University library manpower in Kerala: an analysis

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Analyses the size and structure of the professional and non-professional manpower in the five university libraries of Kerala. It examines the staff pattern, categorisation of manpower, their salary scales, qualifications prescribed for each category, general and professional qualifications possessed by them and present strength of professional and non-professional manpower. It also suggests urgent measures to be taken to rectify the anomalies in the present situation.

Introduction

Of the two factors which contribute to the effectiveness of services viz, resources and manpower, the latter has got a predominant role by virtue of its complexity. As Likert, the famous management expert, has pointed out, "All the activities of an enterprise are initiated and determined by the persons who make up that institution. Every aspect of its activities is determined by the competence, motivation and general effectiveness of its human organization"[1]. A library is not an exception to this. Since most libraries spend more than half of their budgets on staff salaries, there is growing concern to get the maximum from them which is possible only through the optimum utilization of their abilities. Unfortunately, the present day utilization of human resource capacity in the government and corporate sector has not been encouraging[2]. It is also important to analyze and evaluate existing jobs and staffing structures and modify them in relation to changing needs of the users and the changes in the work environment.

In India, the work force in the university libraries is categorized as professionals, semi-professionals and non-professionals, though the designations vary from library to library. In the report of the UGC Library Committee, the staff in the university library is categorized into professional senior, professional junior, professional assistant and semi-professional. All others are treated as non-professionals. While university librarian, deputy librarian, assistant librarian, reference librarian, chief classifier and chief cataloguer are put in the category of professional senior, maintenance librarian, assistant classifier, assistant cataloguer, accession librarian, periodicals librarian and circulation librarian are considered to be professional junior. Senior library assistant is treated as professional assistant and junior library assistant as semi-professional[3].

Objectives of the Study

The major objectives of the study are:

- To determine the size and structure/ pattern of library manpower in each of the university libraries in Kerala;

- To ascertain the qualification and skills of the library staff in the university libraries;

- To examine the extent of recruitment of professional and non-professional staff in the university libraries; and

- To offer suggestions for the better utilization staff in the university libraries.

Methodology

There are seven universities in the state of Kerala. They are:

i   University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram (established 1937)

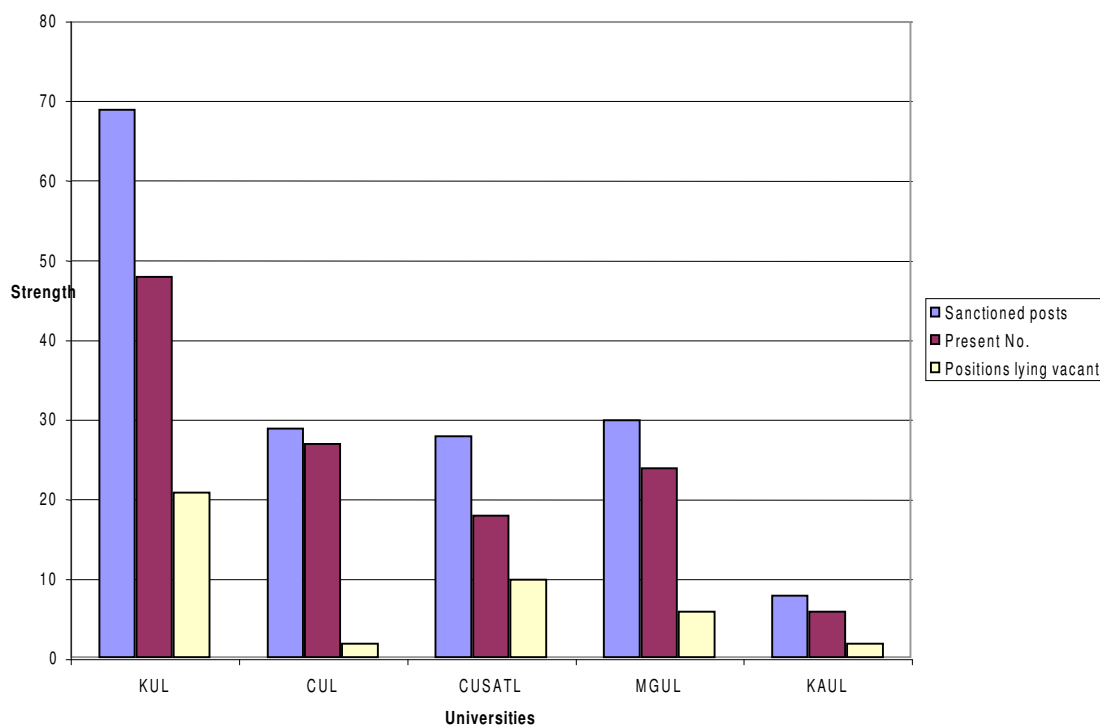ii University of Calicut, Tenhipalam, Malappuram (established 1968)

