

Problems of Continuous Education of Library Professionals in Uzbekistan

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the analysis of current problems and prospects of development of the continuous education system of library specialists in Uzbekistan. The key aspects of librarian's professional development, the necessity of introducing modern educational technologies and international standards in staff training are considered. The author draws special attention to the importance of the formation of sustainable educational programmes oriented to modern requirements. Special attention is paid to the problems of adaptation of library professionals to modern challenges, including digitalisation, development of media literacy and interdisciplinary approach.

Keywords: Continuous education, library professionals, Uzbekistan, professional qualification, digitalisation, media literacy, educational technologies, staff training.

Introduction

The activities of any information and library institution at the modern stage largely depend on the qualification level and degree of professionalism of its staff. The demand for and success of a library specialist are determined not only by possessing a basic set of specialized knowledge but also by the willingness to continuously expand it, acquire and apply new knowledge, skills, and abilities, as well as adapt existing ones to changing conditions.

In the professional field, the term "professional development of librarians" is interpreted as "the improvement of professional knowledge, skills, and abilities, as well as the enhancement of librarians' general educational level in line with the latest achievements in culture, science, and technology, as well as advanced library practices."

Professional development contributes to the enhancement of professional expertise, the renewal of theoretical and practical knowledge of library staff in line with modern qualification requirements, and the need to master innovative methods for solving professional tasks¹.

A high level of professional training for librarians not only improves the quality of library, bibliographic, and informational services provided to readers, ensuring the full satisfaction of their professional, cultural, and self-educational needs and demands, but also fosters a deeper understanding of the library's role in society and helps create a positive social image of the library.

¹ Traditional and Innovative Forms and Methods of Professional Development for Library Specialists. - Novosibirsk: Publishing House of GAUK NSO NNGNB, 2017.

Therefore, professional development should be ongoing, encompass all categories of specialists, and be based on the principle of continuity².

Due to the current rapid informatization of all areas of social production, education, and science, a new perspective on the library profession is emerging. The role of the librarian in the modern information society is evolving significantly, and the perception of professional knowledge required for library specialists is also undergoing substantial changes.

At the current stage of the development of library and information activities, librarians take on many roles that were not previously characteristic of their profession due to the nature of social and societal development. Modern library and information work requires librarians, in addition to performing traditional library services and activities, to also function as administrators, specialists in new information technologies, managers, psychologists, educators, and more.

Modern trends in library activities, driven by changes in their social functions and the intensive adoption of new technological advancements in library practices, have significantly transformed the content of programs and forms of continuous library education. According to experts, by the end of the last century, programs focusing on training in the use of the latest information technologies and mastering modern methods of human resource management garnered significant interest in almost every country.

In particular, within the structure of IFLA's Education and Research Division, a "round table" on issues of continuing professional education (CPERT) was established in 1986. Its mission was to promote education at IFLA's annual General Conferences, where discussions on issues related to continuing education are scheduled every three to five years. The first CPERT meeting was held in Tokyo in 1986, followed by meetings in Barcelona in 1993, Copenhagen in 1997, and Boston in 2001. At the Boston meeting, the problems of professional education were discussed under the theme: "*Libraries and Librarians: Their Importance in the Age of Knowledge.*"

Foreign specialists consider practical workshops to be the most popular form of professional development, with 52% of respondents in a 1992 survey conducted among U.S. state library management staff identifying them as the preferred method. Other widely used forms mentioned in the study include courses (16%), self-education at home (16%), teleconferences (12%), video cassettes (12%), audio cassettes (24%), and the use of cable television combined with satellite transmission (16%)³.

In the system of professional development in foreign countries, alongside forms familiar to Uzbekistan—such as conferences, problem-solving and working seminars, publications, and business games—many non-traditional forms are widely used. These include consultations and instructions delivered via television, email, video and audio cassettes, teleconferences using satellite communication, pre-designed self-education program kits, and, of course, distance learning.

² Medvedeva, E.V. The System of Professional Development for Staff of the Scientific Library of Tomsk State University at the Present Stage // Bulletin of Tomsk State University. Cultural Studies and Art History - Tomsk, 2012. - No. 2(6). - Pp. 102-106.

³ Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On the Establishment of the State Institute of Arts and Culture of Uzbekistan" [No. PP-1771 of June 4, 2012] [Electronic resource]. - URL: <http://www.lex.uz/ru/docs/2018207>. - Accessed on: 05.12.2019.

Abroad, the main participants in the process of professional development and retraining of personnel are library associations, educational institutions, library management bodies, large publishing and book trade corporations, and private commercial firms (such as database producers). A leading role among these is attributed to library schools, which have the necessary teaching staff and equipment for practical training.

The faculty of these institutions understands the importance of maintaining close contact with all graduates and providing them with active assistance and support throughout their professional careers.

