

# Nursing Education and Libraries: Historical Perspectives

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Although the need for literature growth and library facilities in nursing education have been apparent for decades, the development of them seem to be slow. In the third world, literature for nursing discipline and the establishment of nursing libraries were sporadic and limited. In order to understand this situation, it is necessary to look at the historical perspectives of the profession.

Nursing, as an occupation has a history virtually as old as humanity, but literature of them was almost non-existent before this century. Nursing encompasses the responsibilities of nurturing attention to hygiene, food, comfort and safety. Knowledge of these skills tends to be based on commonsense, folklore, trial and error rather than on written documents. Nursing care based on non-structural continued for centuries.

Attitudes began to change when Florence Nightingale, an affluent young English woman, educated in Latin, mathematics, philosophy, religion and modern languages decided to use resources to reform nursing. Among her numerous achievements in public health and military medicine, the recognition of the necessity for *Collection and Recording* scientific data and the founding of *Modern Nursing Education* have got special interest. She has introduced systematic nurse training in 1860.

In Britain, with the establishment of Nightingale Training School and the philosophy of nursing education, there was a beginning of an autonomous profession based on documents and scholarships. This emergence of professional background paved the way to form organizations and associations. The members propagated their own views and brought about a professional awareness by the publication of periodicals and some of which still flourish. Among them *Midwives Chronicle* (started in 1887 as *Nursing Notes*), *Nursing Mirror* (1888), *Nursing Times* (1905), are prominent and used by almost all nations. (In November 1985, *Nursing Mirror* was amalgamated with *Nursing Times*).

The emergence of educational background was cemented by the efforts of some prominent leaders. As a result, at London, the College of Nursing came into existence in 1916. It received Royal Charter in 1939. The College Library, later to develop into a model national nursing library was established in 1921 with a stock of 178 books listed in the committee minutes as one textbook for nurses, four for midwives and 173 on medical and surgical subjects. The only textbook for nurses was '*Notes on Nursing*', What

it is and what it is not' written by Florence Nightingale in 1859.

This small book of seventy-seven pages held a special interest for nurses. It was used as a text in many schools of nursing. In 1860, the book was rewritten, enlarged and translated into Italian, German and French and reprinted in the following years. The fundamental principles that were set forth in this book remain as true to-day as when they were written.

In USA during the period of civil war (1861-65) many dynamic leaders emerged to increase public awareness of the urgent need to develop *Schools of Nursing*. As a result of this development on September 1, 1872, the New England Hospital in Boston (USA) admitted a class of five students to the newly formed Training School. The course was of one year length. During the course, no classwork was required although lectures were given during the winter month. Books were not available to give a background of nursing and the library facility was completely nil to them. This programme was different from that of Florence Nightingale.

Miss Melinda Ann Richards, who graduated on October 1, 1873, has been called as 'America's First Trained Nurse'. Her efforts were directed to establish nursing schools with sound educational background. Before 1910, Mary A. Nutting and Isabel Stewart, both nursing professionals at Columbia University, made specific efforts to move nursing education into College or University setting.

The earliest schools of nursing borrowed heavily from the medical literature for instructional materials. The role played by the physicians in early education should not be ignored. One of the first American Nursing Textbooks, the *New Heaven Manual of Nursing* in 1879, was written by a committee of physicians and nurses. A textbook of nursing written by Clara Weeks-Shaw, a nursing professional, was published in 1885. Diana, C Kimber has been credited with writing the first *Textbook on Anatomy for Nurses* in 1893. The first general history of nursing was written by Adelaide Nutting and Lavina L Dock. Slowly, the need of the library was realised and developed in course of time.

In India, the military nursing was the earliest type of nursing. The East India Company started a hospital for soldiers in 1664 at Fort St. George, Madras. Later in 1688, a civilian hospital was built and the medical staff appointed by the company served in both the hospitals. In 1797, a Lying-in-Hospital was built and the government sanctioned a *Training School for Midwives* at this hospital in 1854. As it was felt

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that the training was much below the standard desired, a plan for more efficient training was drawn by the authorities and submitted to the government. In 1871, the revised training programme was started at the government General Hospital with six students. To start this school, one lady superintendent and four trained nurses came from England. The first two wellknown nursing schools were established at Madras and Bombay in 1884 and 1886 respectively. But there was no proper literature or library facilities for either the educators or the trainees during this time.

