

# From Oblivion Towards Vision: A Case Study of the Expedition of Decolonization and Personalization Initiatives of Punjab University Library

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**abstract:** The Punjab University Library (PUL) is the oldest and largest public-sector university library in Pakistan, established in 1873 as a Punjab University College Library and then upgraded as PUL in 1882. As in many other post-colonial countries, the end of British rule over South Asians in 1947 did not end colonialism itself, as an embedded feature of the culture. Under the British Raj on the Indian subcontinent, the PUL served the educational objectives set by the colonial rulers, promoting European texts and languages both during and after the colonial period. However, over the passage of time, PUL has taken various steps to decolonize library practices and offer user-centered initiatives. This case study, the first of its kind in South Asia, explored PUL's journey toward decolonization and user-centered initiatives.

## Introduction

As in many post-colonial regions, the end of British rule over South Asia in 1947 did not bring an end to colonialism for the people of the region. Multiple complex factors were involved; however, one major reason was the decision to continue the colonial-originated systems without indigenization to run the administration of newborn states by the political leaders.<sup>1</sup> One can argue that to meet the economic, administrative and survival challenges hovering over the newborn state, the leaders were left with no other choice. However, it cannot be denied that if adopting these systems was required to run the administration smoothly, their continuation, even today, maintains the coloniality of power. Unfortunately, there is a lack of awareness about the indispensability of philosophical and structural modifications that would make these systems beneficial for the general population. This lack of awareness further strengthens the rule of coloniality.



However, it is important to recognize that these people cannot be blamed solely, as they were brought up and educated under colonial rule, with a colonial education system that revolved around the objective to seize intellectualism among the public to get complete obedience to colonial rule.

From the year 2000 onward, the drive for decolonization, especially in academic circles, is not only getting stronger in post-colonial countries like Canada, but universities of colonizer countries like the UK, are also holding discussions and activities focused on decolonization.<sup>2</sup> The launch of a reparative justice program by the University of Glasgow, after discovering that the university benefited from the proceeds of slavery, is one example.<sup>3</sup> UK universities are working to decolonize the curriculum within specific disciplines and recognize the indispensable role of Indigenous forms of knowledge in colonial settler nations like Australia and Canada.<sup>4</sup> Canadian libraries, particularly public libraries, are taking steps to decolonize their collections and spaces with digital and physical resources, as well as revisiting their policies regarding books which were declared banned due to some controversial elements.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, scholars suggest extensive modifications and flexibility when applying foreign-originated systems to local collections. Ultimately, libraries need macro-level change to classification and subject heading systems.<sup>6</sup>

Research on the decolonization of libraries in Pakistan is notably scarce. This case study begins to fill this gap in the literature by examining the Punjab University Library's (PUL) various initiatives and plans that aim to decolonize the PUL library and transform it into a personalized, user-centered institution for modern, diverse library users.

### **Aims of the Study**

The aims of this case study are to highlight the expedition of decolonization of the Punjab University Library (as one of the oldest and largest institutions in the region) considering the needs of Asian literature, Indigenous diverse modern library users, access and knowledge services, sustainability and green shift initiatives, and strengthening human-technology partnerships. Furthermore, this study has implemented various initiatives to foster critical thinking and lifelong learning among library users. It also pinpoints the future plans of PUL transforming into a personalized and user-centered institution.

## **Literature Review**

### **Colonialism, Coloniality and Decolonization**

The terms colonialism and de-colonialism or post-colonialism are similar to coloniality and de-coloniality respectively, and may be used interchangeably in general conversation. However, there is a significant difference between the two. Collins English Dictionary defines colonialism as "the practice by which a powerful country directly controls less powerful countries and uses their resources to increase its power and wealth."<sup>7</sup> The practice can be considered abandoned when the physical rule is lifted. However, in the real world, the end of the physical colonial rule did not bring the end of colonialism in affected countries because of the political, cultural, and economic quandaries and damages engrained in the philosophies and structures of these post-colonial nations. The

term post-colonialism was extensively used to describe the impact of these legacies of colonial rule on a nation

Colonialism unweaves the Indigenous socio-cultural fabrication of society in order to maintain dominance. Colonial systems are introduced in such a way that the natives start to hate their Indigenous culture and system. The flaws of Indigenous culture are highlighted while publicizing and imposing the strength of the colonizer's culture along. The colonizer's physical hold on all the economic and administrative sources and structures supports a psychological endorsement of the superiority of the colonizer's beliefs over Indigenous beliefs. Examples of this style of colonialism can be observed in post-colonial countries in Africa and South Asia.<sup>8</sup>

