

Professional Issues and Challenges Confronted by Pakistan Library Association in the Development of Librarianship in Pakistan

Shakeel Ahmad Khan
Government College University, Lahore
Pakistan
Shakeelkhan575@gmail.com

Rubina Bhatti
Islamia University of Bahawalpur
Pakistan
dr.rubytariq@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: The paper probes the challenges for the Pakistan Library Association (PLA) in playing its dynamic role for the development of librarianship in Pakistan. It explores the role of PLA in meeting the standards of library associations in countries with developed librarianship systems. It identifies the professional problems faced by PLA members. The findings show that PLA needs to play its active role in enhancing librarianship in Pakistan. It was found that inadequate finance for libraries, weak national infrastructure, automation and digitization of libraries, and development of library-related standards are the major challenges for PLA. It was suggested that PLA should work more actively for the development of librarianship in Pakistan by publishing its journal, offering adequate training programs, and hosting conferences covering current trends.

I. Introduction

The role of library association in professional development is highly important in this digital era. The advent of information technology and its extensive use by library users has not only affected their seeking behavior but also changed the ways libraries use to preserve, extract and disseminate information. This revolution demands highly professionalized information services from library professionals. Due to this change in librarianship, library associations need to play their vigorous role for continuing professional education of librarians in order to keep them well informed and current with modern trends in their profession. They should offer professional workshops, training programs, conferences, and seminars for librarians to exchange their professional experiences and ideas with their colleagues on a regular basis.

The Pakistan Library Association (PLA) is a national association of libraries and librarians in Pakistan. It was established in 1957. The major objective of PLA is to enhance library services and librarianship in Pakistan by improving access to information through information technology

and offering technical help for library professionals in order to provide comprehensive information services. Its main three branches are: PLA Federal Branch, PLA Punjab Branch, and PLA Sindh Branch. These branches conduct different workshops, conferences, seminars, and training on various professional topics.

The current study is aimed at investigating challenges PLA has encountered in the development of the library profession. It also explores problems faced by PLA members.

II. Problem Statement

PLA was established in 1957 with the objectives to improve access to information resources through the application of information technology and develop comprehensive information service in the country. But the available literature on the role of Pakistan Library Association in the development of the profession does not present a satisfactory picture.

Since the inception of PLA, not a single survey has been conducted in Pakistan to explore the challenges faced by the Association in the development of the profession or professional issues of its members.

This study is aimed at investigating the challenges for PLA from the viewpoint of its members so as to find solutions.

III. Significance of the Study

The study highlights the challenges faced by PLA in the development of librarianship in Pakistan. The findings will be helpful for PLA to develop strategies and professional activities to cope with the challenges.

IV. Research Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research method. A questionnaire was designed and used for data collection. A PLA membership list was obtained. As PLA members are in different universities, colleges, and organizations inside and outside Pakistan, it was not possible to collect data from all members. In order to delimit the scope of the study, PLA members working in universities of the Punjab recognized by the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan were identified as a sample population of the study. A survey of the identified population was conducted. One hundred and fifty-two (152) copies of the questionnaires were distributed. And 114 completed copies were returned. The acquired data were then analyzed with the help of SPSS software.

V. Research Questions

The study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- What are professional challenges faced by library associations in other countries?
- What are the challenges for PLA in the development of the profession?

- Has PLA played the role to meet the standards of library associations in countries with developed librarianship systems?
- What are the factors that deter PLA in meeting the standards of those library associations?
- What are the professional problems of PLA members?

VI. Literature Review

Extensive use of information technology for assimilating, preserving, and sharing information in digital format has made the librarianship as an ever-changing profession. This change has offered a big challenge for library associations to fulfill the changing professional needs of library and information science professionals on a continuous basis. Library associations need to play their crucial role in keeping librarians and information professionals up-to-date with modern trends.

Morrison (2004) stated that librarians and library associations have an opportunity to play their leadership role in providing open access to information. Open access to library literature is an important way for the advancement of librarianship. Library associations should educate their members about the possibilities in providing open access to their published materials.

Adomi and Nwalo (2003) recommended that professional associations should devote their efforts in continuing professional education got their members. Due to drastic changes in librarianship, library associations are facing various challenges in keeping the information professionals well trained and abreast of modern trends in librarianship.

Uzuegbu and Onyekweodiri (2011) explored the professional visibility of the Nigerian Library Association (NLA). They concluded that the visibility of NLA is very poor. It was found that NLA is not playing its vigorous and effective role in the development of profession.

