

Education for Librarianship and Information Science in the Republic of China

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This study was carried out in June of 1983 during a visit to the Republic of China utilizing both a questionnaire and interviews with faculty members. The original report, in addition to presenting the survey data, purveyed a comparative approach to library education in the west and recommendations for directions that developments in Taiwan should take. This comparative viewpoint was presented from the perspective of the Standards for Accreditation of the American Library Association because these standards represent a distillation of accepted educational policy established over a period of several decades.

The development of higher education in the Republic of China during the past three decades has been one of explosive growth. From a total number of institutions of higher education (universities, colleges and junior colleges) of seven in 1950, this figure had grown to one hundred and one in 1980. The number of students in institutions of higher education has grown proportionately during the same period, from a total enrollment in junior colleges and college and university programs of 6,665 in 1950 to a total of 329,603 in 1980.

The development of education for librarianship in the Republic of China has, over the same period, also been one of great growth. The history of education for librarianship in China in modern times goes back to 1921 and 1928 with the founding of schools at Wen Hua (Boone) College and Ginlin University, on the China mainland. The first program of library education in Taiwan, Republic of China, dates to 1955 with the establishment of a school within the Department of Social Education of the National Taiwan Normal University. This department is grouped with those of journalism and social work under this University's structure. The program of library education at National Taiwan University was founded in 1961. The next program to be set up was that of Fujen Catholic University which was set up with a large evening division in 1969. The program at Tamkang University was started in 1971, also with a large evening division. The latter institution has always emphasized educational media as witnessed by its title of Department of Educational Media Science. The library technician program of the World College of Journalism was started in 1964.

CURRICULUM OF THE SCHOOLS

The curriculum of these programs of education for librarianship has been largely a traditional one with the possible exception of that at Tamkang University, which has always had an emphasis upon the role of educational media in its courses. Some idea of the overall curricular emphasis may be seen from the sequence of required courses in library and information science that all undergraduate students had to take prior to the most recent revision in the spring of this year (1983). These courses were given at the undergraduate level and had to be passed by all students majoring in library science in addition to those general courses required of all students. For example, the National Taiwan Normal University Department of Library Science (within the Department of Social Education) had its students take the following courses:

COURSE	CREDIT HOURS
Introduction to Library Science	4
Classification & Cataloging of Chinese Books	6
Chinese Reference Materials	6
Chinese Bibliography	4
Acquisition & Book Selection	3
Classification & Cataloging of Western Books	6
Western Reference Materials	6
Management of Materials	3

Library Practice Work (Internship)	6
School Libraries	2
Library Automation	2
Total Required Credits in Library Science	48

The Department of Library Science at the National Taiwan University required of its undergraduate students somewhat more in the way of credit hours, as indicated below:

COURSE	CREDIT HOURS
Introduction to Library Science	4
Library Trends	2
Classification & Cataloging of Chinese Books	9
Chinese Reference Materials	6
Classification & Cataloging of Western Books	8
Western Reference Materials	6
Chinese Bibliography	6
Acquisitions and Book Selection	3
School Libraries	2
Public Libraries	2
University Libraries	2
Special Libraries	2
Library Practice Work	2
Management of Materials	4
Library Management	4
Practice Work in Cataloging	3
Total Required Credits in Library Science	65

Although the Department of Library Science at National Taiwan University required seventeen more hours, the basic program was the same. That is, library science majors were required to take work in the areas of introduction to library science, classification and cataloging of both Chinese and western books, study of both Chinese and western reference materials, Chinese bibliography, acquisitions and book selection, management of materials, school libraries, and library practice work. The differences in total hours required are attributable largely to different hours assigned for particular courses (i.e., NTU giving six hours of credit for Chinese bibliography while NTNU gave four) and the fact that National Taiwan University required courses in public, academic, and special libraries of its students. The important point is that a common core of traditional courses was required of all library science majors. The program of study for majors at Fujen Catholic University's Department of

Library Science was quite similar in its requirements with a common core and a very few individual differences such as a requirement for study of a second foreign language. The program at Tamkang, the most recently founded, also taught in these required areas of cataloging and classification of both Chinese and western materials, Chinese and western reference sources, administration of libraries and media centers, etc. It should be noted that a substantial number of elective courses in library science was available to students in these programs.