Africa was not illiterate before the arrival of their colonial rulers, Europeans. Socialization was the informal method of schooling for every child of society, and even specialized professionals were taught by their fathers and grandfathers; this method of teaching had always proved effective. Children were not punished for misconduct, rather the elders explained the consequences of their particular behaviors on society, and the children were motivated to uphold the rich values, norms and culture of the society. Therefore, there was no need for formal schools and libraries, and there were no school dropouts because "the whole society was the repository of information and knowledge."<sup>9</sup>

The elders were the symbol of wisdom and were treated as a living repository of knowledge. There was no strict demarcation between leisure, work, and official and formal occasions, thus a sense of conviviality always prevailed in society, a quality that modern industrial societies lack. The authors of this article, natives of a post-colonial country, can relate to this description for their region, South Asia. The arrival of European colonialism in Africa changed the societal structure. African children were forced to go to schools for formal education to learn the skill of reading and writing so that they would understand the European culture, life, religion, science and technology, and government styles in the colonial language.<sup>10</sup>

As a result, the Africans who acquired the skill and mastery of reading and writing became known as educated or literate persons. The ones who failed to acquire reading and writing were now considered illiterate. According to researcher Jennifer Cram, the formal modes for education, including libraries, were introduced by European colonizers as a legitimate way to achieve their colonization objectives and "to acculturate the 'natives' into European ways."<sup>11</sup>

Jess Crilly wrote that in the late 1990s, Anibal Quijano introduced the term coloniality to describe the continuity of colonial practices and mindset in the post-colonized societies through imposing globalization and modernity in the areas of power, knowledge and being. Quijano believed that any effort to expose and undo the coloniality of a system or thought is the process of decoloniality.<sup>12</sup> Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine D. Walsh,

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earlier theorists of decoloniality, discuss the phenomenon as an ongoing process which carries forward in all institutions of society, including universities and museums and their libraries, as well as convents and monasteries.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, Nelson Maldonado-Torres argues that the colonial era and post- or de-colonial era cannot be separated into two distinguished historical phases within a country; the mindset of coloniality is ongoing.<sup>14</sup> Maldonado-Torres believes that coloniality is surviving colonialism through admiring foreign cultural patterns, the low self-image of Indigenous peoples, academic curricula and evaluation patterns, administrative procedures, formulation of laws and many more daily life routines without realization.<sup>15</sup>

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fact that society—along with its leaders and intellectuals—was adhering to colonial-originated stereotypes, which had led the country's policies in the wrong direction. To bring about change, the entire nation requires formal and informal learning systems that prioritize critical thinking over merely adopting established theories of knowledge. Additionally, there must be a shift toward becoming more respectful to one another, fostering an environment where everyone, especially minorities, can honor each other's beliefs, values, and concerns. Above all, society must strive to reclaim its humanity, moving away from colonial mindsets. Decolonizing formal education involves accepting Indigenous and alternative ways of seeing the world, and decolonization

of the mind is not easy in higher education because of the extensive need to read and write. Konai Helu Thaman said that, as academics, we accept ideas from the academy as natural and inevitable truths and incorporate them into generated knowledge. For example, Thaman noted that during and after colonialism, the Pacific and Asian societies started to use the term 'cultured' to refer to wealthy persons who were associated with Western art, music, literature, and theatre.<sup>16</sup>

### Colonialism and Coloniality in Libraries

Colonialism deprives Indigenous people not only of land but of their physical and intellectual assets. Libraries, as a hub of knowledge, are meant to help society develop knowledge and critical thinking, but in colonized societies, libraries are used as a tool to

support colonialism and coloniality. Unfortunately, the libraries mechanically provide this support through the adoption of colonial-originated philosophies and systems. Scholars highlight several common ways in which the libraries of post-colonial societies support coloniality, such as using foreign policies and systems to manage local collections, restricting access to certain collections based on predefined values, and so on.<sup>17</sup>

