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Foreign Students and American Library Education

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Foreign students and American library education is a topic that has growing importance as an increasing number of foreign students come to the United States to study librarianship. How relevant do these students find American library education and library practice to the practice of librarianship in their native countries? What expectations do foreign students have about American library education? How are these expectations met? These are some of the questions considered by the contributors to this issue.

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Note: The editor apologizes for the late appearance of this issue.

InULA Quarterly is a publication of the Indiana University Librarians' Association. Letters and items of interest should be addressed to Steven L. Sowell, Biology Library, Jordan 122, IU-Bloomington. Publications Committee: Nancy Boerner, Mark Day, Amy E. Novick, Maudine Williams, Steven L. Sowell, editor.

A Nigerian Point of View

In recent years there has been a dramatic increase in the number of foreign students in American library schools. One nation with a large population of students in American colleges and universities is Nigeria. In this article I will briefly describe the Nigerian library scene and discuss the problems and expectations of Nigerian students enrolled in American library schools.

The Nigerian library system is made up of the following: a national library, headquartered in the federal capital and its branches in some states of the federation; university libraries with branches in faculties and distant campuses; polytechnic libraries serving technical colleges; public libraries with branches in local government areas (the equivalent of American counties); special libraries serving industries, research institutes, newspapers and private enterprises; and school libraries serving elementary and secondary schools.

There are presently four library schools that train manpower for these libraries. The University of Ibadan awards a two-year undergraduate diploma, a one-year master's degree, and a three-year doctor of philosophy degree in library science. The Ahmadu Bello University confers the two-year undergraduate diploma, a three-year bachelor's degree, a two-year master's degree, and most recently, a three-year doctorate degree in library science. The University of Maiduguri grants a three-year bachelor's degree in library science. Bayero University, Kano, offers a two-year undergraduate diplo-

ma and a three-year bachelor's degree in library science. The growth of libraries both in numbers and in size, together with the recent increase in interest in librarianship by young Nigerians, have largely contributed to the rush to obtain library training.

Nigerian students come to the United States for degrees in library and information science for a variety of reasons. Some students come to obtain a higher degree in library science or to specialize in an aspect of librarianship such as information science. Other students come because they could not gain admission into either of the two Nigerian library schools that offer the master's degree in library science due to the schools' limited enrollments.

Two types of Nigerian students come to the United States for library education. The first type are those students who have had previous library education, for instance, the bachelor's degree. The second type are those students who have had no library education. The latter have no problems because the American master's degree in library science is the first professional degree. However, the former, who already possess the first professional qualification, have a problem. They expect the American master's degree to be an advanced program. They become frustrated when they are asked to take courses similar to those which they have already completed in Nigeria. The degree to these students is no longer an advanced degree, but a second first professional degree. This situation points to the need for advisors to guide foreign

students in the choice of courses to be taken. A faculty member who has some knowledge of or experience with library education in other countries should be appointed foreign student advisor. The advisor should help foreign students choose courses that will make their educational experience in the United States more meaningful.

A second expectation of Nigerian students is that American library education will relate to the Nigerian situation. However, they are disappointed when they find that courses in American library schools are taught with an emphasis on the American library scene. They find themselves in a situation where they know more about American library problems than about the problems of their own country. One solution to this problem is that before coming

to the United States, Nigerian students must understand thoroughly their own libraries so that they will be able to define areas of similarity and difference with American libraries. An international student in an American library school who wants to succeed and make his education relevant to his or her country must think comparatively. He must compare library practice in his country with the American situation, noting which aspects are relevant and those which are not. It is important to mention, however, that foreign students should not be concerned solely with those aspects of American library education that relate to their own countries, but they should also prepare themselves in those areas of librarianship that have universal significance.

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Libraries in Saudi Arabia

Situated on the Arabian Peninsula, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a country of 870,000 square miles and a population of approximately 7,012,642. The development of libraries and librarianship in Saudi Arabia, as in other countries of the Islamic world, dates back to the founding of the first mosque of Medina in the 7th century, when the mosques were the only cultural and educational resources for the community. During that period and afterwards there also existed in the two holy cities of Mecca and Medina many large collections of books which could be termed libraries. Most of these were private collections for religious purposes. Historically, however, they are seen as good examples of libraries during the Islamic civilization period.

Today new libraries are being opened and old ones expanded in Saudi Arabia. One can find all types of libraries, including academic, public, school and private libraries.

The national library is in desperate need of improvement in order to provide needed services of national concern. As a librarian I cannot presently classify the library as a "national" library because it fails to meet all the requirements thereof.