Fig. 1 — Present position of professional manpower

iii Cochin University of Science and Technology, Kochi (established 1971)

iv Kerala Agricultural University, Vellanikkara, Thrissur (established 1971)

v Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam (established 1983)

vi Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady (established 1993)

vii Kannur University, Kannur (established 1995)

Of these seven, the first five have got full-fledged university libraries, whereas the libraries of the last two universities are at the fledgling stage with skeletal staff. The first five university libraries – Kerala University Library (KUL), Calicut University Library (CUL), Cochin University Library (CUSATL), Mahatma Gandhi University Library (MGUL) and Kerala Agricultural University Library (KAUL) have very strong central libraries and separate departmental libraries/constituent college libraries. Therefore, the manpower of only these five universities is taken for the study. Moreover, the analysis is confined to the workforce in the central libraries of universities and does not cover the departmental libraries, most of which have only one professional staff member to manage.

The main tool used for data collection is a comprehensive datasheet meant for collecting details like documentary resources, membership, equipment, budget allocation, services offered, annual output of work in each and every section and manpower (both professional and non-professional). The datasheet is intended mainly to collect details of manpower and the output of staff members. It was administered to the librarians of the central libraries.

Of the five university libraries, only two are having university librarians. All others are headed by senior-most Deputy Librarian or Assistant Librarian. The heads of all the five university libraries selected for the study were interviewed with the help of an interview schedule. The idea was to collect information about the mission of the library, policies on collection building, functioning of the library committees, new services introduced, human resource management policy, in-house training programmes, continuing education programmes, and to obtain suggestions for the improvement of human resource management including proper utilization of staff members.

Table 1—Staff pattern in the university libraries of Kerala

Designation of professionals in the universities					Scale of pay (Pre-revised)
KUL	CUL	CUSATL	MGUL	KAUL	Rs.
Library Assistant	Professional Assistant Gr 2	Professional Assistant Gr 2	Library Assistant	Library Assistant	5000-8150
Technical Assistant	Professional Assistant Gr.1	Professional Assistant Gr 1	Technical Assistant	Technical Assistant	5800- 9425
Reference Assistant	Junior Librarian*	Junior Librarian*	Reference Assistant	Reference Assistant	6500-10550*
Assistant Librarian Gr. 2	Assistant Librarian Gr. 2	Assistant Librarian Gr.2	Assistant Librarian Gr.2	Assistant Librarian Gr.2	6675-10550
Assistant Librarian Gr.1	——	—-	Assistant Librarian Gr. 1	Assistant Librarian Gr.1	7800-12975
Assistant Librarian	Assistant Librarian	Assistant Librarian	Assistant Librarian	Assistant Librarian	8000- 13500
Assistant Librarian (Senior Scale)	Assistant Librarian (Senior Scale)	Assistant Librarian (Senior Scale)	Assistant Librarian (Senior Scale)	Assistant Librarian (Senior Scale)	10000-15200
Assistant Librarian (Selection Grade)	Assistant Librarian (Selection Grade)	Assistant Librarian (Selection Grade)	Assistant Librarian (Selection Grade)	Assistant Librarian (Selection Grade)	12000-18300
Deputy Librarian	Deputy Librarian	Deputy Librarian	Deputy Librarian	Deputy Librarian	12000-18300
University Librarian	University Librarian	University Librarian	University Librarian	University Librarian	16400-22400

Though there is similarity in the hierarchy between reference assistant and junior librarian, there is difference in the salary scales among the universities. The designation reference assistant is the same in Kerala and M G Universities and the scale of pay also is the same. While the junior librarian in the calicut has the scale of Rs. 7200 – 11400, the corresponding scale in Cochin University is 6500 -9425.

