

EUROPEAN INITIATIVES FOR THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF LIBRARIANS *

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Abstract: This article briefly describes the opportunities for the professional development of librarians, as well as actual benefits, arising from a number of EC supported activities, in particular from projects and related work of the Libraries sector of the Telematics Applications Programme.

1. INTRODUCTION

Let us define our terms first: *Professional development* comprises all activities that make an individual fit for doing a certain job, for growing in that job and for keeping up with changes that have an impact on the nature of that job. It may hence enable a person to transcend eventually the job he or she has been trained for and to do quite different jobs with equal and perhaps more satisfaction. It should maintain and possibly expand a person's qualifications. Undoubtedly, over the past couple of decades librarians have not been spared the challenges of the *information age*. On the contrary: they have had to cope with profound changes in their professional environment. The demands on their know-how (or *know-where?*) and services are not likely to decrease in the foreseeable future. Therefore, talking about the *professional development of librarians* is just as timely and appropriate as talking about the development of any other group of professionals that are affected by that silent revolution brought about by the rapidly evolving information and communication technologies.

European initiatives is of course the most distinguishing element of the title of this paper. At first glance one might assume we are referring to what is happening in each of the European countries, to what various national organisations, schools and authorities are doing for their particular constituency to modernise training and (continuing) education in librarianship. However, taking such a broad view would certainly mean going beyond the scope of a short contribution to a conference. Rather, our use of the geographical qualifier refers to activities financially and otherwise supported by the European Commission (EC), the executive branch of the European Union government. Nothing less should be expected from a speaker affiliated to that institution.

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Yet, talking about *EC initiatives* related to professional development and vocational training requires some explanation. Is it not up to each Member State of the Union to determine its own ways of dealing with these matters? In Germany, for example, this right is with each of the sixteen *Länder*, who are autonomous in structuring and managing their institutions of education and training at all levels. So why *European* initiatives? Do they not violate the principle of *subsidiarity*¹, proclaimed fundamental in the Maastricht and Amsterdam treaties? Well, the answer is (possibly) *yes and no*. Clearly, initiatives aiming at *imposing* institutional structures or even specific curricula would most likely provoke an outcry of protest. There is not and there must not be a European super-ministry of education. On the other hand, the subsidiarity principle also implies that suitable government action on *lower-level* issues may be called for if and only if that action provides some added value that could not be achieved at a lower level of government. This is in fact the very essence of many European funding programmes, such as the *Framework Programmes for Research and Technological Development*. They are designed to combine forces, to support cross-border initiatives, to reduce disparity, to create conditions favourable for a single European market and to foster a sense of European unity in general.

In that light the European Commission has indeed an obligation for suitable action in the field of education and training. This fact has been recognized at the highest political level and even been codified in the treaties establishing the European Union². It has led to major Europe-wide awareness campaigns, such as the *European Year of Lifelong Learning* in 1996, preceded by the publication of a *White Paper on Education and Training* (in 1995), setting the political agenda.

In this article we shall focus on opportunities for the professional development of librarians, as well as on actual benefits, arising from a number of EC supported activities.

2. OPPORTUNITIES

2.1 LEONARDO and SOCRATES

The Commission department in charge of matters directly related to *Education, Training and Youth* is Directorate General XXII. Its mission is based on Articles 126, 127 of the Maastricht treaty (cf footnote 2). DG XXII runs several programmes of which LEONARDO and SOCRATES are the ones that mainly interest us here. They are probably also the best known. LEONARDO is directly concerned with vocational training. Adopted for a period of five years (1995-1999) its *key objective is to support the development of policies and innovative action in the Member States, by promoting*

¹ Each level of government should not interfere in dealings of a lower level, in matters that can best be dealt with at that lower level.

² Articles 126 and 127 of the Treaty establishing the European Community stipulate respectively that "*the Community shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action*" and that "*the Community shall implement a vocational training policy which shall support and supplement the action of the Member States*".

