

The Education of Library Support Staff in the United States

YAMAMOTO Takako
OSHIRO Zensei
SETOGUCHI Makoto
KANNA Kenji

The purpose of this paper is to describe the historical development of the education for library support staff (LSS) in the United States of America.

The paper discusses the LSS education first by dividing the topic into two parts: the pre-21st century and 21st century. Then, each part is divided into two subparts: “the Role of American Library Association in Educating LSS” and “Institutions and Programs for Educating LSS”.

It was found that ALA played a significant role for LSS education in the pre-21st century, as they did for the professional librarians. The ALA adopted a policy in 1970, “Library Education and Manpower” in order to deal with the then shortage of library staff. The policy classified LSS into three categories: clerk, library technical assistant, and library associate. Though it was expected that this classification could contribute to effective utilization of the library manpower, it did not result in what was expected partly because the libraries did not expand in 1970's and 1980's. The policy, however, has become significant for LSS since the ALA officially recognized the role of LSS in the library and described their educational requirement. The ALA prepared “Criteria for Program to Prepare Library Technical Assistants (CPPLTA)” in 1971, revised in 1979, and again in 2004. This criteria provides two kinds of programs: Associate Degree and Certificate. It also prepares the model of core courses. Notwithstanding, many colleges have adopted “A Suggested Two-year Post High School Curriculum: Library Technical Assistant”, published by U.S. Office of Education in 1973.

In the 21st century, the ALA established the certification program for LSS in 2010. It will greatly improve the employment of LSS since a LSS with the ALA's

certificate could be employed by any library at any state. Before establishing the program, each state has had its own certification program and a LSS with a certificate from one state was not qualified to be employed in another state.

Regarding the Institutions of LSS education, it is said that Los Angeles City College first started LSS education in 1937. In 1960's, many colleges established educational programs for LSS and in 1976 there were about 130 programs with about 7,000 students enrolled. The majority students were part-time students. However, LSS had hard times to find their employment in 1980's and in 1984 there were only 67 institutions (community colleges) that offered the programs for LSS. In 1999, there were 47 institutions across 17 states which provided the programs for LSS. And most of the programs were developed by the library staff of the institutions. The majority of institutions provided both associate and certificate programs and most of the courses were traditional ones.

In 2005, there were 48 institutions which provided the programs for LSS. Most institutions provided both associate and certificate programs and offered their programs based on ALA's CPPLTA. In 2009, there were about 50 institutions.