

LIS EDUCATION

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1. INTRODUCTION

Providing a decent description of the patchwork of academic traditions, structural specifics and course profiles characterising Library and Information Science (henceforward LIS) in Europe presents a formidable task to those embarking on such a project. Explaining features of the past of LIS education along with current trends in curriculum development and educational reorientation within the space of ten pages or so seems almost impossible. Therefore, rather than intending to provide a more or less sketchy coverage of Europe's national LIS educational systems and practices for the sake of completeness, we decided to draw a picture that singles out LIS education scenes in a few larger areas in Europe for more detailed treatment. The depiction of LIS educational structures and developments in selected nation states produced by this selective approach is rounded out in this chapter by an outline and discussion of some key issues and activities of a transverse and cross-country nature. Within the LIS academic community, education is frequently intertwined with research efforts and LIS educators have a major role in LIS-specific research and knowledge production. However, the research dimension of LIS schools is not addressed in the sub-chapter.

1.1 European LIS Education: Diversity Prevails

Given the range of differing LIS academic levels from country to country and the multiplicity of national degrees, diplomas and vocational/professional qualifications, the project of delineating the "topography" of European LIS education is an unenviable one. Ample evidence on the mix of degrees and qualifications can be found in the recent edition of *World Guide to Library, Archive and Information Science Education* (Schniederjürgen 2007). The variety of curricular approaches, thematic orientations, subject emphasises and "paradigms" represented by LIS academic programs throughout Europe is conspicuous. Thus, the thematic profiles of courses and LIS programs in European countries range from archives/libraries/museums, book science/bibliology, business and management, cultural librarianship, digital libraries and librarianship, documentation, engineering-oriented information studies, information and communication technology-specific, information science pure, literacy, learning and educational support orientation, LIS "mainstream" to traditional/classic librarianship. Just to give an illustration of the diversity of programme profiles that can be found.

No less motley is the picture of academic quality assurance practices and accreditation of LIS programs. Most of the European LIS schools rely on national-level accreditation bodies and mechanisms with national governments or specific government-funded agencies overseeing matters of quality assurance. In some na-

tional contexts combined solutions involving internal quality audit are the norm. Some LIS academic institutions also use external assessors such as employers and international panels of experts (Kajberg and Lørrin 200:28). As the situation looks now, formally established European-level accreditation and quality assurance procedures for LIS educational programs are non-existing.

A bird's-eye view of the European LIS education scene reveals an array of credit point systems, academic traditions, program structures and lengths, course levels, placement structures, curricular emphases, forms of teaching and assessment, etc. Nevertheless, convergence of educational structures and trends towards increased transparency in the field of LIS education are clearly discernible, not least because of the active involvement of governments and higher education institutions in Europe in the Bologna Process, which has as its aim to establish a European Area of Higher Education (EHEA) by 2010. The overall intention is to harmonise the European higher education system architecture and within this framework efforts are made to achieve comparability between degree qualifications while at the same time acknowledging and respecting the differing national educational traditions. So far the main focus has been on degree systems, quality assurance and study periods and it is essential to point out that the Bologna Process essentially considers systems, not curricular contents. However, in LIS, there are examples of initiatives involving the introduction of joint modules educational institutions located in two or more countries. Also reported are studies on the comparability and equivalence of course themes in different national contexts and the prospects for tuning specific curricular topics (Vilar, Zumer and Bates 2007).

In many European countries, there is a well-established and long-standing tradition of university-based LIS education and on the whole the tendency goes towards offering university-level LIS programs. Hence, in some countries the pattern is that formal academic preparation has gradually replaced vocational training schemes and sandwich courses, etc. provided by institutions outside the university sector. A concrete example of this transformation can be found in Hungary, where the Berzsényi College in Szombathely has become a part of the University of West Hungary and is now called the University of West Hungary Savaria University Center. As a consequence, the LIS Department of the former College now operates in conjunction with the Institute of Social, International and European Studies at the new university. However, in a few countries, it is still possible to locate "profession schools" and very practice-oriented courses by and large modelled on the apprenticeship approach. Most European LIS schools provide practical training of some sort, but the time students spend on fieldwork placement seems to be on the decline (Borup Larsen 2005: 233-234).

