



Current Status of Pakistan Library Association: A SWOT Analysis

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Abstract

Oldest and most well-known professional association of librarians and information professionals in Pakistan is the Pakistan Library Association (PLA) founded in 1957 and registered under the Societies Registration Act of 1860. In this paper, a thorough review of the PLA in terms of its past evolution, organizational structure, professional practice, and contribution to the library and information science (LIS) field will be discussed. It examines the governance system of the association, which areas it covers, its standing committees, and major projects such as annual conferences, workshops, publications, and advocacy. To inform the discussion of strengths and weaknesses, the paper takes stock of the strengths of PLA, which include national penetration, impact, and international cooperation, as well as highlights the weaknesses, which include the lack of consistency in academic productivity, the use of volunteers, and the inconsistency between time segments. Areas of renewal research are the increase of digital spaces, research involvement, global networking, and development programs. Other threats that will be discussed include the threat of dependency, the threat of loss of relevancy, the threat of loss of funding, and the threat of informal online groups. The research establishes that PLA has an illustrious reputation to adhere to, where it needs to take strategic steps on research, the incorporation of the digital aspect, and the training of the workforce to remain relevant and steer the transformation of librarianship in Pakistan. The present paper can provide LIS professionals, the leadership of PLA, and policy-makers with practical ideas on effectiveness in library services and scholarly cooperation nationwide.

Keywords

Pakistan Library Association (PLA), Library and Information Science (LIS), Professional Development, Library Associations, Governance and Policy, SWOT Analysis



Introduction

Library Association

Reitz (2005) defines library association as: “A membership organization consisting of a group of librarians, library directors, and other persons involved with libraries who meet periodically to discuss matters of professional interest. Library associations represent the interests of their members, sponsor conferences, elect officers, select committees to address specific issues, publish newsletters and professional journals, and charge dues to support the organization's activities.” as cited in (Ahmad & Science, 2007)

The mechanism leading libraries associations is very formal whereby the organizations are registered with the government often on the lines of the legal systems like the Societies Registration Act, 1860, or any other potential legal laws. They will be offered this registration which will bring them legal status allowing them to conduct operations as nonprofits, perform financial accounting and conduct official operations (Assembly, 1860). To register, associations are required to submit a constitution that outlines their goals, governing body, and operational structure. They must obey the rules of government, perhaps, by conducting annual general meetings, having open elections of leaders, and filing financial accounts once they are identified Adelman, G., et al. (2017). Moreover, the work of library associations is affected by the national policy frameworks that define such issues as professional standards, copyright laws, intellectual freedom and access to information (Byrne, 2000). They also have the advocacy role to work with the policy makers in formulation of a better legislation, funding and promoting the growth of the libraries and the information services.

Purpose of Library Association

Library association generally works for the progress and promotion of the library profession by providing the professionals assistance using channels for exchanging professional ideas and experiences. It speculates the professional issues, problems and keeps them up to date with recent trends existed in the profession. It motivates the professional for the achievement of their rights. Abram (2006) elaborated three main purposes of library association. According to author associations create interacting among its members, provide different opportunities for the professionals to make progress and promoter for the profession and its users.

We find several major national and international organizations in the library profession.



American Library Association (ALA)

It is the oldest and largest library association in the world, with approximately 66,000 members, founded in 1876 in Philadelphia. Its head office is now in Chicago (Adelman, 2017).

Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP)

The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals was formed in April 2002 following the union of the Institute of Information Scientists (IIS) and the Library Association (LA). It is the leading professional body for librarians, information specialists and knowledge managers (Broady-Preston, 2006). There are up to 23,000 CILIP members working in all sectors.

Canadian Library Association

The Canadian Library Association (CLA) was founded in Hamilton, Ontario in 1946. Its membership is 57,000 professionals (Association, 1979).

