

LA MAESTRIA EN BIBLIOTECOLOGIA Y CIENCIAS  
DE LA INFORMACION DE LA UNIVERSIDAD DE GUANAJUATO:

A BRIEF REPORT WITH RECOMMENDATIONS

by

Edwin S. Gleaves\*

BIBLIOTECA



CENTRO UNIVERSITARIO  
DE INVESTIGACIONES  
BIBLIOTECOLÓGICAS

1. Los Problemas

After operating for three and one-half years, during which time 37 students completed the full one-year program, the Master's Program in Library and Information Science of the University of Guanajuato finds itself at the crossroads. Although the program has had a number of successes, the Director has decided, in collaboration with other personnel in the University of Guanajuato, to restructure the program and to begin a new school year in September of 1984. The events leading up to the present time are well described in the Informe 1979-82 on the Maestría en Bibliotecología y Ciencias de la Información (Guanajuato, 1983).

Among the problems facing the Master's Program at the present time are the following:

1. Scarcity of full-time professors to teach in the program.
2. Scarcity of students. The number of students has declined from 15 in 1980 to 6 in 1982.

---

\*Professor and Chair, Department of Library and Information Science, Peabody College, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee 37203

INFOBILA

3. A fixed program that does not allow for electives or specialization.
4. A short period of time for the program (one year).
5. Lack of articulation with other programs and schools, particularly undergraduate (pre-grado) educational programs.
6. Most students do not complete their thesis after completing the formal program of studies.
7. Many students arrive and depart from the program with clear deficiencies in the use of English, which is a necessity in the field of library and information science.

A number of these problems are, quite obviously, inter-related. For example, it would be difficult to offer elective courses with either a small number of students or a small number of professors. Some of the problems which the Master's Program now faces lie beyond the control of the administrator of this program and, indeed, beyond the control of the University of Guanajuato. For example, although the University of Guanajuato now requires all students to complete a thesis before receiving the master's degree, only three out of the 37 students have actually completed the thesis at this time. Even though the thesis is required for graduation from the University of Guanajuato, it is not usually required by the universities and other agencies where the students will themselves be employed. Until such time as these agencies can uniformly require a completed degree, including the thesis, there is little incentive for the students to complete their thesis after they have begun work on a full-time basis.



Another related problem is the deficiency in English. Even though the administrators could be more restrictive in accepting only those students who have achieved a high level of proficiency in English, to do so would, in the words of the Director of the Master's Program, be fighting against the national educational system which itself does not put sufficient emphasis on English as a requirement.

As for the lack of professors and students, these are subject to the problems of restricted budgets and to such intangibles as the difficulty of recruiting full-time professors to leave the DF area and move to a provincial city such as Guanajuato. In effect, therefore, the administrators are caught in a vicious circle of not being able to offer all that they would like because of the limited number of professors and students, but at the same time such professors and students choose not to move to Guanajuato because of the limited resources available. In any case, the policy of the new government of Mexico will continue to emphasize decentralization, and it is hoped that a number of pressure points may be applied to make relocation in the provinces of Mexico a more viable option for many Mexicans.

## 2. Opciones y Medidas

It is clear that the Master's Program needs to develop a number of options, some of which can be taken during the next year. These include the following:

INFOBILA

1. Extend the program to more than one year.
2. Open the program to students with different educational backgrounds, specifically to those with previous studies in library science.
3. Enrich the curriculum through additional and modified offerings.
4. Require students to complete all requirements of the program of studies before entering the workforce.

To accomplish these goals, the administration of the Master's Program would need to take the following steps:

1. Modify the calendar to accommodate different schedules.
2. Offer optional courses and some specialization within the entire course of study.
3. Offer special courses for credit to part-time or visiting students.
4. Revise curricular offerings through the addition of new and modified courses.
5. Offer independent studies and/or seminars on topics of special interest.
6. Develop incentives and schedules conducive to students completing their courses.

### 3. Calendario

The Master's Program should consider offering an introductory semester for those students with no previous courses in library and information science, perhaps in a special summer session. Such a calendar would permit full-time, resident students to begin their course of study

in a summer session and then continue through one full year of study beyond the introductory semester. It would also permit in-service students to study in summer sessions only, taking the introductory courses in the first summer and then returning for three consecutive summers to complete the degree. By enriching the summer offerings, the Master's Program could then accommodate other non-degree students who might well enroll as special students during one but not all of the summer sessions.

#### 4. Especialización

Special courses, offered either during the summer session or during the regular academic year, would provide the opportunity for limited specialization within the Master's Program, possibly by type of information agency. Specialization might also be conceived in terms of type of information services, such as technical processes, public services, computer applications, or even research/investigation. However, it is my own conviction that students should be advised against too heavy a specialization within the Master's Program. In the United States, where considerable specialization within large academic libraries is often possible, students often make the mistake of trying to specialize too much at the master's level, only to find that certain career opportunities are closed to them when they choose to change departments within a university setting. In general, therefore, students are often advised to keep their options open and to take a large portion of their program



within a general area, while allowing for specialization in no more than 30-50 percent of their program.

