

PHILIPPINE LIBRARIANS ON LIBRARY PROBLEMS

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ABSTRACT. Reported here are the results of a survey of 112 librarians working in various Philippine institutions. Conducted in December 1970, the study inquired into librarians' opinions as to the priority of importance they would assign to various problems of librarian training, leadership, and community standing, and of library materials. Opinions were similarly sought on solutions to these problems and on library-related projects, as well as on a policy to govern the use of Philippine archival materials.

To sound out a sample of Philippine librarians on what they felt were the major problems they and other members of the profession faced today, I decided to put together a questionnaire that could be sent to large numbers of them.

My first step was to consult several practicing librarians located at convenient distances from my own Quezon City campus. Encouraged to express themselves freely and fully, they helped me gather a list of problems and proposed solutions that covered a wide range of library-connected topics. These preliminary findings, expressed in propositional form, were reviewed, edited somewhat (questions of physical facilities and the new "Librarianship Law" were omitted), and then assembled under several broad but distinct categories. Care was taken to avoid duplications and overlaps.

After pre-testing and revising, the final form of the questionnaire was distributed in December 1970 to a purposive sample of 112 working librarians in the major regions of the country (Greater Manila, 45; Luzon outside Greater Manila, 15; Visayas, 27; Mindanao, 18; Address not given, 7). Respondents asked to participate were those active librarians known personally to me or one of my colleagues, and considered "reputable" professionals. Hence, the replies we analyze here are those of a select portion of the

nation's 800 working and professionally associated librarians.

When the completed questionnaires had been returned, the replies were coded where necessary and analysis undertaken. I am confident (here and I am pleased to believe my research consultants) that what we have here expresses the thinking of many Philippine librarians, and most of the better ones.

Findings

Block 1. The first block concerned problems in training, leadership, and community standing. Each one of nine problems was paired with every other one just once, resulting in a total of 36 pairs. The respondent was in each case asked to choose which was the more important, more serious problem, and the problem-statement's score was the number of times it was chosen over the ones with which it was paired. Thus, a perfect score from a particular respondent in this block would be 8. Putting together all respondents' scores for a particular statement and dividing by the total number of respondents gave the average score (perfect score, 8.00), which appears in Table 1.

The problem that received the greatest number of high-importance votes attained the highest average score. This was the problem of the

library's low position on the administrator's scale of priorities. In second place was the inadequate salaries paid even to trained librarians. Following the first two problems was a cluster of four, all of which received average scores in the 3.70–3.85 range. While no statistical test was used to see if the scores differed significantly from one another, I think the reader will understand why we made this grouping, and that of the last three problems, if he inspects the "average" column of scores in Table 1.

What impresses me in Table 1 is the fact that the replies of our respondents do not support the complaint that Philippine librarians think first of their own salaries. The nature of the top-ranked problem suggests rather that the librarians' first concern is the library, and the attitude of administrators towards it. From the distance (0.63) between the third problem of the third level and the first of the lowest level, I judge that librarians believe that cooperative projects can be undertaken independently of association structures.

Table 1

Nine problems in librarian training, leadership, and community standing, ranked in importance (paired-choice technique) by 112 selected librarians (Philippines, December 1970)¹

Rank ²	Average	Problem
1	5.47	Administrators of educational and other institutions often give low priority to library needs.

2	4.88	Even trained librarians are often poorly paid.

4.5	3.85	There are too few trained librarians.
4.5	3.82	Training standards differ greatly in the various Philippine library science programs of study.
4.5	3.73	Librarians from different institutions have not yet developed working systems for cooperative buying and sharing use of library materials.
4.5	3.70	Even trained librarians do not enjoy very high status in the community.

8	3.10	Librarians generally show little active interest in their own professional organizations (librarians' associations).
8	3.06	Librarians are often made personally accountable for losses of books and other materials.
8	3.03	Librarians frequently do not show leadership.

¹Broken lines are used to make separate levels more apparent.

²Averages differ among items ranked the same, but the differences are not significant. Numerical values were not submitted to sophisticated statistical checks, since intervals between weighted averages were quite pronounced: the top two much above a random median; the third, just below it; and the fourth, much below it.

Block 2. Eight problems about the acquisition of library materials were the substance of the second block. Here statistical tests could be used to advantage, and they serve to reinforce the impression that an inspection of scores in Table 2 would give. I refer especially to two conclusions: (a) the cost of imported books is seen as a problem distinctly more serious than the scarcity of locally published materials; and (b) bookstores exist in sufficient numbers, but apparently not enough of them provide their customers with information on new Philippine publications.

