

Research.

## Performance Management of Academic Librarians in Improving College Library Services

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**Abstract.** Despite the implementation of technology to provide services, college library services in Indonesia remain severely constrained. It cannot be separated from the unchanging role of librarians. Based on that context, this research focused on the performance management of academic librarians in improving college library services. The research broadens its scope to examine the performance of librarians in higher education in different countries by comparing librarian practices, methodologies, and challenges in various global contexts. This research was a qualitative study in the form of library research. Data was collected by finding sources and reconstructing them from various sources such as books, journals, and previous studies. The results of this study indicated a lack of librarian performance evaluation and a lack of librarians' role as information leaders. Furthermore, the use of technology to assist services is still quite restricted, as is communication with users, and the role in supporting academic goals.

**Keywords:** Academic librarian. Library, information. Librarian management

### INTRODUCTION

The rapid pace of digital development has had an impact on various services, including library services. Since the era of digitalization, libraries are no longer merely a place to store book collections, but rather a multidimensional information center that provides unlimited access to electronic resources. Libraries' shifting function is closely related to changes in how students access information and engage with learning content. It also places additional demands on the academic curriculum, such as digital skills, information literacy, and a deeper understanding of technology.

Technology is increasingly being integrated into learning curricula, either as a tool for delivering material, as a significant information resource or as a way of collaboration and communication. Curricula are also adjusting to changing times and the constant technological advances in numerous spheres of life. As a result, on-campus academic libraries are experiencing new challenges. These library services require librarians to keep pace with the ever-changing demands of users.

Unfortunately, not all academic library services, particularly college libraries, are now adapting to the demands of their users. Even though many college libraries have integrated technology to provide services like lending and retrieval, many still offer extremely limited capabilities. According to data from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) 2023, there are 164,610 libraries in Indonesia. There are 2,057 college libraries among them, 558 of which are accredited. It means that 1449 college libraries have not been accredited (Napitupulu, 2023).

Some other facts mention that library services in accredited universities have not been maximized. For example, the UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta Library's reference

service is still limited or not functioning optimally. The service system is still manual. Staff members such as librarians, on the other hand, have not mastered foreign languages such as Arabic. This makes obtaining foreign language references challenging for users (Maryulisman, 2017).

The next fact occurred in the IAIN Raden Fatah Palembang library. The college library is still rather basic. Library facilities, amenities, and infrastructure are still very limited. Similarly, the library's management and organization are inadequate. The library lacks a manager who has a basic library science education or has obtained library training (Nurmalina, 2011).

Despite not being indicative of all college libraries in Indonesia, the two instances above demonstrate that college libraries remain conventional. The "value of libraries," on the other hand, is one of the challenges that has developed from the current role of higher education libraries. Unfortunately, the value and significance of libraries have yet to become a reference point for librarians in Indonesia, not to mention in many developed countries. Many European and American libraries are encouraged to gather concrete evidence of their importance. They are required not only to demonstrate their activities but also to prove the value and impact of those activities on the main objectives of the universities in which they are located (Greenwood & Cleeve, 2008).

Librarians are one of the key roles that need to be revitalized (Rodin, 2020, p. 301). So far, the lack of standardized quality measurements has been linked to the problem of librarian professionalism in Indonesia (Siregar, 2008). This is exacerbated by the role of the library which is still considered as a support, rather than something that should be at the heart of the schools and even universities. Academic librarians' current roles are still based on regular tasks. Academic librarians have not yet become research partners of the university academic community, even at well-known universities (Andayani, 2017, p. 30).

Furthermore, as mentioned by de Lima et al (2017), the performance of academic librarians in Indonesia has not played a role as a blended librarian. This means changes in the education delivery system based on technological innovation for learning purposes. Academic librarians' roles as blended librarians are not well defined. College librarians have not mingled with academics in scientific activities (Andayani, 2018, p. 14).

