

LIS EDUCATION

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EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN LATIN AMERICA

Educational systems of most of the countries included in this chapter are different from the ones of Puerto Rico and Jamaica. In almost all Hispanic-Portuguese countries, the system includes an elementary school of six years, a secondary school of three years, and post-secondary or high school studies preceding college, also of three years.

The next level is professional or tertiary-undergraduate studies. These schools do not provide general studies, unlike Anglo-Saxon countries. Furthermore, our professional schools focus on technical training, and their structure mirrors Spanish and Portuguese schools. Thus, educational systems in Latin America differ from other places, since the first professional educational level are tertiary-undergraduate studies, which takes four or five years, at a tertiary or higher level. Professional practitioners of library science are trained at this level. Next in the system is the level of tertiary-graduate studies, which may take one or, most frequently, two years. As for tertiary-undergraduate studies, this level requires the elaboration of a final work or dissertation to obtain the degree.

INSTITUTIONS AND PROGRAMS

Let's begin by comparing the first and second edition of the directory compiled by Fang and Nauta (1985) and Fang, Stueart and Tuamsuk (1995), with the help of Figure 1.

Figure 1. Comparison Between the First and Second Edition of the Works published by Josephine Riss Fang (1985, 1995)

Country	1985 Schools (A)	1985 Schools with Known Programs (X)	1995 Schools (B)	1995 Schools with Known Pro- grams (Y)	Difference Between Schools (B-A)	Difference Between Schools Having Known Programs (Y-X)
Argentina	13	13	9	9	-4	-4
Bolivia	1	1	1	1		
Brazil	31	31	13	13	-18	-18
Chile	1	1	1	1		
Colombia	4	4	3	3	-1	-1
<i>Costa Rica</i>	1	1	2	1	1	
Cuba	1	1	1	1		
<i>Ecuador</i>			2		2	
El Salvador	1	1	1	1		

Country	1985	1985	1995	1995	Difference Between Schools (B-A)	Difference Between Schools Having Known Programs (Y-X)
	Schools (A)	Schools with Known Programs (X)	Schools (B)	Schools with Known Pro- grams (Y)		
Guatemala	1	1	1	1		
Jamaica	1	1	1	1		
Mexico	7	5	4	4	-3	-1
<i>Nicaragua</i>	1	1			-1	-1
Panama	1	1	1	1		
Paraguay	1	1	1	1		
Peru	2	2	1	1	-1	-1
Puerto Rico	1	1	1	1		
Uruguay	1	1	1	1		
Venezuela	2	2	3	2	1	
Total	71	69	47	43	-24	-26

Source: Josephine Riss Fang and Paul Nauta, *International guide to library and information science education*, (München ; New York : K. G. Saur, 1985). Josephine Riss Fang, Robert D. Stueart and Kulthida Tuamsuk, *World guide to library archive and information science education*, 2nd rev. and enlarged edition (München ; New Providence : K. G. Saur, 1995).

At a first glance, there is a reduction of the number of schools, in only one decade of both schools (34%) and schools with known programs (38%) is striking; at a second glance, we find the case of Ecuador, a country that was not included in the first edition, we note the closing of the only school existing in Nicaragua and that Costa Rica opened a new one whose program is unknown. In general, this comparison suggests that out of 71 schools in 1985 only 47 were working in 1995, and that the 69 schools with known programs were reduced to 43 in the same period. Also, it should be noted that the countries with most schools and programs are Argentina and Brazil and that, from all the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, only 18 do provide formal study programs in library science.

Taking into consideration the extent of the work performed by the editors of the above-mentioned study, as well as the difficulties and disadvantages inherent in its conformation, we deemed it reasonable to analyze the data provided by Maris and Giunti on study plans in Iberoamerica on Figure 2.

