Collaboration in LIS Education in Europe: Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract

This paper describes the collaboration in library and information science education in Europe. Current trends and developments in higher education in Europe and the responses of library and information science institutions to these changes as well as the main challenges and opportunities are discussed. The overview is based on literature reviews and personal observations and involvement, and is further examined through an institutional case study.

Introduction

Stevens and Campbell (2006: 536) note:

> "Information literacy", "lifelong learning", "global citizenship", and "collaboration" have all become academic "buzzwords" that have made their way into the mission statements, program descriptions, and planning documents of HE institutions across the USA. As such, they are increasingly used as "hooray words", deployed to evoke a positive emotional response, to generate support, and/or to stimulate action rather than to incite empirical analysis.

However, collaboration and cooperation as well as lifelong learning are important strategic concepts in many documents in the field of higher education (HE) in Europe. Although intra-institutional and national collaborative activities are also reinforced, there is a stronger emphasis on international collaboration. It is believed that international collaboration is a necessary strategy for the survival of the universities in our global world and will "inevitably broaden a person's horizons, enrich their lives and provide them with both professional and personal networks for a lifetime" (Freshwater et al,

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2006). According to Chan (2004: 32), however, the most important reason why universities today form linkages with each other is the necessity to compete in an increasingly competitive and global environment.

European library and information science (LIS) HE is a part of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and changes and challenges in European HE influence also LIS education and its community. In the last two decades an increasing interest towards academic collaboration has been also evident in LIS education in Europe. However, quite recently expansion and intensification of collaborative initiatives can be identified; European LIS schools have started to participate more actively in joint activities to respond to the challenges of globalization, to improve, innovate and strengthen the LIS curricula and courses to serve the changing needs of students and the global employment market, and to meet the international standards of quality in teaching, research and services.

This paper describes the collaboration in LIS education in Europe. The current state of collaborative activities within European LIS education as well as the main challenges and opportunities the LIS education are likely to face can be better understood with some awareness of the major factors and trends that have influenced HE in Europe. The paper is structured into five parts. The first section explores the concept of collaboration and relationships between collaboration, cooperation, globalization and internationalization. The second examines current trends and developments in European HE in the context of the Bologna Process and the European Union's (EU) action programmes; the third reviews the collaboration in LIS education in Europe; the fourth is using the Tallinn University as a case study to illustrate LIS collaboration in Europe; finally, the challenges, opportunities, and barriers in collaboration are discussed. The overview is based on literature reviews and personal observations and involvement and presents a selective review.

The Concept of Collaboration and Related Terms
There does not have a common definition of the concept of collaboration. *The New Oxford Dictionary of English* (2001) defines collaboration as: "the action of working with someone to produce or create something" and also "traitorous cooperation with an enemy". The second meaning refers to the fact that collaboration has negative connotations in some European cultures; for example, the French Vichy regime in the 1940s collaborated with the German occupiers. Despite these negative origins, collaboration is most frequently interpreted as acting or working together and mostly used today as a synonym for cooperation. NODE (2001) defines the two words very similarly: cooperation is a "process of working together to the same end". There is also a tendency to use the terms 'collaboration' and 'cooperation' interchangeably with the term 'partnership'.

There is a huge amount of literature on this topic. In the literature of psychology, sociology, educational sciences, public administration, management, social work, and health sciences 'collaboration' is described in a variety of ways for the past fifty years (Elliott, 2001). Mattessich et al (2001: 4) propose the following definition:

Collaboration is a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve common goals. The relationship includes a commitment to mutual relationships and goals; a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility; mutual authority and accountability for success; and sharing resources and rewards.

In education, the concept of collaboration is one of the cornerstones of the social constructivist learning (Jonassen, 1994) and refers to the activities that promote learning through social interaction. There is an extensive literature on the effectiveness of collaborative learning in an online environment since 1990s, mainly inspired by Vygotsky's socio-cultural psychology and Piaget's cognitive psychology.

There is also a continuing debate and exploration of the relationship between collaboration and cooperation. According to Panitz (1996), collaboration is a philosophy of interaction and personal lifestyle whereas cooperation is a structure of interaction designed to facilitate the accomplishment of an end product or goal. Elliott (2001: 1-2) concludes that even after decades of study, the term 'collaboration' remains somewhat tentative in nature, with its definition often being dependent upon the context of a particular experience. For the purpose of this paper, collaboration is defined as a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship between individuals to achieve common goals, and cooperation as a structure and system of interaction designed to facilitate the accomplishment of a goal through people working together.

There are several other concepts closely related to international collaboration; for example, globalization and internationalization. It is believed that international collaboration and cooperation are visible aspects of globalization. Globalization is also used in a multiplicity of senses and is a much debated topic in general and in HE in particular. In this paper globalization is viewed as "a phenomenon that affects internationalization" (Knight, 2005: 6).

For more than twenty years, there has been a debate about defining internationalization. The concept has been used for centuries in political science and governmental relations, but in education it started to spread in the early 1980s. Before then, *international cooperation* and *international education* were the favoured terms, as they still are in some countries (Knight, 2005: 10). However, many authors prefer now to use the term 'internationalization', as a more holistic concept, when talking about collaboration and cooperation in HE. The most widely accepted and cited definition of internationalization is provided by Knight (2004: 11): "Internationalization at the national/sector/institutional level is defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education".

