UP SCHOOL OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION STUDIES: UPHOLDING THE TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE IN LIS EDUCATION FOR 50 YEARS (AND BEYOND)

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At the time of this writing, the UP School of Library and Information Studies (UP SLIS) is currently right smack in the middle of celebrating its Golden Anniversary. That's 50 years of being part of the university. 50 years of being part of librarianship. 50 years of library and information science. 50 years of upholding the tradition of excellence in LIS education. In actuality, THAT is the theme of the school's 50th anniversary: "UPholding the Tradition of Excellence in LIS Education".

With all of the activities lined up, the focus has been on the past 50 years. These next few pages will address the present as well as shift the focus to the near future, all to provide a counterpoint to the historical perspective.

Looking at the present and the near future would entail looking at a couple of things that make SLIS into SLIS. These would be:
1. Purpose
2. People
3. Processes
4. Products
5. Place

Purpose

Section 3, under *Purpose of the University*, of Republic Act 9500 or "AN ACT TO STRENGTHEN THE UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES AS THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY", outlines a common blueprint for all degree-granting units in the university. Sections (b) and (c) indicate that the university shall serve as a graduate universtiy as well as a research university. These would reflect heavily on the other factors that need looking into SLIS' near future.

People

At the end of academic year 2011-12, the SLIS will be left with a complement of 8 full time faculty and 26 part time lecturers. Two of those full time

faculty members are on leave and are finishing their PhD studies. None of the full time faculty members are in their 50s and 60s. In fact, the oldest full time faculty members will only be in their early 40s. They are all Assistant Professors, the two PhD candidates being the most probable in achieving Associate Professor status. This makes the full time faculty complement young compared to other units as well as wanting in doctorates, a premium in the current university set up.

As such, the remaining full time faculty need to pursue their doctorates in the next decade. Looking into recruiting new faces into the fold must be done to ensure the lineage of the tradition of excellence in LIS education.

As far as BLIS and MLIS students are concerned, currently the SLIS houses an average of 350 students per semester. Less than a decade ago, the average student population was 500 for the academic year. Recruitment and scholarships have to be looked into to entice future LIS professionals to take up studies at the SLIS.

Processes

Advancements in technology have an important place in the heart of SLIS as far as rendering services. These same technologies can be applied to certain processes in the SLIS to speed things up for everyone. The SLIS' web presence (http://upslis.info website, facebook page, facebook group, etc.) has been proven helpful in the past couple of years in terms of information dissemination, form management, databases, etc. But there are other concerns in terms of processes that have to be looked into.

One example would be form management. In the past, room and posting requests for organizational activities involved letters addressed to the Dean. The past years somehow devolved these letters into templates with the date, officer names, administration names, rooms and requests being constantly updated with very little or no change to the letter itself. One solution would be to go with that flow and make a request form instead. In the long run, these forms can serve as input for systems design involving online reservations of said rooms. A similar example, though a more important one, would be the use of similar technologies in the classroom, e.g., technology-aided instruction, online tools, online collaboration tools, etc. An even better scenario would be distance LIS learning.

One process, also related to product, is currently being looked into. In the past, graduate and undergraduate students were only assigned advisers

after the approval of their topics pending the result of their thesis proposal presentation. This evolved into suggestions to the students to actually consult with the faculty even before the presentation or proposal writing to flesh out their topic early on. This process is currently being strengthened to resemble the student research path of other colleges within the university. The faculty are involved more in the pre-presentation / proposal-writing stages and thus serve more as mentors rather than just consultants. This makes for a better way of achieving the goal towards being a research university.

Products

One common belief in LIS is that information which is undisseminated is actually useless. The SLIS is addressing this by making research outputs of the school open access. All research outputs of faculty and students are now made available online via the *JPL* (http://journals.upd.edu.ph/index.php/jpl/) and the SLIS Thesis Database (http://thesis.upslis.info).

Other matters the SLIS could address would be the degree offerings. The past decade has seen renewed interest in Archival Studies. The SLIS has tried to propose the establishment of the MARM (Master of Archives and Records Management) and the MAS (Master of Archival Studies) degree programs in the past but to no avail. The near future may see a revisiting of this path which will hopefully see graduates in MAS and possibly BAS (Bachelor of Archival Studies). In order for this to see light, though, the faculty must obtain the proper credentials in the form of PhDs and Masters in Archival Studies. The next step would be to propose a PhD in LIS as well as a PhD in Archival Studies. This is also towards SLIS being part of UP being a graduate university.

An addtional path the SLIS is pursuing is collaborative researches undertaken with other Diliman units. Currently in the works are a database on multilingual medical thesaurus with the UP College of Medicine and the preservation and restoration of Philippine Art Music Manuscripts of UP College of Music.

Place

To make all of this come together, the SLIS has to have a new home. Hopefully, by 2012, the SLIS will be occupying the building to be vacated by the Institute of Biology as they move to the Science Complex. Plans for this are still in the early stages but ideas such as learning commons, the SLIS archives and museum, archives laboratory, etc. have been thrown around.

All towards looking at the next 50 years of UPholding the Tradition of Excellence in LIS Education.

References:

Republic Act 9500, dated 29 April 2008, entitled "AN ACT TOSTRENGTHEN THE UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES AS THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY". Retrieved from http:/ www.up.edu.ph/pdf2/RA_9500.pdf.