

**EXPERIENCES ON RECRUITING AND TRAINING LIBRARY AND INFORMATION  
MANAGEMENT (LIM) STUDENTS IN CANTHO UNIVERSITY, VIETNAM**

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper aims at sharing experiences on recruiting and training LIM students in Cantho University, Vietnam. Even though the LIM program in Cantho University is recently launched, it has gained certain achievements and needed to be shared with other institutes. Especially, it is helpful for the ones that have dreamed of submitting a proposal of LIM program or updating the current library training model at their working spaces. This unique LIM program intends to train the new generation of librarians who are good at managing and developing their libraries and information centers. They are able not only to apply information technology and automated technology in library and information work to store, process, analyze and systematize information, but also to conduct research and apply it actively and creatively as professional knowledge to library activities.

**INTRODUCTION**

In the age of knowledge-based economy, gathering, managing, distributing and sharing information is increasingly important. Especially, in Vietnam after the event of WTO involvement, acknowledging and sharing information are extremely necessary to keep up space with new science and technology achievements. How can the Vietnamese people in general and the intellectual people such as students, scientists and researchers in particular access information? It is the role of the librarians. According to Stuart (1992), he asserts that “librarians redefine themselves as information managers.” Also, “to the more abstract term, information; and a further shift from information science to information management. Science seeks to analyse, to interpret, to understand, to explain. Management has more instrumental connotations, identifying opportunities, formulating strategic plans, orchestrating means and ends, making costs transparent, measuring inputs and outputs, maximising efficiency.” Therefore, it is essential for the Vietnamese libraries to recruit and train LIM students at our university.

**BACKGROUND**

In Vietnam, until 2004 there are only two LIM training centers. They are in Hanoi capital and in Ho Chi Minh city. The number of trained librarians is not enough for the increasing demands in the country generally and in the Mekong Delta particularly. In order to solve this problem, in the year 2004, the Atlantic Philanthropies approved a grant to Cantho University Central Library (now it is named Cantho University Learning Resource Center). The purpose of this grant is to support the development of a comprehensive Vietnamese tertiary level curriculum for

library studies and knowledge management. It is the library professional and information technology skills that make the curriculum design unique in comparison with any other training center programs. LIM students know not only how to process information but also how to create their own websites for their particular fields of interest. In addition, it is interesting to note that students are taught the course in human resources management preparing for their future leadership.

The LIM program was operationalized in Cantho University in the years of 2005-2006. This program is under implementation and evaluation. The lecture notes are updated, refined and revised. Up until now, 47, 61 and 53 students were recruited in 2005, 2006, 2007 respectively.

## **EXPERIENCES**

Our experiences are drawn from the following activities.

### **1. Market survey**

The purpose of the survey was to investigate the need of human resources in the field of Library and Information in Mekong Delta provinces and to collect evaluation sheets about the quality of LIM educational program in universities in Vietnam. 500 survey sheets were delivered to university libraries and information centers in the Mekong Delta regions. The result shows that all agreed that it is pivotal that the proposed training program is needed so as to meet the demanding need of library trends in the future.

### **2. Curriculum design**

Since curriculum renewal and curriculum development are viewed as professional task (Tanner, 1995) and play a decisive role in improving students learning outcomes, our program is expected to optimize student achievement as well as their learning styles for students in Cantho University where the learning conditions, materials, and sources such as library uses, computers, and other learning facilities are very profuse.

In order to design LIM curriculum, we referenced other LIM curricula offered by two universities in Vietnam such as Ho Chi Minh University of Culture, Ho Chi Minh University of Social Science and Humanities, and one foreign country—Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand. Besides, we had consultancy from experts and professors, who are members of Consultancy Board, in the field of Library and Information Management from Universities in America, New Zealand, Malaysia and Thailand about offering new courses for our LIM program.