### **Research Question**

In facing the era of technological development and the dynamics of information needs in higher education, the role of academic librarians has become very vital. Even though university libraries have great potential to become dynamic information resource centers, there are still obstacles in optimizing their services. The main problem involves the limitations of librarian performance management, which tends to be conventional and focused on routine work. Therefore, this research aims to dig deeper into the performance management of academic librarians as the main key in improving higher education library services. Some of the research questions underlying this study include:

1. How is the current performance management of academic librarians in the higher education environment?
2. To what extent is there collaboration between librarians and users in supporting the success of library services?
3. What service development efforts have been made by academic librarians to respond to changes in information needs in the academic environment?
4. Has the role of librarians effectively supported the achievement of higher education academic goals?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Based on that context, this research focused on the performance management of academic librarians in improving college library services. Many studies have been conducted to date to investigate academic librarian performance management to enhance services. Previous research has emphasized the critical role of librarians in managing collections, delivering quality services, and adjusting to technological advances. Some studies have concentrated on evaluating librarians' performance

criteria, the use of technology to improve services, and librarians' involvement in the integration of library services and resources. However, most studies still focus on analyzing performance in general.

Marguna and Sangiasseri (2020), for example, investigated the impact of digital competencies (e-Skills) on the performance of Hasanuddin University Library librarians. The results found that some librarians have digital competencies (e-Skills) below the average standard. Then the study of Iswanto, Wince, and Marleni (2019) on Optimizing the Utilization of the SliMS Application in Improving Librarian Performance at the Curup State Islamic Institute Library. Unfortunately, this study does not highlight the major issues with existing library services. Another study was conducted by Prasetyo and Ismiyati (2021) who examined the effect of services, library facilities, and librarian performance on user satisfaction at the Semarang State University Library. The results showed that library services, facilities, and librarian performance all had a positive and significant effect on user satisfaction.

Previous research on the topic of librarian performance management in higher education has focused on performance, technology use, and librarians' roles in library services. However, most studies tend to focus more on local or regional contexts, with few cross-country comparisons. The research broadens its scope to examine the performance of librarians in higher education in different countries by comparing librarian practices, methodologies, and challenges in various global contexts. This research will provide a more comprehensive picture of the factors that influence their performance. This comparative approach can provide deeper insights into best practices that may be adopted or adapted to improve library services in higher education globally.

## RESEARCH METHODE

The research uses library research methods. Data collection was done by finding sources and reconstructing them from various sources such as books, journals, and previous studies. The library study approach was used for this study to offer a comprehensive picture of librarian performance management. In addition, the method was highly relevant for comparing the role and performance management of higher education librarians (Herdiansyah, 2011). Thus, a comprehensive understanding of the practices and strategies used by librarians in different countries will be obtained. This research might reveal differences in approaches, challenges, and wins accomplished by librarians globally using library research that incorporates literature from different regions. As a result of employing library research in this study, the researcher was able to gain in-depth insights into the dynamics of librarian performance in various contexts without being limited to geographical boundaries or specific environments.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Efforts to enhance the performance of academic libraries must begin with an evaluation of the work done by librarians, particularly in the management of library collections. Moreover, the role of librarians is the benchmark for the success of library performance in carrying out its vision and mission. If the librarian can serve the users professionally and is responsible for the information needs of the users, then the library's assessment will be improved.

### **Librarian Performance Evaluation**

As information technology advances in libraries, it influences new ways of communication, which in turn affects library services (Hariri, 2018, pp. 175-185). A librarian must adapt to the rapid advancement of information technology, which has transformed the way people access and disseminate information. Librarians must be able to be proactive in identifying the evolving needs of the users (Daryono, 2017). Librarians who are unable to adapt to various advances will have an impact on the fate of the library they manage, leading to the abandonment of the library by users. This is consistent with the findings of Mulyadi et al. (2019) research, which suggests that a library will survive as long as it can adapt to technological advancements.

Changes in information technology are rapidly affecting all aspects of life, including libraries, giving rise to the term "digital library". Librarians cannot only work using traditional approaches (Harmawan, 2016). This is because the concept of digital libraries, which make use of the advancements in information technology, must be supported by enhancing the competency of librarians who do more than just assist people in accessing information. However, librarians must serve as information managers, content consultants, literacy consultants, as well as collaborators in developing services and innovations (Linawati, 2023). Moreover, the quality of service indicates whether or not a library is valuable. Librarians must be able to provide services in accordance with this new culture. Adaptation in the digital era shifts processes and services from manual to automated. The biggest challenge for librarians, however, is to understand and master these technological developments while integrating them into all library services. This must be done for the library to maintain its competitive edge.

