



South Africa

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THIS ACCOUNT HAS BEEN COMPILED shortly after the publication of a comprehensive and fairly accessible study in which the history, development, and present state of training for librarianship is described.¹ Supporting that article are reports of a recent survey.^{2, 3} Also available are a number of summaries of various phases of library education.^{4, 5, 6} Therefore, it seemed more important in this review, rather than to repeat what has been so recently done, to enlarge upon those aspects which might be of particular interest to readers unfamiliar with the country. Administrative organization, number of units, accrediting and standards, recruiting, admissions, faculty, teaching methods, curricula, and continuing education are discussed chiefly on those points known to have a bearing overseas. Countries just developing new programs and those reconstructing existing programs have both been kept in mind.

South Africa has an area of half-a-million square miles, a population of over fifteen million of which three million are of European descent, half-a-million of Asiatic, ten million of African, and a million and a half of mixed ancestry by custom referred to as Coloureds.⁷ Regarding literacy, education is compulsory for European children, partially so for Coloured and Asiatic but not yet so for African, i.e. Bantu. In 1952 the Bantu literacy rate was 21.8 per cent and in 1958, 35 per cent.⁸ The nine universities and five university colleges have a student population of 43,000.⁹ Of this number over 10,000 are registered with the University of South Africa, the senior university responsible for university development and control. The University examines students of the affiliated colleges, but it has none in residence. Since 1947, however, the University has offered a variety of courses by correspondence which are open to anyone, here and abroad, and its degrees are regarded as highly as any other university. In South Africa the academic year runs from March through November, and

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of this time six weeks are devoted to vacations and usually four or more weeks to examinations. The bachelor's degree takes three years to obtain. Since the average matriculant is usually seventeen years old, graduates tend to be younger than in some countries. The bachelor of arts (Hons) involving a fourth year of study is only now becoming more than an exception.

Universities Offer Training

Libraries and librarianship were almost embryonic before 1928 when the Carnegie Corporation^{10, 11} became interested and provided advice and funds for development. A few librarians had overseas qualifications, but no training was available locally. In the early thirties, shortly after its formation, the South African Library Association began correspondence courses.¹² These were followed¹³ in 1938 and 1939 by courses at the Universities of Pretoria and Cape Town.^{14, 15} After the war came extensive library growth followed by the introduction of courses in librarianship at the Universities of South Africa (1955), Potchefstroom (1956), Stellenbosch (1958), Witwatersrand (1958), and Western Cape (1960).¹⁶ In 1962 the SALA transferred its teaching responsibilities to the University of South Africa, and its courses are in the process of dwindling off.

While all library training is now offered by universities, some differences do exist in the administrative patterns followed. Of the seven universities involved, the first two which began courses in librarianship twenty-five years ago did so within the library set up and under the direction of the university librarian.^{17, 18} As the courses expanded, in one instance, a full-time assistant director was appointed to take charge of day to day affairs,¹⁹ in the other, a department of librarianship was formed independent of the library, but it continued under the librarian for the next half-dozen years or so when it was then placed within the Faculty of Arts.²⁰ All the post war teaching has been organized as Departments of Librarianship. In two,²¹ where the number of students is relatively low, the librarian acts as head; in four, the head of the department, with rank of professor in two instances and of senior lecturer in two instances, is independent. These departments come within the Faculty of Arts. Also, in two or three instances, the university authorities, in establishing new librarianship courses, found that they could not attract suitable heads unless they gave them complete responsibility. In the one instance, where the instruction has always remained within the structure of the library

certain confusions have arisen. Are the teaching staff academic faculty or librarians? They are both and neither. Academic requirements must be met, but as they hold library posts they are not really of the academic body, even when they are given certain academic recognition. Administratively they must observe regulations designed for librarians, their hours, attendance, leave, and so forth. On the other hand, the link with the library is very close, to the marked advantage of staff and students. Furthermore, the guidance of the teaching program by the university librarian, a member of the Senate, brings to it a valuable breadth of view. To sum up, the tendency now is to establish a teaching department within a humanities faculty, technically independent of the library, even where the librarian may be also the head; and where he is head, once student members and courses expand, to transfer the duties and responsibilities to one who can give full time to the task.

