"Core Curriculum in LIS Latin American Schools"

Filiberto Felipe Martínez Arellano
National Autonomus University of Mexico.
Institute of Research on Library Science and Information
felipe@unam.mx

Juan Miguel Palma Peña
National Autonomus University of Mexico.
Humanities Coordination.
Scholarly Information System, Humanindex
jemajumi@hotmail.com

Abstract:

In the dynamic world we live today, curricular innovation is an important element in LIS education, which is the reason why these schools have incorporated current trends and professional needs, as well as their local peculiarities, into their curricula. The afore mentioned has not been foreign to the LIS schools of Latin America, so there are curricula with different approaches and contents that respond perfectly to current trends and professional needs. However, it cannot be ignored that LIS education must answer to a basic curriculum, which should be common to all LIS schools in Latin America, as well as to others in different geographical regions that fulfill the needs of the professional identity of librarians, no matter where they have been formed. In addition, having a common LIS curriculum will promote student mobility and internalization among LIS schools in different countries of the region. Thus, the purpose of this document is to present a proposal for a basic curriculum in LIS schools, derived from a review of the "Directory of librarianship LIS schools in Latin America and the Caribbean" (https://www.ifla.org/node/91663?og=68) compiled by Karla Rodríguez and published in the IFLA-LAC website. It is important to remark that in this review, LIS schools in Brazil were not included because of the large number of schools.

Keywords: Curriculum in LIS; Curricular Innovation; Latin American; LIS Librarianship Schools.

Trends in Higher Education

Karisiddappa (2014) holds that the 21st century is called the Age of Knowledge, and that therefore it should be addressed taking into consideration three pillars: provide professional education, take into account their organization and institutional aspects, and consider their technological infrastructure.

In parallel, UNESCO's Agenda for Knowledge Societies (2004) points to four additional fundamental elements: freedom of expression; access to quality education; cultural diversity and universal access to information and knowledge.

Thus, it can be globally pointed out that, higher education is located in a Dynamic stadium that requires asking to their graduates to possess multiple skills and competencies that will help them understand the needs and trends as well as the objectives, visions and diverse realities of the environmental and social structures.

In addition, it can be pointed out that trends such as communication, evaluation, collaboration, cooperation networks, distance education, exchange, access, competences, metadata and web applications, among others, are elements currently proposed to support the economy, politics and the social structures of the 21st century. All these particularities should be taken into account by the graduates of higher education institutions to assume the theoretical and pragmatic elements and to meet the needs and social interests worldwide.

On the other hand, Pirela and Pulido (2018) point out that currently "higher education institutions must implement actions that allow them to position themselves as true engines of development, without renouncing to their status as intellectual creation environments, which define flexible curricula that includes transversal axes and formative projects in tune with the advancement of science and technology."

In this regard, it can be pointed out that information goods and services are being increasingly valued at a global level for their transversal contributions so that society has instruments with which substantiate and innovate their development and evolution, and show that such inputs require to be applied with care by the human resources trained in their fields of knowledge.

Undoubtedly, information technologies are a cross-cutting factor for the development of higher education activities, and therefore it is necessary to address their treatment and influence according to the time and trends that are manifested, as these are instruments that provide significant elements to social development.

In parallel, another element that needs to be addressed within the context of higher education is curricular innovation, which consists on the process of complementing, improving and updating the academic program or career of a given area of study, based on the premise of improving the fulfillment of the objectives and optimizing the relevance of the professional profile. Likewise, the curricular innovation requires to be in agreement with the administrative institutional structure in which it will be implemented, in order to be in consonance with the mission, objectives, principles, policies, and other regulations that support the implementation of this process.

In so doing, the delimitation of the stadium and the trends on higher education should be articulated by specifying what library schools work around the development and implementation of a strengthened curriculum so that librarians and information specialists are trained based on a core of general and common knowledge, in order to develop skills and competencies, according to the needs and trends that today's society requires.

Trends in the Librarianship and Information Sciences (LIS) schools in Latin America

LIS schools in Latin America have a long tradition in what refers to the transmission of knowledge and the development of skills and competences. However, it is also necessary that the educational programs of these schools are in accordance with regional and local contexts as with their updating and adaptability, they also need to be articulated to the internationalization of the discipline, programs and students, as well as increase its presence in various areas of academic debate.