The number of LIS schools in Europe is estimated at 200-250 (Borup Larsen 2005:232; Wilson, 2008) with the number of schools included in the above *World Guide to Library, Archive and Information Science Education* being somewhat larger. A count reveals that there are 346 entries in the book covering LIS schools in European countries. In looking at the organizational contexts, in which Euro-

pean LIS educational institutions operate, we find that the very large majority of institutions function as a unit or department within a specific faculty or as a programme within a particular department. There are extremely few mono-faculty universities or stand-alone academic institutions with the Royal School of Library and Information Science (Denmark) and Enssib (École nationale supérieure des sciences de l'information et des bibliothèques (France) as notable examples. In universities, LIS educational units are typically located within such host faculties as Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences, Communication and Media, Business Studies and Computer Science. The size of the student body of LIS schools varies from less than 50 students to more than 1,000 enrolled students with approximately two thirds of the schools having student populations in the range of 51-400. It is not unusual for a LIS department to have less than 200 students and LIS schools generally tend to be very small (Borup Larsen 2005:239). This is also illustrated by the number of full-time staff members in LIS departments: more than half (64%) have fewer than 20 staff members and more than a quarter (27%) had fewer than 10. Typically, the size of the academic staff is 11-20 (Borup Larsen 2005:239-240).

1.2 Subject Emphases of European LIS Curricula: Some Characteristics and Trends

As stated above, LIS education in Europe boasts a rich diversity of curricular traditions and domain-specific orientations. Traceable in Italian LIS education, for instance, is the prominence and historical significance of cultural heritage as a discipline and many universities offer archival studies and provide courses on palaeography and preservation of cultural goods. *Book science* or *bibliology* has for many years occupied a firm curricular place in some of Europe's LIS schools. "Bibliology" is the umbrella term for the scholarly disciplines studying the phenomena related to the book world and the book as an entity. In the former Soviet Union and in the Eastern and central European countries, library schools and institutes of culture, etc. tended to include the study of books from a variety of aspects in their programs. However, during the last decades, the prominence of book science and its sub-disciplines has diminished in LIS curricula throughout Europe. Today, scholarship and education of specialists in the field of book science enjoy a strong position in LIS education in the Baltic countries, and LIS schools in such countries as Croatia, the Czech Republic, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine offer courses in the field (Reimo 2007).

Looking at the approaches to teaching the historical aspects and developments within LIS, there seems to be a dividing line between West European and Scandinavian LIS schools with their emphasis on library/information history and the institutions in Central and Eastern Europe where there is a continued strong coverage of book science/book history (Reimo, 2007, p. 7). Thus, for instance, the post-

graduate degree programs on offer at the Institute of Information Studies and Librarianship at the Charles University in Prague also include a 2-year master's degree in book studies. Further, the Kharkiv State Academy of Culture in Ukraine offers a Master in Book Studies (Sheyko 2005:117). The emergence of *digitization of cultural heritage* as a curricular area in LIS schools has brought new relevance to the treatment of the historical dimension in LIS curricula. Thus, the point is made that specialists involved in digitization projects must master not only the technological skills, but must also be knowledgeable about manuscripts and printed materials so as to make the right decisions in selecting materials for digitization (Reimo 2007:12).

A prevailing feature of some LIS curricula – for instance those of some of the Scandinavian schools – is their inclusion of a cultural and literary knowledge base as part of the LIS curriculum. Thus, subjects such as culture and media studies, adult fiction and children's books have for many years occupied a firm place in LIS-specific curricula (Audunson 2005a). As in other parts of the world, the interface and interaction between archives and libraries and records management increasingly find their way into the curricula of some LIS schools, e.g. in Germany and Portugal. In other schools, e.g. in Scandinavia, museums and the keeping, "processing," conservation, digitisation and mediation of the objects of "memory institutions" are increasingly gaining ground in LIS course offerings. On the whole there is an increasing awareness of the response to be provided to the inter-related educational needs existing within the European Archives Libraries Museums (ALM) community. A study on university programs and educational institutions preparing future professionals in the ALM field identified three European academic institutions devoted to the entire ALM field (Dragija-Ivanović, Faletar, Pehar, and Aparac-Jelušić 2005:49).

In many European countries, schools in the LIS field have undergone processes of transformation and curricular restructuring directed towards resolving the dichotomy between librarianship and information science. But in France, there are academic institutions that traditionally orient themselves strongly towards the concepts of *document* and *documentation science* in the theoretical underpinning of librarianship and information systems and services. Similarly, the Department of Documentation Studies at the University of Tromsø, Norway sees itself as an academic unit concerned with *documentation science* emphasizing the scholarly concern with the entity of the *document*. More trendy labels such as knowledge management, information sciences, business information systems, or information and communication studies have been adopted by other schools, and the inspiration from the business school environments is discernible in some places. This seems to be the case in countries such as the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

The last few years have seen a growing interest in *information literacy* as a field of research and analysis, as a policy area and as a curriculum subject. Thus, many conferences and seminars on information literacy have been held and networking initiatives and European projects have been started. European-scale initiatives in-

clude the European network on Information Literacy (EnIL) with the maintenance of the European Observatory on IL (Information Literacy) Policies and Research as one of its three action lines.¹ The concern for information literacy has spread to the European LIS education community and some LIS educators are currently engaged in conceptualising the field while at the same time contributing to the discussion of its integration into LIS curricula (Koltay 2007; Corradini 2007:25).

