, Dale Eugene, *The maturity of librarianship as a profession*,
Metuchen, N.J., Scarecrow Press, 1968, p.27.

2. SHERA, Jesse H., *The foundations of education for librarianship*,
New York, Becker and Hayes, 1972, p.214.

1.3.   The functions of a library association can be categoriesed
into (i) Direct functions and (ii) Indirect functions.

<div align="center">(i) <u>Direct functions</u></div>

     (i)   The organisation of members.

     (ii) The awarding of qualifications.

     (iii) The promotion of further study of the
           theory and techniques of the profession.

     (iv) The communication and publication of
           professional knowledge.

     (v)   The registration of competent professionals
           to ensure standards of performance.

<div align="center">(ii) <u>Indirect functions</u></div>

     (i)   To raise professional status.

     (ii) To control entry to the profession to
           ensure adequate standards.

     (iii) To protect the profession and the public
           by maintaining high standards of service
           and conduct.

     (iv) To act as a pressure group.

     (v)   To encourage social activity and cooperation
           among professionals.

The *primary* duty of the library association is towards its
members but its *ultimate* duty is towards the profession.

Seen in the light of its role vis a vis the profession, its
role in preparing its membership for new trends assumes greater
significance. Discussed in isolation, the significance is lost.
Once it is established that in preparing its members for new trends
it is actually advancing the goals of the library profession —
it can be clearly seen that the role assumed by the library associa-
tion is an onerous one. It goes beyond mere fraternity.

2. <u>CURRENT TRENDS IN LIBRARIANSHIP</u>

I have identified the following to be current trends in
librarianship. I prefer the term "current" to "new" because "new"
connotes replacement whereas "current" connotes "development".

What I have identified as current trends are not really 'current' with regard to time. They are not the phenomena of the 1980's but had their roots in 1970's and even earlier. These issues had been written about, talked about and discussed at great length and with depth. The fact that we are still discussing them today shows that they are indeed 'trends' and not 'fads'.

The trends that I mean are as specified below:

    (i)   Conceptual development.

   (ii)   Automation

  (iii)   Education and training

   (iv)   Social awareness

    (v)   Professionalisation.

2.1. Conceptual development

The terms 'librarianship' and 'library science' are currently given a very low profile — used most apologetically — as if they represent something old, traditional and outdated. Nowadays, there is a certain amount of embarrassment at being called 'librarians'. The fashionable term is 'information professionals'. This trend to down-play 'library science' and incorporate 'information science' into everything includes the formalisation of such terms by library schools which are now called 'School of Library and Information Science' or 'School of Library and Information Studies'.

What are the implications of all this? Is it just a craze for words or does it represent something more fundamental than just love for the semantics? Does it really matter which term is used? Do they mean the same thing or are they quite different?

There are two schools of thought on this:

    a. Library science and information science are *two* different concepts.

        Library science is defined as traditional, having cataloguing and classification as it core, with no real corpus of knowledge because its knowledge is derived through library practice and shared experiences. Librarianship is not research-orientated and therefore not scientific in approach to problem-solving.

        Information science on the other hand is seen as having a strong orientation towards research. It is capable of solving problems and removing uncertainly because it is scientific in approach through the use and analysis of data.

        This school of thought sees library science as passive, unprogressive and non-intellectual. W. Boyd Rayward is a good representative of this school of thought.

b. There are no basic conceptual differences between library science and information science. They have the same aims and functions and differ only in the tools they use. As defined by Shera "It is quite evident that information science is rooted in attempts to extend the boundaries of library technology and give it revived respectability by endowing it with a unique name". [3] He goes on to say that library science is based on *ideas* and information science based on *data*. He maintains that "Librarians are so obsessed with process that that they have confused substance with instrumentation. Processing data can be performed by machine but only the human mind can process knowledge or even information. Information science is based on data and their manipulation, not on ideas". [4]

Despite the differences in opinion, it cannot be denied that there is a common meeting ground of these schools of thought and this is *computer technology*. Like it or not, it has become an integral part of library operations and procedures.

The advent of computer technology and its popularity implies that:

(i) there is an awareness of the importance of information in performing tasks eg. decision-making, policy-making, etc.