Besides one course as the prerequisite for all other courses and 5 courses in Organisation of Information Resources as the other LIM training centers, our curriculum emphasizes on the courses in Information Needs and Services, courses in Information Technology and courses in Management. Our program focuses on training a new generation of librarians who are not only good at traditional library skills but also keen on information technology applied in

libraries and management. They know how to design basic functional web pages and websites; arrange folders and files when creating web pages; use web page authoring programs to create web pages and websites; use hypertext/hyperlinks, image maps, anchors, tables and other useful web design tools; create a basic web site consisting of a home page and at least four supporting pages. Furthermore, they know how to use a range of software applications for designing websites, portals and home pages of information organisations; demonstrate an understanding of various models and employ basic principles of good design including how to meet specific audience needs; articulate key issues associated with design and evaluation of web pages and portals; use colour graphics and text effectively in websites; employ appropriate writing techniques for conveying information on the web and apply appropriate methods for evaluating websites. In reality, these training courses were put into active use instead of simply introducing students the theoretical issues or principles. These make our program unique to the others ones.

In short, from the historical perspectives of curriculum as ‘reconstruction of knowledge and experience that enables the learner to grow in exercising intelligent control of subsequent knowledge and experience.’ (Tanner, 1995), the more involvement in longing for new knowledge students get by thinking independently, the more comprehensive and generative their knowledge become, and the less challenges students may have to encounter in their academic environment.

### **3. Compilation of lecture notes**

The courses of the LIM program have been compiled by the library experts from Victoria University, Wellington (New Zealand), Simmons College, Hawaii University (USA), Nanyang Technological University (Singapore), Mara Technological University (Malaysia) and Missouri University (USA). Each course will consists of 14 modules with the clearly defined-objectives and weekly assignments. It helps the students enroll in their courses from the beginning of the course rather rushing at the examination time. The compilers also assign the reading list of books or articles. These help the students get further information beyond the course contents.

### **4. Assessments**

Currently, we are applying the problem-based learning approach and student-centeredness. It is the real situations at our institution that have been put into heated discussions or debates. Course syllabi include weekly assignments, oral presentations, research papers, group projects, and final exams. Therefore, students learn something from their own work and independent study by the end of every term thanks to on-going assessment. It is their background knowledge and shared experience that help them gain more confidence and enable them to find jobs easily.

### **5. Recruitments**

Cantho University LIM program seeks for the students who are good at Mathematics, Literature and English from the entrance exams into college while the other universities require Literature, History and Geography. Priority is

given to good command of English proficiency in students because English is most used in not only accessing Internet but also reading the reference materials for each course in the program. Required scores for the library programs and those of other fields of study are equally competitive by the Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training. The following table shows that in the first year of operating the program, the number of high school graduates who registered and wrote exam papers was very high. Then in the following years, the number of these items remains stable.

Year	Registration No.	Examinees	Recruitment	Ratio
2005	661	462	47	9
2006	180	127	61	2
2007	196	144	53	2.8
2008	182	121	65	2

## **6. Workshops**

We organized workshops on Evaluating activities and outcomes and drawbacks of the Library and Information Management Courses. In these workshops, the invited professors and library experts discussed the main points such as contents of the courses, the appropriate template for courses, assignments, assessments, length of class periods, the expertise and experience of the teaching staff, issues related to supporting and teaching LIM programs offered by Cantho University (course books compilers, translating course books and recommended readings, purchasing databases and journals,...), updated course contents and teaching materials of LIM courses, English capacity of students, course book translation, classrooms, facilities and equipment.

## **7. Short training**

We invited Professors from Nanyang Technological University (Singapore), Victoria University, Wellington (New Zealand) and from Simmons College (USA) to train the LIM staff teaching methodologies. Besides, these are the good opportunities for LIM students to study with foreign experts to increase their professional knowledge and English capacity. They were taught by Dr. Dan Dorner on Information and Society; Prof. Abdus Chaudry and Shaheen Majid on Subject Analyzis and Classification; Understanding and Servicing User Information Needs and Philip Calvert on Human Resources and Organizational Management; Information Systems and Technology. They show their great interest in library science and pursuit their set career.