Thomas, Satpathi, and Satpathi (2010) studied the emerging challenges in academic librarianship and the role of library associations in keeping library professionals up to date. It was found that the majority of librarians need continuing education support. Their study concluded that library associations all over the world, especially in USA and Europe, need to play a dynamic role in keeping librarians abreast of current trends.

Madden (2008) reviewed the current library and information services in UK and the challenges confronted by those associations. It was revealed that the major challenges for library associations in UK include training members with information technologies, marketing and promoting information services, securing sufficient funding, and developing information policies and strategies.

Muswazi (2002) observed that financial and leadership constraints and lack of commitment are major problems faced by the Swaziland Library Association. It was recommended that membership should be surveyed on administrative, leadership, and communication improvements. A strategic plan should be crafted to prioritize legislation and training. An increase in institutional membership subscription rates should be implemented. And good working relations with allied professions should be established and maintained.

Karisiddappa (2002) investigated the role and importance of national and state level associations in library development in India. The study concluded that in India, library associations are suffering from financial assistance and there are very few associations with funding to expand their activities.

Alemna (1995) studied the role of library associations in Africa and the case for professionalism. It was found that in Africa, library associations are not successful due to such barriers as finance, legal recognition, and inadequate national legislation. It was recommended that library associations in Africa should continue their struggle in addressing the mentioned issues for the promotion and advancement of librarianship.

Haider (2003) advocated that the Pakistan Library Association must play its leadership role for the development of cooperation among library professionals. He stressed that library schools, library associations, individual librarians, government agencies, and other professionals bodies need to get modern technological skills for fast storage and retrieval of information.

Bhatti (2009) suggested that the Pakistan Library Association should play its active role for establishing a research and development section, hosting annual conferences, providing training courses on research in LIS, promoting resources sharing, conducting workshops and seminars, publishing publications, and setting up information exchange programs.

Khan and Bhatti (2010) recommended that the Pakistan Library Association should advocate for professional recognition. It should provide training courses for professionals, promote professional collaboration and communication, and maintain a bridge between LIS researchers and practitioners for the better solution of professional problems.

Sabzwari (2008) analyzed the performance of the Pakistan Library Association after its 50 years and concluded that PLA has not yet obtained any cheerful prestige and honored reputation in the country.

VII. Data Analysis and Discussions

1. Gender of the Respondents

Table 1. Gender of Respondents

Respondents	Number	Percent
Male	82	71.93
Female	32	28.07
Total	114	100.00

Table 1 shows that of the 114 respondents, there were 82 (71.93%) male respondents and 32 (28.07%) female respondents.

2. Profiles of the Respondents

Table 2. Profiles of Respondents

Respondents	Number	Percent
Professor	2	1.75
Assistant Professor	7	6.14
Lecturer	5	4.39
Chief Librarian	3	2.63
Deputy Chief Librarian	3	2.63
Senior Librarian	13	11.40
Librarian	51	44.74
Assistant Librarian	30	26.32
MLIS	105	92.10
MPhil	05	4.38
Post Doctorate	02	1.75
PhD	02	1.75

Table 2 shows that 105 (92.10%) respondents have a Master's degree in Library and Information Science. Only five (4.38%) have an MPhil degree, two (1.75%) have a PhD degree, and two (1.75%) are Post-doctorate.

Table 2 also shows that the majority of the respondents are librarians (51, 44.74%) and assistant librarians (30, 26.32%).

3. Role of PLA in Meeting the Standards of Library Associations in Countries with Developed Librarianship Systems

Table 3. Role of PLA

Opinion about the Role of PLA	Responses %	
	Yes	No
Do you agree that PLA has played the role in the development of the profession by meeting the standards of library associations in countries with developed librarianship systems?	14 (12.3%)	100 (87.7%)

Table 3 shows that the majority of the respondents (100, 87.7%) do not think that PLA has played the role in meeting the standards of library associations in countries with developed librarianship systems. PLA should examine how those associations are coping with professional issues and challenges and providing effective library and information services. PLA should learn from their professional programs and strategies for meeting the professional issues and challenges for librarianship in Pakistan.

4. Factors Deterring PLA from Meeting the Standards of Library Associations in Countries with Developed Librarianship Systems

Table 4. Factors Deterring PLA from Professional Development

Factors Deterring PLA from Professional Development	Number	Percent
Ineffective leadership	62	54.39
Inadequate policies	72	63.16
Lack of collaboration	85	74.56
Loss of membership	46	40.35
Inadequate finance	76	66.67
Inadequate communication	67	58.77
Limited infrastructure	60	52.63
Inactive role of PLA members	80	70.16
Inadequate training programs	70	61.40

Table 4 shows that major factors have deterred PLA from meeting the standards of library associations in developed countries, including lack of collaboration among professionals (74.56%), inactive role of PLA members (70.16%), inadequate training programs (61.40%), inadequate policies (63.16%), inadequate finance (66.67%), inadequate communication among professionals (58.77%), limited structure of PLA (52.63%), and ineffective leadership of PLA (54.39).

