



Library Associations as an Academic Course

Tania Todorova¹

Abstract

The report introduces the contents, the teaching methods and the student assessment mode applied in the Library Association academic course. The course has been taught for five academic years and is well received by students and is new to the academic programs in Library and Information Science (LIS) in Bulgaria. This is an independent course providing knowledge about the library associations to the students in LIS and will be of interest to the international professional community and fits into the on-going discussions about revisions of the Guidelines for Professional Library / Information Educational Programs, developed by experts from IFLA's Education and Training Section in 2012.

1. Introduction

The timeliness and significance of studying the problems related to library associations are defined by the place and the role which libraries, museums, archives and other informational institutions and associations take on as an underlying factor in the processes of developing the new informational and educational environment. The summarization and the analysis of their activity - research, theoretical, applicable, communicational - allow for revealing their unifying and stimulating effect for the presentation, popularization and promotion of the library and cultural community in the world as a factor for achieving sustainable development. Another important motive is the contributory role of library association in strengthening the position of librarianship and the prestige of the library and information specialists. Library associations create an environment which is inspiring, informative, and engendering new opportunities for education, development and contribution of individual professionals; build up interest-based networks, discussion groups; organize the upgrade of knowledge, skills and initiatives; rally and counsel under crisis conditions, provide expert assistance, popularize the achievements and the good practices and elaborate many other forms of interaction, united by a democratic, equitable and positive approach.

Knowing the theoretical and practical and applicable achievements of the national and international associations and unions is an important prerequisite for the successful realization within a globalized information environment which the librarians and information specialists of today work in.

At the University of Library Studies and Information Technologies this necessity in the academic training of students of LIS has been met by the introduction of the *Library Associations* course as a mandatory training course in the curriculum of the speciality 'Library, Information and Cultural Management', Master Degree course – full-time, part-time and distance learning.

2. Key features of the Library Association

The Library Association is a professional, nongovernmental and non-profit organization which expresses the aspirations and the perspectives that librarians and library and information professionals as a whole encounter on a local, national and international scale.

Being a public organization, it is featured by the following basic characteristics and specific tasks:

- to consolidate the community of library and information professionals;
- to establish conditions for informal communication within a team of professionals, belonging to different levels of the institutional hierarchy;
- to identify, formulate and advocate the interests of its members;
- to represent the library community before various institutions and organizations;
- to publish and submit professional standpoints and to take part in the settlement of disputable issues;
- to promote the right of legislative initiative;
- to develop expert and consultancy activity and to prepare regulatory documents, such as standards, manuals, codes, etc.;
- to assist for the continuous vocational training and qualification and for the relations between the library and information science, the library education and practice;

¹ University of Library Studies and Information Technologies (ULSIT) (Bulgaria)



- to stimulate the scientific-theoretical and the practical-applicable research in the field of LIS;
- to attend to the current informing of professionals about the topical issues and subjects and their participation in the discussions in terms of active planning of events (congresses, conferences and other forums and appearances) and publishing activity;
- to initiate programmes and projects as regards the development of the library sector;
- to develop intercessory activity and to lobby for the provisioning of terms for the development of the profession;
- to work for the formation of new professional conscience and self-awareness as well as a communication style within the team environment;
- to develop activities for the establishment of partnerships and strengthening integration;
- to conduct active public communication for forming a positive image of libraries and librarians and about their mission in the public development;
- to have an impact on the educational, cultural and social tendencies in the society [3].

The library association according to M. Mladenova brings closer people with similar intellectual abilities and professional pursuits, among which during the process of their voluntary and creative communication new ideas were born and more modern forms of work are established, changing the concepts of libraries and librarianship [2].

The first library association in the world was founded in 1876 in the USA in Philadelphia (Pennsylvania). During the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia in 1876, 103 librarians responded to a call for a "Convention of Librarians" initiated by a group of librarians, including Melvil Dewey, Justin Winsor, C. A. Cutter, Samuel S. Green, and others. These attendees (90 men and 13 women) formed the American Library Association with main aim "to enable librarians to do their present work more easily and at less expense." [1]

From that moment up to now, a significant tool in the library associations' activity are the congresses, the conferences and the other professional forums where new tendencies and issues are discussed, contacts are made, ideas, knowledge and experience are exchanged all of them reflecting the library science, studies, education and professional activity.

3. Library Associations as an Academic Course – Purpose, Contents, Methods

The academic course 'Library Associations' gives theoretic knowledge about the essence of the library associations, about the history, mission, objectives, structure and functioning of the library associations such as: IFLA – International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions; EBLIDA - European Bureau of Library, Information and Documentation Associations; LIBER – Association of European Research Libraries; EUCLID – European Association for Library and Information Education and Research; ALA – American Library Association; LCA - Library Copyright Alliance, founded by the three largest American library associations, the American Library Association (ALA), the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) and the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL); eIFLnet (Electronic Information for Libraries Network). The inauguration of the first library associations in Bulgaria is also reviewed and the role of library figures such as S. Stanchev, I. Sestrimski, V. Klasanov, T. Burmov, S. Argirov – champions of the establishment and strengthening of the librarianship community. Students are introduced with the activity of Bulgarian library associations nowadays – the Bulgarian Library and Information Association (BBIA), the Association of the University Libraries (AUB), the Bulgarian Information Consortium (BIC), and the National Automated Library Information System Foundation (NABIS).