*projects in the context of transnational partnerships which involve different organisations with an interest in training*³. Other measures include

- placement and exchange programmes;
- analyses and surveys examining problems and issues concerning vocational training;
- networks and dissemination projects;
- the development of open and distance learning.

Its implementation is mainly through Calls for Proposals (CfPs) which so far have been launched annually. LEONARDO projects should make contributions to achieving at least one of the following subgoals:

- improving vocational training systems and arrangements in the Member States,
- improving vocational training measures, including university/enterprise co-operation, concerning enterprises and workers,
- developing language skills and knowledge, and disseminating innovation in the field of vocational training.

Among the many projects chosen (cf footnote 3 for the URL of the LEONARDO homepage) there are surprisingly few which directly address the training needs of librarians or, for that matter, of information professionals in general⁴. Project DECID (Développer les Eurocompétences pour l'information et documentation), to be undertaken by ECIA (the European Council of Information Associations), is perhaps most noteworthy in that regard among those most recently selected. It does not address the library profession but a related one, and as such it may serve as an example of the kind of opportunities the LEONARDO programme offers. It encourages and supports cooperation between relevant bodies and organisations of the Member States in order to arrive for instance at common terms of reference which would facilitate the mutual recognition of qualifications and increase the mobility of staff.

It must be noted that in its implementation LEONARDO receives specific support from CEDEFOP⁵ (the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, established in 1975, as an independent European institution).

The second DGXXII programme that provides opportunities especially for students and (academic) teachers is SOCRATES⁶. The main objectives of SOCRATES are:

- to develop the European dimension in education;
- to promote improved knowledge of European languages;
- to promote the intercultural dimension of education;
- to enhance the quality of education by means of European cooperation;
- to promote mobility of teaching staff and students;

3 <http://europa.eu.int/en/comm/dg22/leonardo.html>

4 We must not forget, however, the TELEPHASSA project, funded in part under COMETT, one of the precursor programmes of LEONARDO. TELEPHASSA was a joint venture of three academic libraries (Tilburg, Barcelona Autònoma and Patras) and two private companies. One of its follow-ups is the annual Digital Library Summer School organised by TICER (Tilburg Innovation Centre for Electronic Resources BV, <http://cwis.kub.nl/~ticer/>).

5 <http://europa.eu.int/en/comm/dg22/cedefop.html>

6 <http://europa.eu.int/en/comm/dg22/socrates.html>

- to encourage the recognition of diplomas, periods of study and other qualifications;
- to facilitate the development of an open European area for cooperation in education;
- to encourage open and distance education in the European context;
- to foster exchanges of information on educational systems and policy.

It may suffice to mention but one of the many activities supported by the SOCRATES programme: Action Line 1 of its ERASMUS chapter invites applications for *Thematic Network* projects. These projects *aim to define and develop a European dimension within a given academic discipline or other issues of common interest (including administrative issues) through cooperation between university faculties or departments, academic or professional associations.* The *Directory of Thematic Projects 1996/97*⁷ lists 28 networks, covering subject areas such as the Humanities, Social Sciences, Science and Technology, Medicine, as well as horizontal themes. Applications may be submitted once per year. According to the programme's documentation a *Thematic Network project might seek to assess the quality of cooperation and curriculum innovation, promote within an active forum discussions on improvements in teaching methods in specific discipline areas and foster the development of joint European programmes and specialised courses.*

Library and Information Science is not one of the currently supported areas, though, but ... there is an opportunity!

2.2 The Telematics Application Programme

Strengthening the European dimension of activities related to the development of human resources through education and training: that is the principal objective of programmes such as LEONARDO and SOCRATES. It is complementing the main objectives of the large multiannual *Framework Programmes* that provide monies to collaborative European RTD (Research and Technology Development) projects. Based on Article 130⁸ of the European Union Treaty, they are perceived inter alia as making an important contribution to achieving the long-term goal of a single European market, and to improving the competitiveness of the European industry⁹. They consist of specific subprogrammes that cover basic and applied research in a number of broad areas, such as life sciences, environment, energy and information and communication technologies (ICT).