5. Challenges for PLA in the Development of Library Profession

Table 5. Challenges for PLA in the Development of Library Profession

Challenges for PLA	Number	Percent
Inadequate finance for libraries	98	85.96
Service structure for librarians	106	92.98
Implementation of copyright law	71	62.28
Weak national information infrastructure	88	77.19
Automation and digitalization of libraries	84	73.68
Development of library related standards	87	76.31
Redesigning/up-dating of curriculum for LIS schools	72	63.15
Production of skillful professionals for better services	74	64.91
Creation of network among public libraries	71	62.28

Table 5 shows that the majority of the respondents recognized that PLA faces many challenges in the development of library profession in Pakistan, including service structure for librarians (106, 92.98%), inadequate finance for libraries (98, 85.96%), weak national information infrastructure (88, 77.19%), development of library related standards (87, 76.31%), automation and digitalization of libraries (84, 73.68%), implementation of copyright law (71, 62.28%), redesigning/up-dating of curriculum for LIS schools (72, 63.15%), production of skillful professionals for better services (74, 64.91%), and creation of network among public libraries (71, 62.28%).

6. Professional Norms and Standards that PLA Should Establish

Table 6. Professional Norms and Standards that PLA Should Establish

Opinion about Professional Norms & Standards	Mean
Norms and standards related to the promotion of information literacy	4.43
Methods and standards in management of library products and services	4.41
New ideas in librarianship, i.e., Web 2.0 and Library 2.0	4.08
Diffusion and implementation of bibliographic standards	4.21
Norms and standards regarding the social and political role of libraries and librarianship	4.16
Norms and standards regarding education and professional developments of librarians	4.29

Note. 5= strongly agree, 4= agree, 3= agree to some extent, 2=disagree, 1= strongly disagree

Professional norms and standards of practices help the professionals to provide information services in a better and standardized way. These provide guidelines for library staff in planning and development of effective library services for the users. Table 6 shows that the respondents agreed that PLA should develop professional norms and standards for the promotion of information literacy (mean=4.43), methods and standards in the management of library products and services (mean=4.41), norms and standards regarding the education and professional developments of librarians (mean=4.29), new ideas about librarianship, i.e., use of Web 2.0 and Library 2.0 (mean=4.08), diffusion and implementation of bibliographic standards (mean=4.21), and norms and standards regarding the social and political role of libraries and librarianship (mean=4.16).

7. Problems Faced by PLA Members

Table 7. Problems Faced by PLA Members

Problems Faced by PLA Members	Number	Percent
Inadequate trainings on contemporary trends in profession	90	78.94
Inadequate trainings on Web 2.0 & Library 2.0 for professionals	88	77.19
No financial assistance offered to PLA members to overcome professional problems	77	67.54
No article contest organized for PLA members	80	70.17
Inadequate training programs for professionals to improve IT skills	78	68.42
Lack of sponsorship for its members to participate in international conferences	68	59.64
No support from PLA for its members' publications	72	63.15
Poor collaboration of PLA with other national & international library associations	79	69.29

Table 7 shows that the majority of the respondents agreed that PLA members face many problems, including inadequate training on contemporary trends in profession (90, 78.94%), inadequate trainings on Web 2.0 & Library 2.0 for professionals (88, 77.19%), no article contest organized for PLA members (80, 70.17%), poor collaboration of PLA with other national and international library associations (79, 69.29%), inadequate training programs for professionals to

improve IT skills (78, 68.42%), no financial assistance offered to PLA members to overcome professional problems (77, 67.54%), no support from PLA for its members' publications (72, 63.15%), and lack of sponsorship for its members to participate in international conferences (68, 59.64%).

8. Suggestions Provided by the Respondents

Table 8. Suggestions Provided by the Respondents

Suggestions	Number	Percent
PLA should work actively for the development of profession	7	6.14
PLA should publish its newsletter on regularly basis	5	4.38
PLA should offer more workshops, conferences and trainings	5	4.38
Election process of PLA should be fair	3	2.63
Others (single suggestion)	20	0.87

An open-ended question was asked to learn about the respondents' additional comments and suggestions. Table 8 shows that some respondents suggested that PLA should work more actively for the development of the profession (7, 6.14%), that PLA should publish its newsletter on a regularly basis (5, 4.38%), that PLA should offer more workshops, conferences, and trainings (5, 4.38%), and that the election process of PLA should be conducted fairly (3, 2.63%).

