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Regional LIS Education Cooperation in Asia, A Continuing Effort

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Abstract

As reported by Lin, Chihfeng in the paper titled “The Challenges and Opportunities of Regional Cooperation in LIS Education In East Asia” in IFLA SET 2004 Workshop in Buenos Aires, Argentina, there is a great need for coordination of activities of LIS education in Asia. The efforts continue as to tie colleagues from the

region to promote the community's relationships and to lift the level of LIS standards as well. An important occasion took place in Royal School of Library and Information Science of Copenhagen, Denmark in August 2005 revealed a cross-Continent, Africa, Asia, and Latin America (AALA) LIS Educator's Discussion Forum was initiated and expanded regional cooperation.

This paper firstly conducts literature review related to theories and practices of LIS cooperation, secondly, summarizes several conferences, workshops or seminars which have been taken place in the region that across geographical boundaries to gather scholars of LIS in different countries for discussion and sharing. These events include The 1st International Conference on Universal Digital Libraries (ICUDL 2005 in Hangzhou, China), The 2005 High Level Forum for Innovative Library Information Services from 4-Zone Cross Strait (in Beijing, China), The 8th International Conference on Asian Digital Libraries (ICADL 2005 in Bangkok, Thailand), and Asia-Pacific Conference on Library & Information Education & Practice (A-LIEP 2006 in Singapore). The article analyzes the common base of LIS in the region, submits suggestions and recommends possible solutions for regional cooperation as well.

I. Introduction

Since 1887, Mevil Dewey established the School of Library Economy in Columbia College in the United States. Library education has developed for about one hundred and twenty years. Higher education makes a lot of progress since then, especially recently, pursuing excellence and globalization being main targets, cooperation and competition has become trends of higher education as well as the Library and Information Science (LIS) Education.

As reported by Lin (2004), here was a great need for coordination of activities of LIS education in East Asia. The formal educational program for training professional librarians in the Republic of China on Taiwan was started in 1955 as a division of the Department of Social Education at the Taiwan Provincial Normal College. Now it has developed a LIS education system composed of ten LIS schools with bachelors', masters', and PhD's degree programs. As Wang (2005) studied, there were about fifty-two LIS schools in Mainland China; eight LIS schools in Japan; thirty-two LIS schools in South Korea. However, comparing with European and American countries, the scale of LIS education systems in East Asia is still small.

As Kigongo-Bukenya (2004) found there were advantages in LIS Education cooperation in developed world. Firstly, they are economy measures against duplication of resources-financial, physical material and human. Secondly, the optimum use of resources. Thirdly, sharing of expertise and experience in solving unique problems in LIS education fields. Fourthly, the exchange of staff and students, which affords participants experience through working in varied environments. Fifthly, is the philanthropic philosophy that the strong institutions should help weak ones. Finally, facilitating the borderless flow of information and knowledge enforces the global village concept. Thus, more studies need to be conducted to ascertain LIS Education regional cooperation in Asia. This study conducts literature review, and then summarizes several major conferences, workshops or seminars which have been taken place in the region that across geographical boundaries to gather scholars of LIS in different countries for discussion and sharing.

This study anticipates to find moderate models and strategies on LIS Education cooperation in East Asia, to analyze the context of interactions among scholars to find common bases of LIS education in the region, so as to provide ideas of emphasis for issues related to LIS curriculum in order to strengthen the curriculum reform and regional cooperation, and to make some suggestions. This topic was identified as being of importance to LIS Educational schools and faculties in East Asia to promote resources and quality of LIS Education.

II. Literature Review

There have been few studies on LIS regional cooperation in American, European countries, online education, and international accreditation. Rodriguez (2003) showed that library cooperation had been defined by Edmonds as reciprocally beneficial sharing of resources, developed or pre-existing, by two or more bodies. Bewer established that library cooperation is an umbrella term for a wide spectrum of cooperation processes and mechanisms. Caparrio-Univazo (2005) found the reasons of collaboration including internet in enhancing the quality of the LIS classroom; interest in enhancing the learning process of the LIS students and professional; increasing interest in professional development; and recognition of the negative consequence of isolation.

There were several case studies of LIS Education cooperation occurring in Africa, Europe, America, and Asia. Kigongo-Bukenya (2004) reviewed partnership initiatives in LIS Education in developed and developing world with particular reference to their objectives, activities and constraints. It can be deduced from the case studies that success in the developed countries is due to several factors including conviction and willingness of partners to cooperate; partners' full participation right from the conception of the ventures; the partners' voluntary spirit to offer services and management of the partnership; the apparent benefits for the institutions, staff and students; and available and sustainable funding. The success of European Association for Library and Information Education and Research (EUCLID) , the International Network of Schools of Library and Information Science (SLISNET) , Association of Library and Information Science Education (ALISE)makes good examples.