A national plan is needed to expand the public libraries so that they may offer better services, support the national educational system's goals and objectives, and provide cultural information for all people in the community. About forty-five public libraries are distributed throughout the five main regions of Saudi

Arabia. For several reasons progress for most of these libraries has been slow; Jeddah public library is an exception with its new building and excellent facilities.

Besides public libraries, there are university libraries, private libraries, and elementary and secondary school libraries. Saudi Arabia has seven universities, each with a central library and other branch libraries. The collections and services in the university and college libraries are growing rapidly.

There are about twenty-six special libraries in Saudi Arabia, some with private organizations and others belonging to governmental agencies. The Institute of Public Administration has the finest special libraries in the Kingdom.

Some school libraries also exist, but the number is not available. It is important, however, to note that not every elementary or secondary school in Saudi Arabia has its own library.

Compared to the development of libraries in the United States, the libraries in Saudi Arabia are only now beginning to make progress. Librarians in the United States do not have any problems similar to those facing librarians in Saudi Arabia. Z. Khurshid stated that the overall problems in the development of libraries and information centers can be characterized by the following:

1. Lack of national planning
2. Lack of trained local staff
3. Absence of library legislation
4. Absence of a library association

5. Lack of an advanced Book Trade

6. Substandard national library¹

The lack of trained local staff is a major problem. Only two programs at two different universities offer an undergraduate degree in library science in Saudi Arabia. The first began in 1974 through the department of Library and Information Science at King Abul Aziz University in Jeddah. The other was initiated in 1975 by Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud University in Riyadh. Jeddah has begun a master's degree program in library science. In addition to these, there are three other institutions offering training programs in librarianship. It is my opinion that these few programs cannot begin to solve the problems of untrained staff, especially since university level students are not attracted to academic programs in library science. Consequently the library science programs have the lowest enrollment at each university which offers them.² I agree with Z. Khurshid that libraries are growing more quickly than the qualified staff to run them.³

In Saudi Arabia, reading, especially in a library, is not a hobby that most people enjoy and pursue during their leisure time. Most of the university students read because they have to write a paper or book report. Over 50% of the students reported that they had never used any type of library before coming to the university. This is a statistic discovered by M. S. Ashoor in his study of user attitudes toward the resources and services of three university libraries.⁴

¹Zuhiruddin Khurshid, "Libraries and Information Centers in Saudi Arabia," *International Library Review* 11 (October 1979):417-719.

²Abdulaziz M. Al-Nahari, "The National Library, An Analysis of the Critical Factor in Promoting Library and Information Science in Developing Countries: The Case of Saudi Arabia," Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, 1982, p. 156.

³Khurshid, op. cit., p. 417.

⁴Al-Nahari, op. cit., pp. 151-52.

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The Library and Librarianship in Japan

My first impression of a Japanese library is that it is "a place to study." As is well known throughout the world, most Japanese students experience extreme pressure to enter universities. Several years ago I was one of them, and I used to go to my hometown public library to study. The library was always overflowing with students. Librarians had to hand out cards with numbers on them to assign seats to students. On weekends there was even a waiting list for seats in the lobby of the library. I heard often that some people hated this atmosphere so much that they did not like to go to the library. In fact, even I was glad that I did not have to go to the library anymore after I passed the university entrance examinations.

During the past two decades, Japanese libraries and librarianship have benefited from the assistance given them by American library science educators. Moreover, many faculty from Japanese library schools have come to the United States to study and share ideas. However, in Japanese society, libraries are still only for special people such as the previously mentioned students and scholars. People know that libraries exist, but they do not know what libraries can provide them. The Japanese conception of the library is far from the idea of "the library as a center of the community," or "the library for everybody," concepts which I hear mentioned often at library schools in the United States.

Like the library itself, librarianship in Japan is not well recognized by society as a profession. For a long time librarians have been seen as nothing more than "book watchers." Even with the movement toward better education that is seen today in Japan, we still have much to accomplish. The training of Japanese librarians is significantly different from the graduate

education for librarianship in American universities and colleges. There are not many universities or colleges in Japan that have library schools as independent departments. As a consequence, librarianship requires not a degree, but a certificate that one can get by taking about twenty credits during his or her undergraduate study. One can also get the certificate through a ten-week summer course or a six-month night course. I do not mean to imply that the quality of librarians in Japan is not good as a result. However, it seems to be true that this limited training contributes to the low social status given the profession by Japanese society.

I had very little idea of what I would learn at library school in the United States before coming here. However, while I was studying for my undergraduate degree, I was very much impressed by librarianship in this country. As a profession it is much more sophisticated and well recognized than in my country. This difference really encouraged me to learn about it.

