

## **International presence of project management in the university curricula in Library and Information Science**

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**Abstract:** Proper project management in information and documentation centers stands as one of the main pillars for the correct working of these units. Given the importance of this managerial technique, Library and Information Science's professionals and students should receive a solid knowledge on the subject, which is included within the planning of information and documentation units as integrated function in the Management field. According to this framework, this paper analyzes the international presence of project management in the university curricula in Library and Information Science.

**Keywords:** Project management; planning; professional training; university curricula; Library and Information Science

### **1. Introduction**

Nowadays, libraries are immersed in the implementation of many projects in accordance with demands or social needs, such as the presence of libraries and other information units on social networks or virtual access to services and resources in these units. Unlike other times, all these project experiences are disseminated by the scientific community in order to assist or serve as an example for other institutions which want to copy the projects implemented.

Consequently, many theoretical issues are not addressed in the scientific literature, but practical application and innovation are the key elements in the specialized papers published. In this regard, work experiences and references to the implementation processes of project proposals can be found in some of the main databases of Library and Information Science, such as papers on

digitization written by Londhe (2011) and Holley (2004), related to Jayakar library at University of Pune (India) or at University of Auckland in New Zealand, respectively.

Other project trends in information and documentation units are institutional repositories and virtual reference services. In the first case, institutional repositories are created as a means of visibility and dissemination of teachers, students and staff's scientific production. On this point, such project management is addressed by Greene (2010) or Barwick (2007), whose papers describe the institutional repositories implementation in some libraries at University of Dublin and at University of Loughborough, respectively.

In the second case, information and documentation units strive to reach their users and break geographical barriers by implementing virtual reference services, for example the library experience at University of Saskatchewan in Canada (Duncan and Gerrard, 2011) or some university libraries of the Library Consortium of New Zealand (Clements 2009).

Given this situation, there are many items to be considered:

- How project managers face to Library and Information Science projects.
- What project management methodology they use.
- Project managers' academic training on project management in Library and Information Science.
- Students' academic training on project management in Library and Information Science.
- Importance given to project management in Library and Information Science by university departments.
- Universities and higher education institutions where monographic courses on project management are taught.

As a result, the present paper aims to analyze the international presence of project management in the university curricula in Library and Information Science (LIS) so as to identify teaching programmes which can be of reference on every continent.

## **2. Project management in information and documentation units**

Innovation, change and adaptation to new social demands are concepts which have always been linked to the information and documentation units by incorporating project proposals, which produce new products and services and determine the ordinary strategy of libraries and information units. In this case,

projects such as teleworking, virtual and face to face exhibitions, restructuring services, social networks or messaging systems implementation.

These projects, which had previously been defined in the operational planning, must be managed successfully. In order to achieve this purpose, professionals and students should receive appropriate training on project management in Library and Information Science in universities and higher education centres. Consequently, the acquisition of this knowledge is configured as additional training more specific than other courses related to Management- for example, the strategic planning – and it is considered as a guarantee of quality both the university teaching programme and the skills achieved by professionals and students.

In line with these training premises, products and services offered in information and documentation units acquire a project perception, whose integrated management involves deadlines and a definition of the human, material and financial resources which are required for its successful achievement.

Discipline theorists as Kristen Black (1996), Liz MacLachlan (1996), Winston and Hoffman (2005), Wamsley (2009) and Massis (2010) include such content in their publications, in which project planning and implementation stages become essential points enforceable by Project Managers and centres staff. Project topics so decisive as the scope definition and the objective determination are usual among authors, who do not forget to include references and examples of temporary or financial estimations that all projects should include.

According to Kristen Black's patterns, Liz MacLachlan proposes that project managers include the objectives, setting the limits of the project scope, and any problems that may occur subsequently in the project definition. Furthermore, it is considered that the global cycle of any project must meet a set of stages (definition, planning and implementation), culminating with an assessment in which a set of best practices and management strengths can be deduced for their application in the following projects.

Karen-Ann Moore (1998) suggests that project management in information and documentation includes eight processes: scope, time, cost, quality, human resources, risk, integration and communication, being the last process a key factor for contributing significantly to the project success. Also, leadership issues and management skills are included in the authors' papers.

