

The Development of the Library Science Program of the University of the Philippines, 1914-1929

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Abstract

The library science program of the University of the Philippines began in 1914, and the institution soon became one of a small number of colleges under the American flag to offer a bachelor's degree in library science. Twelve years later, the American Library Association's Board of Education for Librarianship described the program as having "an extensive curriculum," and by 1929, the program was completely in the hands of Filipinos. This article examines the development of the program in its formative period.

Keywords: library science, Gabriel A. Bernardo, University of the Philippines

INTRODUCTION

The University of the Philippines (UP) was established in 1908 "to provide advanced instruction in literature, philosophy, the sciences, and arts, and to give professional and technical training" (UP, 1916, p. 27). It was seen as a key to developing Filipinos' ability to govern themselves, which the United States held up as a prerequisite of granting independence (Harrison, 1922). UP student Gabriel A. Bernardo stated in 1916 that he "consider[ed] the U.P. as an institution of men and women who will endeavor to make 'Free and United Philippines' a reality, a center of which will radiate all over the Orient, the true and enlightened spirit of Democracy" (Quoted in Casambre, 1985, p. 78). This was three years into the administration of Governor-General Francis Burton Harrison, who declared a "new era" in which more Filipinos would be placed in positions of authority in the government (Harrison, 1922, p. 50). Bernardo was among the early students to take UP library science courses, which began in 1914. In 1924, he was leading the library science program, and five years later, all members of the library science faculty were Filipinos.

Previous articles on the history of library science in the Philippines, such as those by Natividad P. Verzosa (1968) and Rosa M. Vallejo (1990), covered this period while focusing primarily on the post-World War II era. This current article contributes to further understanding of the development of the UP program by focusing on its formative years and by incorporating more information from early UP catalogs, as well as correspondence of Bernardo found in the archives of the American Library Association.

First Library Science Courses

James A. Robertson, the first Director of the Philippine Library, taught the first UP library science class on July 13, 1914. His student Francisco R. Ventura (1916, p. 139) wrote two years later that this was "the only library science class that has ever been inaugurated in the Philippines, nay, in the Orient." Although library science classes were taught at the University of Nanjing the previous year, Robertson's students rightfully saw themselves as library science "pioneers" (Ventura, 1916, p. 139; Yi, 2018). Assisting Robertson, who had the title of Lecturer on

Library Science, were Mary Polk of the Bureau of Science library, as well as Emma Elmer, Syrene McKee, and Blanche Shelp of the Philippine Library, and classes met in those libraries. Robertson went to the United States on official business in January 1915, leaving the others to teach the classes (Brazzeal, 2023).

The curriculum consisted of three six-unit courses that were taught one per year (UP, 1916). Bernardo later described the courses as “far from being satisfactory. The subjects usually included under various headings in the regular curricula of accredited library schools were spread over a period of three years” (Bernardo, 1974, p. 27). He was one of six students listed in UP student publication *The Philippinensian* who took the courses while pursuing a general Bachelor of Arts degree in the College of Liberal Arts (“Library Science Class,” 1917; Ventura, 1916). The degree required the completion of 68 hours, and the UP catalogue explained that “this degree does not correspond to the American baccalaureate degree. It is the bachiller en artes, a degree familiar in the Philippine Islands for many years” (UP, 1916, p. 66). *The Philippinensian* also listed five “special students” who seemed to be non-degree-seeking, and Ventura (1916) noted that there were many other students who started in the program but soon dropped out. He appreciated the efforts of the instructors, but he hoped that the program would be raised “to the standards of those library science courses offered in American universities” (p. 140).

The Bachelor of Science in Library Science

Robertson resigned while in the United States, and Polk officially joined the UP faculty as Lecturer on Library Science on January 10, 1916, though she continued her full-time position with the Bureau of Science (Brazzeal, 2023; Palma, 1925). Later that year, she submitted a proposal for the establishment of a four-year Bachelor of Science in Library Science (BSLS) program in the College of Liberal Arts, which was approved by the UP Board of Regents on January 27, 1917 (David, 2015). As shown in UP’s catalog for 1916-1917 (Bulletin 7), which also contained announcements for 1917-1918, the 136-unit curriculum included seven library science courses. These were taken one per semester, with Library Practice taken for both semesters of the junior year, making a total of 24 units. Some courses were still not very focused. For example, Library Science 6 covered library history and the history of printing and illustrating, but also advanced cataloging and

classification, loan systems, and inventory. Non-library science subjects most represented in the curriculum included English (28 units), non-English languages (24 units), and Education (15 units). Students who completed the first two years of the curriculum still earned a Bachelor of Arts, though this was not a library science degree (UP, 1917).

