

# ASSESSING THE CORE COMPETENCIES OF PROFESSIONAL LIBRARIANS WORKING IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES OF PUNJAB, PAKISTAN.

Abida Raza<sup>1</sup> and Manzoor Raza<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

**Purpose:** This study “Assessing the ALA core competencies of professional librarians working in public libraries of central Punjab” was conducted to examine the library professionals’ competencies. The main objective of the study was to find out the gap in the competencies of professional librarians in the light of ALA core competencies standards. The first four competencies of ALA were disused in this study.

**Design/methodology/approach:** The research was conducted by adopting quantitative research method. The population of this study was professional librarians working in public libraries of central Punjab. There are 53 library professional working in public libraries of central Punjab. The questionnaire was sent to 53 library professionals. Among them 45 library professionals returned the questionnaire correctly, with a response rate of 84.9%.

**Delimitation:** only public libraries in central Punjab were the population of the study.

**Key finding(s):** Data collected through questionnaire was arranged and entered for analysis and SPSS was used to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics were applied to calculate the mean, percentage and frequencies. The findings reveal that the participants’ perceived competencies were at intermediate level. The major problem of public libraries was the lack of professional staff.

**Practical implication (s):** The findings of the study indicate that there is a need to revise the LIS curriculum under the light of ALA core competencies standards. It is recommended that there should be proper recruitment policies for the selection of public libraries’ staff.

**Paper type:** Research

**Keywords:** ALA standards, core competencies, skills, librarians, public libraries, central Punjab,

## Introduction:

Knowledge is the basic need of humanity which is acquired with the help of many different sources. Books are one of these sources and are considered vital. A Public library is one of major places that holds the books to fulfill the knowledge need of the humanity. A Public library is a nonprofit organization that is maintained by local taxation for public use. In the view of Federal Library and Information Center Committee (FLICC), the Human Resources Working Group of libraries of congress competencies are defined as the knowledge, skills, and abilities that contribute to performance in a particular profession (Library of congress, 2011). Competency is the foundation of management and continuous professional improvement. Competency provides a common bond of understanding and a common language for defining professional standards. The public library librarians require the competencies for performing their job efficiently, effectively and to provide services to users according to their needs. Public library librarians serve different types of users, so they need the skills to serve them accordingly. With the development of technology, users’ demands are also changed, so librarians need a set of competencies to fulfill their need in changing environment (Khalid, 2002). Now a days, librarians work in a hybrid environment, and they provide physical as well as digital content to different users at the same time. Due to the evolving nature of libraries, library professionals need an up-to-date knowledge and skills to meet the new era challenges. This study explores the core competencies of librarians working in public libraries of central Punjab.

According to Choi and Rasmussen (2006) competencies are basically knowledge, skills and abilities. There are two types of competencies i.e personal competencies and professional competencies (Special Library Association, 2003). In library profession there is a need for competent employees as a librarian. Library professionals also need knowledge of their profession.

Today, knowledge is an essential requirement for every individual. For the sake of knowledge, people visit the libraries to fulfill their needs. Libraries play a vital role for the provision of

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<sup>1</sup> Dept. of Information Management, Uni. of Sargodha, Pakistan. Email: abidaraza990@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup> Asst. Prof. Dept. of Edu University of Lahore Sargodha Campus, Pakistan. Email: Manzoorraza0@gmail.com

information. Librarians help the users and provide them with relevant information. If the librarian has competency in his profession, then he will be able to provide the right information to the right user at the right time. Libraries also play a vital role in the transmission of information from one generation to another. Libraries preserve information/knowledge for the next generation. The most important function of the library is organization, preservation/conservation and providing access points for information retrieval. ALA core competencies for librarianship are standard. In 1999 ALA designed a list of competencies for library professionals. These competencies were discussed and a refined list recommended by the ALA committee in 2002. According to ALA, the first competency of library professionals is to manage and organize information resources. LIS professionals should have competencies to collect, organize and disseminate the information to the users. It is the responsibility of library professionals to provide library services according to the needs of the users further, to provide a conducive learning environment to the learner and provide all facilities of learning to the users. They should have the ability to manage all forms of resources. They should be able to adapt to the current and innovative technology in the library. Assessing the core competencies of public librarians is crucial for ensuring high-quality library services, as these competencies directly influence the efficiency, accessibility, and relevance of library resources. Public libraries serve diverse users with varying information needs, requiring librarians to possess skills in information organization, digital literacy, user engagement, and emerging technologies. Without regular assessment and enhancement of these competencies, librarians may struggle to meet evolving user expectations, manage hybrid collections effectively, or provide timely and accurate information. The American Library Association (ALA) Core Competencies offer a standardized framework to evaluate and improve librarians' skills, ensuring they can curate resources efficiently, adopt innovative technologies, and create an inclusive learning environment. By systematically assessing public librarians' competencies against these standards, libraries can identify skill gaps, implement targeted training programs, and enhance service delivery, ultimately strengthening their role as essential knowledge hubs for the community.

