

Evolving Promotion Prospects for Library Technical Staff in Universities

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Library technical staffs as Library Attendant, Semi Professional Assistant and Professional Assistant form the main technical support cadres in a University library. Most of the professional operations are handled or executed through these cadres and hence their job satisfaction is of utmost importance in realizing the various objectives of the library. There are no promotional avenues like Career Advancement Scheme (CAS) or time bound promotion as compared to Assistant Librarian (AL) for these staff. In university and college libraries, number of Professional Assistants, Semi-Professional Assistants, and Library Attendants are stagnating without any career advancement schemes, which causes frustration and demoralization among these professionals. Until and unless library professionals are satisfied with their profession especially in respect of pay scales and promotional avenues, they cannot provide excellent service to library users. Earlier there was a smooth career progression to entry level officer post of Assistant Librarian in a university from the post of Professional Assistant and this got stopped after implementing the UGC NET (National Eligibility Test) in 1988 as a minimum entry qualification for the post. The Government of India, through its notification dated 22nd July, 1988 entrusted the task of conducting the eligibility test for lectureship to UGC. Consequently, UGC conducted the first National Eligibility Test, common to both eligibility for Lectureship and Junior Research Fellowship in two parts, that is, in December 1989 and in March, 1990¹. Till the 5th Pay Commission, Professional Assistants after completing 8-10 years of service used to get their pay revised through timescale or Upward Movement Scheme (UMS) to Rs. 8000-275-13500, the pay scale of Assistant Librarian without a change in designation. But the recommendations of the 6th Pay Commission further downgraded the prospects. Semi Professional Assistants were offered Grade Pay (GP) Rs.2800 in Pay Band (PB) 1 instead of GP 4200 in PB 2 as done in the case of PRTs in schools. Professional Assistants

were placed on a lower GP than school librarians (GP of Rs. 4200 instead of Rs. 4600) and they may only get the next GP through timescale scheme of Modified Assured Career Progression Scheme (MACPS) such as 4600 after 10 years, 4800 after 20 years and Rs. 5400 after 30 years if one is lucky enough to serve for so long. This situation is pathetic when considering promotion prospects of many other categories of staff in the very same institutions.

Library staff is normally an isolated minority cadre in a university considering the maximum number of senior staff in teaching cadre and majority cadre of administrative staff. For teachers, UGC Pay Review Committee (PRC) frames recommendations for new pay scales and career advancement. In the case of administrative staff, due to the similarity of designations and work profile, adhering to scales for equivalent positions in Government provides many advantages. Development of any library depends on the team work and no single librarian can provide the library services alone. Thus, when the representatives of librarians and library associations met UGC PRC for impressing upon pay scales, promotion prospects and service conditions of librarian, deputy librarian and librarian, they also pleaded with the committee about the stagnation of professional assistants, semi professional assistants, etc. This request went unheeded due to "both the qualifications required for and the nature of work being done by these category of staff are very different from those required for the position of teachers in universities and colleges"². The career progression of technical cadre with more educational and technical qualifications should be better than or at least as good as the administrative support staff in a university. There are some universities with large library facilities which still maintain a channel for their professional assistants to become assistant librarian through promotion where as such a facility is not available in many universities. In a democracy, the dreams and aspirations of every citizen is given due weight and these democratic ideals can be guaranteed only when the library technical staff can progress towards higher cadres after serving for long in a lower post. If a candidate is very meritorious, s/he can join as assistant librarian immediately after education where as if s/he is not so can still get the

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post after 8-10 years of working as professional assistant. The same is the case with one who joined in the still lower posts of semi professional assistant and library attendant after prescribed experience through promotion to higher cadres. Such a guaranteed promotion scheme is highly essential as a service institution like a university library needs the dedicated and wholesome participation of each and every member of its staff to unearth its full potentials for services expected of it.

Library Technical Staff in Universities

This discussion basically centres around three broad categories of technical staff working in university libraries, viz., library attendant, semi professional assistant and professional assistant. Though there are other designations like library clerk are available in some institutions, they are not discussed here due to their absence in many institutions. Administrative or ministerial staff in libraries such as attendant, clerical staff, administrative officers such as section officer, assistant registrar etc., are transferable administrative positions well taken care of in a university due to their sheer numbers and hence not included in this discussion.