Main dimensions of internationalization are: 'internationalization at home' and 'cross-boarder education'. *Internationalization at home* is purely domestic and refers to the international and intercultural dimension of curriculum; teaching and research that is helping students develop international and intercultural competencies without leaving their country. *Cross-boarder education* refers to a situation where the student, teacher, researcher, program, institution/provider or course materials cross national jurisdictional

borders (Knight, 2003). De Wit (2002) and Knight (2005) provide good overviews of the meaning, definitions and development of internationalization and related terms[1].

Although there is a tendency to use the concepts 'internationalization' and 'globalization' interchangeably, it is suggested to view them as very different, albeit related, processes (Knight, 2005: 3). Knight (1999) believes that internationalization is "both a reaction to, but also, an agent of globalization". The main elements of globalization influence significantly HE and shape the responses and actions of internationalization to globalization (Knight, 2005: 6).

Although universities have always been international institutions in their orientations (Beehrens, 2004), internationalization of HE started to increase in its importance, scope, pace, volume and complexity over the past two decades as a response to globalization and ICT developments (Knight, 2005). The number of internationally mobile students seeking an education abroad was 1.8 million in 2001, 2.5 million in 2004 and is expected 7.2 million in 2025 (EC, 2007a: 2). However, Altbach & Knight (2006: 9) express a concern that these predictions might be too optimistic; the international student numbers in Australia have declined somewhat, after a decade of dramatic expansion. The US, the leading host country, also saw a modest enrolment decline in 2004.

The Impact of the Bologna Process on Collaboration
Research shows that European HE is well perceived in some parts of the world but largely unknown in others (EC, 2006). In order to understand the recent developments and collaboration in European LIS education it is necessary to review some of the changes that European HE has undergone in the last decade.

Changes and challenges in European HE refer to what is commonly known as the Bologna Process. The Bologna Process is the product of a series of meetings of ministers responsible for HE at which policy decisions have been taken in order to establish an EHEA by 2010. The premises of the Bologna Process are to be found in the Sorbonne Declaration on Harmonisation of the Architecture of the European Higher Education System, signed in May 1998 by the ministers of education of France, Germany, Italy and United Kingdom. The Sorbonne Declaration met a positive response from other European countries and in June 1999 twenty nine European ministers signed the Bologna Declaration and committed their governments and their countries to create the EHEA by 2010. This declaration became the primary document used by the signatory countries to establish the general framework for the modernisation and reform of European HE; the process of reforms came to be called the Bologna Process (Eurydice, 2007).

The signing of the Bologna Declaration means a commitment that is freely taken by each signatory country to reform its own HE system. It was recognized that in spite of their valuable differences, European HE systems are facing many common challenges. Thus,

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[1] The concept of and approaches to internationalisation as well as issues and trends in internationalisation of HE have been discussed in more detail in Abdullahi, I., Kajberg, L., Virkus, S. (2007). Internationalisation of LIS Education in Europe and North America. *New Library World*, 108(1/2), 7 - 24.

the Declaration reflects a search for a common European answer to common European problems. The Bologna Process aims at creating convergence and, thus, is not a path towards the 'standardisation' or 'uniformisation' of European HE. Principles of autonomy and diversity are highly respected in the Bologna Process; a common space for HE should be achieved within the framework of the diversity of cultures, languages and educational systems. However, the Declaration recognises the value of coordinated reforms, compatible systems and common actions (Eurydice, 2007).

The action programme set out in the Declaration is based on a clearly defined common goal, a deadline and a set of specified objectives. The goal is the creation, by the year 2010, of the EHEA in order to enhance the employability and mobility of citizens and to increase the international competitiveness of European HE. A set of specified objectives in the Bologna Declaration include: a) adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees; b) implementation of a system based on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate; c) establishment of a system of credits (such as European Credit Transfer System (ECTS); d) promotion of the mobility of students, teachers and researchers; e) promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance, and f) promotion of European dimension in HE. Thus, the Declaration is a key document which marks a turning point in the development of European HE.

The goals of the Bologna Declaration, through a set of policy measures were later reinforced and expanded[2]; for example, The Prague Communiqué (2001) emphasised three elements of the Bologna Process: a) promotion of lifelong learning, b) involvement of HEIs and students as active partners, and c) enhancement of the attractiveness of the EHEA. The Berlin Communiqué (2003) emphasised certain priorities for the next two years: a) development of quality assurance at institutional, national and European levels, b) the implementation of the two-cycle system, c) recognition of degrees and periods of studies, including the provision of the Diploma Supplement automatically and free of charge for all graduates as of 2005, d) elaboration of an overarching framework of qualifications for the EHEA, e) inclusion of the doctoral level as the third cycle in the Bologna Process, and f) promotion of closer links between the EHEA and the European Research Area (ERA). In the Bergen Communiqué (2005) the priorities for 2007 included: a) reinforcing the social dimension and removing obstacles to mobility, b) implementing the standards and guidelines for quality assurance, c) implementing national frameworks of qualifications, d) awarding and recognising joint degrees, and e) creating opportunities for flexible learning paths in HE, including procedures for recognition of prior learning. The Bergen Conference also marked the adoption of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (Eurydice, 2007).

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[2] Every second year the Ministers meet to measure progress and set priorities for action. After Bologna (1999) they met in Prague (2001), Berlin (2003), Bergen (2005) and London (17-18 May 2007). They will meet again in Leuven/Louvain-La-Neuve (May 2009).

