

S U M M A R Y

Many times have we questioned the why and the what for of Librarianship Research, and the why and the what for of doing it in Mexico.

Librarianship must explore new approaches and methods applicable to the various aspects of this discipline; as a reply to this need, the University Center for Librarianship Research is created within the National Autonomous University of Mexico on December 14, 1981.

This paper provides a general overview of this Center's activities and its bearing upon the librarianship activity.

LIBRARIANSHIP RESEARCH

As a rule, Librarianship is grouped with disciplines considered in the area of social science. Today, such disciplines are affected and modified by other disciplines that allow them to quantify and evaluate with mathematical models the librarianship deeds, as well as the adaption to fast and exact handling of great amounts of information. This is a reflection of what is presently happening in the area of social science wherein mathematics, statistics and computing are very commonly employed.

I am certain that many times we have questioned, first, the why and the what for of research within librarianship, and later, the why and the what for of doing it in Mexico.

In Librarianship we may well devote to study theoretical aspects that do permit, in the long run, at a certain moment, to modify approaches and the same current postulates currently in effect, usually by the law of tradition.

Librarianship research may respond to two situations: the urgent need to solve a problem affecting a certain community, or the need to solve problems posed by the researcher himself in order to learn on the cause and consequence of a deed, or to seek origin and behavior of a theory on the user, the information, the organization, etc. Therefore, in Librarianship, as much as in other areas, we may well talk about basic and applied research.

Basic research includes studies leading to exhaustive analysis and deep knowledge of a certain phenomenon. When such research is carried out, there is no need to worry on whether the answer discovered will be applicable or not. The research or study is carried out to acquire knowledge that is self-enriching.

Basic research, also called pure or theoretical research, is basically derived from intellectual problems which, usually due to its originality, produce new knowledge.

Applied research is pragmatic. Its purposes are more specific and pre-determined at the beginning, usually in order to solve practical problems or to discover some new knowledge that may be immediately put to use.

Basic research results may be applied for solving practical problems, or be used as background for other research. Such results are incorporated to the general body of knowledge. Some times, the difference between basic and applied research is not easy, especially in young areas that are in the process of building a theory, such as is the case of Librarianship.

Day by day the need to know the why and the what for of the librarianship happening in our country, is more urgent. Progress and advance of many librarianship areas have been limited due to the lack of adequate and efficient research offering the necessary elements on which to base creation or change.

Librarianship must explore new approaches and methods that are applicable to the various aspects of this discipline; these new approaches will require of imagination and originality, based on strong and proven provisions that are to be objective and carefully analyzed.

The moment we are living in, is featured by fast technological change leading to new solutions for old problems, when applying scientific methods that enrich librarian knowledge through experiments, questioning, historical research, operational research, and application of quantitative methods.

The field for research is very ample, if we want to research theoretical aspects and practical problems pertaining to libraries and information centers, such as acquisition, cataloguing, storage, and dissemination of information; also, the how and the why and for whom is information produced, its behavior, and its means of communication.

In front of this situation, the National Autonomous University of Mexico considered necessary that librarianship be given its own space and personality within a research program. It is with this purpose that on December 14, 1981 the University Center for Librarianship Research was founded.

With the establishment of this Center, the process of librarianship research systematization is begun and built into a critical being devoted to full time research activities.

Its main goal is to carry out librarianship research to assist in solving national problems directly related to libraries and information centers in the country, and to provide indirect support to education, research, production, administration, and diffusion of culture.

The Center has, among its functions, apart from researching, that of supporting academic staff training and high level research, make librarianship knowledge available, and assist and foster research programs with national and foreign institutions, as well as to support, from the methodology point of view, useful and priority librarianship programs for UNAM and for the country.

Research areas presently covered by CUIB are:

- a) History of Librarianship
- b) Librarianship education
 - b.1 Open education
 - b.2 Educational technology
- c) Bibliographical analysis
 - c.1 Classification
 - c.2 Cataloguing
- ch) Users
- d) Evaluation
 - d.1. Mathematical models
 - d.2 Informetry
- e) Automation
- f) Types of libraries
 - f.1 Public
 - f.2 University
- g) Bibliographical materials selection

As soon as the needed staff is obtained, the previously defined as priority areas for research are fostered and developed (see Anex 1).

