Information Science in Europe

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ABSTRACT (BY CHRISTIAN SCHLOEGL)
This panel aims at giving an overview on the situation of information science in a few selected European countries/ regions (Scandinavia, France and former Yugoslavian countries). At the beginning the panelists will give an outline on the discipline in their country. In particular the following questions will be addressed:

- What is the state-of-the-art of information science with regard to academic education and research in your country?

- How do you see the development in information science as a discipline in your country in the next five years?

After the panelists have presented their opinion on the present and future situation on information science (see the following sections) they will continue with the discussion of the following topics:

- Is there anything like a European approach/identity on information science?

- If yes, what differentiations are there between Anglo-Saxon and European information science?

With regard to the last two topics it is intended to engage the audience into the discussion as much as possible.

Keywords
Europe, information science, state-of-the-art, future development, Anglo-Saxon vs. European tradition.

INFORMATION SCIENCE IN SCANDINAVIA (BY PETER INGWERSEN)

Aside from the traditional library and information science (LIS) schools (The Danish School of LIS in Copenhagen and the LIS Schools in Boraas (Sweden) and Oslo (Norway), the LIS education now takes place also in university contexts, most often associated with humanistic faculties. Whereas the Danish School has had the right to promote to PhD and D.Ph. degrees since 1998 this may first be made available in Boraas in 2011. In Oslo this right may also be made available next year. In Finland the tradition has always been to have Departments of Information Studies/ Management forming part of the social science faculties in the Finnish universities.

Regarding student intake the trend has been somewhat negative in the last couple of years in Sweden as well as in Denmark. This has implied the closing of courses and, as in Denmark, academic staff reduction. One should note that in Denmark and Finland LIS education includes bachelor as well as MSc and PhD levels.

Research evaluation measures have increased in order to distribute public research funding and monitoring university contracts with the governments. As a result bibliometric and scientometric research and courses have intensified in Denmark, Sweden and Norway. I believe that the bibliometric trend will continue and that the LIS departments should intensify the hold on this central LIS aspect.

The trend in the Scandinavian countries for LIS seems to move in two directions: 1) an increased focus on media, culture, information seeking as well as literacy and knowledge 'theory'/'design' at 'macro' levels – less on information processes and information architecture developments (Denmark and Sweden); 2) an increased focus on information architecture, interactive IR, seeking in daily life contexts and information/knowledge management (Denmark, Norway and Finland). Probably fusions of the traditional schools into universities will take place (Denmark).

INFORMATION SCIENCE IN FRANCE (BY FIDELIA IBEKWE-SANJUAN)

Information science (IS) in France emerged in 1972 as part of a discipline called "Information & Communication Sciences" (ICS). This singular occurrence has significant impact on the way IS has involved in France, on the difficulties that IS has to clearly define its object of investigation and its community and on the very little space awarded to this specialty within the ICS. The context of cohabitation with communication science (CS), where the latter has at least thrice more researchers and more students, makes it more difficult for IS to exist. The result is a very dispersed and sparsely populated community which suffers from a lack of clear identity.

On the education side, few or no IS departments exist separately. They are often part of a much wider department (information & communication) and there is little continuity between undergraduate, master and doctoral programs in IS. The majority of IS departments offer undergraduate technical diplomas (IUTs) for becoming information professionals (documentalists mostly). Librarians and archivists go through a specific training offered by the state institutions and thus have little relations with IS academic community. Although some master and doctoral programs exist within university departments, with the notable exception of the ENSSIB in Lyon, there are no educational institutions comparable with "Schools of Information Science" (iSchools) in France.

The current landscape of IS in France has also been largely shaped by earlier incoherent governmental policies towards scientific and technical information. The national policies in the early eighties and nineties were geared towards the development of a technological infrastructure for science and technological information. This involved building national databases and servers like Questel to rival the all powerful American competitor Dialog. This did not foster a cognitive and conceptual development of the field that could have taken advantage of significant contributions made by pioneers such as Paul Otlet and Suzanne Briet many decades earlier.

From our point of view, IS in France can go either of these two ways: becoming completely absorbed by CS or coming out of this "unhappy marriage" and seeking another alliance, perhaps with computer science. The first scenario seems more likely in the French context. The second scenario is less unlikely because the number of researchers in ICS who clearly work on IS topics is rapidly dwindling and also because computer science is so much bigger than IS so that it does not need the latter.

INFORMATION SCIENCE IN FORMER YUGOSLAVIAN COUNTRIES (TATJANA APARAC-JELUŠIĆ)

In ex-Yugoslavian countries information science started in the early 1960ies with a formal educational program for information professionals of various profiles, in particular in the area of science and medicine. Later in the same decade a postgraduate program in documentation, library science and museology was established through the visionary efforts of professor Bozo Tezak. (Prof. Tezak also started the first research journal with the aim to publish research papers on information theory, bibliometrics and results of studies in theory and practice of sub-disciplines involved.) The students were from all ex-Yugoslavian countries and after they finished MSc or Phd program they were leading professionals in their respective communities.

The foundation of the undergraduate program at the University in Zagreb in 1976/77 was another impetus for the development of the field which was followed by the establishment of other undergraduate and graduate LIS programs in Belgrade, Sarajevo and Ljubljana. On the one hand, that program encouraged the connection of archival studies, librarianship and museology the institutions of which have traditionally been associated with selecting, collecting, processing, preserving and mediating information and documents of all kinds. On the other hand, that program also drew the attention to stronger utilization and application of information and communication technology (ICT) in everyday life. Since the end of 20th century there has been the emphasis on the existence of natural ties between archival studies, librarianship and museology in the developed countries. This demonstrates that the vision of B. Težak is interpreted as a valid foundation for interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary studies and research today, the quality of which does not only rely on ICT but also on the investigation of information phenomena in the knowledge society from the point of view of education, psychology, philosophy, sociology, linguistics, history and other disciplines in the area of social sciences and humanities.