Library and Information Science Education in Thailand

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Historical Background

Library education in Thailand was initiated at Chulalongkorn University in 1951. A special program in library management was offered under the auspices of the Fulbright with five American professors conducting six courses, one at a time, for five consecutive years.

The Department of Library Science in the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn Universtiy was founded in 1955. This was the first library school to offer a diploma program. The objectives of the School are to promote librarianship, provide well-educated librarian to work in various types of libraries, and to support educational programs which depend on extensive library materials. (Suthilak Ambhanwong 1964: 6)

A first course on "library use" was offered to freshmen of the Faculty of Arts in 1957. Two years later, a full undergraduate program in library science was offered for juniors and seniors. In 1964, the master's program in Library Science was introduced. The curriculum was based on that of graduate library schools in United States, with modifications to meet the needs of Thailand. The graduate curriculum consists of both theoretical courses such as library history and library administration; as well as practical courses such as cataloging and classification, and reference services. Dr. Frances L. Spain, an American professor, who was consultant to the program at that time, stated that the graduate level of education for librarianship offered opportunities for librarians to contribute to the progress and direction of library development in Thailand. (Spain 1964: 1)

Another graduate level of education offered in 1965 was Advanced Certificate in Library Science at the College of Education, Prasanmitr Campus (now Srinakharinwirot University). It was a one-year post bachelor's degree program aimed to produce school librarians, comprising three main subjects, namely, survey of library science, theory and technical process, and practicum in library service. (Supat Songsangchan 2003)

LIS Education Programs

Undergraduate Programs

During the intervening 50 years library and information science programs have been updated and expanded. At present more than 15 universities offer programs of library and information science at undergraduate, masters and Ph.D. levels.

The first degree for information professionals in Thailand is the bachelor's degree and most universities offer such programs. However, the titles of those degrees awarded vary. The bachelor's degree in Information Studies, is offered at 5

universities, firstly at Chulalongkorn University, and at Ramkhamhaeng University, Chiang Mai University, Suranaree University of Technology, and theUniversity of the Thai Chamber of Commerce. Khon Kaen University, Mahasarakham University, Sukhothaithammathirat Open University award Bachelor of Arts in Information Science. The Bachelor's in Library and Information Science degree is offered at Srinakharinwirot University, Burapha University and Thammasat University. Silpakorn University and Dhurakijpundit University offer Bachelor of Arts in Information and Library Science. Prince of Songkla University and Walailuk University award Bachelor of Arts in Information Management degrees.

Table 1: Title of Degrees Awarded and Credit in LIS

University	Degree Awarded	No. of Cradits in LIS / IS[*]		
		Required	Electives	Total
State				
Burapha University	B.A. (Library and Information Science)	38	12	50
Chiang Mai University	B.A. (Information Studies)	36	24	60
Chulalongkorn University	B.A. (Information Studies)	24	30	54
Khon Kaen University	B.A. (Information Science)	36	33	69
Mahasarakham University	B.A. (Information Science)	60	15	75
Prince of Songkla University	B.A. (Information Management)	60	24	84
Ramkhamhaeng University	B.A. (Information Studies)	30	30	60
Silpakorn University	B.A. (Information and Library Science)	30	27	57
Srinakharinwirot University	B.A. (Library and Information Science)	36	27	63
Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University	B.A. (Information Science)	66	-	66
Suranaree University of Technology	B.I.S. (Information Studies)	30	36	66
Thammasat University	B.A. (Library and Information Science)	38	30	68
Rajabhat University	B.A. (Library and Information Science)	24	44	68
Walailuk University	B.I.S. (Information Management)	52	21	73
Private				
Dhurakijpundit University	B.A. (Information and Library Science)	42	16	58
The University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce	B.A. (Information Studies)	39	18	57

The undergraduate program's mission is preparing professionals for library and information work. These graduates are expected to have sufficient competency to work in government and private sectors.

