

LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE CURRICULUM IN TOP-PERFORMING LIBRARY SCHOOLS IN THE PHILIPPINES: IMPLICATIONS TO INFORMATION LITERACY PROMOTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

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Abstract

The need for information literacy (IL) education became more evident because of economic, social, cultural, and technological changes happening around the world. In response to these changes, different nations as well as library and librarian organizations are calling for the establishment of IL standards and the teaching of IL skills. This paper will explore the bases for the need for librarians to teach IL. This paper, in general, will attempt to find out if there is a gap between the library and information science (LIS) curriculum and the expectations on practicing librarians in terms of implementing and promoting IL. This paper will endeavour to provide simple suggestions on how to bridge this possible gap. IL is part of a librarian's education and training, whether as an elective or part of the core curriculum, in library schools outside of the Philippines for several years already, but in the Philippines, it seems that this is not the case. Many of the Filipino librarians were taught and is continued to be taught using a curriculum which does not foster the concept of IL in the level that it should be. In order to determine whether IL subjects are included in the LIS curriculum, the LIS curricula of the top-performing library schools in the Philippines (based on the licensure examination given by the Board for Librarians, Professional Regulation Commission-Philippines), were gathered and analysed. Specifically, the LIS curricula of the University of the Philippines-Diliman (UP), University of the Santo Tomas (UST), and St. Louis University (SLU) were included in this study. There is a saying that "you cannot give what you do not have". This statement is also similar to: "you can not teach what you do not know". This statement holds true to the teaching of IL skills. Librarians who do not have the training and education of IL will definitely find it difficult to implement and promote IL programs to their clientele.

Keywords: Information literacy, Library and Information Science Education, Library Science Curriculum

INTRODUCTION

To this day, there is no standard definition of information literacy (IL). And because of this, people often use IL interchangeably with other terms like user education, library instruction, computer literacy, information and communications technology literacy, media literacy, etc. (Clyde 2004). The different environmental changes that librarians encountered, changed the terminology and definition of what used to be library orientation - library instruction - bibliographic instruction - and IL (Campbell 2004).

For this paper, the American Library Association's (1989) definition of IL is used: "IL is a set of abilities requiring individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information".

Despite all the buzzes on IL around the world, the Philippines is unfortunate to be in a very weak position to tackle or discuss issues concerning IL. This could be attributed to the fact that the Philippine government is still in the stage of addressing the basic needs of the Filipino people, like food, shelter, and clothing. Even though the government has different priorities at this point, librarians must be proactive and find ways to address the need for IL.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Alexandria proclamation

International organizations like the American Library Association (ALA), International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), have created several studies, policy papers, documents, and manifestos on the importance of IL in nation building and in creating life-long learners (Clyde 2004). One of the most important documents on IL was created in 2005. In a report made by Garner (2006), the High-Level Colloquium on IL and Life-long Learning held at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina on 6-9 November 2005 created the Alexandria Proclamation on IL and Life-long Learning. This proclamation states that:

"IL and lifelong learning are the beacons of the Information Society, illuminating the courses to development, prosperity and freedom... IL lies at the core of lifelong learning. It empowers people in all walks of life to seek, evaluate, use and create information effectively to achieve their personal, social, occupational and educational goals. It is a basic human right in a digital world and promotes social inclusion of all nations."

This proclamation is clearly a wake up call not only for librarians, but for society as a whole, to embrace the importance of IL and create a blue print for IL program planning, implementation, and assessment.

(a) The Internet and IL

Information and communications technology opened the gates of the information highway to anybody who has access to it. The Internet in particular, has become the source of information not only for the members of the educational community, the white collar workers, but also for the common folks. Although information is available in unimaginable quantity, individuals who lack IL skills will find it difficult to find information that they really need especially, information from credible and reputable sources. Julien (2004) wrote that:

"We live in a time when many library users and non-users believe that they are indeed *information literate*, simply because they make extensive use of the Internet. Sadly, this confidence is often misplaced. Information overload, misinformation, and complex information retrieval systems, in addition to people's natural inclination to be satisfied with conveniently accessible information, regardless of its accuracy or reliability, combine to challenge most claims of competence in information skills".