- Library Attendants are basically involved in the stacking section and for support in other professional activities. They should be aware of basic routines in library operations and services; preparation and organization of library materials including display and shelf arrangement; basic knowledge of different types of library collections, library classification schemes, library automation software and OPAC, library cataloging scheme including AACR-2, book no., subject headings and reprography services; and basic skills of use of computer for library work.³
- Semi Professional Assistants are involved in the next higher level of professional activities. They need to possess skills and knowledge of a level higher than the library attendants. They should possess knowledge and skills of library routines and practices such as basic routines of acquisition including checking for duplicates, placing orders, receiving books, processing bills and accessioning; basic knowledge of library classification and cataloguing; basic routines of serials control; able to involve in library services of circulation and reference; stack arrangement, shelf rectification, stock taking and binding control; and operating and

handling OPAC. They may also be aware of different kinds of documents (print and non-print including electronic and web-based) and their characteristics; information and communication technology (Internet, web and email) and skills of using word processing and library software; basic knowledge of e-resources including e-books, e-journals and e-data-bases⁴.

- Professional Assistants conduct both technical job on their own as well as supervision of semi professional assistants and library attendants attached to their sections. They need to possess skills and knowledge of a higher order than the semi professional assistants. They should have advance knowledge and skills of library routines and practices such as advanced acquisition processes; advance knowledge of library classification, advance practical skills of cataloguing and serials control routines; involve in serious processes of circulation control such as entitlement, fine management and override procedures; advance reference support services; maintenances supervision; operating and handling OPAC involving complicated searches and user training. They should command advance knowledge of: different kinds of documents (print, non-print including electronic and web-based) and their characteristics; information communication technology and its tools including web designing, internet searching and documentation; e-resources including e-books, e-journals, e-data-bases; information resources and their use for wide ranging reference services; and tools and techniques of library management⁵.

The entry qualifications and eligibility for promotion for these three library technical posts is presented in Table 1.

On the one hand, the promotion prospects of professional assistants are deteriorating and their pay scale is also being reduced in successive pay commissions on the other as per the comparison attempted in Table 2. According to 6th pay commission the promotion prospects of professional assistants are pathetic. In the 4th pay commission, the professional assistants were in the pay scale of Rs. 1640-2900 which was equivalent to PGTs in Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs) and Navodaya Vidyalayas (NVs). In the 5th pay commission professional assistants were one step downgraded; i.e., equivalent to TGTs of KVs and NVs and the pay scale was 5500-9000. In 6th Pay

Table 1: Entry Qualifications and Eligibility for Promotion for Library Technical Posts

No	Post & Pay Scale	Eligibility Qualifications for Direct Recruitment	Eligibility through Promotion	Further Promotional Avenues
1	Library Attendant (LA) PB1: 5200-20200 + GP 1900	10+2 with 1 year CLIS ⁶	100% by Direct Recruitment ⁶ .	Can become SPA after 5 years of Service in case of availability of vacancy
2	Semi Professional Assistant PB 1: 5200-20200 + GP 2800	Bachelor's Degree of a recognised University with Certificate in Library Science preferably with computer knowledge ⁶ .	5 years experience as Library Attendant ⁶ .	Can become PA after 5 years of Service in case of availability of vacancy
3	Professional Assistant PB 2: 9300-34800+ GP 4200	M.A./M.Sc/M.Com with a Degree in Library Science of a recognised University with 2 years Library experience with computer knowledge. Or B.A./B.Sc/B.Com with a Degree in Library Science of a recognised University and 4 years experience in a Library with computer knowledge ⁶ .	5 years of regular service as a Semi Professional Assistant ⁶ .	No promotional avenues in spite of having vacancy and requisite qualification as prescribed by UGC.

Commission, again the Professional Assistants have been downgraded by giving them the PB of Rs. 9300-34800 + 4200 GP which is equivalent to PRTs. And if the deteriorating situation continues like this, then no doubt in the 7th Pay Commission the professional assistants will get the pay scale equivalent to LDCs of Government of India.