As a general principle at British and American libraries, collections are developed according to the needs of the clientele they serve. However, the standards for the libraries in colonized countries were different, and these libraries were damaged in two ways. Firstly, colonial rulers deprived them of their Indigenous manuscript collections by transporting these materials to the ruling countries.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, the libraries became storehouses of Western materials and tradition, to reinforce the Western domination. The situation was further exacerbated when, even after independence, the new native administrations supported the continuation of the Anglo-American brand of librarianship while assuming that the needs of the locals were similar to Europe and America.<sup>19</sup> The ineptness of collection development policies in post-colonial libraries continues. Cram revealed that nearly 70 percent of books acquired in post-colonial South African libraries are considered not suitable for African communities and most of these are received as foreign aid. He alleged that this foreign aid included hidden motives of the rich, print-oriented societies in order to maintain the coloniality of knowledge. Cram also posited that this practice has mostly proven to be a futile burden for the post-colonial libraries.<sup>20</sup> The technical services sections of libraries received the donated books without checking their relevance to local interests. Therefore, absurd circulation policies were introduced to justify the books' presence in libraries. Cram shared one such policy. It stated that although it is normal for libraries to put a limit on the maximum number of books allowed to be checked out at a single time, a main library of Lagos forced users to take not fewer books than the maximum number allowed for checkout, even if they did not need that many.<sup>21</sup> The idea behind this rule was that it would force people to read more, while raising library statistics. Banned books with the label 'controversial and immoral' are considered a sensitive issue in libraries. Before declaring a book not suitable for people it is necessary to assess who is determining its controversiality and for what reason. Some benign topics can become 'controversial and immoral' at certain times and in certain situations and vice versa. For example, during the colonial period, the writings of intellectuals and freedom fighters in the Indian subcontinent were considered rebellious and destructive for the public. Even today similar treatment is given to books containing views of religious and ethnic minorities. Banning such books is equal to suppressing the voice of the weak.<sup>22</sup>

Libraries used different systems to organize and disseminate library materials, like classification schemes, cataloging codes, subject headings, and metadata platforms. Many systems used in post-colonial libraries were developed in Euro-American contexts, along with a universal intention of generalized use of the system. However, assuming a generalized use of a system neglects the fact that systems are developed by humans raised in a specific biological and socio-cultural environment, and naturally these humans carry the perspective biases of that particular society and culture; these biases are then transmitted into the systems they develop. The limitations of a system to cater to



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the needs of Indigenous populations surface when it is used outside its society of origin.

Instituted 1876, the Dewey Decimal Classification system is a highly used classification system in libraries worldwide. However, the infrastructure of this scheme indicates the dominance of the perspectives and experiences of Western culture while marginalizing others.<sup>23</sup> The Dewey Decimal system's treatment of Indigenous geographies, cultures, ethnic groups, languages, and religions of African and Asian countries makes the Western favoritism is easily noticeable. One example is that the system allocates ten base numbers (from 220 to 229) to classify the knowledge related to the world's first-largest religion, Christianity, whereas the world's second-largest religion, Islam, has been allocated only one base number (297) for the coverage of related knowledge.<sup>24</sup>

Subject headings are a controlled vocabulary that provides an additional method for locating material in libraries. However, the projection of a particular perspective through this method in libraries has caused subject headings to draw criticism from

many scholars. Sanford Berman, in 1971, objected to the use of the word 'kaffir' in the Library of Congress Subject Headings because the word had a complex history and offensive connotation for Black Africans.<sup>25</sup> Todd Michelson-Ambelang pointed out another example of colonial treatment of the Library of Congress's Subject Headings system. Michelson-Ambelang stated that searches for areas belonging to Pakistan before the partition did not yield accurate results because the subject heading entries cover only 'Punjab before the partition,' under 'India,' and 'Indian Punjab.'<sup>26</sup> Indeed, Pakistan did not exist before partition, however, searching for the history of Punjab should reveal its link with Pakistan and to India, via subject headings. Otherwise, the omission means accepting the hegemony of India over Pakistan. Crilly believed that controlling the identity of marginalized groups through language continues, as exemplified by the Library of Congress's recent attempt to replace the term 'illegal aliens' with the preferred alternative term 'migrants.'<sup>27</sup>

The use of Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, Edition 2 (AACR II) is considered an international standard for cataloguing material in post-colonial libraries, even though certain rules do not cover the diversity of cultural values. For example, in Asian countries, the formation of peoples' names is different from in Western countries, and the last part of the Asian and Islamic names does not always indicate a family name. Therefore, inverting



the name of an author to enter their intellectual work under a family name according to AACR II causes confusion and problems among library professionals and users.