Other contents taught in this management course are studied by Barbara Allan (2004) and Julie Carpenter (2008, 2011), who delve into the thematic area and establishes interactions between projects and financial opportunities in information and documentation units; in other words, project management in

Library and Information Science not only ensures an appropriate management, but also minimizes potential risks and ensures an efficient use of budget heading.

Other significant contributions to which professionals and students will get used to are related to the following issues:

- Partnership between library institutions.
- Development of business cases.
- Accurate drafts to formalize project proposals.
- Reporting.
- Use of project management software.

### **3. Methodological approach on project management in Library and Information Science programmes**

According to its relevance and the importance of acquiring this knowledge by LIS professionals, it was considered that a quantitative and geographical study on project management must be conducted to determine the state of the art of this course in the university curricula of Library and Information Science.

To determine the international presence of project management and to ensure teaching content is being taught, the methodology used in this paper is divided into the following stages:

- First stage. International review (America, Europe, Asia, Africa and Oceania) and identification of universities and higher education centres in which Library and Information programmes are offered both on campus and virtually. This period could be materialized with an institutional directory.
- Second stage. Focusing on the universities and higher education centres previously selected, specific programmes in Library and Information Science, in which project management is being taught, were identified. In this phase, a LIS programmes directory was created and divided into undergraduate/graduate and postgraduate (Masters) programmes.
- Third stage. Curricula analysis was conducted in order to identify the presence or absence of courses related to project management. As a result, a database was created to record geographical data, institutional data, academic data and some other details concerning to project management courses.
- Fourth stage. Contact by email with university departments and professors responsible for teaching project management in Library and Information Science. The main purpose was to confirm some data and to request some others for the present paper.
- Fifth stage. Result analysis.

#### 4. Results

The research, which has lasted eight months (July 2012 - March 2013), has showed project management is a monographic course in 106 university curricula in Library and Information Science, meaning a 34, 29% of 312 programmes analysed (see table 1 for the distribution).

Criteria selected for the outcomes are the following:

- Programmes in which project management is not explicitly included in the curricula were not recorded in the database.
  
- Programmes in which teachers or university departments did not reply after getting in contact with them to request more information were not recorded in the database.

| CONTINENTS | INTERNATIONAL PRESENCE OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT IN LIS PROGRAMMES |                            |
|------------|--|----------------------------|
|            | PROGRAMMES   | %                          |
| America    | 53   | 50                         |
| Europe     | 37   | 34,90                      |
| Oceania    | 7  | 6,60                       |
| Africa     | 5  | 4,72                       |
| Asia       | 4  | 3,78                       |
|            | <b>TOTAL</b><br><b>106</b>                                     | <b>TOTAL</b><br><b>100</b> |

**Table 1.** Geographical distribution by continents of project management courses included in the Library and Information Science programmes.

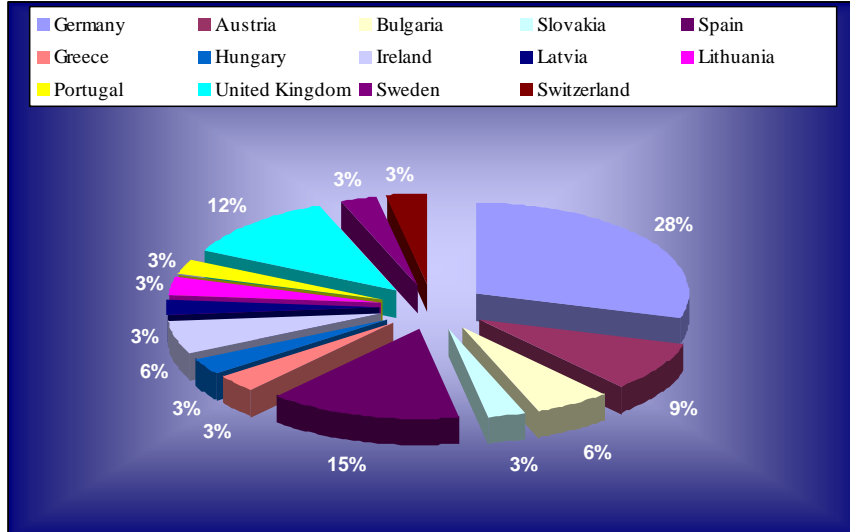
As can be seen, the 50% of Library and Information Science degrees and programmes are located in the American continent, which means there is a specific course on project management in their curricula. With a difference of 15.1%, Europe shows that project management in LIS is a required course in their curricula, being aware of the importance of acquiring these competences and skills among their graduate and postgraduate students. In this regards, the presence of this thematic area is also located in Oceania, Africa and Asia with 6.60%, 4.72% and 3.78 %, respectively.