Over the next two years the focus will be in particular on the following action lines: mobility of students and staff, social dimension, data collection, employability, stocktaking and EHEA in a global context (London Communiqué, 2007). However, Winckler (2007: 5) point out that the cultural impact of the Bologna Process has often been under-estimated and that there remains much work to be done throughout society, and that the EHEA will continue to be "work in progress" well beyond 2010. As the 2010 deadline set for the realisation of the EHEA approaches, there has been enormous change in European HE. *Trends V* report contains significant findings on the implementation of Bologna reforms and also on the attitudinal shift that has taken place across the HE sector (Croisier et al, 2007: 16).

The Bologna Process has influenced as well as supported significantly international collaboration. Clark (2007) notes that there has been also a shift towards collaboration and cooperation in the language used in official Bologna communications and documents; for example, buzz words from early declarations such as 'competitiveness' and 'attraction' have been replaced in more recent communiqués with terminology such as 'cooperation,' 'partnership' and 'exchange'. Alan Johnson[3] noted in his Opening Address at the Bologna 5th Ministerial Conference in London:

> Our 46 states have the potential to produce 46 times what can be achieved in isolation, for the benefit of students, academics and higher education institutions across Europe. The Bologna Process is an extremely important catalyst for change. It will support the EU's agenda to modernise universities, helping our higher education systems to meet the challenges of the 21st century. *International collaboration* is the only way to fulfil that mission: opening access to higher education for all students, pooling the knowledge of academics, and bolstering businesses with an increased supply of highly-qualified graduates (Johnson, 2007; italics mine).

However, EU authorities have supported academic collaboration with the help of the EU action programmes long before the Bologna Process started. Beerkens (2004: 35) notes that the Action Programme in the Field of Education, approved by the European Council in 1976, marked the start of a formal European educational policy. In this programme a number of policy objectives were addressed among which were the promotion of closer cooperation in the field of education. The launch of the first well-known action programmes in 1980s such as Comett, Erasmus, Petra, Lingua, Force and Tempus broadened the scope of collaboration and cooperation (ETUI-REHS, 2007).

Probably the best-known action programme is the Erasmus which was launched in 1987 with the aim of increasing student mobility within the European Community. The programme was extended later to include many other activities (e.g. teacher mobility, joint curriculum development, international intensive programmes, thematic networks, language courses, ECTS). Over 1.5 million students have so far studied abroad with an Erasmus grant, and the EC hopes to reach a total of 3 million by 2012. Thousands of partnerships have been created between universities and departments, and hundred of networks and associations have been established across the continents (EC, 2007b). In 1995 Erasmus became a part of the broader Socrates Programme which covered education from school to university to lifelong learning including actions such as

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[3] The Secretary of State for Education and Skills of Her Majesty's Government, UK

Comenius (addressed to schools), Grundtvig (adult education), Lingua (language learning) and Minerva (e-learning and the use of ICT).

Since 1990s, several other action programmes have had a significant impact on collaboration between EU countries and especially for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) (e.g. Tempus, Phare and Leonardo da Vinci). Tempus (*Trans-European Mobility Scheme for University Studies*) focused on curriculum development, teacher training, university management, and structural reforms in HE. Today, the program promotes exchange with non-EU countries in the Western Balkans, East Europe, Central Asia, North Africa and the Middle East. A new Tempus Plus Programme runs from 2007 to 2013. The Phare Programme (1989-2006) supported CEE countries to the stage where they were ready to join EU. Now it is replaced by Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA). Leonardo da Vinci (1995-2006) programme supports collaborative initiatives in the field of vocational training (ETUI-REHS, 2007).

Several EU programmes promote the use of ICT in education. Within the eEurope 2002 Action Plan the eLearning Programme (2004-2006) was launched with the aim of improving the quality and accessibility of European education and training systems through the effective use of ICTs. However, projects containing e-learning elements were actually supported also within Minerva, but also in Leonardo da Vinci, Grundtvig, Lingua, Comenius and Erasmus (ETUI-REHS, 2007).

For the period 2007-2013 these programmes are all being brought within the common framework of the new Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP). The LLP comprises four specific sectoral sub-programmes: Comenius for school education, Erasmus for university level education, Leonardo da Vinci for vocational training, and Grundtvig for adult education. The new LLP also includes four transversal programmes, focused respectively on policy cooperation and innovation, language learning, ICTs, and dissemination and exploitation of results (ETUI-REHS, 2007).

There are also various funds aiming to reduce disparities between different regions and to promote economic, social and territorial cohesion. European HEIs have also been affected by the European research policies. The research collaboration has mainly been developed through the Framework Programmes, founded in the 1980s. At present, the Seventh Framework Programme (2007-2013) is largely concerned with cooperation between researchers in the field of technological developments (ETUI-REHS, 2007).

The Bologna Process has grown from 29 countries in 1999 to 46 countries today and has extended beyond the geographic borders of Europe. Cooperation with other continents is now very much part of the Bologna agenda and is supported through a series of bilateral programmes (e.g. EU-USA/Canada, Asia-Link, Edulink, Alfa and Alban for Latin America and the new Nyerere Programme for Africa) (Clark, 2007). The EU's flagship programme for worldwide academic cooperation and mobility is the Erasmus Mundus. The programme is focused on academic exchange at the graduate level, for the enhancement of quality in HE and the promotion of intercultural understanding through cooperation with third countries. By the end of the programme's first phase in 2008, 100

courses and 8,000 scholarship-holders will have received EU support (Clark, 2007). It is proposed that the second phase of the Erasmus Mundus programme (2009-2013) would extend its scope to all levels of HE (EC, 2007a).

