

Library Science Education

Modern Romanian Library Science Education

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Abstract

Library and Information Science celebrates 25 years of modern existence. An analysis of this period shows a permanent modernisation of this subject and its synchronisation with European realities at both teaching and research levels. The evolution of this subject is determined by the dynamics of the field, the quick evolution of the information and documenting trades in close relationship with science progress and information technologies. This major ensures academic training (Bachelor, Master, and Doctor) and post-graduation studies and is involved in research projects relevant for the field and the labour market. Exigencies of the information-related trades and the appearance of new jobs are challenges for this academic major.

Keywords: library and information science, information, academic curriculum, information careers

Introduction

In September 1990, the Faculty of Letters of the University of Bucharest organised an admission examination for a new major: Bibliology and Information Science: this was the materialisation of the wish to introduce (or rather re-introduce) among higher education majors this major that was well defined in the international arena (mainly in the European and North-American ones that were our models at the time) and enjoyed notable prestige. In 2015, we celebrate 25 years of Romanian Library and Information Science. This anniversary follows the anniversary of 150 years of existence

of the University of Bucharest (in 2014) and the anniversary of 150 years of existence of the Faculty of Letters (in 2013). The anniversary of the Faculty of Letters was a good occasion for reviewing and analysing in an objective manner the role this institution played in Romanian higher education in different philological fields and majors (including Library and Information Science) as well as its involvement in our national social and cultural life. In its evolution, the field Library and Information Science had to take two distinct steps: from the establishment of the Faculty of Letters (in 1863) until 1989 and after December 1989, considered a modern, post-revolutionary moment for many fields in Romanian culture and civilisation.

Historical Landmarks

Since its establishment, the Faculty of Letters of the University of Bucharest has focused on the integration in the academic curriculum of subjects that approach such topics as books, libraries and written culture, in general. However, it has not always had the status of a well-defined major; Library and Information Science has been a constant presence in the field of Philology in both the teaching and research fields. Great professors have focused on libraries and librarians' training to ensure access to information and culture and to support both education and research activities.

The beginnings of the Romanian School of Library and Information Science go back to Ioan Bianu, the founder of a true "library and information school" at the Library of the Romanian Academy. In his capacity of Dean of the Faculty of Letters, Professor Bianu supported the training in the field of Library and Information Science as part of fundamental philological training; Professor Bianu claimed that there is no good philologist without thorough knowledge of books and libraries as essential tools in research. Without the status of an institution, the library and information science school at the Library of the Romanian Academy at the beginning of the 20th and within the Faculty of Letters managed to turn the field into a scientific one and draw a route for national development in agreement with European standards, rules and practices.

Great philologists and librarians from the beginning of the 20th century managed to establish the basic landmarks of Library and Information Science (librarian, bibliographer, editor, cataloguer, indexer, specialist in old books and special documents, etc.) and synchronise trade and training with European ones. Thus, Ioan Bianu aimed at turning the Library of the Romanian Academy into the first Romanian national library with regulations defining its organisational structure, allowing it to establish structure and valorise its collections, and develop bibliographic tools starting from the existing documentary fund. Together with Nerva Hodoș, he set the grounds for Romanian scientific bibliography. He transmitted his love for the books, for their preservation and valorisation to his students of the Faculty of Letters (University of Bucharest). Alexandru Sadi-Ionescu introduced the Universal Decimal Classification System for the structuring, organisation, and representation of the collections of documents. He developed the first Romanian cataloguing code. He defended his bibliological conception at the Higher School of Archives and Palaeography in Bucharest and at the Romanian Academy, writing a course in Library and Information Science.

The first owner of the title of PhD in Bibliology was awarded to Nicolae Georgescu Tistu, a follower of Ioan Bianu and Nerva Hodoş. A familiar of the practices of European Library and Information Science, Tistu focus, between the two wars, on the establishment of a school of Library and Information Science to make known the theories and practices related to books, libraries, and readers, and contribute to the professional training of librarians. He used to teach Bibliology at the Higher School of Archives and Palaeography in Bucharest and at the Faculty of Letters.

In Cluj, Ioachim Crăciun also supported, during the same period of Romanian history, the development of Bibliology as a subject in higher education. The inaugural course at the University of (November 1932), *A new science – Bibliology*, was a synthesis of the role, content, and importance of Bibliology and of professional training in the field.

