Conclusions and Suggestions
8.0 Introduction

Libraries have already been considered as effective media for supporting educational system of universities. Thus, library buildings are also considered as an important places, which can be used to support the educational system of the universities. For reaching the educational objectives of the universities, well-planned library buildings play a crucial role. At present, with the advances in IT, and with the huge amount of information, which has brought the information explosion situation, the need for well-planned as well as fully-equipped library buildings has been felt more seriously.

Historically, libraries have mostly been grown up in civilized societies. The more civilized a nation, the more well-planned its library buildings. Generally, it is believed that as long as the printed books existed, the need for a safe and suitable place to keep these has been felt necessary. Moreover, psychologically and sociologically people like to live in public. Thus, planning library buildings based on the said theories should be continued at least in the near future. Planning and construction of library buildings, especially those of universities is felt more seriously in developing countries, where the accessibility to up-to-date information through Internet and other electronic equipment is not possible conveniently for everybody.

An examination of the existing university library buildings can be very beneficial for planning functional library buildings. Investigation of the strength and the weaknesses of the existing library buildings can help the library planners to plan more functional and well-planned library buildings. Likewise, to study the users’ needs and expectations from the library buildings as well as to investigate the viewpoints of the librarians from their library buildings can help the library planners to provide more functional library buildings. So far as the related literature reveals, a systematic study on the university library buildings in Iran has not been done so far. This work is an attempt to fill the said gap; to evaluate and investigate the existing situation of the university library buildings, as well as to study users’ and librarians’ satisfaction from the university library buildings. The findings have been presented using tables, graphs, photographs, figures etc. for better and clearer understanding.
The data was collected through questionnaires, interview with the librarians and the library users, as well as the personal visits to the university libraries in Iran. First of all, a detailed questionnaire, containing all the standard space of the library buildings, was provided to enable to study the existing space of the university library buildings and to evaluate the merits and demerits thereof. Secondly, two separate questionnaires for evaluation of the rates of satisfaction of the library users as well as the librarians' viewpoints on library buildings were also provided. In the questionnaire numerous questions on various space and equipment of library buildings were asked from the respondents to enable to evaluate the strength and the weaknesses of their library buildings. The data collected was analyzed, using various statistical methods and techniques. For better results and in order to conduct interview with the librarians as well as the library users, the investigator of the present study managed to visit majority of the university library buildings in various states of Iran. Floor plans of the library buildings were also collected and redrawn, where necessary and possible. The floor plans of some of the original library buildings were explained and compared with standards and the drawbacks thereof were highlighted.

8.1 University Library Buildings in Iran:

There are 80 governmental universities in Iran. These are of two types, namely, “Medical” and “Non-Medical” universities. Although there is almost one medical and one non-medical university in every big city in Iran, yet the number of non-medical universities is more than that of the other universities. Some of the universities do not own central libraries. Some of these are only in service of cataloguing and related technical work. Thus, these libraries also do not own large well-planned library buildings. Hence, these university libraries are not covered for the present study. Hence, as many as 39 of the non-medical and 20 of the medical university library buildings have been examined in the present study. Thus, at least, 59 university library buildings (i.e. 74%) have been studied in details. Some of the university libraries have owned well-planned original buildings while the others are housed in non-original library buildings. The
number of original library buildings is less than that of non-original library buildings in Iran.

So far as the investigator of the present study visited and studied the university library buildings in Iran, these are more imposing than to be functional. Majority thereof are facing space problems. Space for various IT equipment necessary for a university library and also the required standard space for the library users has not been provided is most of these libraries. Other shortcomings of the library buildings have also been discussed throughout the study. The findings of the present study can be concluded as under:

8.1.1 Original and Non-Original University Library Buildings:

Although it is expected that every university should own an original central library building, majority of the universities in Iran lacks it. As already mentioned, some of the universities do not have a central library and some others do not provide services to the students. Thus, only 25 original university library buildings (i.e. 31.2%) have been constructed in Iran. Table 2 in Chapter 4 reveals a very low percentage of the total required library buildings. All the other libraries have emphasized the need of original library buildings. Thus, the first hypothesis of the study i.e. “Only a few of the existing university library buildings in Iran were originally constructed as “Library Buildings” stands confirmed.

