

## More than 'Stamping Books': Library Education and Training in the USP region.

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The training of library assistants in the USP region has made remarkable progress since discussions first began in 1969 between Dennis Edwards, then Librarian, Fiji Library Services and Harold Holdsworth, the former University Librarian of the University of the South Pacific.

However, some things have not changed. Programmes for training library assistants in the South Pacific still exist only in Fiji and Papua New Guinea. Papua New Guinea has for many years offered formal training to non-professionals through two residential courses run by the Government of Papua New Guinea Administrative College — the Library Assistants course of one year and the Library Officers course of over two years which in 1976 was elevated to a diploma course at the semi- or para-professional level. Papua New Guinea has always maintained that there is a need for two levels of training below the professional level.

Likewise, no provision for professional training exists in the University of the South Pacific region. A school for training professional librarians is not justified because of the lack of employment opportunities. Consequently trainees are sent to Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, United States, Philippines, West Indies, etc. This training can take two forms — non-graduates with some working experience can enrol in a three or four year course towards a bachelor's degree in librarianship. The other alternative which is now becoming generally accepted is for graduate recruits to pursue a one-year post-graduate course. At the University of the South Pacific Library, fourteen persons have qualified in this way.

The situation in some countries where libraries are poorly developed and not a priority in government development policies, is such that emphasis has been placed on developing non-professional training programmes to train not graduates but semi- or non-professionals.

## **Fiji Certificate in Librarianship**

The Fiji Certificate in Librarianship Course which began in 1972, was for some years the only formal non-professional training programme offered in the USP region. It was introduced by the Library Services of Fiji and held at the University of the South Pacific Library in four short full-time sessions during the University vacations throughout one year.

The Certificate was a practical course for library assistants from all types of libraries. It was especially geared towards the assistant who would work under professional guidance and supervision rather than the assistant working alone in a small library or with someone at a lower level and without guidance at most times.

Its generalist courses aimed to produce librarians capable of working in any type of library and in any type of work situation. It was a course of pure library instruction and excluded non-library subjects in its 300 hours of tuition. Assistants attending the course had to have passed New Zealand School Certificate, and have not less than two years practical experience.

The Fiji course was remarkable in that it never had a budget, and all lecturers were voluntary or honorary. USP Library staff participated as teachers and all coordinators were aid-funded overseas volunteers. When it ended in December 1980, 72 library assistants had gained Certificates.

The Fiji Certificate aroused interest among those employed in libraries in the region. Many wished to enrol but there were difficulties in accepting regional entrants because of the entry requirements. Many did not have school certificate and the lack of qualified colleagues meant that assistants employed in regional libraries did not have continual professional guidance or supervision. Therefore the length of their employment was not necessarily a measure of the quality of their experience.

Finance was another constraint and attendance by the few regional persons who enrolled was only possible through aid. Because the Fiji Certificate in Librarianship was a four-part residential course, it was expensive and the enrolment of regional assistants was difficult and restricted. Nor could many assistants be seconded to Fiji for one year to attend course sessions and to gain practical experience in Fiji libraries during the periods between sessions.

## **USP Certificate in Librarianship**

Since 1981, the University of the South Pacific has been involved in the training of library assistants. Interest in a regional course run by USP was expressed as early as 1973. In 1974 USP staff outlined a course that could be offered to the region by correspondence. Although it would lead to a Certificate, it would not be accredited to further USP studies. It would be a qualification that would be recognised regionally by employers, on a par with the Fiji Certificate. Ministerial support was sought as this was seen as prerequisite for mounting the course.

The University recognised the need for some form of intermediate training for library assistants in the South Pacific. In July 1981, the USP Senate approved a Certificate in Librarianship to be offered under the auspices of Extension Services and the Institute of Education as both were involved with regional instruction through workshops, seminars and distance teaching. The support for the USP Certificate in Librarianship which was to begin in Semester 2 1981, was a formal commitment by the University to library education in the South Pacific. The USP Library staff administered, coordinated and taught the programme.

