

EDITORIAL

100 Years' Journey at the University of the Punjab: From Librarianship in 1915 to Information Management in 2015

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DEPARTMENT OF
INFORMATION
MANAGEMENT

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A series of centenary celebration events took place throughout the year 2015. It included:

- 1) *Meet and Greet Former Heads* of the department; 2) a *National Symposium on Expanding Horizons for Information Professionals: Challenges for Education & Training Programs*; and 3) a ceremony for the *Honorary Conference Registration* of the most senior faculty and professionals alumnae; 4) The highlight was an *International Conference on Information Management & Libraries (ICIML)*. It was the very first of its kind international conference in Pakistan and received unprecedented praise and participation from all concerned quarters. We would like to take this opportunity to thank our delegates, committee members, volunteers, sponsors and staff for their role in its success.
- Another milestone event was the DoIM finally moved into its very own building in 2015 summer. The new building has three floors and enough space to accommodate the foreseeable future needs of the department.

2015 has been a landmark year in the history of our discipline at the University of the Punjab. The department celebrated 100 years of the library science and information management education in Asia, which started at the University of the Punjab in 1915.

A series of centenary celebration events took place throughout the year 2015. It included:

- The appointment of three Associate Professors instead of one is also an extraordinary development in the profile of the Department and we offer our congratulations to all three.
- Lastly a major review of the curriculum was undertaken that has resulted in fundamental changes in the course work. This was conducted in order to match the knowledge and skills being imparted to our students with the new nomenclature and the growing needs of the discipline.

We would like to take this opportunity to throw some light on the issue of name change of the department as it is of a fundamental nature in our national context.

Libraries have always been responding to the changes occurring in a society to stay in tune with its needs. From hand-written and typed catalogues to web-OPACs, from physical in house collection development to desktop access to remotely held virtual databases, from managing a physical library to managing digital reservoirs in cyberspace, from limited opening hours to 24/7 access to information, from passive to active service culture and much more. These developments require broad-based array of competencies and knowledge in librarians for them to become effective market oriented information professionals.

The University of the Punjab was pioneer in Asia when it started training librarians in 1915. Over the last 100 years, the University has changed the name of its training program from 'Librarianship', to 'Library Science' and then to 'Library and Information Science'. In the last 2 decades, the world-wide

emerging status of the discipline has demanded another change as the job market of its practitioners has gradually expanded beyond traditional libraries. Therefore, a move to change the name was set in motion in 2012. The first big step was the finalization and approval of the name 'Information Management' in a meeting of the Board of Studies in Library and Information Science, held on May 29, 2012. It took almost two years of hard work and extensive lobbying to garner support for approval from all concerned quarters. The change was finally made official on August 18, 2014. The positive role of the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Mujahid Kamran, and facilitation by the then Dean, Prof. Muhammad Ehsan Malik needs specific mention in this regard.

The new name has been, by and large, lauded and accepted by the academic and professional community, though there were a few voices of disagreement as well. We think that the new name represents our professional core---imparting the knowledge, competencies and techniques which are required for finding, evaluating, selecting, organizing, disseminating, and facilitating the usage of information sources within as well as beyond a library.

Librarianship is no more merely related to the management of a physical library but to the management of facilitated access to information--- be it within or beyond walled libraries. It was high time to make this change in the nomenclature to address the evolving local market needs. It is important to understand our information environment and to learn to organize, manage, retrieve, access, search, preserve and promote the use of both physical and digital information sources. It is imperative to be able to work for any of the memory institutions including libraries, archives, media, business firms and likewise.

Furthermore, with the emergence of digital paradigm, users' information seeking behavior has been significantly changed. Research studies have established that library is one of the many ways of meeting information and research needs, not just *the only one*. Therefore, we have to broaden our perspective regarding our professional obligations and to reflect it in the nomenclature as well. It is our expectation that the change in the nomenclature and curriculum will increase our graduates' employment

marketability, enabling our alumnae to get better job opportunities in various sectors. Nevertheless, the emerging professionals will need to develop other skills within themselves as well, in order to avail these opportunities. In this regard, the communication and soft skills are the most important ones that need to be focused on.

Additionally, it is hoped that it will help to uplift the present profile and social image of our graduates resulting in generating a better intake in the Department.

It is interesting to share the following text written by Prof. Mumtaz A. Anwar to conclude the rationale for the change in the nomenclature:

Information and knowledge, historically for centuries, was produced, recorded, preserved and used in the form of a physical book and in a physical building, called the library. Hence, the profession became known as librarianship. However, during the past 50 years, the introduction of computers, the Internet, large-scale digitization of information, development of World-Wide-Web and the resulting access to full-text information located anywhere from anywhere, have changed the nature of this discipline and the profession. The professionals can now identify, evaluate, select, acquire, organize, maintain, and disseminate information without any limitations of form, time, and space. The 'information' is no more restricted by the physical book and the physical library while the user does not need to physically move to the library to use his needed information. As a matter of fact, thousands-times more information is available world-wide in digital form than it is available in physical books and physical libraries. This discipline and the profession, consequent to these changes, have developed systems and tools to meet that situation. It will change further with the adoption of mobile, wireless and related technologies.

Responding to these changes positively and making adjustments to its knowledge base, professional practices and names have been changed during the past 125 years, since Columbia University opened its 'School of

Library Economy' in 1887. The discipline has changed its name from 'Library Economy', to 'Library Science', to 'Library and Information Science' and to 'Information Studies'. None of these have truly reflected the nature of the discipline as it has been adjusting to change. At the same time, a move has been taking place to give it true identity. During the 1980s, 'Information Management', which reflects the true nature and functions of the discipline, has been slowly replacing the previous names. Many associations have changed their name and many universities in Europe, North America, and Asia have changed the names of their academic departments and adopted 'Information Management'.

Names, whether for academic disciplines or for practicing professions must portray the scholarly parameters of the discipline and the professional activities of the practitioners to meet the relevant needs of the society. In order to do that, they must embrace latest developments in the related knowledge and changes in the needs of the society. If that does not happen, the intellectual contents of the discipline and the knowledge and skills of its practitioners will become deadwood (Personal Communication).

In the end, I would state that who knows what really lies in future, but vision can help us to plan and create it, to a certain extent!