

CHANGES IN THE M. A. CURRICULUM OF LIBRARIANSHIP AND INFORMATION SCIENCES IN IRAN

M. H. DAYYANI, Ph.D.

Faculty of Librarianship and Information Sciences,
Meshed Ferdowsi University
Meshed, I. R. of Iran
email: Dayani@ferdowsi.um.ic.ir

Abstract - This article aims at reviewing the curricula related to the discipline of Librarianship and Information Sciences, M. A. level, exercised since 1967 in Iran. Changes and modifications in these programs will be focused on. The main points in the program used since 1978 together with ways of implementing them in any of the 7 subdisciplines of this major will also be discussed. Later, the reasons behind using or ignoring certain courses will also be explained. It will be mentioned that basic courses, in this discipline, must not be put aside as Information Technology is gaining an everincreasing importance; because, such a phenomenon will question the existence of faculties running such courses, at M. A. level, altogether.

Keywords - Curriculum, Librarianship, Information Sciences, Changes, Modifications, Information Technology.

THE CURRICULA OF LIBRARIANSHIP, M. A. LEVEL

In all, there have been four programs, M. A. level, for Librarianship in Iran. The first program was approved and put into effect between 1968 and 1975. It underwent small changes during its existence. The second program was put into effect in 1975 and continued to be used until 1996 when the third program appeared. This program is being used by some faculties at the time being. And finally we come to the fourth program which was approved in order to cover topics in IT while keeping a look at the basic concepts in Librarianship and Information Sciences.

Courses taught at M. A. level between 1968-75. This program embodied 12 courses as follows:

- Course 1: An Introduction to Library and Librarianship
- Courses 2 and 3: Cataloging and Classification
- Course 4: Collection Development and Acquisition
- Course 5: Writing Systems and Publications in Persian
- Course 6: Archive
- Courses 7-9: Different Types of Libraries

Course 10: Persian Publications

Course 11: Reference Sources

Course 12: The Role of Library in Adult Education

An overview of the above courses reveals that some of them put into discussion basic concepts of Librarianship and Information Sciences and that these courses have been included based on their applicabilities in Iran and for Persian sources. The above courses could be summarized in terms of the following course titles: Selection and Acquisition of Sources, Cataloging, Classification and Provision of Services.

Some of the 12 courses introduced above lacked practicality in the country at the time they were first introduced, but they were included since they were thought to give students an idea of what future libraries of Iran would be like. In fact, such courses were illustrative of the patterns used in western countries. These included courses beginning with the term, 'Seminar'. Below, the courses included in such a curriculum will be reviewed [1].

THE NEW COURSES PROPOSED FOR LIBRARIANSHIP, M. A. LEVEL, IN 1968: FACULTY OF LIBRARIANSHIP, TEHRAN UNIVERSITY.

- The History of Books, Libraries and Librarians (3 credits):

The history of writing systems, alphabets, publishing, an introduction to the history of different types of libraries – public, university, school and specialized; emphasis on the need for changes in Librarianship – This includes a discussion of the history, philosophy, morals and finally academic and global aspects.

- Cataloging and Classification (3 credits)

Basic cataloging and classification of Persian and non-Persian materials; an introduction to the history of classification with an emphasis on Dewey Decimal Classification; different ways of writing card catalogs; exercises on cataloging and classification; exercises on filing and on how to determine subject headings.

- Cataloging and Classification 2 (3 credits)

This is a continuation of topics discussed in cataloging and classification.

- Technical Services in Libraries (3 credits)

Different types of materials and how they are received – ordering, donations, exchange; duplications, precataloging and processes of joint cataloging, recataloging and classification of materials; preservation of library sources; binding and processes related to book circulation.

- Persian Bibliography (3 credits)

The history of Persian publications and writing systems since the ancient times.

- Management of Archives (3 credits)

Principles of organizing materials and provision of services related to different archival materials in different types of libraries.

- Seminar in Public and School Librarianship (3 credits)

Advanced study of public and school libraries; a comparative study of library systems used abroad, different ways of doing library research related to public and school libraries, independent studies, special research articles and independent research endeavors on problems related to such libraries.

