



# **Status of Librarianship in Thailand**

**Associate Professor Dr. Chutima Sacchanand**  
**President of the Thai Library Association**

**Paper Presented to Librarians from the Philippine Library Association**  
**Bangkok, Thailand**

**23 October 2007**

## About the author

Chutima Sacchanand B.A. , M.A. (Library Science) Chulalongkorn University, M.L.S. University of the Philippines (UNESCO/UNDP scholarship), EdD Charles Sturt University, Australia (STOU scholarship), Associate Professor in Information Science, Sukhothaimathirat Open University (STOU), Jaengwattana Road, Nonthaburi 11120 Thailand [chutimastou@yahoo.com](mailto:chutimastou@yahoo.com) ), a member of the standing committee, International Federations of Library Institutions and Associations (IFLA), Theory and Research Section (THEOR) (1997 - 2001) and a member of the executive board, Congress of Southeast Asian Librarians (CONSAL) (1997 - 2000, 2007- at present) At STOU, Dean of the School of Liberal Arts(1987 -1996), Director of the Documentation and Information(1996 -1997), Acting Director of the National Printing Technology (1996- 1998) and Vice President for Operations (STOU) ( 1995- 1999.At present, Member of three Rajabhat University councils .

## **Introduction**

Thai Librarianship has its long history. It plays an important and vital role in the promotion of an informed and knowledgeable society. Thai library scenario at present is an integral part of Thai Society. In order to affirm the library roles, as a highly respected and important institution that imparts knowledge, Thai committed librarians carry out their mission and devote efforts for the advancement of their profession and the Thai society at large.

## **School Libraries**

Regarding the library organization and system, school libraries are of different organizations and agencies, vary in term of development, administration, budget, personnel, buildings and facilities, collections, cataloguing and classification system, and problems. Prior to 1962, the development of the school libraries was very slow. At present, school libraries receive more support with recognition of the importance of libraries for the educational system and as an essential factor for educational quality assurance of the schools. In addition, the National Education Act 1999 has led to extensive educational reform in Thailand. Application of the learner-centered approach is an important point in learning reform and school libraries play important roles in organizing the learning process. Learners are able to learn from a variety of learning resources and through the application of information technology, the Schoolnet serves as a means of resource sharing, access to information resources, exchange of knowledge and information and provision of better services to support teaching and learning.

## **Academic Libraries**

Academic libraries especially university libraries are much more developed than other types of libraries in term of status, budget, services, cooperation, network and technology. The status of university librarians in Thailand is almost equivalent to the teaching staff. Factor contributing to such development include substantial funds allocation from the government and their parent institutions, well trained professional librarians and the importance of academic libraries for quality assurance. The THAILIS (Thai Library Integrated System) with the support of the Commission on Higher Education was set up to cooperate in exchanging and sharing information

among government university libraries. The Uni-Net enables each library to access other library databases.

### **Special Libraries**

Special libraries in Thailand have various forms and at the turn of the century, they move towards information centers. Special librarians are facing with the competition against other information professionals, the so-called "information specialists", "information scientists", "computer specialists" who work in the new units within the organizations known as "information centres and computer centers". Some librarians have changed their titles to become "information managers". However, their duties are those of librarians but with the new technology management. (Praditta Siripan 1999, 26-27).

### **Public Libraries**

Public libraries in Thailand are under the supervision of various organizations: the Department of non-formal Education, Ministry of Education; the Department of Local Administration Promotion Management ; and Local Administration Authority. The status of public libraries in Thailand is still not satisfied. The evaluation of public libraries in Thailand, conducted by Chutima Sacchanand , Boonsri Prommapun and Siriporn Sajjanand (2006) funded by the Educational Council of Thailand showed that their performance was averagely less. In regards to the passing criteria developed ( $X = 3.00$ ), it was found that public libraries in Thailand as a whole and classified by types and regions did not pass the criteria. Most public libraries are substandard due to insufficient funding and staff. Budget and finance had lowest average mean. Some 43 percent of the valuated libraries, mostly the Non-formal Education Department receive an annual budget of less than Bt50,000. Communication and public relations had less average . Inferior public relations also meant libraries often failed to inform visitors about their services and activities. In regards to the indicators classified by types of libraries, it was found that public libraries of all types passed the criteria of six indicators: the percentage of library work that information technologies had been applied to the management and performance ; contents of acquired information resources; the correctness of books/information resources shelving facilitating fast access; number of hours library opened per

week ; the number of times library staff had attended continuing professional development, and the buildings.

However, due to Section 25 of the National Education Act, 1999. which indicates that the state should promote the running and establishment, in sufficient number and with efficient functioning, all types of lifelong learning resources including public libraries, it is expected that public libraries will play more vital roles as significant knowledge sources and learning centers for people of all ages.

### **Education in Library and Information Science in Thailand**

Library and information science education in Thailand has its long history. Since 1951, through the assistance of Fulbright foundation of the United States, library education in Thailand has been founded at Chulalongkorn University. At present, library and information science has become widespread.