In order to analyze the trends in LIS education in Latin America, the titles awarded by the schools included in the "Directory of Librarianship Schools in Latin America and the Caribbean" were reviewed and compiled by Karla Rodríguez in the IFLA-LAC website. In performing this analysis, the following data were considered:

- Total number of schools per country
- Name of school
- Title that was granted

One of the main results of the analysis is that Latin America has 76 schools of librarianship. The degrees awarded present a great diversity of thematic tendencies focused upon the training of human resources in this field of knowledge. The degrees awarded include different levels, undergraduate or graduate and postgraduate, but there is also a great diversity of names such as a bachelor's in librarianship and information studies; library science and information sciences; information management, among others.

In accordance with the degrees awarded, different tendencies can be perceived in the formation of LIS, and therefore, the existence of different curricula, with different approaches, which makes it necessary to articulate a basic curriculum that considers the common elements that the schools of LIS should adopt, regardless the name of the title they grant.

The curriculum in education in LIS

LIS is a term that merges the theoretical and practical elements of the field of Library Science and Information Sciences (Martínez, 2013). This field of knowledge has received different names and approaches, in line with the diverse currents of thought and geographical tendencies that delimit it and the main fields and topics that are addressed in these disciplines.

The curriculum of LIS schools confronts the dynamic trend of communication, the exchange and the immediate flow that requires information in order to meet the main objective of an area that seeks to meet the information needs of the user communities' it serves.

The specialized literature on education in LIS proposes multiple elements to address the different economic, political and social phenomena and trends that faces this area of study.

Therefore, it can be considered that the curriculum of LIS is in a relevant phase to carry out curricular innovations globally, regionally and locally.

The basic curriculum in LIS can be defined as the set of knowledge, skills and competencies that should be available to any professional who wants to develop projects and tasks on the discipline, particularly in the field of libraries and professional information services, which refers to the qualities for professional practice in this area. (Raju, 2017).

According to a study by Raju (2016), there is a tendency to implement the technological aspects demanded by current society in the LIS curriculum; but further requiring that they are transferable and / or adaptable; and that encourage constant learning.

As well, in accordance with the geographical nature addressed in this document, in Latin America the curriculum at LIS continues to be subject of multiple debates and discussions regarding its improvement, updating and complementation.

In the last two decades the idea that the contents of these programs should include aspects related to information technologies has prevailed; however, there is also a tendency to guarantee that the graduates of this area possess a basic core of knowledge about the LIS field.

Regarding this debate, Gorman (2004) mentions that:
"The seductions of modern communications technology have led many library educators to focus on that technology and dismiss anything about libraries that is not amenable to a technological solution. This is a world in which fantastic schemes for virtual libraries and the world's' recorded knowledge available on the Internet and the Web are presented as if they were real components of the short-term future, despite the fact that they fly in the face of history and facts. We do not need these urban myths to be propagated in LIS schools or, worse, to be presented as facts to a new generation of librarians."

Thus, it can be said that in Latin America the curriculum at LIS has been developed according to the contexts, needs and interests of these institutions and educational programs, which face multiple challenges related to the functionality and usefulness of the knowledge that seeks social and global benefit.

The foregoing highlights the need to reexamine the existence, timeliness and quality of the curriculum of LIS schools so that it is developed based on specific situations and training that encourage the exchange of programs and review the academic-administrative aspects to achieve unification, accreditation and international homologation. (Gutiérrez, 2012).

On the other hand, diverse organisms and library institutions of North America, have discussed and adopted a nucleus of common knowledge that a professional librarian of the 21st century must possess. Therefore, it is important to identify the relevance, actuality and characteristics of the curricula of LIS schools in Latin America, assuming that these should promote processes of assimilation and understanding of common theoretical and pragmatic knowledge, to be implemented in the production of useful, functional and innovative information goods and services that support the solution of the challenges that Latin American countries face in terms of libraries and information.

