The changing role of the manager in the digital era: Findings from Erasmus IP LibCMASS 2012 Project

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Abstract: Information sciences are an ever growing field which requires immense knowledge from its professionals. Students that are just beginning to enter this world sometimes lack practical experience or some theoretical knowledge which would prove useful in their future careers. Programs such as ERASMUS IP LibCMASS (2012-ERA-IP-11), which started in 2011, offer both of these in a stimulating international environment. The IP School include four main subjects – Library, Information and Cultural Management and Information Literacy; Intellectual Property and Information Brokering; Information Technologies in Libraries, Archives and Cultural Institutions; Preservation and Access to Cultural Heritage and Digital Libraries and brought together students and lecturers from Bulgaria, Croatia, France and Turkey. The aim of this paper is to present the inner workings of the second year of the IP LibCMASS project held in University of Zagreb and to highlight the novelties that appeared in regards to its first year. Moreover, it also aims to convey students' conclusions about the role of the manager of cultural institutions in modern society.
Keywords: Information science, IP LibCMASS, manager of cultural institutions, future information professionals

Introduction

Information science has recently become extremely important and widespread. Technology, communication, education and so on serve to develop critical analysis of information and show its significance. When thinking on the critical importance of information, information professionals' qualifications become more debatable in recent years. Evermore businesses and institutions are looking for information professionals who can offer them

unique services and who possess knowledge of their field as well as of other adjoining fields. Future information professionals will be required to know even more. They will be supposed to have the competencies in many aspects. However, universities find it difficult to offer comprehensive programs of information science because of lack of money or professors. Most often they focus on several fields within information science, e.g. library science, archival science, cultural heritage management. For this reason the ERASMUS IP 'Library, Information and Cultural Management – Academic Summer School' (LibCMASS, 2012) is very much needed to offer students of information science a broader scope of topics and issues that are relevant in today's information society. Furthermore, some universities due to internal or external difficulties cannot offer a curriculum which combines theoretical knowledge and practical aspects so an interdisciplinary program bridging the gap between these two aspects has proven to be very useful to both students and professors (Todorova, Raykova, Çakmak, & Miočić, 2012). Through ERASMUS IP 'Library, Information and Cultural Management – Academic Summer School' students, future information professionals, have a chance to meet and recognize the various applications in different countries and also to compare national and foreign best practices.

About the Project

From 2nd to 14th September 2012 at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb, the IP LibCMASS project brought together 25 students and 19 teachers from Bulgaria, Croatia, France and Turkey (http://libcmass.unibit.bg/). Such an international environment representing four countries with a lot of similarities and differences proved to be an amazing opportunity for creating new relations.

The Intensive Program in Zagreb centered around four main subjects: Library, Information and Cultural Management. Information literacy; Preservation and access to cultural heritage. Digital libraries; Intellectual Property. Information brokerage; and Information technologies in libraries, archives, museums and other cultural institutions. For each topic, there were several lectures presented by professors from the four universities. These lectures brought a rich knowledge to apprehend the profession of librarian and its changes in a world more and more computerized. Students studied different methods, theories and approaches to manage libraries and organize knowledge: they had lectures about *information architecture* and *outsourcing*, for example. They also studied about the impact of new technologies and the Internet on libraries, with lectures about *social networks* and *Internet services as a support to library services*. They studied how to make available the digitized information with lectures about *folksonomy*, *digital libraries* and the ways to *serve the users of cultural institutions in the digital area*. Finally they compared libraries in an European dimension, with the *digital library Europeana* and the study of the *European Union Cultural Policies and Strategies*. All these topics and issues are essential for preparing students for their future careers in librarianship and for developing their ability to adjust to the changes in their profession.

During the Intensive Program, oral participation was required from students with several tasks and oral presentations. Firstly with workshops which complete lectures, and secondly, with reports made by teams, during free time. Most of the workshops were based on collaboration in international teams giving the students a chance to learn about other countries, different specialties, universities, libraries, archives, programs etc. Moreover, national teams contributed to lectures by presenting the situation in their own country, like the

differences between their university programs. This oral requirement had a very good impact because it obliged the students to communicate despite the language barrier. Consequently, they made a real cultural exchange while improving their English.

Several study trips enriched these two weeks of work and created a link between courses and real practice. Students visited The National Library of Zagreb, the Croatian State Archives and the Zagreb City Libraries. Reports have been done in international teams about these visits and we can find them on the platform called "Intercultural exchange around the profession of librarian" (http://www.docinfos.fr/culturex/).