(ii) there is a demand for information that can be supplied accurately and speedily.

(iii) the traditional non-automated methods of information-retrieval are not adequate for current needs.

The proliferation of automated systems in the market testifies to this popularity. One-line computer systems, laser printers, telex, telefacsimile machines, etc. are now familiar features in some libraries and in most commercial information service centres.

All these developments result in the need for acquiring and developing information-gathering and information-retrieving techniques as well as marketing techniques — developments the library association cannot afford to ignore.

The off-shoots of the awareness in the value of information and the availability of the means to process information storage retrieval and delivery, are the emergence of:

3. SHERA, Jesse H., Librarianship and information science in *The study of information : interdisciplinary messages*, Ed. by Fritz Machlup and Una Mansfield, New York, John Wiley, 1983, p.381

4. *Ibid*, p.384.

(i) Fee-based information services. They are
commercial agencies and they provide information
for a fee. They depend a lot on on-line computer
systems as well as libraries. They are managed
by a group of people from different types of
professions including free-lance librarians.

(ii) Information centres

These are established in institutions and agencies,
catering mainly for specific groups. They are not
special libraries. They provide specialised
information and are manned by subject-specialists.
They can also be termed research units or documenta-
tion units.

(iii) Information specialists.

Their primary task is to provide information,
using mainly automated systems, depending mainly
on computer databases as well as telephones. They
also use libraries. Although most of them perform
tasks similar to librarians — indexing, biblio-
graphic compilations, they also undertake infor-
mation transfer or information consolidation.

The library association must take heed of these developments
and see how they affect the library profession, the libraries and
of course the association itself.

Taking the issue one by one what are the effects?

(i) Fee-based information services. These are mainly
commercial. Somehow the service ideal seems so
idealistic in the face of this new development.
There must be a re-think on this issue. All along
there has been no 'accountability' in performing
library services. We have not been accountable
because it makes no difference whether the book
we provide is correct or not — it was just
assistance given. But once money is involved,
people expect returns and the higher the price
the higher the level of accountability.

It also means that standards must be maintained
putting to good effect the Code of Professional
Conduct.

(ii) Proliferation of information centres — What happens
to libraries as information centres. It has been
proved that fee-based services and information
centres use libraries as a source of information.[5]
But what about libraries themselves? Why don't we
provide information?

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5. An account of libraries as a source of information is found in
Lorig Maranjian and Richard W. Boss, *Fee-based information services;
a study of a growing industry.* New York, R.R. Bowker, 1980.

(iii)   Emergence of information specialists

These are people who have the sense to use resources
and deliver information. It is crucial to be
knowledgeable not only in the subject area but in
using library tools as well. It is obvious that
information skills must be introduced in library
schools and through seminars ans workshops to
equip librarians with the new skills.

In the final analysis, the library association would have
to consider the fact that terms like "information specialists",
"information handling" and "information science" are not passing
fads but represent new demands made on the role of its members.
To cope with these new demands, the members must be aware of what
are expected of them so that they can be equipped to play *their*
role in the profession.

2.2.   Automation

The technological era has caught up with librarians and
one has to be very obtuse not to recognise it. There are as usual,
2 schools of thought about this issue:

(i) That library automation is god's gift to
mankind and

(ii) That library automation is over-rated

Again, this paper is not concerned with the merits and demerits of
automation — firstly because I am not qualified to comment on
this aspect and (ii) I dare not say it is not God's gift to mankind.
My collegues would never forgive me.

Whatever one's feelings are about automation, it cannot
be denied that this trend towards automation dominated all work-
brocesses in all profession. Computers, photocopy machines,
telefacsimile machines, telex, laser-printers, etc. are now
so much a part of the library scene.

But agains, to come back to the topic, what implications,
does automation have on the library association?

Bearing in mind that association members are the source of
manpower, they would have to be exposed to this new challenge so that
they will bot be left behind, dogging the footsteps of the non-librarian
information specialists.