Advancing the state of the art in any of these areas not only requires dissemination and promotion of results, but also raising awareness and upgrading skills and know-how among the profession. Managing these activities cannot simply be separated from the RTD activities proper. Therefore most RTD subprogrammes and all sectors of subprogrammes include a component called (for instance) "Accompanying Measures" which caters for these needs.

⁷ <http://europa.eu.int/en/comm/dg22/socrates/tsum/tnpdir.html>

⁸ <http://europa.eu.int/abc/obj/treaties/en/entr6d15.htm#141>

⁹ The fourth such programme (1994-1998) is currently being executed and the fifth (1998-2002) is in its final preparatory phase.

This holds true in particular for the two sectors of the *Telematics Applications Programme*¹⁰ (one of the three subprogrammes covering the ICT area) that have the most immediate impact on the library and information profession: the *Telematics for Libraries*¹¹ and the *Information Engineering*¹² sectors.

The *Libraries Sector* has a fairly long (more than ten years) tradition of supporting the professional development of librarians through the kind of Accompanying Measures just mentioned. It has provided ample opportunity for debate among librarians and other information professionals from all over Europe through workshops and seminars. These are usually held in connection with commissioned studies on specific topics or with collaborative RTD projects that are working toward similar goals. A list of the more recent events¹³ includes the following:

- From Quantity to Quality, workshop on library statistics (December 1997)
- Metadata Workshop (December 1997)
- Workshop on UNIMARC and related EU Projects (September 1996)
- Workshop on Public Libraries and the Information Society (July 1996)
- EUROPAGATE/SR concertation meeting (February 1996)
- HARMONICA Workshop on Music Information Services (January 1996)
- Deposit Collections of Electronic Publications (December 1995)
- Digital Imaging (November 1994)

Studies are, by the way, a type of Accompanying Measure that allow the Commission services responsible for running RTD funding programmes to investigate in depth particular issues or topics that are relevant for the design and implementation of such programmes.

At least two studies have been commissioned by our Libraries Sector with a view to obtaining reliable data and other information on training for librarianship in the Member States of the European Union. The first of these, finished in 1992¹⁴, examined the curricula of library schools in Europe with regard to their information technology content. Its results, now more than 6 years old, are of course too dated to be of relevance today. At the time they served nevertheless to assess the overall ability of future librarians to cope with technical innovations in their specific domains.

¹⁰ <http://www2.echo.lu/telematics/home.html>

¹¹ <http://www2.echo.lu/libraries/en/libraries.html>

¹² <http://www2.echo.lu/ie/en/iehome.html>

¹³ <http://www2.echo.lu/libraries/en/support.html>; in the early nineties the responsible Commission department even had a special course developed to help librarians acquaint themselves with OSI networking technology. Another activity of the “early days”, supporting the professional development of librarians, was the compilation of a *Library Automation Pack* designed to assist librarians in the selection of advanced library automation systems.

¹⁴ **Starre, Jan H.E. van der:** Information technology content of initial professional education and training for librarianship in the European Community. Study prepared for the Commission of the European Community by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions. Luxembourg, 1992. (See also: **Starre, Jan H.E. van der:** Library schools and information technology: A European overview. In: *Information Processing & Management*. Vol.29, No.2, 1993, pp.241-247)

The second study¹⁵, carried out in 1996, took a somewhat more philosophical approach. It focused on continuing education (or the professional development) of practising librarians, in information and communication technologies. Its authors presented a careful analysis of training needs in these areas and of possible (and, above all, efficient) ways and means of delivering the appropriate training. The study and the resulting recommendations were presented to the board of EUCLID, the association of European schools of library and information studies. In the recommendations pointers were set to the LEONARDO and SOCRATES programmes mentioned above.