2. SELECTED EUROPEAN LIS EDUCATION LANDSCAPES

2.1 Eastern and Central Europe

In many Eastern European countries, there was a need to reform national educational systems and to shift away from structures and ideological values rooted in the regime of the former Soviet Union. As a consequence, in the years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, new higher education structures were established, outdated tertiary educational elements were eradicated and new curricula, and teaching and learning materials were created while at the same time links and partnerships with western academic colleagues were initiated. At the same time the epistemological outlook was broadened and extensive use of textbooks and study materials published abroad began (Virkus 2007:11). In Poland, changes in higher education led to the establishment of four models of LIS education at accredited universities:

1. Two-stage, bachelor/master, studies in information science and library/ or book studies;
2. Librarianship specialisation in non-LIS departments running MA programs;
3. Postgraduate studies in LIS and
4. Doctoral studies (Woźniczka-Paruzel 2005:165).

In Estonia, three academic institutions provide LIS education with the Department of Information Studies at the Tallinn University being the only institution offering LIS programs at all three academic levels and with coverage of information science, information management and records management. In Russia, the system of LIS education is being constantly transformed. LIS education in the Post-Soviet Era reflects the complicated period of social and economic transition characterising the Russian society, reforms in higher education in general as well as the dynamic developments in libraries. In 2007, there were 26 higher education institutions in Russia providing LIS education. These include state universities and higher specialised institutions of culture. In 2002, the library faculties were transformed into LIS faculties and new State-approved standards for qualifications in LIS were created. A general LIS-specific syllabus has been issued, which includes

¹ <http://www.ceris.cnr.it/Basili/EnIL/index.html> (accessed 15 March, 2008)

both a federal and a national and regional part. A look at the subjects and sub-disciplines covered by the prescribed syllabus reveals the emphasis on liberal arts and social science fields (e.g. foreign languages, political science and Russian language and speech culture). The considerable weight given to bibliographic studies in the library-related components of the syllabus is reminiscent of library courses and library professional activities in the Soviet epoch (Donchenko and Kerzum 2006).

2.2 Croatia and Neighbouring South-East European Countries

Croatia may be taken as an epitome for the neighbouring countries in the South-East of Europe; from 1919 until the dissolution of Yugoslavia in 1991, its educational and library systems were developed along more or less the same lines as with Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo, which today are all independent countries.

Until the 1960s, there was no formal schooling at the university level available to librarians, and professional knowledge was acquired by passing a state examination for librarians. The obligation to pass the examination was first prescribed by regulation in 1928 for librarians of the National Library in Belgrade and the University Library in Zagreb; in 1931 it was extended to include all librarians in state libraries (Hanz 1971). Soon after the end of World War II the obligation to pass the professional examination was reintroduced for civil servants in libraries and archives.

The first programme of postgraduate studies in librarianship, documentation and information sciences, open to graduates from any discipline, was introduced at the University of Zagreb in 1961. The programme significantly contributed to professionalizing librarianship and helped create a core group of formally educated librarians for all types of libraries, yet mostly for university libraries. Until its closure in the end of the 1980s it attracted numerous students from all parts of the then Yugoslavia.

In the early 1960s, programs in librarianship were introduced in teacher training academies in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Slovenia. In the 1970s, they were mostly replaced by university studies. New programs were opened for graduate students at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Sarajevo (1972), Faculty of Philosophy, University of Zagreb (1976), and Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade (1978).² The Zagreb and Belgrade programs were characterised by their interdisciplinary approach to library studies, i.e. students of any academic discipline were allowed to enrol. Reliance on information technology was another characteristic they shared, what normally meant that traditional core courses, such as library management, cataloguing, classification, bibliography, and history of book and libraries, albeit under slightly different names, were enriched

² Faculty of Philosophy has been a traditional name for faculties offering study programs in social sciences and humanities.

by courses in database organization, theory of information science, etc. The Sarajevo programme differed in that it was opened at the Department of Comparative Literature and Librarianship for students of comparative literature only and offered a combination of literature courses and courses in librarianship.

Graduate library studies at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Zagreb were established in 1976/77, first as a two-year supplementary study programme, open to students of any academic field, and from 1986 also as a four-year programme in Information Sciences for librarians, archivists, museum documentalists and information science experts. The programme was based on the assumption that information sciences comprise several disciplines, e.g. librarianship, archival studies, museum studies (ALM studies) and information science pure and that the latter provides a common basis upon which the other disciplines can develop. All students attended the same courses in the first two years and in the 3rd year they could choose among librarianship, archival studies, museum studies or information science. Each year around 100 students enrolled in all programs, around 40 chose librarianship. Since its establishment, more than 650 students of librarianship had graduated. The last generation enrolled in that programme in 2006.