#### ALA's Core Competences of Librarianship

The Core Competences of Librarianship define the knowledge to be possessed by all the people graduating from ALA accredited post graduate programs in library and information studies. There were various bodies who worked and prepared the drafts of the core competencies and the Presidential Task Force on Library Education has gathered the drafts of the Core Competencies to the first meeting on Professional Education and it was redrafted and presented to the Executive Board, who approved them in 2008 meeting. The final statement was approved and adopted as a policy by the ALA Council on January 27, 2009.

This document defines the basic professional knowledge for librarians working in school, academic, public, special, and governmental libraries. The major arrears of ALA competencies are as follows.

1. Foundations of the Profession
2. Information Resources
3. Organization of Recorded Knowledge and Information
4. Technological Knowledge and Skills

There are 8 ALA core competencies but here only the first four were discussed.

#### Foundations of the Profession

This point states that the librarian should have knowledge about the value, ethics and the principles of the library profession. Information professionals should also know their role for the promotion of intellectual freedom. An information professional should have knowledge about the history of librarianship, the history of human communication and its impact on libraries. They should also know the types of libraries. There are three types of libraries which are academics libraries (school, college and university), public libraries and special libraries. Librarians should have also knowledge about the national, international trends, significance of the library profession, and copyright laws.

The library professions should also acquire knowledge about the services of libraries. The library professional uses an appropriate technique to analyze complex problems of library users and

provide appropriate solutions. The librarian should have the ability to communicate with users verbally and none verbally.

### **Information Resources**

Library professionals deal with information resources. There is a need to know the concepts and issues related to information and knowledge. Librarians should also have knowledge about the concepts, issues and methods of resource acquisition as well as the management of library collection including preservation and conservation.

### **Organization of Recorded Knowledge and Information**

After selection of library collection, the next step is organization of the information. The library professionals should have knowledge about how to organize the library collection. The librarian knows the principles involved in the organization and representation of recorded knowledge and information. The systems of cataloging, metadata, indexing, classification standards and methods used to organize recorded knowledge and information.

### **Technological Knowledge and Skills**

Technology plays a very important role in libraries. Due to innovative technology the need of users has changed rapidly. Information professionals should have knowledge of new technology and communication tools and application of these tools and technology in libraries. Librarians know the principles and techniques necessary to identify and analyze emerging technologies.

### **Objectives of the Study:**

The following were the objectives of the study:

- To identify the level of current competencies of professional librarians working in public libraries of central Punjab.
- To find out the gap in the competencies of professional librarians in the light of ALA core competencies standards.
- To suggest measures for enhancing professionals' librarians' competencies working in public libraries of central Punjab.

### **Literature review:**

Tahir and Warraich (2021) aimed to compare the self-perceived ICT competencies of early career Library and Information Science (LIS) graduates with the expectations of senior LIS professionals in Pakistan. A quantitative survey-based research approach was adopted, utilizing a purposive sampling technique to collect data from 100 early career LIS graduates and 100 experienced LIS professionals with over five years of experience through a structured questionnaire. The findings revealed a gap between the expectations of senior LIS professionals and the self-assessed ICT competencies of early career LIS graduates.

Abbas and Siddique (2020) evaluate the ICT competencies of LIS professionals in the digital era. A quantitative research approach was employed, utilizing a self-administered questionnaire distributed via Google Forms and email to 206 university library professionals in Punjab. The data collected was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings indicate that most LIS professionals demonstrated advanced competencies in library management systems, basic search techniques, social media proficiency, and effective use of search engines.

Khan and parveen (2020) This study aims to identify the essential competencies required for librarians in special libraries and assess the competencies of those working in Punjab Province based on the checklist developed by the Special Library Association (SLA) Task Force. To gather quantitative data, a peer-reviewed questionnaire, aligned with the SLA Task Force's competency framework, was used. The study employed an online survey to reach librarians in special libraries across Punjab Province, and the data collected was analyzed statistically using SPSS software. The findings revealed that librarians in these special libraries demonstrated an intermediate level of competencies as outlined by the SLA.