In the face of digital libraries, librarians must develop skills that go beyond procurement, processing, and services. Librarians, on the other hand, must recognize the necessity of integrating information and communication technologies, as well as abilities that promote the emergence of innovations (Sudarsono, 2006, p. 145). Some competencies must be satisfied to develop professional librarians. *First*, an understanding of the content of information sources, as well as the ability to critically analyze while screening collections, is required. *Second*, knowing specific subjects that are suitable and required by the parent organization or service users. *Third*, in accordance with the organization's strategic objective, develop and process information services that are conveniently accessible and cost-effective. *Fourth*, provide service users guidance and support. *Fifth*, evaluate the information needs as well as the added value of information services and products that satisfy those demands. *Sixth*, use appropriate information technology to procure, organize, and disseminate information. *Seventh*, communicate the importance of information services to senior management using management and business approaches. *Eighth*, create unique information products for internal and external usage, as well as for specific consumers. *Ninth*, evaluate the results of information usage and research information management issues. *Tenth*, constantly upgrade information services to meet challenges and developments. *Eleventh*, become a member of the senior management team or consultant to the organization on information issues.

### **Librarians as Information Leaders**

The role of librarians as information leaders can be reflected in the various practices they engage in to help users understand, evaluate, and use information more effectively. Such practices include guiding users in their information search. Librarians assist users in identifying information according to their needs, guide them in effective search strategies, and introduce them to relevant information sources. The reason for this is that in practice, some users still struggle to discover information about library materials. This is the case at Ungaran's Ngudi Waluyo University Library. causes the search for information to frequently fail to provide the expected library materials. This is aided, however, by the presence of librarians who actively assist in the search for library materials (Lestari & Jumino, 2017). This demonstrates the importance of librarians in helping users access the information they need.

In strengthening their role as information leaders, librarians should also provide information literacy instruction to users. This may be accomplished by offering training sessions or workshops on topics such as analyzing information sources, comprehending database systems, and developing online search strategies. In the middle of the advancement of communication and information technology, the issue that emerges is not only how to gain access to information, but also how to selectively choose information based on needs. Users of information technology must be capable of finding, analyzing, and evaluating information. This literacy is needed to help individuals filter and evaluate any information received while preventing the spread of false or misleading information.

Librarians must also help with the evaluation of information that becomes library material. They assist users in evaluating the reliability, accuracy, and adequacy of information sources, ensuring that users receive the right information for their needs. Actually, this can be accomplished by improving users' information literacy. However, before delivering literacy to users, librarians must first have qualified literacy skills. A librarian with low competence can't educate users. Of course, this is hard to imagine, and librarians' roles as information leaders will be tough to achieve. As a result, libraries must be supported by human resources capable of identifying and evaluating various types of information while managing information. Because, it cannot be denied that librarians play a role in the presentation of quality information to users (Hardiningtyas, 2016).

Most college librarians nowadays possess proficient literacy skills, with some even being experts. However, some are classified as learners, and their capacity needs to be improved. Information literacy is a set of information management skills. However, librarians who are not skilled in one or more of the abilities required to build information literacy can still be found. This is shown, for example, by the results of research conducted by Megasari, (2010) (2011) who examined librarians at three state universities in Surabaya, and Wulandari (2011) who examined librarians at five private universities in Surabaya. The study found that most librarians at state university libraries in Surabaya had good information literacy, although some skills were still lacking. Meanwhile, the information literacy of private university librarians in Surabaya is high. This condition is influenced by motivation, attitude towards the profession or knowledge, expertise, ethics, and others.

### **Implementation of Technology that Supports Services**

Amid the development of information technology, libraries must evolve. As an institution whose purpose is to provide services, libraries must be responsive to changes if they do not want to be abandoned by their users. The use of technology must be a concern because of the demand for increasing the number and quality of library services. The implementation of information technology in library management will make catalog searching easier. Moreover, modern people who are accustomed to technological developments would seek information technology-based services that make it simpler to locate the necessary information (Nugrohadhi, 2013, p. 112).