To date, we have 15 full time researchers who, in turn, are externally supported by specialists in other disciplines when the interdisciplinary relationship so demands; four academical technicians in process of training as researchers, plus the staff for library support, editorial work and teaching and information logistics.

Regarding staff, it is convenient to notice two aspects of same: recruiting and training.

Although it is well known that Mexico is a country with very few librarians, in relation to needs and to true and potential demand, it is also common to face the reality that there are very few librarians with experience and knowledge in librarianship research. In general, the professional librarian is besieged by employment offers related to service and burdened by users' demands. Librarians devoted to research usually do so out of personal satisfaction, not as a modus vivendi. With the creation of CUIB, the possibility of having full time researchers who devote themselves to a creative and innovative process, is born. Right now they are part of UNAM's staff, and are not necessarily experienced researchers; so apart from identifying the interested and qualified research professionals, the task of supporting those already trained and providing for the training of new cadres had to be undertaken. For this purpose, there already is a permanent program of academic improvement which includes research methodology and other supporting specialty courses such as statistics, automation, and educational research, among others.

Both to support research in process as well as to support updating and training of researchers, we have library that is developing a collection of monographies,

periodicals, thesis, pamphlets, newspaper clippings, and an archive on the word librarianship. This collection covers mostly librarianship, achivology, informatics, computing, administration or management and education.

Also worth noting is the formation of a Latinamerican librarianshi: collection and the beginning of analisis of information contained in these materials, as well as the formation of the corresponding data bank.

This collection, and those of like institutions, is available to our researchers through the work developep by three professional librarians.

To support library work and research carried out in this Center, there are four micro-computers and some bibliographical and statistical packages.

Research has yielded products since its first months of operation since each one of the researchers carries out round table works on the subject he is dealing with in order to provide for communication between area specialists and, sometimes, results may be make known through simple editions such as Cuadernos de Catalogación y Clasificación (Cataloguing and Classification Pamphlets). Also, each one of the researchers organizes an updating course on the topic researched, in order to make the information of his findings obtained in the process of researching, known to interested librarians.

Also, when research is concluded and results so demand, there is a posibilidad of publishing. In relation to this editorial activity, each researcher produces two articles per year.

Both the round table work, as well as the courses and publications, form part of the activities of diffusion of universal and Mexican librarianship knowledge. These activities allowed for ten round tables, two seminars, five lectures, 13 courses and one talk carried out during 1984; the latter is the yearly CUIB

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event in which a floor is offered for the discussion of librarianship research problems. During 1985 nine courses, eight round tables are being offered. Six books have already been published, and nine are in press, apart from three that are to go to press before the year's end. (For detailed information on these areas, please refer to Annexes 2 and 3).

CUIB has already established assistance and cooperation relationships both with other UNAM departments as well as with other national and foreign organizations.

A very special place in these relationships is given to librarianship schools in the country, since one of the Center's programs is to link research to teaching and to support schools for both teaching itself as well as with the products of research, that in many instances become reading material for students.

As far as possible, the Center supports transcendental librarianship programs for UNAM and for the country, for which reason three of the highest rated researchers at CUIB are under special assignment to direct:

- a) The Direction General of Libraries at the Ministry of Public Education, which is the responsible entity for instrumentation of the Public Libraries National Program.
- b) The Direction General of Libraries at UNAM, which is the responsible entity for coordination of 170 departmental Libraries within the system.
- c) The Center of Scientific and Humanistic Information at UNAM, that is responsible for information analysis in some areas of knowledge, at a Latinamerican level, and that is in charge of provision of periodicals to the 170 university libraries.