- Seminar in Special Librarianship (3 credits)

Advanced research on the organization and objectives of special libraries; independent studies on problems related to special libraries and document centers; writing research articles, implementing research programs that students are interested in.

-Seminar in Academic Librarianship (3 credits)

Advanced study of problems related to university and research libraries; independent studies in this regard; writing special research articles and finally problems of independent research.

-Manuscripts and Lithographies in Persian and Islamic Languages (3 credits)

The importance of manuscripts for scientific studies in Iran; kinds of manuscripts; paper, binding and preservation, cataloging and classification of different types of written materials, the history of writing, illumination and the miniature drawings of manuscripts; an emphasis on observing manuscripts and analyzing the problems related to the cataloging and classification of such manuscripts.

- Advanced Reference Sources (3 credits)

Special reference sources in Persian; emphasis on preparing indexes; writing an introduction, preparing new versions, etc.

-Adult Education and Libraries (3 credits)

The role of library in provision of services to adults in all academic levels through formal and informal training programs; studying the history of adult education movement outside the country, particularly the Middle East.

CHANGES IN THE CURRICULUM OF LIBRARIANSHIP, M. A. LEVEL, BETWEEN 1969 AND 1971

Between 1969 and 1971 the curriculum of Librarianship underwent certain changes and

modifications to adopt to the realities of the society of that time. Such changes are illustrated below: [1]

1969 – 1970	1970 – 1971
Advanced cataloging and classification	Library Administration
Library materials for children and young adults	Library materials for children and young adults
Special, public and university library services	Cataloging and indexing, intermediate level Advanced reference sources, Library materials and sources for adults
Advanced reference sources	Advanced cataloging and classification
The science of information	Manuscripts and archives
Writing research articles	The science of information
Probation	Writing research articles Probation

It is observed that courses like Advanced Cataloging and Classification, Manuscripts and Library Materials and Services for Adults have been included in the curriculum for M. A. level.

THE LIBRARIANSHIP CURRICULUM, M. A. LEVEL, PROPOSED BY TEHRAN UNIVERSITY, 1975 [1]

101. History of Books and Libraries (3 credits)

Changes in the format of books since the ancient times; the history of publishing and its different techniques, illumination and binding of books; standards observed in well-printed books; visiting printing houses. An overview of changes libraries underwent since the ancient times, with an emphasis on the establishment of libraries in Iran and other Islamic countries.

102. Introduction to Library Materials (3 credits)

An emphasis on different kinds of library materials, organizing the library sources, their utility for specific purposes, studying different kinds of basic reference sources like encyclopedias, dictionaries, year books, biographies, bibliographies, indexes of articles, etc.; preparing bibliographies by students.

201. Administration and Organization of Libraries (3 credits)

General and practical principles of library management, financial matters, staff management, different types of operational and sectoral organizations, library building

and library equipments.

202. Technical Services in Libraries (3 credits)

An introduction to acquisition of materials, cataloging, classification, binding, different types of books, designing card catalogs, practice on filing and simple cataloging.

203. Organizing and Selection of Books (3 credits)

Principles of book selection and evaluation, more details about acquisition of sources, book markets, publication and selling of books.

204. Cataloging and Classification of Persian and Non-Persian Materials (3 credits)

It is a continuation of topics related to technical services in libraries discussed in section 202 above. A comparative study of classification systems – Library of Congress, Dewey Decimal and Universal Decimal Classifications, exercises on how to notate books (Cater – Sanburn); analysis and organization of periodicals and governmental journals; cataloging a large number of materials.

205. Cataloging and Classifying Persian and Non-Persian Materials 2 (2 credits).

It is the continuation of topics discussed in 204 above.

206. Reader's Services in Libraries (2 credits)

Loan systems and their use in different libraries; reference services management and organization, inter-library loan system, bibliographic centers.