## **8. Staff Qualifications**

The teaching staff are the Learning Resource Center librarians who held the master's degree of Library and Information Science in different countries such as Simmons College, Boston, MA. USA; Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand; AIT University, Thailand; Queensland, Australia. Three staff were trained for their

master's degree of national LIM and one for PhD program in Hawaii University. Six young experienced and dedicated staff have recently graduated from Simmons College, Boston, USA. The following is our recruitment and professional training plan.

**Recruitment plan**

Year	Major	Number	Level		
			Ph.D	Master	Bachelor
2008	LIM	3		3	
2009	LIM	2		2	
2010	LIM	2		2	
2011	LIM	2	1	1	
2012		1		1	
<b>Total</b>		10	1	9	0

**Professional training plan**

Year	Major	Number	Ph.D	Master
2009	LIM	1	1	
2010	LIM	2	2	
<b>Total</b>		3	3	0

**9. Teaching Software**

In April 2006, we decided to purchase the Edu. 4 Software from France for the LIM classes. It was installed and operated effectively for the LIM students. The advantage of the software is helping the teacher guide and observe or control 32 students' PCs. The students can discuss in pairs or in groups even though they have seats far away from each other. In addition, the teacher can participate and transfer her/his own files to every student or the whole class. Most surprisingly, the teacher can interfere or shut down the students' screens whenever they really focus to the other points rather than participate in the class activities. This software is also useful for the LIM students in self-study foreign languages. They can record their voices, check and compare to the native speakers'. It makes them great progress in reading professional materials such as library journals, newsletters and reports. In fact, the senior students now can read the reference materials without translation. This is the strong point that no LIM programs in Vietnam can hold.

**10. Graduation requirements**

Students who gain 138 professional and other required credits are accepted to complete the LIM program. Excellent students can do any kind of library researches in their graduation thesis rather than study the alternative courses. These students are priority to be recruited to the institutes and organizations that have the policy to upgrade them to

higher education levels and higher positions. Other students can work at their local and provincial libraries or information centers and have many opportunities to attend the training courses, workshops or seminars to update their knowledge from the host libraries and the National Library Associations.

### **11. Quality insurance and evaluation**

24 LIM courses ought to be evaluated by the Advisory Board. The translated course notes also need to be edited and updated frequently. Especially, the latest information need to be replaced for the old ones. More information resources from the Internet must be added. The URLs should be checked to make sure about the broken-links by the LIM instructors. The Advisory Board set up the schedule of meetings, semi-evaluation and final evaluation for the program. In the first meeting in September 2005, the Advisory Board evaluated 2 compiled courses and listed the library experts who were going to be invited the compile the remained course. In the second meeting in July 2006, the Advisory Board considered LIM majored students' feedback on and remarks of the two teachers in charge on the first two courses LIM 111 and LIM 121; edited the recommended changes to LIM course template and decided on the adjustment of courses' learning objectives and level and combination of some related courses. In the semi evaluation in March 2008, the Advisory Board and some invited library experts evaluated 10 compiled courses. They suggested some additional and edited information and discussed to the LIM staff on their capacity of creative using the course notes into the Vietnamese library teaching environment. The final evaluation is going to be organized in this November after all of the courses are finished.

### **12. Employment**

We set up the first meeting between the LIM students and the library leaders in the Mekong Delta in this August. The following table shows the required number of students by the library leaders for the internship and recruitment in the year 2009. The second meeting between the LIM students and different kinds of information centers such as newspaper agency, television station, tourism, publishing houses.... is intended to be organized in this late September. The purpose of these meetings is to create chance for the LIM students to present what they are knowledgeable and what the leaders expect the new recruited staff can do. These are the good chances for the students to know the job requirements in the society so that they can have good preparations for their future work.

After one year of graduation, we will carry out the survey about the social satisfaction on our educational quality. We need to observe what our students have done and how they made any library changes. These are the basis for upgrading the curriculum so as to satisfy the social requirements.

