# THE UP SCHOOL OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION STUDIES: CONTINUING THE TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE IN LIS EDUCATION

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**Abstract**

*Discusses the traditional and new competencies of librarians and how the UP School of Library and Information Studies fulfills its goals and commitment to continue the tradition of excellence in LIS education.*

**Introduction**

The traditional role of librarianship consists of (1) preservation and conservation of heritage, and (2) education, scholarship, and research. Developments in the information infrastructure during the last decade requires a reorientation of that role to give more emphasis to greater access to information. The library of today is no longer confined to, as the name suggests, a storehouse of books (libris). It must now be regarded as a community's center of information. The Library's new role as information center requires a re-commitment to an expanded mission, and a marketing program that promises meeting of customer needs. It also requires an openness to change. Changes, according to authorities in LIC Management, is brought about by the emergence of a global complex that enables information service centers to offer a greater variety of services (in-house, online, consortial, virtual access). These same authorities describe the changing political and social matrix that enables seekers of information to demand alternatives to traditional search methods. And, it is brought about by the new knowledge economy in a global society in which knowledge has become an important central factor in development. In order to remain relevant, LIS education must inculcate in the future librarians an openness to a shift in paradigm, not only in the ways of doing things but, more especially, in mentality (Steuart & Moran, 2007).

The library organization of the future, as described by Steuart and Moran (2007), for which we must prepare future librarians and which practicing librarians must be willing to acknowledge and accept, may no longer be solely the concept of "library as place" but may be virtual or without walls. It may no longer be a physical entity. Or, even if it can still refer to a physical entity, the collection in that

physical place will be small. Structures are expected to be geographically dispersed and supported by ICT.  Rather than a centralized system, libraries will  have a networked structure, made up of "knowledge servers" linked into vast networks that provide services to customers geographically dispersed across the country and the world. How will these future developments affect library services (for it surely will)?

Some predictors of the future envision a library that will no longer have print but online resources; that will shift readers' instructions from bibliographic to electronic resources utilization; that will give access not only to local but to other collections as well; and whose information service will include an expanded information sharing, thus shifting the collection management paradigm from a warehouse mentality of accumulation and storage to resources sharing for better and wider access to information.  While Stueart and Moran (2007) believe that the LIC of the forseeable future will not be virtual or boundary-less libraries but hybrids that will display some components of virtual organizations, they nevertheless do not find a library without walls impossible for some distant future. According to them, the library will continue to exist as a physical place while progressively becoming boundary-less. This will certainly have implications for the training of future librarians.

In this regard, Gutsche (2010) opines that  librarians' education must focus on competencies that can help librarians "stick to values while absorbing future shock". This will allow them to meet new expectations and take advantage of new opportunities that change brings. In practical terms, librarians must learn how to bridge gaps. To be always relevant, the overarching competency that librarians as information professionals must acquire is the ability to adapt to change, to be flexible and fluid.

Abram (2010) poses three questions for the "New Librarian": (1) Is there a core set of skill skills and competencies for librarianship? (2) Has librarianship become a largely technocratic profession? (3) What is needed to be successful and respected, i.e., what competencies will have the most beneficial impact for the profession?

For the first question, Abram (2010) believes that there is no core set of skills and competencies for today's librarian. Instead, more diversity of perspective is needed to prepare librarians for present and future changes.  He gives as example a core competency that librarians of some years back considered a highly professional task – cataloging. With technology, this is now believed by some to to be properly the task of that group of library workers called library technicians. On the other hand, the dynamic and massive transformations that have happened in

society and in the world of information make us wonder if we should not instead be preparing our LIS students for technological competencies.

Responding to the second question, Abram (2010) is of the opinion that, despite the extensive use of technology in most library operations, librarianship has not become a largely technocratic profession. According to him, the ability to offer strategic advice is more important to delivery of technical skills. The professional librarian's role, therefore, must shift from purely technical work to managerial functions. Particularly, the professional librarian must know how to plan. For this, the professional librarian's training must undergo some kind of metamorphosis. This metamorphosis should likewise address Abram's third question: what competencies will have the most beneficial impact for the profession.

