LIS education in Europe

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News / Project description

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Project title
(EUCLID Working conference in Copenhagen 2005) Library and Information Science Education in Europe: Joint Curriculum Development and Bologna Perspectives

2. Objectives
2.1 [Rationale and Background]

It is only during recent years that European LIS schools have participated in joint meetings enabling them to take a broader European approach to themes of mutual interest. Three recent events should be mentioned in this context: The international seminar on "Internationalisation in Library and Information Studies" in Parma (2002), the EUCLID Conference on "Restructuring and Adapting LIS Education to European Standards" in Thessaloniki (2002) and the meeting on "Coping with Continual Change – Change Management in Schools of Library and Information Science" organised jointly by EUCLID and its North American counterpart ALISE (Association for Library and Information Science Education) in Potsdam (2003). During these conferences it became clear that the thinking underlying the structure and contents of LIS courses vary very much between the different types of LIS education providers in Europe, which include many fairly small academic environments.

In some, but relatively few European countries, the implementation of the 3 + 2 + 3 overall academic sequence has gradually replaced a more conventional practice-oriented and profession-centred LIS education prototype, typically of four years' duration including more or less comprehensive elements of practical training. In other European countries, LIS-specific education is provided either by university departments or by "profession schools" with considerably differing curricula. In yet other countries, there are examples of very practiceoriented courses still emphasising the apprenticeship approach and with the theoretical elements of the curriculum offered as course units and modules of varying duration.

But the overall view is lacking and transparency and equivalency suffer. The apparent disparate nature of LIS educational programmes in Europe constitutes a barrier to increased co-operation in the field. There is a marked need for joint discussions of the structure and contents of LIS school curricula and for identifying and discussing possible common curricular elements both for the purpose of enhancing the quality of individual LIS educational programmes and for the sake of increased collaboration between European LIS school programmes.

2.2 [Aims and objectives]

The aim of this seminar is to organise a working conference for representatives of Library & Information Science (LIS) schools in Europe. The theme of the conference will be: "Library & Information Science Education in Europe: Issues in Joint Curriculum Development and Bologna Perspectives." Concrete objectives of the conference (short-term):

- To explore issues in and ways of adapting LIS courses to the requirements as set out in the Bologna Declaration
- To examine the idea and relevance of a core curriculum in the context of European LIS education
- To review the current state of curriculum development in LIS schools throughout Europe
- To identify opportunities for enhanced networking and collaboration in the field of LIS education in Europe. Wider objectives of the conference (long-term):

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- To make the European dimension and diversity visible in national LIS education programmes throughout Europe
- To encourage individual LIS schools to reflect on the concept of a core curriculum and juxtapose it with existing institutional LIS curricula • To encourage cross-country network building among LIS teaching and research academics in Europe
- To create better possibilities for European student and teacher mobility
- To increase the scale of mobility and inter-institutional collaboration together with the volume of individual student and staff exchanges
- To develop a common conceptual framework for defining core elements within the LIS curriculum as a basis for enhancing mobility flows and accelerating the Bologna Process
- To work towards greater flexibility, transparency and comparability of curricula
- To strengthen and enhance the activities of the existing European association in the field: EUCLID

2.3 [Demonstrate that the project is "complementary"]

The conference project is closely related to the ERASMUS – Higher Education component of SOCRATES. The resulting conference will be oriented towards those tertiary level educational institutions in Europe that offer courses in the broad field of Library & Information Science. In this sense, the conference will assume the character of an academic meeting for European specialists in the field focusing on issues and challenges in curriculum development within the discipline of LIS and during which all are actively producing. But, since the conference to be arranged as part of the project aims to span a variety of issues and areas of activity in a specific field within European academic collaboration, the project falls outside the existing key priority areas for funding defined by the ERASMUS scheme (student and staff mobility, short study visits, European modules, joint curriculum development or intensive programmes, etc.).

2.4 [Provide a clear description of the types of activity]

The project aims at organising a work-intensive academic meeting and the very idea of it is to assemble a group of experts carefully selected on a Europe-wide basis to explore a number of issues defined by the organisers. Two sets of objectives are set up for the conference project: (1) A group of concrete objectives to be pursued by participants through their active contribution at the conference site, in workshop contexts and during plenum; (2) A few long-term goals pursued partly by the organisers of the event by actively communicating the results of the event in Copenhagen to the European LIS education community. This will be done by issuing a publication presenting the findings from the conference and by relying on networks for formal as well as informal communication within the discipline. In this way it is hoped that the outcomes of the conference, i.e. the ideas and proposals generated during the event, will find their way to the broad range of LIS educators, policy makers and curriculum designers throughout Europe.