Proposal for a basic curriculum in LIS schools in Latin America

It is assumed that education in LIS must respond to a basic curriculum common to all LIS schools in Latin America, but also to other geographical regions, attending to the professional identity of the librarians, regardless of where these are formed and the complementary aspects that respond to local needs and trends.

In this regard, the American Library Association (2009), the Association of College and Research Libraries (2008), Simmons University (2019), as well as various authors, including Asundi and Karisiddappa (2014) and Martínez and Rodríguez (2014), have proposed a nucleus of basic content to be developed in the schools of librarianship, complemented by those contents that respond to the contexts, needs and regional tendencies.

This proposal includes a basic core that should be included in the LIS curriculum so that all those who are trained in this field of knowledge can apply and implement them in different types of libraries, schools, academic, public, specialized and governmental, that can also be applied and complemented with the contents that demand the contexts, needs and local tendencies.

The main aspects that a basic and common curriculum should contain for Latin America are the following:

- Fundamentals of librarianship
- Information resources
- Organization of information
- Library and information services
- Administration of libraries and information units
- Applied research
- TIC technologies

- *Fundamentals of librarianship*
This theme represents the initial nucleus to encourage students to acquire and develop values and principles of the LIS.

It includes promoting knowledge about the role of the librarian in different scenarios and contexts in order to promote access without barriers to the information that is located in the libraries and / or in the information platforms they manage.

One of the essential elements of this area is to promote knowledge about the history of libraries and librarians, in order to boost identity and ownership of the discipline; this element is also related to publicize how communication has been established and the impact of libraries in different contexts and stages of humanity.

The fundamentals of librarianship should provide the theoretical aspects of the development and impact that libraries have in the economic, political, cultural, scientific, and other contexts.

Establishing elements of appropriation and understanding of background knowledge will strengthen the defense of libraries based on the effectiveness and usefulness of knowing the foundations of LIS.

- *Information resources*

This element has a close relationship with the cycle of generating information and intends to provide theoretical elements about the stages and actors that influence the production of the great diversity of available information resources.

At present, the information resources and the multiple formats in which they are objectified, require to be analyzed, since they propose the modification of methods and techniques for their evaluation, selection and acquisition for the development of collections, both printed and electronic and / or digital.

Since LIS's main focus is the theoretical and empirical treatment of information recorded in any format, developing meaningful knowledge about the multiple printed, electronic and digital information resources currently produced, it will support those librarians' having a broad panorama regarding the diversity of formats, channels and means to guarantee and satisfy the information needs of the users.

The aspects that tentatively will be provided by the study of information resources in current contexts will endow students with theoretical and pragmatic elements on how to deal with these assets, and whether to develop, organize, manage and preserve collections.

- *Organization of information*

The core of the training in LIS is the organization of information, since by registering and normalizing the data of the information recorded in various formats, stored in systems, catalogs, repositories and / or digital libraries will transform into an element that will guarantee the localization and recovery of the collections that are currently owned and to which the libraries have access.

This aspect will provide the theoretical elements, technical tools and methods for the organization of information, whether printed, electronic and / or digital resources, which in the current context is highly relevant to organize.

Likewise, this area implies the knowledge of languages for the storage and retrieval of information, such as lists of subject headings, thesaurus and ontologies, among others, in addition to the knowledge of classification systems and metadata standards.

The organization of information in current contexts is also significant, since from a library perspective, there are different ways to treat metadata for accessing information in multiple information platforms.

Also, the organization of information is the backbone of libraries and other institutions that provide information services, since this is closely related to different areas, such as the development of collections and information services.

- *Library and information services*

This area includes library and information services, where the reference service is of particular importance. It also includes the concepts, principles and techniques to develop and implement reference services for users of libraries and other information units, in order to provide them with access to information and registered and organized knowledge.

In the same way, this area includes the knowledge and skills to recover, evaluate and provide information of various types of resources to be provided to the members of various types of user communities.

The methods used to interact with users will guarantee the mediation between information resources and the needs of different user communities.

On the other hand, the development of information skills is a backbone in libraries and other information units, since through it, users can be able to search, locate, retrieve and obtain the information they need.

