

## Chapter 73

# Special Library Standards: The Philippine Scenario

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter will provide an overview of the existing standards being observed in the Philippines. With the fractionalization of various special library associations, how does the Philippine Board for Librarians (BFL) coordinate and monitor special libraries with regard to the application and tracking of the standards? The chapter will also talk about various library associations catering to special librarianship in the country. In addition, it will mention some consortia particularly established for networking and resource-sharing of special libraries which can address part nine of the revised draft standards of 2013.*

### BACKGROUND

Some of the sources cited are not so recent. This is to justify that special libraries and its standards were being discoursed way long before the Philippines had its prevailing standard. This is to establish a historical trend of special libraries outside of the Philippines' perspective. It is noticeable that the Philippines was a bit late in coming up with the standards for libraries. It was in June 2007 when the Board for Librarians released the Standards for Philippine Libraries. It was a requirement to produce a standard for libraries as mandated by Republic Act 9246. As libraries continue to evolve, a draft revision of standards for special libraries is underway. Nevertheless, the standards will guide the special librarians in their day-to-day operations and management of their special libraries.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF SPECIAL LIBRARIES

According to Cogwill & Havlik (1972) there are three old characteristics of a special library that may be true up to this date. First, there is an absence of a generally recognized and exclusive definition upon

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which to base an identification of the universe of special libraries. Second, there is diversity in collection, content, size, operating procedures, facilities, services and staff, and lastly, there is diversity in objectives and responsibilities assigned by non-library management.

An old assumption of a special library would tell us that “by their nature, special libraries are unique. Not only is one kind of special library different from another, but libraries of a similar type differ widely from each other” (Carnovsky, 1959). Maggie Weaver (2012) aptly describes special libraries as unique entities because these libraries are responsible for materials produced by their organization. Special librarians have a new role to play as they are becoming more embedded with the institution they serve. Simply put, we can say that at this age of technological growth, special libraries will remain unique and diversified. The uniqueness of each *special* library is best described in this chapter. There are six local library associations established catering to numerous types of special library (i.e., agriculture, law, medical and health, and theology).

Most special libraries can be found in government agencies. In China, special libraries are classified into two: libraries maintained by the Academy of Sciences and its research institutes; and, libraries under the ministries and commissions (Hu, 1996). In the Philippines, there are more than 25 offices and departments under the executive branch, various constitutional offices, numerous government-owned and controlled corporations, and local government units, offices under the legislative branch and offices under the judicial branch. There are also special-academic libraries coming from the state universities and colleges. This alone can build and satisfy a group of special librarians in the country.

### **Why Establish Standards for Special Libraries?**

Standards are primarily established: (1) to suggest the steps necessary for the establishment of special libraries; (2) for those recently established, to suggest the steps necessary to achieve satisfactory performance levels in all areas, and finally, (3) for well-established libraries, to suggest the steps necessary to achieve excellence (Harvey, 1973). As an example, the National Library of Indonesia developed a standard for special libraries mainly for their government agencies. They established a standard to provide a library management guide for its government agency libraries (National Library of Republic of Indonesia, 2011). The document consists of standards in handling library collections, infrastructure, library services, library personnel, and standards implementation and management. These standards were discussed and agreed upon by the National Standards Drafting Team in Bogor in November 2011.

## **STANDARDS FOR SPECIAL LIBRARIES IN THE PHILIPPINES**

According to the Philippines’ Department of Trade and Industry (2014), a standard “is a document, established by consensus and approved by a recognized body that provides, for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines or characteristics for activities or their results, aimed at the achievement of the optimum degree of order in a given context.”

Almost all aspects of life are governed by standards. Living in a society requires compliance with norms or standards, which should be followed for harmony, a better quality of life and for social acceptance. In business, the principal gain from compliance with established standards is the assurance of the quality and safety of goods and services. In libraries, the benefits gained are quick and efficient information retrieval on account of system interoperability and connectivity, better and updated informa-

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