Australian Library and information Association (ALIA)

The principal professional association for the Australian library and information services industry is the Australian Library and Information Association, formerly known as the Australian Institute of Librarians and Library Association of Australia (Hallam, 2013). Founded in 1937, its headquarters are in Canberra. The Australian Library and information Association (ALIA) has developed a comprehensive LIS Workforce Framework to ensure a strong, well qualified and ethically-minded library and information services (LIS) workforce to meet the needs of the new landscape of the library and information services industry. The significance of recognizing Country, respecting multiple Indigenous knowledge systems, understanding past and current colonial contexts, and ensuring appropriate representation and involvement of First Nations peoples is all covered in this area (Tumuhairwe, 2013). This entry in the LIS industry means a lot in terms of commitment to fairness, reconciliation, and inclusive library practice in Australia.

Pakistan Library Association (PLA)

Pakistan Library Association was founded in 1957 in Karachi under the society's registration act. xxi of 1860. Dr Mahmud Hussain, Ex-Minister of Education and the then Dean of Faculty of Arts, University of Karachi was elected its first president and Dr Abdul Moid its first Secretary General. The first conference of PLA was inaugurated by the then President of Pakistan, Major General Iskandar Mirza, in 1958. The current president of the Pakistan Library



Association (PLA) is Abdul Baqi Bloch (Abdul Baqi Bloch, personal communication, July 15, 2025).

At present it has more than 1400 members. In addition, the Association has a headquarters and five branches in four provincial capitals and one in Islamabad in the Federal Capital of Pakistan. However, the Headquarter of the PLA rotates between Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Peshawar, and Quetta every two years. Currently more than 48 meetings were also organized by the PLA headquarter and its branch councils on different issues that geared up the status of profession and contributed towards the formulation of pay scale structure, weeding out policies and write off procedures that benefited at large in the profession in coming years (Hague, 2008). Government of Pakistan recognized the professional efforts of Dr. Anis Khurshid and awarded him “Presidential Pride of Performance” and this all is because of the Pakistan Library Association who really built a good image of profession all over the country. Also, PLA published its journals namely, “Pakistan Library Association Journals”. And with the following aims and objectives as mentioned:

- To establish a comprehensive library service throughout Pakistan.
- To promote the study and research in library science and dissemination of information about current trends, theories and practices in the field o librarianship.
- To improve the status and professional standing of library workers and for safeguarding their interests.

For such other ends as will further the cause of libraries and librarians of Pakistan. The association shall act as connection between Pakistani organizations of similar aim and objectives and outside Pakistan and shall arrange for mutual cooperation.

PLA and stated that the Association, through its annual conferences held in various parts of the country, highlighted librarians’ role in the organizations and struggled hard for upgrading their pay scales and status in them respective departments (Khan, 2010). It also stressed on creating better image of librarians in the society.

Table. 1: Activities Checklist

Sr. No.	Activities	1957-77	1978-98	1999-2006	2007-2025
1	Research work initiated/conducted	0	0	0	0
2	Conferences/Seminars organized	12	26	2	4



3	Workshops/Trainings organized	10	26	2	10
4	Publications	10	16	0	2
5	Professional meetings organized	12	30	0	7
6	Codes of ethics & standards	2	3	0	0
7	Library legislation	1	1	0	0
8	Library education	0	1	0	71
9	Membership	1	5	0	1400
10	Image Building activities	0	0	0	0
11	Scholarships	5	0	0	2
12	Miscellaneous activities	1	5	0	7

Conferences

The PLA has organized 20 successful conferences at various Provincial Headquarters and Federal Capital of Pakistan. The first conference was organized at Karachi and inaugurated by the President of Pakistan in 1958 (Anwar, 2008). The last conference was organized at Lahore in 2022.

