WHITHER INTERNATIONAL LIS EDUCATION? SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE PERTINENCE, PROLEMS AND APPLICABILITY OF CROSS-COUNTRY AND CROSS-CONTINENTAL ANALYSIS

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Introduction. In surveying and exploring LIS education contents, LIS curricular structures and LIS-specific knowledge production in Africa, in Asia, in Europe, etc., one has to come to grips with the comparative, cross-country and inter-cultural perspective.

Method. Based on a review of the literature and experience recorded from the author's involvement in a European Union-financed project on LIS curriculum development in Europe and his contribution to a forthcoming book on libraries and education of LIS professionals worldwide, some reflections are presented on issues and problems in designing and carrying out comparative studies of LIS education. Also discussed are approaches to internationalizing LIS education in the age of globalization. A variety of strategies, methods and vehicles are available to LIS academic institutions that consider internationalizing their activities and getting actively involved in international co-operation within LIS education. Selected examples drawn from different parts of the world are given of initiatives and approaches to be relied on for furthering internationalization of LIS school environments and programs.

Results. The author observes that in carrying out comparative analysis in the international LIS classroom, studies should be so designed that they are capable of identifying and analyzing problem areas, issues, developments, challenges, etc. as they have manifested themselves in the geographical area under study or on the continents being analyzed and contrasted.

Conclusion. It is suggested that comparative librarianship be subjected to critical analysis so as to assess its potential in a contemporary perspective. In promoting international cooperation in LIS education and in exploring ways of internationalizing courses and curricula, consideration should be given to enhancing the flow of information on internationalization activities and collaborative projects in LIS education in all parts of the world.

Comparative Librarianship Revisited

The purpose of revisiting comparative librarianship and briefly reviewing its potential and relevance from a 2009 standpoint is twofold. First, this sub-discipline and methodology – which should actually be renamed *Comparative LIS* to ensure a more up-to-date label – offers an analytical framework for cross-national comparison of LIS education and LIS curricula. Second, Comparative librarianship presents itself as a field of study designed to give students an understanding of LIS infrastructures, landscapes, libraries, historical developments, professional issues, etc. in a specific geographic area. Thus, for instance, projects with this scope serve as vehicles for students to analyze and grasp complex social, cultural, historical, educational, political and administrative factors and epistemological traditions, which have affected library and information-related developments in specific parts of the world. In comparing and contrasting national or continental developments, such questions could be asked as: what are the differences and what are the similarities? What have been the chief concerns, priorities and main lines of discourse within the LIS profession, information sector or the library community in each of the countries and geographical areas over a specific period of time? Quite a few definitions of comparative librarianship exist. For example, back in the 1950s, C. Dane (Simsova & MacKee, 1970, 14) presented comparative librarianship like this: "It is a study of library development in many countries to discover what developments have been successful and can be copied elsewhere. It is an examination of the philosophies and policies of librarianship on an international scale to determine long-range trends, to appraise short-comings, and to uncover contradictions and inconsistencies between practice and theory. Above all it is the study of the cause and effect of library development throughout the world. Like comparative anthropology and comparative religion, comparative librarianship seeks to broaden our tolerance and deepen our understanding. It is one of the first steps toward international library co-operation." According to Danton (1977, 4), studies in comparative librarianship are defined as: "analyses of libraries, library systems, some aspect of librarianship, or library programs in two or more national, cultural or societal environments, in terms of socio-logical, economic, cultural, ideological, and historical context. These analyses are made for the purpose of understanding the underlying similarities and differences and for determining explanations of the differences, with the ultimate aim of trying to arrive at valid generalizations and principles." In considering the potential of comparative studies,

Jackson (1981, 342) observes that "the mutual sharing and study of librarianship on a comparative basis could broaden professional viewpoints, stimulate consideration of one's own national library system and point to needed areas for further development and research. Finally, comparative librarianship offers the opportunity to look at theories and practices of librarianship in different countries for the purpose of solving and broadening understanding of library problems." Danton draws attention to the difference between comparative librarianship and international librarianship and points to the importance of avoiding confusing the two concepts. According to Kumar (1987, 6) comparative librarianship is mainly a *search* for "cause and effect" in library development, whereas international librarianship is an *approach* for "international understanding and cooperation."

