

Need For Trained Librarians

—Md. Faruque Ahmed

THE old concept of library as a storage centre is now obsolete. Today's library is basically a service-oriented agency where the problem of trained manpower is vital for obvious reasons. Librarians are teachers. They teach with books. A well-organised library run by a properly trained librarian can answer almost any query under the sun. But unfortunately, due to lack of sufficient training facilities our libraries suffer for want of trained librarians. Very little attention has been paid so far to the education of this challenging, demanding and dynamic profession. Only the University of Dhaka offers post-graduate diploma and degree in Library Science. The Library Association of Bangladesh has been conducting its Certificate Course in Library Science at under-graduate level at Dhaka and Rajshahi only. But these are not at all sufficient for our purposes. There could hardly be two opinions about the immediate need for thousands of trained librarians in the country. The demand simply exceeds the supply.

What number of trained Librarians is presently needed cannot actually be put forward until and unless a properly organised countrywide survey is made. However, the following will help gauge the present situation and the approximate volume of demand for trained librarians.

According to 1983-84 figures there are 43039 primary schools, 8664 secondary schools, 595 colleges (general), 2864 Madrasahs and a good number of other types of educational institutions in our country. Each of them should have a library of its own with a qualified librarian to support the academic programme. Besides these, we have a huge number of other types of libraries, such as public Libraries, special Libraries, Government Departmental Libraries, Libraries attached to Business, Industry and other organisations. Librarianship is a specialised profession and hence each and every library should be equipped with professionals. But most of our libraries have not got even a single professional.

In fact, a library is non-existent

[To meet the present shortage of and to cater to the future needs for trained librarians the university authorities (general) should immediately offer Library Science Courses in post-graduate Diploma and Degree levels.]

in our primary schools. The condition of secondary schools is not at all satisfactory. Most of them do not have any librarians, not to speak of trained librarians. If there is a library, it is generally run by a part-time teacher-librarian. Library situation in Government schools and schools attached to some organisations is comparatively better. The main object of primary and secondary education is to develop the latent faculties of children. "Primary and secondary schools are regarded as the most important stage where most of the skilled manpower of a nation is trained and where the quality of future university students is determined, where character building and the qualities of leadership can best be developed." If we want to educate our children properly and to cultivate in them a habit of further reading, school libraries should be treated as integral part of school teaching and specially secondary schools should be equipped with a good Library and a trained librarian for organising and servicing the Library on modern scientific lines. At the moment we may not afford to organise and equip libraries at the primary level but the matter should receive our careful consideration in future to make our children library-minded.

A library is regarded as the heart of any modern institution of higher education. College students study such a vast and fast-changing body of knowledge that few courses can be taught with one, two or even half a dozen textbooks. But the condition of college libraries specially the private ones is unsatisfactory. The collection is neither rich, nor up-to-date. Most of them have arranged their materials without any relation to any modern scientific scheme. They may better be called store houses than libraries. Majority of the libraries do not have trained librarians. A college library

without a qualified librarian is unthinkable but it is the real scene. Recently I went through the Annual Report of the Inspector of Colleges, Rajshahi University, that the number of trained librarians in the affiliated colleges under Rajshahi University is very negligible. The collection is also miserable. He suggested that the untrained librarians should be trained. This is the library situation of colleges, in the whole of Bangladesh. The condition of libraries in Government Colleges is better but not as it should be.

We have got a large number of public libraries throughout the country. Excepting four Divisional Government Public Libraries the condition of others is also not happy. They need immediate attention. Most of these libraries are run by untrained librarians. The public library and the librarian who operates it—have a vital part in educating people of all the ages throughout their lives. An efficient and effective public library system is after all a weapon to eradicate illiteracy from the country. It is a matter of joy for us that the Government of Bangladesh has a plan to establish libraries at union level. Really it is good step for national development and to fight effectively against illiteracy. So, in future our slogan should be "one village, one library." Existing public libraries should be equipped with professionals. Besides these, there are other types of libraries where a good number of trained personnel are urgently needed, University Libraries, Government, Departmental Libraries and Libraries attached to organisations and centres are however the only well-organised ones and more or less equipped with qualified staff.

The present and future trained manpower needs in various types of libraries might appear ambitious but if we consider the term 'need' in its literal sense, it will demand just bare

and dire requirements for trained librarians. It will not be out of place to mention here that each and every year thousands of graduates are being produced by our universities who do not get job according to their qualifications. If all of our general university authorities introduce Library Science courses as one of their disciplines, some of the unemployed and other graduates may get themselves admitted into the Librarianship courses and after completion of training they may get jobs in our libraries and this will also solve some unemployment problems. It may also be suggested here that at under-graduate level Library Science may be introduced as an optional subject for those who want to adopt librarianship as their career. The Library Association of Bangladesh should be requested to conduct its Under Graduate Certificate Course in Library Science at each district head quarters.

Rules should be framed for the Directorates of Education and the Universities regarding minimum required standard in respect of libraries. They should not give recognition to any institution which does not meet the prescribed standards in respect of library provision. District Inspector of Libraries should be appointed to supervise, inspect and guide for development of school and public libraries. University should appoint a library officer in each university so that it may better look after the interests of college libraries and enforce the rules and regulations as framed by the university authorities in respect of college libraries.

If we consider the idea of equipping our libraries nicely with at least minimum required number of trained personnel we should implement the principles and conditions enumerated above seriously and implement them properly. This will involve huge amounts of money but money spent on education and instruction is an investment. Priority should also be given to national planning for advanced studies and research in librarianship. Give the country trained and modern librarians and they will give you invaluable though invisible wealth.