Manpower in the university libraries

In the university libraries of Kerala, there are four grades of professional staff such as university librarian, deputy librarian, assistant librarian and the professional assistants. The category of semi-professionals is conspicuous by its absence. Apart from these there are the administrative staff, and the class IV category.

The professional staff in the university libraries can be broadly divided into two categories, based on the pay scales – UGC and non-UGC categories. The UGC scale of pay for the academic library staff was implemented in the state of Kerala in 1991 along with the teachers vide G.O No. (Ms) No. 87/91/H. Edn dated 9 April 1991. As part of that, those who were in the category of assistant librarian (Grade 2) and above were brought within the purview of UGC scheme irrespective of the qualifications possessed by them and the rest are continuing in the state scale of pay and service conditions. Owing to the demand of those in service to relax the norms laid down by UGC to be inducted in the scheme, the issue of automatic induction to the scheme as soon as one gets promoted to the post of assistant librarian remained unsettled for a long time. The universities adopted different norms on this issue. While the Calicut, Cochin and M G Universities automatically inducted the assistant librarians to the UGC stream, provided they possess the basic qualifications prescribed by UGC, it remained a polemic issue in the Kerala University for a long time and a decision was taken only in 2006. The delay in solving the issue has led to much disenchantment among the professional staff and this is one of the reasons for studying the job satisfaction of the staff. As a result of the implementation of the UGC scheme, there exist two categories of professional staff

as indicated above. The five universities follow the same pattern as far as staff grades are concerned, though there is slight difference in the designations at the junior level.[4] The details of the staff grades are given in Table 1.

It is evident from Table1 that there are slight differences in the designations and existing scale of pay in the universities. But the qualifications prescribed for different categories are the same as is clear from Table 2.

Professionals in the first five designations are eligible for UGC scales of pay and therefore, UGC qualifications are prescribed for fresh entrants. It is worth mentioning here that even for those who belong to the UGC category, UGC stipulations are applicable only for placements and for other service conditions like retirement age, pension, etc., State Rules are applicable.

Table 2—Designation and scales of pay of professional staff

Designation prescribed	Qualifications
University Librarian	As prescribed by UGC
Deputy Librarian	P.G. degree with B.L.I.Sc
Assistant Librarian (Selection Grade)	As prescribed by UGC
Assistant Librarian (Senior Scale)	-do-
Assistant Librarian	-do-
Assistant Librarian Grade 1	Degree with B.L.I.Sc
Assistant Librarian Grade 2	-do-
Reference Assistant/Junior Librarian	-do-
Technical Assistant/Prof. Asst. Gr.1	-do-
Library Assistant/Prof. Asst. Gr. 2	-do-

Present position of professional manpower

The strength of the professional manpower in the central libraries of the five universities is given in Table 3.

Kerala University, naturally, has the largest contingent because of its sheer size followed by CUL. Though CUSATL is older and bigger in size in terms of documents and budget allocation than MGUL, the latter has more professionals. The percentage of professional juniors is slightly bigger than that of professionals in all libraries except CUSATL. The total figures also show that professional juniors constitute 51.67 percent of the total.

Qualifications and skills of professionals

The quality of services offered by libraries is very much dependent on the quality of staff which is manifested in the qualifications and skills possessed by them. At stated by Seetharama, mere possession of knowledge would not be sufficient but one should possess the skill or skills to apply the knowledge gained fruitfully.[5] Therefore, besides the traditional skills, they should possess communication skills, managerial skills, analytical skills, advocacy skills and a host of others.