This second study was also intended to prepare the ground for more widely scoped joint action in the field of training for librarianship, and in fact to entice the library schools in Europe (or at least a representative subset of them) to submit appropriate proposals for such action to one of our Calls. As an aside we note that due to the administrative constraints of our work the only mechanism through which we can fund collaborative efforts of this kind is the Call for Proposal, with its subsequent peer evaluation phase. Unfortunately, this mechanism failed to produce the desired result.

The Library's companion sector in the Telematics Programme, Information Engineering, has been more successful in that regard. Project EUROIEMASTER¹⁶ (Towards the Development of European Education and Training Qualification in Information Engineering) had been proposed to that sector following the Telematics Call in 1995. Although it does not address our particular constituency it is worth mentioning as an example of what may be done under the Telematics Programme to promote the development of a specific group of professionals. The project is being carried out jointly by university departments in Spain, Italy, Ireland and the United Kingdom, and coordinated by an independent consultant. It aims to define (and implement!) a syllabus for postgraduate courses in Information Engineering, to be offered by each of the participating institutions and other interested universities. Accreditation procedures will be the responsibility of the respective institutions. The courses are structured in a modular fashion. They are open to students (who may already be practising information professionals) with different backgrounds. Some of its modules can be delivered via distance education mechanisms, and they can be used by individuals for independent learning or by organisations who wish to upgrade specific know-how and skills of their staff. Apart from these features the project gives rise to closer cooperation among players in the Information Engineering sector (industry, academia, publishers, etc.) on pertinent education and training issues.

3. RELEVANT PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY THE LIBRARIES SECTOR

Having said that our second study of ICT training needs of librarians could not yet be followed up with a fully-fledged collaborative project, it must be added, however, that quite a number of other, more mainstream RTD projects supported by the Libraries Sector have made and are still making significant contributions to the professional

¹⁵ **Pors, Niels Ole, and Trine Schreiber:** Librarian training in information and communication technologies: A Typology of Needs and Deliverables. Study prepared for the Commission of the European Community by the Danish Royal School of Librarianship. Luxembourg, 1996

¹⁶ <http://www2.echo.lu/ie/en/euroiemaster.html>

development of librarians¹⁷. Some of them do that implicitly, some have a more or less dominant professional development component, and for at least two professional development is the key issue. I shall cite and discuss but a few examples, taken from the list of both our FP3 and FP4 projects¹⁸ (i.e. projects run under the 3rd and 4th Framework Programmes).

3.1 HYPERLIB

HYPERLIB¹⁹ (Hypertext interfaces to library information systems, involving a Belgian university library and a university-affiliated research institute in the UK, funded from 1/1993 to 12/1995) was among the first series of Library projects to be selected after a Call for Proposals (CfP'91). Technically speaking, the project set out to develop and use an SGML document type definition (the *HYPERLIB DTD*) and suitable conversion tools, covering various *library objects*, such as manuals, bibliographies and catalogues. From a user point of view much of the work done under this project provided library staff with more efficient tools for their day-to-day work, e.g. hyperlinked manuals on acquisition and cataloguing. That work included a careful analysis of staff needs, the design of convivial user interfaces and appropriate staff training.

3.2 BIBDEL

In January 1994 BIBDEL²⁰ (Libraries without Walls: the Delivery of Library Services to Distant Users, carried out jointly by three university libraries in the UK, Ireland and Greece respectively, and Commission funded until 9/1995) began to research strategies for remote user access to library catalogues, databases, enquiry services and documents.

By developing three different models of provision through the medium of three universities BIBDEL demonstrated how technology and expertise can be transferred between libraries in different countries and adapted to the needs of each. It did not aim to produce a single solution for EU-wide adoption but rather a series of solutions each of which will find application in different geographical areas of different Member States.