The Decline of Comparative Librarianship?

Comparative librarianship as a theoretical construct attracted considerable interest in the 1970's and 1980's. At that time most educational programs in library science in North America and quite a few library schools in other parts of the world offered a course in comparative librarianship. But comparative librarianship as a methodological approach in the original sense seems to have a somewhat obscure profile within the discipline of LIS today. Now this is not to say that comparative analysis in the library field has disappeared from current LIS discussion and scholarship. Texts on this theme still appear and googling on the term *comparative librarianship* produces about 8,000 hits (January 2009). There are even blogs that feature this specialized field and the related area of international librarianship. But the question is whether the methodological shape and the epistemological context of comparative librarianship as it was originally conceived some decades ago still makes sense today. Can it be considered a dated field and does it have any relevance today? And if still significant, what are the prospects of a revival of comparative studies in librarianship from a 2009 standpoint? A proper analysis would be needed to shed light on this issue. Nevertheless, some tentative answers will be suggested below. One possible reason for the postulated decline of interest in comparative librarianship could be the redefining of library school programs, curricular revision efforts and the shift in priorities that have taken place within library education during the last two, three decades or so. Library studies and librarianship pure have been downgraded in LIS school contexts and recent years have seen the emergence and rise of other subjects such as IT, information systems, business information resources, knowledge management, digitization, information architecture, planning, media and formats and retrieval. In other words, curricular "mainstreaming" trends within our discipline and in our academic institutions during recent years have quietly pushed comparative librarianship to the sidelines. This development is distinct not least in British LIS schools. As a result, library history, international librarianship, librarianship abroad, etc. have become declining course areas and they tend to receive less priority in curricula, lower number of lessons, etc.

A Renewed Role for Comparative librarianship: Enriching Teaching and Learning in International LIS Programs and Classes

It should be borne in mind that comparative librarianship was defined and conceived as a specialized discipline or subfield within librarianship many years before the advent of the Internet and the digital age, etc. However, the new era of IT and the incredible growth in the use of social networking tools on the Internet along with the increased interest in the international dimension of higher education could bring a new perspective to comparative librarianship. In determining the relevance and suitability of comparative studies to contemporary LIS education, attention should be focused on the aspects of cross-country analysis of LIS-specific issues and phenomena and the implications and requirements of "the international LIS classroom". Hence, there is a need for examining and discussing the applicability of comparative analysis as an analytical tool and a research methodology to cross-country and cross-cultural analysis of library systems, library architecture, library and information infrastructures, information provision developments, LIS education as well as "professional ideology" and developments. Comparative studies can be undertaken at the national and regional level, across continents and even from a global perspective.

Various current R & D projects in our field already apply comparative analysis of topics and problems areas in different countries. One European example of this is a study conducted by Nikica Gardijan, Ivana Morić Filipović, Franjo Pehar and Srećko Jelušić from the Department of Library and Information Science at the University of Zadar, Zadar, Croatia (Gardijan *et al.*, 2009). The title of this study,

which was presented at the BOBCATSSS Conference 2009, is "Information ethics as reflected in LIS curricula: Comparative analysis of Croatian and Slovenian learning programs". The reported R & D project intends studying the presence of information ethics in LIS programs and comparing Slovenian and Croatian programs. The resulting paper will include a discussion of the main concepts and resources of information ethics in LIS and set out to explore a variety of ethical issues.

Comparative analysis was also used in a study on trends and issues in LIS education in the Asian region reported by Miwa (2006). These trends were identified through content analysis methodology applied to conference presentations given in Tokyo in 2003 and 2004 by pre-selected invited experts from China, Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, and Thailand, as part of the LIPER project. The project with the acronym LIPER (the Library and Information Professions and Education Renewal) addressed the history, current situation, and future prospects of LIS educational delivery systems and curricula in Japan. The invited LIS experts from five Asian countries were requested to focus on LIS education in their respective country and explore four major issues in their presentations: (1) the current state of LIS education, (2) qualification systems for librarianship, (3) recent changes in curricula and employment markets for certified librarians, and (4) co-operation and credit exchanges with other universities, etc. in nearby countries. Experts' oral presentations including the subsequent question and answering and discussion sessions were tape-recorded and transcribed. Content analysis techniques were then applied to the transcribed material.