In the Republic of Uzbekistan, according to the "Law on Education" adopted in 2020, continuous education is the foundation of the personnel training system, a priority area that ensures the socio-economic development of the Republic of Uzbekistan and meets the economic, social, scientific, technical, and cultural needs of individuals, society, and the state. Specifically, the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Education" in Article 13, Chapter 2, discusses retraining and professional development of personnel: "Retraining of personnel ensures the acquisition of the necessary additional professional knowledge, skills, and competencies for performing activities in fields related to basic professions and specialties. Professional development ensures the deepening and updating of professional knowledge, skills, and competencies, and contributes to the improvement of the category, level, grade, and position of personnel. The forms and durations of retraining and professional development are determined by the relevant state educational requirements."⁴

In addition, an important role in the professional development of employees of information and library institutions was played by the Faculty of Advanced Training for Cultural Workers at TashGIK named after A. Qadyri, which was opened in January 1995 and operated until 2012. In that year, following a decree "On the Creation of the State Institute of Arts and Culture," the library program was closed as part of the merger of two universities: TashGIK named after A. Qadyri and the State Institute of Arts. Over the years, more than 1,500 library professionals from various categories, including library directors, methodologists, and employees of the service, acquisition, processing, and storage departments, received advanced training at the faculty⁵.

Thus, it was the technical schools (now colleges) that trained specialists with secondary vocational education for the library institutions of the republic, while specialists with higher education in library science were trained by the Tashkent State Institute of Culture named after A. Qadyri. Among the secondary vocational institutions that trained librarians, it is important to note the library science departments created at art schools in the 1990s. In these institutions, librarians were trained without interrupting their work.

After the decree "On the organization of information and library support for the population of the republic," in order to improve the staffing of Information Resource Centers (IRCs) in secondary vocational educational institutions with librarians holding secondary vocational education, library

⁴ Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Education": adopted by the Legislative Chamber on May 19, 2020 <https://xs.uz/ru/post/ob-obrazovaniy> President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sh. Mirziyoyev, Tashkent, September 23, 2020, No. ZRU-637.

⁵ Kovalenko A.P. Modern Trends in Continuing Professional Education // Beggerov Readings. – Tashkent: Publishing House of the National Library named after A. Navoi, 2005.

departments were opened in various industrial vocational colleges in the 2009-2010 academic year⁶.

However, this experience was not successful, as there was a noticeable shortage of highly educated staff in the regions of the republic to train librarians with secondary vocational education. One of the main tasks of continuous professional education is to bridge the gap between theoretical professional training and the requirements for the qualified performance of one's work. Librarians understand that the quality of library services entirely depends on the qualifications of the library staff. Therefore, specialists from different countries note the growing interest among practicing librarians of all levels in the opportunities provided in the field of continuous library education. One of the first libraries in the Republic of Uzbekistan to establish courses for the professional development of library staff was the Fundamental Library of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan. At the beginning of the 21st century, this library implemented the project "Model Automated Library (MAL) with a Training Center" (2001). In a specially equipped computer training room, not only librarians from the Scientific Research Institutes of the Academy of Sciences but also librarians from other libraries and organizations were trained. In this training center, they acquired skills in working with the IRBIS software, using the internet, handling email, scanning, printing on a network printer, and more.

Around the same time, an interesting project was implemented by the Tashkent Regional Library "Turon" on the topic "Regional Library Informal Scientific Society (ISS) of Uzbekistan - Development through Training," within the framework of which five seminars and training sessions were conducted with the involvement of specialists from leading libraries of Uzbekistan and neighboring countries. The seminars included topics such as: "New Forms of Library Work in Modern Economic Conditions," "How to Write Library Projects," "Fundraising in Libraries," "Managing the Activities of a Library Association," "A New Library for a New Society," as well as an event titled "The 21st Century District Library - An Information and Cultural Center for Civil Public Dialogue."⁷

A significant contribution to the professional development of employees in information and library institutions of Uzbekistan has always been made by the Alisher Navoi National Library of Uzbekistan. The library organizes and conducts national seminars, conferences, as well as roundtables within the framework of the "Beggerov Readings," the annual information and library week "INFOLIB," the "Central Asia" international conference, and many other events.

According to reports from the Alisher Navoi National Library of the Republic of Uzbekistan, during 2019 alone, 5-day training courses were organized to provide methodological assistance to specialists in information and library institutions.

A total of 241 participants improved their skills in 9 groups, including:

- 60 specialists from the information and library institutions of the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Special Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan;
- 19 specialists from the information and library institutions of the Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan;

⁶ On the Organization of Information and Library Services for the Population of the Republic: Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan // Narodnoye Slovo. - 2006. - June 21.

⁷ Kovalenko, A.P. Modern Trends in Continuous Professional Education // Beggerov Readings. - Tashkent: Publishing House of the National Library named after A. Navoi, 2005.

