The Need for Library Education

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When I began thinking about the topic - "The need for library education" - it seemed to me to be such an obvious subject that I had some difficulty deciding what to say.

To go into librarianship you must prepare yourself for it. In most countries, librarianship is a professional field, but in Cyprus it is not yet. Most librarians around the world have at least a bachelor's or master's degree in library science. If you want to prepare yourself for professional work you should expect to educate yourself for that profession.

Several years of higher education is needed in order to prepare for the job of a librarian. That is, you need to study -

1) What is done in libraries
2) Why it is done
3) How libraries operate in other countries and in other parts of your own country
4) The literature of the field of librarianship. There are thousands of books in this field
5) The books you're likely to have on the library shelves. The literature of each subject field covered by the library and the subject matter which these books cover, e.g., if you're working in a chemistry library you need to know something about chemistry.

All of this is obvious and clear. I should point out also that in certain countries it is not optional whether you obtain a library education or not; a library degree or certificate is required by law. You cannot have a librarian's job unless you are certified or have a library science bachelor or master's degree. There are certain situations where, if you take such a job and do not have the proper degrees, your library will be penalized. The library budget will be cut by the government because they are hiring an unaccredited and under-educated librarian.

The subjects that you should study cover the job of the librarian. You need to study:-

- The publishing world, i.e. study how what kind of books are published.
- The source of supply of the primary material used.
- Principles of selecting books need to be learned and how the library selects that material.
- Next comes acquisitions, - how do you order books? Ordering books is difficult in Cyprus. This may suggest that the area requires additional study. However the whole field of acquisition librarianship has been growing in recent years and is now a challenging field, especially if you are ordering books from abroad.
- Cataloguing is perhaps the most technical part of librarianship and some librarians think it is the only part of the field which really requires study.
- Then the library school student studies the use of the collection, not just how to circulate material but how to carry out reference work. Reference work is often difficult and depends on your general education. In many countries the librarian is required to obtain a bachelor's degree in a subject field before he/she goes to library school because librarian-
ship depends heavily on general and subject field education. In refer-
ence work one cannot answer reference questions intelligently unless
their subject field is understood.

Relating the user and the material collection is the last phase of the
librarian’s study.

Many African countries require five years of higher education to
prepare a librarian. Generally, in Asia four years are required, in Europe
four or five years. None of these nations expect persons to become a
librarian with just a secondary school certificate.

There are two kinds of people working in the library: clerks and li-
brarians. The library is directed and supervised by professional librar-
ians.

- Clerks carry out simple easily learned routine tasks:– Charging out
books, typing catalogue cards and book orders.

Most Cyprus libraries are quite small, but they are growing and the task
of supervising the staff members is growing also.

There are several ways to become a clerk. One way is to start
working in a library and the department head teaches the person how to
charge out books, and send overdue notices and why. Another way is to
go to a two year college to study that subject. In the United States, cur-
ricula in certain community colleges educate library technicians/clerks.
You are taught how to do much of the library’s work below the supervi-
sory level. Library clerks, if well prepared, can handle much of the li-
brary’s work, thereby freeing the librarian to do professional work. If li-
brarians are simply doing clerical work, their time is wasted and they
are being overpaid. With good clerical staff, librarians can become truly
professional people and provide good service for users than they would
provide otherwise.

- Librarians need to know the usefulness of books and how to provide
factual information for people on the job. The use of books for recrea-
tion needs to be learnt, also, especially in school and public libraries.
The professional needs to learn the relationship between the various li-
brary services, e.g., how does circulation relate to reference work? How
does reference work relate to cataloguing? They all relate closely and
each one depends heavily on the other. If the librarian does not have a
proper background then he/she will find it hard to appreciate how intri-
cate these relationships are.

The librarian is also taught how to study the community, the group
of users, and how to relate it to the library. What does your user group
need in the way of printed material? That is not the same as asking
what the user wants. The user group may want popular fiction but what
they need is practical non-fiction, so normally the library has some of both. They must learn how to adjust the library’s book collection, its staffing and activities to serve these users properly.

One of the ways of serving users properly is to compile bibliographies on subjects that the users are interested in. Librarians in Library school learn how to carry out reader’s guidance, and assist in locating material.

I don’t know whether or not Cyprus can support a library school, but I hope it can. Certainly the leading librarians in every country have attended a library school, and I hope that we can have a library school in Cyprus soon.

