

E-Motion of the Manager of Cultural Institutions Experiences within ERASMUS IP LibCMASS at State University of Library Studies and Information Technologies in Sofia

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Abstract: ERASMUS and its related programmes offer important opportunities to many scholarly fields of education and training such as Library, Information and Archive Science. These opportunities also bring cultural interaction between the countries and students. Bulgaria, Croatia and Turkey, 3 countries that share lots of similarities through their cultures but they have many differences in their everyday lives. They share a part of history but, more important, are keen to build a common future. One of the efforts on that path was an ERASMUS IP ‘Library, Information and Cultural Management – Academic Summer School’ (2011-ERA-IP-7) held in Sofia in fall 2011. This paper focuses on the analysis of the programme, in terms of organization, resources involved and lessons learned as well as current and international experiences of programme participants.

Introduction

Library and information science (LIS) is one of the fields under the effect of highly changing environments and developments of technology. Changing environments and advancements in technology have also affected LIS education as well. In this context LIS departments generally update their curriculums and participate in projects such as ERASMUS. IP ‘Library, Information and Cultural Management – Academic Summer School’ (IP LibCMASS, 4-17 September 2011, 2011-ERA-IP-7), which is one of the related projects carried out by three countries within the scope of ERASMUS Lifelong

Learning Programme. This project aims to create interdisciplinary educational programme and learning environment in which participants will acquire the knowledge and skills relating to the contemporary challenges of the management of libraries, museums, archives and information technology centers and the policy response to higher education and the European Union initiative on “New skills for new jobs”. The target group are students (BSc and MSc) in library and computer science, information technology and cultural and historical heritage from State University of Library Studies and Information Technologies (SULSIT, Sofia), Hacettepe University in Ankara (Turkey) and University of Zagreb (Croatia). Within the context of this aim these universities were chosen to collaborate within Intensive Programme in terms of their similarities such as small scholarly communities, small languages and similar LIS education structures but also strong will to educate and prepare new young professionals for the challenges in a highly changing working and studying environments (Todorova, 2011).

Foundations of the LIS Education or Why Is the Intensive Programme Needed

Despite the problems three countries are facing, they are well aware of the importance of new information and communication technologies implementation and all show a great interest in education of the new library professionals. Bulgaria, with its Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” has the longest tradition, since the undergraduate programs for the education of library professionals are taught there since 1924. Similar to Croatian, whose programs for the LIS professional education formally started in 1986 when the Department of Information Sciences at the Faculty of Humanities and Social sciences was founded, Bulgarian programs are offered as full-time study programs but also as part-time studies which can be very useful for the library employers interested in gaining professional degree. On the other hand Turkish librarianship education started with courses after the first course was offered by Istanbul University Library in 1925 and LIS programs was started in 1954 at the Ankara University as undergraduate programs. That is to obtain enhancement of theoretical knowledge with the practical aspects.

Many students are not as lucky as that and often feel very confused when the need to bridge this two aspects occurs. Universities, confronted with the demands of competitive markets, try to establish interdisciplinary curriculums but sometimes internal or external conditions are standing in the way of its fulfillment.

That is one of the reasons programs like Intensive Programme are needed; wisely designed and with the right candidates involved, these programs, even though they are very short-termed, can offer valuable experiences. IP Library, Information and Cultural Management – Academic Summer School was especially significant because of the field it covered, it aimed to provide its participants with not only international but interdisciplinary experience as well so that, throughout the best practices from every field, profile of the new cultural manager can arise.