Collaboration in LIS Education in Europe
According to Borup Larsen (2005: 232), there are approximately two hundred institutions of LIS education in Europe. The LIS field is characterized by a great diversity and complexity. The diversity is found in traditions, approaches, models, program structures, levels, placements, the duration of courses, thematic profiles of curricula, the content of courses, ways of teaching and assessment, and other factors (Borup Larsen, 2005; Kajberg, 2006). Most typically LIS schools function as a department within a specific faculty or as a programme within a specific department; few institutions function as an independent faculty/department or as an independent academic institution. LIS educational units most often belong to Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences, Communication and Media, Business Management, and Computer Science, followed by other disciplinary affiliations. The most typical number of students enrolled is between 51-600 students per a school; the larger academic institutions have approximately one thousand students and many LIS schools have less than 200 students enrolled. The number of full time staff members is most typically between 11-20 employees (Borup Larsen, 2005).

European LIS education has gradually moved from vocational education to academic HE. Audunson (2005) distinguishes between the discipline-oriented and profession-oriented approach taken by European LIS schools. However, the institutional affiliation, approach as well as conceptual, theoretical, and methodological perspectives influence the way how teaching and learning is organized. There is also great diversity in the curricula content, but it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss this topic.

Differences in the European LIS field arise from historical, cultural, social, economic and political factors as well as from educational traditions, practices and regulatory systems in a country (Kajberg, 2003). This diversity has both positive and negative aspects. Audunson (2005) believes that the pluralism is a strength that future scientific and professional developments should be built upon. Kajberg (2006) also agrees that cultural diversity and the variety of educational traditions in LIS represent a valuable resource in international cooperation. However, Clyde (1998) and Kajberg (2003) are concerned that the diversity hampers transparency and student mobility, and presents obvious difficulties to intentions of working together and organizing joint programs. The findings of the study of Borup Larsen (2005: 236), however, provide evidence that LIS programmes in Europe are fundamentally on the same academic level and LIS schools fulfil a basic requirement for participation in collaborative activities.

Although collaboration has been a quite desirable goal in LIS education for many years, very little is known about the way how European LIS schools are actually collaborating, which attributes contribute to collaborative activities and how it is influencing LIS schools and their activities (Kajberg, 2003). Increased attention to collaborative activities in the LIS literature can be noticed during the last five years, mainly in the context of internationalization of HE. Several seminars and workshops on internationalization have

been arranged by European LIS educators or with their involvement; for example, in North Carolina at Chapel Hill (2002), Parma (2002), Tallinn (2006) and New Orleans (2006) (Kajberg, 2003; Abdullahi et al, 2007).

Discussions on collaborative activities in European LIS education have focussed on the role of associations and networks, EU projects and support schemes, joint international programmes or courses, including ICT-based courses, and joint doctoral programmes. There are also many institutional case studies and several overviews which cover two or more of these aspects or focus on collaborative activities in the specific region. Many networks emerged in Europe in 1990s as a response to globalization and the increased global competition in the HE market. In the European LIS literature two arrangements are more frequently mentioned: the European Association for Library and Information Education and Research (EUCLID) and BOBCATSSS, a yearly international symposium arranged under the auspices of EUCLID.

EUCLID, established in 1991, is an independent European non-governmental and non-profit organisation whose purpose is to promote European cooperation within LIS education and research and to provide a body through which it can be represented in matters of European interest. According to its webpage, EUCLID aims to facilitate exchange of students and staff among the members, encourage mutual recognition of curricula or parts of curricula, develop cooperation on research projects and with other international organizations, exchange mutual information about development in curricula and research, arrange meetings about the topics of organization, encourage support from stronger to weaker members, represent the membership in relation to European and international bodies, undertake other activities of interest of the Association, maintain an archive of the Association's documentation, and publish a newsletter. The EUCLID's directory lists seventy one member institutions and it seems that the association is extending beyond European boarders; for example, institutions form Australia, Bangladesh and Brazil are also members (http://euclid.hio.no/).

There has also been some criticism towards EUCLID's activities. Kajberg (2002) notes:

> … the association seems rather far from achieving some of its objectives. It is not easy to see whether EUCLID activities have stimulated co-ordinated curriculum development and increased networking among European LIS schools. It also remains unclear to which extent EUCLID is seriously backed by its members and whether it receives the awareness, input and support from its constituency which would enable it to really act as a catalyst for and an initiator of co-operation and joint project work between LIS schools in Europe.

However, during the last five years, the EUCLID has developed a number of successful initiatives that encourage collaboration. These initiatives will be discussed in more detail later in this paper.

BOBCATSSS is a symposium organized every year by LIS students of two European universities, one from CEE and one from Western Europe. The initial aim of the BOBCATSSS was to enhance collaboration between students and professionals in CEE and Western Europe. Teams of students plan and realize both the content and the management of the symposium as a part of their studies. The name BOBCATSSS is an

acronym, which is composed of the initials of the cities of HEIs that initiated the BOBCATSSS symposium in 1993: Budapest, Oslo, Barcelona, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Tampere, Stuttgart, Szombately, and Sheffield. Other European LIS schools have joined the network later. Since 1993, the symposium has been held in different locations in Eastern Europe. BOBCATSSS is regarded as a successful, innovative and very visible collaborative effort in European LIS education (Abudllahi & Kajberg, 2004).