Figure 2 Schools and Schools with Known Programs by Maris y Giunti (1999)

Country	Schools	Schools with Known Programs
Argentina	26	26
Bolivia	1	1
Brazil	31	18
Chile	2	2
Colombia	4	4
Costa Rica	3	3
El Salvador	1	1
Guatemala	1	1
Mexico	8	8
Panama	1	1
Paraguay	1	1
Peru	2	2
Puerto Rico	2	2
Dominican Republic	2	2
Uruguay	1	1
Venezuela	2	2
Total	88	75

Source: Estella Maris Fernández and Graciela María Giunti, *Planes de estudio de las escuelas de bibliotecología, archivología y museología de Iberoamérica* (Buenos Aires: Sociedad de Investigaciones Bibliotecológicas ; IFLA, Programa Avance para el Desarrollo de la Bibliotecología en el Tercer Mundo, 1999).

Although the work is limited to Iberoamerica, Maris and Giunti provide data on 16 countries, with a total of 88 institutions, from which 75 have known study programs; the difference observed between schools and programs in the case of Brazil results from the lack of information about the programs for 13 schools, although it is known that they offer some kind of teaching regarding library science. However, this confirms that most of the programs do concentrate in Argentina and Brazil.

According to the data gathered by Maris, at the end of the last century Latin America had 88 institutions teaching library science (17 and 41 additional institutions to the ones identified in the first and second edition, respectively, of Fang's directory). In addition to the differences regarding the number of schools, we must point out that this source does not provide information related to Cuba, Ecuador y Jamaica, but it does so for Dominican Republic.

Regarding programs, information was available for 75 schools (6 and 32 additional schools in Fang and Nauta (1985) and Fang, Stueart and Tuamsuk (1995)).

To identify the variables implicated in Fang's and Maris' results regarding the number of schools and programs is an enormous task. However, if we take a chronological approach considering the establishment date of schools, we may determine whether differences are due to a recent change in educational systems.

Almost all schools have been established starting from the decade of seventies and in general after the Second World War. Thus, the influence of the UNESCO may have played an important role, as well as its programs to promote libraries and library science teaching.

Although the data identified so far is illustrative in nature, it does not provide an answer to our concern of knowing with at least some certitude the number of library science schools in Latin America and the Caribbean. We therefore deemed pertinent to use directories of schools available in Internet.

As it can be seen, the data related to the number of schools operating in Latin America and the Caribbean widely differs from one source to another. However, Maris and Giunti (1999) are outstanding since they have identified 88 schools, followed by the Associação Brasileira de Educação em Ciência da Informação with a total of 79 schools, the Fang and Nauta's *International Guide to Library and Information Science Education* (1985) with 71, and the Directory on Institutions on Library and Information Science in Iberoamerica and the Caribbean (INFO LAC) with 51 schools. Because there was not enough information about the programs' levels on the Web's directories, we consider appropriate to establish that kind of comparison only between Fang and Nauta (1985) and Fang, Stuart and Tuamsuk (1995), and Maris and Giunti (1999).

Later we will detail the available data to better understand the characteristics of library science teaching in Latin America and the Caribbean. It must be noted that when I refer only to Latin America and not to the Caribbean, I am talking about the nations with a Hispanic-Portuguese heritage.

Since it is difficult to establish equivalences without previously considering common parameters, to better classify and understand educational systems, in this work we will use the division established by the UNESCO and used by Josephine Riss Fang and Paul Nauta in their work *International Guide to Library and Information Science Education* (1985). In that work they state that elementary school takes six years and that in most Latin-American countries it is known as *educación primaria (elementary school)*, which is followed by a higher level of three years referred to as *secundaria (secondary school)*, which is in turn followed by a level of three years called *bachillerato* (post-secondary studies) or high-school.

The next level is *licenciatura* (tertiary-undergraduate studies), which takes between four and five years. In some cases, a degree is granted after three years in this level, which certifies the student as technician or "Bachiller in Library Science", but these cases are not acknowledged as professionals of Library Science, and they cannot continue to postgraduate levels, which are *maestría* (tertiary-

graduate studies) which takes from one to two years and, finally, *doctorado* (tertiary-postgraduate studies), which may take from three to five years.