Unfortunately, this implementation is not without obstacles. Librarians are still loyal to implementing conventional services and are satisfied with routine work because they believe that all work can be done properly without the assistance of technology. In addition, the quality of human resources for library managers in terms of information technology mastery remains low. Another obstacle is the lack of information technology equipment (Fahrizandi, 2020). As a result, boosting the capacity of librarians who are not only knowledgeable in the subject of librarianship but also proficient in technological aspects is essential.

When viewed from the efforts made, many libraries in the country and abroad have utilized technology to support their performance. The Indian Law Institute Library and the National Social Science Documentation Center Library in New Delhi are examples of this. They use Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) in providing services to the users. This technology can provide consumers with a sense of self-service while borrowing and returning collections. RFID is a piece of equipment and technology that uses radio waves to identify data (Thornton, 2005). Borrowing and returning books is now 20 seconds faster per item since using the service. As a result, the number of visiting librarians has increased. Furthermore, this speed benefits circulation staff because they no longer have to record collections to be borrowed or returned one at a time. However, the expensive cost of implementing this technology is an obstacle (Madhusudhan, 2010). Unfortunately, this technology is still not commonly recognized or used in libraries, particularly in Indonesia. It is expected that many libraries in Indonesia will utilize RFID so that the library will have more value and realize a modern library in line with the times (Hamdani, 2014).

Higher education libraries in Indonesia, on the other hand, have not completely maximized their efforts to develop a digital ecosystem. This is the case at the Andalas University Library, which is attempting to develop a digital communication ecosystem between library management and users during the COVID-19 pandemic by utilizing social media platforms and Zoom meetings. The reason is that librarians do not take advantage of social media as a medium for promoting various activities. This situation has arisen in part because social media management has not been backed by specialized personnel (Nupin, 2023). Therefore, building an ecosystem for the use of digital technology requires serious attention from both librarians and university leaders.

### **Collaboration with Users**

Librarians need to continue to develop their capacity by building collaboration with various parties, including users. Librarians have a greater understanding of their users' information needs through collaboration, allowing them to continue to make adjustments. Collaboration is one of the solutions to improve library performance and quality. The opportunity to build collaboration is wide open, depending on the willingness and ability of the parties involved (Istiana, 2016).

This collaboration can be done in numerous forms, such as participating in research activities. Moreover, the basic function of academic libraries is to support higher education institutions' teaching, learning, and research activities (Abdoulaye & Majid, 2000). Collaborative research activities in libraries have an impact on strengthening librarians' roles and responsibilities, from being technical and administrative library managers to professional development activities and librarianship systems. Berg & Banks (2016) emphasized that librarians need to have a strong passion and competence to carry out research. This is needed to create synergy between the two parties, both librarians and users or academics.

In fact, several universities in Indonesia have undertaken attempts to foster collaboration between librarians and users. Sebelas Maret University Surakarta (UNS) undertook this endeavor. Through the UNS Library's "Scientific Library Clinic" service, they are attempting to create an ecosystem of research collaboration between librarians and academics. As a result, the service is regarded as very supportive of academic librarian research collaboration activities, increasing research publications and librarian research collaboration (Nurkamilah & Nashihuddin, 2021). This effort is in line with the aim that academic librarians would be truly present to assist library users in locating the scientific information needed to support research. This includes involving them as members of research teams (Naibaho & Mariyah, 2018).

Collaboration between librarians and users is also applied in the Library of the Faculty of Biology, University of Gadjah Mada (UGM). This step is done by forming student library volunteers who aim to improve library services. The collaboration makes students not only act as users but also contribute creatively and benefit the academic community (Nuraini, 2022). Efforts to improve university library services are not only done by building collaboration between librarians but also various other related parties including the academic community.

Indonesian universities need to see how universities in several countries utilize the existence of libraries to support their vision and mission. This is what the University of Toronto, Canada, has done in the realm of building librarian collaboration. Fortin & Mueller (2013) found that at the university, librarians assisted with Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping in The Don River Valley Historical Mapping Project (DVHMO). This collaboration produced a geospatial historical "map set" based on shoreline, industry, and land ownership data. In this project, the librarian acted as an information architect in the GIS field.

Another collaborative effort is librarians at the University of Michigan Library (UML), United States. Brandenburg et al. (2017) explain that librarians at the university play a role in finding grants and systematic reviews of publications. UML librarians play an active role as leaders in institutional research projects. Not only that, they are also the

authors of activity proposals. This starts with finding funds, establishing communication with all stakeholders, to monitoring the progress of research projects.