8.1.2 Standards and the University Library Buildings in Iran:

Various standard space of well-planned library buildings for both developed and developing countries have been presented by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). The National Library of Iran has also provided standards for university library buildings of Iran, based on the standards of IFLA. These standards determine various required space in university library buildings of Iran. The data collected for the present study as presented in Table 7 in Chapter 4 reveals that very few library planners have followed the standards completely. The data reveals that only some of the required space have been planned for majority of the university library buildings of Iran. Reading halls, book stacks, reference sections, periodical sections and
also space for the staff have been provided in majority of library buildings. But, the other required standard space has been provided only in a very few of the university library buildings. Likewise, the required space of the libraries is determined according to the number of students, teachers, staff as well as the library collection, etc. Yet, the space provided for the university library buildings in Iran does not match the needs in most of the cases. In some of the university library buildings, the space provided for the library users is almost one eighth of the required standard space. Therefore, the second hypothesis of the study i.e. “While planning university library buildings in Iran, only a few libraries have adopted standard plans completely” stands confirmed.

8.1.3 Users’ Satisfaction from the University Library Buildings in Iran:

Generally it is proved that users are more satisfied with the library services and the facilities provided for them in well-planned original library buildings. But an old well-planned library building, which is used for a large population, can also handicap the library users. Likewise, a well-planned library building in one region can be considered an ill-planned building in the other region, since the local needs of the users are different from one another. Thus, a library planner, who copy a plan completely from a developed country, may face un-satisfactory conditions. On the other hand, the economical, psychological, sociological and cultural factors of the users affect their rates of satisfaction from the library buildings. These should be kept in view by the library planners in order to provide satisfactory library buildings.

According to the data analyzed, library users have registered different rates of satisfaction on the well-planned and other university library buildings in Iran. Although in majority of the cases, users in well-planned library buildings have registered a higher rate of satisfaction, yet the difference between the rate of satisfaction of the two groups under study is not significant in some of the cases (Chapter 6). Library users in well-planned library buildings in a few cases have registered even a less rate of satisfaction in comparison to those of other libraries. Since only some of the well-planned university library buildings in Iran have been planned according to the standards completely and because of the rapid increase in the population of the students, especially after the Islamic Revolution, users have not registered a meaningful difference on all the space and
facilities provided for them. Therefore, the third hypothesis of the study i.e. “There is a direct relationship between a well-planned university library building and users’ satisfaction from the library services” stands partially confirmed for the university library buildings of Iran.

8.1.4 Librarians’ Viewpoints on University Library Buildings in Iran:

The data analyzed and presented in Chapter 6 indicates that librarians in well-planned library buildings have registered a higher and meaningful rate of satisfaction on most of the space and facilities provided in their library buildings in comparison to those in other library buildings. Librarians in other library buildings have also registered a higher meaningful rate of satisfaction on a very few facilities provided in their library buildings. However, as the total rates of satisfaction of the librarians of the two groups under study reveal, and according to the total means provided, librarians in well-planned library buildings are more satisfied with the various space and facilities provided for them. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis of the study i.e. “Librarians are more satisfied with their working condition in well-planned university library buildings as compared to non-planned ones” stands also partially confirmed.

8.1.5 Librarians’ Participation in the Team of Planning University Library Buildings of Iran:

As already mentioned, majority of the university library buildings in Iran are non-original. Some of the existing original library buildings have also been constructed by foreign construction companies. Only those library buildings, which have been constructed after the Islamic Revolution have been planned by the Iranian construction companies. Among these, some of the librarians were asked to be a member of the planning team of university library buildings. As the data collected from both medical and non-medical universities reveal, only 6.2% of the total university library buildings have been planned with the help of the librarians. This very low percentage may be because of the reality that there is no well-experienced librarian for planning library buildings. It may be also because architects think that they are qualified enough to plan library buildings without the help of the librarians. The ill-planned university library buildings in Iran may
be due to the problem that librarians have not actively participated in the planning team of library buildings. Thus, the fifth hypothesis i.e. “Only a few librarians have had an active participation in the planning process of the present university library buildings in Iran” stands confirmed.