Today's LIS curriculum should, therefore, offer courses that will teach future librarians new competencies in addition to traditional ones. As early as 2002, Rehman (in Lynch, 2008), already identified the following:

- Information theory, use and user studies
- Information resource development, organization and processing
- Information searching and retrieval
- Access services
- Automation and networking
- Web design
- Research capabilities
- Planning & evaluation
- Human resource skills, and
- Communication

**Tradition of Excellence in LIS Education**

The UP School of Library and Information Studies stands out today as the leading LIS school in the country, as it has seen fit to address the need for new competencies, based on globally accepted standards for today's LIS education. Its aim "to be recognized as a Center for Excellence for the generation and sharing of knowledge in the fields of Library, Archives and Information Studies in the country" will be achieved by its mission to ensure that graduates of library and information studies will have "the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to function effectively and efficiently in the information society" and "to produce information professionals who understand the theoretical and practical knowledge necessary to preserve the past, manage the present, and design the future" (UP Diliman General Catalogue, 2004-2010). That it has

largely been successful in this goal is evidenced by its graduates' performance. From 1992, when the first licensure examinations for librarians was given by the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), until the present time, our graduates have consistently garnered the top ten and the highest passing percentages, often with a 100% passing average.

The 1990 Review Report of the then UP Institute of Library Science (cited in the Annual Report for AY 1990-1991), states that the mission and goals of the Institute in the area of library and information studies education are as follows: (1) to provide quality education for library and information professionals, (2) to provide high quality training for teachers of library and information studies, (3) to carry out advanced research in LIS, and (4) to have an outreach program for the information profession and society through publication, consultation, training and organizational leadership. It is significant that even at this early time when the Institute's curriculum was limited to Library Science, the mission and goals were already referring to Library and Information Studies. This paper will explore to what extent the Institute of Library Science, now School of Library and Information Studies, has fulfilled or has come closer to the fulfillment of these four goals.

From March 18, 1914 when the UP Board of Regents approved the holding of special courses of study for library training, education for librarianship in the University has gone through stages of development towards excellence. It became a department in 1922, an independent Institute in 1961, and a School in 2007. This was achieved through constant and painstaking efforts to conform to international trends in LIS education. Prior to December 1994, the Institute of Library Science offered four programs: the Bachelor of Library Science, Master of Library Science, and Diploma in Librarianship with two areas of specialization: Law Librarianship and Medical Librarianship. The Diploma program was approved in December 1989. On December 10, 1994, the UP Board of Regents approved the change of degree titles from Bachelor of Library Science to Bachelor of Library and Information Science. The change from Master of Library Science to Master of Library and Information Science occurred six months later on July 22, 1995. Thus, the course initials were also changed from LS to LIS. This change was not only a change in nomenclature but reflected the new thrust of the Institute in response to the then growing importance of information systems to library services. Consequently, new courses were offered in the field of information technology for LIS.

This new thrust in Library Science education led to another significant development for the Institute: the change of name from Institute of Library Science to Institute of Library and Information Science on August 29, 2002. The next most

important change happened on March 29, 2007 when the UP Board of Regents approved the change of name to UP School of Library and Information Studies (UP SLIS), in recognition of the School's efforts for the restructuring, revision and enhancement of its curricular offerings which eventually led to an increase in enrollment.

**Curriculum Development**

Since the change of its courses and degree programs from LS to LIS, the School has been in constant pursuit of the curriculum that would best respond to the needs of the present and still evolving information infrastructure. Thus, curricular changes were proposed piecemeal as the need for these changes were felt. Finally, in 2010 and 2011, major revisions in the LIS curriculum were made and approved by the different levels of curriculum committees in UP Diliman, the UP Diliman University Council, and the President of the University. The changes were anchored on the dynamic evolution that has taken place and is still taking place in the field of Library and Information Studies.

The newly approved UP BLIS curriculum (proposed in 2010-2011) consists of traditional LIS competencies such as Introduction to LIS, Collection Development, Cataloging and Classification (6 units), Indexing and Abstracting, Information Resources & Services (Reference), and LIC Management (6 units). Then, six units of IT courses are required, namely, Information Handling and Processing, and Computer-Based Information Systems. The practicum course (6 units/300 hours) for students in the senior year level is designed to give students hands-on experience in actual library work. An indispensable requirement for this field assignment is that the partner agency must have a licensed librarian who can effectively supervise the student and the assurance that the student will be allowed to experience all aspects of librarianship in the workplace. Students in the senior year level are also required to take a course on Statistical Techniques in LIS and Research Methodology in preparation for thesis writing. The topic of the undergraduate thesis must be approved by a panel of experts among the UP SLIS Faculty.