In current contexts and trends, information services acquire a leading role in the dynamics of sharing and accessing information through multiple channels and means.

- *Administration and management of libraries and information units*
The principles of administration applied to the planning and management of library and information services are a basic element in the training of the librarian, since through this the usefulness and significance of the goods and services will be guaranteed.

This element is also related to the treatment of human resources and requires adaptability and effectiveness in the development and implementation of library activities and services and quality information.

The administration and management of library and information services is closely related to elements of evaluation and quality of activities, goods and services that are developed in libraries and other information units in order to improve, update and innovate.

- *Applied research in librarianship*
In accordance with the trends on application of knowledge that intend to determine the functionality and usefulness of skills and theoretical and pragmatic skills developed in the professionalization of a discipline; the area of research applied to the solution of problems and / or phenomena is a relevant element to be implemented in the basic curriculum in LIS for Latin America.

The proposal to include the area of applied research in education in LIS, is based on the assumption and has as its mission to support society with the solution of the problems surrounding libraries and information innovation of situations, phenomena and / or professional problems in the field of study of information and knowledge.

Promoting the development of knowledge and / or competences in applied research at LIS will provide a greater social value for the profession since, based on the application of scientific methods and techniques for the solution of specific problems, it will demonstrate its functionality and social utility based on the know-how.

In current contexts, the applied research in LIS will be very useful to support decision-making based on the best evidence in professional practice related to the areas that are part of the basic curriculum: information resources, information organization, library services and information, library administration and information units.

- *TIC technologies*

A main premise in accordance with the tendencies and particularities with which develop the activities of the actual society and industry of information, reside in assessing and making usufruct of TIC, particularly in what refers to the basic curriculum of LIS in such aspects as technological changes, costs and management and control. At present, labor, educational, academic, scientific and cultural functions are more dynamic and require to be updated constantly, and therefor support themselves in technological instruments such as: Internet, virtual museums, digital libraries, data basis and repositories, among other resources or operating, distributing, using and communicating information and knowledge.

As it can be proved, TI have different applications in diverse realms of the social structures, specifically in the field of education, since according to UNESCO (2004) such instruments promote liberty of expression, long life learning and access to information, among other fields.

In this sense, TIC, for the domain of LIS are a group of instruments which have promoted many changes among theories and learning methodologies of human resources, as well as contributed in the praxis and development of activities in library functioning.

In the presence of these particularities, human resources formed in LIS, increasingly require the development of abilities and strategies in TIC, which support the implementation of innovative services, as well as the improvement of work flows implemented among diverse libraries. In addition, Haythornwaite (2012) proposes a group of teams on TIC's which could be applied in the formation of human resources such as electronic access; digitalization; e-learning; social networking; big data; virtuality, among others, proposal which could be considered for reaching our objective.

One of the main elements that should be considered in TIC's formation, is that they require to be revised and checked recurrently in order to adapt and upgrade their technological infrastructure and the strategies applied to the epoch and needs that propitiate a better functioning. Briefly, since TIC incide in each of the proposed sub themes of the basic curriculum of LIS, it is considered that the improvement and actualization of this theme requires to be constantly thought of, analyzed and monitored and actualized, since its permanent implementation permeates the development of the area, the information access, the multiplication of formation opportunities and the development of innovative services which must be articulated to contribute with the objectives of the industry of information.

Final considerations

Since the 21st century is considered as the age of knowledge, it is assumed that this stage requires human capital with solid theoretical and empirical knowledge in their respective areas; in accordance with this trend, it is considered that the areas that should be part of the basic curriculum of LIS schools in Latin America will promote the training of professionals with common significant skills and competences.

One of the main features of this proposal should be its flexibility and adaptability to the contexts in which it is implemented, since being a proposal of a disciplinary nature, it can be complemented to address the realities and tendencies of different regions at a global level.

The establishment of a basic curriculum in Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC), is a necessary condition for the internationalization of the profession, for this will allow the exchange of students, courses and other programs of the region (via online), the creation of thematic relationships among institutions, and the establishment of cooperative global work, as well as the consolidation of projects for the development of the LIS at a local, regional and international level.

