



Libri

International Journal of Libraries and Information Studies

Editor-in-Chief: Albright, Kendra S. / Bothma, Theo J.D.

4 Issues per year

IMPACT FACTOR 2017: 0.500

5-year IMPACT FACTOR: 0.596

CiteScore 2017: 0.52

SCImago Journal Rank (SJR) 2017: 0.243

Source Normalized Impact per Paper (SNIP) 2017: 0.634

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Library Education in South Asia

ANIS KHURSHID

Published Online: 2009-10-19 | **DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.1515/libr.1970.20.1-2.59>

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Library Education in South Asia

by ANIS KHURSHID

The present education systems of Burma, Ceylon, India and Pakistan owe their origin to British rule dating back some 200 years in India and about 60 years in Burma. Even after two decades of independence, the educational structures of these countries have not changed substantially, although various reforms have been introduced. Many of these reforms follow the old pattern of education. Burma, which completely broke away from the British Commonwealth of Nations at the very day of its independence, attempted in 1964 to reconstruct its education system with a view to meet the demands of its political doctrine, "Burmese Way of Socialism". Even then, it could not completely shake off the earlier influences. This is apparent from the statement made by the then Education Minister, who said, "it is not practicable to transform the existing education system abruptly".

The four countries, therefore, inherited systems of education which had common links. Within this common framework, library developments in these countries were simultaneous with the development of education. The libraries which have now become important were established under British rule. Among them are the Imperial Library (now the National Library of India); the Punjab Public Library in Pakistan; the Colombo Museum Library in Ceylon; the Bernard Free Library (now part of the National Library of Burma).

The vitality of library developments in all the four countries during British rule was more or less the same. The indigenous leadership in the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent, however, carried forward the library work initiated by British rulers. Some of the developments emanating from British rule were significantly different from the practice then existing in Great Britain itself. For example, the commission of Asa Don Dickinson in 1915 specifically required him to organise a library training class at Panjab University, Lahore. Such a training did not exist at all in any British university at

This article is based on a Ph. D. thesis, "Standards for Library Education in Burma, Ceylon, India and Pakistan", submitted to the Faculty in the Graduate School of Library and Information Sciences at the University of Pittsburgh in June, 1969. The countries discussed in this article are Burma, Ceylon, India and Pakistan. The Department/Institute of Library Science, as generally called in these countries, has been referred to as a school without implying any administrative parallel to Library Schools in other parts of the world. The author is lecturer at the Department of Library Science, University of Karachi, Pakistan.

Libri 1970: vol. 20: no. 1-2: pp. 59-76

About the article

Published Online: 2009-10-19

Published in Print:

Citation Information: Libri, Volume 20, Issue 1-2, Pages 59–76, ISSN (Online) 1865-8423, ISSN (Print) 0024-2667, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1515/libr.1970.20.1-2.59>.

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