The UP BLIS Curriculum also has a number of LIS electives from which students may choose, depending on the track that they want to pursue. Many, however, choose a variety that will give them a taste of the different LIS disciplines. The areas of choice are: Literature for Children and Young Adults, Legal Information Sources, Methods of Legal Information Research, Media Materials and Technology, Health Sciences Literature, Methods in Medical Information Research, Marketing Library & Information Services, Analysis and

Design of Library and Information Systems, Telecommunications and Networks for LIS, Programming & Database Structures in LIS, Archives and Records Management, Archives Principles and Practices, Archives Conservation, and Special Topics. This latter course serves as testing ground for new and emerging trends in the field of LIS. Some of the topics that have used this Special Topics venue are: Advanced Course in Indexing and Abstracting, Legal and Ethical Issues in LIS, Managing Heritage Institutions: Archives, Libraries and Museums, and Organization and Dissemination of Legal Information.

The MLIS program consists of two plans: Plan A is for non-BLIS graduates. It, therefore, reflects the offerings of the BLIS program since its graduates will eventually have to take the Librarians Licensure Examinations to be able to practice the profession. Plan B is prescribed for BLIS graduates who must follow a different set of requirements with more electives plus 12 units of cognates in a non-LIS field. Plan B MLIS students must choose an area of specialization and must enroll in electives in the chosen area. The areas of specialization are: Archives and Records Management, Law Librarianship, Medical and Health Librarianship, and Information Sytems Management for LIS. Those who desire to pursue a career in academic or school librarianship are advised to enroll in relevant courses in other fields.

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**The UP SLIS Faculty**

The UP SLIS recruits faculty members from among its graduates. Evaluation includes the future LIS teachers' scholastic records as well as expertise in a particular LIS specialization, based on formal education received in that area and practical experience in the field. With a few exceptions, the applicant also must have passed the Librarians Licensure Examinations (LLE) with flying colors. The few exceptions to this LLE requirement are teachers in the field of

information systems for libraries and information units and in the field of research. However, the requirement that the recruit be a holder of a degree in LIS is not waived, even for information technology courses. We believe that only LIS graduates can teach LIS-relevant information systems for the training of future librarians and information professionals.

As the oldest LIS school in the country, the UP SLIS can boast of having had LIS icons among the ranks of its faculty. At present, it has eight regular, full-time, faculty members [one vacant item is waiting to be filled up], and 24 part-time lecturers. All of the regular faculty members are holders of a masters degree, either in Library and Information Science or in a related field like Technology Management. They are further encouraged to pursue a Ph.D either in LIS or in any related field. The part-time lecturers are library practitioners whose valuable contributions are measured by how much their practical experiences enhance the learning process.

**Research Activities**

In furtherance of its commitment to the research function of the university, the School has embarked on several research projects, among which are: Survey of Information Use and Needs of Population Information Users (1993), commissioned by the Population Commission of the Philippines, and the Filipiniana Reference Sources Project (FILREF, 2002). Faculty members are encouraged to come up with a research agenda in their respective fields of interest both for their own research outputs as well as for the students who may want to write a thesis in these areas.

On September 1, 2002, a Memorandum of Agreement was signed between the University of the Philippines College of Medicine Medical Informatics Unit (UPCM-MIU) and the University of the Philippines Institute of Library and Information Science (UP ILIS) for the undertaking of joint research projects in the field of medical informatics. Specifically, the UPCM-MIU undertook to share its expertise and resources with UP ILIS in the field of medical informatics for the conduct of research in this area, including "to act as thesis advisers or thesis panel members of students who may wish to focus on given areas of medical informatics for their theses" (UPCM-MIU-UP ILIS MOA, 2002, A-3 & 4). This resulted in 38 completed LIS undergraduate theses on the Philippine Multilingual Medical Thesaurus, from 2003 to 2009, translating medical terms in English into the seven major Philippine languages. Still in the area of medical and health librarianship, a project on Philippine medical and health information sources is currently in the pipe line. Other research projects

awaiting completion include Linux for Filipino Librarians, Reference Service and Provisions on Access of Selected Archives of Government Institutions in Metro Manila, Revision and Expansion of the U.S. Library of Congress Classification Schedule for Philippine Legal Materials, Expansion of the Dewey Decimal Classification for Philippine History, Reexamination of the Standards for Libraries in the Philippines, and an update of the Filipiniana Reference Sources (Faderon, 2008).