#### **Job opportunity in 2009**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Libraries</b>	<b>Internship No.</b>	<b>Recruitment No.</b>
01	University Library of Natural Sciences - HCM	5 students	1 student

	City		
02	Long An Public Library	5	2
03	Tien Giang University Library	0	2
04	Tien Giang Public Library	5	0
05	Ben Tre Public Library	3	0
06	Dong Thap Education University Library	0	2
07	Tra Vinh Public Library	30	2
08	Vinh Long Public Library	8	2
09	Cantho City Public Library	50	0
10	Kien Giang Scientific and Technology College	10	0
11	An Giang University Library	5	5
12	Hau Giang Public Library	4	1
13	Soc Trang Public Library	10	2
14	Bac Lieu University Library	4	4
15	Bac Lieu Public Library	5	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>23</b>

### 13. Sustainability

The sustainability of the program is determined by the financial cost of operation of the Library and Information Management Department since its establishment; staff salaries and wages from Cantho university; the development of Cantho Learning Resource Center, financial support from the Ministry of Education and Training and the ability of the Department to continue the functions as it is intended including provision of the required services and quality of service.

### CONCLUSION

In short, the establishment for such an innovative new program can serve as a model for future development and encouragement for existing program to rebuild and renew their efforts as information and technology that enhances its access, begins to play the most important role in the political, economic, social and political life of the country. It needs to be shared and upgraded to satisfy the increasing needs of library trains not only in Vietnam but also in the other countries.

### References

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## Appendix

### Can Tho University Bachelor of Library and Information Management Courses, Arranged by Areas

For all areas:

No.	Year Term	Course number	Course title	Prerequis ite	Prerequis ite for:	Credits
1	1-1	LIM111	Information and Society		All other courses	4

Courses in Information Needs and Services

No.	Year Term	Course number	Course title	Prerequis ite	Prerequis ite for:	Credits
2	1-2	LIM121	Identifying & Evaluating Library and Information Resources		322, 312	5
3	3-1	LIM312	Understanding and Servicing User Information Needs	121	322, 324	5
4	3-1	LIM316	Preservation Management in Libraries and Other Information Organisations			3
5	3-2	LIM322	Information Resource Management	121, 312	411, 412	4
6	3-2	LIM324	Information Literacy	312		3
7	4-1	LIM411	Archives and Records Management	322		4
8	4-1	LIM412	Digital Resource Management	322		4
			Total			28

Courses in Organisation of Information Resources

No.	Year Term	Course number	Course title	Prerequis ite	Prerequis ite for:	Credits
9	2-1	LIM211	Knowledge Organisation and Structures in Library and Information Services		222, 224, 311, 321,	5



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					325	
10	2-2	LIM222	Information Organisation and Retrieval Systems	211	417	5
11	2-2	LIM224	Bibliographic Description	211		5
12	3-1	LIM311	Subject Analysis and Classification	211	321	5
13	3-2	LIM325	Metadata Applications	211		4
			Total			24

Courses in Information Technology

No.	Year Term	Course number	Course title	Prerequisite	Prerequisite for:	Credits
14	2-1	LIM212	Information Systems and Technology		All IT-related courses	4
15	2-2	LIM223	Web Design		313	4
16	3-2	LIM321	Database Creation	311		4
17	4-1	LIM414	Web Content Management	223		4
18	4-1	LIM417	Integrated Library Management Systems	222		5
			Total			21

Courses in Management

No.	Year Term	Course number	Course title	Prerequisite	Prerequisite for:	Credits
19	2-2	LIM221	Introduction to Management in Libraries and Other Information Organisations		322, 225, 326, 412, 415	4
20	2-2	LIM225	Communication in Libraries and Other Information Organisations	221	326	4
21	3-1	LIM315	Human Resource and Organisational Management in Libraries and Other Information Organisations			5
22	4-1	LIM413	Research in Information Environments	60 LIM points		6

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23	4-1	LIM415	Marketing the Services and Products of Libraries and Other Information Organisations	221		4
24	4-1	LIM416	Information Policy			4
			Total			27

Total: 104 Professional credits

**About the Authors**

Huynh Thi Trang earned a BA in English from Cantho University, and MSL from Simmons College, Boston, Massachusetts. She is currently the Director at Cantho University Learning Resource Center and specialized in Library management and Project management.