Table 2: The details of the conferences are as under:

Conference	Venue	Year
1 st	Karachi	1958
2 nd	Peshawar	1959
3 rd	Dacca	1960
4 th	Lahore	1961
5 th	Dacca	1963
6 th	Lahore	1965
7 th	Lahore	1968
8 th	Karachi	1971
9 th	Swat	1973
10 th	Lahore	1975
11 th	Islamabad	1979
12 th	Peshawar	1982
13 th	Quetta	1985

14 th	Karachi	1991
15 th	Lahore	1994
16 th	Islamabad	1997
17 th	Lahore	2007
18 th	Islamabad	2009
19 th	Islamabad	2012
20 th	Lahore	2022

PLA Annual Conference

The annual conference is a great way for PLA members and other community members to learn more about current trends, concerns, and professional possibilities. It is also a great place to share ideas and thoughts (Thomas, 2010). Members, librarians, and others working in the library profession are now very interested in the PLA's annual library conferences. Its goal is to give librarians and people interested in the library field a chance to interact, share ideas, and gain experiences, as well as to assist in resolving professional issues. Conference themes and topics ought to be pertinent to librarians' needs and interests as well as the state of the library profession and society at large. To gain the support of the library professionals, it should endeavour to obtain funding and recognition from the public and private sectors (Southon & Todd, 2001).



Figure:1. PLA Annual Conference Cities and years



In November 2007, Aiwan-e-Iqbal in Lahore hosted the Pakistan Library Association's Golden Jubilee International Conference on Emerging Paradigm of Librarianship: a Call for Innovation. Participants have praised it as a groundbreaking advancement in Pakistani librarianship history (Warriach, 2016). The United States, United Kingdom, Singapore, Kuwait, India, and Jammu & Kashmir all contributed to the first-ever international conference held in Pakistan. The celebration of PLA's golden jubilee was as spectacular as it should have been. This conference demonstrated that our younger professionals are capable of organizing events, are a valuable value to the field, and possess the bravery, ideas, and energy to advance their careers. Senior professionals both domestically and internationally expressed their gratitude to the organizers of this successful seminar. The PLA Punjab Branch Council is currently taking the initiative by holding a variety of conferences, workshops, and seminars (Islam, 2015).

Resource Sharing

PLA needs to emphasize its goal of fostering collaboration and networking among its members, library and information professionals, and institutions both domestically and abroad. For research goals, it is necessary to encourage the exchange of resources, reading materials, technology, and ideas (Bhatti, 2012). Professionals at all levels must be able to communicate and exchange ideas internationally. PLA might engage in international programs and coordinate with library associations and institutions abroad. Now the PLA has created a WhatsApp group for this purpose, and in this group, more than 262 professional members for the sharing updated documents Bloch (Malik Shair Afzal, personal communication, July 01, 2025).

Workshops and Seminars

Regarding the purpose of discussing and exchanging ideas and expertise with certain groups regarding themes, topics, or difficulties in all facets of librarianship, seminars and workshops ought to be organized. This is to improve the staff's understanding of the library (Emasealu, 2016).

Publication Section

A publication area should be maintained by PLA to encourage the LIS profession's research output. A variety of publications might be launched, perhaps once a year at first, and then, with the support of experts, at bi-annual or quarterly intervals.



- PLA Bulletin (bi-annual)
- PLA Newsletter (Quarterly)
- PLA Journal of Research in Library and Information Science

Standings Committees

According to (Dr-Zaheer Ahmad, personal communication, May 26, 2025) standings committees are vital for an association to oversight, involve different interest groups and play their role to meet the objectives of their domain. PLA Punjab Branch Council, in exercise of the power conferred by sub-section (iv) of Section 11.1 of the Constitution of Pakistan Library Association (PLA) formed different committees namely Public Library Committee, Media & Public Relation Committee, College Libraries Committee, University Libraries Committee, PLA Conference Committee, LIS Education Committee, Membership Committee, Volunteer Coordination Committee, Social Media Management Committee and Continuing Education Committee.

Complete details of each committee with the contact number of convenor(s) are as follows.