2.3 Education and Training

The new trend in education and training is manifested in the
characteristics typical of library education today, which means that:

(i)   It is multidisciplinary

(ii) Library technology is an integral component

(iii) Continuing education is considered as essential

2.3.1.   Multidisciplinary

Many disciplines have had humble beginnings. Education
as a discipline began as a craft but developed to become a
subject taught in universities.[4] Medicine is another example.

Librarianship began the same way but even at this stage,
the intellectual foundation of librarianship is still wanting.

Library science lacks the scientific core that forms the
basis for the intellectual foundation of professional knowledge.
It has been said that the most important element missing in
Library science discipline is the orientation towards scientific
research.

Although librarianship has recently shown some semblance
of being multidisciplinary — incorporating elements from
management, administration, automation, technology, research
methods, sociology, mathematics, computer science the discipline
does not lend itself to scientific research. Even if we incorporate
philosophy, psychology, marketing, mass communication, creative
writing and education, would it make much headway?

2.3.2.   Library technology

Courses are given on "library technology", "information
technology" in most library schools. Hands-on experience forms
part of the course.

2.3.3.   Continuing education

Postgraduate degrees - Master and Ph.D. — are offered in
most library schools. This is essential to update knowledge
and skills of serving librarians. Seminar, workshops, talks,
discussions too are important for serving librarians.

2.4   Social Awareness

Libraries realise that they can no longer exist in
isolation. In many contries, as in Malaysia the National
Library has to perform public library functions while university
libraries provide services for special groups who need information.

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4. A lengthy account of its development into a university
discipline is detailed in Brian Simon, The study of
education as a university subject in Britain in *Studies in
Higher Education*, v.8, no.1, 1983, p.1-13.

The trend is to regard libraries as social institutions, not ivory towers. Projecting the right image is crucial in this respect because social recognition of what the library association present can boost its attempts to professionalise.

2.5   User Education

There is growing awareness that library services should be user-orientated. I have always maintained that library procedures are librarian-orientated — often too confusing for the user to understand. Library and information skills are now given greater emphasis with users being taught skills that facilitate use of not only the catalogue but also the resources contained within the collection.

2.6   Professionalisation

As the library profession matures there is a greater awareness of the need to professionalise. Library schools, library associations and libraries in general are most conscious of the need to become more professional in their curriculum, activities, procedures and services.

The quality of teaching, research and publication in library schools has improved tremendously over the years. Quantitative and analytical research are increasingly encouraged. Library associations on their part try to inculcate a greater sense of professionalism in its membership, manifested in several countries in the form of the Code of Ethics. Seminars, workshops and such activities are arranged so that members are aware of the need to update their knowledge, experience and skills as well as to maintain standards in services.

3   STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION TO PREPARE MEMBERS

3.1   The library association is in the best position to prepare members for new trends because:

(i)   To a certain extent, its members are organised and united, and committed to the advancement of the profession.

(ii) Its members are drawn from all types of libraries, cutting across institutions and experiences.

(iii) It has the status and influence as the representative of the profession to assert its autonomy and authority.

3.2   The ways in which the library association can prepare members are categorised under the following:

      (i)   Organisation

      (ii)   Education and training

     (iii)   Publications

     (iv)   Research

     (v)   Standards

    (vi)   International and regional contacts

3.2.1   Organisation: Objectives, structure and activities

(i)   Goals

      The objectives of the library association as enshrined in its constitution reflect the goals of the association. It would be necessary to review the objectives in the light of the new developments and ensure that they accomodate the change in attitude and emphasis that come with the new developments. To be receptive to new developments the library association must provide the psychological impetus and if the objectives spell out these intentions members will be guided by them. It is, I think, the first line of attack. Discussion of this intention to reflect in the objectives, these new developments, even to the extent of changing the name of the Library Association, will inevitably result in members having to come to grips with issues. It may not be possible to get everybody to agree, but members must be made aware that such developments have taken place and the library association needs to adapt.

(ii)   Structure

      Having decided that the goals of the library association need to accomodate the new developments, the operations mechanism of the association needs to be restructured. I am talking specifically of committes and sub-committes within the association. As example, I have included in this paper the committees and sub-committees of the Library Association of Malaysia. Do they reflect these new developments would be something the PPM Council could consider at the next meeting — not that the Council members will thank me for the suggestion. Basically, the PPM operates through committees and representation — 12 committees and 10 types of representation.