In a conference paper Sulistyo-Basuki (2006) argues for the necessity of producing a textbook on ASEAN comparative librarianship. It is pointed out that the envisaged textbook should cover all ASEAN nations and reflect the various cultural, social, and technical backgrounds represented by all ten ASEAN member countries. Detailed treatment is given to the problems and barriers in preparing and publishing this textbook. It appears from the author's observations that courses on comparative librarianship are offered in the South East Asian Region, but courses on this subject usually appear under various titles in the curriculum of LIS schools. Courses offered are available only as electives. According to Sulistyo-Basuki (2006, 5), for lecturers on comparative librarianship, the experience of locating and getting hold of publications on other ASEAN countries is a nightmare. He continues: "Let me tell you of an experience I and a fellow student had during our post-graduate studies in the United States in early 1990s. We were designing a course on ASEAN comparative librarianship, particularly public librarianship with special emphasis on ASEAN countries. We had nightmares and frustrations as we gather documents on ASEAN public libraries which are nearly non-existent in Indonesia. It was even harder to get literatures from the national libraries and if ever available, many of them were published in non-English languages (read vernacular languages) which we could not understand. My concern today is that the library and information science students enrolled in library schools in the ASEAN region know better about libraries in USA, UK or Australia rather than those in Malaysia or Thailand or Vietnam! This is really ironically shameful!"

The author proposes the preparation of common textbook(s) on ASEAN comparative librarianship with the following features:
First, the material should be prepared by ASEAN authors.
Second, the textbook should be written in English.
Third, the textbook should be published and hopefully marketable!
Fourth, the topics should include traditional as well as contemporary issues.
Fifth, existing literature available in vernacular languages should be drawn upon along with items published in other languages especially English.

Unfortunately, no details are provided on the methodological issues and the theoretical frameworks dealt with in the courses on comparative librarianship in this part of the world.
Thus, in re-visiting and exploring the history and theoretical framework of comparative librarianship, efforts should be made to appraise strengths and weaknesses of the comparative methodology and to determine its potential for serving as an analytical tool in national LIS school contexts and in the international LIS classroom with degree-seeking students and/or exchange students from different countries. As touched upon above, the digital age has radically changed the nature of and availability of study materials constituting the basis for comparative librarianship, or *comparative LIS*, as it should be termed today. Some years ago print-based materials such as books, journals and newsletters and some unpublished reports were the prime or sole resource to be drawn upon in studying librarianship, library systems, information agencies, services and structures on a cross-country basis, but today we have the web and an array of digital materials are at hand. At the same time, in many parts of the world, LIS school academics and LIS students have access to a battery of communication vehicles and many young

people and students are familiar with and rely heavily on social networks on the Web. In addition to linking LIS classrooms and those active in the classrooms or laboratories – students and teachers – in different national/international contexts, video conferencing and digital learning facilities also lend themselves to long-distance information gathering, consolidation and analysis activities in a comparative perspective. There are ample opportunities for international study and networking in this area. In short, this IT-driven dimension was non-existing when comparative librarianship developed as a methodological approach. Hence, there is work to be done in giving comparative analysis in librarianship a brush-up and in redefining it as a sub-discipline and an analytical tool given the conditions, possibilities and challenges of the digital age and the processes of globalization.