The number and size of library schools is frequently a moot point. In South Africa over the last decade the number of library school students at each university has continued to rise even though five new librarianship departments were established during the period. In fact, the opinion has been expressed in conversation, more than once, that in addition to the strong factor of availability, there is that of acceptability. The more courses there are scattered about the country, the more students accept librarianship as something one studies. Language makes a difference, too, in the real availability of courses. Of the seven schools, one teaches by correspondence and either English or Afrikaans may be used by students as they wish, two present lectures in English, and four in Afrikaans. While the English-medium universities are within an hour's ride of an Afrikaans university, they are a thousand miles distant from each other. Three of the Afrikaans universities are equally scattered while the fourth offers courses only to Coloured students. Students do not necessarily elect to go to the university of their mother tongue, but most do.

The possibility of having fewer centers with larger faculties and a wider range of courses is seldom, if ever, discussed. The courses are too new, too individualized, and the demand for formal continuing education is too sporadic. The amalgamation of the SALA's correspondence courses with those of the University of South Africa was chiefly prompted by the difficulty of securing suitable tutors. On the other hand, the librarians of the northeastern section of the country are seriously discussing the possibility of establishing yet another school

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at the University of Natal. At present their students must go either the 500 miles to Johannesburg or the thousand miles to Cape Town. At the moment neither the number of students nor of vacancies would seem to warrant the move, but experience elsewhere in the country suggests its wisdom.

How is the quality of a new course in librarianship determined? As in Britain, the control of standards of professional education in South Africa rests with the professional associations. Until now this has been the case with librarians, with these differences from the British Library Association practice: the SALA has always looked upon the award of its certificates as an indication of professional competence, once eligible always eligible, whereas the Library Association certificates are more in the nature of permission to practice so that failure to pay dues deprives a librarian of his qualifications. In addition, in Britain, since the certificates are based on the Library Association's examinations, there is no need to assess courses. The SALA on the other hand has always been as much concerned with the teaching as with the curriculum, and when courses were developed at the universities, after almost a decade of intellectual and emotional conflict, it adopted the practice of equating new courses against its own. Now that the SALA has given up its educational program, some new method has to be found. While no formal substitute has been established, there is a feature of general university practice which tends to create a certain unity of approach, that of the External Examiner. The function of the External Examiner is to review examinations set and scrutinize scripts written, to see that standards of quality and fairness are maintained. External Examiners usually are from sister universities. The system is particularly useful for maintaining traditions and standards, but it may also lead to too great an emphasis on what was acceptable in the past at the expense of what should be introduced in the present. While some formal type of accrediting is mooted from time to time, the general feeling among librarians is that in a country with so few library courses and small teaching staffs any negative evaluation would tend to take on personal overtones and lead to bitterness and rebellion.

While, theoretically, standards of library training are important; in practice, the market for the product, the newly qualified librarian, is what finally tells. In South Africa there are always vacancies for librarians at all levels. The general postwar expansion was augmented by the introduction of public library services for the whole country.

In addition, several studies have shown a persistent loss of 80 per cent within the first five years of service.^{22, 23, 24} This is among graduate librarians. There are no figures for undergraduates as many have proven impossible to trace. Marriage and overseas travel are the usual reasons given. Recruiting is, therefore, important, but there is no organized program. University librarians display material on librarianship as a career, talk to students individually, or give them summer employment. Some newspapers think librarianship is news and publish feature articles and news items; other do not. Three universities and the national government offer bursaries of varying sizes. These seem definitely to attract a number of students of good calibre who otherwise would not have considered librarianship. Persons involved in career guidance programs, e.g. the university's public relations officer, the Rotarians, the Department of Labour, and vocational guidance personnel do much. The University of Cape Town's public relations officer, an amateur photographer, has made ciné films of a number of careers offered by the university including librarianship. At the annual exhibitions of university activities librarianship is featured, for example, along with ballet and mathematics. In many of these activities, the librarianship faculty are the promoters and organizers behind the scenes. There are several large film libraries in the country with many films on librarianship available, and these are often shown on weekly film nights at public libraries. When students are questioned on reasons for choosing librarianship, they usually stress a love of books and people, but later admit that the salaries and career opportunities in the provincial library service attracted them too. The trend is toward a growing general awareness and acceptance of libraries and librarianship as part of community life.