Many universities, conventional, open or distance, private and public, offer library and information science programs. Library schools in Thailand can be categorized according to their *affiliation background* into two groups:

- a. Universities which formerly affiliated with the Ministry of University Affairs have been transferred to be under the Commission of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, since 2004, due to the reform of government public sector. This is the group that LIS has long been established especially for graduate programs.
- b. Rajabhat Universities were formerly Teachers' Colleges and later on Rajabhat Institutes under the Ministry of Education. They became autonomous universities under the same Ministry as the first group since 2004. Before becoming autonomous, all Rajabhat Universities use the same curriculum and played an important role in offering library science degree program for teacher-librarians. Now, each Rajabhat university starts develops its own LIS curriculum to serve the needs of the employment market to fit its environment.

Library schools in Thailand can be categorized according to their *instruction mode* into two groups:

- a. Library schools with traditional mode or face to face classroom teaching dominate the area.

- b. Open education or distance education mode in LIS programs became an attractive alternative for the Thai people who work and study at the same time. Two universities, Ramkhamhaeng University and Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University are the two open universities that offered the LIS programs.

Library schools in Thailand can be categorized according to *degree levels* being offered.

LIS programs in Thailand can be divided according to the degree levels into: certificate, bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree programs.

One-year certificate program in Information Work is offered only by Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University via distance education system for those interested persons who have a high school diploma.

Bachelor's degree programs in library and information science/studies or information science. Most library schools in Thailand especially Rajabhat Universities offer bachelor's degree programs.

Master's degree programs in library and information science/studies or information science. Ten universities and two Rajabhat Universities offered master's degree programs.

Doctoral's degree programs in library and information studies has been offered by only one university, Khon Khaen University, situated in the northeast of Thailand .

### ***Analysis of LIS programs in Thailand***

1. LIS bachelor's degree programs in Thailand are offered under the School of Arts, Liberal Arts or Humanities except Makasarakam University which is under the School of Informatics. For graduate programs, all programs are under the Graduate Schools.

2. The degrees students get after graduation are Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) Master of Arts (M.A.) and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

3. LIS curricula in Thailand have almost similar objectives. They are generally to qualify librarians and information specialists for the demands of society's diverse needs

for information, both public and private sectors; and to provide leadership and professional ethics within the LIS profession.

### **Major trends of LIS curricula in Thailand**

1. The word "library" will not be included in the name of the program as this is found to be unattractive to the students and limit the scope of the subject area. There tend to be a change in the name of the revised curricula from library and information science to information science or information studies.

2. The objectives of the curricula will be changed from graduate individuals with general information knowledge and competencies to business-oriented and technological-oriented approach.

3. As the employment markets for LIS graduates, especially government sectors, have become downsizing, the curriculum changed its goals to business or private sectors and entrepreneurs.

4. Information and communication technologies especially the internet has been integrated as an important part of the curricula and the teaching/learning process. Web-based instruction is challenging Thai library and information science educators to find a model that best suit to the nature of library and information science and particularly to the Thai context.

5. The curricula become more interdisciplinary with more course works in subject fields especially computer and technology, business, management, communication arts.

6. Professional experience program which students are required to participate prior to graduation, has shifted from library settings to business and private settings.

### ***Framework for development of LIS curricula in Thailand in the new century.***

1. Paradigm shift in the library and information profession and the learner-centered teaching/learning process.

2. Employment market and social demand for the LIS graduates.

3. Standards of the undergraduate and graduate curricula 2005 issued by the Ministry of Education for educational standards and accreditation of all curricula offered in higher institutions in Thailand.

4. National development strategic plan, policy of the government and new management in public sector.

5. Concept of cooperation, collaboration, networking and resource sharing with other programs or schools to share resources, teaching and learning facilities including technological infrastructure.

### **Summary**

Thai librarianship plays important roles in the development of all aspects of the country, economic, political and societal especially in education. Thai education is undergoing a complete change through the concept of educational and learning reform with the views to improving the quality of Thai people, strengthening Thai society, in harmony with learning culture in the age of globalization, and serving the needs of learners, teachers, parents and Thai society. It is hoped that Thai librarianship will play a more prominent role, prosper and also enjoy higher standing.

### **Bibliography**

- Chutima Sacchanand. (2005). **Development of Public Library Standards Suitable for Thailand**. Bangkok: Education Council.
- Chutima Sacchanand , Boonsri Prommapun and Siriporn Sajjanand. (2006). **Development of Indicators for Performance Evaluation of public Libraries in Thailand**. Bangkok: Education Council.
- Chutima Sacchanand , Boonsri Prommapun and Siriporn Sajjanand. (2006). **Performance Evaluation of public Libraries in Thailand**. Bangkok: Education Council.
- IFLA'99 National Organizing Committee. Bangkok, Thailand. (1999). **Libraries and Librarianship in Thailand**. Bangkok: IFLA'99 National Organizing Committee. Bangkok, Thailand.
- Praditta Siripan. (1999). " Special Libraries in Thailand" in **Libraries and Librarianship in Thailand**, pp.26-31. Bangkok: IFLA'99 National Organizing Committee. Bangkok, Thailand.