Closely related to Philology for almost fifty years, after the 1950s, Library and Information Science started to become autonomous and become acknowledged as an academic major and research topic. During 1953-1958, the University of Bucharest had a Department of Bibliology at the Faculty of Letters. The courses in Bibliology initiated by N. Georgescu Tistu at the University of Bucharest were resumed by Mircea Tomescu (1960-1969) and Dan Simonescu (1970-1972). Between 1963 and 1970, Professor Simonescu coordinated a Department of Bibliology that taught a 3-year course and, in 1968, started a PhD course. The first PhD in Bibliology was Corneliu Dima Drăgan who continued the teaching activity of Professor Simonescu.

Library and Information Science: an academic major nowadays

In 1990, Library and Information Science became a form of institutionalised academic training as a section of Bibliology and Information Science at the Faculty of Letters (University of Bucharest). The new section aimed at training in the fields Library and Information Science, Information and Documenting, Information Science for jobs undergoing permanent changing such as document and information. Starting with 1990, this major changed permanently from the point of view of its curriculum under the pressure of different professions related to Library and Information Science that requires increasingly diversified and specialised competencies to integrate modern technologies. There has always been a change in the structure of the major under the influence of reforms in higher education and of the Bologna process. After the establishment of the major Library and Information Science in Bucharest, similar majors were established at the Universities of Oradea, Cluj-Napoca and Timișoara, while in Sibiu, Târgoviște and Brașov they established colleges and post-high schools of Library and Information Science. In this study, we present only the major at the University of Bucharest; the other similar sections in Romania are presented by our colleagues in these schools and universities.

This major had different yet close names reflecting as well as possible the Romanian Library and Information Science within the European context. Thus, right after 1990, this major was named *Bibliology and Information Science* in an attempt to point to both the continuity with the inter-war period and the modernity of the field. The phrase *Information Science* expresses the modernity of the field and the clear differentiation

from Philology. Information Science is acknowledged as an interdisciplinary field focused on information under all aspects including creating, processing, communicating, using, and archiving information with different technologies. Opening it to the European area through teaching and research activities results in synchronising the name of the major becoming *Library and Information Science*. From a curriculum perspective, the new name requires a higher practical dimension and organisational and documentary management in one's basic training.

The dynamics of the field brought about a new change of the name of the major: this is the reason why we talk nowadays about *Information and Documenting Sciences*.

No matter its name in time, the major addresses mainly those who wish a professional training specific to information, documenting, and communication activities (professions related to document and information). The major *Information and Documenting Sciences* ensures the training of students in such professions as librarians (cataloguers, indexers, relations with the public, reference services, etc.), editors, archivists, documenters, database specialists, specialised information intermediaries, and other professions in the field of Information Science. The curriculum covers strictly specialised disciplines as well as interdisciplinary disciplines; it is established depending on the following goals: deep understanding of the place of information in the development of the society and of all aspects related to the development, processing, communication, preservation and valorisation of information and documentary resources; developing operating abilities of modern information systems; moulding and developing research abilities; increasing group and individual communication abilities; consolidating knowledge regarding performing management; understanding the relationship performance – quality in information transfer, etc. The curriculum covers disciplines in the fields of history of the book, libraries and archives; Romanian and world culture and civilisation; Library and Information Science (development of collections, communicating documents and information, library legislation, etc.); theories and techniques of cataloguing and indexing; bibliographic theories and techniques; information and documenting; library management and marketing; digitalising libraries, theories and technologies of information and communication; digitalisation, electronic documents, multimedia; disciplines derived from these topics; languages.

The major started (re-covered) its existence after 1990 with two types of courses: Bachelor (4 years) and College (3 years). The Bachelor cycle provides solid academic and research training while the College cycle focuses on solid practical training. The reform of the higher education and the Bologna Process wiped out the College and turned the Bachelor cycle from 4-year course into 3-year course followed by Master cycle (2 years) and Doctor cycle (3 years). The European model of this major in Information Science assimilated this field with Information and Communication Sciences as a research direction focused on the processes of construction, processing, communicating, and using information and products, systems and technologies.

Starting with the year 2001, we organise annually a post-graduation course in Library and Information Science. The course is the response to the numerous requirements of libraries and information centres to train the staff working in these institutions. The applicants are mainly librarians working in different libraries in the country that have graduated from other faculties than those providing a major in Library

and Information Science. There are also post-graduation courses for documentarists. By overtaking the French model, school libraries are re-organised in centres of information and documenting with complementary teaching attributions regarding the organisation and use of information; the managers of such centres are documentarists, i.e. teachers that add to their basic training, training in information and documenting. It is worth mentioning the existence, during 2003-2007, of post-high school studies organised by the College of Library and Information Science (removed after the organisation of higher education according to the Bologna Process).