European LIS educators participate also in other collaborative initiatives and networks in Europe as well as internationally; for example, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), European Network for Information Literacy (ENIL) and European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU) are just few examples. These organisations and networks provide an opportunity for LIS educators for discussions and professional activities as well as for presentations in their seminars, workshops, conferences and meetings.

The EU Socrates Erasmus programme is frequently mentioned in the LIS literature and it seems that many European LIS schools have benefited from the Erasmus grants (Virkus & Harbo, 2002; Kajberg, 2003; Paris, 2004). Other highlighted programmes are Tempus (Pálvölgyi, 1995; Murányi, 1997; Pors & Edwards, 2001; Virkus, 2001; Dahl et al, 2002; Divjak, 2005) and NORDPLUS, a scheme for HE institutions in the Nordic countries (Virkus & Harbo, 2002; Kajberg, 2003).

LIS Education in Europe: Joint Curriculum Development and Bologna Perspectives (2005), a project funded by EU Socrates, is regarded very successful by many LIS educators in Europe. The idea behind the project goes back to the EUCLID conference *Restructuring and Adapting LIS Education to European Standards* in Thessaloniki in 2002. In Thessaloniki the need to implement the intentions of the Bologna Declaration in the field of LIS education was highlighted. The follow-up conference *Coping with Continual Change - Change Management in Schools of Library and Information Science* was organized in Potsdam in 2003. As a result, a joint project proposal was formulated and applied for funding within the EU Socrates programme. The overall focus of the project was on reflections on LIS curricula in order to stimulate the European debate and collaboration between the LIS schools on the implementation of the objectives of the Bologna Declaration (Kajberg, 2006).

The project application was successful and in June 2004 twelve virtual discussion groups were formed focusing on a specific LIS curricular theme: 1) (Meta-level) LIS curriculum in general, 2) Cultural heritage and digitisation of the cultural heritage, 3) Information literacy and learning, 4) Information seeking and information retrieval, 5) The information society: Barriers to the free access to information, copyrights, licences, etc, 6) Knowledge Management, 7) Knowledge Organization, 8) The library in the multi-cultural information society: International and intercultural communication, 9) Library and society in a historical perspective, 10) Mediation of culture in a European context, 11) Practice and theory: Placements and practical training in libraries and other information agencies, and 12) Library management and promotion.

The project steering group invited twelve LIS curricular experts as group leaders. Each group leader nominated four core experts within their curricular theme taking into account geographical representation. Additional experts were invited to the virtual discussion groups. It was envisaged that each virtual discussion groups would have at least 8-10 members. However, in reality some discussion groups had a quite limited number of participants while some groups consisted of twenty members. Each group explored a specific LIS curricular theme from January to August 2005 and submitted a brief report on its work. In August 2005, the core experts of each group, altogether fifty LIS professionals, met in Copenhagen and discussed the possibilities of European LIS curriculum development in a workshop. As a result of the virtual discussions and workshop in Copenhagen the material was generated for the final e-book[4]. In the framework of this project a questionnaire-based survey was carried out by Jeannie Borup Larsen (2005) to gather information on European LIS schools. The survey results provide an overview of organisational affiliations, curriculum contents, a number of staff and student enrolments of fifty European LIS schools. A more detailed overview of the project is provided by Kajberg (2006) and Lørring (2006).

Kajberg (2003: 40) believes that joint curriculum, course or module development is more ambitious and resource demanding way of collaboration. One of the earliest initiatives seems to be the MSc course on Information Management offered jointly by the University of Sheffield (UK) and the Laboratório Nacional de Engenharia e Tecnologia Industrial (LNETI) in Lisbon (Portugal) (Kajberg, 2003). Kajberg & Pors (1995) report the initiative of the Royal School of Library and Information Science to deliver three-month course *Access to Information* during the autumn term 1994 together with the Technological Educational Institution of Thessaloniki in Greece and Loughborough University, University of Sheffield, and the Robert Gordon University in UK.

Other examples include the delivery of masters' level course (1997) using collaborative technology (e.g. audio- and videoconferencing, electronic whiteboard, shared applications) to provide students at the Department of Information Studies at the Oulu University (Finland) and at the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (USA) opportunities to participate in interactive class exercises and discussions, and to do class assignments together (Iivonen et al, 2001). Virkus & Sponberg (1999) report the results of the joint interdisciplinary course *Netbased-Multimedia* between Tallinn University in Estonia and Gjøvik College in Norway. Internet and ISDN-based videoconferencing as well as integrated media tools were used in the project and the course included high level of interactivity among Estonian and Norwegian students. Dixon & Tammaro (2003) describe the International Master in Information Studies arranged jointly by Parma University and Northumbria University in 2000.

More recently a joint master programme on Digital Library Learning (DILL) between Oslo University College (Norway), Parma University (Italy) and Tallinn University (Estonia) has got support in the framework of the EU Erasmus Mundus programme. The

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[4] The e-book *European Curriculum Reflections on Library and Information Science Education* is accessible at http://biblis.db.dk/Archimages/423.12.05.pdf

first semester is offered in Oslo, the second semester in Tallinn and the third semester in Parma. Students can choose to write their Master Thesis at either of the three partner institutions. The students will acquire a joint Master Degree (120 ECTS), recognised by the Consortium partners. The DILL will start this August with a summer school in Oslo.