The failure of the Association of African Library Schools, CASIS and SISA is due to several factors including without vital conviction, commitment and capacity to give the ventures the support without which they are doomed from the start. Funding has been available for the ventures without proved commitment and conviction from the founding partners and has been given without proper pre-planning of how the projects would be sustained when the donors' support ceased.

Kajberg (2000) reported formal and informal links between LIS schools in Europe. The EU' s SOCREATES program, the NORDPLUS scheme, and professional bodies offer frameworks for communication as well as European LIS education projects and networking activities. The mission of EUCLID is to promote European co-operation within LIS education and research and to provide a body through which it can be represented in matters of European interest. The EUCLID board's main recent concerns have been focused on such issues as mobility within EU program,

equivalency of LIS academic qualifications in Europe, and joint European LIS education conference.

However, the paradox is still that visible efforts of intensified links between LIS academics and schools in European countries are difficult to identify. The differences between the Nordic LIS are visible in such main areas as length of courses, degree structures, credit systems, and the link between undergraduate and postgraduate studies. Pors (2000) recommended that all LIS education institutions adopt a single unified credit system that can replace the four different national systems existing in Nordic countries.

Rodriguez (2003) reported the library education cooperation between Mexico and the United States. A great amount of activity had been developed that involved two or more institutions, such as masters program, scholarship, training visits, exchange of professors. Between the National Autonomous University of Mexico (LINAM) and the University of Texas in Austin; between the National Council of Science and Technology of Mexico and the Universities of Denver, Illinois, there were some agreements. At the present time, talks between the American Library Association and the Mexican Association of Librarians had begun in regard to the possibility of accrediting the master's degree that is awarded at the UNAM.

Lin (2004) focused on the challenges and opportunities of regional cooperation among LIS educational institutions in the East Asian countries. The Chinese Association of Library and Information Science Education (CALISE) established by Taiwan's LIS education institutes in 1992, exchanged experiences and information of curriculum of LIS schools domestically, and also enlarged the discussion with Mainland China's LIS educational programs on a regular basis. The First LIS Educational Conference of Cross-Strait and Hong Kong Area was held in 1993 in Shanghai and topics including: LIS professional development; LIS education; Library Management and Utilization; Library Information Classification and Cataloging; and Issues in Library Automation, Information Networking, and Information Retrieval. Later on, in 1994, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2004, there were seven conferences held by the CALISE in China. Those conferences held by China and Taiwan on regular basis has set a successful model for a regional cooperation and it could be expanded for further cooperation of the region. LIS schools in Taiwan were engaged with China's LIS educational institution regarding exchange programs and activities as well.

Lin (2004) conducted a brief survey with some LIS education institutions in East Asian countries. Most LIS educational institutions had cooperation activities; but most of them were local or domestic based, not regional based. Many LIS schools responded

that even though they currently didn't participate in a regional LIS education cooperation, they would like to participate in the future if such initiative was undertaken.

Chaparrío-Univazo (2005) made some suggestions that online education offers a wide array of possibilities for enhancing the collaboration process. He also explored the reasons of collaboration including internet in enhancing the quality of the LIS classroom; interest in enhancing the learning process of the LIS students and professional; increasing interest in professional development; and recognition of the negative consequence of isolation.

Gregory (2003) reported the School of Library and Information Science (SLIS) at the University of South Florida (USF) helped to pioneer the field of distance education since as long as the mid-1970s with early efforts in site-based distance education and interactive video. USF offers a combination of web-based classes and face-to-face classes at distance sites located around the state of Florida. Plans for the internationalization of the SLIS program are now afoot, with the expectation that USF will soon be offering the SLIS master's degree in library and information science at several possible sites in Latin America, as well as in Singapore, in cooperation with existing via the World Wide Web is often now seen as a viable alternative to the construction of more brick and mortar university campuses. They also reported some barriers to cooperative programs.

Kigongo – Bukenya (2005) explored accreditation definition and reasons for international accreditation in the LIS profession. Accreditation together with certification and licensing of individual practitioners, creates a complex quality assurance system known as credentialing. International accreditation can be constructed as quality control measures degrees and involves in the education, training and practices among LIS institutions and professionals of nations of the world. It has been referred to in many ways including: international parity, reciprocity of qualification, recognition of overseas qualifications, equivalence of LIS qualifications or for that matter LIS International Education. Efforts towards international accreditation have been several and over a long time, with the support of UNESCO, the International Federation of Library Association and Institutions (IFLA). Dalton and Levinson (1999) highlighted problems inherent in the three approaches they saw as possibilities in the international accreditation system.