8.1.6 Future Expansion of University Library Buildings in Iran:

Possibility of future expansion of library buildings has been considered as a key factor for solving the space problem of library buildings by most of the library planners. Even those who think about the advances in IT equipment in libraries, predict that expansion of library buildings can be the key for solving the future needs of the libraries. But the possibility of expansion has not been kept in view in majority of university library buildings in Iran. According to the data collected for the present study, only 6 of the medical and 12 of the non-medical university libraries (i.e. 18.7%), of the total number of libraries have predicted the future expansion of their library buildings. Thus, majority of the existing library buildings in Iran face or will face shortage of the required space within their library buildings. Hence, the sixth hypothesis of the present study i.e. “While planning university library buildings in Iran, future expansion has not been kept in view in most of the cases” stands confirmed.

8.1.7 Prediction of Future Technological Advances in University Library Buildings in Iran:

Although nobody can precisely predict the future, yet it is obvious that more advanced technological equipment will be employed for better library services in future. Hence, the required space and facilities for the technological equipment as well as the related machine readable material should be provided within the library buildings. Since using computers and other technological equipment in university library buildings in Iran is in its infancy stage, the required space and facilities have not been provided and predicted in most of the library buildings. Computers have been housed in the space provided for other library activities in majority of the library buildings. As shown in Table 7 in Chapter 4, only 72% of the original and 58% of the non-original university library buildings have been designed with a relatively small space as their “Computer
Sections”. The said space has not been provided according to the users’ needs as well as the standards in most the libraries. Likewise, the space for computer readable material has been provided in 16% of the original and only 2.8% of the non-original library buildings. Therefore, the seventh hypothesis of the study i.e. “While planning university library buildings in Iran, the space and facilities needed for IT equipment in future have not been predicted according to the needs” stands confirmed.

8.1.8 Newly Constructed University Library Buildings in Iran:

After the Islamic Revolution in Iran, an attempt for construction various types of new buildings was started. The revolutionary government of Iran, with the help of the people who have promised to rebuild the country, tried to construct as many educational buildings as possible. A large amount of funds for construction of various buildings was also allocated to universities. As a result, numerous educational and administrative buildings and also some library buildings were constructed during this time. But the number of the library buildings is not as much as required. In the second decade of the revolution, with the increase in the number of the students, the need for library buildings was felt more seriously. Therefore, more library buildings were constructed for the universities at that time. Some of the newly constructed library buildings came up because of the aforesaid reasons. Likewise, a few more library buildings are also going to be opened to the users in the near future (Chapter 2). Although there are still many universities which do not own original central library buildings, yet the number of those constructed in the recent years is comparatively too high. Thus, the eighth hypothesis of the study i.e. “In spite of the dire needs, only a few university library buildings have been constructed in Iran during the last 20 years” stands refuted.

8.1.9 Modular University Library Buildings in Iran:

Libraries are ever-growing institutions. The number of library collection as well as the students’ population increases drastically every year. Thus, university library buildings should be very flexible to provide the required space at any required time and with minimum efforts. Likewise, since library collections are generally classified according to the subject, every newly arrived library material is to be housed in its
appropriate subject place. Hence, only a flexible space can provide the said facility for libraries. On the other hand, every library space should be in harmony and with close relation to other library space. Thus, each section is to be attached to other sections according to the functions and activities thereof. Standards have determined this relation. For example, reading halls should be quite close to book stacks as well as the public catalogue cabinets in order to prevent the wastage of time of the library users. Modular library buildings with their maximum inside flexibility provide the best suitable condition for the library activities. Thus, majority of the newly constructed university library buildings in Iran is planned on modular basis. The data presented in Table 1 of Chapter 2 reveals that out of 15 original and non-original library buildings at least 10 thereof (i.e. 66.6%) have followed modular concepts. Since most of the medical library buildings have been constructed on a relatively smaller space, these have not been planned on modular basis. Planning large well-planned university library buildings on modular concept confirms the benefits of the said type of planning. However, the ninth hypothesis of the present study i.e. “Modular university library buildings have a direct bearing on the space planning and providing efficient library services. Therefore, most of the newly constructed library buildings have followed it.” Stands confirmed for the existing modular university library buildings in Iran.

