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## Competencies of Paraprofessional Staff of Academic Libraries: a Case from University of Ruhuna

I.D.K.L. Fernando<sup>a</sup> and U.A. Lal Pannila<sup>b</sup>  
Main Library, University of Ruhuna

<sup>a</sup>kusala@lib.ruh.ac.lk

<sup>b</sup>ualal@lib.ruh.ac.lk

### Abstract

Rapid development of technological environment has reshaped the roles of library staff in the knowledge-dependent society. In order to manage and cope with this accelerating rate of changes effectively, understanding of competencies of staff has been recognized as an important area. Among many such different approaches, *KSP* (Knowledge, Skills and Practice attitudes) measurement can be considered as the most commonly applied approaches to measure competencies in professionals at work. No previous attempts have been found to evaluate the competencies of the library paraprofessional staff in the university sector. The objective of this study was to investigate these competencies of paraprofessional staff of the library. Data were collected through printed questionnaire. A census was conducted including all the paraprofessionals in the library staff (43) and the response rate was 100%. Educational qualifications (knowledge) show that there are 32% of males from the total population who qualified O/L while 28% of A/L qualified persons. Minority of 7% were graduates in the male population. Females with O/L qualified were 4% while the A/L qualified populations were 23%. There was only one postgraduate degree holder among females. Males show more competency in work with computers 26.8% than females 15.8%. Both sexes show equal competency in work with the library database (26%). Females are more competent (10.5%) than males in classification skills (4.9%). Cataloguing skills shows high frequency in both sexes male 29.3% and 31.6% in females across the age groups. Interestingly 10.5% of females showing book binding skills with respect to males (9.8%). However 100% of the respondents commonly got the attitude that “*they got confidence to perform any given task at the library after a proper training*”. Even though the educational level of the majority are below the Advanced Level of school the paraprofessional staff members of the university are competent in different skills and some of them are competent more than one skill in the context irrespective of the gender. It can be concluded that the university administration can withstand against new information management technologies and practices with the current staff with further training.

**Keywords:** skill analysis of library staff, library para professionals, KSP of library staff