BIBDEL's contribution to the development of the profession consisted in two workshops / conferences devoted to the subject matter of the project. The second of these was held only in autumn last year, long after the funding of the project had ended. Speakers at both conferences were from different parts of Europe and so were the participants.

3.3 EDUCATE

¹⁷ Allowing a sufficiently generous interpretation of "professional development" we may even go so far as to say that the very existence of a European programme specifically for the technological development of libraries has spawned pertinent activities throughout Europe.

¹⁸ <http://www2.echo.lu/libraries/en/projects.html>

¹⁹ <http://www2.echo.lu/libraries/en/projects/hyperlib.html>

²⁰ <http://www2.echo.lu/libraries/en/projects/bibdel.html>

Project EDUCATE²¹ (End-user courses in information access through communication technology) started at around the same time as BIBDEL and was funded for a period of three years. Its initial target groups have been students of science and engineering who need instruction on how to find and use information sources relevant to their fields. The most visible result of this project is a website²² that provides precisely this kind of instruction. It includes *net-referenced* textbooks (specially written and/or adapted to meet the requirements of this project) and exercises in information retrieval from e.g. abstracts databases. In a way the EDUCATE product automates a service that is traditionally rendered by many an academic library to its student constituency: teaching them how to find the information they need to pursue their studies.

Obviously, the EDUCATE approach and the actual EDUCATE courses can also be applied to training librarians in the use of networked information resources. And indeed, they have been and will continue to be applied to this end.

University libraries from five EU member states have been involved in EDUCATE. Work continues and is now focusing on including more subject areas (such as chemistry, medicine and also subjects of the humanities) and on enhancing the distance education component, e.g. by providing facilities for discussion, feedback and teacher-student interaction.

3.4 MURIEL

MURIEL²³, following a proposal submitted in 1994, was intended to provide students of librarianship and practicing librarians alike with a distance education system. Based on ISDN technology, the project included the adaptation of an authoring tool to the specific needs of the profession, and the creation of exemplary multimedia courseware on topics such as “the Internet” and Information Ethics. It ran from 1/95 until 10/97 and involved two library schools, two technology companies, a research library and a national library.

MURIEL is one of the two projects highlighted above as having professional development as their key issue. In fact, the proposal referred to the possibility of defining common European curricula for librarianship training, thereby increasing the mobility of library staff. As the project progressed, however, it became quite clear that this was too ambitious a goal, and the technical component received more attention than the service aspects. It became nevertheless an interesting application of ISDN networking technology, of courseware tools and of *Computer Supported Cooperative Work* (CSCW) concepts to education and training for librarianship. It has been presented and / or demonstrated on several occasions, including ED-MEDIA '96 (Boston), Online Educa '96 (Berlin), MILIA '97 (Cannes) and IFLA '97 (Copenhagen).

3.5 ELVIL

²¹ <http://www2.echo.lu/libraries/en/projects/educate.html>

²² <http://educate.lib.chalmers.se/>

²³ <http://www2.echo.lu/libraries/en/projects/muriel.html>

A close relative of EDUCATE is project ELVIL²⁴ (The European Legislative Virtual Library, started in 9/1996 and supposed to run for two years). It is best described by quoting from <http://www.sub.su.se/sam/elvil.htm>, the project's website:

The project consists of three parts:

- *the first part aims at assembling a World Wide Web index on law and politics in Europe in order to gather references to all Internet-accessible computer-based information on European law and politics into one coherent World Wide Web-accessible database;*
- *the second part aims at developing a multimedia educational aid for students of European law and politics, and for teachers and librarians;*
- *the third part aims at constructing a search engine composed of a World Wide Web-interface and software gateways for easy and concurrent access to the national parliamentary databases and to the European parliamentary database.*

ELVIL is based in three universities in Sweden, the United Kingdom and Spain respectively. It receives input from national parliaments and the European Parliament.

