

# LIBRARY SCIENCE EDUCATION THROUGH ALLAMA IQBAL OPEN UNIVERSITY

by

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It cannot be denied that education is a fundamental right of all the citizens. It is considered to be the most powerful instrument for human development, may it be external, internal, social, political or economic.

When Pakistan came into being in 1947, there appeared only one higher seat of learning which was fully functioning i.e. Punjab University. It was established in 1882. The establishment of Sindh University was approved a few months before the inception of this new country. After independence, the first decade was purely a reconstruction period marked by our struggle for national survival.

In spite of huge financial constraints, due consideration was given to education. The Government of Pakistan from time to time, took interest for the development of education by organizing national conferences, forming Educational Advisory Councils, National Planning Commissions. Resultantly new schools, colleges and universities were established. Having only one university in 1947, now we have 22 universities all over the country, and the number of colleges, schools and other institutions has enhanced abundantly. A number of National Education policies were introduced to improve quality and services of education.

Libraries play a vital role in the national

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development. Their importance in educational development, has been emphasized in all the national educational policies. Libraries are the store houses of the literacy heritage of a nation, and thus maintain them in a definite order and disseminate the human knowledge to its clientele without any restriction. Their usefulness as a source of intellectual development is an established fact.

Alongwith the general education, education in library science was also introduced at university level. Following universities have been teaching library science education as a discipline:

	Name of University	Diploma Started	MLIS* Started
1.	University of Karachi, Karachi	1956	1962
2.	University of Punjab, Lahore	1959	1974
3.	University of Peshawar, Peshawar	1962	1983
4.	University of Sindh, Jamshoro	1965	1974
5.	University of Baluchistan, Quetta	1981	1984
6.	Islamia University, Bahawalpur	1983	1984

Undoubtedly, the libraries are the backbone of educational research and national development. Keeping in view their importance, trained professional manpower, organised infrastructure, adequate and appropriate equipment are necessary.

Our library schools have served this important profession through formal system by providing professio-

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\*Master of Library and Information Sciences.

nal training. Much has been done for the professional, para-professional education and training on various levels by various organizations. In spite of these efforts, unfortunately, it has been revealed from the various surveys, conducted by the different professional individuals and library related organizations, that the existing libraries are facing many problems, like inadequate stock which is lying un-arranged in the locked almirahs, lack of funds, poorly housed, ill equipped and in-sufficient services. Similarly, the librarians appointed are unqualified and possess outdated information due to lack of latest information sources. The librarians in schools and colleges at various levels are working single handed.

There is no provision of para-professional staff which can assist them in professional services.

Looking to the above real facts, it was deemed necessary to teach this discipline through distance education system. Librarianship as a profession has a scientific basic and it is not only an occupation, but is like any, academic discipline.

### **Establishment of Library and Information Sciences Department<sup>1</sup>**

#### **Introduction**

The department was established at Allama Iqbal Open University in early 1985 to meet the tremendous public demands and requests. It was considered as an urgent need to start such a course through correspondence in Library Science. The department planned as a first step to start certificate level course at B.A. level and to introduce later on the Post-Graduate Diploma and M.Sc. programmes. The department has planned to offer in future Post-Graduate "Certificate of Study in Librarianship" for practising librarians as part of its continuing education programme/post-experience professional courses to update and acquaint the qualified librarians with national and international agencies in the field of library science.

## Main Objectives

Following are the main objectives of establishing the department of Library and Information Sciences at Allama Iqbal Open University:

- 1) To create a teaching learning environment through distance teaching system which will foster and facilitate the attainment of skills, attitude and knowledge necessary for students to obtain optimal success in the library/information profession;
- 2) To assume a dynamic role in providing leadership to the library/information profession and to related professional institution/organizations;
- 3) To promote an increasingly productive faculty/student commitment to research and publication.

## Significance of LIS Department

Libraries, either directly or indirectly, are concerned with the problems of the society. Different groups of people need and will continue needing library services. There are several types of library works for which the students will prepare: one type of library work is reader services and activities associated with the circulation of materials to readers; another type is of technical services, which concerns the selecting, acquiring, organising, and arranging library materials so that they are easy to find and use. Among others, these broad types of services are offered in public libraries, school libraries, academic and research libraries and special libraries. Therefore, it was deemed fit to establish Library and Information Sciences at AIOU and introduce professional courses in this subject through distance education system to meet the needs of existing libraries and this profession.