To provide a solid ground for discussions in workshops at the conference, an inventory will be made of existing LIS curricula in Europe. A student assistant will be hired to carry out this task. The results of the inventory will be included in a guide made available to conference participants when they arrive at the conference site.

2.5 [The most important pedagogic and didactic methods]

The conference will rely on structured discussion. The way the event is organised will allow the experts participating to express their opinion in a creative and intellectually stimulating atmosphere with a reasonable amount of time allowed for intensive work in small groups.

2.6 [Target groups]

The target audiences of the project are mainly LIS educational institutions, heads of LIS schools, LIS educators and administrators, LIS academics involved in curriculum development as well as LIS academics concerned with internationalisation of courses and student mobility. Because of the absence of consolidated statistics about European LIS schools and their activities as well as their employees it is very difficult to provide a reliable estimate of the number of schools and the number of staff members within the above categories. However, according to a very rough estimate there are at least 250 schools in Europe with educational responsibilities in the areas of LIS.

2.7 [Expected impact on target groups]

The expected impact on target groups wil be:

1. An improved basis for developing strategies and activities for implementing the Bologna Process at individual European LIS academic institutions
2. An increasing scale of student and staff mobility in the LIS field
3. Strengthened co-operation on curriculum development with special regard to the European dimension and LIS core areas
4. Establishment of thematic networks among LIS schools in Europe within teaching and research
5. A qualitative enhancement of teaching and research at individual European LIS schools
6. Strengthening and consolidating EUCLID as the European forum of collaboration in the field of LIS education and research

2.8 [Explain what you consider to be innovative about the project]

The project – the conference – is innovative not least in the sense that it requires active work on the part of those LIS education experts attending the conference. The structured approach characterising the way the conference is organised – with emphasis on workshops with participants having to examine a set of predefined issues and come up with reports in a pre-specified format – will make a difference. There have been quite a few conferences and seminars in European LIS education over the years, but the structured and outcomesoriented approach has generally been lacking. Typically, the programme of such conferences has been compiled on the basis of a call for papers. This rather conventional approach has left the initiative with those sending in proposals for papers. In our case, there will be no call for papers. Instead, participants will be required to prepare a piece of collective work during the conference within a thematic context and according a set of guidelines specified by the organisers. Another significant organisational feature is the work of a number of electronic or virtual discussion groups at the pre-conference stage. These virtual groups will be set up concurrently with the commencement of the pre-conference planning process and they will be entrusted with the task of initiating a process of discussion leading up to the conference. This e-discussion will consider the thematic areas to be examined during the workshop discussions at the conference.

3. Envisaged outputs 3.1 [outline the envisaged outputs of the project]

The tangible results of the project will be the summaries of viewpoints, ideas and proposals embodied in the reviews and reports to be produced during the conference. All results will be available in English, and only in English. Further, it is hoped that the reflections on key issues and the suggestions as presented in the finalised reviews and reports prepared in continuation of the conference and spread through a variety of vehicles will enrich future discussion of LIS education in various European contexts. Also, it is hoped that the above reflections and ideas will have a catalytic effect on LIS curriculum design processes in Europe and generate concepts to be translated into educational practice. Another potential effect will be to stimulate interest in internationalising LIS school activities and extending European co-operation in the LIS education field.

3.2 [Indicate for each output the target group]

The findings from the conference will be of interest to the following broad target groups: 1) LIS educational institutions in Europe; 2) Heads of LIS schools and LIS educators and administrators broadly; 3) Planners and officials at central government level as well as university rectors, vice-chancellors and other people in university environments interested in or concerned with the Bologna Process; 4) Academic organisations (primarily as EUCLID, but also some national-level associations such as the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in the United Kingdom).

3.3 [Indicate conference specifics]

The event will cover two days in 2005 (August) and be scheduled on a Thursday and a Friday. Venue: The Royal School of Library and Information Science, Copenhagen, Denmark. The number of participants is limited to 50. The conference is intended for teachers, researchers and administrators employed by European LIS schools as well as for heads of schools. If the number of LIS educators, etc. registering for the conference exceeds 50, priority will be given to ensuring geographical representativity of participants admitted. The 50 participants in the conference will be distributed on 10 workshop groups. Each workshop is expected to be of at least a half day's duration. The intention is to schedule four keynote addresses or plenum

lectures. Leif Lørring (Rector, Royal School of Library and Information Science) will be one of the keynote speakers. The two other keynote presenters will be distinguished LIS teachers and researchers. We are also considering a presenter from the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA) based in Brussels who will be addressing the developments and implications of the Bologna Process and university networking in Europe. During the conference, ten workshops will be organised to explore a sequence of general questions relating to classic LIS curriculum subjects. The questions can be phrased as follows:

- How is the range of typical LIS domains generally reflected in a LIS school curriculum and how should it be reflected?
- Are there special national reasons why some curriculum elements have a particularly prominent place in LIS courses?
- What is the place of the individual LIS curriculum subject in a core curriculum developed from a European perspective?
- What part of the LIS subject could be determined to fall within a core curriculum for LIS?
- In what way could the individual LIS subject be related to the general objectives of LIS courses? In what way could the LIS domain contribute to promoting equivalency, comparability and transparency of LIS courses?
- Which kind of European networks should be built among LIS teachers and researchers in a specific LIS subfield?
- What is the place of a specific LIS domain in joint periods of study abroad?
- Which kind of research areas and research approaches could be defined for each of the ten LIS domains listed below? And how could research be advanced in these areas? The ten workshop themes to be analysed in the above way are the following:
- Cultural heritage and digitisation of the cultural heritage
- Information literacy and learning • Information seeking and information retrieval
- Information technology and the information society: Barriers to the free access to information, copyright, licenses, etc.
- Knowledge management
- Knowledge organisation
- The library in the multi-cultural information society
- Library history
- Mediation of culture in a European context and Public library development from a European perspective
- Placements in libraries and other information agencies

During the pre-conference phase (April 2004 – July 2005), a number of virtual working groups being established by the conference organisers and the steering committee of the project will be assigned the task of conducting an e-mail based discussion in the above thematic areas. The e-discussion will lead up to the conference in August 2005 and serve to generate input for the workshop discussions during the conference.

3.4 [Application of new information and communication technologies]

No elaborate plans, but we will consider possibilities of drawing upon video conferencing facilities, etc. for regular contacts between partner institutions in the network in the pre-conference phase.

4. Evaluation and dissemination 4.1 [Activities to be applied in monitoring and evaluating the project]

A detailed description of all tasks, routines, steps and processes involved in the planning of the conference – the conference planning manual – will be elaborated. The major activities and processes as indicated in this description will be timetabled into an overall schedule and a number of "milestones" will be identified and listed in the planning sequence. The conference planning manual will, together with the work plan to be prepared as part of the project, serve as a tool for monitoring the project. The manual with the included milestones and the work plan will be drawn upon in checking that the conference planning process as well as the post-conference activities are progressing smoothly.

4.2 [Specify means for testing and evaluating outputs]

The organisers together with the planning team will conduct the evaluation of the conference project and its results. In addition, participants in the conference will be given the opportunity of evaluating the conference and consider the outcomes of the event. This will be done by distributing questionnaires to the participants.

4.3 [Outline publishing and dissemination plans for project results]

The major visible long-term product of the conference will be a publication with a variety of state-of-the-art reviews that identify peculiarities, differences and similarities of LIS school curricula as well as the various educational philosophies underlying courses in the field. Also included will be papers that address the concept of a core curriculum in a European perspective and include observations on the place of selected mainstream LIS subjects within a curriculum. Finally, there will be contributions that try to explore the nature of contentsrelated barriers to the continued Bologna process and increased co-operation between LIS educational programmes in Europe. The publication will include brief reports (5-10 pages A4) summarising workshop discussions taking place as part of the conference. Leif Kajberg and Leif Lørring, the Royal School of Library and Information Science, Copenhagen, will edit the volume. Estimated extent: 120 pages. The publication will be in English. Communication during the conference in Copenhagen will also be in English.

In addition to issuing a proceedings-like publication presenting the major findings from the conference in condensed versions, the results will be disseminated using a variety of outlets. Thus, efforts will be made to publish articles in relevant journals, above all Education for Information, and items in newsletters, etc. Special attention will be given to EUCLID, which will have an important role here in that the association via its network of member institutions, LIS schools, could serve as a vehicle for wider communication of the findings from the conference throughout Europe. The planning team members representing the five partner institutions involved in the project will undertake to write items about the conference and the findings and contribute articles to journals. At the same time they will use their personal academic networks for dissemination purposes.

5. Partnership composition and contribution 5.1 [Demonstrate the capacity, expertise and experience of the project co-ordinator and partner institutions]

The contracting and coordinating institution of the project is the Royal School of Library and Information Science (RSLIS; in Danish: Danmarks Biblioteksskole).