3.6 PLAIL

PLAIL²⁵ (Public libraries and independent learners, 2/1994 - 2/1996), one of the early projects under the *Telematics for Libraries* programme had a dual objective: to serve a particular group of users of public libraries, the so called *independent learners*; and secondly, to help enable public library staff to render this kind of service. In doing so PLAIL picked up on recommendations put forward in a study on *Open Distance Learning in Public Libraries*²⁶, that had been funded by our Sector. And, clearly, PLAIL is one of the projects that have been designed primarily with a view to *training the trainers*, so to speak, the trainers being public librarians in this case. Five key questions, in logical succession, have been underlying this project:

- What are the needs of adult independent learners ?
- What (library) services can meet those needs ?
- To what extent do those services rely on (or could benefit from) information technology ?
- What skills are necessary to provide the services ?
- Can those skills be acquired via information technology ?

PLAIL has not only output a number of significant reports based on desk research, providing (partial) answers to these questions, but also multimedia training materials (CD-ROM, Video) to help public library staff to acquire the appropriate skills. It is worth noting that the very composition of the project consortium itself had the effect of transferring know-how from a group of librarians (in the UK) who were already relatively

²⁴ <http://www2.echo.lu/libraries/en/projects/elvil.html>

²⁵ <http://www2.echo.lu/libraries/en/projects/plail.html>

²⁶ <http://www.uclan.ac.uk/research/centre/cerlim/reports/odinrep.htm>

experienced in these matters²⁷, to colleagues in southern Europe, in particular Portugal, where public libraries have been instituted on a larger scale only fairly recently, and Spain whose public library system does not enjoy a very long tradition either²⁸. The involvement of Portugal's Open University turned out to be of great benefit especially in this context.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND OUTLOOK

In this paper we have argued that it is in the European Commission's remit to give support to activities in the areas of education and training, including vocational training, that would enhance the *European dimension* of these activities. We have given examples of opportunities offered to the library profession at large by Commission programmes such as LEONARDO, SOCRATES, and the specific subprogrammes of the RTD Framework Programmes. We have looked in particular at the Library and Information Engineering sectors of the Telematics Applications Programme that can accommodate pertinent activities in the form of Accompanying Measures. A number of mainstream projects of the Libraries sector are also oriented toward the professional development of librarians.

We contend the time has come for the European library profession (including schools, professional associations and other players) to respond to these opportunities in a proactive way. The intense debate that has been going on within the profession on how to adapt to the exigencies of the emerging *information society* could well be turned into even more effective action for the benefit of practising and future librarians. Combining forces, from the grassroot level upwards, is the clue. Coming back to the title of this paper, it is perhaps fair to give the term *European initiatives* an additional twist: initiatives taken by the European Commission can only be successful if they are met by matching initiatives of those interested in positive change. Examples (other than the above mentioned EUROIEMASTER) exist²⁹.

The *5th Framework Programme*³⁰, supposed to become operational by the end of this year, will place an even greater emphasis on the importance of education and (professional) training³¹. Equally important will be the development of the information society. Both will have to be in tune. The need for professional development persists. And so will the opportunities provided by the European Commission for making it happen on a European scale.

²⁷ see for instance: <http://www.ncet.org.uk/info-sheets/flexible.html>

²⁸ see also: <http://www2.echo.lu/libraries/en/plis/homeplis.html>

²⁹ One of these examples has been set by the Community of European Management Schools (CEMS), an association of 12 universities and Business Schools who, with support from private consultancy enterprises and the Commission's SOCRATES/ERASMUS programme, have successfully implemented a European study programme, leading to an internationally recognised Masters degree (CEMS-Master). (see also: <http://www.uni-koeln.de/wiso-fak/dekanat/cems.htm>)

³⁰ <http://www.cordis.lu/fifth/home.html>

³¹ <http://www2.echo.lu/telematics/education/en/resource/publics.html#FifthFWP>