Approaches to Internationalizing LIS Education

As demonstrated above, the comparative analytic approach still has a role to play in the courses and internationalization schemes of LIS schools. The comparative perspective and line of attack is but one way of introducing internationalization initiatives and getting actively involved in international co-operation within LIS education. A variety of strategies, methods and vehicles exist for LIS academic institutions that have decided on internationalizing their activities. Initiatives and approaches to be relied on for furthering internationalization include: Student and staff mobility, visiting lecturer schemes, bilateral agreements between LIS schools, regional and international conferences and seminars, summer schools, study abroad programs, faculty and student visits, distance learning activities and last but not least formal international programs. Staff participation in and contribution to international scholarship and research should not be overlooked. In addition to writing for publication in international journals, academic staff members attend regional and international conferences and present papers in their special fields of expertise. Some schools also host major international conferences and seminars addressing LIS relevant topics. For LIS academic institutions outside English-speaking countries, the offering of international programs taught in English provides an additional avenue towards internationalizing curricula. In his state-of-the-art-review of LIS education and collaboration in Africa, Ocholla (2007) exemplifies the range of co-operation areas and joints projects, which includes student and staff exchange, organization of joint conferences, seminars and workshops, publication of books such collective works and textbooks, research and teaching visitations such as sabbatical, visiting lectureships and post doctoral fellowships), quality management in research, learning and teaching or accreditation as well as curriculum development.

In Europe, we very much value the contribution and potentials of formalized student exchanges programs such as ERASMUS and NORDPLUS. These practical schemes did not exist in the 1970s and 1980s. It was only in the 1990s that student mobility really got a foothold in European LIS academic institutions. Further, study abroad programs of shorter duration are to be recommended as a manageable and tangible internationalization activity with a clear impact. For example, last year a group of students from the North Carolina Central University, School of Library and Information Sciences visited the Royal School of Library and Information Science (RSLIS) in Copenhagen. Students were accompanied by Associate Professor Dr. Ismail Abdullahi and the program included lectures at RSLIS, visits to libraries and library organizations and institutions as well as cultural events. The period in Denmark, of two weeks' duration, was preceded by preparations at the home institution and students completed individual project work incorporating recorded experience and attended feedback sessions and evaluation meetings in class upon their return to North Carolina. Study abroad programs can be kept simple and their positive effect on the international climate and activities in the LIS department should not be underrated.

The CIP Program

Arranging and hosting international courses can be a time-consuming and resource-demanding affair, but they are worthwhile activities and generally successful from a student perspective. In order to illustrate how an international course can be approached and organized a brief account is given of the CIP program offered jointly by three LIS academic institutions. In 2003, the Division of Information Management of the Temasek Information Technology School, Temasek Polytechnic in Singapore, the Royal School of Library and Information Science, Denmark and the School of Information and Library Science (SILS) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in the United States agreed on offering a Circulating International Program in Information Management (CIP). The idea and incentive for initiating the CIP project had as its offspring an international meeting on globalization and Library and

Information Science (abbreviated LIS in the following), which took place 7-9 April 2002. Conceived as an intensive undergraduate program, multicultural in scope, that would circulate between the three LIS academic institutions in Denmark, Singapore and the USA, CIP would be offered on an annual basis and hosted by each of the above three partner institutions in turn. The first run of the program was hosted by RSLIS in 2004. In 2005 the program moved to North Carolina and in 2006 Singapore was the host country of CIP. Clearly, the innovative and dynamic nature of the CIP program lies in its mobile character. The CIP program was targeted at third or four-year undergraduate students at each of the participating institutions. The program would be roughly equivalent in workload to one semester, or half a year, of a student's normal academic workload, thus allowing students from each of the institutions to attend the program without loss of credit in their home programs. The thematic focus of each run of CIP was information management. For the purposes of the CIP program, information management was broadly defined as the organization, storage, retrieval, transmission and use of information in any technical, social or organizational context where the focus in on the information itself. This broadly conceived definition allowed the individual organizing partner institution within the CIP framework extensive flexibility in defining the subject orientation of the CIP course it would be hosting. The main focus of the initial CIP course in Copenhagen (2004) was on aspects of information management. All teaching was done in English by RSLIS teachers as well as by a visiting teacher from each of the two overseas partner institutions in North Carolina and in Singapore. Lectures and seminar presentations given by the teachers alternated with practical sessions and students' project work in groups. At the end of most modules, students would be expected to give a presentation of their project work. The course started with a two-week introductory module. A total of fourteen students were admitted for the first run of the CIP course including five European (ERASMUS) exchange students. In many respects, the above cross-country and cross-continental learning project was successful and a rewarding experience. But in evaluating the performance and outcomes of the CIP courses, there are some lessons to be learnt. Thus, for instance, considerable differences between students groups from participating institutions in terms of age, basic disciplinary knowledge and familiarity with student-centered and self-driven study skills and habits were noted. Thus, based on the experience drawn from the first three CIP runs at the national partner sites, 2004-2006, it was decided to put this pioneering collaborative project on ice, but plans and ideas for launching a new undergraduate-level international program available to international students are currently discussed at RSLIS.