This required curriculum was revised in 1982 and new requirements published in the spring of 1983. The changes made reflect developments in the field and the need to adapt to greater use being made of media materials by libraries and the growth of importance of information science. The following courses are required under the new curriculum:

COURSE	CREDIT HOURS
Introduction to Library Science	2
Introduction to Information Science	2
Chinese Reference Sources	4
Western Reference Sources	4
Chinese Cataloging & Classification	6
Western Cataloging & Classification	6
Building Library Collections	4
Bibliography	4
Audio-Visual Materials	4
Non-Book Materials	2
Library Management	4
Library Field Work	0
Introduction to Computer Science	4
Library Automation	4
Total Required Hours	50

The trend toward accommodation of new developments may be seen in the requirement of three courses related to the general area of information science: Introduction to Information Science, Introduction to Computer Science, and Library Automation. The requirement of courses in audio-visual and non-book materials illustrates the same trend. As with the previous arrangement, a substantial array of elective courses is still available to the students, and, of course, they must meet the requirements of general course work for all students. The special handicap (or from another perspective, strength) of Chinese library education may be seen in the requirement of double time for the study of reference materials, both Chinese and western,

and, cataloging and classification of both Chinese and western materials. Students in the Republic of China must spend twice the amount of time that their counterparts do in the west to master these subjects.

SURVEY OF LIBRARY EDUCATORS

In order to most easily capture the views of the library education community of the Republic of China, questionnaires were distributed to department chairs and faculty members at each of the schools. In addition, an interview schedule was filled out for each conversation held with faculty at the time of the site visit.

What were some of the results obtained from this investigation? Two main concerns quickly made themselves manifest. The first of these, although not necessarily the most critical, was related to whether or not education for librarianship should be raised largely to the graduate level in the Republic of China. The other related to the place of the broad, general area of information science in the changing curriculum of the schools.

In regard to the issue of graduate versus undergraduate education for librarianship, faculty members and chairmen saw a trend in this direction but recognized that the trend was only developing slowly. The attainment of graduate status for the programs was generally seen as desirable, but as difficult of attainment. There was also a general, but not unanimous, feeling that the undergraduate programs should be retained whether or not graduate programs were set up. This seemed to be based on a feeling that undergraduate education for librarianship was the best system for the Republic of China at the present time, best in terms of the social and economic realities. It was felt that adequate training for the profession could be given in these programs. Also, the comment was made on more than one occasion that undergraduate education fitted better with the realities of the status of librarians in Taiwan and their relatively low salaries, implying that the profession could not attract people with graduate training to its ranks. The library market for graduates was thus seen as a critical factor.

It was also felt by some respondents that the advantage of having more time to work with the students in the undergraduate programs was a factor in their favor. More opportunity was present for practice work situations as well. Another comment was that the students in these programs had a better attitude toward their studies and were more willing to work at mastery of the details of the profession than were graduate students.

On the other hand, certain advantages were seen in graduate programs which made almost all of the participants in the survey see

this level of instruction as being desirable even if undergraduate programs were retained. The opportunity for students to attain a stronger subject background in their undergraduate years was prominent among these. Also, the chance for more training in library management for potential administrators was cited, as well as the advantage of greater opportunity for specialized education for senior staff positions, information specialists and librarians in general.

Some (a small minority) saw the attainment of a graduate credential as being advantageous in obtaining better positions and higher status for the profession. In general, however, respondents saw the opening up of graduate programs as desirable in advancing the profession by providing a better opportunity to prepare librarians and information specialists for service to society.

A major question would appear to be what elements of library and information science education would be best studied at the undergraduate level and could be articulated with a graduate program. Such a program might constitute a minor field to be coupled with a major in a liberal arts subject area.

The issue of graduate education for librarianship and information science is related strongly to the need for well-trained faculty as well as to the need for assuring professionals who have good liberal arts backgrounds. This factor is seen in two ways. First, one can state that a program of graduate education for librarianship is needed in order to train faculty to teach in the field. At the present time, the only way for persons to prepare themselves for teaching through obtaining the requisite credentials is to embark on a period of study abroad.

On the other hand, there is apparently at present a dearth of people available to teach at the graduate level, a factor which militates against a precipitous change to an all graduate program of education for librarianship.