If specialization at the master's level is a problem in the United States, it would, in all likelihood, be an even more difficult problem for students in Mexico who, in many cases, are going to be expected to provide services in a wide range of areas within a Mexican library or information center. Therefore, any specialization contemplated by the Master's Program should be considered with the students' welfare in mind, and, accordingly, future students in the program should be advised very carefully about the degree of specialization, taking into consideration both the specific positions for which they may be preparing and the career options which may lie ahead for them.

#### 5. Modificaciones

The Master's Program has operated for the past few years with a curriculum that has been revised at least once and which has served quite well as an all-purpose curriculum. However, a number of possibilities exist for enriching the curriculum, and such courses as the following might well be considered in modifying the present program and in adding additional courses which could form the basis of the specialization which has already been discussed:

1. Administration of the University Library.
2. Administration of the Special Library and Information Center.
3. Introduction to Computer Technology.
4. Indexing and Abstracting.

5. Periodical Publications.

6. Microform Materials in Libraries and Information Centers.

7. Audio-Visual Materials and Methods.

8. Promoting the Use of the Library (Public relations and bibliographic instruction).

These are a few of the areas which would seem to be appropriate for offering in Mexico at this time. However, they would need to be integrated carefully into the overall program, at the same time modifying other such courses on which these might have an impact. Any educator in library and information science will recognize the infinite possibilities in this area, but at the same time will recognize the limitations that lie within a 12-15 month program of studies.

One area of study which deserves special attention is an introduction to computer technology. Even though many libraries in Mexico are not now actively using the computer, it is quite clear that many information services within Mexico are already relying on the computer for information processing. In addition, with the coming of the microcomputer it cannot be long before the impact of the computer is felt not only in business, industry, government, and information services, but in all areas of education and even in the home. Therefore, it is not too early for the University of Guanajuato to consider purchasing additional microcomputers that would give this program a headstart in "computer literacy" for all students



going through the program in library and information science.

Such a course, if not actually required, could well become a very popular item as the students' enthusiasm for computers is increased by first-hand contact and hands-on experience with microcomputers. Much of the distrust of computers on the part of librarians and educators is based on ignorance and upon the immensity of many computer systems now in operation. With the coming of the microcomputer, these fears can indeed be reduced and students can be quickly trained to accept the computer as an important educational tool and information resource.

#### 6. Estudios Independientes y Cursos Especiales

One method of lending variety to a program without introducing new courses per se is to provide some independence to those students capable of undertaking work on their own. However, with the thesis requirement, there will probably be less need for additional independent research undertaken by the students in the program. In certain cases, the Master's Program should consider such methodologies as "special topics" courses and/or seminars which could address the newer and more specialized areas in library and information services. The names and topics of these courses could change with each semester, but would be offered in a seminar setting under the continued guidance of a professor. Such an offering would require a certain degree of flexibility within the program, but at the same time would not necessitate the addition of as many new courses on a permanent basis. Some of the "new" courses mentioned above in this section could be offered in this manner.



## 7. Tesis

As mentioned earlier in this report, the problem of the thesis is a national one in that the students who complete the course of study have no special incentive in the work force to complete the thesis itself. The Master's Program can work toward the solution of this problem in at least two ways:

1. By working through such professional associations as ABIESI in pressuring libraries and information centers (and their parent institutions) in the country to require the master's degree (complete with thesis) as a condition for employment, whether the student is beginning employment for the first time or is returning to a job.

2. By building within the program special provision for the student to work on the thesis while taking other courses. This would, in effect, lower the number of courses during a given semester, or semesters, while expecting the student to show satisfactory progress toward the completion of the thesis. This would, in turn, almost certainly imply a longer course of study than one year, but students in the program might well be encouraged to take more than one year to complete the full course of studies so that they can, at the same time, complete their work on the thesis. Certainly, the question of the thesis is one of the more difficult problems facing the Master's Program, and will not be easy to resolve within a short period of time.

## 8. Conclusión

To undertake the program as has been discussed above (and which, to some extent, has been discussed by personnel in the library of the University of Guanajuato) would be a calculated risk that would require more full-time professors than are now engaged in the program. The key to attracting a sufficient number of students may lie, not only in the program itself, but in promoting the program both nationally and internationally.

The Master's Program in Library and Information Science at the University of Guanajuato is now faced with a great opportunity for opening new doors in the education of information specialists. It is obvious that information services are moving forward with great speed in Mexico and that more trained personnel are urgently needed in all parts of the country. On a larger scale, no other university in Latin America, outside of Brazil and Puerto Rico, is now offering a master's program in library and information science, and thus with an expanded and modernized program the University of Guanajuato could well become an important international educational center for the training of information specialists in Latin America.