

Overview of Library and Information Science Education Since the Mid-1940's

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The great leader Comrade **Kim Il Sung** said as follows.

“Libraries and reading rooms should be well-stocked.

Since all our people study, this is very important.”(“**KIM IL SUNG WORKS**” Vol. 33 P. 423)

Libraries are very important for people's life and it has been over 130 years since education in modern librarianship began.

Education for librarianship has gone through dramatic changes since World War II. By the end of World War II, the standard professional degree was the BLS from a school of library science.

In keeping with the development of the times and social demands for libraries, the standard professional degree became a master's degree, often with “information” as well as “library science” in the title.

The expansion and growth of libraries, which had begun after World War II, created an unprecedented demand for librarians in the early 1970's through 1950's and 1960's.

For example, the following table shows the total number of librarians required in a certain country where the Library Science has turned out to be the best worldwide.

Table Available Positions 1961-1975

Year	Number of Positions
1961	2 826
1963	3 159
1965	3 673
1967	4 401
1969	3 171

After World War II, the radical change in the socio-political and economic life brought about the increasing demands of people for libraries and it led to the corresponding development of librarianship.

By this time, libraries demanded more competent librarians.

That is, the qualitative demand for librarians was combined with the quantitative one.

Noticeably there was an enlargement of the scale of education for librarianship and they focused on programs for MLS (Master of Library Science) and PhD degrees rather than on BLS (Bachelor of Library Science) degrees while they established different types of education for librarianship in response to library practice.

For example, in a certain country, the number of graduates who finished MLS programs was only 1 072 from 36 schools in 1946 but it reached the peak by 8 100 between 1973 and 1974.

Before World War II, there was only one university that awarded the PhD degree in the library science in the country, but since the late 1940's the number of universities, which award PhD degrees, has increased.

They also established a special 2-year library technician program, apart from the program which gave the professional degrees in order to help meet the desperate shortage of library workers.

By the mid-1970's, the demands for librarians disappeared gradually and many of MLS programs were closed between the late 1970's and the early 1990's.

The primary cause of closed MLS programs was dropping enrollment due to low demand for librarians and fewer jobs due to the economic stagnation and to infusion of science and technology into the library practical affairs.

But there was also other reason for the closing of MLS programs. LIS schools were small in comparison to other schools and colleges on each campus. Their alumnus hardly ever found jobs with good salary and in times of budget crisis, they were sometimes judged as not being central to home institution's mission, which led to the decline in education for librarianship.

For example, in a certain country, the peak year in terms of MLS graduates was 1973-1974, with 8 134 graduates. By 1985-1986, MLS graduates dropped to 3 564.

By the late 1970's some MLS programs began to be closed, but the remaining schools adapted to the times and even began expanding in the 1990's by cooperating or merging with related academic disciplines and expanding their programs in broader information studies.

In the meanwhile, the development of a whole new discipline – information science, which had already begun to come into the field of library science since the mid-1960's, encouraged the advent of library and information science as an interdisciplinary field.

During this integration, the word “information” was included in the titles of institutes and associations of library science.

For example, in a certain country, the title of association of library schools was changed into the “Association for Library and Information Science Education” while the publications such as the “Annual Review of Information Science and Technology” and “Library Research” were combined into “Library and Information Science Research”.

Such changes brought about gradual change in education for librarianship. The newly-built schools for librarianship education had the titles such as “Graduate School of Library and Information Sciences”, “School of Library and Information Services” and so on.

Besides, a number of schools didn't include the words either “library” or “librarianship” in their official title, whereas there were other titles such as “Information School”, “Information Science and Politics School”, “Information Science and Technology School”, “Informatics School” and so on.

The advances in computer and communication technology had a great impact not only on the establishment of schools of library and information science but also on its curricula. In particular, the advent of library automation, database and online searching, the Internet and the Web, electronic publishing and digital libraries improved significantly the curriculum of library and information science.

In the early 1980's, library and information science education included acquisitions, cataloging and classification, circulation, collection development, indexing and abstracting, interlibrary loan, management, reference and serials control.

By 1990's, library and information science education became active again taking advantage of

increasing societal concerns with information and technology.

They revised their curricula and developed into new areas of education by cooperating or integrating with related fields.

By this time, the library and information science education consisted of technical management, organization of information, searching and database development, collection development, mathematical methods, non-print media, rare materials and conservation, sources of information reference materials, archives, children's literature and services and so on.

Also, they included undergraduate programs in information science, new master's programs in the research aspects of information science, joint degree programs, continuing education programs, and distance education programs using the new technologies.

In the 21st century, new themes were found in LIS curricula, which included information systems, competitive intelligence, human-computer interaction, information architecture, knowledge management, medical information, and natural language processing.

It is evident that there are six major current trends in LIS education.

First, LIS schools are addressing broad-based information environment and problems.

Second, Core curricula are predominantly user centered and incorporated interdisciplinary perspectives.

Third, LIS programs experienced an increased infusion of information technology.

Fourth, LIS schools have diverse program formats.

Fifth, LIS schools are expanding degree offerings at all levels.

Sixth, LIS programs are experimenting with structuring specializations

In conclusion, education and training in modern librarianship, which has a history of more than 130 years, has changed significantly its content, nomenclature, structure over years and is trying to keep a balance between the core of librarianship, user-centered service, and new developments in ICT and management techniques.

The nature of librarian has changed and the role of a librarian has developed from that of simply of a custodian of knowledge to that of a service provider, trainer and adviser and future librarians will play a completely new role in the collection, organization, dissemination and creation of knowledge.