Even though the Internet provided many opportunities, it also created many problems especially for librarians and members of the academic community. Issues of copyright infringement, plagiarism, digital divide, etc. are just some of the issues that librarians and non-librarians are facing today.

What is now the role of the librarians given all of these? Hedman (2005) stated that the librarians' mediation of IL is the true mission of librarianship. In a similar manner, Ford (1994) stated that "librarians will help information seekers use critical thinking skills to select and reject information sources and to develop frameworks in which information can be understood".

(b) Librarians as teachers of IL

Why do librarians need to teach IL? Julien (2004) said that "... librarians have long played a role in training their clients in the skills needed to independently find, retrieve, analyse, and use information effectively and efficiently." Campbell (2004) gave a more detailed explanation on the reasons why librarians teach information skills to their patrons by stating: "the practice of librarians undertaking the teaching of information skills has two sources, one philosophical and one practical. At the philosophical level, most librarians believe that IL is a part of a student's well-rounded skill set that will help him/her be more efficient and effective in the future. At the practical level, IL instruction is a self defense mechanism. Librarian to student ratios is so low in most post-secondary institutions that librarians must teach students to be information self-sufficient and do so mostly in classroom settings".

And since librarians have been tasked to teach IL, it's important to assess the competencies of the librarians as far as the teaching of IL is concerned. In an article written by McKinney (2006), he made reference to the ALA Librarians competency statements that have direct connections to IL specifically, a librarian "...knows basic learning theories, instructional methods, and achievement measures, and can apply them to learning situations within libraries and other information providing entities". In light of this state, we have to ask these questions in order to check the readiness of librarians to teach, and promote IL. Are librarians ready to take on this new role? Do we have the competencies needed to teach and promote IL and life-long learning? These are just some of the questions that Filipino librarians and librarians around the world will have to answer.

The world opened its arms to the Filipino librarians. More and more Filipino librarians are leaving the Philippines to find greener pastures abroad. Usually, seasoned and experienced librarians are recruited by institutions in other countries. Most of the Filipino librarians find employment in continental U.S. (e.g. Washington-D.C., Maryland, Texas, etc.) and its protectorates (e.g. U.S. Virgin Islands). IL programs in the U.S. have existed for several years already. This will definitely have an impact on Filipino librarians who do not know what IL is all about. Simply put, there will be a mismatch on the competencies of Filipino librarians compared to the expectations of their employer as far as IL is concerned.

The Gap between the LIS curriculum and expectations on practicing librarians in terms of implementing and promoting IL.

Gorman (2003) stated that "the gap between what is being taught in many LIS schools and what is being practiced in most libraries is wide and widening." Gorman added that "teaching library skills to increasingly a-literate library users are not addressed in a serious manner (or at all) by LIS educators. That gap between theory and practice, each operating on different premises, is the most serious argument for complete reform of library education".

In order to bridge the existing gaps between IL and the society's information needs, librarians need to educate themselves in order to master not only new technologies but also their influence on individual and on society. Librarians also need to emphasize the concept of life-long learning for acquiring IL for the benefit of all members of the society (Siitonen 1996).

In order for future librarians to have the necessary competencies in teaching, implementing and promoting IL, they must be taught using a curriculum that fosters this concept. The LIS programs must respond to this rapidly growing area in order for librarians to keep pace with what is happening inside and outside of the library as especially in the area of IL. This will prepare the future librarians to become catalysts for the IL cause. Practicing librarians can update their skills and knowledge in IL by engaging in formal or informal education. But I firmly believe that it must be the former because the concept of IL is not a simple one. A more thorough treatment of this topic is necessary if librarians are to fulfill society's expectations from them as far as IL and life-long learning is concerned.

THE PRACTICE OF LIBRARIANSHIP IN THE PHILIPPINES

The state of LIS education varies from one country to another. In the Philippines, the state of LIS is influenced by state laws and regulations and by the different library and librarian associations. The bible for Filipino librarians is Republic Act 9246 otherwise known as the Philippine Librarianship Act of 2003. Another important document is the Implementing Rules and Regulations of R.A. 9246. These documents conduct the practice of librarianship in the Philippines.