### **Libraries and Decoloniality**

Academic libraries help to support some narratives and exclude others through the collection, consumption and generation of knowledge within a university. Therefore, Crilly states that proactive collecting is a response to the recognition that mainstream publishing frequently does not represent the work and interests of marginalized groups.<sup>28</sup> Libraries can play a significant role in not only supporting hegemonic power structures but can also ignite resistance and reject these hegemonies to support decoloniality. Maldonado-Torres believes that the library is not an isolated entity within the university and can support significantly decolonization through collaboration with other academic units and should work in “the production of counter-discourses, counter-knowledge, counter-creative acts and counter-practices that seek to dismantle coloniality and to open up multiple other forms of being in the world.”<sup>29</sup>

Michelson-Ambelang suggests that to decolonize Western libraries, the archives plundered by the colonizer states should be returned to their cultural owners after the digitization of these archives.<sup>30</sup> To avoid the hegemony of a single country on the digitized versions of these manuscripts, he recommends that collaborative projects be given preference to ensure easy digital access for the cultural owners as well. Michelson-Ambelang believes that digitization is necessary to ensure that content is saved, as the cultural owners may not be able to guarantee the safety of these manuscripts after they return to their native country. He admits that after digitization the item’s physical importance is finished, but, in his view, its cultural relevance for the original owners still exists. The authors of this article have reservations, as the cultural owners of those archives feel that repatriation of archival materials after digitalization would mean that colonizer countries are throwing away these items to save space and human effort. Although the librarians of post-colonial countries are well aware of the imperfect colonial-originated systems and possible solutions, making new unbiased systems is not an easy task and overall lethargic behavior from librarians is a big challenge to the excursion of decoloniality of libraries.<sup>31</sup>

### **Personalization and Decoloniality in Libraries**

Libraries play an important role in personalization, user-centeredness, and decoloniality. Recently, one of this article’s authors, Murtaza Ashiq, reported that libraries need to promote indigenization, inclusiveness, and a user-centered experience. He stressed the need and the potential to use modern technological tools that facilitate and promote Indigenousness and inclusiveness in libraries. He suggested that libraries could implement various initiatives such as accepting content recommendations, implementing alert and notification services, offering customized research assistants, creating inclusive and accessible services that cater to the diverse needs of library users, and facilitating personalized event services that involve sending invitations to participate in library book clubs, workshops, or resources, among other similar services.<sup>32</sup> Libraries are promoting



social justice, decoloniality, and critical thinking through various initiatives. The 'library book club' is an initiative nurturing social justice in libraries in Pakistan.<sup>33</sup>

Furthermore, there is a debate surrounding the use of artificial intelligence (AI) for personalization and user-centeredness, as well as the use of technology as a tool to recreate colonialism. Rachel Adams posed the question, "Is it possible to decolonize AI?" and reported that AI can serve as a tool for reenacting colonialism; it is not sufficient to merely assert that AI is fostering racial bias and global control under the cover of technology.<sup>34</sup> However, John W. Murphy and Carlos Largacha-Martínez stated that the design of AI is community-based and the fear of 'coloniality' is significantly less in their article "Decolonization of AI: A Crucial Blind Spot." They asserted that merely discussing the decolonization of AI presents significant challenges. However, they recommended viewing AI as supportive and community-based design.<sup>35</sup> Recently, Gelan Ayana, et al. conducted a study titled "Decolonizing Global AI Governance: Assessment of the State of Decolonized AI Governance in Sub-Saharan Africa." They reported that the global South should prioritize decolonization and critical thinking and accordingly design AI that prioritizes fairness, inclusivity, and empowerment in this region. They further recommended various initiatives to foster decolonization, such as stakeholder involvement, addressing inequalities, promoting ethical AI, supporting local innovation, establishing regional partnerships, capacity building, public awareness, and inclusive governance.<sup>36</sup>

## Methodology

The authors employ a case study approach to examine and highlight Punjab University Library's journey from the colonization-era to decolonization, specifically in relation to the development of services, resources, infrastructure, and physical library spaces. The past two decades have witnessed significant changes and noteworthy initiatives. This article outlines the historical journey of the PUL library, its progressive development, and its decolonization efforts, which are informed by practical initiatives and experiences. The authors also present strategies for future library directors to further transform the PUL library into a more personalized and user-centered library.