Due to similar qualifications and tying with the TGT post of teachers, librarians of schools were offered the GP of 4600 whereas similar qualified professional assistants of universities, SLIAs of IITs/IIMs and LIAs of Government libraries were offered lower GP of 4200 only. Representations to address this anomaly are still pending. Another visible injustice noted from this table is PRT with pay scale of 4500-7000 in the 5th Central Pay Commission (CPC) was offered GP of 4200 in PB2 in the 6th CPC whereas the SPAs in the said scale in the 5th CPC was only provided GP of 2800 in PB1. In 4th CPC, PGTs, PAs and SLIAs were getting equal pay scales and TGTs, SPAs and LIAs were equal. In 5th CPC, PA and SLIA were one step downgraded, i.e.,

equivalent to TGT and LIA and SPA were downgraded to PRT. In 6th CPC PA and SLIA are again downgraded by giving the PB of Rs.9300-34800 + 4200 GP which is equivalent to PRTs. Perhaps the small number of library positions prompted such sort of tinkering with their pay scales in different institutions and pay commissions. The authorities concerned should immediately address the genuine grievances of SPAs and PAs by enhancing their GPs to 4200 and 4600 respectively to match with what is offered for similar positions in other cadres and to render justice to those who toil for long in service facilities.

Evolving Promotion Prospects for Library Technical Staff

It is evident from Table 1 that every incumbent can move to the next post after 5 years of continuous service through promotion. But there is a catch here as promotion is offered only when there is a vacancy exists in the post. Since library positions are few in number, they never have the requisite number of vacancies

Table 2. Pay Scales in various Pay Commissions of Teachers and Librarians of School, PA, SPA, SLIA and LIA in different organisations

Pay Scales in various CPCs	In Schools			In Universities			In IITs, IIMs & Govt. of India	
	PGT	TGT	PRT	Librarian	PA	SPA	SLIA	LIA
4 th CPC	1640-2900	1400-2600	1200-1800	1400-2600	1640-2900	1350-2200	1640-2900	1400-2600
5 th CPC	6500-10500	5500-9000	4500-7000	5500-9000	5500-9000	4500-7000	5500-9000	5000-8000
6 th CPC	PB2: 9300- 34800 + GP 4800	PB2: 9300- 34800 + GP 4600	PB2: 9300- 34800 + GP 4200	PB2: 9300- 34800 + GP 4600	PB2: 9300- 34800 + GP 4200	PB-I 5200- 20200 + GP 2800	PB2: 9300- 34800 + GP 4200	PB2: 9300- 34800 + GP 4200

CPC- Central Pay Commission, PGT – Post Graduate Teacher; TGT – Trained Graduate Teacher; PRT – Primary Teacher; PA- Professional Assistant; SPA - Semi-Professional Assistant; SLIA - Sr. Library & Information Assistant, LIA- Library & Information Assistant.

forcing many incumbents to stagnate in one post for long. As a result, library attendants may get the post of semi professional assistants and semi professional assistants may get the post of professional assistants on promotion only if there is provision for promotion of professional assistants to the next higher post of assistant librarian to create vacancies for accommodating these incumbents at lower level:

- Public institutions have two types of promotion-vacancy based as well as personal.
- Normal channel is vacancy based promotion where apart from the minimum stipulated period of service you also need to have vacancy in the higher post to get the promotion. Since the number of posts in an institution is fixed and based on a predefined formula, most of the time vacancies arise on retirement or resignation and miniscule addition at long intervals as a result of institutional growth. As per the prevailing rules, a government employee is eligible for promotion only when there is vacancy in the post to be promoted. In case of vacancy, there are cases (especially for positions with more number of vacancies in each cadre) where an incumbent got the promotion by waving the minimum service/experience prescribed. However, if there is no vacancy, then the person won't get the promotion even after completing the minimum period of service prescribed.
- To tide over this crisis, the government has evolved the timescale scheme of UMS in 5th pay revision through which institutions gave the pay scale of the post due without designation as a means to at least extend partial benefits to stagnating

incumbents. Accordingly, many PAs got the pay of AL without designation. But the timescale got effective in 6th pay revision, MACPS offered not even the GP of the next post but only the next GP in the pay structure leaving PAs to satisfy with GP of 4600 in the first timescale, GP of 4800 in the second timescale and only GP of 5400 (not the GP of 6000 valid for ALs which they would have got in the first timescale itself as per the UMS of last pay revision) in the third timescale. All this to a cadre which the National Knowledge Commission (NKC) considers as the backbone of all professional activities of any library⁷. If this is the plight of the backbone, you can very well imagine the plight of the library.