Anwar and Ullah (2017) described the process for the development of competencies identification and validation instruments. For the development of instrument previous published literature was reviewed after that a raw draft was prepared. The draft was sent to the panel of experts. There were six members in the panel. After experts' opinion, some competencies were added and some were removed. An instrument consisting of 84 competency statements was categorized in eight domains. These eight domains were: concept about health sciences, theory of management, reference services about health sciences, resource management of health science, technology, instructions, research, and personal and general competencies. This instrument was used in different areas for identifying the competencies.

Mehmood et.al (2017) study was on competencies required for Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals in university libraries underscores the significance of managerial, reference, information services, and technological skills in ensuring effective library operations. The study was conducted across nineteen HEC-recognized public sector universities in Punjab Province, targeting Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals holding MLS/MLIS degrees and working in these institutions. A close-ended, pilot-tested, and peer-reviewed questionnaire was distributed via postal mail and email to chief librarians, deputy chief librarians, assistant librarians, and library assistants. The findings revealed that out of 51 assessed competencies, 49 were rated as "very important" by LIS professionals. These competencies were categorized into four key areas: (i) management theory and techniques, (ii) reference and information services, (iii) information resource management, and (iv) information systems and technologies. Meanwhile, two competencies were identified as "highly important": knowledge of copyright, licensing, privacy, and intellectual property rights issues/laws, and the ability to use barcodes and RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) technologies in libraries.

Ahmed and Rehman (2016) investigated the ICT competencies of library professionals of KPK and investigated the needs of training for updating these competencies. The fourteen universities were included in the study and one hundred and four librarians working in university libraries were the population of the study. The result showed that the ICT competencies in librarian were unsatisfactory. In this study the author also provided a framework for the development of ICT competencies. There is a need to provide proper computer training for the library professionals.

Farooq, Ullah, Iqbal, and Hussain (2016) identified the current and needed competencies of library professionals. The questionnaire was used for data collection. The population of the study was library professionals who were working in public sector universities. The findings of the study showed there was a gap between the perception of library professionals and current level of skills.

Ullah and Anwar (2013) identified the competencies of medical librarians. The questionnaire was used for data collection. The population of the study was 115 library professionals of medical libraries. The findings showed that medical library professionals needed all those competencies which are needed for general librarianship.

Jordan (2011) defines the leadership competencies of librarian. The research method of the study was content analysis and Delphi method. Several 100 public library directors and information managers participated in this study. The leader development in the library is very important. Results of this study revealed that research-based competencies should help the librarian in the development of training opportunities who desire to be an effective as an information manager. The researcher defined that competency comprises knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Midrar (2011) identified the competencies level of library professionals working in medical libraries. The data was collected through questionnaire. The population of the study was 130 library professionals. SPSS was used for data analysis. The set of competencies was prepared and validated in this study that will help the educators to design the training for library professionals.

Ullah, Ameen and Bakhtar (2010) identified the needed competencies, professional activities and the need of training for librarians. The population of the study was 20 medical librarians were involved. Data was collected through interview. The findings showed that medical librarians were involved in traditional activities, and they were not familiar with the latest technology.

Batool and Ameen (2010) identified the technology competencies of professional librarians. The eight library professionals from the faculty of economics and management were the majority of the study. Interview technique was used for data collection. The result showed the lower level of technical expertise and training was required for professionals to automate the library. To provide

advanced information services, there is a need for advanced training. Continuing education and training were also limited for medical librarians. There is a need to provide the opportunity of training for library professionals.

Wang and Liu (2009) examined the competencies of information professional of the libraries of Taiwan. This study discovers the core values of librarianship, librarian roles and core competencies, as well as new library functions. Competencies were concluded by using focus group interview method and questionnaire method. Researchers concluded a specific list of librarian core competencies for example reference services, information resources, management of resources competency, technology competency, continuing education competency, management competency and research competency, librarian role, librarian functions for example developed digital content, provide innovative services, organized and disseminate digital information in digital age.

According to Robert and Moran Jr. (2005), the essence of librarianship is librarian's ability, skills, and capability to create an adequate value for the patrons and will support the libraries in their all process.

In the same way, Gulati and Raina (2000) described distinctive competencies of the information professionals. The informational professional has comprehensive knowledge about traditional and printed information resources and their management that fulfil the needs of individuals as well as community. Its means that librarians should have ability to provide information in all format according to the need of users.

Fern (1998) represents the state of the art of research in library science on professional competencies for academic, public and special libraries since 1985. The similar research study on librarians' competencies was conducted in 1983-86 by Griffiths, & King, (1986). The major aim of the studies was to identify the skills and knowledge that information workers needed to be effective in the future.