Ford (1994) wrote that "IL is a means of personal and national empowerment in today's information rich environment". This statement is reflective of the important role of Filipino librarians in nation development together with other professional in the field of education as clearly stated in R.A. 9246 article 1 section 2 (Statement of Policy):

"The State recognizes the essential role of librarianship as a profession in developing the intellectual capacity of the citizenry thus making library service a regular component for national development. It shall, through honest, effective and credible licensure examination and regulatory measures, undertake programs and activities that would promote and nurture the professional growth and well-being of competent, virtuous, productive and well-rounded librarians whose standards of practice and service shall be characterized by excellence, quality, and geared towards world-class global competitiveness."

R.A. 9246 also constituted the Professional Regulatory Board for Librarians that is under the administrative supervision and control of the Professional Regulation Commission. Under article 1 section 3 of R.A. 9246, the Professional Regulatory Board for Librarians, governs the following:

- national examination for licensure, registration of librarians, issuance of certificate of registration and professional identification card;
- supervision, control and regulation of practice of librarianship;
- integration of librarians under one national organizations and;
- development of professional competence of librarians.

The following statement is very important for this paper: *development of professional competence of librarians*. This function of the Professional Regulatory Board for Librarians calls for a standardized curriculum for library and information science education. Prior to the implementation of R.A. 9246, there is no uniformity in the title of the courses, neither in the number of units nor the nature of the library science subjects offered among the different undergraduate degrees available to the students of library science (David and Perez, 2006). At present, there are more than fifteen different types

of undergraduate and graduate curricula in the country (Perez 2004). This lack of standards in the curriculum could have an impact on the implementation of promotion of IL by Filipino librarians. This statement is also supported by the study conducted by David and Perez in 2006. In their study, all of the respondents answered that they perceive a gap between theory and practice.

The various library and librarian association like the Philippine Librarians Association, Philippine Association of Academic and Research Librarians, Philippine Association of Teachers of Library Science, etc. also play an important role in the education and practice of librarianship in the Philippines (Santos 2003). Many of the library and librarian organizations became LIS program accrediting bodies (Hernandez 1999). Given the sheer volume of work to be done, all Filipino librarians, together with the other stakeholders in the field of education, must work together in order to start working for a standardized LIS curriculum that will advance the IL movement in the Philippines.

TOP-PERFORMING LIBRARY SCHOOLS IN THE PHILIPPINES

The top-performing library schools in the Philippines were identified using the results of the licensure examination given by the Professional Regulatory Board for Librarians during the last five years (2003-2007) as can be seen in Table 1. It is important to note that the examinees of the licensure examination consisted of both bachelor's and master's degree holder in the field of library science and/or information science. The top three library schools were chosen on the basis of the frequency of their appearance in the top-three spot in the licensure examination. Additionally, the schools chosen had a passing rate of 80% or higher. The University of the Philippines-Diliman (UP) consistently held the top-spot in the licensure examination. A more careful examination of table one will also reveal that UP has the most number of LIS students in the Philippines taking the licensure examination in the period covered. The University of Santo Tomas-Manila (UST) was in the top-three of the rankings in the years 2006, 2004 and 2003, while St. Louis University (SLU) was in the top-three of the rankings in the years 2006 and 2003. In light of this information, the library and information science curricula of the undergraduate (baccalaureate) and graduate (masters) level of UP, UST, and SLU were chosen for this paper.

Table 1: Results of the licensure examination for librarians from 2003-2007
(source: Elnora L. Conti, member, Professional Regulation Commission-Board for Librarians)

Year	School	No. of examinees	No. of passers	Passing rate
2007	University of the Philippines-Diliman	48	47	98%
	University of Santo Tomas-Manila	11	9	82%
	University of San Carlos-Cebu	13	9	69%
2006	University of the Philippines-Diliman	37	39	95%
	University of Santo Tomas-Manila	13	14	93%
	St. Louis University-Baguio City	11	10	91%
2005	University of the Philippines-Diliman	46	43	93%
	University of the East-Manila	12	8	67%
	University of San Carlos-Cebu	17	10	59%
2004	University of the Philippines-Diliman	35	33	94%
	Baliuag University	9	8	89%
	University of Santo Tomas	8	7	88%
2003	University of the Philippines-Diliman	57	57	100%
	St. Louis University-Baguio City	11	10	91%
	University of Santo Tomas-Manila	20	18	90%