Up till the present time, most library development, including the training of librarians in the region, has been heavily dependent on foreign aid. From 1981-1983, the University obtained the assistance of two US Peace Corps Volunteers and one person from CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency) in writing three courses. CIDA personnel coordinated the programme from 1982-1984. Until 1984, CIDA provided funds for the writing and printing of all course materials and for two of the three regional workshops which were held.

Since 1984, the USP Library has absorbed the costs of running the programme into its own budget. Since that time too, the Senior Assistant Librarian, who is also the Coordinator, and the University Librarian have been responsible for administering the programme; writing new courses and revising old ones; course assessment and student evaluation; conducting fortnightly face-to-face tutorials with Fiji students, and regional students when on work assignments; and conducting fortnightly satellite tutorials for the regional students — all this in addition to their duties in the Library.

In May 1983 an interim assessment prepared for CIDA revealed that

in numbers alone the programme had far exceeded expectations. (See Table 1.) It had been anticipated that at the end of the three year project which began in July 1981, approximately 35 to 40 library assistants would have qualified for the Certificate. Table 1 shows that one year before the project was completed, these expectations were exceeded.

Table 1  
Enrolments (July 1981 — May 1983)

	No. enrolled in Sem. 1 1983	Withdrawals before exam. to Sem. 2 1982	No. completed course, to Sem. 2 1982	Failed, to Sem. 2 1982	Total
Introduction to the Library	39	13	81	24	120
Building the Library Collection	Not offered this term	11	54	23	54
Special Librarianship School Option	Not offered this term	9	21	5	21
Public/Special Option	23				23
Basic Library Operation	38	16	97	13	135
Organizing the Library Collection	Not offered this term	9	56	22	56
Technical Operation	23	13	30	6	53
<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>339</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>462</b>

Numbers have continued to increase since 1983. Table 2 details enrolment figures by country from 1984 to 1986. These figures are taken from the beginning of the semesters and do not take into account any withdrawals or dropouts during the semester. Table 3 gives the number of passes by country from 1984-1986.

The regional interest in the programme is evident from Tables 2 and 3 where enrolment and pass figures have been tabulated by country. Students from outside the USP region have also been admitted to the programme, namely from New Caledonia and the Marshall Islands. USP continually receives enquiries from other countries — Papua New Guinea, New Zealand and early this year from American Samoa.

Table 2  
Course Enrolments 1984-1986

Year	Cook Islands	Fiji	Kiribati	Nauru	New Caledonia	New Zealand	Niue	Solomon Islands	Tonga	Tuvalu	Vanuatu	Western Samoa	Total
1984	12	123	7	1	4	2	7	2	17	-	-	28	203
1985	14	147	10	-	2	-	6	3	25	-	18	19	244
1986	10	130	4	5	-	-	2	15	10	-	16	24	216
Total	36	400	21	6	6	2	15	20	52	-	34	71	663

Table 3  
Course Passes 1984-1986

Year	Cook Islands	Fiji	Kiribati	Nauru	New Caledonia	New Zealand	Niue	Solomon Islands	Tonga	Tuvalu	Vanuatu	Western Samoa	Total
1984	7	91	2	-	4	1	3	-	8	-	-	17	133
1985	5	88	2	-	2	-	3	1	10	-	12	12	135
1986	5	81	2	2	-	-	1	7	2	-	5	17	122
Total	17	260	6	2	6	1	7	8	20	-	17	46	390

The programme produced its first graduates, a total of 15, in December 1982. By the end of 1986 a total of 86 graduates had been awarded the USP Certificate in Librarianship. (See Table 4.)