Universities in Indonesia have not yet realized the potential of this collaboration in utilizing the role of librarians. Even librarians contribute to the perception that their profession is undervalued. They feel inferior and ashamed to identify as librarians (Artana & Wardana, 2019). Despite the fact that the profession has a lot of untapped potential, especially given its proximity to information, collaboration efforts cannot be successful unless all parties are aware of the situation.

### **Service Development**

Currently, an information technology application is employed as a library management information system. These activities facilitate the delivery of services by librarians. Procurement, inventory, cataloging, circulation of library resources, member management, statistics, and other tasks may all be connected with the system. These functions are frequently referred to as a form of library automation.

In almost all university libraries, automation systems have been implemented. In its development, many libraries have utilized library applications or software, both open and closed source. Several studies have shown that the use of information systems such as SLiMS can work effectively in college libraries (Widodo, 2016). This is in line with the statement that states the uses and benefits of implementing information technology, such as streamlining and simplifying library work, providing better services to library users, improving the library's image, and developing national, regional, and global infrastructure (Marshella & Marlina, 2014).

In addition to implementing technology, libraries are now also adopting a user education approach. It has become a solution as part of the services they offer. User education includes various initiatives to improve users' information literacy, helping new students understand and use information resources effectively.

The initiative includes the library's efforts to guide users on how to use the library catalog, databases, electronic resources, and effective information search strategies. User education can include organizing workshops, training, or guides to help users gain skills in evaluating, selecting, and using information resources relevant to their needs.

Through user education, libraries seek to empower users to become more independent in finding and using the information they need in their academic, research, and daily life activities. This not only enhances users' experience in the library but also expands their understanding of information literacy, helping them to become more skilled in utilizing available information resources (A.S, 2020).

Chen and Lin (2011) stated that 3 levels of user education should be carried out by higher education libraries, namely, the first level is given to students regarding library introduction. This level can be applied to users who first utilize the library. The second level is given to students following their respective majors. The third level, literature search training, is the provision of user education with more emphasis on the practice of searching literature for research. This is appropriate for the preparation of final assignments/research.

However, user education has so far been limited to new students in some university libraries. The activity is routinely carried out only once a year. Other problems that occur, for example, the schedule of activities that have not been routine and there is no written policy on user education programs (Wijayanti et al., 2019, p. 64). This also seems to be the case in developed countries. Only a few university libraries provide library user education for lecturers. In fact, libraries should offer a much wider selection of courses in user education to lecturers. Ideally, lecturers should be more proficient in information retrieval and library orientation than their students, so that they can actively use the library as a resource in their teaching.

User education is frequently an inherent aspect of library services in developed-country college libraries. In building broad and complete user education programs, developed countries use a more systematic and extended approach. Some of the common user education practices in higher education libraries in developed countries

include Regular Workshops and Training, Individual Consultations (Katuu, 2015, pp. 448-481), Integration of Information Literacy into the Curriculum, and Partnerships with Faculty (Scherrer, 2004).

### **Strategic Role in Supporting Academic Goals**

Participation in research, learning, and teaching activities is one of the ways librarians help academic institutions achieve their goals. According to Geiger (2004), universities in the United States have made research the primary role of universities since 1900-1940. This means that universities have evolved into a way of satisfying the demands of numerous interested institutions' research program requests. This period also marked the rapid development of the world's research universities.

Many Indonesian universities are now aspiring to be world-class universities. One factor that has been highlighted is the importance of improving university research. The library is an important infrastructure of research universities that helps to facilitate this. Libraries have a significant amount of responsibility for the success of university research development programs. The library must also be a collaborator in ensuring the long-term viability of university research and scientific communication (Rifai, 2022, p. 3).

Along with its development in several developed countries, the library is one of the main supporting units for academic activities (learning, teaching, and research). The library is the center of meetings and interactions of the entire academic community to collaborate and produce various research from various fields (Andayani, 2017, p. 30). For this reason, librarians are required to be an important part of university research activities. In addition to being able to provide sources of information or literature in the library, academic librarians must have a strategic role as partners in the research activities of university academics.