## Punjab University Library

The Punjab University Library is the oldest and largest public sector university library in Pakistan established in 1873 as a Punjab University College Library and then upgraded to Punjab University Library in 1882. PUL is one of the oldest and richest university libraries in South Asia. It was established in 1882 under British Raj on the Indian subcontinent and since then has served almost the same educational objectives and systems established by the colonial rulers. The library, like many other institutions, faces challenges when organizing and administering Indigenous collections using colonial-originated systems.<sup>37</sup> To address some of these classification system problems, modifications are made from time to time to the Asian languages collections. However, these modifications were not made with the realization and intent to challenge colonization of the library's systems. Since the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, PUL has undertaken several initiatives to transform it into a user-centered library.





## **PUL Mission Statement**

Technological advancements have forced libraries worldwide to adopt new technologies, not only to accommodate their users but also to ensure their survival in the digital age. These changes have put pressure on PUL as well, and starting with infrastructural changes in the building and collection management systems during the first decade of 2000s, the PUL librarians—particularly the authors of this article—realized that a more user-centered approach was needed to address the humanistic and social development needs of a post-colonial society in a digital era. In 2018, while reviewing the library's objectives and policies and introducing more reading activities like a book club, it became clear that to stay focused and on the right path, the library needed a mission statement. As a result, a draft was created with feedback from library friends, and it remains open for further input from other stakeholders, including the university administration. The draft reads:

The library aims to provide state-of-the-art library services, resources, and spaces to its varied user community. PUL manages the wide, accurate, and ethical use of information through print and digital resources. Through academic community involvement, the library provides a welcoming environment for the diverse library community to share ideas, inspiring its users to become critical thinkers, lifelong learners, and active members of society.

## **PUL Collection and Usage**

The PUL collection comprises over 600,000 print books and journals, in addition to a digital repository with 150,000 items. It is housed in a three-story building, utilized annually by over 40,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students, along with around 2,000 faculty members. PUL offers integrated services that encompass both conventional and digital components. Currently, the library is concentrating on personalization and user-centered techniques to engage modern library users. The library has now reexamined its collection development policy and will try to emphasize the accumulation and usage of Asian collections.

## **Classification Systems of PUL**

The library uses Dewey Decimal Classification. As mentioned, the DDC has denoted a single three-digit base number 297 for the literary collections on 'Islam.' PUL is the library of a religious, predominantly Muslim country and has a vast collection of Islamic books. Since the scheme could not accommodate the richness of the Islamic collection in Asian languages, the PUL decided to adopt a locally developed expansion of the class number 297, based on the 14th edition of the DDC.

## **Cataloguing Asian Collections**

Because the formation of Asian and Islamic names is different from European names, cataloguing of Asian collections under AACR II always causes confusion among library professionals and users. Special rules were formulated and adopted for the cataloguing



of Asian and Islamic names in the PUL. In 2001, the library began automation, and, as a first step, the library catalogs were required to be entered into the database. However, the bibliographic records of Asian collections were impossible to enter in the software due to the language barriers. The project was started, excluding the Asian collection; however, the library soon realized that digital book borrowing could not be operationalized without making room for the Asian collection in the database, due to the heavy use of Urdu (the national language of Pakistan) language books. Fortunately, the library got support from the university's information technology center and a new multilingual database named "Multilingual Library and Information Management System (MLIMS)" was developed. The database had been successfully used for in the 49 libraries of the University of Punjab for the past 15 years and facilitated library catalog searches in English and Urdu languages. However, efforts were still required to include the facility of search in other Asian languages such as Arabic, Persian, Sindhi, and Pushto. The modifications were adopted to create space for Asian collections in the colonial-originated systems and not with a conscious effort to highlight the importance and worth of these collections bearing Asian knowledge. However, from the year 2000, the voices for decoloniality started to emerge along with highlighting the importance of Indigenous knowledge and culture of post-colonial regions. Projects for the preservation and digitalization of Asian manuscripts in Asian languages particularly Persian, Arabic, and Sanskrit, have been initiated by different national and international organizations.

Sanskrit and Persian were the knowledge languages of the pre-colonial period of the subcontinent. PUL holds a valuable collection of manuscripts in these languages; however, access to these manuscripts was not easy for scholars until 2007. Lack of preservation facilities and awareness about the importance of these manuscripts reduced their life span and use. In 2007 the preservation and digitalization of Persian manuscripts were begun with the collaboration of an Iranian organization, which helped highlight the library's centuries-old treasury and revive its use. The other Asian manuscripts, including a large collection of Sanskrit manuscripts, are waiting for similar attention and financial support.