Giesecke and McNeil (1999) identify core competencies and the learning organization. A learning organization is those who have ability to create, acquire and transfer the knowledge. It is basically called a knowledge management organization, these organizations create, store and disseminate the knowledge from one generation to next generation and use for decision making. Interview technique was used for data collection. They provided a list of core competencies for information professionals in university libraries as follows: The authors explained these skills are very important for providing information to users and for achieving the organizational goals. The first is analytical/problem solving/decision making competency in library manager. Analytical skill is defined as the ability to visualize, articulate, conceptualize and solve the difficult and complicated problem for decision making. The second is communication skills, the library manager can communicate with users and provide information according to their needs. The information managers can listen effectively and transmit information accurately. The third competency in library managers is creativity and innovation, library managers should have the ability to look for opportunities, apply new methods, design and technology. The fourth competency discussed was knowledge about technical expertise. Information managers should have comprehensive and current knowledge and awareness about new technology. The next competency discussed was flexibility/adaptability. The information manager should have the ability to perform the task, adapt change, and accept new challenges and responsibilities. It was further discussed that the library manager should have good interpersonal communication skills, to build a strong working relationship with individuals as well as with organization for achieving the optimum goals. Library and information managers should have the ability of leadership. Information professionals should have the ability to understand the organizational situation for achieving the goals at a global level.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Librarians who work in public libraries serve the general community. Every individual user of the public libraries has different needs. Therefore, the competencies of librarian count a lot. There were many studies conducted on competencies of library professionals in Pakistan. Different types of competencies were highlighted in the literature. There is a big gap that no study was conducted on the competencies of librarians serving in the domain of public libraries in Pakistan. This study was needed to investigate the public librarians' competencies to fill this intellectual gap. There could be different options to measure competencies, but this study opted for the standard developed by ALA

and known as core competencies. It was opted because of its wider popularity and acceptance in the field of library and information science.

### **Rationale of the study**

Competencies are knowledge, skills and abilities to perform the duties of any officials in an efficient way. In any profession, professionals need a set of competencies for doing their job effectively and efficiently. Librarians need competencies for better serving the users according to their needs and expectations. There is a dire need to enhance the competencies of librarians. The present study will provide useful knowledge for the librarians working in public libraries in terms of identifying their current level of competencies, compared with the ALA core competence skillset. This study will be helpful for prospective librarians to benefit themselves with the use of ALA competencies and utilize them in their forthcoming practical professional life. This study will be helpful for the improvement of public librarians' competencies in central Punjab. There are several studies conducted on competencies of academic librarians in Pakistan but there was no prior study conducted on competencies of librarians working in public libraries of Pakistan. Thus, this was revealed through extensive literature search that there will be gap in literature, presenting no information on competencies of public librarians. Therefore, this topic was selected for research.

### **Research Method**

In this study, quantitative methods were used. The quantitative research method was considered appropriate in this research study for investigating the competencies of the librarians. As this research design effectively describe current circumstances, including individuals' attitudes, preferences, behaviors, practices, concerns, or interests (Gay, Mills, and Airasian 2009). Additionally, this technique is widely preferred due to its high flexibility, allowing researchers to examine a broad spectrum of research objectives. It also allows for easy generalizability while maintaining respondent anonymity (Muijs, 2004). The quantitative research method is a mathematical, numerical and statistical collection and measurement of the data. The population of the study was library professionals working in the public libraries of central Punjab. There are 36 districts in Punjab. Among them, seven districts have been selected for this study that constitute the central Punjab. There are 53 library professional working in public libraries of central Punjab, to whom questionnaire was sent. Among them, 45 library professionals returned the questionnaire.

### **Data Collection Instrument:**

Data collection instrument was a questionnaire. It was developed in the light of ALA core competencies. To collect the data for this study, a questionnaire was designed to elicit the data from the participants. For designing the questionnaire, relevant literature was reviewed on the competencies of library professionals which is useful for the construction of preliminary sketch of the questionnaire. Especially the studies of "Developing Competency Based Assessment for Library Professionals" greatly facilitated in developing a sketch of the questionnaire. (Harhai & Krueger, 2015). The initial draft of the questionnaire was discussed with the research supervisors. After thorough revision and required changes in the questionnaire, the second draft was developed in close consultation with supervisors. Comments and critique of the supervisory team brought more changes to the questionnaire and finally made it clear and understandable for the participants. In this way, consequently a final draft of the questionnaire was prepared. On the 1st page of the questionnaire a cover letter was added, in which the researcher introduced the topic and requested the respondents to fill in the questionnaire and send it back in time. The covering letter of the questionnaire is appended in appendix B. The questionnaire consisted of close-ended questions. Close ended questions are those that have been prepared prior, accompanying all possible answers (Newell, 1993). Furthermore, it is easy for respondents to complete the questionnaire without wasting time (Newell, 1993). The questionnaire was divided into two parts. Part (A) included demographic information of the respondents, whereas Part (B) asked questions from the participants about the ALA core competencies for library professionals. ALA core competencies standards comprised of eight points. These standards were kept in view for the development of the questionnaire. Five points Likert scale i.e. fundamental, novice, intermediate, advance and expert was used for assessment.