METHODOLOGY

The LIS curricula of the UP, UST, and SLU were selected and gathered for this paper. The online availability of the LIS curricula of the schools was first sought. Only the University of the Philippines-Diliman have their LIS curricula in their website. The LIS curricula of UST and SLU were requested from their respective program offices, and faculty members. The LIS course/subject offerings of the three (3) schools are listed in Table 2 and Table 3.

Table 2: Bachelor of library and information science (BLIS) curricula of UP, UST, and SLU.

UP-BLIS	UST-BLIS	SLU-BLIS
Cataloging and classification I	Abstracting and indexing	Academic libraries with field trip
Cataloging and classification II	Academic library	Archives management
Collection development	Archives and records management	Collection management
Computer-based information systems	Collection development	Indexing and abstracting
Field assignment I	Information sources and services I	Information sources and services I
Field assignment II	Information sources and services II	Information sources and services II
Information handling and processing	Information technology I	Information technology I
Information resources and services I	Information technology II	Information technology II
Introduction to librarianship & information science	Introduction to library and information	Introduction to library and information science
Library management I	Library and information management in medical libraries	Library and information management
Library management II	Library and information management	Library and information science ethics
Research in library and Information science	Library and information management in academic libraries	Library database management
Statistical techniques in library and information science	Library and information management in corporate libraries	Library literature for children and young adults
Thesis	Library and information management in government agency libraries	Office information systems
<i>Electives</i>	Library and information management in law libraries	Organization of information sources I
Analysis and design of library and Information Systems	Library and information management in school libraries	Organization of information sources II
Archives principles and practices I	Library practicum I	Public libraries with field trip
Archives principles and practices II	Library practicum II	Records management
Document, serials and non-book materials	Literature for young children and young adult	Research methods
Evaluation and use of Philippine and Asian reference resources	Organization of information sources I	School library media centers
Health sciences literature	Organization of information sources II	Special libraries
Information resources and services II	Principles of teaching I	Special materials with projects
Introduction to archives and records management	Principles of teaching II	Specialization in collection management
Introduction to archives conservation	Public library	Specialization in indexing and abstracting
Introduction to methods in medical information research		Specialization in information sources and services
Introduction to methods of legal information research		Specialization in library and information technology
Legal bibliography and legal information		Specialization in organization of information sources
Literature for children		
Literature for young adults		
Marketing library and information services		
Media materials and technology		

Programming and database structures in LIS Special topics Telecommunications and networks for library and information science The Development of the book	Research methods in library and information science School library media centre Special library Special materials	
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Table 3: LIS graduate curricula of UP, UST, and SLU

UP-Master of library and information science	UST-Master of arts major in library science	SLU-Master in library and information technology
Foundation of library and information science Collection management Organization of library and information resources I Reference and information services Management of libraries and information units Introduction to information science research methodology Special problem Thesis <i>Electives</i> Filipiniana archival and historical materials Introduction to archives Administration Archives history and theory Archives methodology and research Records management Archives conservation Librarianship and the publishing world Reading interests of children Reading interests of young Adults Special materials Organization of library and Information resources II Information sources and services in the humanities Information sources and Systems in the social sciences Information sources and systems in science and technology Information sources and systems in the health sciences Information sources and systems in business and economics Asian reference sources Legal bibliography and legal information Law library management Information systems planning and management Health sciences library management Public relations and libraries The Academic library Comparative librarianship Information analysis	Statistics Advanced library administration Bibliographic sources and services (Advanced reference sources and bibliography) Advanced cataloguing and classification Building library collections History of book and printing Special materials and documentation Libraries and librarianship Literature of the sciences Literature of the social sciences Literature of the humanities The Academic library Special libraries Library services for children and adolescents Seminar in Philippine librarianship Seminar on current library development Seminar on adult education and the library Library automation (automated systems and software) Electronic information systems and libraries Special topics	Introduction to Information science Methods of research Statistics Librarianship and society Information systems planning and management Reference and information services Public relations in libraries Advanced classification and indexing Media technology in library and information science Information systems analysis and design World librarianship <i>Electives</i> Information and retrieval systems Database structure and design User-centered information systems development Special materials Information networks and resource sharing Records management Thesis writing I Thesis writing II