General qualifications

The basic qualification prescribed for the entry level post i.e., the post of Library assistant/professional assistant (Grade 2) in all the university libraries in Kerala is a basic degree in any discipline with degree in library and information science. But the number of post graduates in other subjects is much higher among the professionals. The general qualifications possessed by

Table 3—Strength of the professionals in the central libraries

Designation	KUL	CUL	CUSATL	MGUL	KAUL	Total
University Librarian	—	1 (3.7%)	1 (5.6%)	—	—	2 (1.7%)
Deputy Librarian	2 (4.2%)	— (0)	— (0)	1 (4.2%)	—	3 (2.5%)
Assistant Librarian	23 (47.9%)	11 (40.7%)	9 (50%)	11 (45.8%)	2 (33.3%)	56 (44.2%)
Junior Librarian/ Ref. Asst.	6 (12.5%)	3 (1.1%)	4 (22.2%)	5 (20.8%)	4 (66.7%)	22 (18.3%)
Technical Asst./ Prof. Asst. Gr. 1	16 (33.3%)	5 (18.6%)	4 (22.2%)	4 (16.7%)	— (0%)	29 (24.2%)
Library Asst./ Prof. Asst. Gr. 2	1 (2.1%)	7 (25.9%)	—	3 (12.5%)	—	11 (9.1%)
Total	48 (100%)	27 (100%)	18 (100%)	24 (100%)	6 (100%)	123 (100%)

Table 4—General qualification of the professionals

Qualifications	Name of the University					Total
	KUL	CUL	CUSATL	MGUL	KAUL	
Graduation	10	10	8	8	1	37
	(20.8%)	(37.0%)	(44.4%)	(33.3%)	(16.7%)	(30.1%)
Post-graduation	35	16	8	15	5	79
	(72.9%)	(59.3%)	(44.4%)	(62.5%)	(83.3%)	(64.2%)
M. Phil.	2	-	1	1	—	4
	(4.2%)		(5.6%)	(4.2%)		(3.3%)
Ph. D.	1	1	1	—	—	3
	(2.1%)	(3.7%)	(5.6%)			(2.4%)
Total	48	27	18	24	6	123
	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)

Table 5—Professional qualification of the staff

Professional qualifications	Name of the University					Total
	KUL	CUL	CUSATL	MGUL	KAUL	
BLISc	10	3	3	4	1	21
	(20.8%)	(11.1%)	(16.6%)	(16.7%)	(16.7%)	(17%)
MLISc	38	21	14	20	4	97
	(79.2%)	(77.8%)	(77.8%)	(83.3%)	(66.6%)	(78.9%)
M Phil/Ph D	—	3	1	—	1	5
		(11.1%)	(5.6%)		(16.7%)	(4.1%)
Total	48	27	18	24	6	123
	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)

Table 6 — Additional qualifications/skills acquired by the staff

Sl.No.	Programme	No. of programmers				
		KUL	CUL	CUSATL	MGUL	KAUL
1	Computer basics	1	2	-	-	-
2	Database management	3	1	-	2	1
3	DCA/PGDCA/PGDIT	2	2	1	2	-
4	Hardware/networking	3	1	1	2	1
5	Library automation	3	2	3	3	1
6	Programming languages	4	2	1	2	-
7	Software packages	3	2	3	4	1
8	Others	3	-	-	3	-
	Total	22	12	9	18	4
		(45.8%)	(44.4%)	(50%)	(75%)	(66.7%)
		26	15	9	6	2
	Missing System	(54.2%)	(55.6%)	(50%)	(25%)	(33.3%)

the professionals in the central libraries is given in Table 4.

KUL and KAUL have the highest concentration of professionals with post-graduate or higher qualification. In general, while about 70 percent possesses post graduation, more than 5 percent has higher degrees.

Professional qualifications

Table 5 gives the details of the professional qualifications of the work force in the five university libraries. CUL has the highest percentage of professionals with post graduation and higher qualifications.

It can be safely stated that qualification-wise there is not much difference among the professionals of the five universities. Taken together, 83 percent of staff possesses higher qualifications than the entry level requirement.

Additional qualifications of the professionals

An attempt to study the additional qualifications or skills acquired by the staff members through programmes of more than one month duration revealed that many people have tried to update their knowledge and sharpen their skills by attending various programmes either officially or unofficially. The details of the programmes attended to by them are given in Table 6.

The percentages of persons who have undergone such programmes vary from library to library from 75 in MGUL to 44.4 in CUL. Their share is more in MGUL, KAUL and CUSAT, compared to the older libraries. Courses on software packages and library automation seem to be the more popular among the staff. Apart from the computer skills, nobody is found to have acquired any other skills which are considered to be vital for information professionals.