### Library Book Club

Since 2018, PUL has initiated a book club with the intent to familiarize the younger generations with Indigenous knowledge, different schools of thought, and to promote

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social reading habits. The club also strives to create awareness of the issues of social change, equality, and justice. The program not only helped the library raise its status in the community but also aided in creating a realization of decolonization in the audience, including library professionals. The book club prompted the library itself to revisit its objectives for the community and collections and include decolonization as an intended goal within the library's mission statement. Each

month, this club selects two books, one in English and one in Urdu, for introductory talks given by academic intellectuals. Occasionally, PUL invites the author or an expert in the field to speak to the book club. The university and community receive an open invitation to attend, pose questions to the speaker, and participate in the conversation. Several other libraries in the country have adopted this initiative from PUL.

The PUL Book Club selects books based on their content, which should be appealing and valuable for students or have a social message. Efforts are made to include books on a variety of subjects. Two copies of each book are purchased before the event and displayed on the day of the talk. If available, e-versions are also added to the collection. Local publishers of the books are invited to participate in the program and offer special 50 percent discounts. Each program lasts two hours. A guest speaker has half an hour to introduce a book, explain the main themes, give a short biography of the author, and explain his or her personal views. Afterward, the audience, including faculty, students, and visitors, share their perspectives regarding the topic of the book. The chief librarian or associate librarian takes the role of mediator. Students' engagement in discussions is valued. Announcements of library book club programs are made through the library's official social media accounts and the library website. Often, individuals share the event information on the personal social media accounts, as well. The main auditorium of the library, with a seating capacity of nearly 250, serves as the venue. The book club's first program was immediately popular. Students and faculty members filled the auditorium, and a report of the event on a university student's weblog called it a "ray of hope." To date, the library has arranged more than 50 discussions in the book club series and has presented works with multidimensional perspectives on social issues. The success of the PUL Book Club encouraged other libraries to start similar activities. For example, the Government College University, Lahore, and Karakoram International University, Gilgit-Baltistan, have recently established their book clubs following PUL initiatives.

### **Book Lover Award to Promote Reading Habits**

Since 2012, the library has been awarding an annual Book Lover Award to encourage users to develop reading habits. Typically held in April on World Book Day, PUL celebrates a "Book Lover Award ceremony" and recognizes the top ten students who have made significant use of the library, its resources, and services based on the number of books checked out and hours spent in the library, and awards gifts to them. An open invitation has been sent to their peers, institutions, and parents to attend this ceremony. Various places within the university display their names, departments, and pictures to encourage and promote reading habits.

### **Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessible Libraries**

Diversity, inclusion, and accessibility are considered core values of librarianship. They signify that each individual's race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, identity and expression, socioeconomic status, age, religious beliefs, and political beliefs ought to be valued and respected.<sup>38</sup> Libraries are providing personalized services, resources, and spaces for differently abled, marginalized, and minoritized individuals. PUL has taken various user-centered steps to modernize its services. For instance, the reference



librarians run an official WhatsApp number to address various types of user queries 24 hours a day, seven days a week. PUL comprises three floors, with a recently established third floor dedicated to personalized and inclusive library spaces. It features discussion rooms, separate research cabins for researchers, a multipurpose auditorium hall, and more. Additionally, one of the library professionals just completed his PhD dissertation on the topic, "Practices of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Library and Information Science Profession in Pakistan."<sup>39</sup> Based on the findings of this research, PUL is planning to implement various measures to uphold social justice principles in both the library itself and the library profession in Pakistan. The library plans to develop infrastructure for visually impaired students, install elevators, and subscribe to audio books.

### **Academic Integrity and Ethical use of Information**

In the past two decades, PUL has enhanced its involvement in the intellectual and social growth of its users, particularly students. The library is a pioneer in South Asia in the promotion of academic integrity, through the use of anti-plagiarism software and trainings that address intellectual property rights and information ethics.<sup>40</sup> Recently, students and researchers have widely adopted artificial intelligence tools which unfortunately led to frequent AI similarity and plagiarism issues. PUL aims to educate its users on how to ethically use AI tools and avoid infringement of academic integrity in their research projects.

