

Chapter LV

A Review of Progress in Digital Library Education

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ABSTRACT

In this entry, we review the history, development and current status of digital library (DL) courses and programmes now being offered, mainly by universities/institutions with accredited programmes or courses by CILIP (the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals) and ALA (American Library Association), and review the latest thinking and potential curriculum developments on the topic of how best to educate and train digital librarians. Trends in digital library education (DLE) are presented including:

- *Data from four major and earlier studies relating to DLE,*
- *Main survey date: institutions offering DL programmes /courses as at the end of October 2006.*
- *Recent developments of DL curriculum (potential standard models) as at the end of June 2007.*

BACKGROUND: BRIEF HISTORY OF DIGITAL LIBRARY EDUCATION (DLE)

The history of digital libraries (DLs) themselves can be characterized as short and volatile, and

DLE history is even shorter. The DL is a new form of managing the knowledge record and cultural heritage on both small and large scales. Thousands of digital collections continue to be created around the world. Large amounts of research effort and money have been devoted to

DL research throughout the world over the past decade, but very little on research regarding how Librarians may best be educated and equipped to work in the digital domain.

DL education can be defined as the programmes or courses specific to the training and educating of students who will be able to build and manage DLs after graduation. It is evident that there is already a shortage of supply, a lack of information professionals with the right combination of skills, and a particularly serious shortage in specialist areas such as digital librarians and digital recording managers (Fisher, 2002; Wilder, 2002). DLE started sometime in the middle of the 1990s as a consequence of the fast development of DLs. Spink and Cool (1999) thought that DLE programmes were “choices for rationale,” and that DLE “reacts with a time lag to both research and practical developments in DL.” Our latest studies (Ma, O’Brien, & Clegg, 2006, 2007) on DLE show there is a progression from a stage where educators are exploring basic questions such as “why and what to teach about digital libraries?” to more focused academic questions like “how and what is best practice in DLE?”

It is well known that the term “digital library (DL)” means different things to different people (Arms 2005; Borgman, 1999). Many academics in DLE have been, and are still, struggling to construct a suitable or standard curriculum for their students (Borgman, 2001; IU & UIUC, 2004; Jacso, 2000). DLE is faced with many questions and it is clear that there is a pressing need to develop suitable education programmes to train and equip new librarians and information professionals who will be capable and comfortable in working in a digital environment. The combination of social trends and technology is here the push for educational developments.

Most DL courses have been taught either in Library and Information Science (LIS) or Computer Science (CS) programmes. It is noted that DL programmes or courses offered by CS are now based on the Computing Curriculum (CC)

2001 Information Management (IM) Areas (defining curricula by ACM & IEEE-CS for CS). In contrast, the DL curriculum offered by LIS has varied more widely from time-to-time and place-to-place. There has been little agreement as to the contents and scope of these programmes or courses offered by LIS (Rose, 2001; Saracevic & Dalbello, 2001), and a lack of cooperation between institutions, or between LIS and CS disciplines until late 2005.

There was little or no funding for education in DL (Spink & Cool, 1999) in the last century. However, there are some encouraging changes in the past few years. For example, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) in the USA has funded several projects in digital library education as part of their “Librarians for the 21st Century Programme” in late 2004.

There has been significant progress in the development of DL curricula from the LIS perspective. For example, Indiana University and the University of Illinois at Urbana—Champaign (IU & UIUC, 2004) were awarded a grant from IMLS on a collaborative DLE project. This grant is aimed at “building up an effective digital library curriculum through library school and academic library partnership.” Progress in this three-year project was presented, in at least three workshops held with the Joint Conference on Digital Libraries (JCDL) in June 2005, 2006 and 2007 (Brancolini & Mostafa, 2006; Dolan, 2005; IU & UIUC, 2007). At the same time, 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. The project (VT, 2006) is titled “Collaborative Research: Curriculum Development: Digital Libraries,” and is led by academics from CS at VT and LIS

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