207. Bibliography of the Social Sciences (2 credits)

Studying reference books, sources for book reviews, applications of general reference sources in the area of Social Sciences with wide coverage – including Astronomy, Biology, Plantology, Chemistry, Geology, Mathematics, Aerology, Physics, zoology and other related areas.

209. Bibliography of Humanities (2 credits)

Studying reference books, book reviews, the applications of general reference sources in the area of Humanities with wide coverage – including Art, Folklore, Literature, Music, Philosophy, Psychology, Religions and other related topics.

301. Manuscripts and Rare Books (2 credits)

Acquisition, cataloging, management, major problems with manuscripts and rare books, kinds of paper, different text fonts, different types of cover, preservation procedures, browsing, binding, etc.

302. Audio–Visual Materials in Libraries (2 credits)

Selection, organization, preservation and use of audio–visual equipments in different types of libraries.

303. Literature for Children (2 credits)

Evaluating Children libraries for the age group 3-12 years old; stories, folklore, poetry, illustrations, information books with an emphasis on standards of material selection (based on the interests, needs and abilities of the kids) and on enriching the school curricula; training in story telling; selection and adjustment of stories, provision of library services to children.

304. School Library Services (2 credits)

Activities and responsibilities of school libraries at the time of encountering new changes in the educational objectives and programs; evaluation and selection of materials related to the courses to be used by teachers and students in the class. This includes books and other information sources for students at elementary and high school levels; exercises on possible ways of ordering materials, organizing library materials in order to enable students to use them more effectively; Designing school libraries and other related topics.

305. Young Adults and Their Reading (2 credits)

Discussing the peculiarities of dealing with teenagers at public and school libraries, analyzing the criteria of selecting books and other materials for teenagers; familiarity with primary bibliographic tools together with a discussion of how to find suitable titles for teenagers; special issues related to monitoring and supervising reading activities in teenagers at public and school libraries.

306. Archive (2 credits)

The organization, management and modifications occurred in national and private archives.

Two major differences in this curriculum have been the inclusion of audio-visual materials and subject bibliographies.

THE CURRICULUM OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCES, THE HIGH COUNCIL FOR PLANNING

After the Cultural Revolution, the responsibility of defining and introducing courses for different educational levels was bestowed on the High Council for Planning in Humanities. This Council approved the curriculum proposed for Librarianship and Information Sciences in 1996. This curriculum is different from the curricula proposed before in a number of ways.

These differences are concerned not only with the number of courses included, but also with the number of sub-disciplines proposed. The courses included in this curriculum are mentioned below [2].

BASIC SPECIALIZED COURSES:

Basic Concepts in Librarianship (2)

Research Method (2)

Those newcomers with a B. A. degree in Majors other than Librarianship and Information Sciences must pass 7 prerequisite credits during the M. A. program. These include:

Cataloging and Classification, Introductory Level, (3 credits)

Collection Development (2)

General Reference Materials (Persian and non-Persian) (2 credits)

The sub-discipline of University Libraries Obligatory Courses (12 credits)

The organization of University Libraries (2)

Specialized Reference Sources (3)

Information Technology and Information Systems (2)

The Organization of Information, advanced level, (3)

Periodicals (2)

OPTIONAL COURSES (8 CREDITS)

Audio-Visual Materials (2)

Statistics (3)

Reference Services: Theories and Methods (2)

Archive Management (2)

Manuscripts (3)

Comparative Librarianship (2)

Systems of Inter-Library Cooperation (2)

Independent Study (2)

THE SUB-DISCIPLINE OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES, OBLIGATORY COURSES (12 CREDITS)

The Organization of School Libraries (2)

Child and Youngsters' Literature (3)

Basic Concepts in Education (3)

Audio-Visual Materials (2)

Organization and Administration of Centers of Educational Sources (2)

OPTIONAL COURSES (AT LEAST 8 CREDITS)

- Psychology of Children and Teenagers (2)
- National and International Publishing Corporations for Children (2)
- The Organization of Information, Advanced Level, (3)
- Education System in Iran; Rules and Regulations (2)
- An Introduction to Behavioral and Communicative Sciences (2)
- Independent Study (2)
- The sub-discipline of Public Libraries: Optional Courses (12 credits)
- The Organization and Administration of Public Libraries (2)
- Public Libraries and the Society (2)
- Public Library Services for Different Age Groups (3)
- Child Literature (3)
- Systems of Inter-Library Cooperation (2)

