Chapter 15
Curriculum Contents of Digital Library Education (DLE) in Europe

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ABSTRACT

Digital library research has attracted much attention around the world. Much of the research and projects funded by several agencies and governments around the world focus on how DLs can aid education; very few studies and projects are funded that address teaching and learning about digital libraries. There has been very little literature on digital library education in Europe. This chapter explores the existing Digital Library curriculum scenario in European Library and Information Science (LIS) schools as well as to find out the preferred DL curriculum contents as rated by the European LIS faculty members. Survey research methodology is used in this study. Three directories of institutions of higher education in LIS (i.e. IFLA, EUCLID, and BAILER) were consulted to find the potential respondents of the current study. The questionnaire was sent to 159 LIS schools/departments in Europe; of those, 54 LIS schools/departments participated in this study. The result indicates that the majority of LIS schools/departments have already integrated the concept of digital libraries into their curriculum. A list of preferred content by LIS faculty members for DL education is presented. Comprehensive literature reviews on DL education aspects have been conducted. The findings of the study would help creating a uniform DL curriculum for Europe and other regions of the world.

INTRODUCTION

Digital library education has received much attention around the world and has become indispensible part of LIS education. Recently, significant numbers of grants are being awarded in USA to DL education aspects. Indiana University and the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign (IU & UIUC, 2004 as cited in Ma, Clegg & O'Brien, 2009, p. 534) were awarded a grant from Institute

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of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) on a collaborative DLE project. Other library schools with grants from IMLS from the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarians Programme, such as Pittsburgh and Drexel, are also exploring aspects of the development of DL curricula. The National Science Foundation (NSF) in the USA awarded a three-year grant of over half a million dollars in 2006 to Virginia Tech (VT) and the University of North Carolina (UNC) to develop a digital library curriculum. It is perhaps the first formal cooperation in this field between CS and LIS and between institutions (Ma, Clegg & O'Brien, 2009, pp. 534-535). This curriculum project deserves appreciation for developing a model curriculum that might be used in LIS schools and Computer Science schools around the world.

European Commission (EC) has already given priority to digital library related research. Though comprehensive, continuous focus has not yet been made to find out the curriculum strengths and weaknesses in the LIS schools in Europe and development of the standard curriculum on DL education for LIS schools in Europe.

However, European Commission (EC) must be given the credit for introducing EC financed Erasmus Mundus International Master in Digital Library Learning (DILL). This kind of programme in digital librarianship is first in the world and attracts library and information science professionals around the world. EC offers handsome scholarships to the students accepted for the programme. This programme was instituted in 2007 and continued with EC's financial support till 5th intake. Unfortunately, DILL stopped offering full scholarships from 6th intake as the agreement with EC was not renewed. Now students have to pay tuition fees and accommodation, though very few scholarships with limited support are still available. Examples of fully-fledged programmes on digital librarianship in Europe are very few. In Sweden, Swedish School of Library and Information Science (SSLIS) recently instituted a programme entitled 'International Master's programme LIS: Direction Digital Libraries and Information Services' where student has to pay the tuition fees.

As documented in some literature on digital libraries e.g. Pomerantz et al. (2006); Pomerantz, Abbas, and Mostafa(2009) most of the funding on DL focused on practical digital library development, but not much importance was given to developing education for digital libraries and producing qualified futuristic digital librarians. It is important to have standardized, acceptable digital library curriculum in all European LIS schools. Therefore, efforts should be made immediately to focus on developing a DL curriculum for all LIS schools in Europe aiming at producing more future qualified digital library professionals.

There is clear paucity of research on DL education in European countries. Even the book entitled *European Curriculum Reflections on Library and Information Science Education* edited by Leif Kajberg and Leif Lørring did not put specific concentration and focus on digital library education in Europe. Only one chapter of the book talks about 'Digitization of Cultural Heritage', one chapter discusses'Information Seeking and Retrieval in LIS discipline' and one talks about 'Knowledge Management and Information Management' and another one discuss 'Mediation of Culture in a European Context'. No specific discussion on digital library education in Europe has been found in this book.

This study tries to find out the current curriculum contents of DL education in Europe and explores the subject preferences of the European LIS faculty members with a view to helping develop standardized, internationally accepted DL curriculum for all European LIS schools.

Research Questions and Purpose of the Study

1. What are the existing curriculum contents of DL education in European LIS schools?