      In the case of PPM, when new developments crop up, ad hoc or standing committes are formed to tackle the developments and Concil would then decide on who should chair the committees. The Chairman can either be council members or any other librarian with suitable expertise.

(iii) Activities

       Activities carried out by the library association is another way of assessing the library association's awareness of new trends.

       One major contribution which the library association can make in the form of activities is to provide the opportunity for continuing education. As such, courses, seminar, conferences and workshops are particularly useful. Again, a glance at PPM's list of courses and seminars would reflect whether or not the association is aware of these new developments. These activities listed are activities for the period 1980-1986. May I also state that this is not the total picture of professional involvement in the country. Each institution would have its own list of activities — just as impressive.

3.2.2 Education and Training

       Library schools are faced with the daunting task of constantly reviewing its core curriculum, not only because the curriculum they offer must reflect the needs of the time but that what they teach must prepare the students for the reality of working life. With the rate of unemployment being what it is today, library schools tend to be extremely competitive and very often courses are tailored almost on the spot to meet the needs of students.

       What role does the library association play in library education and training?

       Some library associations have the clout to dictate what should be taught and how it should be taught but in most cases, this role is purely advisory. Library schools are usually independent and autonomous. They make their own decisions on entry points, qualifications, curriculum, staff, facilities, etc.

       However, the library association can provide invaluable feedback obtained from members and influence the direction of library education. The library association must also encourage research and publications in library schools so that the body of knowledge can be further developed.

       Continuing education is one area that library associations must encourage. This will encourage members to further develop their knowledge and skills. Continuing education is one chanel that provides members with the opportunity to further qualify themselves — from diploma to basic degree, from basic degree to postgraduate degrees. Continuing education also should enable librarians to follow courses in computer science, management or in any other subject area that is relevant to the job he is doing.

The library association has to be in the know and has to be in the forefront to be able to give feedback to its members. In the case of the Library Association of Malaysia, its involvement in library education involves having a representative on the Advisory Panel of ITM School of librarianship and Information Studies and making a contribution in the form of the annual Award for ITM Best Student of the Year.

3.3.3. Publications

This is the most effective way of disseminating information about the profession. Not only is it direct but is also accessible to a wider audience. This should form one of the basic duties of the library association.

3.3.4 Research

Encouraging research among association members and at library schools is beneficial directly in that members can be exposed to research skills at the same time develop their knowledge and experience in areas of interest. Librarians who are members of the association are usually librarians with experience and this experience would enable them to be more analytical, pragmatic and constructive in their research and writing. The quality of research would therefore be better because it will be a blend of both theory and practice. Of course, the ultimate advantage is that the corpus of professional knowledge can be developed to the advantage of the library profession as a whole.

3.3.5 Standards and guidelines

The library association should undertake to formulate standards in the new areas of development. In the field of computer software, for example, there is a poliferation of packages designed for libraries. However, at least in this part of the world, there are too few librarians who are conversant with library computer systems. The majority are not capable of assesing programs meant for libraries. At some stage of development, the library association has to think of standards to ensure that programmes are of certain quality. Along with the standards, guidelines should also be initiated so that the computer ignoramus like me would know which machine to select and which software to buy.

3.3.6 International, regional and local contacts

Through contacts at international, regional and local levels, the library association and its members are exposed to new ideas and developments. Either indirectly through the association or directly by members themselves, participation at courses, meetings, conferences, seminar, etc. would be a good way of equipping members with knowlege and skills in areas of current interest. Of course in doing so, the library association can be selective, depending on need and financial contraints. Generally however the relationship fostered by such contacts would in the long run be beneficial for the library association as well as its members.

CONCLUSION

        In the final analysis, the role of the library
association *is*, at best, *promotional* — Promote the status
and influence of the library profession, promote the status,
interest and welfare of its members, promote the development
of the body of professional knowledge, promote professional educa-
tion and training, etc. The success of any library association
depends on how autonomous and authoritative its own status
is and of course if this status is backed by legislation,
its role as a pressure group will be made much easier.
Generally, however, most library associations cannot fulfill
what is expected of them. Shera suggested that,

> Much of the inadequacy of professional
> library associations has arisen from the
> simple fact that they were asked to perform
> functions that exceeded their abilities and
> power.[6]

        Since its responsibility to its members is part of
its responsibility to the profession as a whole, members
tend to get dissilusioned. Members tend to see the role
of the library association as that of a trade union.