We have used two grades for short programs for which we have information: One refers to a level of *capacitación* (training) which corresponds to programs that take less than one year, while the other refers to the level of *técnico* (technician), for those programs that last two years and often do not require post-secondary studies.

The depth of library science training activities varies to a great extent. There are courses from few hours to the postgraduate levels: Tertiary-graduate studies and tertiary-postgraduate studies, including also intermediate options. The most popular level is tertiary-undergraduate studies, which covers from 40 to 69% of all teaching activities. The highest levels of tertiary-graduate studies and tertiary-postgraduate studies are the ones with the smallest number of programs. There are only five institutions providing tertiary-postgraduate studies in all Latin America and none in the Caribbean. This may explain the low production of books and papers on basic or methodological topics, since most of the production in Latin America and the Caribbean refers to experiences related to the improvement of library services and organization.

Teaching levels

The library education begins in the twentieth century, and although these efforts did not mature in some countries, in others they found fertile ground. Anyhow, the oldest school of Latin America is the *Federação das Escolas Federais Isoladas do Estado de Rio de Janeiro (FEFIER) Centro de Ciências de Informação, Curso de Biblioteconomia e Documentação* founded in 1910 (Riss 1985:76-77), currently Universidade do Rio de Janeiro, which since then has been working regularly. At the beginning of the last century, the European trend could be perceived more than that of any other region, because the Bibliographic Institute of Brussels summoned many of the empiric librarians of the continent to its meetings reaching a sensitive influence on them. When these librarians went back to their countries, they promoted the preparation of national bibliographies, fostering the establishment of library science schools, and started efforts or programs, although sometimes not permanently, trying to train personnel working in libraries.

The level of professional education is not the only one being performed on Latin America. It is highly frequent that the educational efforts are made at lower levels, like these courses in a few training, or programs covering less than two years and for which it is not necessary to have finished post-secondary school (12 years of schooling).

Possibly, the best known and most complete source to date regarding the education levels is the work of Maris and Giunti, so we analyzed this information by means of Figure 3.

Figure 3. Level of library science studies according to Maris and Giunti (1999)

Country	Total programs	Technical (Less than 3 years)	Post-secondary	Tertiary undergraduate	Tertiary graduate	Tertiary (post-graduate)
Argentina	56	16	28	7	3	2
Bolivia	2		1	1		
Brazil	24			17	5	2
Chile	4			2	2	
Colombia	5	1		4		
Costa Rica	6	1		4	1	
Dominican Republic	3	2		1		
El Salvador	1		1			
Guatemala	1			1		
Mexico	13	2		7	3	1
Panama	1			1		
Paraguay	2	1		1		
Peru	5		2	2	1	
Puerto Rico	2				2	
Uruguay	1			1		
Venezuela	2			2		
Total	128 (100%)	23 (18%)	32 (25%)	51 (40%)	17 (13%)	5 (4%)

Source: Estella Maris Fernández and Graciela María Giunti, *Planes de estudio de las Escuelas de Bibliotecología, Archivología y Museología de Iberoamérica* (Buenos Aires : Sociedad de Investigaciones Bibliotecológicas; Progreso de la Bibliotecología en el Tercer Mundo ALP/IFLA, 1999.)

Now, we are going to analyze the characteristics of the different library science education levels, as well as some factors conditioning them. The elements are of different origin and nature, but its analysis would allow us to understand the characteristics of each level on which specialty studies are offered.

Training

As it may be seen with this classification of the programs by levels, 18% corresponds to the technical level, although it is impossible to clearly define if they are after 12 years of schooling or included in them. These studies do not grant a university title but offer a diploma at the conclusion of courses. In some countries it is possible to continue up to a higher level, the Bachelor's degree, after having concluded technical post-secondary school, in others this is a terminal level and the student is expected to be trained as a specialized technician in the field of library science.