Block 3. The importance of this no-information-on-new-publications problem is confirmed by the ranking of remedial measures, or solutions, that might be acted on. Of the eight

solutions proposed, the No. 1 choice was the regular issuing of bibliographies and indexes to inform librarians of recent Philippine publications (Table 3) Indeed, the No. 2 choice was another aid of this kind — a listing with added evaluative comments to help librarians choose the best new publications available.

I am somewhat distressed, however, to find that the felt need for microforms is in last place. This serves notice that for such an innovation to succeed and spread in the Philippines a program of information and motivation will be required. On the other hand, it is comforting to note that association activities are at least of medium interest. The need for organization and united action appears to be a real one among librarians.

Table 2

Eight problems in the obtaining of library materials, ranked in importance by 108 selected librarians (Philippines, December 1970)¹

Rank ²	Average	Problem
1	5.86	Imported books cost very much.
3	5.56	In general, too few books are published in the Philippines.
3	5.25	It is difficult to know what has been published in the Philippines (too few trade and other bibliographies).
3	5.08	Royalties and public recognition are too low to encourage Philippine writers.
5	4.37	Many Philippine periodicals are not published regularly.
7	3.56	Too few books are published in Pilipino (national language).
7	3.42	Bookstores are too few, especially outside Manila.
7	2.53	Too few books are published in Philippine languages other than Pilipino.

¹Broken lines separate levels.

²Weighted averages differ among items ranked the same, but the differences are not statistically significant. Test used was the *t* test for the significance of the difference between two sample means and the Kendall coefficient of Concordance (W).

Table 3

Eight solutions to librarians' problems ranked in importance by 83 selected librarians (Philippines, December 1970)¹

Rank ²	Average	Solution
1	6.37	Publish on schedule a National Bibliography, a comprehensive index to Philippine periodicals, and other publications to help librarians and others learn of the latest publishing in the Philippines.
2	5.47	Publish a review to aid selection (for example, like CHOICE) with bibliographies by subject experts, professional reviews, etc., of Philippine publications, and of foreign publications of interest to the Philippines.
3	4.61	Help librarians' professional associations develop local regional and national units, with organizational programs, activities and projects in all parts of the country.
5	4.30	Develop a Union Catalog for Greater Manila, other cities and regions, and for the whole nation.
5	4.27	Establish a National Documentation Center to furnish Filipino-scientists all over the country with literature they need at low cost and without making them go to other countries.
5	4.11	Create an organization and teamwork for inter-library sharing among all libraries, so that students and researchers may have use of all the materials already in the country.
7.5	3.25	Relieve libraries of responsibility to service text-books; perhaps by stopping import but assisting printing and reprinting locally; so that libraries can concentrate on true library services.
7.5	3.14	Develop microfilm facilities in schools, colleges and universities to take advantage of very low cost for large quantities of good library materials in this form.

¹Broken lines separate levels.

²Weighted averages differ among items ranked the same, but the differences are not statistically significant. Test used was the *t* test for the significance of the difference between two sample means and the Kendall coefficient of Concordance (W).

Table 4

Nine library-related projects ranked in order of priority by 108 selected librarians (Philippines, December 1970)¹

Rank ²	Average	Solution project
2	6.75	Assist college and university libraries to build truly adequate collections of books, periodicals, and other materials in support of all courses offered.
2	6.60	Assist school libraries (elementary and secondary) with enough books so that the pupils will have improved education right from their earliest years.
2	6.51	Establish public libraries with well-stocked collections in at least every city, provincial capital, and first-class municipality.

4	5.54	Bring to the Philippines at least one copy of all important historical materials now kept in foreign countries.

5	5.35	Bring in books and materials in science and technology for university and research libraries in order to promote industrial and technological development.

6	5.00	Build a national Science Library collection so extensive that Filipino scientists will have the best and most up-to-date literature in their science, and thus promote Philippine scientific effort.

7	3.69	Exchange microfilms of archival and other scientific materials with other countries, so that practically all sources on Philippine history are available in the Philippines.

8.5	3.32	Cooperate internationally to make available in southeast Asia (including the Philippines) scholarly research materials in the social sciences, to which Filipino researchers would have ready access.
8.5	3.31	Import enough books and magazines from other countries for Philippine libraries to give adequate information about what other countries think and say about the Philippines.

¹Broken lines separate levels.

²Weighted averages differ among items ranked the same, but the differences are not statistically significant. Test used was the *t* test for the significance of the difference between two sample means, and the Kendall coefficient of Concordance (W).

A difficulty cropped up in this block. By an oversight of both typist and revisor, one answer line was omitted. As a result, 23 respondents lumped two items into one answer. All of these replies were thus thrown into some doubt, and had to be discarded. An examination of the 23 rejected answers revealed, however, that a large proportion had given such high rankings to a National Documentation Center, that, had their scores been counted, this item would have moved up *two levels* on the scale of importance. It does not seem likely that such high rankings would have varied much with the insertion of one more item in the series, and so, there is probably stronger interest in a National Documentation Center than is indicated in the results reported here. One distracting thought: Isn't it curious that some 10 persons perspicacious enough to value a Documentation Center could not see the importance of drawing in a single line, in order to make their answer clear to the investigator?