III. Occasions of Exchanges and Sharing of LIS Education in the Region

Forums for sharing experiences among international researchers, educators, practitioners, and policy makers under organized panels, tutorials, and workshops were

taken places in this region. Discussions related to Digital Libraries, Library Information Services, and LIS education research in these occasions that brought together similar concerns in LIS Education.

1st ICUDL 2005

The 1st International Conference on Universal Digital Libraries (1st ICUDL 2005), during October 31 to November 2, 2005 in Hangzhou, China, themed as “Universal Digital Library” which deposited views on the recent development and progress in the digital library technology.

The theme of ICUDL2005 was "Universal Digital Library". The goal of this conference is to provide a forum for library and IT professionals to exchange comprehensive views on the recent development and progress in the digital library technology, to promote international cooperation in related fields, to advocate universal access to information, and to enhance the global impact of Universal Digital Library Project (Million Book Project). Two sessions of discussion included 1) Digital Library Technology, and 2) Digital Library Services and Management.

4-Zone Cross-Strait LIS Forum 2005

The 2005 High Level Forum for Innovative Library Information Services from 4-Zone Cross Strait took place in Beijing, China during November 22-24, 2005 (4-Zone Cross-Strait LIS Forum 2005). Participants were high level administrators and managers of libraries from four areas across-strait.

The theme of the Conference was: Innovation and Development of Library Information Services Under New Environment - Strategic Considerations Toward 2010. Sessions included: 1) Library Information Services Under Digitized and Internet Environment; 2) Organizational Database, Knowledge Management System and Management Systems Related to Library Information Services; 3) Library Administration and Management Related to Library Information Service Under New Information Environment; 4) The Evaluation of Library Information Services Under New Information Environment; 5) Cross-Strait LIS Education Under New Information Environment.

8th ICADL 2005

The 8th International Conference on Asian Digital Libraries (8th ICADL 2005) was held in Bangkok, Thailand, during December 12 – 15, 2005. The theme of the conference was “ Implementing Strategies and Sharing Experiences” Strategies with regards to economic, legal, organizational, pedagogical, policy, and social issues.

Sharing experiences of collection development, international collaboration, quality of service, system evaluation, user communities, and user studies. Topics included 1) Systems in architecture, models integration and interoperability; 2) Techniques in information processing, cross-language information access, information retrieval, integration and information mining, metadata, multimedia, semantic web, semi-structured data management, web cataloging and web-page analysis; 3) Management issues in access control, content management, intellectual property, security and privacy and service models; 4) Areas and Concerns of application in digital archives, digital preservation, knowledge management, education, e-science, scholarly publishing.

1st A-LIEP 2006

The First Asia-Pacific Conference on Library & Information Education & Practice (1st A-LIEP 2006) was held in April 3-6, 2006 in Singapore. Theme of the Conference was “Preparing Information Professionals for Leadership in the New Age”. Presentations of topics included 1) Global and regional trends in LIS Education and practice; 2) Quality and innovation in information services, 3) Professional development strategies, 4) Digital libraries and repositories, 5) Digital information services, 6) Information literacy.

Sessions were divided into Global trends in LIS Education & Practice, Regional Trends in LIS Education, Quality & Innovation in Information Services, Advances in Digital Library Research, Digital Information Services, National Perspectives in LIS Education, Innovation in Information Literacy Education, Professional Development Strategies, Development of Digital Repositories & Archives, Cooperation and Resource Sharing in LIS, Aligning LIS Curriculum with Industry Needs, Facets of user Information Behavior, The Information Job Market, Educating School & Special Librarians, Diverse User Information Needs, Internationalization of LIS Education Programs and Intercultural Issues, Information Services for Special Communities, Bibliometric Studies, Leveraging e-Learning Technologies, Impact of Research on Information Service, Leadership and Entrepreneurship.

1st ICUDL 2005, 4-Zone Cross-Strait LIS Forum, 2005, and 8th ICADL 2005 emphasized on library information services in ever-changing environment. As view points from practitioners, Digital library and related technology, techniques and management were the major concerns in these conferences. Digitizing documents and preserves information in the library in order to put them on the cyberspace as to actualize ideas of resource sharing. As Paul Poon mentioned in the 4-Zone

Cross-Strait LIS Forum that Mindset of the management; library personnel (Manpower), Library personnel; technical infrastructure (Methods), Funding (Materials), and Technical Infrastructure (Machinery) are components of a successful resource sharing, the 4M categories all need human resources. This is also clearly point out the responsibility of LIS Education of current stage.