- 73 specialists from the information and library institutions of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Uzbekistan;

- 55 specialists from the information and resource centers of the Agency for Information and Mass Communications under the Administration of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan;

- 6 specialists from the information and resource centers at the Center for Vocational Education;

- 4 specialists from the information and library institutions of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Uzbekistan;

- 22 specialists from the information and library institutions of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Uzbekistan;

- 2 specialists from the information and library institutions of the JSC "Uzbekistan Temir Yullari". From May 13 to 17, 2019, mobile training courses were organized at the Rashidov Information and Library Center of Jizzakh region. A total of 59 participants took part.

From April 26 to 27, 2019, production internships were held for employees of regional information and library centers (60 participants) as part of the Automated Information and Library System program.

On July 11-12, 2019, a practical training on scanning and digitization was held at the National Library for employees of information and library centers⁸.

The Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated June 7, 2019, "On Further Improvement of Information and Library Services for the Population of the Republic of Uzbekistan" also addresses the issues of professional development for library staff. In particular, the Decree includes the Concept for the Development of the Information and Library Sector of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2019-2024.

Item 3, Chapter 4 of the Concept states:

"Development of the system for training, retraining, and professional development of information and library personnel based on modern information and library technologies:

- Creation of a continuous information and library education system for library personnel, based on regular professional development and retraining in relevant areas of information and library modernization, implementation of a distance learning system for information and library staff, etc.;
- Organization of ongoing professional development courses for information and library staff, development of distance learning courses for both students and employees of information and library institutions, internships for teachers and assistants at leading scientific organizations abroad (library faculties), development of scientific schools in the field of information and library studies, etc.;
- Based on the study of demand for specialists in the library field, increasing the quota for admission to specialized higher education institutions in the field of "Library and Information Activities";
- Providing the information and library community with professional information, publishing fundamental bibliographic guides using new publishing technologies, facsimile editions of unique

⁸ Distance Learning for Information and Library Specialists is Being Conducted for the First Time in Uzbekistan. - Tashkent, 2019 // <https://aoka.uz/ru/article/w2wsgj0vw9mw-v-uzbekistane-wperwyeprowoditsq-distancionnoe-obuchenie-specialistow-informacionno-bibliotechnogo-dela> (accessed: 28.01.2021).

documents from the collections of information and library institutions, cooperation in cataloging to prevent duplication of work and reduce cataloging costs in the country's information and library institutions;

- Expanding the participation of information and library institutions in international projects in the field of professional development of information and library staff, experience exchange, etc." Based on this Decree, it is clear that the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan recognizes the importance of professional development for information and library staff as one of the foundations of quality library services for the population of the republic⁹.

The 2020 pandemic had a negative impact on all areas of life, not only in our republic but also across the world. The first institutions to "suffer" were those whose work was associated with mass public attendance. Libraries were no exception.

After the gradual lifting of the quarantine measures introduced due to the COVID-19 pandemic, library institutions began to gradually return to their normal operations.

Thus, on November 17, 2020, specialists from the Information and Library Center "Bilim" and district IBCs actively participated in events held as part of the IX National Information and Library Week "INFOLIB UZBEKISTAN-2020."

Among the events held during this week were: "Theoretical and practical sessions for information and library specialists on working with the UzNEL information and library system," "Organization of funds and catalogs in district (city) information and library centers: problems and solutions," "Normative documents adopted in the system of the National Library of Uzbekistan: requirements and implementation," an online presentation "Writer's Alley - A Wonderful Place for Enlightenment," and "Scientific and methodological services in information and library centers: yesterday and today."

During the events, specialists from capital city information and library institutions gained important theoretical and practical knowledge and skills in registering new books, working with the UzNEL MARC editor, creating bibliographic records, uploading and accessing electronic resources on the server, registering users in UzNEL, using the search function in the online catalog, replenishing and accounting for information and library resources, classifying information and library resources, their placement and storage, converting rare and valuable publications into information and library resources, and the general requirements for hiring, appointing, and dismissing staff.

In addition, during a discussion with specialists from the scientific and methodological service of the National Library, the heads of district libraries and employees of the scientific and methodological service of the "Bilim" IBC received necessary recommendations on organizing and conducting scientific and methodological activities, developing regulatory and legal documents, working on professional development for young specialists, providing methodological assistance, and preparing quarterly reports on all areas of information and library activities¹⁰.

⁹ Concept for the Development of the Information and Library Sector of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2019-2024: Appendix No. 1 to the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PP-4354 dated June 7, 2019. - URL: https://nrm.uz/contentf?doc=591266_&products=1_vse_zakonodatelstvo_uzbekistana

¹⁰ The project "National Public Educational Electronic Library" (UZNEL) was implemented in collaboration with the Economic Development and Cooperation Fund of the Republic of Korea.

However, despite the gradual restoration of the system for training library specialists with higher library education and the various events organized by libraries for the professional development of library staff, it is still too early to speak of a system of continuous library education.

Since the process of continuous education includes: secondary specialized library education, higher library education, postgraduate education, and professional development and retraining, the latter remains the least developed.

Thus, the issue of continuity in education for the training and retraining of library personnel remains unresolved in Uzbekistan.

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