OPTIONAL COURSES (AT LEAST 8 CREDITS)

- Special Reference Materials (3)
- Audio-Visual Materials (2)
- The Organization of Information, Advanced Level, (3)
- Comparative Librarianship (2)
- Manuscripts (3)
- Independent studies (2)

**THE SUB – DISCIPLINE OF INFORMATION SCIENCES
OBLIGATORY COURSES (12 CREDITS)**

- Information Storage and Retrieval (3)
- Special Reference Studies (3)
- Information Technology and Information Systems (2)
- Indexing and Abstracting (2)
- Data Processing (2)

OPTIONAL COURSES (AT LEAST 8 CREDITS)

- The Administration and Organization of Document Centers and University Libraries (2)
- Theory and Methods in Reference Services (2)
- National and International Information Centers (2)
- Statistics (2)

Archive Management (2)

Periodicals (2)

Independent Studies (2)

Although this new curriculum embodied more sub-disciplines and courses compared to the previous ones, all universities, affiliated to the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology focused on the sub-discipline of Information Sciences.

Thus, this was the course to be introduced to students. The result has been that except this, the other three sub-disciplines have been totally ignored by faculties with an M. A. program for Librarianship and Information Sciences.

A Comparison of Obligatory Courses in Each Sub-Discipline

Obligatory courses	Obligatory courses
The sub-discipline of University Libraries	The sub-discipline of Information Sciences
The Organization and Administration of University Libraries	Information Retrieval and Storage
Special Reference Materials	Special Reference Materials
Information Technology and Information Systems	Information Technology and Information Systems
The Organization of Information (advanced level)	Indexing and Abstracting
Periodicals	Data Processing

As indicated above, there are two common obligatory courses in the two sub-disciplines of University Libraries and Information Sciences. The first one is Special Reference Studies. This course is also present in the current discipline of Librarianship, the B. A. level.

It was also present in the curriculum before the Islamic Revolution in 1978 with the name Special Bibliographies (Science, Social Sciences and Humanities). Information Technology, Information Systems as well as Data Processing are new courses included after the approval of the 1996 Curriculum.

It is true that there is a difference between 'Information Retrieval and Storage' and 'Indexing and Abstracting' on the one hand and 'Advanced Material Preparation' on the

other; nevertheless, the former courses can come under the latter course in the sub-discipline of 'Information Science.'

The topics discussed under the title, 'Periodicals' were also discussed in Collection Development before the Islamic Revolution.

The four courses of 'Comparative Librarianship', 'Reference Services: Theories and Methods', 'Interlibrary Cooperation', and finally 'National and International Information Centers' were added as new courses in the 1996 Program.

In each sub-discipline there is a course title named, 'The Organization of (University, School, Public and Special) Libraries'. This course was also present in the curriculum before the Islamic Revolution, but with another name, 'Seminar of Librarianship and (Public, School, University and Special) Libraries'.

The course, 'Methods and Theories in Reference Services' is just a renaming of the course, 'The principles of Reference Service' that is introduced to students at B. A. level.

The list that will be given below contains new courses, directly related to Librarianship, added first in the 1996 program:

- Information Retrieval and Storage
- Information Technology and Information Systems
- Indexing and Abstracting
- Data Processing
- Systems of Inter Library Cooperation
- National and International Information Centers
- Comparative Librarianship
- Statistics
- Research Methods
- Research Seminar

On the contrary, courses related to collection Building or Collection Development have been excluded from the program.

CLOSING REMARKS AND CONCLUSIONS

An overview of the courses introduced in different periods, for the discipline of Librarianship at M. A. level, in Iran, illustrates a number of points as follows:

- 1- The courses introduced in different years cover topics related to three major activities in libraries, namely Collection Development, Organization of Information and Provision of Services.
 - a- Courses that were related to, and discussed, Collection Building, Material Organization and Library Services had an eye on the needs of kids, teenagers and new adult readers.