Sanctioned posts vs. vacant posts

A comparison of the sanctioned posts of professionals with the present number showed that except CUL, all other libraries have many vacancies to be filled up, as is clear from Table 7.

Both KUL and CUSATL have more than one third of the posts lying vacant. While KAUL has one fourth of the posts vacant, the corresponding figure for MGUL is one fifth. In total, more than one fourth of the total positions are lying vacant.

A comparison of sanctioned posts and the number of permanent incumbents in the university libraries shows that the largest gap is in the KUL (34.78%). Here, roughly one third of the posts, including that of the university librarian are lying vacant.

At present the gap is made good by temporary staff and apprentices. Steps are on to fill the posts. In the CUL, since fresh recruitment of professionals has been made recently and the gap is just 6.89%. But in CUSATL,

Table 7—Present position of professional manpower

Library	Sanctioned posts	Present position	Positions lying vacant
KUL	69 (100%)	48 (69.57%)	21 (30.43%)
CUL	29 (100%)	27 (93.11%)	2 (6.89%)
CUSATL	28 (100%)	18 (64.29%)	10 (35.71%)
MGUL	30 (100%)	24 (80%)	6 (20%)
KAUL	8 (100%)	6 (75%)	2 (25%)
Total	164 (100%)	120 (73.2%)	44 (26.8%)

Table 8—Section wise distribution of unskilled staff

Library	AS	TS	MS	CS	PS	RS	D S	ITS	Others	Total
KUL	1	—	2	3	1	1	—	—	12	20
CUL	1	—	2	—	2	2	—	—	14	21
CUSATL	—	2	1	—	—	1	—	—	5	9
MGUL	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	5	8
KAUL	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

AS — Acquisition Section TS — Technical Section MS – Maintenance Section
CS — Circulation Section PS — Periodicals Section RS — Reference Section
DS — Documentation Section ITS — Information Technology Section

Table 9 — Sanctioned and vacant posts of non-professionals

Library	Manpower position		
	Sanctioned posts	Present no.	Positions lying vacant
KUL	37 (45.95%)	20 (100%)	17 (54. 05%)
CUL	21 (0%)	21 (100%)	0 (100%)
CUSATL	14 (35.71%)	9 (100%)	5 (64.29%)
MGUL	13 (38.46%)	8 (100%)	5 (61.54%)
KAUL	—	—	—
Total	85 (31.76%)	58 (100%)	27 (68.24%)

Table 10—Recruitment of staff during the period 2000 – 2005

Name of library	No. of professionals recruited	No. of non-professionals recruited
KUL	—	—
CUL	11	—
CUSATL	10	3
MGUL	12	—
KAUL	—	—

the mismatch of 35.71% is more than that of KUL. In MGUL and KAUL the gap is 20 % and 25% respectively. Fig. 1 depicts the sanctioned posts vs. present incumbents in the different university libraries.

Position of unskilled staff

Section-wise distribution of unskilled staff is consolidated in Table 8. It is obvious from the table that there is no policy in the deployment of non-professional staff. In the technical section of KUL, CUL and MGUL there is not even a single non-professional to work. Their number is very less in the Maintenance Section also. Others category includes class IV staff in the office, cleaners, sweepers, security, Photostat operators and others.

Sanctioned posts of non-professionals

Table 9 presents the details of sanctioned posts and vacant posts of non-professionals in the libraries.

The absence of non-professionals is more glaring in the KUL where about 46 percent of the posts are lying

vacant. While there is gap in the CUSATL (35.71%) and MGUL (38.46%), there is no non-professional at all in the KAUL in the Sections. CUL is the only library with all the posts filled up.

Recruitment of professionals

The fact that the practice of filling vacancies in universities is not regular is clear from Table 10.

