LIBRARY EDUCATION AT CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY*

by

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Library education in Thailand was for the first time initiated at Chulalongkorn University in 1951 as an extension course. The program was made possible by the grants graciously offered by the Fulbright Foundation, which enabled the University to bring in five American professors of library science to conduct six short courses, one at time for five consecutive years. Graduates of this program comprise mostly practising librarians.

The first library school in Thailand

It was not until 1955 that the first library school in Thailand actually started functioning as a regular department in the Faculty of Arts at Chulalongkorn University. The School aims at promoting librarianship, providing well-trained librarians to work in the various types of libraries, and supporting present and future educational programs which depend on extensive library materials.

At the present time the School operates three programs: the diploma, the undergraduate and the graduate programs. In addition, a course in the use of books and libraries has been offered to the freshmen of different Faculties.

The Diploma program

Upon the establishment of the University School, the diploma program was started with only eight students. Due to the increasing demand for more qualified librarians from all over the country, the School has enjoyed a great number of applicants in recent years. A maximum of thirty students only is accepted each yearly, so that an entrance examination is required. The duration of the program

The curriculum consists of both theoretical and practical subjects. The theoretical courses such as HISTORY OF BOOKS AND PRINTING, LIBRARIES AND SOCIETY, LIBRARY ADMINISTRATION are aimed at promoting understanding of the history and the development as well as the functions of the library in Thailand and in other countries. The practical subjects such as CATALOGING AND CLASSIFICATION, REFERENCE SERVICES have been designed for extensive experiences in the field. Some courses with no connection with librarianship, such as TYPING and BUSINESS METHODS are offered simply as a supplement to the routine work in the library. Students of the diploma and undergraduate program are scheduled to attend many of the courses together. Only a few cognate and specialized subjects are optional for the undergraduates.

The curriculum of the graduate program has been set up on a sound basis, built upon the other two programs. Advanced or specialized courses have been offered to suit the needs or interest of students. This program aims at training practicing librarians with responsibilities of serving the community in the capacity of head librarians or heads of the various sections in the library.

Teaching staff

With regard to the teaching staff, the School has ten permanent staff members, of which nine have had professional training from overseas, including two members, now studying in the United States. The foreign training was made possible by the grants available from various sources including the Asia Foundation, the Fulbright Foundation, Simmons College, Indiana University, the British Council and UNESCO. The School also brings in part-time instructors in specialized fields, for example a supervisor of school libraries from the Ministry of Education who helps teach a course on school libraries and the manager of Teachers' Institute Press who conducts the course in the history of books and printing. Apart from part-time instructors, this year marks an auspicious event for library education at Chulalongkorn University, as the Rockefeller Foundation has honored the School by sponsoring an American professor
The School has an annual publication in Thai with a coverage of library aspects and School activities. The publication has been made available through the co-operative effort of the students and the instructors.

Prospects of the School

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the Library School. Despite the fact that 135 graduates of the diploma course and 69 of the undergraduate program have passed through the Library School, there is still an acute shortage of qualified librarians to work in libraries of every type all over the country. Half of the graduates from the diploma program are school librarians sent by the Ministry of Education for professional training.

The School is fully aware of the fact that library work in Thailand will be immensely expanded. The request for a great number of qualified librarians will arise in the near future, when the new building of the National Library is completed, and new universities in the provinces are readily established, plus the expansion of services in all types of existing libraries. The School must assume full responsibilities for producing, both in considerable quantity and quality, graduates, who will go to work all over the country.

The other responsibility of the School is to work closely with the Thai Library Association in the production of professional publications as well as in the workshop program for librarians, ineligible to attend the Library School. It also serves as a consultant to librarians for their actual problems and to students wishing to further their studies abroad in the field of librarianship.

Since the University has a plan to build a new functional building for the Central Library, the School hopes to have its new quarters in the annex of the Library, and its would thus be possible to accept more students. It is also hoped that a plan for a entire separation of the staff of the Library School from that of the Library will also materialize in the near future.