The discipline interprets the various forms of interaction between library associations and library education and practice. Summary is made of the position of IFLA, EBLIDA, LIBER, ALA, LCA, eIFL and other library associations and their interaction with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the European Commission in vindicating the interests of the libraries and their users in the light of the drafted changes in information legislation regarding the expansion of the scope of copyright exceptions and limitations for libraries, archives, museums and other cultural institutions in line with the digital technologies and the more growing use of digital information and the Internet. The professional editions, the websites and the scientific conferences as forums of theoretical knowledge and good professional practices exchange, and as an informational resource for raising the professionals' awareness, are focused on in the course. The possibilities of the library and information professionals' ongoing education and continuous qualification are reviewed.

This academic course is structured in two modules. The first one is titled '*Significance of Library Associations for the Interaction between the librarians in Europe and Worldwide*' and contains 9 units;



the second module '*The Role of Bulgarian Library Associations for the Reinforcement of the Modern Vision of Libraries and Librarians*' consists of 11 units.

The role of the library associations for the implementation of the new library missions in the ever changing world, particularly their contribution in the discussions about the basic tendencies in the information society's development, the popularization of the free access to scientific information, the green library movement, etc. stands out in the process of the educational intercourse with students. The emergence, the development and the activity of international, European and Bulgarian associations is traced in terms of the retrospective and systematic analysis supported by the teaching of knowledge about the structure, organization, administration and their multi-aspectual activity. Updated theoretical and applicable agenda are acquired as well as particular achievements and good practices of library associations as regards the implementation of intellectual growth and knowledge society generation.

Author's publications, comprising of monograph, rich bibliography, and supplementary educational materials are prepared to provide for the quality of the teaching process [3]. For the needs of the e-learning the course has been uploaded in the e-platform ILIAS and specific technical, organizational and pedagogical methods and educational means are used, as well as the interactive approach and the possibilities of the virtual educative environment.

The examination of how the acquired knowledge is mastered is effected by means of the elaboration and defence of a course project. The discipline is studied in the last term of the program of study, parallel to the process of writing the master's thesis. When choosing a topic for the course project in Library Associations, the students usually select a theoretical and/or an applied problem related to the subject-matter of the master's thesis and as a primary task they carry out a strategy of information search of relevant materials, making use of the resources which are created and made available by the library associations. Thus, the education in this course is upgrading and assists for the higher quality of the examination academic product prepared by the students in the end of their studies, i.e. the master's thesis.

The Librarian Association academic course has been taught for more than five academic years. The educational content is accepted with interest by the students and a number of course projects are further developed in master's theses, or the acquired knowledge is integrated into students' elaborations in various library and information science related problems.

The subject of the course is directly related to and is in a causal link with the courses: Cultural Institutions Management, Cultural Institutions Marketing, Educational Strategies in Libraries, Project Management, Human Resources Management, etc.

4. Conclusion

Library associations are the carriers of a huge potential of increasing the professionals' competence in the current nowadays topics, of unifying the problem solving efforts, and of inspiring adherents for the sake of purposes of public benefit. The educational content related to studying library associations is an important component of the academic training of the students in LIS and in the ongoing education of the library and information professionals. The accumulated knowledge assists for providing up-to-date contents and high quality of the interactive knowledge triangle: education – science – business.

This is an independent course, providing knowledge about the library associations to the students in LIS will be not without interest to the international professional community and fits into the on-going discussions about revisions of the Guidelines for Professional Library / Information Educational Programs, developed by experts from IFLA's Education and Training Section in 2012. [4]

Cognition and the participation in the library associations' activity is a prerequisite for the successful career development of the librarian professional of today, and the competent interaction with the professional associations is a hallmark of the modern library manager's profile.

References

- [1] American Library Association (ALA), <http://www.ala.org/aboutala/1876-0> (accessed 1 December 2016).
- [2] Mladenova, Maria. Librarianship in Bulgaria from 1878 to 1944, Sofia, Za bukvite- O Pismeneh, 2007, 316 p. (in Bulgarian)
- [3] Todorova, Tania. Integration Processes in Library and Information Sphere, Sofia: Za bukvite-O Pismeneh, 2014, 278 p. (in Bulgarian)
- [4] Guidelines for Professional Library / Information Educational Programs, Ed. by IFLA's Education and Training Section, 2012, available at: <http://www.ifla.org/publications/guidelines-for-professional-library-information-educational-programs-2012> (accessed 14 November 2016).