South African universities are public, and admission to them is on academic merit. Therefore, screening out unsuitable applicants has to be done informally, e.g. by explaining the difficulties of the course or by suggesting alternatives. Preregistration interviews are not officially required although they are generally encouraged. Restriction of numbers so as to maintain quality is a practice accepted by South African universities, and the Department of Librarianship at Witwatersrand is now contemplating for 1964 a maximum of twenty-five students. The academic qualifications required are not too rigid. For the nongraduate courses most universities accept either a matriculation or a general school leaving certificate since the first year will weed out the weak, no matter what their qualifications. For graduate

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courses, while a bachelor's degree is the general requirement, some universities stipulate that the major be in an academic as contrasted with a professional field, or if not, that it be subject to decision of Senate. Languages other than the two official are required in two instances. Candidates who fail in their librarianship examinations usually are allowed to repeat a course only once.

Part-time students are admitted by all but one department of librarianship. A few courses may be given late in the day, but more frequently libraries release staff to attend regular morning sessions. The amount of time actually "given" by the library ranges from nil to one day a week. There is no national library policy nor is there much discussion among librarians about this method of recruiting. In fact, increasing controls by the governing authorities' general personnel regulations make it more difficult for a librarian to take on, as he used to, an unqualified but promising graduate to study as he works. No age limits are enforced by the universities, but hiring bodies frequently have age barriers, usually at fifty. No figures are available of the number of students over thirty-five who are registered, but 15 per cent is possibly a safe estimate. Their success seems determined more by personal factors than age. Neither previous intellectual training nor occupation in a kindred activity seems as strong a factor. NonWhite students are accepted by the English-medium universities if the students apply for permission by the government. This appears to be granted readily.

The reported numbers²⁵ of students registered for courses in 1961-62 were (undergraduate figures first): Cape Town 22, 25; Potchefstroom 24, 18; Pretoria 80, 12; Stellenbosch 13, 11; University of South Africa 177, 121; Witwatersrand 0, 12; Western Cape 16, 0, i.e. a total of 545 would-be librarians of whom 223 were actually attending a university.²⁶ Of this latter group, 207 are drawn from a population of just over three million, i.e. those of European descent. They belong to a university student body of 34,000.

There are seven men and four women full-time and sixteen part-time instructors in librarianship. Of these, one full-time and six part-time instructors have been trained overseas, and five additional instructors have been recipients of overseas travel grants. By the system of part-time lecturing, as distinguished from spare-time, library staff carry one or two subjects and are released on official time for the actual teaching and usually for preparation and correction. Unless excessive demands within the library arise, teaching for them

is part of the job. The advantages for the students are the breadth of approach which a faculty of four to eight can give with their wide experience, superior training, and subject specializations. The staff participating are stimulated to look upon their field objectively, to become thoroughly familiar with its underlying principles, and to keep abreast of new developments. The difficulty is that library duties expand faster than a staff can so that even in a theoretically permissive situation the teaching may become a burden. Only occasionally is assistance for revising and marking available from the library school. Even where there are a variety of courses offered, the number of full-time staff remains low. The usual practice has been to start with one full-time "head" responsible for the program and much of the teaching, who is assisted by two or three members of the university library staff. Except in one instance, clerical assistance is available only from the university offices. Teaching loads reported for full-time staff have been as high as twenty-four hours per week although more of them approximate the university standard of twelve contact hours per week. The nature of the courses—electives do not occur until B.A. (Hons) or the M.A. Bibl. is reached—require a staff capable of teaching three or four different subjects, e.g. cataloging, book selection, administration, so that it is difficult to find time and energy for specialization in one subject except at the expense of another. The system does make for a breadth of approach to librarianship, and the teacher who knows practically nothing about a field of librarianship not his is much rarer than where specialization is practiced. On the other hand, it takes many years of teaching to bring a person in a particular subject to the level of competence of a specialist. The departments which have added higher degrees have done so without hiring special staff for the purpose. What does occur is the conversion of a number of part-time lecturing posts into a second, and very occasionally a third, full-time post. Librarianship faculty is usually recruited from the higher ranks of university library staffs, but several recently qualified men who prior to training were teachers have been appointed. Now, with the departments fairly well-established, the additional posts created are at salaries lower than similar qualifications command in the field so that younger, less experienced staff is necessarily engaged. There is no accepted method whereby such persons can readily obtain further practice without giving up their teaching posts. Two heads of librarianship departments have resigned for this reason within the last two years.