## Methodology

The LIS is an important department in the Allama Iqbal Open University that offers, through open distance education, the programmes and courses in Library and Information Sciences and has large enrolment annually. As part of the efforts to reform the conventional education in library science in the country, an innovative strategies have been developed to provide flexible self-instructional methods for students scattered all over the country. Different media technologies are utilised to deliver the distance education programme in the field of library sciences.

As are the general practice in the system of AIOU, this department adopts the same pattern for preparation and launching its courses. The courses are prepared, written, passed and launched according to the procedure prescribed in the University Act.

## Curriculum

Distance education system as a matter of fact, aims to redress social or educational inequality and offers opportunities of learning to those who, for their personal, social or economic reasons cannot attend conventional colleges and universities.

The curriculum of library science courses through distance education consists of the established and recognised curriculum of the formal universities of Pakistan. Other formal library schools in Pakistan are teaching the post-graduate classes, whereas, at the moment LIS department, of AIOU has started two programmes at B.A. level i.e. "Certificate in Librarianship" and "Bachelor of Library and Information Sciences". For this purpose the basic topics of the courses are taken from the existing general curriculum of other universities in this subject. Since, no other formal university is imparting graduate level education in Library and Information Sciences, therefore, the question of equivalence in this case does not arise.

The post-graduate level programme in Library and Information Sciences is under active process and it will be launched in near future as soon as the resources are available.

The curriculum of our Library and Information Science Courses has been framed according to the needs of those who either want to adopt this profession as their life career, or they are already working in libraries and need professional training or want to improve their professional qualification. The approach is functional and goal-oriented in these programmes.

New amendments, recommended by the Curriculum Revision Committee formed by University Grants Commission,<sup>2</sup> have been incorporated in the curriculum of Master's Degree Programme.

### **Admission**

Like other courses, the Library and Information Sciences courses are notified through national newspapers well in advance to enable the students to contact the Admission Office or their nearest Regional Offices to get admission. Candidates with intermediate certificates are eligible for admission.

### **Study Materials**

The written materials (LIS text books) in each area consists of unit lessons, each a self-explanatory composition in which the theme has been developed in simple and informal language and in self learning style. Lessons have been set in a format that makes them distinct from the commonly used text books in formal education.

The printed study material forms the package of the distance teaching programme. A full credit course has an actual study period of 18 weeks. A correspondence unit for each week requires about 10 hours of study. Students are expected to work regularly throughout the semester. Each semester normally lasts for six months i.e. April to

September (Spring) and October to March (Autumn).

### Assignments

Each LIS full credit course has four assignments (100 marks each). Which the students are required to complete and send them to their tutors for assessment.

These assignments have three-fold functions:

- i) to enable a student to have his/ her performance and progress assessed regularly by expert of LIS courses;
- ii) to enable a tutor to give instruction to his/her students through the comments and corrections made on the assignments;
- iii) to act as a pacing device for the student during his/her period of study.

-Continuous assessment

Each assignment carries 100 marks. Thus to pass in the assignment component a student should obtain 160 marks.

### Study Centres

Study centres are the places where students meet their tutors and fellow students to discuss the contents and problems pertaining to LIS courses with each other.

The study centres are open in the evening and on specified days and times.

### Tutors

The tutors for LIS courses are appointed on a part-time basis from the local institutions by the Regional



Directors on the following criteria:

"Committee of Courses" on Library and Information Sciences proposed the appointment criteria of the tutors as under:<sup>3</sup>

- i) MA/MLIS with 3 years experience;  
or  
MA in any subject alongwith Diploma in Library and Information Sciences and working Librarian in any library;  
or  
MA/MSc/MLIS in Library and Information Sciences and working as College or University Teacher.
- ii) Regular member of Pakistan Library Association Federal/Provincial level.

Tutor and student contact is provided throughout the courses. Normally 30-35 students are allotted to a tutor.

The tutors are required to check assignments and return to the students with instructional notes. The marks obtained by students in these assignments are sent to the Controller of Examination through respective Regional Director for the purpose of record and for the preparation of result.

The work of tutor and services provided at study centres are supervised by the full time Regional Director of the area concerned.

### Regional Services

The Allama Iqbal Open University has 36 Regional Offices comprising a country-wide regional network of study centres at district level. The Regional Directors are important channels for student and tutor feed back. They act as 'Liaison Officers' with local authorities and departments, agencies and other institutions. The



University is projected through them into the 'middlemen' between the Course Coordinators and the thousands of students spread over all parts of the country. They advise the students, provide them with relevant literature, application forms and other introductory information. They also organise and supervise the final examination of the students.

### Examination

Final examination is held at the end of semester for each course:

-Final examination

Minimum pass marks in the final examination will be 33% and weightage of the continuous assessment component and the final examination would be 25:75 respectively. A student in order to be declared pass in each course, would be required to obtain at least 40% aggregate marks.