The Bologna reform, introduced in 2005, proved to be a difficult task for LIS educators not only because the programme had to be revised in order to follow the 3+2 cycle, but also because of the trend to merge previously more or less independent programs for different categories of information sciences experts into a single programme. Taking into account a relatively wide scope of the information sciences field, the establishment of a single LIS programme is likely to result in a less specific and less practice-oriented curriculum. The first Bachelor's of Information Sciences will graduate in 2008. Master's programs for librarians, archivists, museum documentalists and information science experts will be offered for the first time in 2008/2009. Students with Bachelor degree in any discipline will be allowed to enrol into Master's programme, but they will have to meet additional requirements as compared to Bachelors of Information Sciences.

All programs are carried out by the faculty of 25 persons with either a doctoral or a Master's degree.

New LIS graduate programs were introduced in 1999 at the University of Osijek and in 2003 at the University of Zadar. The two LIS departments collaborate closely relying on the same staff and offer some joint programs. The curriculum is rich in courses on the book, reading, and information literacy. A new Master's program for publishers has also been envisaged.

At present the only doctoral program in information sciences has been organized by the University of Zagreb. It has replaced the earlier postgraduate programme in information sciences with the streams librarianship, archival studies, museum studies and information science (1994 – 2006).

All university programs must be reviewed and approved by the National Council for Higher Education.

Bosnia and Hercegovina

Since 1972 librarianship could be studied at the Department of Comparative Literature and Librarianship, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Sarajevo as a 4-year programme in comparative literature and librarianship. Bosnia and Hercegovina joined the Bologna Process in 2003 and the first revised programs were introduced in 2006/2007 allowing students to choose LIS as an independent study programme leading to the Bachelor degree (3 years) and Master's degree (two more years). In 2006, an agreement on co-operation was concluded with the University of Zagreb and teachers from Zagreb help the Sarajevo staff of 3 full-time teachers deliver the programme. The new curriculum has been modelled partly in accordance with the curriculum taught at the Zagreb University. 50 students are enrolled in the library programme each year. A doctoral programme is not available at present.

Librarianship can also be studied at the new University of East Sarajevo, founded in 1993. Since 1997, the programme in librarianship combined with literature has been offered by the Department of Literature and Librarianship. The four-year programme leads to the Bachelor degree and is executed by 25 full time teachers who teach ca 100 students.

Slovenia

Since 1987, LIS studies are taught at the Department of Librarianship, Information Science and Book Science, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Ljubljana. The program was harmonized with the Bologna process in 2006. A teaching staff of ten full-time academics and one part-time lecturer take care of about 200 students. Besides the traditional library courses, the curriculum offers courses on production and distribution of books, electronic publishing, records management, documentation, and information science. Students can choose elective courses in psychology and literature.

Serbia

An LIS curriculum is taught at the Department of Librarianship and Informatics of the University of Belgrade as a four-year program. In addition to the traditional library courses in library management, cataloguing and classification, bibliography and history of libraries, courses on database management, Internet and Web, and multimedia have been introduced into the curriculum as well as courses in records management and museum documentation.

There is no formal training provided as of yet for librarians in *Macedonia* and *Kosovo*, although specific courses have been organised for them by the universities in the neighbouring countries.

2.3 Turkey

The Republic of Turkey was established in 1923, and the need for qualified human resources employed in libraries was stressed in expert reports produced in the early years of the New Republic (Ersoy and Yurdadoğ 1963:206; Baysal 1992:56). From 1925 to 1952, along the lines of the proposals contained in those reports, a number of courses were designed and provided aiming to develop librarian skills, knowledge and techniques as well as promoting choice of librarianship as a profession (Ötüken 1957:20). Particularly those courses run between 1942 and 1952, being the first continuous training on library science, by Adnan Ötüken at Ankara University provided suitable conditions for the foundation of an institute that would offer for the first time library science studies within a university (Ötüken 1957:14-15). The first library science studies at BA level started in 1954 at Ankara University. This was followed in 1964 by Istanbul University as well as by Hacettepe University in 1972 with post-graduate studies. Witnessing the success in post-graduate studies, Hacettepe University launched its undergraduate studies in the discipline of library science in 1974 (Çakın 2005:14).