In addition to requiring more highly trained faculty, specifically those holding a doctoral degree, graduate education requires a greater financial investment than does undergraduate education. Graduate study should allow for smaller class size in general, and for seminars in particular although large lecture classes may still be used. Again, from an outside perspective, the evidence would appear to point toward a gradual move toward the desirable goal of graduate education in the field of library and information science in the Republic of China.

The other major issue pointed up by respondents in both the questionnaire and at the time of the interviews was that of the integration of information science, or computer applications in libraries, into the curriculum of the schools. This problem, if anything, preoccupied the library education community even more than the

matter of graduate programs. There is no doubt that library educators are concerned about dropping something from the curriculum to include more required coverage of information science.

Comment was made in both the questionnaires and the interviews that training in the use of computers is a national goal and that the schools must train their students in this field. Also, it was mentioned that employers want graduates who are trained in the use of computers whether or not they are ready to utilize them and their expertise.

When respondents were asked what they would add to the curriculum if they had the opportunity, information science topics such as library automation, microcomputers, programming, as well as information science itself formed by far the largest grouping of answers. The same people would be willing, they said, to combine the courses devoted to the cataloging and classification of Chinese and western library materials, and of Chinese and western reference tools in order to make room in the curriculum. Concern was expressed also as to the amount of programming that should be made available to students, whether a number of programming languages should be taught to them.

The facilities available to students taking information science courses were naturally a concern of this study. These facilities, in the words of the respondents, ranged from adequate to less than adequate. Problems existing were largely related to insufficient numbers of terminals available for student use with the resulting necessity of signing up for a short period of use each week, and/or sharing use of a terminal with others at a designated time. Computer terminals were also usually not located in the quarters of the library and information science department. However, terminals were available to all students in the programs and these provided access to both microcomputers and mainframe computers for assigned work. More computer equipment was one of the more frequently cited needs for additional resources for the schools.

In summary, one can say that the teaching of information science and its place in the curriculum is a major, if not the most important issue in education for librarianship in Taiwan today.

What were some of the other issues in this field which occupied the attention of respondents? One of these was what one person described as the "desperate need" for additional teaching materials, particularly reference materials to back up course work. Although not alluded to in quite the same way, a number of others described this as a critical problem.

Another was the apparent rather large number of graduates who seek and find employment in areas other than librarianship. Almost all participants in the study described the percentage of graduates

going into nonlibrary work as being in the neighborhood of half with some stating that they believed it to be higher. Strangely enough, this large figure did not seem to be the cause of much consternation on the part of respondents. It was seldom cited as a major problem. When queried as to whether or not too many librarians were being trained, the most frequent response was that in relation to the needs of the profession, the answer was no. If provision could be made in the field for needed positions, all the graduates could be absorbed. On the other hand, a minority felt that too many librarians were being produced and that the "market" was being saturated with too many graduates. Thus, while many positions in libraries were described as being filled by unqualified people, many people trained as librarians were turning to other work. One comment made in regard to this situation was that the weaker schools were producing the largest number of graduates.

When asked further if there were too many schools for the needs of the profession in the Republic of China, only one respondent answered that there were, while others did not answer or said that there were not too many schools. One qualified the response by saying that the number of schools was not too great but that there should be some specialization among them in the preparation of librarians and information specialists.

While one can only speculate as to the reason for the incongruity of such a large percentage of graduates going into nonlibrary work and the apparent lack of concern about this on the part of the library education community, this phenomenon is perhaps related to some other responses that surfaced in the study. Among these was the need for attaining higher status for the profession. This need was mentioned several times in the course of the study, and it may be presumed that such higher status would aid in retention of more trained people for library positions. Also, several respondents mentioned the desirability of having the government relax, or do away with, the civil service examinations for public library positions, thus making access to these positions easier for qualified graduates of the library and information science programs. Apparently, at this time, many positions in this category of library are filled with unqualified personnel.

Another change that was mentioned which could bear on this incongruity was the desirability of obtaining some differentiation of training levels in the schools. The programs should specialize in training at particular levels, it was felt. Another, related to the matter of higher status for the profession, was the need for higher salaries and greater opportunities for promotion. Surprisingly, however, this need was mentioned infrequently by participants in the study.

A few other issues were mentioned which are worthy of note. One was the need for obtaining a more satisfactory ratio between faculty and students in the schools. The number of students per faculty member is apparently very high in some of the schools, a fact which interferes with good faculty-student rapport in all areas. While the number of faculty at the schools does not appear to be small, the large number of part-time faculty are not available for the important task of counseling students.