8.1.10 Library Equipment and Facilities Provided in the University Library Buildings in Iran:

Library collections are damaged by direct sun light, dust, excessive heat and cold, humidity, dryness etc. Likewise, the said problems can handicap the library users and the staff. A suitable condition with normal humidity and desirable temperature and light etc. are to be provided by installing suitable standard library equipment. Suitable equipment and facilities for prevention and destruction of libraries by fire, earthquake, typhoon, etc. are also required to be kept in view while planning library buildings. Although providing the said equipment for the library buildings is relatively economical in Iran, yet some of the university library buildings have not been provided with the said equipment. For example, certain libraries use gas and electric heaters for heating, which is, dangerous and can lead to fire. Water coolers are also used in some of the library buildings. But water is
harmful for the library material. Impact of direct sun light as well as the artificial light on the library material has also not been prevented in majority of the library buildings. Dust, that can pave way for worms, which are dangerous for the books, has not been controlled through providing dust filtering equipment in almost all the university library buildings in Iran. Likewise, the quality of the indoor air has also not been controlled in majority of the library buildings. Nevertheless, most of the university library buildings have been installed with central air conditions, which help in providing a suitable and healthy quality of indoor air. However, according to the data collected for the present study, the tenth hypothesis of the study i.e. “Some of the environmental equipment which are installed in university library buildings for providing air conditioning, ventilation, heating, fire extinguishing, lighting, etc. are not as per international standards and safe for the library material, users and the staff” stands partially confirmed for the university library buildings of Iran.

However, it may be noted that this is the first empirical study of its kind and its conclusions are based on the data collected from the university libraries in Iran. Hence, the results may be changed quantitatively and qualitatively with the passage of time, especially in the present Information Era when everything changes so rapidly.

8.2 Suggestions:

Based on the data collected for the present study, and the personal visit to the university library buildings of Iran, on one hand, and the information gathered from the related literature, and also the experiences of other countries, on the other hand, the following suggestions are proposed. The investigator of the study believes that these suggestions may be considered as important and put into practice for providing more suitable, functional and well-planned library buildings; to improve the existing library buildings to standard levels, and to provide a satisfactory situation for both users and the staff.

8.2.1 Establishment of a National Committee for Planning and Financing University Library Buildings:

Since the construction of library buildings is very expensive and sophisticated, a team of well-experienced library planners, architects and librarians should work together
in order to provide well-planned library buildings. A huge amount of money is needed to complete a suitable standard library building. Thus, establishment of a national committee for providing funds as well as standard plans, compatible to the local needs, can be very beneficial for planning and constructing university library buildings in Iran. Such a committee must control the entire process of planning and construction of library buildings actively. Experience of other countries also reveals that the said committee had been very successful in providing standard and modern library buildings. Establishment of the Association of Librarians of Iran, which has been defunct for the last 20 years, can be instrumental for the establishment of the said committee.

8.2.2 Librarians as Active Members of the Team for Planning Library Buildings:

Librarians are supposed to know the library functions and activities better than the others. On the other hand, the form of a library building follows the functions of the library. Although, standards have determined the space and the equipment necessary for a library building, yet every library has its own special characteristics and needs. Hence, some well experienced librarians should act as active members of the team of planning library buildings throughout the whole process of planning, construction and installing library equipment. Librarians can also act as consultants in the team of planning library buildings. However, no library should be constructed without the supervision of a well-experienced librarian. Moreover, librarians should have priority over the decisions of the team of planning library buildings too.