To realize the vision of a world-class library, librarians must no longer work traditionally, but become a companion who assists in the smooth running of the research conducted. In this case, librarians' assistance is not only traditional in providing information sources needed for research or providing lending services, but also providing consulting assistance and the use of technological devices that can support their research activities.

Unfortunately, the role of academic librarians in Indonesia has not been maximized. The function of librarians to support the discourse of research universities is still far from expectations. According to Selviana et al. (2017) research, the majority of librarians at universities cannot work in another profession. For example, she surveyed 32 librarians. As a result, only 11 librarians have additional library competencies. Another study mentioned that librarians do not have strong interpersonal skills. It demonstrates librarians' lack of self-awareness. As a result, they frequently misread the message or behavior of the library users and are unconcerned about their communication behavior, leaving them unable to address the needs/desires of the library users.

Nulampau (2019) even mentioned that the performance of academic librarians in several universities in Indonesia is really poor. This is inseparable from the mindset of librarians who think that librarian duties only carry out routine work. This situation results in the inability of librarians to overcome problems that interfere with the work system.

This condition, according to Ibrahim (2014), has been rooted and occurred to librarians in several universities. Librarians frequently express dissatisfaction with the fulfillment of credit scores for promotion. In reality, several activities can be undertaken to meet the credit score (Ibrahim, 2014, p. 65). The librarians do not understand the needs of the library users due to the dynamic information needs. They also have not mastered technology so they often become a marginalized group in the information society (Jannah, 2020, p. 4). The following issue is that library service officers are mainly staffed by less professional officers who have no librarian education background. The lack of librarian expertise and weak work procedures and methods are obstacles for librarians to carry out their work and utilize information, science, and technology.



In contrast to the facts stated above, the function of libraries in some developed countries cannot be separated from the vision and work of the head of the library as a leader (Scherrer, 2004). This positive approach to working influences librarians' performance, particularly in promoting the discourse of world-class libraries. Likewise, libraries' role is not limited to facilitating research universities. Librarians consistently reflect library leaders' expectations of librarians' shifting roles. Librarians also provide teaching and serve visitors who need to learn. This comprises curriculum-based classroom teaching, consultations, providing specialized classes when requested by different users, and conducting online classes. Learning is also more integrated into the curriculum and collaboration.

In addition, the role of librarians also goes further such as designing web pages, developing liaison programs, providing health information to consumers, and engaging in many creative activities. This is considered a major change in the work done by librarians over the past decade.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

To improve librarian performance, librarian self-development is non-negotiable. Such self-development is intended to improve their skills, knowledge, and competencies so that librarians play a more effective role in improving library performance. Law No 43/2007 on Libraries also emphasizes that librarianship is a profession that emphasizes competence. These competencies are obtained through librarianship education and/or training.

Unfortunately, many librarians do not have a library science education. This is worsened by the idea that librarianship is not a glamorous job, therefore specific talents are deemed unneeded. This appears to be the case not only in Indonesia but also in other countries. As a result of such preconceptions, librarians fall short of expectations.

Additionally, information management skills must be strengthened. In this instance, librarians' foreign language skills are still very weak. In fact, language skills are essential for selecting, procuring, and processing the right library materials. Furthermore, information management skills are vital as a tool for teaching information literacy to library users, particularly students, as the foundation of lifelong education.

In Indonesia and several developing countries, librarian training is conducted in short periods through seminars, short lectures, training through social media, and formal meetings. However, it is deemed ineffective since the short training is not intended to significantly improve skill levels. Such training is indeed beneficial if it is well-designed and helps to mold librarians' professionalism.

Librarian training is not only job-related at certain European libraries. However, self-development for librarians is accomplished through a variety of methods. For example, self-development through entrepreneurial skills in the library and information science profession. Training is also conducted not only for librarians in formal positions but also for library staff. Orientation, computer literacy simulation exercises, and in-service workshops are all part of the staff training programs. Staff development programs include job rotation, seminars, consultations, publications and research, institutional education, study leave, mentoring/coaching, and professional associations. Librarian self-development is even prepared at universities in the library and information science department. Many campuses in the department include various courses on business communication, information technology, and personality development.

To improve librarian performance, one of the main requirements of the librarian profession must be a person with a master's level education from an accredited library education institution and who has received library training as a basis for carrying out their duties.

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