



Intercultural Cooperation at Library and Information Science via Students Symposiums BOBCATSSS

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Abstract

The paper examines the thematic content of the BOBCATSSS symposiums in the period 1993-2022, with the main goal to highlight the event as a good practice for intercultural cooperation in Library and Information Science (LIS). Under the auspices of BOBCATSSS Association (former EUCLID - European Association for Library & Information Education and Research) is annually organized the largest symposium of students in the LIS from the European universities BOBCATSSS. Thirty years BOBCATSSS aims to educate and draw attention to important theoretical and practical problems in the LIS field and the library profession. The research methodology includes a documentary and content analysis (internal and online desk research) of the websites, newsletters, publications and other information materials. An analysis of the themes of the symposia, conducted in the period 1993-2022, allows summarizing six main problem fields, as follows: The future of the Library and Information Sciences, Libraries and Reading Culture; The Profile of the Modern Information Specialist; Marketing and Quality of Information Services; Access to Information for All; Information and Educational Policy of the European Union; Digitization, ICT and innovations in the Library and Information Field. The interaction in the frame of BOBCATSSS Symposium favors the creation of student interuniversity networks, initially united through the shared experiences within the event.

Keywords: BOBCATSSS, BOBCATSSS Association, Library and Information Sciences, intercultural cooperation, academic education, students

1. Introduction. What is BOBCATSSS?

Already 30 years the *symposium* BOBCATSSS is a prestigious and unique in its character European initiative of students in Library and Information Sciences (LIS), which encourages the academic and intercultural communication, influences the exchange of good practices and interaction between traditional and innovative forms of university education and motivates the future professionals. One of the contributions of EUCLID (European Association for Library & Information Education and Research) is its long partnership with the LIS student community, maintaining the continuity and dialogue between the different generations in the library and information sector in Europe. Under the auspices of EUCLID is annually organized the largest symposium of students in the LIS from the European universities BOBCATSSS. Since 2019 it was proposed the new name for EUCLID – BOBCATSSS Association (<https://bobcatsss.info/>), based on the survey that BOBCATSSS is a much stronger and better-known brand than EUCLID, nowadays [1]. BOBCATSSS Association establishes a closer liaison with the conference, which will remain the core forum.

Since its first edition in 1993 and until now, the BOBCATSSS symposium is managed and filled with content by students from European universities from Eastern and Western Europe. The name BOBCATSSS is an acronym and describes the university network. The letters stand for the first letters of the cities of the universities that initiated the BOBCATSSS symposium in 1993: Budapest, Oslo, Barcelona, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Tampere, Stuttgart, Szombathely and Sheffield. During the last years further members from Borås, Riga, Kharkiv, Moscow, Tallinn, Torun, Warsaw, Sofia, Ljubljana, Krakow, Bratislava, Prague, Osijek, Zadar, Berlin, Potsdam, Porto, Ankara and Parma have joined the network. The basic requirement for the educational institution is to offer courses in the field of Library and Information Sciences.

The target groups of the BOBCATSSS are students, teachers and researchers in scientific and application field of the Library and Information Sciences, as well as librarians and information professionals working in libraries and information departments. Annually, over 250 participants are attracted by the interesting topics and professional discussions at the BOBCATSSS symposium.



2. Goal and Methodology

The report examines the thematic content of the BOBCATSSS symposiums in the period 1993-2022, with the main goal to highlight the event as a good practice for intercultural cooperation in Library and Information Sciences. Thirty years BOBCATSSS aims to educate and draw attention to important theoretical and practical problems in the LIS field and the library profession.

The research methodology includes a documentary and content analysis (internal and online desk research) of the websites, newsletters, publications and other information materials [1].

3. Content analyses of BOBCATSSS Symposia Themes

An analysis of the themes of the symposia, conducted in the period 1993-2022, allows summarizing *six main problem fields*, as follows:

- The future of the Library and Information Sciences, Libraries and Reading Culture;
- The Profile of the Modern Information Specialist;
- Marketing and Quality of Information Services;
- Access to Information for All;
- Information and Educational Policy of the European Union;
- Digitization, ICT and innovations in the Library and Information Field.

