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DEVELOPMENT OF A TRAINING POLICY FOR THE LIBRARY ASSISTANTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PERADENIYA LIBRARY NETWORK

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The Library Assistants (LAs) are the largest staff category in any University library and perform a wide variety of duties from counter operations to acquisition, circulation of reading material, technical service and assistance with administration. The quality of a library depends on its staff. If a library collection is not well organized and qualified and trained staff is not employed, an efficient service cannot be expected. Staff training is a critical and challenging task. A policy is typically described as a principle or rule to guide decisions and achieve rational outcome. If the LAs have a training policy as guidelines to follow training or any courses it is very useful for their career development. There is no training policy for LAs in the University of Peradeniya Library Network (UoPLN). Therefore this survey was conducted to collect baseline information to formulate of a training policy. Total numbers of 50 LAs are available in UoPLN. These 50 LAs support to every category of the readers registered at the UoPLN. Hence, training of LAs is a significant aspect in the library. The broad objective of this study was to collect baseline information required to formulate a policy document on training the LAs in UoPLN. A questionnaire was used to gather data from 50 LAs in the UoPLN. The response rate was 82% (41 LAs responded). The findings of the survey revealed that the LAs have not undergone appropriate in service training. Whatever training they have had has been of an ad-hoc nature in the form of short courses and workshops. The areas in which LAs need training are basic ICT skills, E-resource handling, database searching, communication skills, Tamil and English language proficiency and skills on library technical service, all of which do not appear to have been addressed at length in existing training programmes. To address these issues a training policy was developed. The policy provides a framework that supports and encourages the development of all the LAs of the UoPLN. The policy document covers the equal opportunities of the training, identification of training needs in accordance with the library need,(LAs training needs can be identified in a number of ways), and responsibilities of the trainees and senior staff of the library. Training policy also included specific areas of the training requirement of the LAs. The main areas are upgrading knowledge in overall background at the library or division, Ability to perform all library activities to maintain a high level of services to users, Skills on counter operation, Developing skills on library technical services such as Acquisition procedure, cataloguing, conservation preservation, basic knowledge on book binding ICT skills, Communication skills.