- Personal promotion through career advancement or performance evaluation was extended to teachers and academic staff in universities and scientific staff in research institutions where an incumbent gets the next higher position based on performance and experience without vacancy created in the higher post. Such a facility is unfortunately not extended to lower staff in universities though some research institutions have extended the provision to scientific and technical support staff also. Perhaps extending such a feature to stagnating cadres in universities is the only way to tide over the present huge crisis of vacancy based promotion scenario bereft of vacancies. This may help the library technical staff to reach the next higher post (both pay and designation) after 8-10 years of service: library attendants to get the post of SPAs, SPAs to get the post of PAs and PAs to get the post of ALs. There should be provision for at least one of these posts

to be granted to a particular incumbent exclusively through promotion in 5 years itself.

What is required is the setting up of vacancy substituting (an SPA can move to PA without creating vacancies in the higher post but by substituting the lower post with the higher) or personal promotion for these staff to sustain their increased professional output and enhanced job performance. Once there is a forward movement from one lower cadre to another, there will be vacancies in the lower cadre both for fresh recruitment for inclusion of young blood and for promoting incumbents in still lower posts. There must be a fixed percentage of vacancies in each of the cadres for fresh recruitment for finding fresh talent which is highly essential in a service institution like library which is under the continuous onslaught of new technologies and to counter increased user dissatisfaction so common with service units. Instead of suggesting professional assistants, who were offered a lower GP of 4200 in place of 4600/4800 genuinely due to them, have to slog for 10 years to get GP of 4600 through MACPS (not promotion) and the next GPs of 4800 after another 10 years (after 20 years of joining GP 4200) and 5400 after another 10 years (after 30 years of joining GP 4200), they should have been straightaway granted AL designation with GP of 6000 after 8-10 years through timescale. Placing in the next GP which is of very meager difference may not be treated as a promotion especially for an isolated cadre of library technical staff considering the very lesser number of positions in these cadres and the limited chances of open selection for higher positions in same or another institution.

To break the argument of next GP only on timescale movements, the library positions in Government of India libraries are highlighted in Table 3. Here Assistant Library & Information Officer in GP of 4600 is promoted to Library & Information Officer in GP of 6600 though there are GPs of 4800 and 5400 in between in government pay structure. Thus it is evident that each category of staff is offered certain pay scales to meet the genuine aspirations of that cadre to reach a substantial GP after putting certain years of service permissible in a person's service period. Thus professional assistants after 8-10 years of service may be permitted to get the assistant librarian post through MACPS. This can be achieved more pragmatically now as a result of the exemption of NET for Ph. D. holders for the assistant librarian post and permitting professional assistants to undertake part time Ph.D. after five years continuous service in the post. In special

cases of overage and other personal constraints, Ph.D. may be relaxed on a case to case basis in lieu of job conduct and professional performance. This may be done by creating supernumerary positions or as personal promotion to the incumbents as in the case of teachers through career advancement without compromising the infusion of fresh hands in this important entry level officer position of university libraries. For recruitment to the post of university librarian, experience of 13 years as Deputy Librarian (DL) or 18 years as College Librarian/Assistant Librarian (AL) is required. Then why not for recruitment to the post of DL, 10-15 years of experience as PA may also be considered along with assistant librarians with 5 years experience. The most affected are PAs and SPAs working in institutions which have adopted UGC scales because neither they are governed by government scales nor UGC is doing anything for them. In some universities promotion policy has been implemented by their higher decision making bodies like Boards or Executive Councils for promoting PAs as ALs which will be extended to the affected staff in those institutions only. But there are no clear guidelines by UGC for its wide implementation on a national scale leaving many of the affected professionals without any benefits of career improvement and job satisfaction. Consider this with the case of comparatively better promotion avenues in scientific institutions under CSIR, ICAR, DRDO, DAE, DST, DOS, etc., after stipulated years.