As an academic institution specialising in LIS, the School boasts a unique position both in the European Union and on a global scale. Founded as an autonomous institution in 1956, it is the largest institution of its kind in the world with a permanent staff of some 150 full-time employees plus a considerable number of part-time employees. The teaching, research and consultancy staff is around 75 full-time persons with degrees in LIS, humanities, social sciences, economics and other academic disciplines. RSLIS is the national centre for education and research in the LIS field in Denmark. The School's activities are defined in an Act passed by the Danish Parliament in 1998. The School has approximately 900 full-time undergraduate and postgraduate degree students and some 20 PhD students including two foreign PhD students.

As set out in "The Main Purpose and Strategies of the Royal School of Library and Information Science 2000- 2004: A Policy Statement " (1999), the School should serve as a leading academic centre, nationally as well as internationally, providing research-based undergraduate and postgraduate education together with continuing professional education. Enriched by an attractive teaching and learning environment, academic degree programmes in LIS as well as continuing professional education initiatives should encourage and stimulate academic absorption and creativity and prepare committed players for the information and knowledge society determined to pass on the identity-developing cultural values in society.

RSLIS offers an undergraduate LIS programme, a two-year postgraduate and a one-year Master's programme. Also offered is a PhD programme. RSLIS is determined to maintain its position as an internationally recognised higher education and research institution. At the same time, the School aims to consolidate its position as a European centre of excellence in its field. Also, efforts are being made to internationalise activities and expand course offerings in English for incoming exchange students. The School has its own continuing education and consultancy department and it has a comprehensive expertise in organising short courses, workshop, seminars, theme days, conferences, etc. It is a large-scale provider of continuing professional education. Over the years, thousands of short courses, seminars, etc. have been held at the School. A similar experience and expertise is available when it comes to organising international conferences. The School's modernised premises provide excellent facilities for conducting seminars and conferences. Clerical support and catering services are available as well.

RSLIS is known for the high standard of its research and the considerable number of R & D projects in progress. RSLIS academic staff numbers a handful of internationally highly distinguished LIS researchers (active in such fields as information retrieval, information seeking, informetrics and knowledge organisation) and has a high profile in mediation of culture and cultural policy research as well. Recently one of the School's research professors, Dr. Peter Ingwersen, was nominated as recipient of The American Society for Information Science and Technology (ASIST) Research Award 2003. Several RSLIS academics are on the boards of leading international journals in the LIS field and are currently doing peer reviewing tasks.

Since 1977 international activities at the Royal School of Library and Information Science expanded markedly. Academic staff members for many years attended international conferences and are frequently presenting papers in various fields, in some cases as invited or keynote speakers at the events. During recent years, thanks not least to the efforts of some of the School's leading researchers, the Royal School of Library and Information Science hosted a range of major international conferences and seminars addressing LIS relevant topics. Over the years RSLIS has been participating in or managing international projects in different fields. RSLIS staff members have participated in numerous EU-funded projects. Web address: http://www.db.dk /home_uk.htm

Like the co-ordinating institution, the five partner institutions involved in the project are higher education institutions offering LIS courses and doing LIS-specific research. They possess a considerable international expertise too. The partner institutions are represented in the project group and the five representatives of the partner institutions are outstanding teachers and researchers in their fields and have a longstanding experience and reputation in running international projects. Four of the representatives are members of the Board of EUCLID (European Association for Library & Information Education and Research).

5.2 [Specific tasks to be assigned to each partner]

The Royal School of Library and Information Science, Denmark (RSLIS) will be the contracting institution acting as co-ordinator of the project. RSLIS will be conducting the planning process related to the conference scheduled for August 2005. At the same time the School will schedule, announce and host planning meetings for members of the project group. Moreover, RSLIS will host the conference and be responsible for performing all practical and organisational tasks related to conducting the event. Two members of the staff of the school including the conference organiser will edit the proceedings volume resulting from the conference. The five partner institutions that back the project will each be asked to nominate one person for the conference planning team (the project group or steering committee). These representatives of the partner institutions will attend planning meetings organised by the contractor/co-ordinator. They will contribute to the planning process and also make their expertise available during the conference. Those four members of the planning team who are serving on EUCLID's Board will see to it that EUCLID is used as a vehicle for disseminating information about the conference and for reporting and discussing the findings of the conference. Also, each partner institution in the network of LIS schools backing and handing in the present application will be assigned the responsibility of initiating and conducting the pre-conference e-discussion of the thematic areas to be focussed on during the conference workshops (see under items 2.8 and 3.3). Each partner institution will organise an ediscussion group within 1-2 thematic areas.