## Data Analysis

### Demographic information:

Table 1 indicates that 36 male and 09 female librarians participated in the study. The table further reveals that male comprise of 80% and female 20% of the population.

*Table 1 Gender detail of professional librarians*

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	36	80
Female	09	20
Total	45	100

Table 2 shows that the age group between 25-30 years is 20%, 31-40 years is 40%, 41-50 years is 31% and 51-60 years is 8.9% of the population.

*Table 2 Age group detail of professional librarians*

Age	Frequency	Percentage
25-30yrs	09	20
31-40yrs	18	40
41-50yrs	14	31.1
51-60yrs	04	8.9
Total	45	100

### Professional experience

Table 3 indicates that professional experience from 1-5 years had 17.8%, 6-10 years 26.7%, 11-15years 15.6%, 16-20years 22.2%, and 21-25years and above 25 years had 8.9% of the population.

*Table 3 Professional experience detail of professional librarians*

Experience	Frequency	Percentage
1-5yrs	8	17.8
6-10yrs	12	26.7
11-15yrs	7	15.6
16-20yrs	10	22.2
21-25yrs	4	8.9
Above 25	4	8.9
Total	45	100

### Qualification

Table 4 shows that 35.6% had no professional degree 15.6% had certificates, 2.2% had diploma 11.1% had M.Phil. Degree and 35.6% had MLIS.

*Table 4 Academic qualification detail of professional librarians*

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Nil	16	35.6
Certificate	7	15.6
Diploma	1	2.2
M.Phil.	5	11.1
MLIS	16	35.6
Total	45	100

### Core Competencies of Librarians Working in Public Libraries

This section deals with the core competencies of professional librarians working in public libraries of central Punjab as per ALA framework.

#### Foundation of the profession

Table 5 indicates the foundation of the profession which is one of ALA core competencies. It displays the frequency count for the foundation of the profession. Participants were asked how they perceived themselves to have knowledge of the library profession. As shown in table (5) 22.2% of the participants perceived themselves to have fundamental knowledge about library profession. Whereas 2.2% had novice knowledge, 31.1% had intermediate, 28.9% had advanced and 15.6% perceived themselves to have expert knowledge in library profession. The result shows that majority of the participants' range of knowledge is between intermediate and advance level about library profession. Respondents' response regarding code of ethics related to library services shows that 26.7% had fundamental knowledge about code of ethics relevant to library services, 8.9% had novice knowledge, 20.0% had intermediate, 31.1 had advanced and 13.3% had expert. The result shows that most of the the participants' range of knowledge is between intermediate to expert about the code of ethics. Respondents' response regarding history of libraries reveals that 28.9% had fundamental knowledge about the history of libraries, 6.7% had novice knowledge, 35.6% had intermediate, 20.0% had advanced knowledge and 8.9% had expert. The result shows that most of the participants ranged knowledge between intermediate to advance about the history of libraries. It has been found that 37.8% had fundamental knowledge about types of libraries, 2.2% had novice knowledge, 22.2% had intermediate knowledge, 28.9% had advanced knowledge and 8.9% had experts. The result shows that 37.8% of participants have fundamental knowledge about the types of libraries. The data shows that 33.3% had fundamental knowledge about the current library trends, 8.9% had novice knowledge, 17.8% had intermediate, 24.4% had advanced knowledge and 15.6% had expert. The result shows that 33.3% have fundamental knowledge about the current library trends. Table 5 indicates that 33.3% had fundamental knowledge about the library law and its application, 8.9% had novice knowledge, 13.3% had intermediate, 33.3% had advanced knowledge and 11.1% had expert. The result shows that 33.3% have advance knowledge. 35.6% had fundamental knowledge about intellectual freedom of information, 4.4% had novice knowledge, 15.6% had intermediate, 26.7% had advanced knowledge and 17.8% had expert. The result shows that 35.6% have fundamental knowledge about the intellectual freedom of information. 26.7% had fundamental knowledge about verbal communication with users, 2.2% had novice knowledge, 24.4% had intermediate, 35.6% had advanced knowledge and 11.1% had expert. The result shows that 35.6% of participants perceived themselves to have advanced knowledge. 33.3% had fundamental knowledge about the value of library, 2.2% had novice knowledge, 15.6% had intermediate, 26.7% had advanced knowledge and 22.2% had expert. The



result shows that 33.3% have fundamental knowledge about how to communicate the value of libraries. 24.4% had fundamental knowledge about the solution of library problems, 4.4% had novice knowledge, 15.6% had intermediate, 26.7% had advanced knowledge and 28.9% had expert. The result shows that a major proportion of the participants had an expert level of knowledge. The mean score of data related to foundation of the profession shows that the maximum of the participants has knowledge above 2.8 which is closer intermediate level of knowledge.