The future of the Library and Information Sciences, Libraries and Reading Culture – a focus at the following conferences: *“The Power of Reading”* (2018, Riga, University of Latvia and students of Eötvös Loránd University of Budapest, Hungary); *„From Collections to Connections: Turning Libraries “Inside-Out”* (2013, Ankara, Hacettepe University, Turkey and Royal School of Library and Information Science, Denmark); *„Librarianship in the Information Age”* (2005, Budapest, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest and Oslo University College, Norway); *„Library and Information in Multicultural Societies”* (2004, Riga, University College of Borås, Sweden and University of Latvia); *“The Future of Librarianship”* (1994) and *„The Role of Libraries Today, Tomorrow and Beyond”* (1993, Budapest, Hogeschool van Amsterdam, Netherlands; National Library of Hungary and the Hungarian Library Association, Hungary).

The Profile of the Modern Information Specialist - discussed at the conferences: *“Information Management, Fake News and Disinformation”* (2020, Paris, Université Gustave Eiffel, Paris, France and University of Library Studies and Information Technologies (ULSIT), Sofia, Bulgaria); *„Challenges for the New Information Professional”* (2009, Porto, University of Tampere, Finland and University of Porto, Portugal); *„Information, Innovation, Responsibility: Information Professional in the Network Society”* (2006, Tallinn, Tallinn University, Estonia and Royal School of Library and Information Science, Denmark); *„Hum@n Beings and Information Specialists. Future Skills, Qualifications, Positioning”* (2002, LIS Departments at universities in Portoroz and Ljubljana, Slovenia and University of Applied Sciences Stuttgart, Germany).

Marketing and Quality of Information Services – an issue discussed at the symposia: *“Data and Information Science”* (2021, Debrecen, University of Debrecen, Hungary and Hannover University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Germany); *“Improving Quality of Life through Information”* (2017, Tampere, University of Tampere, Finland; Oslo and Akershus University College, Norway and Hanze University of Applied Sciences, Netherlands); *“Library (R)evolution : Promoting Sustainable Information Practices”* (2014, Barcelona, University of Barcelona, Spain and University of Borås, Sweden); *„Marketing of Information Services”* (2007, Prague, Charles University, Czech Republic; Media University Stuttgart, Germany and University of Applied Sciences Konstanz, Germany); *„New Book Economy / International Symposium Marketing and Developing New Information Products and Services in Europe”* (1997, Budapest, Hogeschool van Amsterdam, Netherlands; National Library of Hungary and the Hungarian Library Association, Hungary); *„Quality of Information Services”* (1996, Budapest, Hogeschool van Amsterdam, Netherlands; National Library of Hungary and the Hungarian Library Association, Hungary); *„Marketing and Development of New Information Products and Services in Europe”* (1995, Budapest, Hogeschool van Amsterdam, Netherlands; National Library of Hungary and the Hungarian Library Association, Hungary).



Access to information for All - issues placed on the agenda of the conferences: „*The Role of Libraries in Democratic Cultures, Intellectual Freedom and Censorship, Libraries, Open Access and Open Data, and Protecting Privacy*” (2016, Lyon, ENSSIB, University of Paris Descartes and University of Knoxville-Tennessee (USA)); „*Bridging the Digital Divide: Libraries Providing Access for All?*” (2010, Parma, University of Parma, Italy and Manchester Metropolitan University, UK); „*Providing Access to Information for Everyone*” (2008, Zadar, Humboldt University Berlin, Germany; University of Osijek, Croatia; University of Applied Sciences Potsdam, Germany; and University of Zadar, Croatia); „*Knowledge, Information and Democracy in the Open Society: The Role of the Library and Information Sector*” (2001, Vilnius, Oslo University College, Norway; JBI Faculty, Norway and Vilnius University, Lithuania); „*Intellectual Property Versus the Right to Knowledge?*” (2000, Krakow, Jagiellonian University, Poland and Royal School of Librarianship, Denmark).