The international Master of Library and Information Science Program

Recruitment of international degree students is an obvious way of introducing an international element in a LIS school setting. For university departments in say Australia, UK and the USA this would normally be a fairly unproblematic exercise. This is not the case for LIS schools existing in countries where the language(s) spoken are not English. Accommodating international students in a non-English speaking academic environment constitutes a great challenge: faculty members are required to teach and do tutorial sessions in English and to elaborate instructional materials that are in English. Since you have to sort of create a "learning enclave" within the university environment where communication in English is the norm, there is a variety of practical problems to be tackled – signs, instructions and notices of an everyday nature should be in English as well – and the intercultural dimension, having students from several countries work together and drawing upon the resources represented by domestic students, calls for special awareness from the perspective of teaching as well as support staff. In this context it should be mentioned that issues and challenges relating to coping with the learning needs of culturally diverse groups in LIS education are addressed in a recent paper by Abdullahi (2008). The two-year Master's program offered by RSLIS is also available as an international course taught in English. The international postgraduate program was offered for the first time in 2005. The program emphasizes the theories, principles, methods and practical applications of information science and comprises three general modules and one special subject module. Each module is of one semester's duration, corresponding to 30 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System credit points). The four modules on offer are: Information Seeking and Information Retrieval Theories, Knowledge Organization, Knowledge Management and Special subject module (thesis work, individual thematic focus). Degree seeking students must complete the three subject-specific modules and prepare a thesis in the context of the special subject module. The international Master's program is also available as a study abroad opportunity for exchange students from RSLIS partner institutions. The course tends to attract a

mix of Danish and foreign students with quite a few course participants being immigrants or persons with a non-Danish nationality living in Denmark.

There is always a risk that the perspective of the institution hosting an international program is allowed to prevail or dominate too much. It is important that course organizers at the hosting academic institution and those teaching seminars and modules within an international program are aware of the peculiar academic and cultural resources and potentials possessed by international students. These personal knowledge resources and insights should be fully exploited in classroom settings and allowed to enrich teaching and learning activities. Thus, teaching and seminar sessions should be organized and approached so as to encourage international students to present and reflect on upon issues and problem areas, etc., that relate to practices, developments, states of affairs, priorities and viewpoints in students' home countries. Whenever relevant, international course participants should be encouraged to provide input and contribute views on library purpose and philosophy, library systems, library and information services, information technology and challenges, LIS professional matters and historical developments in the field, etc. Critical analysis of the concept of comparative librarianship in a contemporary perspective should help clarify its practical applications to teaching and learning in the context of international degree programs.

Innovative schemes of Internationalization

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 credit points at one of the foreign partner universities or through participation in a joint activity between the partners. The credit 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.