1st A-LIEP 2006 distinguished its goal as “Preparing Information Professionals for Leadership in the New Age” explored trends of the professional education, professional development and professional research. It also included LIS Education job market, leadership and entrepreneurship. Sessions of discussion in the Conference of A-LIEP also coordinated with six general areas of ASIST Guidelines for Information Science Education, which consists of 1) Foundations of Information Science; 2) Information Use and Users; 3) Methods of Inquiry; 4) Information Processing; 5) Information Technology; 6) Information Service Provision and Management. Occasion as such, scholars from different countries of the region gathered and exchanged expertise certainly brought up awareness of cooperation – an important connection in the age of globalization. However, substantial topics and issues needed to be cumulated in the further meetings.

IV. Conclusion

The purposes of the study are to find moderate models of LIS Education cooperation, as well as to express the importance of the continuing efforts of LIS Education cooperation in East Asia. Related literature review revealed that success of LIS Education cooperation caused by several factors including conviction and willingness of partners to cooperate; partners’ full participation right from the conception of the ventures; the partners’ voluntary spirit to offer services and management of the partnership; and availability and sustainability of stable funding. Organizations such as EUCLID, SLISNET are the successful examples.

Most of LIS Education in Asia-Pacific area, such as Taiwan, Mainland China, Japan, South Korea, started in about 1950s and has developed education systems with bachelor’s, master’s, and PhD’s programs. These systems of programs have been confronting similar problems, such as: 1) Rather small scales of education systems; 2) Scarce of faculty members and students; 3) Being unbalanced between job market and educational supply; 4) Professional qualification of librarians are not being identified; 5) Found difficulties of integrating library science with information science; 6) Weakness of scholarship and researches; and 7) Inadequate funding and administration support. It is urgent to establish regional cooperation in East Asian countries to solve

LIS Educational problems confronting the area in order to step forward for further cross-continent cooperation in the global era.

As per analyzed outcome of major conferences, workshops taken place in Asia, it lays emphasis on Digital Libraries, Library Information Services and LIS education research, it seldom discussed regional cooperation of LIS Education. Although CALISE has held several conferences in China, there has not been much progress toward cooperation of Cross-Strait between Taiwan and China. The failure of LIS Education regional cooperation in East Asia is due to barriers of languages and cultures, lack of facilitating institutions, without vital conviction, commitment, capacity and funding to give the ventures the support.

In comparison with European and American countries, it is necessary to expedite steps of Asian LIS cooperation in order to work simultaneously with global-wise, or cross-continent cooperation. Thus, authors of this article suggest following recommendations for LIS education regional cooperation in East Asia:

1. To establish a cooperative organization or institution, such as “Asian Association for Library and Information Science Education and Research (AALISER)”, to promote Asia cooperation among LIS Educators and researchers.
2. This “AALISER” is responsible as a body to represent in matters of Asian interest, such as: 1) Focusing on issues as mobility within LIS programs, 2) Equivalency of LIS academic qualifications in Asia, and 3) Facilitating joint LIS Education conferences.
3. A strategic and concrete approach of LIS Education cooperation in East Asia is to carry on cooperative activities among Chinese-speaking countries, such as China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau. Since CALISE has contributed to LIS education cooperation between Taiwan and China, it can be a foundation of developing cooperative activities among Taiwan, China, Hong Kong, and Macau.
4. It is necessary to hold a series of conferences on LIS Education Regional Cooperation in Asia at regular base, to assist establishing Cooperation Organization or Association, to plan and discuss LIS education regional cooperation in Asia.
5. Authors of the study suggest that the new organization of “AALISER” can facilitate exchanges and cooperative activities relating to curriculum development, proposing LIS education standards and guidelines, reciprocity

of qualification, cooperative teaching, cooperative research, exchange of faculty and students and so on.

6. For online education offers a wide array of possibilities for enhancing the collaboration process, we suggest to develop pilot projects of web-based education in LIS education among Taiwan, China, Hong Kong, and Macau, and later applying to other Asian countries.
7. As reciprocity of qualification and regional accreditation among LIS schools are regarded important, we need to have a discussion about them to help students studying across East Asian countries.

This paper concludes that better strategic approaches lines ahead to establish LIS Education cooperation scheme, and professional bodies offering frameworks for communication as well as LIS Education projects and networking activities appendixes with concrete recommendations.

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