Communication and Collaboration or How Was It to Work as a Part of International and Interdisciplinary Team

After the selection procedure and summer break, on 4th September the IP LibCMASS started in SULSIT, Sofia. It was obvious that upcoming 14 days will be very hard-working but also very enjoyable since the program expected full class arrangements

from 9 to approximately 4.30 p.m. but it was also very clear that the coordinators did excellent job: the group of 23 students (14 from Croatia and Turkey and 9 from Bulgaria) was heterogenous in every aspect; there were Bachelor and Master level students involved, all of them with different interests under the scope of library and information studies; some of them were interested in cultural management and heritage preservation, some in heritage presentation in real or virtual world, some were more computer-oriented and interested in implementation of new IC technologies to the cultural institutions, and some were particularly interested in digital libraries but they all had one thing in common, a wish to exchange their experiences and to grow better in their own fields. This aim was supported by the methodology of the program as well; firstly through assignments given to students in their national teams and, most importantly, by mixing and dividing students into international teams collaborating in workshops and presentations during the classes. The diversity was also shown through 4 main topics of the program: library, information and cultural management; preservation and access to cultural heritage and digital libraries; intellectual property and information brokerage and information technology in libraries, archives and other cultural institutions combined with information literacy presented to the students by 18 lecturers (12 from Bulgaria, 4 from Croatia and 2 from Turkey), all of them well-known experts in the field of their expertise. Cooperation, collaboration and communication are three words best describing the program. Project management and communication teacher-student was based on its own IP LibCMASS website <http://libcmass.unibit.bg/> and e-learning platform ILIAS, which guaranteed the long-term sustainability of the IP LibCMASS. It was created and used for all project preparation and implementation work. All related material and information for lecturers and students as itinerary, tasks, educational materials, bibliography, organizational information, useful links, news and PR activities and etc. could be found there on time. Website was a central communication place during the project but also afterwards, for now it also serves as a platform for programme and material evaluation, remarks and photo documentation.

Findings

The final evaluation of Erasmus IP in Sofia has been documented on the penultimate day; two questionnaires were filled in, one by students and the other by lecturers. Most lecturers graded the program with highest marks, especially the project management, information and communication and offered cultural and guiding tours. Contact to other participating lecturers and students during IP programme was evaluated as excellent or very good by fourteen lecturers (77.7%) and 94.4% of lecturers have evaluated IP excellent or very good in terms of cooperation with students during lecture/workshops.

In the second part of the assessment of the IP LibCMASS another questionnaire, which aimed to provide critical information about IP in terms of general overview, was filled by 23 student participants. Satisfaction levels of the students about academic activities and pedagogical aspects of IP are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Satisfaction level of participants about academic activities and pedagogical aspects of IP LibCMASS

	Very High		High		N/A		Satisfactory	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
The number of hours taught	10	43.4	10	43.4	3	13.2	0	0.0
The equipment used*	16	72.7	6	26.3	0	0.0	0	0.0
The capabilities and expertise of the professors*	19	86.4	2	9.1	1	4.5	0	0.0
The overall quality of teaching	15	65.2	6	26.0	1	4.4	1	4.4
The expected learning outcomes*	13	59.1	8	36.4	0	0.0	1	4.5
The activities besides the general course*	18	81.8	4	17.2	0	0.0	0	0.0

*1 participant didn't reply to this question

As it was highlighted in Table 1, the capabilities and expertise of the professors and the activities such as workshops, international and national team tasks and other activities besides the general course are rated as very high by more than 80% of the students. On the other hand 43.4% of the students have evaluated the number of hours taught as very highly or highly satisfactory and 59.1% of them have described the expected learning outcomes as very highly satisfactory. At the end of the analysis, 87% of students evaluated the IP in general as excellent while the other 13% rated it as very good.

Conclusion

The IP LibCMASS intended to show that the most important thing for a new cultural professional is to communicate and collaborate; to be in the motion all the time for that it might be the only way “small” scholarly communities can be competitive on the scholarly and business market. Collaboration between students with different cultural and educational backgrounds was a tremendous enrichment for the future and resulted in stimulating professional and personal partnerships. The fact that universities from Paris and Vilnius have shown interest to be a part of the project in Zagreb 2012 and Ankara 2013 is only one more detail witnessing its quality.

References

Todorova, T. Y. (Ed.). (2011). IP Library, Information and Cultural Management – Academic Summer School (LibCMASS): Project Documentation. Sofia: GRAFIS.