Until 1988, the academic studies were continued as a single discipline within an organizational framework called the Department of Library Science; however, the discipline was later divided into further branches on the grounds that the existing body of studies was not sufficient to train such workforce as needed in archives as well as in documentation and information centers. The studies were grouped under the Department of Library Science into three disciplines (discipline of library science, discipline of archiving, and discipline of documentation and information) were continued until 2002. This practice, which was based on the notion that the said disciplines were different in content, became less efficient in time in the face of progress in information technologies. The characteristics of the sectors employing a workforce trained in this field made clear that all the relevant professional skills, knowledge and techniques should be taught in a holistic approach (Çakın 2005: 16-18). Based on this understanding, the names of Departments of Library Science were changed in 2002 into Departments of Information Management, and all the related disciplines were brought together under this name. With the change of name, the study program was also revised, which now stresses the notion that information management underlies all those disciplines. The aim here was to emphasize that actually professionals provide information services but are called by different titles (Çakın 2005:19). Underlining that the label “information management” is an umbrella term, Çakın, the architect of the reconstruction process in librarianship and information science studies in Turkey, has pointed out that the graduates of the departments will continue performing their tasks in libraries, archives and documentation centers in their capacities as librarian or archivist. He has added that the title “information manager,” on the other hand, will be a sort of higher identity for information professionals to be employed at information centers and in new service areas requiring information and documentation man-

centers and in new service areas requiring information and documentation management (Çakın 2002:6).

There are six study programs in the discipline of library science and information science offered by universities in Turkey. One of these programs had not started to admit students as of this writing.

Since the beginning of studies on library science and information science in Turkey, the greatest international influence has possibly been exerted by student and staff exchanges within the Erasmus program besides the influence of the American line of library science studies on the foundation of departments. Mutual visits at student and faculty level have been continuing in departments that made exchange agreements with European universities. It is considered that incorporating the notion of cultural diversity and an international perspective in study programs would enable the students to adapt themselves more easily to the changing global conditions, and that the experience gained by the faculty members would contribute to the improvement of study programs designed for international students at national universities (Oğuz 2007:286).

2.4 Northern Europe (Germany and the United Kingdom)

Germany

Typical of German (and previously West German) LIS education has for many years been the differentiated and sector-oriented/specific system of courses, which mirrors the multifarious and very hierarchically structured employment market for higher and medium-level library and information professionals and semi-professionals. Moreover, course offerings, bodies of knowledge transmitted to students, qualifications and job titles still reflect the traditional dichotomy between *documentation* and *librarianship*. As a consequence, in Germany, the somewhat compartmentalised LIS workforce includes *documentalists*/information specialists (university degree in a subject discipline degree topped by a documentation/information-related speciality course), diploma documentalists (4-year specialized program covering information retrieval, information systems, information service, information management, etc.), media documentalists, medical documentalists and documentation assistants. In the library field, primarily university libraries and large special libraries have for many years offered positions as academic or scholar librarians that are open to university graduates in various subject disciplines and which requires a complementing library-related programme. In addition, there are diploma librarians possessing a full library qualification (awarded after three or four years of undergraduate study) and library assistants in both public libraries and academic libraries. Finally, some universities have launched degree programs with a clear business profile leading to the qualification of corporate information manager. Also offered by a few universities are degree programs with an information science focus. However, during recent years the winds of change have begun to influence existing LIS educational structures and routes to

professional qualification in Germany. Preceding this process is the adoption of the revised Framework Act for Higher Education in 1988, which led to university reforms in the federal states of Germany (*Bundesländer*). The key elements of the university reforms are improved student mobility for students, introduction of the two-tiered Bachelor/Master degree system, greater transparency in teaching and course structures, reduced course lengths and promotion of lifelong learning (Krauss-Leichert, 2003, p. 301). As part of the implementation of the structural changes of higher education, a system of credit points was implemented (Krauss-Leichert 2002). Paralleling the structural reforms in higher education in general and in LIS education in particular are efforts within LIS academic contexts to re-examine librarianship and LIS as a discipline. The Bologna Process-inspired reorganization of LIS education implies the introduction of a 3-year Bachelor's degree, which will replace the traditional librarianship diploma course and a Master of Arts (MA) programme of typically 2 year's duration. The MA is offered partly as a consecutive course that builds on, and expands what has been taught in the bachelor context, and partly as an additional qualification in LIS that can be taken by graduates from other disciplines (non-consecutive Master). An exciting feature of the MA degree programme is that it provides room for specialisation, absorption and even students' research. In 2007, the Humboldt-University, Berlin and seven universities of applied sciences (the so-called *Fachhochschulen*) offered degree programs designed in harmony with the new model of delivery (Bachelor/Master). MA programme designations include Information Science & Engineering/Information Science, Information Science and Management and Library and Information Management. However, MA opportunities are not yet available in all places and two schools in Bavaria concentrate on traditional librarianship courses (Hellmich and Schleh 2007).