Public institutions such as libraries are strongly influenced by social structure, economics, and culture. Therefore, it would be impossible for Japan to adopt everything done by libraries in the United States. However, I strongly feel that I should be able to utilize what I learn here and make it effective in my home country. As I mentioned before, Japanese libraries and library education have continuously progressed. In many areas Japanese librarians have taken the contributions of American librarianship and adjusted them to fit Japanese society. I hope that in the near future Japanese students trained here will be able to improve the importance of librarianship in our society.

Book Review

International Handbook of Contemporary Developments in Librarianship, edited by Miles M. Jackson. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981. (School of Library and Information Science Library Ref. Z721.I59)

"In the German sense of *Handbuch* this book is a compendium of facts on a central theme and is intended both for reference and for general reading. Of course, not every country in the world can be represented in a work of this kind. The countries that are represented here as representative have developments that are significant and more pronounced than those found in other countries. Many of the countries selected have made advances over the past thirty years which require detailed analysis of basic processes." In this statement taken from the preface, Miles Jackson presents the general aims and dimensions for *International Handbook of Contemporary Developments in Librarianship*. Jackson accomplishes quite well his stated goal of producing a "compendium of facts," but his work contains several weaknesses when viewed as a tool "for reference use and for general reading."

The editor divides the world into six regions (Africa; Middle East; Asia; Oceania; Europe; and North American, Mexico, and the Caribbean) and the contributors discuss in 34 chapters the significant developments in librarianship that have occurred since 1945 in 65 countries. All of the contributors are either natives of the country they discuss or have lived there and/or have been directly involved with libraries and librarianship of that country.

For each of the six regions Jackson has written a brief description of some of the political, historical, social, and economic forces that have influenced library affairs in each country

covered in the section. He states in the preface that "to fully understand the role or state of affairs of librarianship, the library problem must be placed in context."

The topics typically discussed by each contributor include the following: history of the nation's major libraries; the national library, if one exists; library legislation; library development plans; bibliographic control of the nation's publishing output; special, school, academic, and public libraries; library associations; and education for librarianship. Most of the chapters include statistics, many in the form of tables, on the number of libraries in the nation and their holdings, and on the book publishing industry. Each chapter ends with a bibliography.

International Handbook of Contemporary Developments in Librarianship includes a listing of abbreviations often seen in international circles (Why is ISSN not included?), and an appendix covering library associations. The index appears to be adequate.

One of the weaknesses of the work is that the editor did not exert firm control over the contributors to ensure an equitable and consistent treatment for each of the nations selected for inclusion in the volume. For example, all of the Arab countries are discussed together in one chapter by one contributor, while the chapters on Malaysia, Singapore, and Denmark are each subdivided into subsections, really chapters in themselves, each with an individual author. Can it be that the developments in librarianship

in Malaysia, discussed in 29 pages, are more significant than the advances made by the United Kingdom, discussed in 17 pages? I doubt it. However, from another perspective, this unevenness can be viewed as a strength. The researcher interested in developments in librarianship in one of the developing countries that is covered in this volume will generally find a large quantity of information brought together in one place.

Another weakness of *International Handbook of Contemporary Developments in Librarianship* is that the editor fails to discuss what criteria he used to determine whether a nation's developments in librarianship were significant enough to merit its inclusion in the volume. Since the editor does not discuss his criteria, I find it difficult to accept the omission

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of all of the countries of Central and South America.

One theme that runs throughout the volume, in both the chapters and in the section introductions, is that significant advances in librarianship are closely linked to advances in education. I think that this theme stands out because of the work's emphasis on developing nations.

International Handbook of Contemporary Developments in Librarianship is an important tool for the individual interested in international librarianship, particularly in the developing nations that are included. However, the researcher interested in the developed countries will find the work deficient and will need to consult other sources for a more complete overview.

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Official Rules

Poems, music, short stories, drawings, or any other written or graphic forms of creative expression which relate to libraries are eligible. Entries may be a maximum of 750 words or fill three 8-1/2" x 11" sheets of paper, whichever is less. Your name, campus address, and telephone number should appear on a separate cover sheet. You may enter as many times as you like. Members of the Publications Committee cannot participate. Entries must be received no later than February 4, 1983, by Steven Sowell, Biology Library, Jordan 122, IUB.

Judging

Members of the InULA Publications Committee will judge entries on the basis of creativity and relevance to the membership of InULA.

Prizes

A first prize of \$25.00, a second prize of \$20.00, a third prize of \$15.00, and three honorable mentions of \$10.00 each will be awarded. Winning entries will be published in a future issue of *InULA QUARTERLY*.