Some of our research, still in process, has already called the attention of the

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public sector, such as the case of the University Library Census, in which result the Higher Education Undersecretariat at the Ministry of Public Education is interested. That of Public Libraries is to complement studies and research carried out by the same Ministry, and the study on classification of the National Medicine Library has created interest both in the Health Ministry as well as in the same National Medicine Library, which already has given this Center permission to translate tables and charts, which are to form part of this study.

CUIB's work has been known overseas, and it does interact with foreign nations to foster and develop librarianship research. For example, we may speak of: Perú, Colombia, Venezuela, Dominican Republic and Cuba.

This regional interest has provided for the cooperation and support of the Organization of American States by means of which a Latinamerican program for training of librarianship researchers could be established as of 1984; and that of the Government of France for the training of specialists in automated librarianship information.

During its first three years of work, CUIB has been preoccupied to: train its academic cadres, create a methodology and technical infrastructure that originates a self-development for librarianship in Mexico and which provides for the improvement of librarian services in the country, which at the same time may satisfy the information needs of the Mexican without by-passing the commitment our country has to Latinamerica and the support the the area's countries in planning and designing local librarianship research programs.

The librarianship spectrum is very ample. CUIB is beginning to discover it, to know it, to enjoy it. We are beginning to receive the early fruits. We are already providing solutions to some areas. But this is only the beginning. We still have

a great deal of work ahead of us. The future demands all our work and enthusiasm. And this is not so only for us librarians who are an important part of CUIB, but also for all those who take part and live out of this profession.

Estela Morales Campos
May, 1985

RESEARCH PROGRAM NOW IN PROCESS

1. Preparation of a manual on the handling of Classification of Congress on social science
Directly supports curricula for undergraduate and graduate (Masters degree) work in Librarianship within the institutions that offer this education.
2. National census of official university libraries in the Mexican Republic
Linked to the Higher Education National Plan in Mexico, supported by the Higher Education and Scientific Research Undersecretariat.
3. Library model design for the structure of automated bibliographical data banks.
Linked to library automation and data base creation programs.
4. Analysis of the Classification System for Medicine more widely employed by the Mexican libraries.
Cooperates with the research and teaching programs that support more than 300 libraries operating in our country and which pertain both to Health Sector institutions as well as to schools and colleges of the Higher Learning Institutions.
5. Evaluation of monographical works of an academic library: a mathematical approximation.
Directed to the development of collections in Higher Learning Institutions.
6. Programmed text for teaching the selection of bibliographical material.
Directly supports curricula for undergraduate work in librarianship, for the program of Selection subject. May also be used for teaching packages of the Open University System in this area.
7. Testimonial fo the Mexican library.
Related to the national identity rescue programs, through libraries and literary production; could also be useful for those responsible of planning national programs for libraries.
8. User's behavior in public libraries in the Federal Distric.
Supports the National Libraries Plan of the Culture Undersecretariat a the Ministry of Public Education, in the design of library services and programs for reading habit and use of library training; alternatively could also be used in programs of the Direction General of Publications at the Ministry of Public Education.
9. Masters Degree in Librarianship in Mexico.
Directed to curricula design for Masters Degrees in librarianship and information sciences.
10. Non professional library personnel training.
Directed to institutions that have training programs for various type of library personnel for the different kinds of libraries existing in this country: UNAM, Ministry of Education, state universities.

11. Analysis of ((illegible))

Directly supports the data bank creation program fostered by CONACYT

12. Selects bibliographical material in Mexican university libraries, at undergraduate level.

Linked to the library collection development programs for higher education, regarding selection

RESEARCH TO BE STARTED

1. Use of information in the research centers in Mexico.

Linked to support to research program fostered by CONACYT within research institutions

2. Study of Users.

Linked to service planning and design for libraries.

Note: Research may support departments and programs of the University herself, such as: undergraduate (Baccalaureate) and graduate (Masters) studies in Librarianship at the School of Philosophy and Literature, departmental libraries, Direction General of Libraries, Open University System, CCH (Science and Humanities College) option, librarianship technician, the program of cooperation with State libraries of the Academic Exchange Direction.