Findings

A thorough and all-inclusive structure of the IP School presented students with a chance to think critically about many issues within the information society, form their own opinion and have that opinion challenged by opinions and experiences from other countries.

The most widely discussed topics were digitization and Internet services and issues relating to them. Students learned that a whole variety of issues had to be kept in minds of young information science professional. Not only did they come to realize that legal issues such as copyright, intellectual property and information assurance need to be dealt with, they also realized that information institutions no longer provide just face-to-face services. They provide user-friendly services most often in the form of digital libraries and its social networks (Facebook, Tweeter, Youtube etc.), digitized cultural heritage, Ask-the-Librarian services and others. Moreover, it is not enough just to provide the public with as much information as possible. Information science professionals need to also organize that information, e.g. through folksonomies. All of these topics do present the future of information services in all kinds of institutions; however, by the last day of the school many students concluded that by putting so much emphasis on these two aspects we tend to ignore the traditional roles of cultural institutions as well as their traditional tangible materials. Questions that appeared on everyone's mind were questions that have been asked by the information science community for a while: Will there be a need for physical information institutions in the future? Will digitization alienate the user from information institutions and all the services that they offer? Can we as future professional and managers of cultural institutions do anything to stop such trends?

Another issue that was raised in students' discussion was the question of university programs which tend to favor library science and information technologies as the most common representatives of information science thus neglecting other aspects such as publishing and cultural heritage management. Such blatant disregard of different aspects of information science can have a negative effect on students in the future since they will not be introduced to issues, topics, terms and practices which they may encounter in their future careers as information professionals and some as managers of cultural and information institutions. Globalization, computerization and the Internet have made it impossible for future managers to focus on solely one thing. Therefore, a versatile education is crucial in producing quality information professionals.

Even without hearing about certain topics the students concluded that today's and future managers of cultural institutions, who have to supervise all of this flow of information, creation of services and projects and make sure that the institution abides the law, obviously have to be more than just professional in their specific field, be it library science, information brokering, printed communications, information management, cultural heritage management, etc. They have to possess knowledge going beyond their specialty, pay attention to both digital and non-digital materials and issues relating to them, be well versed in social networks and Internet services and offer a stimulating physical environment for their users. Therefore, we can conclude that managers are no longer responsible just for the well-being of the materials in their cultural institution but also for the well-being and growing interest of users and the community. As we saw with practices for stimulation of reading, the information and cultural institutions do not just provide a service to the community; they educate, form and care for the community. Managers' responsibilities increase each day and without the help and support of their colleagues, both national and international, they would not be able to fulfill the role and mission of their institution.

Conclusion

Nowadays educational programs like IP-LibCMASS are a very important part of student's future development. This intensive program which we have the opportunity to join gives students a chance to learn a lot of new things and to confirm their old knowledge. The students also have the possibility to meet many new people with which to share ideas and experiences and to keep in touch in the future. Moreover, students get a glimpse into the responsibilities of managers in the digital era which shows them that managing an elaborate machine that is a library or any other information institution requires patience, organization and most of all collaboration. This IP program is a very good example of collaboration and communication between students from different educational and cultural backgrounds. This kind of program encourages the future personal and professional collaboration. In the 21st century, almost everything can be done thanks to the advanced technology. In the digital era everyone should be able to use a computer, the Internet and some of the social networks. However, we shouldn't forget that the majority of the content on the web is intellectual property. These issues were among the main topics discussed during the lectures in the University of Zagreb. Students participating in the Intensive program tested their English skills in a variety of workshops in international or national teams. Students were faced with problems and situations that can happen to them in their future development and they had to provide solutions. These kinds of practices help participants understand simultaneously the similarities and the difference of institutions in their countries. "*United in diversity*" is not just the motto of the European Unity. This is the most precise description of IP LibCMASS and other similar programs because they unite people from different countries and connect them through their common interests. For example, this year's participants were students from Sofia, Zagreb, Ankara and Paris. Proof of the benefits of these programs is the number of people wishing to participate and the number of implemented programs. On 30 November 2012 IP LibCMASS project was awarded with the Certificate of Quality by Human Resource Development Center in Sofia, responsible for Lifelong Learning Programme in Bulgaria.

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Curriculum Vitae

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