**Table 4**  
**Number of graduates (1981-1986)**

Country	No. of individual students ever enrolled	No. of students graduated	No. of students still taking courses
Cook Islands	19	3	7
Fiji	196	61	49
Kiribati	18	NONE	1
Nauru	5	1	1
New Caledonia	1	1	NONE
New Zealand	4	2	NONE
Niue	8	1	1
Solomon Islands	12	NONE	5
Tonga	27	8	2
Tuvalu	2	NONE	NONE
Vanuatu	8	NONE	5
Western Samoa	40	9	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>80</b>

This library course has been very successful and at the request of libraries and governments in the region, a diploma level course in library and information studies is going to be offered by USP. It will be a higher level than the Certificate course and will require students to study academic subjects as well as library topics.

The Diploma is an exciting new educational development in the South Pacific. The call for such a programme reflects the need in the region for competent semi-professional librarians with higher levels of skills.

### **Changing needs in non-professional training**

The information needs of South Pacific countries are becoming increasingly complex and they require higher levels of competence and skill from librarians/information workers who provide services to policy makers, governments, research institutions, universities, schools, international and regional organisations, private enterprises and the general public. It

is vital for those who provide information services in the South Pacific to possess a high level of competency because of their isolation from accessible sources of professional assistance and guidance. There is a need for change in the depth, standard and level of knowledge and skills library assistants need today in order to administer, manage, and maintain a desirable standard of library and information services compatible with the evolving information demands of a changing society.

The demand for qualified, competent semi-professional librarians in the various libraries of the South Pacific region was expressed in November 1985 at the Pacific Information Centre (PIC) Advisory Meeting in Rarotonga, when representatives from the Cook Islands, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Tonga, Western Samoa and Fiji voiced interest and support for a programme to meet the requirements for advanced information skills in the region. Currently, there is no programme of this nature available in the USP region.

Earlier, in 1983, the interim assessment by CIDA had also recommended that long range planning be undertaken to explore how the Certificate could be upgraded to a diploma, so that the market would not be saturated with graduates of a certificate which was terminal. A diploma would provide graduates of the Certificate programme with the opportunity to increase their qualifications, thus also giving library assistants a career/education pattern.

The USP Library, because of its interest and commitment to providing library education training in the region, is now committed to developing a diploma programme in library education.

### **Diploma in Library/Information Studies**

The experience and knowledge gained in running the USP Certificate in Librarianship was invaluable in planning the direction the Diploma programme would take.

Preliminary work was done in various areas to facilitate planning — assessing the need for upgrading the current Certificate in Librarianship to a Diploma in Librarianship; analysing the Certificate in Librarianship programme by identifying the instructional components in each of the course books currently being used; identifying instructional components

not included in the Certificate in Librarianship that should be included in a Diploma programme; identifying academic courses to recommend to students in the Diploma programme; compiling statistics on the Certificate programme, such as those detailed in Tables 1-4; identifying additional topics/subject areas in librarianship to be included in the Diploma programme; and obtaining input from practising librarians on the need for a Diploma programme, its content, and methods of making it available to potential students.

In August 1986, a consultant from the University of Hawaii was invited to work with the University Librarian and the Coordinator of the USP Certificate in Librarianship programme in planning the curriculum and preparing the proposal for a Diploma in Librarianship at the University of the South Pacific.

Initial decisions were made to expand the concept of the programme from 'librarianship' — a term which implies the study of activities related to a library building — to that of 'library/information studies', 'libraries/information centres', and 'librarians/information specialists', which more accurately identifies the field of study and the role of the information-professional, and provides a wider concept of knowledge and information as a creation of the human intellect. The 'library/information' concept successfully captures the dynamism inherent in the library/information profession.

The functional approach to library/information studies education was chosen as appropriate for the structure of the diploma programme.

Planning a structure for the diploma programme must begin with the awareness that the knowledge required to build library/information centre collections, organise resources so as to make information accessible to library/information centre users, and to give quality service to anyone in need of information, is basic to the library/information studies profession. Three courses were developed to cover these functions: Building the Library/Information Centre Collection; Organising Library/Information Centre Resources; Library Information Services.