These courses have remedial character, because they pretend to train people working in libraries and do not have the knowledge required for an appropriate performance. The interest is focused on the work performed by the personnel is efficient, but it does not pretend to offer disciplinary bases to students, only practical knowledge helping them to improve their work.

Technical post-secondary school

This level is characterized by covering three years of study; we do not know if previous post-secondary school (twelve years) is required in all cases, or if at the same time of studying library science, preparatory studies of higher education are carried out. It is possible that in some countries, the studies are equivalent to a professional level, but it is almost impossible to know it given the variety of differences that have been established between the teaching systems in Latin America. For practical purposes and in order to explain congruently and bases on the number of schooling years, we decided to qualify this level of studies that includes three years dedicated to library science as post-secondary school.

There still has to be offered an explanation why this level of studies is so popular on the continent, and based on which reasons the countries and educational institutions promote them, instead of struggling why the library science education is made on professional level, as it happens with many other disciplines.

A possible explanation why there are so many programs at this level, 25% of the programs last for three years, is that Latin America continues having a serious problem regarding the social acknowledgement of professionals in library science. Maybe it is considered that the librarian activity requires personnel trained in a certain way, but not necessary at professional level.

Another possible explanation is that teachers and students are satisfied with this level of studies and do not feel the need to continuing at a professional level, since this would imply another years of study, thus extending post-secondary school. Likewise, the fact that in some countries it has been fostered that certain kind of studies not necessarily conduce to professional studies, but that medium technicians shall be trained to become included early on the labor market, may have an influence.

Whichever is the right explanation, what is important is that 43 % of all programs is among training programs and those we called post-secondary school. While, as we will see later, the highest levels of the educational pyramid include very little programs.

It has to be pointed out that the country with the major number of technical and post-secondary school programs is Argentina, having 44 of a total of 55; that is, 80% of the studies performed on these levels on the continent are made in that country.

Tertiary undergraduate

This level is the one with the most programs and the most common of the Latin American professional studies since it includes a total of 51 programs throughout Latin America (40% of all efforts); that is, the main part of the professional education. The studies of Bachelor's degree require 12 years of previous studies, what implies the conclusion of post-secondary school. The studies usually have a duration of four years, but in some cases they extend to five. It is common that a research paper or a thesis are demanded in order to conclude the education, although in some schools they have replaced it with upper level courses, reports and others. The country with the major number of programs at that level is Brazil offering almost a third of all programs with Bachelor's degree; Argentina and Mexico with seven programs each sum up to 28% of the total. Within the scheme of higher education in Latin America, the Bachelor's degree level is the first professionalizing degree or that conduces to professional exercise of a discipline, from this point of view it is equivalent to the Master's degree which is usual in Anglo-Saxon countries, where the student, after reaching this level, is ready for professional service.

A great influence on the library science education at Bachelor's degree level was represented by the holding of the so-called Mesas de Medellín, Colombia, which in several occasions assembled educating expert groups in Latin America sponsored by the Organización de Estados Americanos (OEA), who discussed and formulated a course of study ideal for the continent. Although not all schools followed faithfully the recommendations, the major part of the study programs reflected the Medellín recommendations. What made them abandon that scheme, slightly conventional, was possibly the incorporation of technology in the study plans and programs. With this incorporation, the influence of Anglo-Saxon library science increased and the library science schools have followed, particularly, the US teaching schemes. What has characterized schools on the continent is having kept the library science heritage of previous years, but even though it is true that the course contents have changed, very few library science schools have undergone a change as dramatic as the one that occurred in US schools, in which even the name library and library science have disappeared in order to give rise to the name Information Science.