Change in Designations

The recommendations of the 5th CPC concentrated on restructuring government staff and designations by abolishing some of the lower positions and instead forming Multi Tasking Staff (MTS) at the lower level. The emphasis was on improved educational qualifications for entry as well as enhanced performance. Better accountability, decentralized decision making, and less number of hierarchies were the major thrusts of this exercise. The 6th CPC further emphasized these aspects and still reduced the hierarchies and number of pay scales by categorizing the entire staff under four pay bands. To reflect the changing times and to make persons more accountable as well as their efficient conduct of work further simpler by evolving well documented decentralized decision making procedures, there are also certain changes in designations. To reflect and assimilate these trends, it is in the fitness of things for evolving changes in designation of library technical staff as displayed in

Table 3. Library Positions in Government of India Libraries⁸

No	Post & Pay Scale	Entry Qualifications	Eligibility for Promotion
1	Library & Information Assistant PB 2:9300-34800 GP 4200	EQ: BLIS with two years professional experience DQ: DCA	Holding analogous posts on a regular basis; or With six years of regular service in the post in the PB I:5200-20200 GP 2800 or equivalent possessing the educational qualifications and experience prescribed for direct recruits; or Departmental Library Clerk(s) in PB I:5200-20200 GP 1900 with 10 years of regular service in the grade and possessing BLIS
2	Assistant Library & Information Officer PB 2:9300-34800 GP 4600 (some recent advertisements show enhanced GP 4800)	EQ: BLIS with two years professional experience DQ: MLIS, DCA	Library & Information Assistant in PB 2:9300-34800 GP 4200 with five years regular service in the grade and successfully completed training of 2-4 weeks in the field of Library.
3	Library & Information Officer PB 3:15600-39100 GP 6600	EQ: MLIS with five years professional experience DQ: 1 year experience of computerizing Library activities, 1 year Professional experience in the specific areas of activities of the Department, DCA	Assistant Library & Information officer in PB 2:9300-34800 GP 4600 with 7 years regular service in the grade possessing qualification and successfully completed training of 2-4 weeks in the field of Library.
4	Senior Library & Information Officer PB 3:15600-39100 GP 7600	EQ: MLIS with ten years professional experience DQ: 1 year experience of computerizing Library activities, 1 year Professional experience in the specific areas of activities of the Department, DCA	Library & Information Officer PB 3:15600-39100 GP 6600 with 5 years regular service in the grade possessing qualification and successfully completed training of 2-4 weeks in the field of Library.

Table 4 and Fig. 1.

Ideally, these scales proposed are still lower when compared with the scales extended to school teachers as per the qualifications prescribed, especially when B.Ed. degree for school teaching is a one year course after graduation like BLIS. No doubt, school teachers deserve better scales even at par with teachers in higher education considering the pious profession they are in and the invaluable roles they play for transforming the new generation into able, educated, informed, efficient and better citizens of tomorrow. For PGT, the entry qualification is PG with B.Ed., and for PA, the entry qualification PG with BLIS or Graduation with MLIS and hence their GP should be 4800 as applicable for PGTs. In a similar manner the respective GPs for SPA (Graduation with BLIS) should be 4600 as in the case of TGT (Graduation with B.Ed.) and Library Attendant

(12th with CLIS/DLIS) should be 4200 for PRT (12th with NTT/JBT/TTC). This is again underlined and emphasized as library professionals play no less roles than teachers in meeting the various pedagogic functions expected of the library in education and research especially in the aftermath of multiple media for education in the context of more learning takes place outside the classrooms.