Other research projects completed include a comprehensive report on the library and documentation requirements of Nepal (Information Manpower Development and Training Needs in Nepal, 1988); Thesaurus on Filipino Women (1987), commissioned by the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women, 1987); A Survey of the Position Classification and Salaries of Librarians in Special Libraries in Metro Manila (1987), commissioned by the Association of Special Librarians in the Philippines; and A Survey of Institutional Facilities and Information Programs and Users' Information Needs and Uses of Institutions Involved in New and Renewable Sources of Energy (1985), commissioned by the PNOC-ERDC (Faderon, 2008).

In addition to the above institutional undertakings, individual faculty members have actively pursued their respective research agenda. The Journal of Philippine Librarianship (JPL) serves as outlet for the scholarly output of the UP SLIS faculty members and students. It was first published in 1968. The difficulty of getting articles for the journal led to gaps in its publication. Thus, from a semi-annual journal, the JPL is now published once a year as a peer-reviewed academic journal. Further, starting with its 2007 issue, it is currently offered online, open access, in http://journals.upd.edu.ph, under the auspices of the UP Diliman Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Development. A perusal of the articles published from 1968 to 2010 gives an overview of how research interests of the faculty have evolved through the years from the purely traditional aspects of librarianship to more inter-disciplinary approaches.

**Outreach Programs**

As the premier LIS school in the country, the UP SLIS has been at the forefront of activities designed for the enhancement of competencies in the field of library and information science. The then Institute of Library Science served as host institution to Unesco's Post Graduate Training Course for Science Information Specialists in Southeast Asia from 1978 to 1984. This inter-country project included Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines. The Institute was, further, designated by Unesco as national distributing center of its integrated software

for libraries, the CDS/ISIS (Computerized Documentation Service/Integrated Set of Information Systems). In this capacity, the Institute has conducted a number of training courses in the use of the software.

In 1988, it supervised the testing and evaluation of Unesco's teaching package on the application of information handling standards to find out if the package can be used in the training of information personnel in developing countries.

In June of the same year, three faculty members went to Nepal on a mission for Unesco to organize short-term courses in library work and to study the documentation requirements of that country for manpower and training. From 1990 to 1991, the Institute was involved in the POPIN Plan for which it was called upon to assist in formulating the plan, designing the database, conducting training courses on the Micro-CDS/ISIS, cataloging and classification, and convening a consultative workshop to discuss the Plan. In this connection, it was called upon to conduct special training workshops and courses, some extending beyond 1991 such as a training course on information consolidation (1992) conducted for the Population Commission.

In addition, the Institute has organized special training courses for Philippine librarians, among which were the training course for the Congressional Library Staff at the House of Representatives (1989); a seminar-workshop on technology, media and the library (1990) in cooperation with and with the support of the National Film Board of Canada, the Canadian Embassy in the Philippines, the Canadian Commision for Unesco, and the Canadian International Development Agency; a training course on information work with emphasis on information processing (1990) in response to a request from the International Training Network for Water and Waste Management (ITN) Philippines; a seminar for school librarians of state colleges and universities (1996) in cooperation with the Commision on Higher Education; and an intensive training program for the staff of the Records Management and Archives Office (1999) in cooperation with the Society of Filipino Archivists and SOFIA. Summer Institutes were likewise conducted touching on various topics in library and information studies. More recently, workshops in digitization of documents were held in three different venues in the years 2007 and 2008; and in 2009, UP SLIS faculty members were called upon to help evaluate the Library Hub projects of the Department of Education.

**Conclusion**

This movement towards progress does not stop here. The UP School of Library and Information Studies is committed to continue this tradition of excellence in LIS education. It shall endeavour to hold on to its leadership role in the field of LIS education in order to remain the best source of competent manpower for libraries and information units not only in the Philippines but in other countries as well. This will be done through an unrelenting review of the curriculum in the light of current and future developments in the information infrastructure both here and in the more developed countries. This desire for academicacademic excellence will not be to the prejudice of the School's responsibility for the improvement of library services in the country. The School will always be mindful of its mandate as a public institution, supported by public funds. It shall always strive to be an effective instrument for the development of library and information science so that Philippine librarianship may truly play its "essential role … in developing the intellectual capacity of the citizenry" and truly become "a regular component of national development" (Rep. Act No. 9246, Art.1, Sec.2).

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