        The role of the Library Association of Malaysia,
as a case in point, is confined to the promotion of the
professional development of its members in two aspects —
publications and continuing education. In other aspects,
PPM can only participate in an advisory role.

        For any library association, one of the main problems
is the conflict between institutional loyalty and professional
loyalty. Much as the library association would like to
think that its influence alone should prevail over librarians,
bread and butter issues are too 'real' to ignore.

        What then is the future of library associations?

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[6] SHERA, Jesse H., The foundations of education for librarianship
New York, Becker and Hayes, 1972, p.214

COMMITTEES OF THE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION OF MALAYSIA

1. Committee on National and Academic Libraries.

2. Committee on Special Libraries.

3. Committee on School Libraries.

4. Committee on Library Services to Special Groups.

5. Committee on Public Libraries.

6. Committee on Raising Funds.

7. Publications Committee.

8. Publicity Committee.

9. PPM Building Committee.

10. Social Committee.

11. Committee on the Professional Status of Librarianship.

REPRESENTATION

1. PPM representative to CONSAL VII

2. PPM representative to IFLA

3. PPM representative to Committee for Best Student Award.

4. PPM representative to Permanent Sub-Committee on Communication.

5. PPM representative to Malaysia Book Development Council.

6. PPM representative to KSPM Academic Advisory Panel.

7. PPM representative to Working Group to Design National Policy on Library and Information Services.

8. PPM representative to Public Libraries.

COURSES AND SEMINARS OF THE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION OF MALAYSIA 1980-1986

1. LAS/PPM Cataloguing Seminar on AACR2. Singapore 8-10 December 1980.

2. PPM Course for Library Technicians and Clerks. 12-14 September, 1980.

3. PPM Seminar on Information Management : Challenges for Special Libraries, 26-27 March, 1981.

4. PPM/PNM Cataloguing Workshop on AACR2.

5. CONSAL V. 25-29 May, 1981.

6. Basic course in Library Science (Conducted regularly)

7. Seminar on Reaching the Rural Community through the Library.

8. Course on Developing Audio/Video Services in Libraries. 12-14 September, 1983.

9. Workshop on the Encouragement of Reading Habit Through the Use of Puppets.

10. PPM/LAS Joint Seminar on New Perspectives in Meeting Library Information Objectives. 5-6 March, 1984.

11. PPM Course on Quantitative Methods for Librarians, 7-13 March, 1984.

12. Introductory Course on Library Science and Information for Clerks, Library Assistant. 16-22 December, 1984.

13. Workshop on Cataloguing of Non-Book Materials. 6-10 May 1985.

14. Course on Video in Libraries, 9-13 August, 1985.

15. Introductory Course on Library Science and Information for Clerks, Library Assistant. 13-18 January, 1986.

16. Workshop on Community Information Services. 27-30 August, 1986.

17. Library Automation : implications for management. 28-30 Oct. 1986.

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3. LINDSEY, Jonathan A. and Ann E. Prentice. *Professional ethics and librarians*. Phoenix, Arizona, Oryx Press, 1985.

4. MACHLUP, Fritz and Una Mansfield, eds. *The study of information : interdisciplinary messages*. New York, John Wiley, 1983.

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8. SIMON, Brian, 'The study of education as a university subject in Britain', *Studies in Higher Education*, Vol.8, no.1, 1983, pp.1-13.

9. VALLS, Jacques, 'Some aspects of information consolidation in and for developing countires'. Paper presented at the *Third Expert Groups on Information Analysis and Consolidation, Kuala Lumpur, Sept., 1983*.

10. ZAITON binti Osman. 'The role of the Persatuan Perpustakaan Malaysia (Library Association of Malaysia) in providing professional leadership in Malaysia'. M.A. dissertation, Loughborough University of Technology, 1981.