Conclusion

A government or public institution should offer genuine justice to all categories of staff as far as pay scales, promotion prospects and career advancement is concerned. Library staff in universities and higher education institutions is not treated at least like similar staff in schools is a matter of introspection. If such type of step motherly behavior sustains, in future young

Table 4. Proposed Designations and Pay for Library Technical Staff

No	Present Designation and Pay Scale	Proposed Designation and Pay Scale	Justification
1	Library Attendant PB1: 5200-20200 GP 1900	Junior Library Executive PB1: 5200-20200 GP 2800	To provide able professional housekeeping of print stacks and support of electronic resources. To efficiently undertake the entry level professional support routines. Enhanced qualification of BLIS or Graduate with CLIS/DLIS may be insisted.
2	Semi Professional Assistant PB1: 5200-20200 GP 2800	Assistant Library Executive PB2: 9300-34800 GP 4200	To efficiently conduct the basic professional support activities.
3	Professional Assistant PB2: 9300-34800 GP 4200	Library Executive PB2: 9300-34800 GP 4600	To efficiently execute the advance professional support activities.

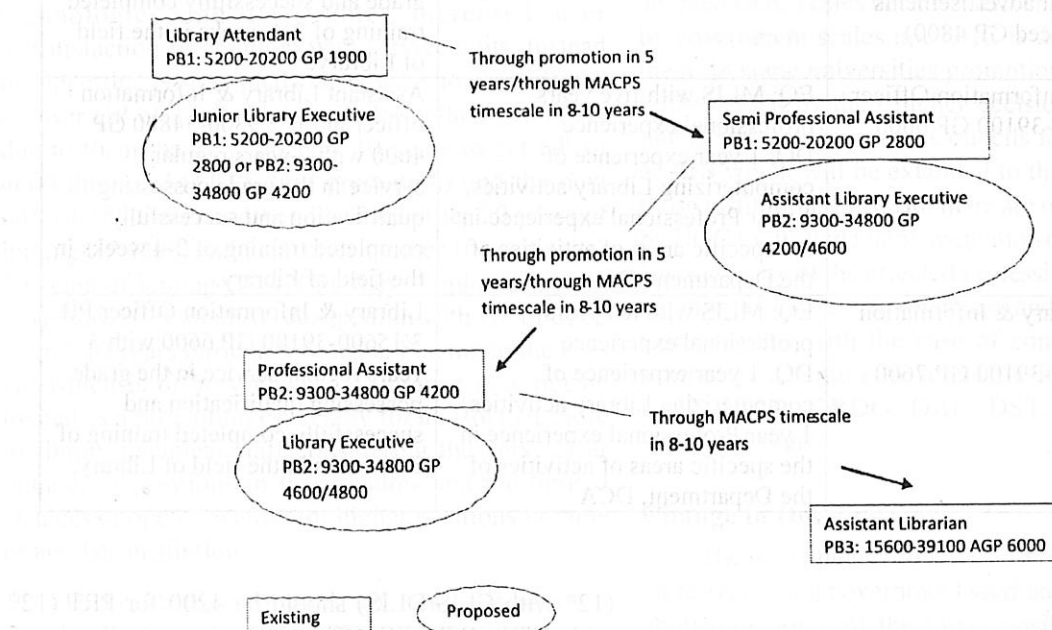


Fig. 1: Schematic Diagram of Better Designation and Pay for Library Technical Staff

Note: Assistant Librarian as an existing post is put in 'rectangle' instead of 'ellipse' meant for proposed positions. However, the promotion from PA to AL currently nonexistent in many universities should be made operational to safeguard the promotion prospects of library technical staff and to improve the professional performance of library.

library professionals will think many times to join universities and colleges below the post of Assistant Librarian. Instead, they will prefer to join as school librarian for better prospects leaving higher education libraries in dearth of much needed fresh technical talent. To ensure promotion prospects for professional assistants to the next higher position in university library of assistant librarians as done by some of the universities with larger and better library facilities,

UGC may immediately constitute a committee of library professionals. The said committee may examine the best practices and provide suitable recommendations for ensuring promotion of professional assistants after completing 8-10 years of service in the post as assistant librarians. The committee may also frame viable options of personal promotion or vacancy substituting promotion system to the stagnant cadres of library technical personnel which are

far and few in number. To strive also for fresh talent in the post of assistant librarian, the professional assistants may be promoted in such a manner without consuming the positions meant for open recruitment either as personal promotions through career advancement or on supernumerary basis. The committee may also look into the anomalies with respect to GPs for LAs, SPAs and PAs as well as for re-designating these positions to reflect the changing trends of job profile and their increased responsibilities in the government sector and public educational institutions.

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