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THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING
OF
LIBRARY AND INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS
AT
THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES

PRESENTED AT THE FIRST WORKSHOP FOR THE ELABORATION
OF A REGIONAL COORDINATED PLAN OF TRAINING
FOR INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS
15 -18 APRIL, 1994, BELO HORIZONTE, BRAZIL.
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ABSTRACT

The Education and Training of Library and Information Professionals at the University of the West Indies

The Department of Library Studies was established in 1971 with the assistance of Unesco in response to representations made by the professional associations of Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. It serves the English speaking territories of the Caribbean and offers courses at both undergraduate and post graduate levels.

The Department is fully integrated within the University structure and has trained nearly 500 students since its inception. Continuing education programmes have been mounted as also outreach programmes to non-campus territories for paraprofessional staff.

Over the years, the curriculum has been modified to reflect the changes and developments in librarianship and the course nomenclature and content reflect these changes.

The Department is presently embarking on a study of its graduates with a view to identifying what changes if any should be made to its curriculum to ensure that the graduates will function effectively in the changing information marketplace of the 1990s and beyond.

THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION
PROFESSIONALS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES

The University of the West Indies is a regional institution which serves the English-speaking Caribbean countries from which it derives financial support. These include the Island territories of Antigua, The Bahamas, Barbados, British Virgin Islands, The Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts/Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and Trinidad & Tobago as well as mainland Belize in South America. It operates from three campuses situated at Cave Hill, Barbados; Mona, Jamaica and St. Augustine in Trinidad & Tobago.

The Department of Library Studies was established in the Faculty of Arts and General Studies on the Mona Campus at the beginning of the academic year 1971/72 with the goal of creating a cadre of librarians capable of providing the efficient human resources necessary for the satisfactory development of library and documentation services in all the countries of the region.

The School was established with the assistance of UNESCO in response to the needs voiced particularly by the library associations of Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica which felt that the stimulation of library development in the region would be greatly enhanced by the creation of a permanent training institution in the region.

The programmes offered were designed to ensure that the education and training of Caribbean librarians would be global in nature, giving them the facility to interface with all other librarians and the ability to work in other library and information systems. At the same time however, they would have a special understanding of and competence to deal with Caribbean information problems as well as cultural, social and other problems peculiar to the region and which would influence library development.

The mission of the DLS as it is popularly known is "The provision of University level professional education for librarians of the Caribbean" Its objectives are:

- 1 Through its courses, tutorial sessions and other planned activities (including fieldwork) to stimulate in the students, sensitivity and responsiveness to the needs of the community and a dedicated commitment to service.
2. To assist the students' understanding of the role of the

library as a dynamic element in the educational process and as a tool for economic and social development.

3. Through its various programmes to provide a suitable qualification for professional work in public, academic and special libraries and in the related fields such as archive management and information science.

4. To undertake, stimulate and assist research on library problems of importance to the region in cooperation with other departments of the University, government offices and local library authorities and library associations and other bodies as appropriate.

STAFF

There are five academic staff members consisting of a professor, 2 senior lecturers (one currently serves as Head of Department), and two lecturers. This number has remained static since 1975/76 and has effectively prevented the school from diversifying its courses by offering more electives and more programmes. In addition the teaching programme over the years has been enhanced by the employment of part-time lecturers who are practitioners in the field and visiting professors from other universities who stay for periods ranging from a semester to one academic year.

THE INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMME

The programmes offered by the department are as follows:

1. A three-year undergraduate programme leading to the degree of Bachelor of Arts with a major in library studies.

2. A fifteen-month postgraduate programme leading to the Master in Library Studies. This programme replaced the Post graduate Diploma in Library Studies which was offered from 1973 to 1988.

3. Occasional courses of varying duration intended as continuing education for professional librarians.

4. Occasional short courses in varying areas, designed to upgrade personnel in anyway connected with library work.

THE UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMME

The three year undergraduate programme is open to those who satisfy the University matriculation requirements. The curriculum is designed to give students a firm grounding in library and information related subjects. However a strong interdisciplinary

element is achieved by the requirement that the library courses are complemented by compulsory university courses and studies in non library courses offered by the Faculty of Arts and General Studies or the Faculties of Natural Sciences or Social Sciences which give the students a measure of subject knowledge. (Appendix I gives a list of the courses which are currently approved.)

THE POSTGRADUATE MLS PROGRAMME

The minimum requirement for entry into this programme is a lower second class honours degree from an approved University. In addition, students who have completed the Diploma programme and who have demonstrated academic growth may be admitted to spend an additional semester completing the masters programme. Students in the MLS programme are required to pass 10 semester courses and complete a research paper of 10,000 to 15,000 words. (See Appendix II for a list of the courses which are currently approved.)