Overall, and in a global context, there is a growing need for furthering educational convergence and transparency and for strengthening cooperation and networking among academic institutions. Within the broader community of LIS schools, LIS educators and researchers there are ample opportunities for embarking on joint initiatives and partnerships. The digital age has brought with it unprecedented possibilities for information exchange, interpersonal communication, networking and learning. Established means of e-communication such as listservs and newsgroups are relied upon for professional and academic communication in countless contexts. As is well known, these internet-based tools and forums have also found their ways into national, regional and international LIS communities. One example here is the Listserv on LIS education in Asia (LISEA@MLIST.NTU.EDU.SG Library and Information Science Education in Asia), a discussion list which was established in November 2006. The purpose of this Listserv is to provide an outlet for disseminating information about LIS education and research.[1]

However, improved cross-boundary communication between LIS schools and their academic staff members through reliance on discussion lists, virtual conferences and other web-based communication packages is one thing. Another thing is the formulation and implementation of more ambitious and far-reaching schemes and projects. In Europe, for instance, a major challenge is to develop a set of common goals and joint policies for European LIS school activities and their collaborative structures. In the meantime two concrete projects of a more short-term nature are under way within the framework of EUCLID (the European Association for Library & Information Education and Research). One project aims to develop a set of guidelines for curriculum development. Since EUCLID has for some time directed its focus on LIS curriculum development, the Board of the Association has come to the conclusion that it is now time to transform the findings of the work in LIS curriculum development into a guidelines document. It is emphasized that the envisaged guidelines should not be viewed as a standard. Rather they should constitute a helpful basis for the efforts of EUCLID members faced with the task of designing a well-balanced and cogent LIS program adjusted to national or local needs. The idea is that the guidelines should be subject to further development by EUCLID's board and revised and amended as required based on discussions at annual Board and Council meetings.[2]

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[1] The archives of the list are available at http://mlist.ntu.edu.sg/scripts/wa.exe?A0=lisea&F=P

[2] http://euclid.hio.no/files/pdf/euclid-guidelines-cur-dev.pdf

The other proposal relates to the creation of a register of LIS program evaluators. It is assumed that such evaluators can be found among present or previous faculty members of EUCLID member institutions. A register of evaluators should therefore be created. In recruiting evaluators for the register, EUCLID should see to it that such educators are designated who possess an expert knowledge of the LIS field, which should be documented by a PhD or similar qualifications. EUCLID's role will be to assist institutions in identifying appropriate evaluators, but the Association will have no responsibility, legal or financial, for the outcome of evaluation exercises.[3] In an IFLA conference paper Virkus (2007) provides a more detailed treatment of EUCLID and other structures for co-operation in Europe. She also portrays the current state of collaborative activities within the patchwork of European LIS education along with the main problems, challenges and opportunities facing LIS schools and the LIS academic community in Europe.

Developing a Repository of LIS Teaching Materials

In Asia, the project aiming at developing a repository of teaching materials for sharing and reuse in LIS schools provides an example of a major collaborative initiative. As explained by Chaudhry & Khoo (2006) the repository is expected to facilitate and advance sharing of digitized teaching materials within the LIS academic community across Asia. The repository will include course outlines and syllabi, timetables and plans of teaching activities, PowerPoint presentations, slides, lecture notes, student-related materials, bibliographies and reading lists, exam questions and test bank as well as other evaluation tools. According to Chaudhry (2006, 4) a very helpful feature is the possibility of identifying experts in new and developing fields who can be drawn upon as experts or invited to give workshops or seminars. A web portal is being designed for this purpose and work on the development of support facilities including content management system, a faceted taxonomy and metadata format is in progress (Chaudhry & Khoo, 2008). In terms of users of the repository for instructional materials, the priority in the first phase of repository development is those who teach courses in LIS. Students and the perspective of a student-centered e-learning platform are not considered at this stage of the project. For those who intend to undertake studies of a comparative nature with focus on Asian countries (library systems, information infrastructures, LIS education, etc.) the repository might serve as an electronic store of resources and raw material for "area studies" and comparative analysis. At least this researcher's utility should be kept in mind when defining "collection development policy" and adding materials to the repository. The Asian LIS repository project appears very promising and can be viewed as an example for imitation by regional LIS education communities in other parts of the world. However, a complication that may restrict use, at least from a European perspective, is the requirement for standard languages (i.e. English) and the need for providing input for the repository that is available in an English version. On the other hand, as indicated by Chaudhry (2006, 5), a problem of this nature might be remedied by the inclusion of an automatic translation facility or by adding an English synopsis.