To address these issues, a library professional who has long observed the challenges researchers face, and who conducted her PhD dissertation on the topic, holds a series of training sessions to create awareness among academics of plagiarism and ethics. The training sessions are designed to help scholars understand that 'software-detected similarity' (using an AI detector) does not always indicate cheating; rather, it often reflects a misunderstanding of the differences between Western and Asian academic learning culture and writing practices in a foreign language. To bridge this cultural gap and meet the demands of a globalized world, the best way to avoid plagiarism is to enhance information literacy skills. This includes searching, organizing, and presenting information in ethically acceptable formats worldwide, rather than relying AI or attempting to cheat. The library's academic integrity trainings have increased in demand among many academic departments at the university. Many request special workshops for their students on information searching techniques and tools for organizing and referencing, such as Zotero and Endnote, in addition to the library's regular orientation programs.

### **Data and Knowledge Services**

Modern technological tools including artificial intelligence, data analytics and the internet of things have greatly supported researchers in terms of data and knowledge domains.<sup>41</sup> Various AI tools are helping researchers brainstorm ideas, conduct literature reviews, understand trends and patterns of data, summarize reports, and identify directions for future research. The professional staff of PUL and its seminar libraries (libraries located within each department, institute or college at Punjab University) are providing personalized training and services to their users about how AI tools (especially Research



Rabbit, Consensus, Scite, Litmaps, SciSpace, and Elicit) can be used for brainstorming, literature reviews, identifying gaps in the literature, and visualizations. PUL is also providing personalized research support services, led by an expert research librarian, to both library users and faculty members.

### Sustainability and Green Libraries

Libraries have great responsibilities toward sustainability and the environment. Libraries can focus on digital services, e-libraries, sustainable digitization, mobile applications, research repositories, and virtual assistance to contribute to a green library user's experience. Furthermore, libraries can initiate green shift initiatives such as building sustainable infrastructure and green buildings, purchasing green furniture, reducing paper waste, operating green data centers (online or cloud storage), offering book exchange programs, and so on. Due to the serious energy crises in Pakistan, PUL recently established a floor with a focus on green and eco-friendly design. Specifically, this floor has reduced paper consumption (all library sections interact through shared drive), digitized library collections, and uses less energy and lighting (thanks to three walls of the floor being fully windows). PUL library holds a digital repository with 150,000 items including e-books and newspaper materials. Furthermore, PUL recently received donations from the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) for sustainable digitization in the library, as PUL is the oldest institution in the country and has the largest number of manuscripts and rare materials. Under this initiative, PUL's library professionals are learning to improve the sustainable digitization of these rich resources.

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### Future Prospects

PUL has many plans to continue initiatives that emphasize inclusion and support a decolonized culture in Pakistan. These include:

- seeking collaborations that emphasize the need for critical analysis of knowledge and help counter the coloniality of knowledge inside and outside of the library premises;
- a newly implemented QR code for remote access to library e-resources, including an audiobook collection to enhance accessibility for library users;
- developing a center for inclusive education for diverse library users, including differently abled, marginalized, and minority communities, that is equipped with relevant infrastructure, facilities, systems, and resources;



- building on basic-level research support services to start offering advanced services that include proposal writing, writing literature and systematic reviews, quantitative and qualitative research and data analysis, article extraction from MPhil and PhD dissertations, research ethics and AI applications, and publishing in a high impact factor journals;
- using AI tools (especially ChatGPT) for Indigenous resources curation, preservation, language translation, and cataloguing and classifications of its resources; and, finally, developing a human library program (a library of people who share one another's experiences and stories) and the human catalog following the DDC first summary (top ten classes).

### Conclusion

University libraries can play a pivotal role in reversing coloniality by promoting indigenization, personalization, and critical analysis of knowledge. Decolonization in libraries necessitates deliberate efforts to rectify classification schemes, terminology and subject heading schemes, as well as creating inclusive programs and community engagement. It also involves the inclusion of diverse staff and training, the challenge of colonial structures, the recognition and respect of Indigenous literature and data, and the representation of Indigenous people's archives through personalization and user-centered approaches.

Punjab University Library has taken many steps to promote indigenization and user-centered library services, spaces, resources, and infrastructure. These initiatives have significantly impacted and attracted modern library users, encouraging them to reconnect with libraries. Furthermore, PUL has several plans to further align with the evolving needs of its users and offer personalization to each user of the library through modern technological tools, as well as to promote social justice in the libraries.

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