

	<p style="text-align: right;">Date : 07/06/2007</p> <p>Challenges in Assisting Schools of Librarianship and Information Studies in Developing Countries – A perspective from Research in Latin America</p> <p>Ian M. Johnson Professor and Associate Dean, Aberdeen Business School, The Robert Gordon University, Garthdee Road, Aberdeen AB10 7QE, Great Britain (i.m.johnson@rgu.ac.uk)</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;"><i>WORLD LIBRARY AND INFORMATION CONGRESS: 73RD IFLA GENERAL CONFERENCE AND COUNCIL</i> 19-23 August 2007, Durban, South Africa http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla73/index.htm</p>	



PROJECT REVISTAS



Abstract

The paper introduces a directory of Schools of Librarianship and Information Sciences in Latin America. This was based on existing printed directories, and an extensive web search in January 2007. An appended directory lists 127 institutions in the region that have or are currently offering courses in the subject, of which 100 appear to be active.

Introduction

One indicator of the changes affecting the LIS profession in Latin America is the apparently steady increase in the number of universities where LIS is taught. Communication within the region, and even within its larger countries, is poor. This not only affects awareness of the existence of relevant courses, but also hinders the pace of development.

Previous directories

Previously published directories of Schools of Librarianship and Information Studies in Latin America have been both incomplete and inconsistent in their coverage. The first known guides to Schools and courses appear to be those compiled on behalf of the Union Panamericana in the 1950s [1]. UNESCO has since supported the publication of several international directories of Schools of Librarianship. The first, published in 1972, identified only 34 Schools in 11 of the 20 Spanish and Portuguese speaking states in the region, although many of these were no more than training centres established by major libraries [2]. In 1985, in a directory compiled by IFLA's Education and Training Section with UNESCO support, it was recorded that there 71 Schools in 17 countries [3], but the compilers of a later edition of the same directory secured reports from only 47 Schools, although, again, only 3 countries were not represented [4]. To date, IFLA's Education and Training Section has, for various reasons, been unsuccessful in its efforts to compile a new edition of its global directory. A study undertaken by this author in 1997/98 estimated that the total number of Schools still in existence in the region amounted to no more than 58. 9 countries appeared then to have then not yet established any School teaching the discipline [5]. However, more recent studies identified that the discipline has been taught in over 80 universities in 16 countries in the region [6]. The seemingly continual changes, which have led one commentator to note that obtaining reliable data about them is problematic [7, 8], inhibit analysis of their current sufficiency and relevance.

REVISTAS

The REVISTAS project was undertaken by an international partnership with support from the European Commission's ALFA programme (América Latina Formación Académica). It was intended to identify professional journals published in the region with a view to ensuring their wider availability through digitisation and thus contribute to professional education and development. The principal users of the journals were expected to be the Schools and Departments teaching and undertaking research in the discipline, and the compilation of this list of Schools and Departments was undertaken so that the information about available journals could be distributed to them.

The preparation of a current list of Schools was complicated by the changing nature of higher education in general, and this investigation has been useful in resolving some of the consequential problems. In some cases, courses have simply been transferred from a library to an institution of higher education. In other cases, institutions' status and names have changed. Similarly, this revised listing resolves some confusion that may have arisen because of different local conventions in presenting addresses (for correspondence and/or visiting), or because addresses were incomplete or incorrectly transcribed in earlier printed directories.

Methodology

Entries from the 3 printed directories that had been prepared with UNESCO support [9, 10, 11] were compiled as an initial basis for web searches. The

entries in these printed directories have been supplemented or updated by searching the lists of Schools on several Web sites:

- UNESCO Libraries portal – http://www.unesco.org/cgi-bin/webworld/portal_bib2/cgi/page.cgi?g=Training%2FInstitutions%2FLatin_America%2Findex.shtml;d=1
- UNESCO Archives portal - http://www.unesco.org/webworld/portal_archives/pages/index.shtml
- INFOLAC - UNESCO Programa para la Sociedad de la Información en América Latina y El Caribe - <http://infolac.ucol.mx/directorio/escuelas.html>
- World List of Departments and Schools of Information Studies, Information Management, Information Systems, etc. - <http://informationr.net/wl/wlist7.html>
- Universia, a portal linking 650 universities, with national nodes in 10 countries (Argentina, Brasil, Colombia, Chile, España, México, Perú, Portugal, Puerto Rico, and Venezuela) - <http://www.universia.net/>
- EDIBCIC - Asociación de Educación e Investigación en Bibliotecología, Archivología, Ciencias de la Información y Documentación de Iberoamérica y el Caribe - <http://www.edibcic.org/index.htm>
- Grupo Baratz - Servicios de Teledocumentación - Centro de servicios y recursos para bibliotecas y bibliotecari@s: Universidades: dónde estudiar - <http://www.absysnet.com/recursos/recuniversidades.html#Iberoamerica>
- Centros de Recursos para el Aprendizaje (Página creada para los Bibliotecarios Escolares del Mundo Hispano, Enero 2005): Escuelas y Departamentos de Bibliotecología - <http://www.geocities.com/crachilecl/asociac.htm>
- ABECIN - Associação Brasileira de Ciência da Informação - <http://www.abecin.org.br/Escolasal.htm>
- Conselho Federal de Biblioteconomia (Brasil) - <http://www.cfb.org.br/html/instituicoes.asp>
- Conselhos Regionais de Biblioteconomia (Brasil) - http://www.cfb.org.br/html/links_regionais.asp

The searches were undertaken in January 2007. It was evident that many of these web-based directories had not been updated recently, and none were comprehensive. Nonetheless, most of the new entries in the list appended to this note originate from the web sites. In addition, a small number of courses were initially identified from the institutional attributions of authors of journal articles on professional education in the region, or by serendipity.