The United Kingdom

In the UK, LIS education has for many years been available at undergraduate and postgraduate level. The two principal routes to professional qualification – an undergraduate LIS degree as the one route and a postgraduate LIS qualification coupled with a first degree in another discipline as the second route – still exist, but the way in which schools present and label their course offerings has changed along with the actual course content. In the 1990s, the “librarianship” or “library studies” gradually disappeared from the names of schools in the field. Alliances with other university disciplines left their stamp on the profile of some LIS departments, which became more blurred. At the same time Bachelor's programs with a LIS orientation came under pressure because of insufficient intake of qualified applicants. These programs were either abandoned or fundamentally revised. Problems in attracting applicants also affected the postgraduate LIS courses. Thus, recent years have seen an erosion and redefinition of traditional LIS and a diversi-

fication of LIS qualifications. A shift away from LIS in a more classic sense has been observable and information management has increasingly been seen as the core element in LIS education and typically combined with business-oriented subject component and business studies. Further, degree programs mirror close relations with computer science and information technology. The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP), which accredits LIS programs, had its role in LIS education redefined, developed a new Framework of Qualifications and started devoting more energy to quality assurance and benchmarking in the field. Paralleling this effort was the publishing of a Subject Benchmark for Librarianship and Information Management in 2000 (Um and Feather 2007). As the situation is now, 16 universities have programs that consider the LIS domain broadly and which have been accredited by CILIP. However, the number of universities offering information-related degrees covering for instance information systems or information management is considerably larger (Feather 2007:1). Overall, there is a marked shift towards Master's programs and Um and Feather conclude that "there is thus some evidence that the orientation of LIS in the UK has tended to shift from its traditional base in the humanities and social sciences to science and technology" (Um and Feather 2007).

3. CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR LIS PROFESSIONALS

In some European countries, LIS schools arrange continuing professional activities targeted to practitioners in the field. Thus, for instance, systematic continuing education is provided by the Continuing Education Centre for Librarians at the Department of Library Science and Information Science, Faculty of Social Science, University of Latvia (Gudakovska and Holma 2005). In Denmark, the Royal School of Library and Information Science provides a large-scale continuing education programme targeted to the library and information sector at large. The School has an in-house unit that plans and develops continuing education activities and annually around 200 short courses, seminars and theme days are offered to all kinds of library staff. Training courses, seminars, workshops or presentations tailored to the needs of individual libraries, organizations or interest groups are organised as well (Larsen 2005).

In quite a few countries continuing professional education for LIS staff is conducted by national players and providers such as national professional associations, national libraries, specialised national (training) centers as well as national agencies and focal points. A few illustrative examples are given in the following.³ In Bulgaria, there is a Centre for Continuing Education for Librarians and in Norway the Norwegian Archive, Library and Museum Authority organises short

³ <http://www.calimera.org/Lists/Resources%20Library/Dissemination,%20networking%20and%20training/Training%20Guideline%20-%20Version%202.pdf> (access date 15.3.2008).

courses, seminars, workshops, etc. pertinent to LIS professionals. In Croatia in 2002, the National and University Library, the Libraries of the City of Zagreb, the Department of Information Sciences of the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb, and the Croatian Library Association founded the Center for Continuing Training of Librarians. Annually it organises an average of 60 one-day courses for more than 1,000 librarians.⁴ The Center collects a small fee from the participants but is mostly funded by the Ministry of Culture. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, there is a Center for continuing education of librarians located in the National and University Library in Sarajevo. In Sweden, BIBSAM, the Royal Library's Department for National Co-ordination and Development arranges seminars and conferences for library staff. In Poland, the Bibweb Project serves as a distance training tool enabling library staff to acquire and develop competencies and skills related to the offering of innovative services to library users. In Slovenia, the Institute of Information Sciences organises professional training and counselling in the fields covered by the national shared bibliographic system COBISS. In the UK, the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) is a larger-scale provider of continuing professional education for LIS professionals. In France, l'Association des professionnels de l'information et de la documentation (ADBS, the Association of Professionals of Information-Documentation) has for long taken an active role in maintaining and updating the skills of information professionals. Thus, provision of continuing education is one of the Association's major objectives. In co-operation with the National Academy of Arts and Trades and with the National Institute of Documentary Techniques, ADBS offers a range of distance learning courses (Lamouroux 2007). In Russia, in-service refresher courses for library staff are available as a formalised promotion and career improvement opportunity. In addition, the State Library Policy has as its priority and pursues the creation of a continuing education system for members of the library workforce. Thus work is in progress on building an all-Russia continuing education system of refresher courses and library staff skills updating activities. In the Czech Republic continuing education schemes supported by the central government (the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports) are available to librarians and other information professionals.