Public Libraries Committee

1. Muhammad Taufiq (Convenor), Public Libraries Punjab
2. Muhammad Taj, Daruslam Library, Lahore
3. Asif Waheed, Punjab Public Library, Lahore
4. Salma Jabeen, Quaid-e-Azam Library, Lahore
5. Shabir Ahmad Pasha, Punjab Public Library, Lahore
6. Ghulam Yasin Malik, Provincial Assembly of Punjab, Lahore
7. Malik Eid Muhammad, Govt. Model Town Library
8. Any other member(s) desired by the committee

College Libraries Committee

1. Ahsan Ullah (Convenor), Govt. Degree College Pindi Bhattian
2. Ch. Khalid Mahmood Sanghera, QAED, Multan
3. Muhammad Idrees Man, Govt. College Sheikhpura
4. Sajid Hussain, Govt. College Alipur Chatha, Gujranwala
5. Riaz Badar, Govt. Commerce College, Hafizabad
6. Saeed Ghafoor Sheikh, Govt. Degree College, Multan
7. Mian Nazir Ahmad, Govt. Degree College, Lodhran



University Libraries Committee

1. Dr. Muhammad Haroon Usmani (Convenor), Main Library PU, Lahore
2. Dr. Muhammad Tariq Najmi, COMSATS, Lahore
3. Ms. Sania Awais
4. Dr. Muhammad Ijaz Meiraj, UET, Lahore
5. Muhammad Naeem, GCU, Lahore
6. Muhammad Asif Khan, Main Library PU, Lahore
7. Kashif Kamal, University of Faisalabad

PLA Conference Committee

1. Dr. Haroon Idrees (Convener), University of Sargodha, Sargodha
2. Dr. Nosheen Fatima Warriach, DOIM, PU, Lahore
3. Kazim Ali Syed, UOG, Gujrat
4. Dr. Muhammad Haroon Usmani, Main Library, PU, Lahore
5. Muhammad Asif Munir, PHEC, Lahore
6. Dr. Shakeel Ahmad Khan, University of Sargodha, Sargodha

LIS Education Committee

1. Dr. Haroon Idrees (Convener), University of Sargodha, Sargodha
2. Dr. Saira Hanif Soroya, DOIM, PU, Lahore
3. Dr. Salman Bin Naeem, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur
4. Dr. Muhammad Ijaz Meiraj, UET/Minhaj University, Lahore
5. Mr. Sakhawat Ali, GC University, Faisalabad
6. Dr. Shamsad Ahmed, University of Sargodha, Sargodha
7. Mr. Bahsir Bhatti, Superior University, Lahore

Membership Committee

1. Muhammad Naushad Ghazanfar (Convenor), BZU, Multan
2. Sher Afzal Malik, e.library Rawalpindi
3. Asif Bilal, e.library Lahore
4. Muhammad Asif Khan, Main Library, PU Lahore
5. Ghulam Yasin Malik, Provincial Assembly of the Punjab
6. Muhammad Asim Khan, University of Sargodha
7. Mushair Ahmad, IUB, Bahawalpur



Volunteer Coordination Committee

1. Dr. Syeda Hina Batool, (Convenor), DoIM, PU (0332-8489380)
2. Muhammad Naushad Ghazanfar, BZU, Multan
3. Dr. Salman Bin Naeem, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur
4. Ms. Fouzia Ahmed, Lahore Gymkhana
5. Dr. Asif Naveed, University of Sargodha

Social Media Management Committee

- 1 Ms. Amna Asad, (Convenor), City School,
- 2 Muhammad Nadeem Munir, e.library Sheikupura,
- 3 Mukarram Nawaz, Punjab Archives and Libraries Department, Lahore,
- 4 Fouzia Ilyas
- 5 Amir Sohail, Noor University Lahore
- 6 Zahid Ahsan, E. library Okara

Continuing Education Committee

1. Muhammad Asif Munir (Convenor), PHEC
2. Dr. Saira Hanif Soroya, DOIM, PU, Lahore
3. Mr. Ashfaq Hussain, Supreme Court of Pakistan Branch Registry, Lahore
4. Mr. Mushtaq Ahmad, National Textile University, Faisalabad
5. Mr. Muhammad Umar Farooq, University of Agriculture, Faisalabad
6. Syed Saleem Abbas, PU Main Library, Lahore
7. Rana Javed Iqbal, Central Library Bahawalpur, Bahawalpur