FIELDWORK

Supervised fieldwork lasting for a period of 12 weeks in approved libraries is an essential component of both programmes. This is usually undertaken over 6 weeks during each summer vacation at the end of the first and second years of study by the undergraduates and for 12 weeks during the summer break of the 15 month M.L.S. programme. This period of practical work is intended to complement the theoretical aspects of the programme by exposing the student to real life conditions in the work environment. Evaluation reports are required of the students and performance reports from the supervising librarians. Award of degrees is made only after the field work component has been satisfactorily completed.

STUDENTS

The students accepted come from the various countries of the Caribbean which support the University. Students from Guyana are trained under an agreement with the University of Guyana. In addition, one student from St. Maarten and a few from countries such as Venezuela, India, Sri Lanka, the United States, Mauritius and Fiji have also been trained. To date four hundred and seventy six (476) persons have been graduated from the programme with Jamaica accounting for about 55% of the total.

The degrees/diplomas awarded have been distributed as follows among programmes:

B.A. (with specialization in Library Studies)	306
Post Graduate Diploma in Library Studies	151
Masters in Library Studies	19

EVALUATION OF COURSES & PROGRAMMES

The Department has constantly reviewed its courses and programme offerings to ensure that it keeps abreast of the modern trends in library education. Over the years some courses have been dropped and new ones added to reflect developments in the library and information profession. Consequently courses such as Audiovisual Librarianship, Automation in Information Units, Computer Literacy for Information Professionals, and Research Methodology for Information Specialists are among the course offerings.

With assistance from a CARICOM/IDRC project the Department is currently conducting an evaluation of its graduates. Information from this study is expected to assist in curriculum revision and development.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

The Department recognizes the importance of continuing education as an essential component of its overall programme. To this end practicing librarians in the region are encouraged and given the opportunity to upgrade and update their professional knowledge. This is done by mounting specific courses, workshops and seminars from time to time. Advice and counselling is also offered and contacts made for library school admission and for awards of fellowships. In addition practicing librarians have been encouraged to register as 'specially admitted students' for courses in the formal training programmes and many have taken the opportunity to pursue the courses in Automation and Audiovisual Librarianship.

TRAINING OF NON-PROFESSIONAL STAFF

The Department has provided training support for paraprofessional staff in various territories of the region by mounting special short summer courses and providing the staff to teach these courses. In addition it has spearheaded the preparation of a standard paraprofessional curriculum for use across the English-speaking Caribbean. Similarly work has also been completed on a curriculum for the training of teacher/librarians and this has resulted in a two (2) volume publication in 1989 which has been widely circulated in the region.

LIBRARY MATERIALS

The Main Library on the Mona Campus provides the chief support for the curriculum. This is however supplemented by a small laboratory library which stocks texts, reference books and journals as well as a small collection of audiovisual material and computer software.

EQUIPMENT

The Department's computer network consisting of a file server, six work stations, two printers, and two CDROM drives provide support for a small but significant software library. This is complemented by basic equipment for use with AV materials such as 16mm film projector, synchronized tape slide projector, reel to reel tape recorder player, an overhead projector and a computer data projector.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

The Department hopes to be able to offer an advanced masters programme for those graduates holding the Bachelors degree who wish to pursue advanced work and a masters degree in Archives and Record Management is also contemplated. Similarly an M.Phil. programme which is research oriented will be offered as soon as the staffing situation improves.

Plans are well underway for the physical expansion of the building which will result in accommodation for a computer laboratory and it is hoped to identify project funding to install high tech equipment for this facility.

(a) Internet Connectivity - The University is expected to achieve full internet connectivity in the near future. Currently only the E-mail option is available. However the Department is hoping to exploit this facility in order to enhance its course offerings.

(b) Distance Education Programme - Economic realities have dictated that the University identify alternative needs of meeting the education and training needs of the region and distance education has been identified as an option. The University of the West Indies Distance Teaching Experiment (UWIDITE) facility provides linkages to some non-Campus territories and may provide the basis on which some form of distance education programme could be developed.

CONCLUSION

The Department is mindful of the important role it must play in education and training as well as in research, in support of the continued growth and development of information services in the region. It is mindful of the fact that it must keep its courses current to reflect modern developments in the information profession in order to stimulate change and advancement in regional library policies and practice. It is equally aware of the diversity in the environments from which the students come and therefore endeavours to provide a mix in its course offerings which while meeting the needs of traditional librarianship will also enable its students to face the challenges of the fast changing information world.