The analysis of data collected from the libraries shows that while KUL and KAUL have not made any fresh posting of professionals during the period 2000–2005, CUL, CUSATL and MGUL have made appointments in the range of 10-12. Being the first university library, many professionals have retired from the KUL during this period. But fresh posting or allocation of non-professionals has not been made except by CUSATL. The interview with the Heads of Libraries revealed that in the case of CUL, CUSATL and MGUL, the fresh postings were made after a gap of about 5- 7 years. They attributed this tardiness mainly to the governmental policy of not giving approval for fresh appointments.

Suggestions

In the light of the analytical study, the following suggestions are offered.

Though the entry level qualification is the same in all universities, the designation for the same category varies. They are designated as library assistants in three universities and professional assistant (Gr. 2) in two. Since all the five are state universities, it is better to adopt a uniform designation. Professional assistant (Gr. 2) seems to be more acceptable which has a distinct identity because many college libraries use the designation library assistant to refer to semi-professionals.

Whereas the salary scale remains the same in the first two grades [library assistants/professional assistant (Gr. 2) and technical assistant/ professional assistant (Gr.1)] in all universities, there is considerable difference in the basic pay as far as the third grade (reference assistant/ junior librarian) is concerned between universities. The scale is definitely higher in University of Calicut. This is irrational and it is advisable to make the scales uniform in all the universities for the same grade.

At present there are three groups of assistant librarians — assistant librarian (Gr. 2), assistant librarian (Gr. 1)

and assistant librarian (UGC). This is quite illogical and it is high time to grant UGC pay scales to all assistant librarians who possess the prescribed qualifications and giving relaxations to deserving cases.

In majority of the university libraries, the post of university librarian remains vacant. In KUL, it is lying vacant for almost two decades! This is sure to affect the planned and progressive growth of the university libraries especially when the role of proper leadership has increased in the context of sweeping changes taking place in the information sector. Steps should be taken by the university authorities to fill the post of university librarians without further delay. Along with that filling up of all vacant posts is also essential.

Since fresh appointments are made once in a blue moon, the size of the professional seniors and professional juniors remains more or less the same resulting in 'greying' of the workforce. Moreover, this also results in scarcity of staff in crucial service points. It is advisable to follow the pyramidal structure in the hierarchy by making timely appointments.

The professionals at present seem to be interested in acquiring IT-related skills alone. They have to come forward to master management skills also since academic libraries are developing as big enterprises in terms of men, money and materials

In the absence of non-professionals in many sections, even routine tasks are attended to by professionals resulting in wastage of manpower and resources. It is necessary to induct semi-professionals and non-professionals to carry out routine tasks. This has become necessary in the context of increased used of IT gadgets resulting in de-professionalization of many of tasks (eg: cataloguing, serials control) which were hitherto considered to be professional. This will also enable the professionals to plan and implement value-added and innovative services.

It is also necessary to shed the Section-wise approach in the deployment of staff which results in water tight compartments, and think in terms of constituting task groups/task forces for new and new programmes/services.

Since library professionals are treated on a par with teachers by the University Grants Commission, it is appropriate that all facilities given to teachers like incentive increments for NET, M. Phil. and Ph.D., FIP, sabbatical leave, project assistance etc. are extended to librarians which will go a long way in quality improvement.

Conclusion

The university libraries in Kerala have take up the automation work on a priority basis and accordingly some new services have also been initiated. But all such services are offered from the new section created as part of the attempts called Information Technology Section. In fact, library automation warrants a reorientation or reengineering of the services which leads to a restructuring of the organizational pattern of libraries. A cursory survey of the organizational structure of universities in UK, USA and almost all developed countries would amply demonstrate this point. But such a realignment has not taken place in Kerala. This revamping of the structure will necessitate change in the number, qualifications, skills and hierarchies of the staff.

The fast changes taking place in the information scenario make it imperative on the part of university libraries to periodically check and update its strategic plans and change priorities continuously. The old hierarchies and divisions are not tenable for long time. There is a strong justification for the traditional hierarchical organization but a flexible and dynamic solution is needed for the areas affected by the rapid changes. This, in turn, changes the workflow forcing library staff to adopt new and additional duties and responsibilities. Unfortunately university libraries in India do not yet have sufficient experience to define and measure the new tasks that are emerging so as to project an alternate model. Even with sufficient experience, it may be difficult to project a lasting model because of the rapid changes taking place in the internal and external environments of the library.

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