A more general consideration of respondents was that of the need for greater subject background on the part of students, a point related to the desirability of establishing and expanding graduate programs. Another point relating specifically to curriculum was the need to emphasize new management concepts for libraries in the programs of instruction.

The subject of practice work for library school students was another area probed by this study. Respondents were asked if they felt that the students were satisfied with their experience in fulfilling any practice work requirement of the schools. They were also asked if they felt that the faculty was satisfied with this program. The majority of participants in the survey answered in the affirmative to both questions, indicating that they felt that the students were satisfied with their practice work experience and that the faculty were likewise satisfied with what they saw in this program. A minority disagreed, mentioning complaints about placement in practice positions and difficulties with assignments. The general impression left by interviews with respondents was that practice work was not a major problem. Regarding details of the practice work program, questioning of the department chairmen revealed that practice work was required of all students, other than freshmen. This means a substantial workload for whoever is given responsibility for the practice work placements. These individuals were described as being different for each school, in one case being a professor, another a tutor, in another "three assistants," and in a fourth, the chairman himself. The department chairmen responded differently to the question of whether or not students were placed in practicum situations according to their choice of libraries. Two responded that they were, one that this was sometimes the case, and a fourth that the choice of practicum site was made by the school. The discussions relating to practice work in the programs gave the impression that this was not seen as a major problem by members of the library education community.

From other sources it was determined that the practice work program does indeed constitute a heavy burden for the schools. While practice work is required of all students, no credit is now given

under the new curriculum. Problems associated with the program appear to be the same as those found in the west, which relate to the large number of students who have to be placed and the small number of librarians who are able and willing to take practice work students and give them a taste of paraprofessional work as distinguished from using them for extra clerical labor. Some of the suggestions for dealing with the situation were the possibility of utilizing the summer recess period and the winter vacation period for practice work assignments, and the possibility of coordinating practical experience with specific courses. Problems foreseen with regard to the former would be that supervising librarians themselves would not be available and that students might object to the practice. With regard to the latter, attaching a practice work component to specific courses would constitute an additional burden on already heavily laden faculty members.

One other area covered by the study bears mention. The first of these is the need for additional continuing education and staff in-service training. Although questions relating to this topic were asked only of department chairmen, the need for continuing education for practitioners was mentioned by several participants in the survey. As a generalization, it may be noted that three of the schools have extensive evening course offerings but that other than that, little is apparently done in continuing education. A recent survey by the National Central Library showed that 77.9 percent of public library staff had received no library training whatever and that another 9.9 percent had received only "short-term-on-job training." Comparable figures for academic libraries were 50.1 percent and 22.2 percent with senior high school and vocational school statistics being 71.2 percent and 24.0 percent respectively. Special library staff indicated that 64.0 percent had had no training in librarianship and that 10.2 percent had had only short-term-on-the-job training.¹ Such figures argue strongly for more continuing education endeavors on the part of the schools.

Continuing education for practitioners in the field of librarianship has long been coordinated in the Republic of China by the Library Association of China with the support and cooperation of the departments of library science and the National Central Library. This involvement in coordination dates back to 1956. It could well be desirable for the departments of library and information science to take a more active role in continuing education in Taiwan in view of their role as "gatekeepers" of the profession and as specialists in the process of education. Although this would be a development for the future, once a sound masters degree program is founded, a school, or schools should consider the development of a post-masters, or specialist degree program to provide for the needs of professional

librarians who have served in the field for several years and who desire to update their training.

The development of a role for employing libraries in continuing education should also be explored. The success of continuing education endeavors often is dependent upon strong support from employers.

These, then, are the major issues in education for librarianship and information science in Taiwan, the Republic of China. The library education community is making a strenuous effort to provide a quality educational experience for the profession in Taiwan. Beyond the findings of this study and any implied recommendations is the need for action by the government to upgrade the status of librarians through higher salaries, opening up the job market for qualified graduates of the schools and ensuring that only those who demonstrate professional competency are employed in professional positions. These actions would strengthen the schools and departments through enabling them to meet the obvious and pressing real needs of the profession.

NOTES

1. National Central Library. "Library Statistics in Taiwan and Fukien Area, 1982."