- b- Courses aimed at systematizing library resources. These included courses like, Cataloging, Classification, Material Organization, Indexing, Abstracting as well as Information Retrieval and Storage.
 - c- Courses aimed at identifying different sources and different ways of using them with the objective of leading the users directly to their information needs. These include courses like, Reference Sources, Bibliographies, General and Special Reference Services and Materials.
- 2- Courses having contents that will enhance the quality of the three major activities of libraries. Such courses are marked as optional or supplementary and each educational group makes use of them based on its own potentials, capabilities and needs. Such courses are more concerned with the administrative, executive and management aspects of different types of information centers and libraries.
 - 3- Courses like Statistics, Research Method, Research Seminar and Thesis Writing help us to have a closer look at the activities of such libraries.
 - 4- The course, 'Information Technology', has, in some cases, been a renaming of other courses, and in certain other cases it has added a new concept to the curriculum of Librarianship at M. A. level (Information Science, Information Storage and Retrieval, Data Processing, Information Technology and Information Systems, Indexing and Abstracting).
 - 5- The substantial changes occurred in certain libraries, particularly in University Libraries, have necessarily led to corresponding changes in the content of certain courses, i.e., lesser degrees of attention to principles of cataloging printed materials, paying attention to electronic reference sources and methods of searching information in information databases and networks.
 - 6- A move toward research dealing with computers, information networks and information databases. Such research takes into consideration the way the above items could be used.

One of the most important points concerning courses in Librarianship, M. A. level, is that although the number of new courses added has been substantial, some of them have been introduced by a small number of educational faculties and only for a short period of time. This is while other courses have not been introduced at all. For example, the course, 'Monography Studies', that was related to the Pre-Islamic Revolution period, was only taught by Iraj Afshar for few semesters in Tehran University. The course, 'Archive Management', was related to the Post Revolution Period and was only taught, for a short period of time, in Tehran and Meshed Universities. There were, and still are, some courses never taught anywhere. This is the case with courses related to the three sub-disciplines of University Libraries, School Libraries and Public Libraries all included after the 1978 Islamic Revolution.

Moreover, some of the optional courses in the subdiscipline of information sciences have not been taught at all. The following courses are just some examples: The Organization of Document Centers and Special Libraries, Theories and Methods in Reference Services as well as National and International Information Centers. The reasons behind not using such courses are three-fold: (1) The unavailability of suitable text books, (2) The unavailability of enthusiastic instructors and (3) the unavailability of sufficient students (in order for a class to be held, at least a given number of students are needed).

Concerning the first factor, four points deserve mentioning: (1) Iranian Instructors started teaching courses in Librarianship shortly after the establishment of this major in Tehran and Shiraz Universities.

After the Revolution, there was a tendency toward using Persian text books; there was a strong resistance against using languages other than Persian; after the revolution there were restrictions on the amount of foreign currencies universities could spend on purchasing non-Persian books. Under such circumstances, courses for which there were Persian text books were preferred to those for which there were not such books. Unfortunately, before and after the revolution there were just few courses for which Persian text books were available.

Concerning the second factor, five points need to be mentioned: (1) Before the Islamic Revolution there were few Iranian Instructors who could teach different courses. During that period, no educational group had more than three full-time faculty members and even these had to teach not only at M. A. courses but also at B. A. and A. A. levels. (2) Although an expansion occurred in the activities of the educational groups at the time of Revolution, few new faculty members were employed who were capable of teaching at M. A. level. (3) Moreover, many of these members had to accept administrative responsibilities in the universities.

This was the case with faculty members in Tehran University, Ahvaz University and Meshed Ferdowsi University. (4) The fourth point concerns the restrictions on the number of teaching hours of each faculty member. (5) Lack of enough motivation in faculty members in order to propose new courses is also important.