Block 4. What stands out here, I believe, is that among the nine library-related projects proposed to our librarian-respondents, those suggestions that would especially assist the "masses", as it were, received high ranking (Table 4). Those that would benefit specialists, such as researchers, were rated less urgent. Philippine librarians seem significantly more concerned about the needs of the average citizen and of the younger generation than about the demands of research.

Block 5. The fifth set began with a general statement about the value of libraries as helps in seeking solutions to human problems. Respondents were then requested to give the names of the libraries they knew which would assist in solving local, provincial, regional, and national problems. As expected, results were quite negative. Very few completed the set, and several said that it was impossible — there were no such libraries. The question was not meant to obtain more than a general indication, but it does seem sad that the vast majority of reputable Philippine librarians cannot name one library useful in solving local or even province-wide problems. It seems equally distressing that only four were

recognized by a majority as helpful in solving national problems. These results will have to be understood in the social setting, but the general impact of the finding remains the same.

Block 6. The sixth and last section of the questionnaire concerned a policy for the use of Philippine primary historical materials. Briefly, the librarians were asked if, for instance, the National Archives should be open exclusively to Filipino scholars, or to all qualified scholars, regardless of nationality. The purpose of the question was to see to what extent librarians agreed with the "exclusive" point of view, a position which had earlier surfaced at the Puntjak Pass conference (Indonesia, April, 1969).

About 16 per cent of respondents indicated that a policy of exclusion was their preference (Table 5). The reasons given clustered around a concept of proper national pride. Of those who negated such a policy — the majority of about 58 per cent — about 10 per cent added that Filipinos should have first priority. Again, however, without qualification the great majority opted for continuing a policy of full access for citizen and foreigner alike — first come, first served. Most commonly given reasons centered around concepts of "unselfishness" and the impartiality of true scholarship. National pride was cited here, too, in such statements as that there is nothing to hide, and

Table 5

Response of 107 Philippine librarians to the question whether Philippine archival materials should be open exclusively to Filipino scholars (Philippines, December 1970)

Response	Number	Per cent
Open archives only to Filipinos	17	15.9
Open archives to all	62	57.9
No response/unclear response	28	26.1
TOTAL	107	99.9

that Philippine culture has something to offer to the rest of the world.

In actual fact, the great majority of leading institutions in the Philippines, including the National Archives and the Main Library of the University of the Philippines with all its branches, offer full access to holdings and services to all qualified researchers — and qualifications are less stringent here than in research entities in other parts of the world. It seems clear that the attitude will remain that way, although there may be pockets of the reverse occasionally, as in any human endeavor.

The exclusivists are nonetheless larger in number than might be expected. Why so? Why does one out of six librarians express a preference for exclusion? This seems another indication, not sufficient in itself, but in the context of a growing spirit of nationalism, that librarians are aware of the limits of time and energy and resources, and are anxious that no matter what they do, the benefit to their immediate responsibilities should be direct — especially where education and civic duty are concerned.

Conclusion

There are many aspects of opinion that have not been delineated and that would be of further interest. How opinion varies in strength

from geographical area to area, the educational status of those who so hold, correlation of one opinion with another (for example, are those interested in bringing in historical materials also interested in developing microform facilities) — all these questions and more can be investigated.

For now, however, we must be content with the more general implications. From the six blocks reported here, the indications are that interest in research matters among the body of Philippine librarians is low in relation to awareness of more immediate needs, both educational and civic. Perhaps another way of saying this would be that it confirms what is commonly enough heard, that only a small proportion of libraries are research-minded. However, there seems some indication that even in these institutions, librarians will be concerned for those needs of students and citizens that are as yet unmet.

Note

Revised version of one section of a paper presented at the 28th International Congress of Orientalists, Canberra, Australia, (January 6–12, 1971). Fr. Suchan, a Jesuit and the Director of Libraries, Ateneo de Manila, received an M.S. in library service from Columbia University. He is active in Philippine library affairs and a member of the National Committee on Microfilm Projects. This paper was submitted to PSR July 1, 1971.



The Tasaday of South Cotabato live in a climax rain forest, the canopy of which is spread 60 or more feet above the ground. This Tasaday boy looks up through a gap in the roof of his tropical world.

As elsewhere in the world, so among the Tasaday (below) the nuclear family is the building block of society. But here it is the only building block, there being no political structures beyond a confederation of four or five families forming a loosely united band.