<p>Information technology Information systems analysis and design Media technology in library and information science Information retrieval systems Database structure and design User-centered information Systems development Information networks and Resource sharing Automation of information services Seminar in Philippine librarianship Seminar in public librarianship Seminar in special Librarianship Seminar in library management Seminar in education for librarianship Seminar on classification and indexing Practicum in law library and information services Practicum in health sciences Library and information services Quantitative methods in library and information science</p>		
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RESULT: LIS CURRICULUM IN TOP-PERFORMING LIBRARY SCHOOLS IN THE PHILIPPINES

In compliance with the provisions of R.A. 9246, the various degrees associated with librarianship were standardized and is now under the BLIS program. For the graduate level, this is not the case. The three (3) library schools grant different graduate degrees, as can be seen in table 3. This clearly shows that the standardization of the LIS is not fully implemented as far as R.A. 9246 is concerned.

Subjects specifically about IL are not evident, especially in the core curriculum of these schools (see Table 2 and 3). A very simple conclusion could be made; the treatment given to IL is not proportionate to the importance given by international library and librarian organizations. We can surmise that IL is just a topic in one of the courses like information sources and services, introduction to librarianship, introduction to library and information, etc. A very frightening conclusion that we can make is that IL is not taught at all.

However, there is light at the end of this tunnel. Even though there is no specific topic on IL in the curricula of the three schools in this study, in the case of UST, six units of Principles of teaching, will definitely help LIS students in preparing for IL instruction. Knowledge of the different teaching methods, preparation of lesson plans will definitely help in the instructional efforts of the librarians. But this is simply not enough to meet society's expectations for librarians to teach and promote IL.

IN CONCLUSION

In other countries, librarians and other stakeholders in the field of education are already studying the efficacy of their IL program. Sadly, in the Philippines, we are still in the stage of knowing what IL is all about. The LIS curriculum in the Philippines is still traditional in comparison to the LIS curriculum of other countries like the U.S., Europe, Australia, Singapore, and China. IL must be included in the core of the LIS curriculum and to ensure

this, it is imperative to establish a Philippine LIS curriculum standard that is regularly evaluated and that is responsive to changes happening around the world. All of this is necessary in order for LIS students to have all the competencies needed in teaching and promoting IL.

I agree with Snaveley (2001) when he stated that IL isn't just a library issue, but an issue for all of higher education and society as well. With the high importance given to IL it is imperative for standards to be developed through cooperative and collaborative process that will include representatives from all the stakeholders. If librarians are to accomplish this, knowledge of IL concepts and models is a must.

This paradigm shift on the role of librarians, from librarians as keepers of information to the librarians as advocates of IL, will definitely create big waves of opportunities for librarians worldwide. Librarians will definitely have a greater role to play in the education of the world's citizenry. Librarians must not simply be a spectator in all of these, but instead, be in the frontline of IL education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the results of this study, the following recommendations are hereby offered:

- For international library/librarian organizations- push/influence their members and local counterparts to create a nationally agreed standard on LIS curricula in order to include IL in the learning experience of the LIS students, given its very important role in nation building and in developing life-long learners.
- For national library/librarian organizations- raise awareness about the importance of IL to their members and encourage LIS schools to constantly evaluate their curricula in order to guarantee its relevance today and in the future; to study the possibility of creating accreditation of LIS programs to serve as a quality assurance activity.
- For LIS schools, to retool their faculty members through professional development activities, whether formal or informal; to regularly evaluate their curriculum to see if what they are teaching conforms to the needs of society that they will serve.
- For Librarians, to always try your best to keep up with the changing times; Read and know what is happening outside our library; to take an active role in IL program implementation and promotion.

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