And finally the third factor was concerned, as mentioned before, with the limited number of students accepted each year by universities at M. A. level. Except Tehran University, other universities usually accept six students each year. The main reason for this has been shortage of enough instructors to supervise M. A. theses. Some more points in this regard are as follows: (1) Some of the entering freshmen are always from Majors other than Librarianship and, thus, a modified curriculum must be arranged for them. (2) Sometimes some of the entering students do not enroll at all for one reason or another. Such a case is frequently found in Ahvaz Shahid Chamran University. (3) As mentioned before, there must be at least a specific number of students in order for a class to be held. This minimum level varies between 2 and 3 from university to university. This point,

together with those mentioned above, eliminates the possibility of holding optional courses as well as courses related to the sub-disciplines.

Based on the three reasons given above, and the points made in each, it could be concluded that the most attention, in the curriculum, has been paid to basic courses.

Another conclusion to be drawn is that we must witness certain changes in the basic courses at M. A. level and that it is possible to make such a change due to the existence of Persian teaching sources. It must be emphasized that most of the courses today focus on Information Technology and pay less attention to basic concepts in Librarianship. True, technology has proved to be very effective and useful today, but its concepts change as fast as they appear and, therefore, students cannot stick only to what they learn from these courses if they are to be successful in their future careers.

On the contrary, courses related to basic concepts in Librarianship and Information Sciences are long lasting and, thus, students can benefit a lot from them in their future professions.

As mentioned before, each year a large number of students, majoring in areas other than Librarianship, are accepted in this area, and evidently the three prerequisite courses given to such students (Collection Building, Material Organization and Reference Services) are not able to give them a good view of the basic concepts of this major. Therefore, more attention must be paid to basic courses at M. A. level.

One conclusion to be made here is that there is a need for a new curriculum that can cover topics and concepts related not only to Information Technology, but also to basic courses in Library and Information Sciences. On this basis, Meshed Ferdowsi University has proposed the following program for M. A. level and intends to put it into effect for the first time and as the first Iranian University. It will be our pleasure, therefore, to receive your illuminating comments and critical views on it so that the revised version will practically be put to use. Certainly, this program needs faculty members with various specialities, which makes it impossible for all universities to introduce such a new program. One point not to be forgotten is that this or similar programs must be proposed and implemented if we are to keep abreast of the latest needs of the scientific society.

Basic Courses

- Basic Concepts in Information Sciences
- Research Method
- Statistics in Library and Information Sciences

Obligatory Specialized Courses

- Management of Libraries and Information Centers
- Collection Management (print and electronic sources)
- Information Organization (advanced cataloging and classification)

Information Retrieval and Storage (with an emphasis on abstracting and indexing)

Search in Information Sources

Management of Information Systems

Optional Special Courses for the Sub-Discipline of Information Management

- Knowledge and Information Management
- Evaluation and Measurement in Libraries and Information Centers
- Principles of Designing and Management of Websites in Libraries and Information Centers
- Communication and Information Sciences
- Principles and Methods in Independent Studies
- Information and Globalization
- Internet and Information Networks

Optional Special Courses for the Sub-Discipline of Information Technology

- Designing and Management of Information Databases
- Electronic Libraries
- Data Processing

Advanced Courses in Electronic Information Retrieval and Storage

- Internet and Information Networks
- Information Retrieval
- Principles of Designing and Management of Websites for Libraries and Information Centers
- Principles and Methods in Independent Studies

Optional Special Courses for the Sub-Discipline of University Libraries

- The History of University Libraries
- Management and Organization of University Libraries
- Inter-personal and Inter-Organizational Communication in University Libraries
- Evaluation and Measurement in Libraries and Information Centers
- Principles and Methods in Teaching Information Literacy

Supplementary Courses

- Research Seminar
- Thesis

REFERENCES

- [1] Saidi, F., *Education for Librarianship in Iran: Some Factors Affecting its Development*.

Ann Arbor, Michigan University Microfilm International, 1977.

- [2] *The Curriculum of Librarianship and Information Sciences*, M.A. Level, Ex-Ministry of Culture and Higher Education, the High Council for Planning, Tehran, 1996.