VIII. Conclusion

The Pakistan Library Association faces professional issues and challenges similar to library associations in other developing countries. PLA needs to play its effective and dynamic role to establish a comprehensive and robust information system in the country. PLA should endeavor to improve the working condition of libraries and information centers in Pakistan. It should ensure the delivery of better services to information seekers and library users. In this regard, PLA's stakeholders and members need to play a pro-active and leadership role for the development of librarianship in Pakistan.

References

- Adomi, E. E.; & Nwalo, K. (2003). Prospects for continuing professional education for library and information science professionals in Nigeria: The case of Delta State. *New Library World*, 104(11/12), 499-508. doi:10.1108/03074800310508777
- Ahmad, P.; & Rehman, S. (2007). Library organizations in the Punjab Province of Pakistan: An appraisal. *Malaysian Journal of Library & Information Science*, 12(2), 77-88. Retrieved from http://umrefjournal.um.edu.my/filebank/published_article/2231/567.pdf
- Alemna, A. A. (1995). Library associations in Africa and the case for professionalism. *Library Review*, 44(1), 56-59. doi:10.1108/00242539510077005

Bhatti, R. (2009). *Role of library associations in promoting research culture in LIS*. Paper presented at the Sixth Pakistan Library Conference on Library & Information Science Research in Pakistan: Challenges & Opportunities, 66- 75.

Haider, S. J. (2003). Not financial issues alone: Moving towards better resource sharing in Pakistan. *The Bottom Line: Managing Library Finances*, 16(2), 54-64. doi:10.1108/08880450310473126

Karisiddappa, C. R. (2002). *Role and importance of national and state level associations in library development in India*. 68th IFLA Council and General Conference (Glasgow, August 18-24). Retrieved from <http://archive.ifla.org/IV/ifla68/papers/020-148e.pdf>

Khan, S.; & Bhatti, R. (2010). Changing paradigms of global library associations and PLA: An appraisal. *Pakistan Library and Information Science Journal*, 41(4), 19-29.

Madden, M. J. (2008). Today's UK professional association library and information service: Challenges and best practice. *ASSLIB Proceedings*, 60(6), 556-569. doi:10.1108/00012530810924267

Morrison, H. (2004). Professional library & information associations should rise to the challenge of promoting open access and lead by example. *Library Hi Tech News*, 21(4), 8-10.

Muswazi, P. (2002). The Swaziland Library Association: An appraisal. *The International Information & Library Review*, 30(3), 203-225. doi:10.1006/iilr.1998.0095

Qarshi, A. H. (Ed.). (1993). Role of associations other than PLA in the development of librarianship in Pakistan. Lahore, Pakistan: Punjab University Library Science Alumni Association. *Proceeding of Seminar at the American Centre Lahore*, 17-28.

Sabzwari, G. A. (2003). Pakistan Library Association. *Pak-LIS News*, 3(6). Retrieved from <http://www.paklag.org/news/newsarchive/news0308.htm#ed>

Sabzwari, G. A. (2008). Golden jubilee – Pakistan Library Association. *Pakistan Library and Information Science Journal*, 38(3).

Sabzwari, G. A. (2011). Let us make PLA dynamic. *Pakistan Library and Information Science Journal*, 42(2).

Thomas, V. K.; Satpathi, C.; & Satpathi, J. N. (2010). Emerging challenges in academic librarianship and role of library associations in professional updating. *Library Management*, 31(8/9), 594-609. doi:10.1108/01435121011093379

Uzuegbu, C. P.; & Onyekweodiri, N. E. (2011). The professional visibility of the Nigerian Library Association: A report of survey findings. *Library Philosophy and Practice*. Retrieved from <http://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/~mbolin/uzuegbu-onyekweodiri.htm>

Authors:

Shakeel Ahmad Khan, Librarian and PhD Scholar, Government College University, Lahor, Pakistan. Email: Shakeelkhan575@gmail.com

Dr. Rubina Bhatti, Associate Professor and Chairperson of the Department of Library and Information Science, Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan. Email: dr.rubytariq@gmail.com

Submitted to CLIEJ on 14 May 2014.

Copyright © 2014 Shakeel Ahmad Khan and Rubina Bhatti

Khan, Shakeel Ahmad; & Bhatti, Rubina. (2014). Professional issues and challenges confronted by Pakistan Library Association in the development of librarianship in Pakistan. *Chinese Librarianship: an International Electronic Journal*, 37. URL: <http://www.iclc.us/cliej/cl37KB.pdf>