4. CO-OPERATION, CONVERGENCE AND JOINT PROJECTS

A significant part of the day-to-day collaboration between Europe's LIS schools encompasses the exchange of teachers and students and in this respect many European LIS schools rely on joint schemes such as ERASMUS, a component of

⁴ <http://www.nsk.hr/CSSU/> (access date 15.3.2008).

the European Union's multi-dimensional SOCRATES programme. The broadly-based SOCRATES programme, now the Lifelong Learning programme (LLP), has for some years funded different kinds of cross-country activities in the broad area of education. But there is a veritable family of EU higher education programs and they are mainly directed towards other parts of the world intended as they are to foster co-operation and create links and joint degree courses between universities in EU countries and universities in other continents. For instance, the highly profiled Erasmus Mundus programme supports European top-quality master's courses and intends enhancing the visibility and attractiveness of European higher education in third countries. Erasmus Mundus provides an additional opportunity of networking and collaboration in European LIS education and thanks to grant money from Erasmus Mundus, Oslo University College (Norway), Parma University (Italy) and Tallinn University (Estonia) have been able to join forces to design and offer a joint Masters programme on Digital Library Learning (DILL) that started in autumn 2007. The course leads to a joint Master's degree equivalent to 120 ECTS (Virkus 2007: 9). Also, there is an increasing awareness of distance learning in LIS education and several domestic and transborder projects and activities have been implemented.

In 2003, the Department of Information Studies at the Tallinn University launched an online-delivered MA course in information management and three current projects at the Department focus on virtual mobility (Virkus 200:13). In Aberdeen, Great Britain, the Department of Information Management at the Robert Gordon University, has built up an extensive body of experience in providing education on the Web. Thus, the Department relies on the Virtual Campus at the University for delivering distance learning to domestic students as well as to a diverse population of international students (Johnson and Reid 2007). Today EUCLID (the European Association for Library and Information Education and Research) can be regarded the major player in European LIS education. Set up as a joint forum for European LIS schools in 1991, the Association has been active promoting links, co-operation and joint initiatives between LIS schools and LIS educators in Europe. Within EUCLID there has for some years been a growing interest in discussions on the comparability and equivalency of LIS qualifications throughout Europe and the Association has organised seminars on issues in curriculum development and internationalisation. EUCLID's concern with the convergence of LIS educational programs and the contents of LIS curricula in European countries culminated in the completion in 2005 of the *LIS Education in Europe* project.

The major visible long-term product of the European LIS curriculum project is the electronic book that was published in December 2005 (Kajberg and Lørring 2005). The project was conceived as a collective Europe-wide effort with clear reference to the Bologna Process. In these years, LIS education is undergoing transformation in many European countries and the traces of the Bologna Process is increasingly visible in the restructured systems and course offerings (Feather,

2007, p. 4, 5). Thus, in some European countries, the 3 + 2 + 3 overarching academic cycle representing the levels of undergraduate, graduate and Ph.D. studies has gradually replaced a more conventional practice-oriented and profession-centered LIS education prototype with elements of practical training.

The BOBCATSSS conferences organised every year in January under the auspices of EUCLID stand out as a successful, innovative and very visible collaborative effort in European LIS education. The aim of the BOBCATSSS, which was first arranged in 1993, is to enhance cooperation between LIS students and professionals in Eastern and Western Europe. The special thing about this symposium is that student groups from LIS institutions located in Eastern/Central Europe and from Western Europe join forces in organising the event. However, there are other groups and fora, typically more specialised in nature, where European LIS educators meet, network, exchange ideas and agree on joint initiatives and projects. Examples of this include the European Network for Information Literacy (ENIL), the Nordic-Baltic Research School in Library and Information Science (NORSLIS) and HIBOLIRE, the Nordic-Baltic-Russian Network on the History of Books, Libraries and Reading.⁵ In a couple of countries, there are national-level associations of LIS schools such as Konferenz der Informatorischen und Bibliothekarischen Ausbildungseinrichtungen (KIBA), an umbrella forum for German LIS academic institutions, and the British Association for Information and Library Education and Research (BAILER). Moreover, EBLIDA (European Bureau of Library, Information and Documentation Associations) takes an increasing interest in issues related to LIS programs and LIS qualifications. EBLIDA also underscores the pertinence of bridging the gap between the LIS school sector and the field of practice when discussing the future of European LIS education, the LIS profession and the services it provides.

5. CURRENT TRENDS AND FUTURE CHALLENGES IN LIS EDUCATION IN EUROPE

In taking European LIS education forward, more attention needs to be devoted to academic quality assurance mechanisms. Since promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance is a key item on the agenda of the Bologna Declaration, the Bologna Process provides an obvious opportunity for bringing about tangible and substantial quality enhancement and transparency in European LIS education (Audunson 2005b). On the other hand, aiming at a unified or standardised European-level process of accreditation for LIS programs does not appear realistic. Instead of centralized bureaucratic procedures, a more appropriate strategy would be

⁵ The homepage of the Network is accessible at: <http://www.helsinki.fi/historia/hibolire/>

to “europeanize” national evaluation measures and accreditation processes by developing a pool of joint European expertise than can be drawn upon by national accreditation bodies (Audunson 2005b: 5). Quality assessment in LIS education needs to be confronted not least from the perspective of equivalency and reciprocity of LIS professional qualifications.