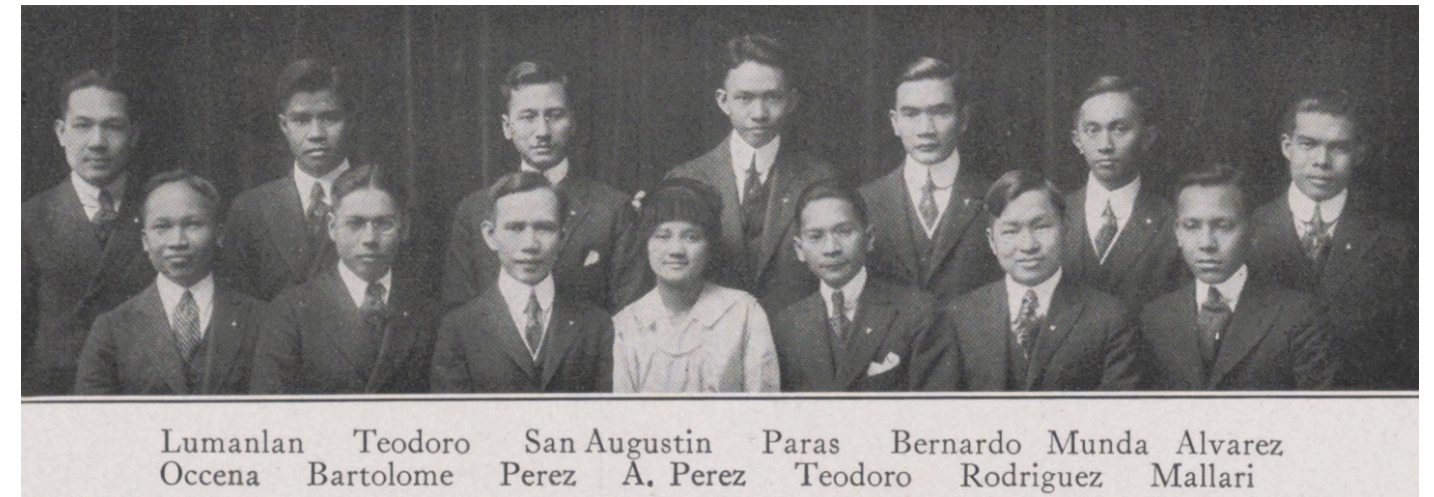
The catalog for 1917-1918 (Bulletin 8) showed the addition of two thesis units in the senior year, bringing the required number of library science units to 26. There were additional changes to required non-library science courses, and completion of the first two years now led to an Associate in Arts, reflecting the American model (UP, 1918). Polk went on extended leave in 1919, and former University of Oregon librarian Margaret C. Upleger taught the library science classes during her absence (“Miss Polk,” 1919; “University Showing,” 1918). Upleger’s credentials were such that she was appointed as Assistant Professor, but she resigned in 1920 (“Society,” 1920).

LIBRARY SCIENCE PENSIONADOS

The next catalog published was for 1921-1922 (Bulletin 9), and during the interim, an important event took place that would significantly impact the program’s future. In 1918, four government scholars (*pensionados*) were sent to the University of Wisconsin Library School (UWLS). These included former UP library science students Bernardo, Jose M. Munda, and Eulogio B. Rodriguez, who were now employees at the Philippine Library and Museum, and Cirilo B. Perez, who assisted Polk at the Bureau of Science. They graduated with certificates from UWLS two years later, and by this time, another library science pensionado, Ismael Mallari, was also attending UWLS (Brazzeal, 2023). In addition to the certificate from UWLS, Rodriguez earned a Master of Arts in Political Science, and Mallari earned a Bachelor of Arts in English. Figure 1 shows the five library science pensionados and other Filipino students at UW.

After Bernardo and Perez returned from the U.S. in August 1920, they continued to work in their former libraries, while also taking the needed UP coursework to receive the BSLS in 1921. (Bernardo, 1974; Perez, 1921; UP, 1925b). Also graduating that year was Ding U. Doo from China, who became a prominent figure in Chinese librarianship (Luo, 2015). These three were the first to receive degrees in library science at UP. Bernardo transferred from the Philippine Library

Figure 1 *Members of the University of Wisconsin Filipino Club, including library science pensionados Bernardo, Mallari, Munda, Perez, and Rodriguez (Travers, 1921, p. 592).*



and Museum to UP, where he served as a cataloger, while Perez continued at the Bureau of Science (Bernardo, 1974).