The final result is declared after 2-3 months and conveyed to every student individually.

The AIOU provides instructions mainly in Urdu, but English is also used as a medium of instruction in certain subjects.

### Current activities and programmes of LIS department

This department offers the following programmes:<sup>4</sup>

#### 1 "Certificate in Librarianship" B.A. Level

The programme has been developed in view of its importance, and recent bias towards professional and technical nature of courses to be offered by the university. The Government of Pakistan gives special attention towards Mass Literacy. Rural Development, and Agro-, and Techno-professional education. It has also necessitated for designing and training demand at the

national development level. In the library sector as well, public libraries are being established as regional and state system; academic and research libraries are being strengthened to coordinate their resources and services; and new national level programmes are being initiated to meet the needs of the rural disadvantages, minority groups, and those in prisons and hospitals.

This programme has been introduced at the post-intermediate level, and it will provide necessary insight and skills to the fresh entrants and to those workers who are employed at support level in different types of libraries, to become qualified hands for the sub level tasks and duties in order to improve the quality and quantity of library services. The "Certificate in Librarianship" programme consists of:

- a) Organising Library Resources (18 units, B.A level)                      One Credit
- b) Library Services (18 units, B.A. Level)                                      One Credit

### Objectives

Following are the objectives of the Programmes in Library & Information Sciences.

To enable the student to:

- 1) Comprehend and apply effectively the basic concepts and skills of acquiring, organizing, maintaining and utilising the library materials;
- 2) Acquire an understanding of the changing social, cultural and educational role of the library in contemporary Pakistani society;
- 3) Develop an understanding of the importance of communication process in the effective performance of para-professional roles;

- 4) Provide students with an intellectual and educational atmosphere which stimulate a positive commitment to libraries and continued professional development.

### **Course-wise Contents-5**

The course contents of these courses emphasize on the types of services library should provide. These courses are consisting of 18 units (one full credit) each and forms the part of the "Certificate in Librarianship" programme. These courses are also pre-requisite for BLIS Programme.

i) **Organizing Library Resources (Full Credit)**

Following topics have been covered in this course:

- User needs
- Book Selection Procedures
- Organization of Book and non-book material
- Classification and Cataloguing.

ii) **Library Services (Full Credit)**

Following topics have been covered in this course:

- Library House Keeping
- Circulation
- Reference enquiries and materials
- Readers Services
- Office Practices
- Furniture
- Building
- Stock Verification
- Binding and treatment of documents etc.

## General Information

Students can take 2 courses in one semester as independent study programme for obtaining the "Certificate in Librarianship" or/and if they desire to continue further, they can claim two credits exemption for completing (general) B.A. degree or Bachelor in Library and Information Sciences (BLIS) under the cluster system of AIOU.

### 2. Bachelor in Library and Information Sciences (BLIS)

Following the re-structuring of the university's Intermediate and B.A. programmes on a "Cluster" basis, it was fully realised that potential for a full series of courses in the field of library science existed. Therefore, the following two more courses were introduced:

- i) History of Libraries with reference to Pakistan (B.A. level) One Credit
- ii) Classification and Cataloguing (B.A. level) One Credit

### Objectives

It is intended for training of para-professional library staff and other interested in picking up librarianship as a career.

### Course-wise contents

These courses consist of 18 units (one full credit) each and are part of BLIS cluster programme.

- i) History of Libraries with reference to Pakistan (Full Credit)

In this course the ancient history of the libraries to modern age has been covered. The role of Pakistan Library Association and other library organizations has also been

highlighted.

ii) **Classification and Cataloguing (Full Credit)**

This course is based on Organizing Library Resources. It covers classification schemes, problems and expansion schemes, Cataloguing codes etc. It is quite practical and technical course.

**General Information**

By now, LIS department has offered four professional courses (see annexure-1). The Bachelor in Library & Information Sciences a cluster completed with 50% LIS courses plus two credit compulsory courses and two credits elective offered by other departments in the faculties of Social Sciences/Basic and Applied Sciences.

**Enrolment**

These librarianship courses have a bright future in the country. Being skill oriented courses the students of these courses particularly working in libraries have great interest. Therefore, the enrolment is encouraging.