A current IFLA study looks at the feasibility of establishing guidelines for equivalency and reciprocity of LIS professional qualifications to facilitate the exchange and cross-border mobility of LIS professionals in Europe (Tammaro and Weech 2007). The curricular discussion continues and there are new and upcoming issues to be addressed including the educational implications of digital librarianship. Capitalizing on current trends in digital library development in Europe and the emerging conceptual frameworks in this field, some European LIS educators show an increasing interest in discussing and defining the role and professional competences of the digital librarian. Also addressed are models for designing curricula for digital librarianship and the level and delivery formats of courses aimed at educating digital librarians (Tammaro 2007).

In addition, continued efforts are required to enhance educational convergence and formal cooperation and networking among Europe’s LIS academic institutions. For this purpose, formalised collaborative structures and communication mechanisms such as thematic networks of institutions across boundaries, technical communication infrastructures, collaboratories and regular meetings, physical or virtual, would seem required and obvious. In the student mobility area, new opportunities are coming up including the notion of *the virtual campus* and schemes for *virtual mobility*. Virtual mobility refers to agreements set up between two or more higher education institutions that allow their students to acquire a number of ECTS points at one of the foreign partner universities or through participation in a joint activity between the partners. The ECTS points resulting from this international experience will then be transferred to the student’s diploma records at his/her home university. Virtual mobility takes place in a virtual learning environment: students study in their domestic academic environment, and, as a consequence, they need not travel outside their home countries.

Hence, accelerating the use of IT solutions and making the most of ICT-based course delivery and learning opportunities present a constant challenge to European LIS schools. A variety of tools are now available including networked collaborative software and web-based communication packages furthering the interpersonal communication. One of the valuable features of distance education and e-learning is the possibility of resource sharing between LIS schools in different countries and the increased feasibility of teaching modules and options that are more narrow in scope and likely to attract relatively limited numbers of students. In this way, elective courses can be shared through collaborative e-learning across countries (Bawden 2007). However, in addition to reliance on virtual conferences and other web-based communication packages furthering the interpersonal com-

munication, formal or informal, between LIS school academics, consideration should be given to more ambitious and far-reaching solutions.

Another major challenge is to develop a set of common goals and joint policies for European LIS school activities and their collaborative structures. In this area, there is work to be done, within EUCLID and at the national level. On the whole, LIS schools in Europe are faced with common challenges emanating from the growth and diversification of higher education systems, the increased significance of lifelong learning, the shortage of skills and expertise in key areas, the employability of graduates produced along with the expanding market share of private and transnational education providers. Other challenges include the introduction of innovative delivery formats and tackling the apparent problems of inconsistent terminology in curricular contexts and within the LIS discipline as such.

A peculiar problem is the existence of very small LIS departments. In the European LIS education landscape, it is not unusual to find departments with only 2-4 permanent teaching staff members. For departments of that small size, it seems like an overwhelming burden to maintain and transmit a body of knowledge to students that fairly accurately and believably portrays the contents of the LIS domain in all its broadness and complexity. Besides, the robustness of the very small departments is fairly questionable because of their invisibility and the risks of financial contingencies and organizational turbulence caused by external factors and policy decisions in the broader university environment. Maybe it is time to consider more unconventional modes of course provision in the LIS area and to aim at organizational structures for provision of LIS programs that go beyond the familiar institutional frameworks known as LIS schools. The 4-year undergraduate degree course in information science jointly provided by the Faculty of Arts and Humanities and the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Porto, Portugal, serves as a concrete illustration of this type of approach. As a result of this cross-faculty collaborative model, an information science curriculum has been tied together, which displays a high degree of interdisciplinarity. Thus, modules are offered within the course framework that cover such complementary and auxiliary disciplines as the history of cultural practices, logic and epistemology, linguistics, cognitive psychology, computer systems, operating software, accounting and administrative law (Ribeiro 2007).

As shown by this somewhat compact portrayal, LIS education in Europe presents a mixed bag with its miscellany of language contexts, historical distinctiveness, academic cultures, epistemological traditions and structural intricacies. But rather than dwelling too much on perceived structural barriers and academic complexity, one may see the prevailing cultural and academic diversity within what one calls “LIS Europe” as a strength and an asset. So from this perspective, there is reason to praise the variety of disciplinary conceptions, curricular approaches and “cultural flavours” reflected by today’s European LIS academic community.

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