EXPANSION OF THE PROGRAM

The catalog for 1921-1922 shows that Mary Polk, now with the rank of Professor, was assisted by four other faculty members (UP, 1921). In addition to Bernardo and Perez, who were Instructors of Library Science, these included Richard C. McGregor, Lecturer on Library Science and Zoology, and Lois S. Osborn, Associate Professor of Education. McGregor was a zoologist at the Bureau of Science who had years of experience editing the *Philippine Journal of Science* (Uichanco, 1937). Osborn, known as the founder of school libraries in the Philippines, joined the faculty of the UP College of Education in 1920 (Cabañero & Tann, 1980; Manuel, 1986). However, all the library faculty members had other responsibilities that prevented them from focusing solely on the library science program.

The catalog listed the following ten courses and a thesis course, which was dropped in subsequent catalogs. Those marked with an asterisk were not part of the required curriculum.

| | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Elementary Reference Work | Book Selection* |
| Classification | Advanced Cataloging* |
| Elementary Cataloging | Advanced Reference Work* |
| Printing and Indexing | Library History |
| Library Practice | Library Administration |

The American Library Association’s (ALA’s) Committee on Library Co-operation with Other Countries reported in December 1921 that “Mary Polk, librarian of the Bureau of Science of the Philippine Islands ... has sent us ... an extremely interesting letter giving details of the courses in Library Science being offered in the University of the Philippines” (“Committee Reports,” 1922, p. 196). However, the UP library science program was not included in listings of library schools found in the 1923 editions of the *American Library Directory* and Arthur Bostwick’s *The American Public Library*, even though the former did have an entry for the UP Library in its College and Normal Libraries section (American Library, 1923; Bostwick, 1923).

UP officially established the University Library on March 9, 1922, and it was “designated as the Department of Library Science to be placed on a level of equality with other departments of instruction” (Quoted in Bernardo, 1974, p. 23). Students no longer had to go to off-campus libraries to attend library science classes. The catalog for 1922-1923 (Bulletin 10) showed that no library science courses were to be taken in the freshman year. Two were to be taken in the second year, four in the third year, and three in the fourth year, making a total of 27 units of library science courses. Library Practice and the thesis were not listed. The catalog also included a new library science major option for the Bachelor of Science in Education (BSE) degree in the College of Education, which required completion of eighteen units of library science courses (UP, 1923). No education classes were

required for BSLS majors.

FILIPINO LEADERSHIP

Leadership of the library science program changed with the death of Polk on April 12, 1924, and the University Library and the library science program would be in the capable hands of Bernardo, who had earned a Master's from UP in 1923, until his retirement in 1957 (Bernardo, 1974; Verzosa, 1963). He saw some weaknesses in the program and wrote to the UP Committee on University Curriculum on December 18, 1924, with proposed changes. This included increasing the required units of English in the second year, since "students ... cannot satisfactorily master the technical courses in library science without a stronger foundation in English." He lamented that Library Practice had been dropped "for no plausible reason ... by my predecessors," and he urged that it be added back. He also wanted Book Selection to change from one three-unit course to a six-unit course over two semesters (Bernardo, 1924).

Bernardo's proposed changes were reflected in the catalog for 1925-1926 (Bulletin 11), with 34 units of library science and 36 units of English now required. Additionally, all library science courses were shifted to the junior and senior years (UP, 1925c). Also, "the College of Liberal Arts changed the name of the degree from Bachelor of Science to Bachelor of Philosophy, believing that the latter would attract more students to the course" (Bernardo, 1925b). Three library science courses for non-majors were also offered: School Libraries I and II and Use of Books and Libraries. There were now two additional library science faculty members. Natividad Polintan received the BSLS in 1924 and joined the staff of the University Library. She also served as an Instructor in Library Science and seems to be the first library

science faculty member who, at the time of appointment, had received all of their education in the Philippines (UP, 1925b). Lecturer Isidoro Saniel was a library science pensionado who worked as a reference librarian at the Bureau of Science before taking the same position at the UP Library (Brazzeal, 2021). Figure 2 is a collage of photos of Mary Polk, Lois Osborn, and Isidoro Saniel.

QUEST FOR RECOGNITION AND ACCREDITATION

Bernardo's proposal noted that "all book selection courses in accredited library schools in the United States require one or more years' work" (Bernardo, 1924). He was likely referring to the 15 programs that were members of the Association of American Library Schools, founded in 1915. In 1924, the ALA Council established the Board of Education for Librarianship to develop "minimum standards for library schools" (Strohm et al., 1926, p. 412). Bernardo wrote to the Board on September 5, 1925, asking for their annual report. He noted that "the recommendations of your Board will, I am sure, be of great aid to us in reorganizing the Department of Library Science of this University" (Bernardo, 1925a). The Board sent copies of the report and also asked for details about the UP program. Bernardo responded on November 28 with a 13-page letter to Board Executive Assistant Harriet E. Howe. He concluded with a frank assessment of the challenges he faced.