The challenges and opportunities of regional co-operation between LIS educational institutions in a number of East Asian countries are examined by Lin (2004). Lin points to the existence of regional co-operation projects including conferences, meetings and exchange programs. Further, there is a marked need for coordination of LIS educational activities in Asia. To fulfill this need an Asian counterpart to EUCLID in Europe and ALISE in the USA should be created. There seems to be scope for extending the volume of collaborative activities in that survey data indicate many LIS schools in East Asia would like to participate in a broadened regional cooperative scheme. The paper ends with a number of recommendations of a more general nature and three items on improved communication and discussion facilities for Asian LIS educators needing immediate consideration. In their analytic review of the literature Lin and Wang (2006) identify notable milestones, structures, organisations and conferences reflecting trends and developments in international cooperation in LIS education. The authors recommend some steps to be taken in advancing regionally based LIS education in East Asia. The recommendations listed include a proposal for the establishment of an organisation or institution to be named Asian Association for Library and Information Science Education and Research (AALISER). Also suggested are web-based LIS courses spanning several countries and a series of conferences covering LIS education at the regional level in Asia.

Reflection: Technology is not a Panacea

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[3] http://euclid.hio.no/files/pdf/euclid-council-2008_5b.pdf

On the face of it the fascinating and easy-to-use groupware technologies such as discussion lists, chat rooms, electronic bulletin boards, virtual workspaces and e-conferencing systems seem ideal for boosting up international activities in an institutional setting. But technology is not a universal remedy. What matters is the climate of internationalization, nationally and regionally, and the existence of well-argued and management-supported policies and actions for networking and international co-operation. Thus, a dedicated approach to co-operation and internationalization at the institutional level and across national boundaries is a basic requirement. In this respect it is interesting to look back on the 1990s with the early days of the Internet, information superhighways and the spread of IT applications in businesses (in some parts of the world) and the fascination about globalization, connectivity, cyberspace (and *cybrarians*) and the sense of shrinking distance. In some countries, including the USA, the advent of *the global village* was welcomed and within the LIS academic community internationalization was increasingly regarded as a mandatory issue. The great expectations of that age and the allure of global communication are very nicely and precisely reflected in brief articles by Cveljo (1997a, 1997b). "Endless opportunities would open up from communicating globally – colleague to colleague," as she puts it. Further, international students should be regarded as an invaluable resource and understanding other cultures was high on the agenda. The focus on the needs of students from Third World countries was indisputable and the solicitude appears impressive. Rhetorically Cveljo (1997b) asks: "Are American library and information science schools providing students with the knowledge and understanding to participate and discuss the conditions in countries worldwide and relate to global library and information issues?" Today the question is: what became of the keenness and dedication articulated in the mid-90's? Where did the enthusiasm for and commitment to internationalization of LIS schools and their curricula as expressed by Katherine Cveljo go? Well, it still exists, in some LIS school environments in the USA and elsewhere. At least it is important in this context to point to the zeal, drive and visions underlying the formation and subsequent activities of the LIS Education in Developing Countries Discussion Group within IFLA (Abdullahi, 2006). Today people around the world are being connected like never before with the advancement of IT, but the question remains whether the most sophisticated web tools and the coolest interactive web applications can be considered a decisive factor in successful internationalization efforts within higher education. What is postulated here is that institutional leadership and well-defined aims and objectives coupled with concerted action within national and regional LIS education communities appear just as important.

Conclusion

In paving the way for further international cooperation in LIS education and in exploring ways of internationalizing courses and curricula, efforts should be made to improve the flow of information on internationalization activities and collaborative projects in LIS education in all parts of the world. As the situation looks now, there is a deficit of information on current LIS school projects and activities with an international flavor in the various regions of the world. Factual detail is needed about the nature of involvement in internationalization as well as the characteristics and scope of individual projects and programs. What are the prevalent types of collaborative projects and cross-country partnerships in the LIS education field? And what about the reliance on the virtual classroom, video-based courses and web-supported textbooks courses and similar applications as means for internationalizing the LIS learning environment?

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