8.2.3 To Construct University Library Buildings as Early as the Other Educational and Administrative Buildings:

Some university authorities believe that construction of library buildings is of their future needs. So they start constructing library buildings after the completion of other educational and various administrative buildings. In the case that the location of library buildings has not been predicted in the general plan of the university campus, library buildings are constructed in an odd space and lose their centrality. However, it should be emphasized that university library buildings are as important as other buildings within the university campus. Likewise, the function of libraries in supporting the educational system of universities is undeniable. Thus, planning and construction of
library buildings should be started simultaneously with other buildings of the universities or at least the location, plan, funds and other required facilities for providing a well-planned library building should be predicted as soon as possible. Thus, in establishing every new university in Iran, planning and construction of a suitable library building should be started as early as other buildings of the university.

8.2.4 Users’ Satisfaction from the Library Buildings Should be Considered as a Determinant Factor:

University library buildings are supposed to be mostly in service of the university students, researchers, teachers and the staff. A detailed study of the requirements and ideals of the users as well as the strength and weaknesses of the existing library buildings can help the library planners to plan more functional library buildings. Thus, users’ viewpoints should be investigated before planning any type of library buildings. Moreover, it is recommended to ask a library user to join the team of planning library buildings too. However, library buildings should be so planned to provide comfort, peace and convenience for the library users. Similarly, suitable space for the library staff, in order to provide satisfactory library services should be planned.

8.2.5 Prediction of Expansion and Installation of Future IT Equipment for Library Buildings:

Library collection as well as students’ population of universities increases regularly and continuously. Thus, suitable large space should be planned for every section of the library. It is experienced that a well-planned library building, which meets the needs of the library material as well as the users and the staff will face space problem after some years. Hence, while planning library buildings, future alteration, remodeling and interior as well as exterior expansion of these should be taken into consideration by the library planners. Moreover, although various types of technological equipment have already been employed by libraries for better library services, it is predicted that latest IT equipment will be housed in library buildings in future. Therefore, provision and prediction of the required space as well as the suitable equipment and the related facilities for the future library buildings should be considered as most essential. Since IT will change most of the existing library services and the electronic material and documents
will be easily available for the library users in future, this should also be kept in view by
the library planners. Obviously advances in IT and availability of Internet and other local
and international networks will change the form of the library services in future. The
library planners should be cautious about these factors also.

8.2.6 To Employ Various Technology Equipment to Solve the Space Problem of
the Existing Library Buildings:

There is no doubt that the technological equipment provides faster, easier and
better library services. IT equipment can also solve the space problem of libraries. The
large space required for book stacks, periodical sections, public catalogue cabinets,
reference sections etc., can be reduced to smaller space by using computers for
performing the same job. For example, one or two computers can replace the public
catalogue of a library, occupying a large space. Thus, university libraries, instead of
spending large amount of money on the expansion of their library buildings, can employ
various technological equipment to solve the space problem of their library buildings.
Moreover, since more and more students will buy computers in future, they can access to
library collection as well as other library services through local networks from their
residence. Therefore, the need for visiting libraries will be decreased and the space
required for the users will also be solved to some extent.

8.2.7 Inclusion of the Subject “Library Building and Equipment” in the
Curriculum of Study at all Levels in Library and Information Science
Courses:

“Library Building and Equipment” is taught at Bachelor level in the Departments
of Library and Information Science in the universities of Iran. Thus, those students who
study a two years course, for getting Post-Diploma do not study the said subject. Since
these students are employed in various types of libraries, they do not have any academic
knowledge about the library buildings and may not be able to design the space of the
library buildings. Similarly, most of the students who study at Post-Graduate level have
done their graduation in other subjects, especially in English language. Therefore, these
students also do not study “Library Building and Equipment” as a subject throughout
their academic studies. Although students have to cover four semesters in Ph.D. level, yet
they also do not find any opportunity to study the said course. Since majority of the university libraries are managed by such librarians, who have got higher level of professional qualifications, they may not be able to plan the library buildings because they may have not studied the characteristics of the library buildings during their academic studies. Thus, it is suggested to include the said course in the curriculum of studies at all levels in the Departments of Library and Information Science. Arrangement of refresher courses for the librarians on the said subject is also beneficial and can solve the problem partially.