Effective management of these three basic functions is necessary for the library/information centre to meet its objectives. In order to provide for this effective management, there is a course in theories and principles of management as related to library/information centre practices. Another



course included in the functional approach is an introduction to the field of library/information studies. Finally, a course relating these functions to a library/information centre specialisation, which can include a field study or a practical attachment provides the student with in-depth and specialised knowledge of library/information centre functions and management.

The functional approach allows the design of a library/information studies education programme that provides a sound theoretical foundation as well as the practical knowledge needed to operate a library/information centre.

The proposed Diploma in Library/Information Studies at the University of the South Pacific consists of ten undergraduate courses, six in library/information studies and four academic courses.

The Diploma at USP will consist of an introductory course, courses in selection, organisation and service, one in management, and one in a type of library/information centre specialisation. Students enrolled in this proposed programme will learn computer applications in information services, database design and creation, networking through bibliographic databases, storage and retrieval of information, telecommunications and automation of libraries/information centres, managing small libraries, actively identifying and recording of documents.

The library/information studies courses for the Diploma programme are HU101 Introduction to Library/Information Studies; HU102 Building the Library/Information Centre Collection; HU103 Organising Library/Information Centre Resources; HU104 Library/Information Centre Services; HU205 Management of Library/Information Centre; HU206 Libraries/Information Centres Specialisation HU206(a) The School Library/Information Centre; HU206(b) The Academic Library/Information Centre; HU206(c) The Public Library/Information Centre; HU206(d) The Special Library/Information Centre.

All students will be required to enrol in the first five courses. For the sixth course students can select one of the Libraries/Information Centres specialisation courses. Students can choose from the academic subjects offered on campus and through Extension Services to complete the required 100- and 200-level courses.

The Diploma will be run initially on the USP Campus in Suva for three consecutive semesters commencing Second Semester 1989 and ending Second Semester 1990. From First Semester 1991 the Diploma will be offered via distance learning only through USP's Extension Services.

Students who have successfully completed the USP Certificate in Librarianship can be admitted to the programme. These students may be exempted from two of the Diploma courses. Intending students without these qualifications or its equivalent must have passed the New Zealand University Entrance Examination and LLF11 Communication and Study Skills I. Candidates who have passed examinations or obtained credits at University towards a University degree or diploma can also be admitted with certain credits or exemptions as the Senate considers appropriate.

## **Conclusion**

The changing role and status of libraries and librarianship in the South Pacific and the increasing recognition of their importance by governments, educators and the private sector, has placed greater demands on library assistants.

Library training at this level has moved from a localised basic course to a regional and higher level programme; and now to the actual planning and development of a regional diploma programme.

The Diploma programme, will give librarians/information workers in the South Pacific the opportunity to acquire knowledge that will enable them to keep pace with the technological advances of the information age. This depth of knowledge is essential for librarians/information workers to provide service commensurate with the needs of contemporary users of information.

It will meet the information needs of the region by upgrading the competencies of those who now hold the USP Certificate in Librarianship and by providing a semi-professional education to persons who wish to enter the field of library/information studies. The Diploma will enable library assistants to advance to higher level positions within the library/information field thereby bridging the education gap between the library assistant and the professional librarian/information specialist. The award of the Diploma acknowledges the additional skills and expertise required

to assume more complex and demanding responsibilities in libraries/information centres.

It will also answer the need to provide an academically recognised and accredited programme from which a degree could be developed. Provision has been made within its structure to use the Diploma as a stepping stone in pursuing advanced professional qualifications. The Diploma will provide an appropriate prerequisite for academic work toward the bachelor degree, post-graduate diploma, and masters in library science offered by accredited library schools overseas. Accredited undergraduate library training programmes exist in the United Kingdom, United States, Australia, New Zealand, etc., but none of these programmes cater to the educational needs of the library assistant in the South Pacific, especially those who are dependent on distance education. Offering the Diploma by distance education will allow students enrolled in the programme to obtain the initial academically recognised qualification in the library/information profession with a minimum of personal dislocation and loss of income. A Diploma in library/information studies through distance education will not only be cost-effective but will also reach the largest number of people living within the USP region.

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