Media & Public Relation Committee

1. Ashfaq Hussain (Convenor), Supreme Court of Pakistan Branch Registry, Lahore
2. Issar Rana, Group Editor Coordination, Roznama Pakistan
3. Dr. Arifa Subha Khan, Senior Columnist, Roznama Nawa-e-Waqat
4. Mr. Imtiaz Ahmad, Chief Reporter, Associated Press of Pakistan
5. Syed Saeed Badar President, Pakistan Council of Media Writers
6. Mr. Azhar Abbas, Coordinator, Karwan e Adab Atfaal Pakistan

Procedure of Elections

Election to the various Councils, including Branch Councils but not divisions/ districts Councils, shall be conducted every alternate year by an election Officer to be nominated by the



Executive Council (Kimball & Kropf, 2006). Branch Councils shall be elected by the members of the Association belonging to the respective areas of the branches. One who fails to pay his membership fee ten weeks before the date of election shall not have the right to vote or to contest the election (Mugoša, 2022). The Secretaries of the Branch Councils shall send to the Secretary General of the Association categorized lists of the members registered by them at least 8 weeks before the date of election. A categorized list of members shall then be prepared by the Secretary General with the assistance of the Finance Secretary. This shall be done at least six weeks before the date of election and shall be sent to all the members under postal certificate. Election shall be by secret postal ballot. The result of the election shall be circulated to the members through the newsletter of the Association.

PLA Head Quarter would make the announcement of the election for the next two years strictly three months in advance of the termination of sealing period (Warriach & Libraries, 2016). In case PLA Headquarter failed to make the announcement three months advanced before the completion of its 02 years in the office, the power of the PLA Headquarter automatically shift to Director General, Department of Libraries, Islamabad and to all the five Councils President Balochistan, KPK, Punjab, Sindh and Federal Branch and it would be compulsory upon them who make the announcement of the fresh election within 90 days of holding the powers.

SWOT Analysis of Pakistan Library Association (PLA)

Strengths

Historical Legacy and Recognition

The oldest and best-established professional library association in Pakistan being formed in 1957, is the PLA. It has been conducting national conferences since long and the first one was inaugurated by the President of Pakistan in 1958. Government has appreciated the efforts of PLA like issuing the doctorate Dr. Anis Khurshid the Presidential Pride of Performance.

Societies Registration Act, 1860 registered

Does it have an extensive system of governance with standing committees (Public Libraries, University Libraries, Membership, Media, etc.). Democratic governance is certified through regular elections which are characterized by the provision of transparent policies and mechanism of elections. Has its presence in all of the four provinces and the federal capital;



the seat alternates between major cities every two years (Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Peshawar, Quetta). Draws in more than 1400 members in the country.

Professional Development activities

Designs and holds conferences and workshops and seminars. International involvement and professional communication organized by biggest events like the Golden Jubilee International conference of 2007. PLA has published journals and reports, contributing to professional discourse. PLA has actively worked on improving librarians' pay scales and professional status. Has a well-used publication department (journals, bulletins, newsletters).

Facilitates the collaboration and exchange of information and resources within the country and abroad (WhatsApp group that includes more than 262 professionals).

Weaknesses

Energy Unstable in Maintenance of Areas

Poor continuity of research works, image building and development of profession ethics codes as demonstrated in the activity's checklist. Large decrease of the conferences and workshops in the period 1999-2006, which could mean stagnancy.

Small Academic Production and Citation

Its academic impact is restricted due to lack of much publishing (two publications in 2007-2025). Newsletters and journals will have a shorter impact and they may not be indexed or seen internationally. Complete dependence on volunteers and ad hoc committees without a standing army of professionals constricts continuity and effectiveness in an organization.