As well, the research allowed us to analyze country by country, in such way that courses were studied in detail. In this sense, lower percentages belong to Oceania, Africa and Asia, whose distribution is as follows:

| LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE PROGRAMMES |                   |                   |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|
| AFRICA                                     | ASIA              | OCEANIA           |
| South Africa<br>1                          | Philippines<br>1  | Australia<br>5    |
| Uganda<br>3                                | Japan<br>1        | New Zealand<br>2  |
| Zimbabwe<br>1                              | Pakistan<br>2     |                   |
| <b>TOTAL</b><br>5                          | <b>TOTAL</b><br>4 | <b>TOTAL</b><br>7 |

**Table 2.** Distribution by countries. Courses on project management in LIS programmes.

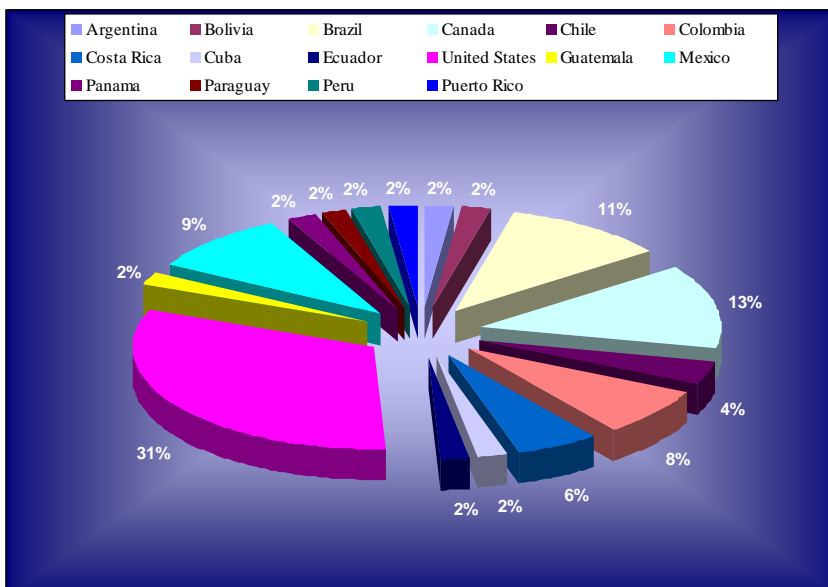
In relation to table 1, the most significant percentages are found in the American and European continents. Specifically in the European case, project management is an active course in Germany (10 programmes which are equivalent to 28% of 37), Spain (5 programmes), the United Kingdom (4 programmes) and Austria (only 3 programmes). The remaining countries, which are listed in the legend of Figure 1 and complete the 37 European university programmes (18 undergraduate and 19 graduate), only have 1 or 2 degrees with project management courses.



**Figure 1.** European countries with courses on project management in LIS programmes

Finally, the country that leads the presence of this management technique in America is the United States with 17 programmes (a combination of university graduate and postgraduate programmes) followed by Canada with 7 (13%) and Brazil with 6 programmes. Next, it should be noted the group formed by Mexico, Colombia, Costa Rica and Chile with 5, 4, 3 and 2 Library and Information Science programmes, whose curricula include a monographic course on project management. The remaining countries only have one programme which meets the criteria identified in the study. In general terms, LIS programmes in America are divided into 28 graduate and 25 postgraduate programmes.

**Figure 2.** American countries with courses on project management in LIS programmes.



#### 4. Conclusions

The final quantitative results -106 LIS programmes in which project management is a monographic course- shows a strong presence of this topic. It means there are many experts in LIS who consider project management as a necessity for the proper academic training of their students.

Programmes content analysis confirms there is a strong link between project management in information and documentation units and their conceptual framework (planning as a Management function).

Project management in Library and Information Science is a highly specialized topic. In line with this premise, teaching programmes in which these contents are taught allow students to get a complete academic training on Management issues, being capable of making strategic plans, operational plans and projects plans.

Finally, project management courses in Library and Information Science are concentrated on a few countries. This imbalance produces a lot of countries have only one or two programmes with this content.

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