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All South African universities award six months' furlough after every six years, and this may be extended usually by another six months for serious study. It is possible, though not usual, for teaching staff to go abroad and work in a library for this period. Since no small country can produce its own ideal answers to all the problems which may arise and since the real significance of another's solution is seldom completely apprehended through reading and observation alone, it would appear that more instructors in librarianship should work abroad if inspiration and stimulus are to be continued.

Librarianship Curricula

Before considering curricula, it is helpful, with regard to South Africa, to understand something of how librarianship is taught and studied. The distinctive feature is the role of correspondence courses.²⁷ Correspondence courses are accepted by the South African academic world and offered by the University of South Africa in many subjects. Where subjects require it, they are supplemented by vacation attendance at the university. During the year, lectures are duplicated and distributed, exercises set and marked, and practicals assigned. Students frequently remark on the satisfaction they derive from this much more personalized form of study; they also sigh over delays in receiving assignments and reports on practicals. The nature of the subject, of course, makes a difference. English, philosophy, and history are more satisfying than classification or cataloging. How effective such courses are is hard to assess. Certainly they attract large numbers. In 1961 there were 337 registered in librarianship with the University of South Africa. Even in its first year, 1955, sixty-five were registered. Yet in the six years, with registration constantly rising, only thirty-nine qualified.²⁸ The cause may lie in the students and not the system, but not enough is known to say.

Correspondence courses were first offered by the SALA in 1933. ". . . the intention of the Committee was to make a syllabus for study rather than a syllabus for examinations."²⁹ Examinations were not to be an end in themselves, but merely a test that students had profited sufficiently from a particular course to be considered trained librarians.

While the original courses were at first intended for all would-be librarians, as other facilities developed, the SALA courses became increasingly favoured by young nongraduates in libraries far removed from a university offering librarianship. Since the students were working as they studied and since the series of examinations took several

years, the student was maturing intellectually as well socially, and the undergraduate holder of the Intermediate Certificate was a very satisfactory product. Many small to medium sized libraries for which it has proven impossible to recruit librarians with more elaborate qualifications have been under their charge. Today, the proposal under discussion is the abolition by the University of South Africa of its undergraduate correspondence qualification. The change will be strongly opposed by isolated libraries, but it may win favor among the big centralized systems where staff and tasks can be more readily sorted into clerical and professional. There is no talk of abolishing correspondence courses. Many unqualified staff elect correspondence courses in cities where part-time attendance at a university course is possible, chiefly because they may study when and where they please and also at their own rate.

Two marked directions in types of curricula have emerged in the last decade: the two year post-matriculation Lower Diploma and the Bachelor of Librarianship degree. The content of the Lower Diploma is equal to one academic year and one professional year. The two areas may be studied simultaneously over the two years, or the academic year may be required as the admission to the professional. The Lower Diploma was first introduced by the University of Pretoria in 1950, followed by the University of South Africa in 1955, Potchefstroom in 1956, Stellenbosch in 1958, and Western Cape in 1960. The qualification is recognized by the Public Service Commission as equivalent to the SALA Intermediate Certificate. Several of the universities thought that they could combine the Lower Diploma classes with the post graduate, but experience has shown this to be very unsatisfactory. The teen-agers seldom are ready for the level of presentation possible with graduates, nor can they move at as great a speed and to such depth as the older students.