In the history of Nursing Schools in India, Christian Missionaries also played an important role. Especially between 1890-1900 many schools for nursing training were established by British and American Missionaries. Soon, schools of nursing patterned along the lines of Western countries came into existence in many parts of the country and the aspect of nursing education gradually advanced. The Trained Nurses' Association was formed in 1908 and the periodical '*Nursing Journal of India*' started its publication in 1910.

In the beginning, nursing education began with short period of six months training for orderlies and midwives. But between 1871-1905 the system was changed and extended to two years and then three years before the students receive their training for midwives. A separate training for midwifery with a duration of 6-9 months was also added along with it. The need for well qualified teacher and ward supervisors to advance nursing profession was realised by the Indian Nursing leaders. Their initiatives helped to start the post-certificate courses in Nursing Administration, Supervision and Teaching at the College of Nursing, New Delhi, the College of Nursing, CMC Hospital, Vellore, and the Government General Hospital, Madras, in the late 'thirties.

The first four-year basic Bachelor Degree Programme commenced in 1946 at the College of Nursing, Delhi and at the Christian Medical College, Vellore, in Madras State. In 1963, the first post certificate Bachelor Degree programme was started by the school of Nursing, Trivandrum, in Kerala State. Later many other schools of nursing followed it. The Masters Degree Programme of Nursing Education with two years duration, started first in 1960 by the College of Nursing at Delhi and in 1968 by the College of Nursing of the Christian Medical College and Hospital, Vellore. In the late 'seventies and 'eighties, a few other nursing colleges of various states have also started the postgraduate programme.

The main handicap in the development of nursing schools was the lack of text books written by nursing professionals. In the training of nursing, where emphasis was on practical skills rather than the development of enquiring and critical minds, books and library provision for nurses were given low priority. Surveys conducted in the 'sixties revealed variations in the provision of books in nurse training schools. In most of them, the libraries were under the charge of nurse tutors and the books ranging from locked inaccessible cupboards to small but well chosen

collections where the principal tutor has a special interest in libraries. Nurse educators who were trained in universities and reputed educational institutions learned to appreciate the value of good literature support and began to agitate for improved provision. The World Health Organization clearly stated their case in 1966 in its report:

"Although at all levels nurses should be ready to give of their best, it must be recognised that their effectiveness is decreased by inadequate physical conditions, poor or insufficient equipment or the absence of a library with adequate nursing and related technical literature."

The Briggs Report (1972) made several references to the need for library support not only for the learners but also for the trained professionals. It reported, "We regard as indispensable the raising of the standard of College libraries so that they become comparable with libraries which serve the training needs of other professions" and "The facilities of the library should be available for use by qualified nurses and midwives and by nursing aids as well as students."

The library attached to the College of Nursing, Christian Medical College and Hospital, Vellore, is a well established and maintained one compared to many other nursing college libraries in South India. In the early 'thirties, when the institution started the Diploma course in Nursing, this separate library for nursing staff and students was established. It had a collection of American and British books and journals on nursing along with its allied subjects and books on general reading. In the beginning, nurse tutors were in charge of the library. The collection development was on par with the institutional development. In 1946, when the nursing school was upgraded to college level and started the University Degree Programme, the library got a good collection and a full time non-nursing staff was appointed to carry out the functions of the library.

Further development of the library has necessitated the need for qualified librarians to be posted for the library. In 1968, one professional librarian was posted along with the non-professional librarian and at present three professional staff are carrying out the main functions of the library with a selected collection of books, journals and audiovisual aids. There are more than 700 members including the teaching faculty, post-graduates, basic students and other staff getting maximum utilization from this library.

Today, the information needs of nurses are as varied as the type of training, the clinical specialities, decision making at various levels of management and their commitment to nursing research. In the past, the nurse had the reputation of being 'not bookish' because of the practical nature of her work. But, these attitudes are changing particularly for the learners who must develop the awareness of library facilities in order to cope with the project work, assignments, tutorials and audiovisual independent learning



which are features of all basic learning of today. The concept of continuous education brings an increasing number of trained staff to the library to be kept up-to-date and to increase their knowledge in subject specialities.

Nursing education frequently depends on the literature of other disciplines. The best provision is to have an integrated library service shared by various disciplines. If this provision is not possible, a well chosen, adequately financed college of nursing library in the charge of qualified library professionals can provide the current and potential needs of all grades of nursing staff. It should be the ideal of a librarian to afford the readers an access to the best thought of the world so that they may develop their personality to the full by putting into practice the best ideas given by great thinkers. When a professional librarian provides a careful and planned instruction fostering skills in retrieval, there is a significant increase in the use made of the library by nurses.

Working in this long neglected area can be both challenging and rewarding for the library professionals.

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