A SURVEY OF INTERNATIONALIZATION ACTIVITIES IN ASIA PACIFIC LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE SCHOOLS

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Abstract. This study replicated Leif Kajberg's *Survey of Internationalization Activities in European Library and Information Science Schools* with regards to Library and Information Science Education in Southeast Asia and the Pacific. Kajberg wrote that internationalization activities in European LIS Schools reflect different national traditions, institutional histories and missions. The purpose of this survey was to discover the different paths toward internationalisation that institutions of Higher Education have taken in LIS Schools in Australia, Bangladesh, China, India, Japan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, and Thailand using the same types of variables which Kajberg used. Findings would assist in developing a theoretical understanding and a knowledge base regarding the forces of international co-operation relevant for higher education institutions at 70 universities concentrating on the LIS discipline. The following issues are examined: (1) Do international issues and priorities have a place on the educational and research agenda of the schools? (2) To what extent are international LIS issues reflected in the schools' curricula? (3) What is the number of international-degree students enrolled? (4) Do schools have persons with an international background on their academic staff? (5) Are cross-country links developed with partner institutions abroad? These questions were considered representative of internationalization activities. As with Kajberg's survey, the questionnaire designed for the study included a mix of close-ended questions (yes-no model) and questions of the semi-open and open-ended type. The close-ended questions were formulated to elicit general information on LIS schools' actual involvement in the various types of internationalisation processes and activities and gauge the level of cooperation. Permission to conduct the study was granted by the Institutional Review Board, Human Subjects Committee of the University of Southern Mississippi. Responses were held confidential.

Background to the Study

In the introduction to *Information Ethics for A New Millenium*, Alex Byrne wrote:

> In the long and noble tradition of library and information work, we have maintained a commitment to conserve the records of human enquiry and imagination. In doing this we recognise and celebrate the interconnectedness of knowledge which transcends natural and national borders, lifetimes, and the tenures of kings and governments.

Dr. Byrne wrote of the Nuremberg trials, the trial of Slobodan Milosevic, the events of September 11, 2001, the PATRIOT Act and the Children's Internet Protection Act as world events related to this need for transcendence of information and culture across geographical boundaries, across 'the tenures of kings and governments'. Agada (2005) suggested that building bridges across countries promotes interdisciplinary collaborations, elevates the human dimensions of the LIS knowledge base and services and addresses moral and ethical issues inherent in current global information transactions. Transcendence of information can be blocked by a type of nearsightedness. Dr. Kendra Albright (2005) stated that there is a need for change in the LIS curriculum primarily because the current curricula are limited to Western assumptions. This not only limits the perspective of LIS students because lack of knowledge about the relationship between information and power from a global perspective limits analysis of the problems facing the discipline, the critical and ethical analysis skills developed in this way are skills needed by future leaders and decision makers everywhere. The lack of focus on internationalization activities can have as an unintended consequence, the lack of international collaboration and can reflect a lack of flexible responses in LIS institutional contexts. Dr. Clara Chu (2002) stated that international issues and comparative research in library and information science can help students understand the political, socio-economic and cultural variables which shape information exchange and the discipline as a whole in a purposeful way.

Literature Review

Kajberg cited Berger (2002) for identifying obstacles to internationalisation, such as contradiction of interests, juridical problems, incongruence between study cycles and academic qualifications, incompatibility of didactic regulations, different tradition and mentalities, language problems, student mentalities, and interests and problems of financial support. However serious these obstacles are to collaboration, Jagtar Singh (2002) wrote that because it is possible to communicate from a networked workstation with anyone across the globe and have real time access to digital documents, international collaboration is now possible in teaching, learning, publishing, and resource sharing via various networks. It follows that professional education and practice in LIS would be responsive to the needs of the information society and be inclusive of educational and philosophical values of LIS. For example, Ken Haycock (2005) determined these values to be "informed decision-making as a foundation for democracy through service for all, access for all, freedom of expression and inquiry for all, privacy for all, and maintenance of the records of the human experience." Higgins and Khoo (2000) examined some of the cross cultural issues in information studies education in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, and advocated the role of an information professional as an agent of change for guiding and stimulating the development of remote or backward regions and help them access and use global information sources. John Agada and Brenda Hough (2005) reported that the LIS curriculum need be repositioned in the global context for the following three reasons: Information is now recognised as the driving force in contemporary society; global information policy regimes on core LIS issues are being designed largely by non LIS experts, and emerging information regimes threaten to undermine LIS core values in international information exchanges. The authors suggested that students create projects such as the Emporia-Nigeria Project as a case study of international exchange of information. Kajberg (2004) noted that overall, LIS schools have been very slow to get involved in cross-country partnerships that go beyond the often small-scale student mobility activity. As a first step of documentation, Dalton and Levinson (2000) investigated LIS qualifications throughout the world. They sought to make recommendations on how data should be maintained nationally and accessed internationally.

Findings

Preliminary findings indicate that the term "internationalisation" within the context of LIS education can be interpreted in many ways. The researcher sought to determine the extent of LIS value clarification in globalization through inclusion of the components aligned with Kajberg's study. One of these was an international component in schools of library and information science as an indicator of such consciousness because assumptions of universality in the LIS curriculum may be inaccurate. Because there is a growing need for professionals who are knowledgeable and concerned about the social and policy issues across the globalized society, internationalization has a place on the LIS curricula. Librarians who have the appropriate commitment, values and attitude to be information intermediaries acknowledge that their role can extend to helping individuals and social groups around the world participate and flourish in the emerging digital environment. Clearly, the issues of globalization occur within the context of an information society and libraries within highly developed nations as well as libraries within underdeveloped nations reflect the political meanings of technology and culture.

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