Since its first years of existence, this major managed to reach a national level of higher education and professional training and develop true international relationships. Beyond partnerships and mobilities defined within Erasmus+ programmes and within other cooperation programmes, the involvement of the teachers in international research projects and in different professional associations and projects allowed the development of less formal relationships between teachers, specialists, and researchers from abroad who visited Romania and participated in events. France, Great Britain, Denmark, Holland and Spain are countries where Library and Information Science is very developed and enjoys an acknowledged academic and social status.

Universities are institutional structures that have established, consolidated and developed their reputation in time due to their double mission – education and research. A faculty, a chair, a team need to combine education and research to consolidate their position and reputation in the academic and economic and social environments. Specialists in Sciences of Information and Documenting at the University of Bucharest have been involved in numerous research projects at national and international levels with other universities or institutions. This major is the basic partner of the Association of Librarians of Romania, managing to play an important role in defining the field and professions of the Library and Information Science in Romania. Scientific research starts from the requirements of the society of information; it has been corroborated with the requirements of the national strategy for research coordinated by national research programmes (INFOSOC, AMTRANS, CERES, RELANSIN, CNCSIS, etc.) that launch competitions for the selection of projects. At faculty level, research project proposals are discussed by departments or teams who define the topic, establishes the research team and the partners; the latter can make up a consortium, a feasibility study, the technical and financial details of the plan, and the project proposal. The projects focus on topics related to the new technologies, to the development of digital information content, to integrated systems of databases, to the application of information and communication technologies in different fields of activity and, last but not least, digitalising libraries, developing a collective national catalogue, supporting the circulation of information and documents, etc. To illustrate, we remind a few representative research projects with impact in the economic and social environments and involving interdisciplinary teams: *A prototype project for public services in digitalised libraries; A management system of the National Fund of Technical Regulations; A national system of management of digital resources in science and technology based on grid structures; A specialised information system for urban databases; A multifunctional information and documenting centre; Digitalising Romanian libraries, etc.*

Trends and perspectives of the major show that it aims at ensuring compatibility with European education to make student mobilities and the transferable credit system possible. It is also necessary to corroborate at national level specific professions and the conditions for each trade in the trade nomenclator. From the point of view of the content of the major, academic curriculum takes into account the deep changes at social level as far as information is concerned and all the information processes involved, and the shift from Library and Information Science to Information Science. The Information Science is the subject focused on *information*. The Information Science is the discipline the Information Society needs because of the development of production and information needs, of the new information industrial sectors, and of the invasion of electronic techniques. Curricula in all cycles (Bachelor, Master, and Doctor) should take into account the evolution of information professions in close relationship with the progress of information science and technology.

The major celebrates this year 25 years of existence; its goals are still the main directions of academic activities integrated in the activity of the Faculty of Letters and of the University of Bucharest as well as in its relationships with the professional, institutional environment and the labour market. thus, this major aims at defining an educational offer that covers good practices in the field; train professionals in the field of Library and Information Science as well as in related interdisciplinary fields; promote scientific research in the field, pedagogical and educational innovation, good practices in the field; establish cooperation relationships with similar institutions and structures in Romania and abroad aiming at improving the quality and performances of one's own academic activities; involve directly and indirectly the graduates in improving and support of the image of the subject, faculty, and university at social level; involve directly and indirectly in scientific, social, and cultural life contributing to the moulding of opinions and attitudes for the benefit of society.

Conclusions

Library and Information Science as a major still has a rather tempestuous existence: a period of preparation, then assimilation of Library and Information Science with Philology, followed by an existence of its own (with different names) – all this showing the will to adapt to the exigencies of the academic environment and of the labour market. The turn to Information Science shows the modernisation of the major and the synchronisation with European realities at both teaching and research levels. Twenty-five years of existence mean a major integrated in the academic environment (both teaching and research), with training at Bachelor, Master and Doctor and post-graduation studies and involvement in research projects relevant in the field and on the labour market. the evolution of this major is determined by the dynamics of the field, the quick evolution of the professions in information and documenting in close relationship with the progress of information science and technology. Understanding the actual content of the major Information Science, the changes at social level and of the content of many information-related professions, the appearance of new professions and the adoption of the content of curricula to these realities is a challenge for this academic major.

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