Our main problem is to attract more serious students into the course. This cannot be easily done for two reasons: (1) There is no demand for trained librarians, as the authorities in the public and school libraries have not yet realized the value of trained library workers; (2) the department lacks the

necessary full-time members in the teaching staff, and the equipment in the form [of] class and laboratory rooms.

I have succeeded in convincing the University Council of the need [for] approving the last curriculum, but I hesitate to recommend further changes until we have the necessary teaching and equipment. My aim is to concentrate all the library science courses in the fourth year (Bernardo, 1925b).

The Board was pleased with the direction of the UP program. The courses offered seemed to meet the Board's expectations because the only comments about the curriculum itself were words of support for Bernardo's hope to move all library science courses to the senior year. The Board also felt "that the executive officer of the library school should give full time to the school" (Howe, 1926). This was likely a recommendation that Bernardo was hoping for. He shared Howe's reply with the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, but he lamented in a letter to Howe on May 5, 1926, that there were "so many obstacles to surmount" to meet the Board's minimum standards (Bernardo, 1926). The Board's second annual report stated that "requests for advice ... have come from the University of the Philippines where an extensive curriculum in library science is being offered and the Minimum Standards for Library Schools are being considered as a basis for expansion" (Strohm et al., 1926, p. 418). However, the pursuit of recognition by the Board continued throughout the pre-World War II era to no avail, most likely due to the inability of the program to have full-time library science faculty (Bernardo, 1974; Saniel, 1929, 1939). It was not until the establishment of the Institute of Library Science in 1961 that UP had full-time library science faculty (Vallejo, 2007).

The catalog for 1929-1930 (Bulletin No. 14) shows that the degree name changed back to the BSLS and now required 36 units of library science courses, with all but six taken in the senior year (UP, 1930). Chemical and General Bibliography I and II were now offered, primarily for pharmacy and chemistry majors, and Medical Bibliography and Preparation of Articles for Publication was required for medical students. McGregor and Osborn were no longer teaching in the department, resulting in a completely Filipino library science faculty. Bernardo was now an associate

professor, and at the time of publication, he was in Germany for further studies in library science. Saniel, who was Acting Librarian, and Isaac V. Mallari were assistant professors (UP, 1930). Natividad (Polintan) Versoza and 1927 BSE graduate Benedicto C. Reyes were instructors, while Perez continued as a lecturer.

The library science department struggled to recruit students for the BSLS programs during its early years. In Bernardo's letter to Howe in November 1925, he noted that, besides the six BSLS graduates, only 21 students had taken library sciences courses "as major, minor, or free electives in connection with other university curricula" (Bernardo, 1925b). The number taking library science classes grew, however, and in 1929, there were 23 library science students doing practicums in the Bureau of Science library alone, though many may have been B.S.E. library science majors (Brown, 1930). By March 1932, the College of Liberal Arts had awarded only nine library science degrees and eight minors. In addition to the BSLS graduates mentioned above, other graduates from the department included library science pensionado Jose Munda in 1922, Eloisa Rivera y Francia in 1925, Dalmacio Alarilla in 1929, and Solomon V. Arnaldo in 1930 ("North, South, East, West," 1931; UP, 1925a). The author has not been able to identify the ninth graduate. The library science major in the BSE program had greater success, with 59 students graduating with this major and another 90 minoring in library science during the same time period (Bernardo, 1974). The minor required nine units and was recommended for BSE students majoring in English (University of the Philippines, 1930). One of the highest compliments paid to the program is found in a book by former Philippine Vice-Governor Joseph Ralston Hayden, who wrote on the eve of World War II that UP "now has a first-rate department of library science which is swelling the ranks of trained librarians and elevating the profession in the Philippines" (Hayden, 1942, pp. 616-617).

CONCLUSION

Mary Grace Golfo-Barcelona (2021) noted that "the success of UP SLIS ... is a fruit of hard work of all pioneering librarians and practitioners in the field of LIS since 1914 up to present" (p. 47). This article has examined the development of the UP library science program during its formative period,

Figure 2 Photos of Mary Polk, Lois S. Osborn, and Isidoro Saniel (U.S. Department of State, 1917, 1919, 1923)



highlighting the pioneering faculty and curricular changes. During this time, the program transformed from a concentration led by Americans to full-fledged degree programs in the College of Liberal Arts and the College of Education, led and taught completely by Filipinos.

DECLARATION ON CONFLICTING INTERESTS

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from 1904 to 1911. Since that time, his research has focused primarily on the American colonial era of Philippine history, with a special emphasis on the history of Philippine librarianship.

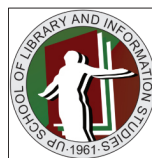
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