Joint research is also important way of collaboration. The results of the survey carried out by Kajberg (2003) showed that joint research is fairly common in European LIS schools. There are many examples of cross-boarder joint research articles, but the book by Ingwersen and Järvelin (2005) may serve as an excellent example of the long-term joint research. The Centre for Research in Library and Information Management at the Manchester Metropolitan University (UK) seems to be the most active partner in the EU Framework Programmes in the LIS field (http://www.cerlim.ac.uk/). However, many EU action programmes mentioned earlier include also research component and require research collaboration by scientists. Joint research is also encouraged in the framework of Nordic-Baltic Research School in Library and Information Science (NORSLIS).

One more field in the LIS literature where collaboration and cooperation is highlighted is quality assurance (Tammaro, 2005). Promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance is also an important objective of the Bologna Declaration. Audunson (2005) believes that the Bologna-process open up for real and substantial quality improvements in LIS. There are no institutionalized and recognized European level accreditation and quality assurance procedures in LIS education; the process normally relies on national level accreditation bodies and mechanisms (Kajberg, 2006). Hartley & Virkus (2003) offer insights into quality assurance processes in LIS education in UK and Estonia. At the IFLA Berlin Conference in 2003, the Education and Training Section of IFLA started a survey about quality assurance models in LIS programmes. The survey results provide an overview of quality assurance systems in 27 LIS schools in Europe[5] (Tammaro, 2005).

Kajberg (2003) concludes that in general European LIS schools have been very slow in arranging cross-country partnerships and there are not convincing results of collaboration. There are few initiatives that go beyond the small-scale student mobility and examples of European LIS schools' projects concerned with the development of joint degree programmes, joint modules, intensive courses and e-learning activities are scarce. It should be said, however, that the Bologna Process as well as EC collaborative support schemes create a very favourable framework for collaboration. LIS institutions respond to the particular challenges and opportunities presented by the changing context in a range of ways; for example, some have put more emphasis on mobility or research, others on curriculum or joint course development, and others on ICT-based learning or arrangement of workshops, seminars and conferences.

Collaboration at the Department of Information Studies at TLU
This section is a description of how a relatively small LIS department, the Department of Information Studies at the Tallinn University (TLU) in Estonia responds to the challenges

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[5] 50 institutions answered to the survey: 27 from Europe, 9 from Latin America, 7 from Asia, 5 from North America, and 2 from Africa.

of EHEA and multiple societal demands, and took the lead in delivering e-courses within the university and in Estonia with the help of international collaboration.

Three institutions are providing LIS education in Estonia. The Department of Information Studies at TLU (established in 1965) is the only institution in Estonia offering LIS education at all academic levels (one BA, three MA and one PhD programme). LIS education at bachelor level has also been organized at the University of Tartu Viljandi Culture Academy and master course in Information Management at the University of Tartu since 2004. A joint master programme *DILL: Digital Library Learning* (Oslo-Parma-Tallinn) under the EU's Erasmus Mundus programme described earlier will start in autumn 2007. The Department has eight full-time staff members.

Increasing interest in international collaboration has been evident at the department since early 1990s. Several stages of internationalization can be identified: internationalization at home; training of trainers; mobility, networking and involvement in collaborative projects, and joint curricula development. This growing interest of internationalization arose after regaining independence and with the need for a systematic modernization of curricula. There was a need to re-westernise the whole educational system and to move from the narrow Soviet degree structure to an award structure that was not only more flexible but also consistent with Western models. New institutional structures were established, ideologically oriented elements were eliminated, new curricula, textbooks, and teaching materials were developed and links with Western colleagues initiated. Extensive use of textbooks and reading materials published abroad started. In this period, unprecedented grass roots engagement of educators in the exploration of new possibilities was experienced (Virkus & Harbo, 2002). At this stage an international dimension was added to the curriculum that helped students develop some international competencies without leaving the country. This first stage of the internationalization was purely domestic and can be referred to as "internationalization at home" (Knight, 2003).

The next stage of internationalization focused on staff development and limited staff mobility. Ideas and assistance for realising education reform came predominantly from the Nordic countries. For example, during the spring of 1992 the general secretary of NORDINFO was visiting the Baltic countries and at meetings with representatives from LIS schools wishes were expressed about having Nordic colleagues perform courses for Baltic teaching staff on subjects that had been non-existent or existed with low priority during the time of the Soviet Union. A programme consisting of eight courses (three in Vilnius, three in Tallinn and two in Riga) started in 1993. Teaching staff from all Baltic States attended the courses. The courses were evaluated at an international seminar in Tallinn in May 1999. It was agreed that the courses had fulfilled their purposes, which was documented by revised curricula in the Baltic schools (Virkus & Harbo, 2002).

More systematic staff and student mobility started. Staff members started to participate in the Nordic PhD students summer schools in 1995. When the EC Erasmus mobility scheme opened up for Estonia in 1999, agreements with fifteen universities in Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the United Kingdom were arranged. Over the years the number of visiting lecturers and

students has increased. The members of the staff started also to participate more actively in international conferences, publish in international periodicals as well as to arrange international conferences. Membership and participation in international organisations (e.g. EUCLID, IFLA, EADTU) as well as development of the curriculum under the guidance of foreign experts and proceeding from the experiences of partner universities were all part of these developments.