From the Spring, 1988 to Autumn, 1994 semesters following is the course-wise enrolment figures of the course:

<b><u>Course</u></b>	<b><u>Enrolment</u></b>	<b><u>From Semester</u></b>	<b><u>To Semester</u></b>
422	5,182	Spring, 1988	Autumn, 1994
423	4,539	Spring, 1988	Autumn, 1994
466	1,914	Spring, 1990	Autumn, 1994
467	996	Spring, 1990	Autumn, 1994

3. **Future Programmes (B.A. Level)**

Following are the courses under consideration for development in future to strengthen the Bachelor of Library and Information Sciences (BLIS) Cluster and to provide more courses in this field:

1. Using Books and libraries (Full Credit)
2. Serial Librarianship (Full Credit)
3. Library Computer Literacy (Full Credit)
4. Building of Library Collections (Full Credit)

#### 4. M.Sc. in Library & Information Sciences Programme

As a matter of fact, the department intends to contribute to the advancement of librarianship, strengthen and improve the Library & Information Services of the nation through offering of this Master's Degree programme. The programme will produce high level professional in LIS to provide organizational and managerial/administrative leadership to the different type of libraries in the country.

The programme also aims at providing opportunities of in-service techni-professional education and training to the persons already serving at middle-level positions (Diploma). As a result, the Library Services in Pakistan would be improved and brought upto the standard library services available else-where in the world.

This programme stands approved by the university statutory bodies, but unfortunately, it could not take off due to lack of resources. There is a great demand to start MLSc programme through AIOU from the Diploma holder professionals who joined their services and could not continue their further education (i.e. Master's Degree) for various reasons, i.e. they are not in position to get leave from their parent departments or to attend regular classes and bear such huge expenses.

As discussed earlier, the curriculum of this programmes has been updated according to the recommendations of Curriculum Revision Committee, formed by UGC.

#### Problems

There is only one Assistant Professor and one Lecturer working in the Library & Information Sciences department, Allama Iqbal Open University. The

writers/reviewers of the units of Library and Information Sciences text books and the tutors who are library experts and senior professionals are part-time workers engaged from outside the University. The following problems are being faced in this connection:

- Since part-time tutors are appointed from the local areas, therefore, it is quite difficult to trace-out the addresses of library professionals with the result that some times the students feel great difficulty when they don't have local tutors.
- Library visits are continuing compulsory component of our courses. The student is compelled to visit any nearest library and get required information through a questionnaire and get marks in their assignments. But, when our students visit some of their nearest libraries, the professional librarian or Incharge of the Libray does not bother to guide or help to the student, the reasons best known to them, with the result, the student becomes very discouraged.
- According to the pattern of distance education system the department has to develop and provide the educational package (print material supported by Audio/video programmes) to the students upto B.A. level. For this purpose, the material on Library and Information Sciences is not frequently available to the department.
- Recently, the Curriculum Revision Committee has recommended to introduce new discipline at M.A. level i.e. Automation. It is undoubtedly a very good attempt. But, it is not possible at this stage, because the facility for practical component is not available.



## Recommendations

For the sake of library profession following humble suggestions is to be considered by all our senior professionals to share the efforts of Allama Iqbal Open University in its library science teaching through distance education system:

- The members of Pakistan Library Association should extend their cooperation and send their contact points to our Regional Directors to help them in the appointment as tutors in our courses. The Federal and Provincial PLA Branches may provide members directory to this department or our Regional Directors for easy appointment of tutors.
- Since there is no regular face to face facility of study/teaching, therefore, it should be the professional and moral duty of the senior librarians to guide our junior colleagues and library students properly.
- Whenever, our students visit any library, the library Incharge should give proper information and guide them upto the mark.
- The required parallel library literature may be produced and made available to our students at the easy access in the libraries.
- Since our professional technical tools are very costly, the Allama Iqbal Open University is not in position to provide all the tools at each study centre. Therefore, it is worth to mention here that the librarians should share their expertise and technical tools to the students for their guidance and use.
- The Donor Agencies like Netherlands Library Development Project, ODA, Asia Foundation and others may extend their helping hand to make available the P.Cs., technical tools and

Consultancies to this department for the improvement of library profession.

If such facilities are provided, this department will be in a position to meet the needs of those professionals who are still looking forward to improve their professional qualification.

### References

- 1 Vice-Chancellor's report 1985-88, Islamabad: Allama Iqbal Open University, 1989.p.75.
- 2 Curriculum in Library & Information Sciences for B.A., B.Sc. and B.Com. and Master of Library and Information Sciences, Islamabad: National Academy of Higher Education, University Grants Commission, 1991.
- 3 Minutes of the meeting of Committee of Courses in the subject of Library & Information Sciences held on 19/10/1987 at Library & Information Sciences Department, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad.
- 4 Syllabus outlines (B.A. programmes), Islamabad: Allama Iqbal Open University, 1988.
- 5 Ibid.