Web sites in Latin American Universities and libraries are at various stages of development. Some websites were under reconstruction at the time they were investigated. Aesthetics are frequently more impressive than functionality. Structures are variable, and a wide variety of terminology is used to headline the internal structure of web sites, and information is presented in greater or lesser detail using an equally wide variety of practices. Navigation is frequently poor – a high ‘click’ count may be needed to find the right page. The lack of planned web site development is further reflected in broken links because changes have been introduced without links from abandoned URLs.

Some institutions do not appear to support individual web pages for Faculties, Schools, Departments, or in some case courses. Some have consequently set up their own web site. Where the organisational entities do have web pages, in

many cases there is no link from them to details of courses, staff, publications, etc. Similarly, in many cases there are no links from course web pages to the relevant part of the institution responsible for the course's management and delivery. There is consequently some inconsistency in this list, as it has not always proved possible to identify the name of the School, Department or Faculty hosting a course, whereas in some instances a greater degree of detail is provided, occasionally simply to ensure that correspondence reaches the correct part of the institution if this list is used for addressing purposes. In the appended directory, some URLs may need truncating to their root to access a page from which it is necessary to navigate through the site to the relevant page(s).

Some URLs are presented only at the institutional level because the detail of departmental or course page locators is not in the public domain. The inclusion of a URL in the appended list, however, simply confirms that the institution still exists, although it may not have been possible to find a page for a relevant department or course. Without direct evidence from a web site, it is not possible to confirm definitely that the institution concerned still offers a relevant course. This Directory includes entries that appeared in previously published directories even though it has not been possible, through a web search, to locate the institution concerned or a relevant current course in an institution. The omission of a URL from an entry simply indicates that it was not possible to find a web site that corresponds to the institution in previous printed or online directories. The results of searches in some institutions' web sites do, however, suggest that some relevant courses have been withdrawn, temporarily or permanently.

Results

These investigations suggest that the higher education institutions in even the smallest countries in the region have at some time addressed the need to educate information professionals. The searches revealed that a total of 127 institutions appear to have offered courses in librarianship and information sciences in the Spanish and Portuguese speaking countries in the region or are currently offering them, of which 49 had not appeared in the 3 printed directories that were examined at the start of the search. Sufficient evidence could not be found to confirm that 27 of the institutions that had been listed in the printed directories or on web sites were currently offering courses. Nonetheless, the total number of institutions whose web sites are currently offering courses (100, including one was identified though a personal communication with a Fulbright scholar who was involved in plans to establish a new course) is significantly greater than had previously been known for certain. Interestingly, in proportion to the region's population, this is about the same as the number of ALA accredited SLIS in the USA, although it is noticeable that there distribution between countries is uneven. Only one country does not appear currently to support a course in the discipline, but many of the larger urban areas in some of the least developed or geographically large countries have no local access to education in the field. This suggests that there may be a small but significant market for Spanish-language distance education providers at both undergraduate and Masters Degree level.

Country	Number of LIS	
	Identified	Currently active
Argentina	18	15
Bolivia	3	1
Brasil	50	40
Chile	6	4
Colombia	7	4
Costa Rica	4	4
Cuba	4	1
Ecuador	4	3
El Salvador	2	2
Guatemala	1	1
Honduras	1	1*
México	12	11
Nicaragua	1	0
Panamá	3	2
Paraguay	1	1
Perú	3	3
Puerto Rico	2	2
Republica Dominicana	1	2
Uruguay	1	1
Venezuela	3	2
TOTAL	127	100

Table 1. Schools and Departments of Librarianship and Information Sciences in Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America

* New course proposed to commence in 2007

Limitations

The researcher was not able to examine the earliest [12] or most recent [13] directories, but it seems unlikely that this has resulted in significant errors or omissions.

In some cases, the URLs included in the appended Directory may link only to a particular course. The aim has been simply to identify institutions where the discipline is or has been taught (or possibly in some cases where it was intended to be taught). No effort has generally been made to provide URLs where courses are offered in an institution at more than one level (undergraduate and postgraduate), or with more than one specialism, in e.g. librarianship, information science, or archives and records management. Schools teaching only archives or records management have not been included unless they already appeared in one of the directories consulted.

Some of the institutions listed here offer their courses both on campus and through distance teaching. In some cases, the distance teaching is managed through a separate department within the institution. This list assumes that the academic development of the course is the responsibility of the cognate

department, and separate address details for the distance-learning programme have been omitted.

In almost every country there is some evidence (implicit in the names of courses and Schools) of the shift from teaching curricula narrowly focused on librarianship to more broadly based information studies. This has been accepted in recognising what appears to be the contemporary manifestation of Schools listed in older directories and including them here, although the changing emphasis of their curricula remains a contentious matter in some countries. In many cases, insufficient information was easily accessible on the web site to facilitate the complete elimination from this list those courses teaching "ciencias de informacion" that may be using the term in its equally widely recognised sense to describe degree programmes in computer science.

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