8.2.8 To Organize Conferences and Seminars on “Library Buildings”:

Evaluation of the existing library buildings of Iran can help the library planners to provide more well-planned library buildings. Similarly, findings of the researches as well as the proceedings of the seminars on the “Library Buildings” can be very helpful for the librarians and the library planners. Although various seminars and conferences have been organized on “Library Buildings” in other countries, yet not even a single seminar on the said subject has been organized in Iran. It is strongly suggested to organize such seminars for the improvement of the library buildings in Iran. The investigator of the present study also hopes that the present study provides the preliminaries for organizing such a seminar as soon as possible.

8.2 To Manage Various Library Services in the Central Library of Every University:

Some of the universities in Iran own rich academic libraries. Some of these are housed in well-planned original library buildings within the university campus. In a competitive race, every college insists on providing such college libraries. Therefore, the limited funds of the universities for the development of their libraries mostly goes to academic libraries. Hence, central libraries of these universities are not so rich, and do not own well-planned original library buildings. In such universities, students are scattered in various colleges for using the library services. Thus, for providing a central, rich and comprehensive library, it is recommended to establish and improve central libraries to provide more satisfactory library services for all types of users.
8.3 Areas of Further Studies:

While conducting the present study, it has been found that there are certain vital issues in library buildings, which require further in-depth research. These areas can be tentatively identified as follows. The present study has also paved the way for making similar studies. Some of these areas can be as under:

1. Study of the “School Library Buildings”, “Public Library Buildings” and “Special Library Buildings” in Iran. A systematic study of various space of all types of library buildings in Iran can be beneficial and help the library planners to become more familiar with the strength and the weaknesses of the library buildings and to plan more functional library buildings.

2. “Role of University Library Buildings in Providing Convenient and Better Environments to the Library Users to Study for Longer Hours”. It is believed that the low rate of study among the university students in Iran is because of unsuitable library buildings. The universities can achieve their educational objectives by providing well-planned and functional library buildings. A comparison between the existing university library buildings in Iran can reveal and support the idea of the role of library buildings in encouraging students to study for longer hours.

3. “Cultural Habits of the Library Users and Planning Library Buildings” Cultural and local habits of the people have a significant role in planning library buildings. While planning library buildings, these factors should be kept in view. The rate of satisfaction of the library users from the library buildings mostly depends upon the aforesaid habits. For example, in a region where people are not used to loud noise, library buildings should be designed sound proof, and various single study tables and research carrels should be provided for the library users to increase the rate of satisfaction thereof from the library buildings. A study on the cultural habits of the library users in Iran can be useful in order to provide library buildings in accordance with the users’ needs.

4. “Space Management of the University Library Buildings in Iran”. It is said that every inch of a library building should be planned for a library activity. In other words, since the size of the modules as well as the columns (pillars) of an original
library building are planned according to standard size of the book shelves, tables and other library equipment, not even a single inch of space of the library buildings should be left un-used. As observed by the investigator of the present study during his visits to various university library buildings in Iran, some of the space problem of the libraries is due to ill space management. These libraries can house more library material and provide more space for the library users in their existing library buildings if they manage to use the maximum space according to the standards. A detailed systematic study of the space management of the university library buildings in Iran can reveal the ill management of the library space. Similarly, studies can also be undertaken to ascertain various factors, which can affect library services in order to plan more functional library buildings and subsequently to increase the rate of satisfaction of library users and the library staff from the space and facilities provided to them.

Thus, it is evident that there is a scope for further investigation of different aspects of library buildings in Iran and other developing countries, that calls for further research studies.