Post-graduate Master's degree

This educational level is relatively new in Latin America and the Caribbean. In the latter, it appeared in Puerto Rico in 1969 and in Jamaica in 1971. In the rest of Latin America, it opened on different dates, but all of them at the end of the sixties or at the beginning of the seventies. This level requires 16 or 17 years of previous schooling. The Master's degree is concluded, in Puerto Rico and Jamaica, after two years and in Latin American countries it may be somewhat longer, but while

education has a mainly professional character in the first two countries, in the others it is an initiation to research and to methodological and epistemological studies. Thus, for graduation purposes a more profound and better-documented and founded research product than the one presented in the Bachelor's degree is expected. It may be affirmed that all education made on the area is part time, because the students have to work and the possibility to obtain a scholarship allowing them to dedicate full time to their studies is remote; relatives are almost always those who have to sustain the studies.

In some library science schools, it is possible that students get enrolled coming from other fields, but the majority are graduates in the specialty. When students from different fields are accepted, they are requested to course a series of courses considered as pre-requirement to enter the Master's degree level. These subjects may vary from one single course up to several.

According to data available to us, in Latin America and the Caribbean there are 17 programs representing 13% of the total of programs in the area. Almost all of these programs require a research showing the disciplinary education of the student for graduation.

Post-graduate Doctorate

This level is the one with less programs of all study levels imparted in Latin America and the Caribbean, representing only 4% of the total. Of the whole of these programs, two of them are imparted in Brazil, two more in Argentina (although the degree is not exactly in library science but in education, because the schools are an integral part of a higher instance in the education area) and, the most recent of all, in Mexico. The number of students is small and of teachers too, because in order to give classes at this level a doctor's degree is required, which in most of the cases was obtained abroad or in other subjects in the own country by means of thesis papers related to library science and information.

On Latin America, this level of education is very new, some of the doctors who recently obtained their degree, and reside and work in Latin America, have received their degree at foreign universities in the US, Great Britain and, more recently, in Spain where a Master's degree is not required in order to study and obtain the Doctorate.

There are two options to obtain the doctorate degree: one in which the student takes several subjects and which may take up to two years, and has to be concluded with a thesis showing education and ability to perform research work independently. The other, the one applied in Mexico, allows the student to be admitted to perform research with the help of a tutorial committee, dedicating himself for at least three years and not more than five years to the completion of his research. In this modality, the student only has to take and pass some subjects if the main tutor considers it necessary for the thesis.

In both cases, the student has to submit a paper that implies an advance in the subject, or a novel methodology for better comprehension of a topic.

Archival science

In Latin America, archival science is separated from the studies of library science. These two subjects, even though close, are studied and taught as if there were no connection between them. Most of the time, archival science studies are even performed in institutions or schools totally different from those of library science. The duration of the studies also varies, but in this case there are only three levels, the one of courses of less than three years, the one of those with a duration of exactly three years and the one that requires more than three years to be concluded, that is, the Bachelor's degree.

Possibly in Puerto Rico and Jamaica, archival science and library science are taught in the same schools, following the Anglo-Saxon tradition, but there is neither any certainty about it, nor evidence of them being performed separately.

It has also to be pointed out that the most part of the programs and schools of this specialty are in Argentina.

CONCLUSIONS

The educational system in Latin America has marked the main features of teaching in library science, which is different from the educational system of Anglo-Saxon countries and constitutes a factor that impedes making generalizations.

Due to the information previously presented, we may conclude that Latin America has followed the patterns, both European and American, in the education of library science. Although at the beginning of the century the major influence was the European, at the mid-twentieth century the influence of North American library science is perceived more intensely, especially with the introduction of information and communication technology.

It is also important to point out that the information about the number of schools and study programs varies largely, depending on the consulted source, and that among these, there is no agreement regarding the number of schools and programs.

In Latin America there are several teaching levels from those taking care of auxiliaries to the Doctorate. The most common educational level is the Bachelor's degree, accounting for 20 years of study.

The area that has to make the largest effort in order to have professional teaching programs is the one corresponding to the Non-Latin Caribbean, which, except for Jamaica, does not have any library science college.

It is necessary to take a census in the schools in Latin America, with normalized information, in order to learn more exactly about the teaching situation in library science are in the area.

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