*Table 5 Foundation of the profession*

Familiarity, ability and understanding	Fundamental F (%)	Novice F (%)	Intermediate F (%)	Advance F (%)	Expert F (%)	Mean
Knowledge of the library profession	10 (22.2)	1 (2.2)	14 (31.1)	13 (28.9)	7 (15.6)	3.13
The code of ethics relevant to library services	12 (26.7)	4 (8.9)	9 (20.0)	14 (31.1)	6 (13.3)	2.95
The history of libraries	13 (28.9)	3 (6.7)	16 (35.6)	9 (20.0)	4 (8.9)	2.73
The types of libraries	17 (37.8)	1 (2.2)	10 (22.2)	13 (28.9)	4 (8.9)	2.68
Current knowledge of library trends	15 (33.3)	4 (8.9)	8 (17.8)	11 (24.4)	7 (15.6)	2.80
Library laws and how to apply them	15 (33.3)	4 (8.9)	6 (13.3)	15 (33.3)	5 (11.1)	2.80
Understand and promote the intellectual freedom of information	16 (35.6)	2 (4.4)	7 (15.6)	12 (26.7)	8 (17.8)	2.86
Communicate with users verbally	12 (26.7)	1 (2.2)	11 (24.4)	16 (35.6)	5 (11.1)	3.02
Communicating the value of library to community	15 (33.3)	1 (2.2)	7 (15.6)	12 (26.7)	10 (22.2)	3.02
Contribute myself to solving the library problems	11 (24.4)	2 (4.4)	7 (15.6)	12 (26.7)	12 (28.9)	3.31

### Information resources

Table 6 indicates the information resources which is one of the ALA core competencies. Participants were asked how they perceived themselves to have knowledge about information resources. Data shows that 28.9% had fundamental knowledge about policies and procedures for the selection of resources, 11.1% had novice knowledge, 22.2% had intermediate, 26.7% had advanced knowledge and 11.1% had expert level of knowledge. The result shows that 28.9% have fundamental knowledge about the selection of information resources, 40.0% have fundamental knowledge about the development of library collection, 6.7% have novice knowledge, 6.7% have intermediate, 24.4% have advanced knowledge and 22.2% have expert level of knowledge. The result shows that 40.0% of participants perceived themselves to have a fundamental level of knowledge about collection development of library. Data shows 44.4% had fundamental knowledge about the acquisition process of library, 2.2% had novice knowledge, 11.1% had intermediate, 17.8% had advanced knowledge and 24.4% had expert level of knowledge. The result shows that 44.4% have a fundamental level of knowledge about acquisition process of libraries. Data shows 35.6% had fundamental knowledge about the collection development criteria, 11.1% had novice knowledge, 8.9% had intermediate, 26.7% had advanced knowledge and 17.8% had expert level of knowledge. The result shows that 35.6% have fundamental knowledge about the criteria for collection development. The mean score ranges from 2.75 to 2.82 which is closer to intermediate level of knowledge.

*Table 6 Information resources*

Familiarity, ability and understanding	Fundamental F (%)	Novice F (%)	Intermediate F (%)	Advance F (%)	Expert F (%)	Mean
The policy and procedures for the selection of information resources	13 (28.9)	5 (11.1)	10 (22.2)	12 (26.7)	5 (11.1)	2.80
How to develop a collection for library	18 (40.0)	3 (6.7)	3 (6.7)	11 (24.4)	10(22.2)	2.82
Acquisition process of library	20 (44.4)	1 (2.2)	5 (11.1)	8 (17.8)	11(24.4)	2.75
The criteria for collection development	16 (35.6)	5 (11.1)	4 (8.9)	12 (26.7)	8 (17.8)	2.80

### Organization of recorded knowledge and information

Table 7 indicates the ALA core competencies of organization of recorded knowledge and information. Participants were asked how they perceived about themselves to have knowledge of organization of recorded knowledge and information. As shown in table (7) 31.1% had fundamental knowledge about the current trends in bibliography control, 15.6% had novice knowledge, 17.8% had intermediate, 24.4% had advanced knowledge and 11.1% had expert. The result shows that 31.1% have fundamental knowledge about the current trends in bibliography control. Data shows 33.3% had fundamental knowledge about information organization principles, 11.1% had novice knowledge, 13.3% had intermediate, 28.9% had advanced knowledge and 13.3% had expert level of knowledge. The result shows that 33.3% have fundamental knowledge about the principles of information organization. It has been found that 33.3% had fundamental knowledge about the application of bibliography control standard, 11.1% had novice knowledge, 17.8% had intermediate, 26.7% had advanced knowledge and 11.1% had expert level of knowledge. The result shows that 33.3% of participants have a fundamental level of knowledge about the bibliography control standard. The mean score of data related to organization of recorded knowledge and information shows that the maximum of the participants has knowledge above 2.7 which is closer to intermediate level of knowledge.