Also gaining in favor is the B.A. in Librarianship. It, too, was first introduced by Pretoria, in 1949, and was the usual South African three-year B.A. with a librarianship major. University of South Africa followed in 1955 with a four-year degree so that its academic and librarianship content is equal to the usual B.A. plus postgraduate library qualification, but both are spread over the four years. The four-year B.A. was adopted by Potchefstroom in 1961 and is to be introduced by Stellenbosch in 1964. The last and newest curriculum will offer librarianship subjects throughout the four years but will permit conversion to the usual B.A. at the end of the first or second years;

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Lower Diploma students also can convert to B.A. or B.A. Lib. While some of the other universities admit regular arts students to librarianship courses, this will not be possible here. The advantages of the B.A. in Librarianship arise from the obvious pedagogical one of building on the known, working from the general to the special, and so on, possible only when a subject as complex as library science is taken over some years, but particularly from the sense of commitment made by the freshman who frequently comes to the university intending to be a librarian but is drawn off by his undergraduate major in other directions. Statistics kept by the University of Cape Town over a decade showed this to be invariably the case. All universities with the B.A. Lib. also offer a post graduate Higher Diploma. There are, therefore, three basic courses being taught. In the freshman year classes can be combined in some subjects, but the difference in final purpose of the courses makes this a not too acceptable, though at times an unavoidable, practice. Current figures for students at the residential universities are: Lower Diploma, 59; B.A. (Lib.) 3-years, 54; 4-years, 23.

The postgraduate Higher Certificate or Higher Diploma courses differ in particular on one point, the requirement by two of them of a lengthy bibliography to be prepared in addition to regular course work. At the University of Cape Town and Witwatersrand where it is compulsory, the bibliography is regarded as giving the student a project in which he is largely on his own, and for which he must cut across the courses taken, since bibliographic knowledge, skill and organization are involved. South African topics usually are required because they present a handable area and one in which original sources may be consulted.

Short courses have been a feature of library education in South Africa since the Carnegie Corporation made its first grant in the early thirties. Vacation courses supported in part by the grant and in part by annual contributions from each province are held in turn annually in each of the four provinces. They are for unqualified personnel in small town and village libraries. The larger part of each delegate's costs is borne by the fund. This fund could also be used for institutes or seminars for qualified librarians, but neither a suitable program nor organizer has been found by the SALA's Education Committee. A development in a parallel direction is occurring which may prove of much interest. The National Development and Management Foundation, a nonprofit organization for the promotion of better management

methods, features short-term seminars, workshops, and institutes and will offer shortly a "Conference" devoted to certain personnel aspects of administration, designed for senior officers of public bodies, such as, librarians, health officers, city engineers, and so forth. The NDMF has branches in all major cities. Should the institute prove profitable, a source of instruction and inspiration in many aspects of administration will become available to most senior librarians of the country. For the unqualified, the Provincial libraries now give frequent courses to small town and school libraries.

While the need for research was recognized officially by the SALA last November,³⁰ the pressures compelling librarians to seek new approaches to most library activities are still sporadic, and the necessity for qualified librarians to continually re-educate themselves is not fully recognized. It is easy to understand that the most popular method of continuing education is the trip abroad, usually assisted by local or foreign grants. Although stimulating and enlightening, such trips cannot give a person the opportunities for growth in understandings and attitudes which a spell of working offers. While many young South Africans do go to England, job opportunities are usually available only at a clerical level. More and more young librarians are, therefore, attracted to Canada and the United States where numerous professional opportunities exist.

In looking at library training in South Africa, perhaps its strongest characteristic is its indigenous nature. Although inspiration and guidance came from Britain, America, and the Continent, it was not long before modifications and developments appeared stemming from local needs. The correspondence courses, the undergraduate curriculum, the ever developing B.A. Lib., all bear a South African stamp. The as yet unexplored needs of the field, particularly in the use of professional personnel, should evoke still further developments of individuality and character.

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