Opportunities

Creating a Research & Development Section and publishing journals like PLA Journal of Research in LIS can revive scholarly engagement. A centralized digital platform for LIS professionals would address current literature gaps and promote professional development. Joining international bodies like IFLA and enhancing global partnerships can open doors to funding, training, and research exchange. Conducting surveys and customized training can build LIS professionals' capacity for quality research and innovation. PLA can take advantage of the current e-learning boom to deliver professional courses, certifications, and virtual conferences.

Threats



PLA risks becoming obsolete if it does not keep pace with digital transformation in LIS services globally. Long periods of inactivity may cause professionals to lose faith in the association's relevance or benefits. Without consistent government or private funding, many planned initiatives may remain unrealized. If PLA remains passive, other professional networks or informal online groups may take over its role.

Finding and Discussion

The results reflect a national library authority like the Pakistan Library Association (PLA) (which was historical and institutionally based) at an important critical stage in the course of its profession. Since its creation in 1957, PLA has been a hub of activities of all library professionals, covering all provinces of the country and having a developed governance framework assisted by standing committees and elective process. The Association has been able to organize national and international conferences, promote professional pay scales, and publish journals that have made contributions in the LIS debate in Pakistan. But compared to its activity trends, it remained stagnant in the scholarly production process, especially in the period of 1999-2006 with very fewer publications and researches conducted on 2007-2025. Even though PLA has been very active in the processes of organizing events and workshops in previous decades, the recent years indicate the more unreasonable involvement of the volunteers, the decline of an academic presence, and the absence of the long-term innovation in the sphere of professional growth. Nevertheless, PLA has unexploited potential in spite of these weaknesses. This gives it an advantage to self-renew through its strengths, such as being a legal body, the large membership, historical credibility, and the global affiliations. The opportunities are in establishing a well-developed research and development arm, high-impact scholarly journals, adoption of digital media and partnership with international LIS organizations. When such avenues are headed in a strategic manner, PLA will be able to reclaim its influence as the leader in the LIS community in Pakistan. However, its threats including long-term idleness, insufficient funding as well as rivalry with unformalized Internet communities may strip it of its significance. Thus, a radical solution model of combining innovativeness, digital modernization, and institutional consistency has become a keystone to sustainable development and further influence of librarianship in Pakistan about PLA.



Recommendations

- Build a Research and Development (R&D) wing.
- Why: No PLA-initiated research activity was found (up to Table 1), and the low level of academic activity only indicates the necessity of orderly scholarly interaction.
- Establish an R&D Committee that will give more attention to:
 - Sponsoring and overseeing the research projects of LIS.
 - Carrying out needs assessment and surveys of the nation.
 - Cooperation with LIS departments to support their theses and to conduct research.
- Join with universities and international LIS bodies in co-hosting webinars, summer schools. Ensure that CPD involvement becomes a requirement to hold leadership positions in PLA.
- Enhance International Relations The reason is clear International alliances inject investments, resources, and recognition. Action: Join asserts such as IFLA, CILIP and ALA. Apply grants of International organizations (UNESCO, IFLA). Promote professional interaction, co-publications and exchange of research.
- Formalize inter-library lending and union catalog systems with signed MOUs.
- Develop a digital repository (PLA-DR) for sharing teaching materials, grey literature, and archives.
- Upgrade the existing WhatsApp group into a full-scale digital communication platform.

Conclusion

Librarians, academics, information experts, and PLA managers can all benefit from this study in terms of creating productive research initiatives. It demonstrates that there is still more work to be done by the Pakistani Library Association to enhance its objectives, rules, and practices in order to bring all the stakeholders together to bring about innovation and alter the paradigm of LIS research. PLA is undergoing change, and the new administration has fresh ideas for achieving the objectives with zeal. As the exclusive forum for the advancement, promotion, and enhancement of library services to support research at any level, library associations act as the main spokesperson for the librarianship profession. The Pakistan Library Association has a proud legacy and an opportunity-rich future. However, it must address its longstanding weaknesses especially in research, digital modernization, and sustained



professional development. With strategic vision, consistent engagement, and collaborative leadership, PLA can reposition itself as a vital force in shaping the LIS landscape of Pakistan.

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