A common curriculum needs to be discussed and developed in conjunction with all the countries of this region, analyzing within their own curricula if these areas are included, and if so, to what extent and with what approach.

Bibliographic references

American Library Association. (2009). *ALA's Core competencies of Librarianship*. Available in:
http://www.ala.org/educationcareers/sites/ala.org.educationcareers/files/content/careers/corecomp/corecompetences/finalcorecompstat09.pdf

Association of College and Research Libraries. (2008). *Standards for proficiencies for instructions librarians and coordinators: a practical guide*. Estados Unidos de America, American Library Association. Available in:
http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org.acrl/files/content/standards/profstandards.pdf

Asundi, A. Y. and Karisiddappa, C. R. (2014). LIS education in developing countries: a knowledge-society perspective with special reference to India. In *LIS education in developing countries: the road ahead* / edited on behalf of IFLA BY Ismail Abdullahi, A.Y. Asundi and C.R. Karisiddappa.(Volumen 165) Germany: DE Gruyter, 2014. pp. 101-114.

Gorman, M. (2004). Whither library education? *New Library World, 105 (9/10)*, 376–380. Other version retrieved June 2, 2014, Available in:
http://arizona.openrepository.com/arizona/bitstream/10150/105907/1/Gorman-keynote.pdf

Gutiérrez Chiñas, Agustín. (2012). El currículum de la profesión bibliotecaria; una aproximación. *Investigación bibliotecológica, 27, 59, enero/abril*. Available in: http://rev-ib.unam.mx/ib/index.php/ib/article/view/36611/51546

IFLA. (2018). *Directory of Librarianship Schools in Latin America and the Caribbean* / Karla Rodríguez Salas. Available in: https://www.ifla.org/node/91663

Haythornwaite, Caroline. (2012). *[Future] Trends in LIS Education*. Paper delivered at the University of British Columbia as part of the BC Research Libraries Group Lecture Sieries. Available in: https://circle.ub.ca/handle/2429/43176

Karisiddappa, C. R. (2014). Rediscovering LIS education in developing countries in the knowledge society: opening keynote address. In *LIS education in developing countries: the road ahead* / edited on behalf of IFLA BY Ismail Abdullahi, A.Y. Asundi and C.R. Karisiddappa.(Volumen 165) Germany: DE Gruyter, 2014. pp. 8-18

Martínez-Arellano, Filiberto Felipe. (2013). Whats is Library and Information Science (LIS) in Latin American Library School. *Revue de l'Enssib, 1, octo*bre. Available in:
https://www.enssib.fr/bibliotheque-numerique/documents/66403-what-is-library-and-information-science-lis-in-latin-american-library-schools.pdf

Martínez-Arellano, Filiberto Felipe and Rodríguez Vidal, Patricia Lucia. (2014). LIS education in Latin America. In *LIS education in developing countries: the road ahead* / edited on behalf of IFLA BY Ismail Abdullahi, A.Y. Asundi and C.R. Karisiddappa.(Volumen 165) Germany: DE Gruyter, 2014. pp. 19-31.

Pirela Morillo, Johann y Pulido Daza, Nelson Javier. (2018). Actualización curricular del Programa de Sistemas de Información y Documentación de la Universidad de La Salle-

Colombia. *Investigación bibliotecológica, 32, 74,* enero/marzo. Available in: http://www.scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?script=sci_serial&pid=0187-358X&lng=es&nrm=iso

Raju, Jaya. (2016). Core competencies in LIS education: professional, generic and personal competencies for the higher education LIS sector. In *WLIC 82nd. IFLA General Conference and Assembly. Satellite Meeting* (Section on E&T; Section on Library T&R). Dublin Ohio, USA. Available in: https://www.oclc.org/content/dam/oclc/events/2016/IFLA2016/presentations/Core-Competencies-in-LIS-Education.pdf

Raju, Jaya. (2017). *LIS profesional competency index for the higher education sector in South Africa.* Cape Town: University of Cape Town. Available in: https://openbooks.uct.ac.za/LISindex/index.php/LISindex/catalog/book/2

UNESCO. (2004). *Education in and for the knowledge society*. Available in: www.osce.org/fom/36398