One important outcome of international collaboration was the implementation of modern teaching and learning methods. The department has participated nearly in all EC projects mentioned earlier. Participation in many projects (e.g. Phare, Tempus, Leonardo da Vinci, Comenius, Minerva, Grundvig, eLearning programme, NORFA, ESF project, Interreg and UNESCO projects) deepened the knowledge and skills about modern ICT-based learning and promoted the integration of theories, methodologies and expertise from other related disciplines and practices into LIS field. For example, the process of testing ICT-based distance education (DE) methods in education started in 1994 and the first DE course was designed for school librarians in 1995 (Virkus, 1997). A new online MA programme in Information Management was opened in 2003. Online teaching and learning is now implemented in many courses and is an important way to cope with limited human resources[6]. New educational ideas derived from collaboration with high level DE centres, institutions and experts in Europe, United States and Canada. Thus, being influenced by constructivist and reflective thinking and alternative modes of educational delivery we started to rethink our curricula, our pedagogical or didactic approaches and models (Virkus, 2005).

Because of the several projects, the share of self-earned income in the departmental budget increased considerably since 1997 and enabled the development of a solid technological infrastructure. At this stage international activities served the following goals: a) to improve personal professional levels as set in the curriculum; b) to pass on one's own and to receive from outside new experiences in the field of teaching and research; c) to conduct practical developmental work, and d) to introduce innovation (Virkus & Wood, 2002). However, it should be also noted that at that stage there was a lack of clear strategy for the internationalization (Virkus & Harbo, 2002).

However, these previous quite *ad hoc* activities have lead to a more systematic collaboration and cooperation. Nowadays internationalization has become a widespread and strategically important phenomenon at the department. It includes a broad range of activities, such as the mobility of students and staff, internationalization of curricula and inter-institutional cooperation in education and research. There are the growing number of cross-border agreements and cooperation projects[7], the increasing number of students

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[6] Albert Boekhorst from Amsterdam University has delivered the module on information management in online mode to the Estonian students for many years and the author of this paper delivered her courses online to students in Tallinn from the Manchester Metropolitan University during the period 2001-2005.

[7] Three of the current projects at the Department focus on virtual mobility (*E-MOVE: An operational conception of virtual mobility* (2006-2007) in the framework of the EC e-learning programme), virtual internship (*CSVM: Stimulating European Employability Through Cross Sector Virtual Mobility* (2006-2008) within the EC Leonardo da Vinci Programme), and on information literacy and e-learning (*Connecting Information Professionals: CIP WorkLab* (2006-2007) within Interreg III A programme).

who have become mobile, more foreign teachers in Estonia, the increasing use of English as a language of instruction as well as the involvement of foreign experts in accreditation and research evaluation process. For example, all programmes at the department got full accreditation in spring 2001. The evaluation committee was made up of representatives from the UK and Finland. The participation of foreign experts is intended to guarantee the greater objectivity of the evaluation as well as the quality of the curriculum at international level. In December 2001 the curriculum was adopted according to the Bologna scheme and was the first curriculum of that kind accepted by the Academic Council of TLU (Hartley & Virkus, 2003). Research at the Department was evaluated by international evaluation team in spring 2004.

The identification of new learning needs and client expectations has led to the development of new programs and courses as well as new concepts of curricula. The development of the new English language joint master programme has been an important recent initiative. International collaboration has helped to prepare our students for professional activities in a global environment, cope with limited resources, rapid technological developments and increased calls for quality assurance. According to the study carried out by Virkus & Wood (2002) the process of internationalization and forming new partnerships was perceived by staff as the main innovation at TLU.

Challenges, Opportunities and Barriers
Globalization presents many challenges and opportunities for HE institutions around the world. Collaboration itself is a challenge and also an opportunity. Beehrens (2004: 73) indicates that universities operate in a specific regulatory, social and cultural context which is influenced by many factors: at the national level, by public and regulatory pressures and sector-wide norms; at the university level, by organisational culture, climate and politics; and at the individual level by norms, values and professional and academic standards and routines. In successful collaboration, partners need to be complementary in their resource bases, but they also need compatible backgrounds.

Existing literature points to many benefits of collaboration. Beehrens, (2004: 94) believes that international collaboration and cooperation affects the quality of teaching, research, organisation and management, the socio-economic development of the region, the competencies of the graduates, the reputation of the university, the enrolment of students, and the university's access to funding. Thus, it is a growing imperative to collaborate in order to meet international standards of quality in teaching, research and services. European HE institutions are facing common challenges related to the growth and diversification of HE, the growing demand for education and training in a lifelong learning perspective, the shortage of skills in many key areas, the employability of graduates as well as the expansion of private and transnational education. However, these challenges might also be the opportunities and sometimes also barriers.

In the European LIS literature the diversity, complexity and incompatibility of institutional structures and regulatory systems are often highlighted as obstacles as well as challenges to collaboration. Several authors point to the administrative and legal

problems in collaborative activities (Johnson, 2000; Berger, 2003; Dixon & Tammaro, 2003). Declining public funding and scarcity of funds is an issue that is frequently mentioned. Kajberg (2002) notes that lack of financial resources makes LIS institutions moderate their international aspirations and may stop many initiatives. Linguistic and didactic problems are presenting also obstacles to collaboration (Berger, 2003).