Information and Educational Policy of the European Union - analyzed in the context of the symposia: „*Information Policy and the European Union*” (2003, Torun, Universitas Nicolai Copernici Torun, Poland and Hogeschool van Amsterdam, Netherlands); „*Learning Society – Learning Organisation – Lifelong Learning*” (1999, Bratislava, University of Applied Sciences Stuttgart, Germany; University of Applied Sciences Darmstadt, Germany and University of Bratislava, Slovakia); „*Shaping the Knowledge Society*” (1998, Budapest, Royal School of Librarianship, Denmark; National Library of Hungary and the Hungarian Library Association, Hungary).

Digitization, ICT and Innovations in the Library and Information Field – topics at the symposia: „*Digital Transformation*” (21-22 January 2021, Virtual Conference, Porto Accounting and Business School - Porto Polytechnic (ISCAP), Portugal; University of Leon, Spain and University of Library Studies and Information Technologies (ULSIT), Sofia, Bulgaria); „*Participation – Innovation – Design*” (2015, Brno, Masaryk University, Czech Republic and University of Tampere, Finland); „*Information in E-motion*” (2012, Amsterdam, Hogeschool van Amsterdam, the Netherlands; Hanze University of Applied Sciences Groningen, the Netherlands; and Stuttgart Media University, Germany); „*Finding New Ways*” (2011, Szombathely, Hungary, University of Western Hungary, Hungary; Oslo University College, Norway; and University of Applied Sciences Burgenland, Austria); „*Information and Technology Transforming Lives: Connection, Interaction, Innovation*” (2019, Osijek, Department of Information Sciences at University of Osijek, Croatia, De Haagse Hogeschool, The Hague, Netherlands, Linnéuniversitetet, Kalmar and Växjö, Sweden, and Uppsala Universitet, Sweden).

University of Library Studies and Information Technologies, Bulgaria is co-organizer of two editions of the symposium BOBCATSSS 2020 in Paris and BOBCATSSS 2021 (virtual conference) [2].

The review of the BOBCATSSS themes and issues discussed at these student conferences shows the aspiration of the student community to deliberate over and offer new solutions to important issues that are a priority of activity also of major library associations such as International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA), European Bureau of Library, Information and Documentation Associations (EBLIDA) and Ligue des Bibliothèques Européennes de Recherche (LIBER) [3]. A new look and importance of the library and librarians are sought; challenges facing the management and marketing of library institutions and information security are discussed; thoroughly are examined the issues of intellectual property, digital information and modern requirements for basic library activities, in accordance with the changes in the information environment; accessibility of education and opportunities for continuing education for all citizens are stand for as an important constructive element for the knowledge society.

4. BOBCATSSS as an Intercultural LIS Community Building Tool

In addition to its educational and research content, BOBCATSSS is unique with its management, organization and potential for collaboration activities. It appears to be a real platform for application of knowledge and experience of students in the management, marketing and public communication. Every year it is co-organized in a different place by student teams from LIS Schools of different countries. Under the supervision of their professors, student teams from several universities plan and conduct the conference in terms both of the topics and contents and its management and realization. Students are responsible for every aspect of the implementation of the event - marketing and public relations, financing, logistics, advertising (print materials, flyers, posters), scientific contents management (topics and sub-topics, summaries, reports, preparation of publications), information and



communications applications, development of website, promotion and communication through social networks, etc.

Future professionals are actively involved in conducting the conference event by contributing to the optimal functioning of the full cycle of the scientific, cultural and social program.

5. CONCLUSION

The interaction in the frame of BOBCATSSS symposium favors the creation of student interuniversity networks in the Library and Information Sciences, initially united through the shared experiences within the event. Complex professional projects and international cooperation are of great benefit to the progress of the future specialists. A unique opportunity is provided to the students from different cycle of education to exchange views with their colleagues from different countries, as well as with teachers, researchers and librarians. The symposium is a platform to discuss visions of the future specialists on problematic fields of the Library and Information Sciences and issues of interest for their upcoming realization.

References

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- [2] BOBCATSSS Virtual Conference "Digital Transformation", 21-22 January 2021. Retrieved December 4, 2021 from [<https://bobcatsss2021.sciencesconf.org/>](https://bobcatsss2021.sciencesconf.org/)
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