Thank you very much

Professor: Thank you very much Dr. Harvey for your very stimulating speech.

Discussion

Professor: You'd better tell us how you select your students in the School of Bibliothekology in Greece.

Mr. Georgios: The students who graduate from high school and wish to pursue tertiary education are required to submit an application to participate in the national examinations. In their application they declare the schools they wish, mainly the universities, because we are people who want higher education or better paper, not higher education. They then choose all the university schools and then proceed to the schools of the TEI and somewhere they declare the Library Science. Depending on the units, the courses that each student gets into one of the schools they declared. In the Library Science we have about 60 students per semester, so we have 120 students a year. They also come from other schools, which is somehow encouraging. We have, as you know, problems with unemployment and especially among the graduates. So some of them take on library work. And they really are employed those who graduate from the Library Science in libraries. However, the choice is made through the general examinations for those who graduate from high school and participa-
τακτήριες εξετάσεις γι’ αυτούς που έρχονται από Πανεπιστήμια στους οποίους δίνεται μόνο 10% των θέσεων των μη πτυχιούχων σπουδαστών.

Σύνεδρος: Εμείς ως βιβλιοθηκάριοι που εργαζόμαστε σε βιβλιοθήκες να να έρθουμε εδώ σήμερα σημαίνει πως νοιάζομαι. Δεν πιστεύω ότι κανένας από τους εργαζόμενους σε βιβλιοθήκες δεν δείχνει το κατάλληλο ενδιαφέρο. Βασικό όμως πρόβλημα της ανάπτυξης των βιβλιοθηκών είναι η έλλειψη πιστώσεων και ύπαρξης ενδιαφέροντος από τους εργαζόμενους. Πιστεύω ότι όταν εμείς εκπαιδευόμαστε πιο σωστά, περισσότερο αναγκαίο είναι να δώσουμε ορισμένα μαθήματα στους υπεύθυνους μας να μάθουν ξανά πως να υποδεχόμαστε τους πιστώσεις και περισσότερο για την εξέταση των διαφόρων βιβλιοθηκών. Πιστεύω ότι πριν εμείς διαφωτίσουμε οι αυτοί, περισσότερο αναγκαίο είναι να δώσουμε ορισμένα βιβλία γι’ αυτούς. Δηλαδή υπάρχει κάποια δυσκολία ως προς το εξής: Με το σημερινό σύστημα η σωματική παρουσία μέσα στην αίθουσα βαθμολογείται με δυο βαθμούς τους οποίους καταχωρώνει ο φοιτητής. Βέβαια είναι δυνατό να μη θέλει τους δύο βαθμούς και να πάει για άριστα το 8. Αλλά και πάλι υπάρχει η δυσκολία ότι πρέπει να συμμετέχει σε μερικά “tests” που υπάρχουν μέσα στο εξάμηνο ή σε κάποια εργασία. Πάντως καταβάλλουμε προσπάθεια να διευκολύνουμε αυτούς που έχουν κάποια δυσκολία με τον ακόλουθο τρόπο: τους αναθέτουμε κάποια εργασία δύο ή τρεις ημέρες και αυτή η εργασία θα βαθμολογηθεί ούτως ώστε να δοθεί κάποιος βαθμός για τη συμμετοχή του και για να μπορεί να συμμετέχει στις εξετάσεις. Αυτά τα έχει πάθει ο φίλος κ. Κώστας Γεωργίου ο οποίος πήρε το πτυχίο με χίλιες δυσκολίες.

Σύνεδρος: Παρακαλώ τον κ. Γεωργάνο να μας διαφωτίσει κατά πόσο εμείς εδώ στην Κύπρο μπορούμε να εργαζόμαστε στις βιβλιοθήκες και παράλληλα να φοιτούμε και σε σχολή Βιβλιοθηκονομίας στην Ελλάδα. Χωρίς να μάθουμε να νοιάζομαι για τις βιβλιοθήκες και περισσότερο για το προσωπικό τους. Να μάθουμε να νοιάζομαι για τα προβλήματα του προσωπικού και όταν πιστεύω ότι πρέπει να κάνει μη εξεύρεση σιγουρικά. Χωρίς να μάθουμε να νοιάζομαι για το προσωπικό και όταν πιστεύω ότι πρέπει να κάνει μη εξεύρεση σιγουρικά.