*Table 7 Organization of recorded knowledge and information*

Familiarity, ability and understanding	Fundamental F (%)	Novice F (%)	Intermediate F (%)	Advance F (%)	Expert F (%)	Mean
The current trends in bibliography control	14 (31.1)	7 (15.6)	8 (17.8)	11 (24.4)	5 (11.1)	2.68
The principles of information organization	15 (33.3)	5 (11.1)	6 (13.3)	13 (28.9)	6 (13.3)	2.77
Apply the standard of bibliography control	15 (33.3)	5 (11.1)	8 (17.8)	12 (26.7)	5 (11.1)	2.71

### Technological knowledge and skills

Table 8 indicates the technological knowledge and skills of the professions. Technological knowledge and skills are one of the ALA core competencies. Participants were asked how they perceived about themselves to have knowledge about the technological trends relevant to libraries, 33.3% had fundamental knowledge about assessing the technology trends relevant to library, 6.7% had novice knowledge, 17.8% had intermediate, 28.9% had advanced knowledge and 13.3% had expert. Result shows that 33.3% have fundamental level of knowledge about the technological trends

of libraries. Data shows 40.0% had fundamental knowledge about the technological needs of community, 6.7% had novice knowledge, 8.9% had intermediate, 26.7% had advanced knowledge and 17.8% had expert. Result shows that 40.0% have a fundamental level of knowledge about the technological needs of community. Data shows 35.6% had fundamental knowledge about the articulation and application of technology policies, 11.1% had novice knowledge, 8.9% had intermediate, 26.7% had advanced knowledge and 17.8% had expert level of knowledge. The results show that 35.6% have a fundamental level of knowledge about the articulation and application of technology policies. The mean score of data related to technological knowledge and skills shows that the maximum of the participants has knowledge above 2.7 which is closer to intermediate level of knowledge.

*Table 8 Technological knowledge and skills*

Familiarity, ability and understanding	Fundamental F (%)	Novice F (%)	Intermediate F (%)	Advance F (%)	Expert F (%)	Mean
Assess the technological trends relevant to libraries	15 (33.3)	3 (6.7)	8 (17.8)	13 (28.9)	6 (13.3)	2.82
Analyze community needs for technology	18 (40.0)	3 (6.7)	4 (8.9)	12 (26.7)	8 (17.8)	2.75
Articulate and apply technology policies	16 (35.6)	5 (11.1)	4 (8.9)	12 (26.7)	8 (17.8)	2.75

### Findings and Discussion:

Findings have been divided into two sections: findings based on demographic information of the respondents and ALA core competencies standard.

### Demographic Information

1. Out of 45 librarians, there were 36 (80%) male and 09 (20%) were female (Table 1).
2. Out of 45 librarians, there were 9 librarians having an age group between 25-30 years (20%), 18 librarians having 31-40 years (40%), 14 librarians having age group of 41-50 years (31.1%) and 4 librarians were in the age group of 51-60 years (8.9%) of the sample (Table 2).
3. Out of 45 librarians, 8 librarians have 1-5 years professional experience (17.8%), 12 librarians have 6-10 years' experience (26.7%), 7 librarians have 11-15years experience (15.6%), 10 librarians have 16-20years professional experience (22.2%), 4 librarians have 21-25years experience (8.9%) and 4 librarians have above 25 years professional experience (8.9%), (Table 3).
4. Out of 45 librarians, 16 librarians have nil academic qualification (35.6%), 7 have certificate degree (15.6%), 1 librarian having diploma (2.2%), 5 librarians having M.Phil. degree (11.1%), and 16 librarians having MLIS degree (35.6%). (Table 4).

### ALA Core Competencies

#### Foundation of the Profession

Questionnaire question one deals with the ALA core competencies which is foundation of the profession. The findings of the study revealed that the foundation of the profession, which is one of ALA core competency, participants were asked how they perceive about themselves to have knowledge of the library profession. The result shows that the maximum of the participants have a mean score of the factors ranging from 2.68 to 3.31 out of 5, which is closer to intermediate level of knowledge about library profession (Table 5).