Berger (2003), Dixon & Tammaro (2003) also draw attention to cultural issues, different traditions, mentalities and interests. Human relationships have not got much attention in the LIS literature. However, over the past decade, researchers have identified several characteristics of successful collaboration and caring human relationships have been perceived as central for success (Elliott, 2001). Differences in philosophies, culture, belief systems, values and attitudes might influence significantly collaboration (Beehrens, 2004). Stereotypes can also prevent collaboration (Richards, 2001). In management literature trust is an important attribute for successful collaboration. It takes time to build trust, but it may be rapidly destroyed. Collaboration needs shared thinking, respect to others and cultural sensitivity. Unfortunately, a lot of people who frequently talk about it are quite dominant about their own interests (Elliott, 2001). International collaboration also requires good leaders who want to make a difference, can build teams and integrate the interests of many people with different backgrounds, and are able to commit to the success of others and to the overall success of the project (Elliott, 2001). This requires intercultural competencies and understanding and abilities to put these into practice.

Important challenge for European LIS education is to prepare students to the global employment market. Employers need employees with deep professional as well as international competencies and experiences. Audunson (2005) suggests that profound ICT-competency and a profound understanding of the librarians' role in a multicultural context is the sine qua non of every educational program in LIS today. Thus, globalization has implications for the content of curricula, teaching, learning and delivery methods, staff competences and quality.

The use of ICT for collaboration as well as for enhancement of educational processes presents challenge to LIS educators as well. Kajberg (2003: 40) notes that a few schools use the possibilities of modern ICT for collaboration, and LIS-specific e-learning across geographical boundaries is more than difficult to spot in Europe. In order to survive in our post-modern society these possibilities can not just be ignored by LIS educators. There are many tools for collaboration, course delivery or just for making teaching and learning more exciting; Skype, Citeulike or Second Life are just few examples.

Terminology is also an obstacle to collaboration. Many authors have expressed a concern about the way the LIS educators in Europe use the terms. The same terms do not always relate to the same things or curricular content (Borup Larsen, 2005) and "such a loose use of scientific terms is not healthy from a scientific and educational point of view" (Broughton et al, 2005: 141). Widén Wulff et al (2005: 126) find it extremely important to use as coherent terminology as possible in our field, because it is suffering from too many vague definitions and connections to adjacent areas. Borup Larsen (2005: 240) propose the way to cope with this dilemma in encouraging further work on the profile

and contents of European LIS programmes and developing a disciplinary framework that seeks to identify the common understanding of terms.

Several authors have noted (Kajberg, 2003; Borup Larsen, 2005) that the manner in which LIS schools are visible on the Web presents another problem for collaboration. Some schools have quite impressive homepages with all information needed for students' exchange or collaboration. However, other institutions' Websites present curricular information in a very confusing way; it makes it extremely difficult to advise students about the planning of study periods in other countries. Borup Larsen (2005: 233) notes: "… many [homepages] were not translated into English, updated or containing correct contact information. Of the 154 homepages, where the national language was not English, only 75 were in some degree translated into English".

New partnerships outside the LIS field, outside the university and Europe present challenges as well. There are many opportunities for joint working, learning, teaching and research. Beerkens (2004: 61) notes:

> Both complementarity and compatibility are seen as prerequisites for sustainable cooperation. Without complementarity, cooperation would be useless or merely symbolic as the participating organisations have nothing to offer that is beneficial to the other partners. But even when a sufficient level of complementarity is apparent, the relationship between the participants needs to evolve in such a way that interaction is possible and not completely disabled through the differences in goals, practices, cultures, etc. of the individual organisations.

Conclusions
In our hypercomplex society, hardly any field can make progress without international collaboration. Collaborative activities in Europe have increased enormously over the last decades. This increase has been stimulated by the Bologna Process as well as by EC collaborative support schemes that have created a very favourable framework for collaboration. The legal, political, social and cultural differences, however, between countries and organisations raise significant obstacles in collaboration and cooperation. Some observers believe that LIS schools in Europe have been very slow to form cross-country partnerships. However, LIS schools have responded to the particular challenges in a range of ways; for example, some schools put more emphasis on mobility or research, others on curriculum or joint course development, and others on ICT-based learning or arrangement of workshops, seminars and conferences.

The Department of Information Studies at TLU like many other HE institutions in Europe is faced with challenges of globalization, the challenge to provide good quality teaching and research, and the challenge to modernise the structure and departmental organisation. International collaboration has had an important influence on these developments and started further discussions on recognition of qualifications, quality assurance and innovation of curricula. The department has participated in many international projects and European mobility schemes, developed a joint degree program, and maintained a leading position in e-learning in Estonia with the help of international collaboration.

European LIS schools are facing common challenges related to the growth and diversification of HE, the growing importance of lifelong learning, the shortage of skills in many areas, the employability of graduates and the expansion of private and transnational education. Other challenges include the innovative use of ICT in education, coherent use of terminology, visibility on the Web, and forming new partnerships. To collaborate successfully we need a favourable collaborative framework and a highly collaborative culture. We need good leaders and creative people with intercultural competencies who are able to commit to the collaborative activities.

It is important to mention that Bologna does offer a number of different pathways and lessons for African universities and countries wishing to promote regional collaboration and mobility, and there are signs that continent-wide collaboration can and may prosper in a manner similar to that occurring in Europe. Bologna does appear to be emerging as a possible model for reform in Africa as well. In July 2007, a conference was convened in the Democratic Republic of Congo to discuss the ways in which African universities could use lessons learned from the Bologna process to build more cooperative international relationships (Clark, 2007).

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