#### Information Resources

"Information resources" is also one of the ALA core competencies. Participants were asked how they perceived themselves to have knowledge about information resources. The result shows that

a mean score in most of the factors is ranging from 2.75 to 2.82 out of 5, which is closer to intermediate level of knowledge about library profession (Table 6).

### **Organization of Recorded Knowledge and Information**

Organization of recorded knowledge and information is one of the ALA core competencies. Participants were asked how they perceived about themselves to have knowledge of organization of recorded knowledge and information. The result shows that a mean score in most of the factors is above 2.75 out of 5, which is closer to intermediate level of knowledge about library profession (Table 7).

### **Technological Knowledge and Skills**

Another ALA core competency standard is technological knowledge and skills of the professions. Participants were asked how they perceived themselves to have knowledge about the technological trends relevant to libraries. The result shows that a mean score in most of the factors is above 2.7 out of 5, which is again closer to intermediate level of knowledge about library profession (Table 8).

### **Discussion**

This study, entitle, “Assessing the core competencies of professional librarians working in public libraries of central Punjab” was conducted to assess the perceived level of competencies as per ALA framework. It assessed how the library professionals perceived themselves about the ALA core competencies’ standards. The findings of the study revealed that participants’ perceived competencies were at intermediate level. Pervious literature shows that a few studies have been conducted on public librarians’ competencies internationally. Fern (1998) also conducted a study on competencies of public libraries’ professionals. The main purpose of this study was to identify the current and needed skills and knowledge of librarians that are effective in future for professionals. In Pakistan, no study had been conducted on public librarians’ competencies under the light of ALA core competencies’ standards, prior to this study. ALA core competencies comprise of eight points. There is no study conducted under the light of these standards, only a few studies were conducted on technological competencies of library professionals. Technological knowledge and skills are the fourth point of ALA core competencies’ standards. Ahmed and Rehman (2016) identified the ICT competencies of library professionals of KPK. The findings show that ICT competencies in librarians were unsatisfactory. In this study the mean score of data related to technological knowledge and skills shows that the maximum of the participants’ perceived level of knowledge was above 2.7, that shows the intermediate level of knowledge about technology. Several suggestions have already been made by the researchers for enhancement of library professionals’ competencies. This study suggested there is a need to provide proper training for the library professionals. ALA core competencies have great significance for library professionals because they cover all areas of competencies which are needed for library professionals. Additionally, findings from Mehmood et al. (2017) revealed that university librarians in Punjab considered managerial, reference, and information services skills highly important. These competencies align with the ALA framework and were also identified as crucial in the present study. However, gaps in competency levels suggest that public librarians may not have access to the same training resources as their counterparts in academic libraries. The study also builds on previous research that assessed competency gaps between self-perceived skills and professional expectations. Tahir and Warraich (2021) found a mismatch between the self-perceived ICT competencies of early-career LIS graduates and the expectations of senior professionals, highlighting the need for targeted training programs. Similarly, the present study's findings suggest that public librarians may require additional structured training to meet professional competency standards effectively.

In conclusion, while this study confirms findings from prior research regarding the significance of technological and managerial competencies, it also highlights unique gaps in public librarians' professional development. The results emphasize the necessity for comprehensive training programs aligned with the ALA framework to enhance the competency levels of library professionals in Pakistan. Future research should explore the impact of structured training initiatives on competency development and assess the evolving role of public librarians in the digital age.

### Conclusion:

The following conclusions are drawn up based on the results of the study:

1. Response rate of the participants was 84.9%. Out of 53 participants 45 took participation in the study.
2. Majority of participants were male.
3. Majority of participants were in the age group of 31-40years.
4. Majority of participants had 6-10 years' professional experience.
5. The perception of participants of all the four competencies was closer to intermediate level with variation in every competency and its factors, which are at the third level in a scale of five points

### Recommendations of the Study

Knowledge is the basic need of human beings and libraries are the best source of information and knowledge. Based on this study, the following recommendations are suggested, and that recommendations of the study will be helpful in assessing the core competencies of professional librarians working in public libraries of central Punjab.

1. The findings of the study revealed that there is a need to revise the LIS curriculum under the light of ALA core competencies standards that could inculcate the knowledge and expertise in the participants up to advanced and more preferably expert level.
2. There is a need to develop proper recruitment policies for the selection of public libraries staff.
3. There is a need to provide proper professional training for the professionals.
4. The same relative study should be replicated among library professionals working in the four provinces of Pakistan to observe their level of competencies.
5. A similar study was conducted using qualitative research methods to achieve much deeper understanding of library professional's competencies.

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