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[*] vary by the structure of curriculum, not including background / introductory courses, minor subject courses, and other electives

Required courses offered in the undergraduate programs including:
- information and society / information in social context
- information sources
- collection development / information resources development
- information services / information service & dissemination
- communication and marketing in information services
- information technology / technology for information work
- management of libraries and information centers / management of information agencies / management of information organizations
- information storage and retrieval
- research
- introduction to information science
- organization of knowledge
- information users behavior
- information resources analysis / information analysis
- reference resources
- indexing and abstracting
- information system development
- electronic library
- database development / database design and development

Graduate Programs

Master's Programs

Since the inception of graduate education in library science in 1964 at Chulalongkorn University, 10 universities offer master's programs. Most of the programs lead to a Master of Arts in Library and Information Science, have been developed. In addition, Sukhothaithammathirat Open University award a Master of Arts in Information Science. Most graduate programs are thesis-programs. Some universities offer both thesis and non-thesis programs. Thammasat University is now in the process of curriculum revision and plans to offer both thesis and non-thesis programs.

Table 2: Titles of Degree Awarded and Credits for Master's Program

University	Degree Awarded	No. of Cradits in LIS / IS				
		Required	Electives	Thesis	Other	Total
Burapha University	M.A. (Library and Information Science)	18	12	12	-	42
Chiang Mai University	M.A. (Library and Information Science) (Plan A)	18	6	12	-	36
	M.A. (Library and Information Science) (Plan B)	18	12	-	6	36
Chulalongkorn University	M.A. (Library and Information Science)	15	15	12	-	42
Khon Kaen University	M.A. (Library and Information Science) (Plan A)	22	6	12	-	40
	M.A. (Library and Information Science) (Plan B)	22	14	-	4	40
Mahasarakham University	M.A. (Library and Information Science) (Plan A)	19	9	12	-	40
	M.A. (Library and Information Science) (Plan B)	19	15	-	6	40
Prince of Songkla University	M.A. (Library and Information Science)	22	14	9	-	45
Ramkhamhaeng University	M.A. (Library and Information Science)	21	9	12	-	42
Srinakharinwirot University	M.A. (Library and Information Science) (Plan A)	21	9	12	-	42
	M.A. (Library and Information Science) (Plan B)	21	15	-	6	42
Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University	M.A. (Information Science)	15	10	15	-	40
Thammasat University	M.A. (Library and Information Science)	18	15	9	-	42

Curricula for master's program vary in terms of structure as well as components. All universities have thesis programs. Four universities Chiang Mai, Khon Kaen, Mahasarakham, and Srinakharinwirot University, offer both thesis (Plan A) and non-thesis (Plan B) programs. For non-thesis programs, the student have to conduct independent studies.

All programs recognize the need for technology knowledge and skills as underlying competencies for information professionals. Required courses including:
- global perspectives in library and information science
- information science
- advanced information media organization
- advanced classification and cataloging
- advanced administrations of libraries and information centers / advanced management of information institutions
- research
- statistics

- technology for library and information science / technology for information and management / information technology
- information retrieval
- records management

The other graduate program meriting mention is the Program for an Advanced Graduate Diploma in Library and Information Science, Started in 1989, in the Department of Library Science at Chulalongkorn University. It is a one-year program for those who have received master's degrees in library science or library and information science. Currently, this program is temporarily closed for admission. The Asian Institute of Technology, a private international higher education institution, offers a master's degree and a Ph.D. in information management.

Doctoral Program

The first doctoral program in Thailand was initiated in 2003 at Khon Kaen University with the degree title of "Doctor of Philosophy in Information Studies". The curriculum focuses on the integration of a knowledge base in management; information, communications and technology (ICT); and social knowledge. Graduates are expected to have competencies in management, ICT, knowledge and information management, and research. There are 2 plans: Plan A with 48 credits dissertation and 9 audit courses, and Plan B with 36 credit dissertation; 9 audit and 9 credit required courses; and 9 electives. Required courses for Plan B including:
- academic writing
- research methodology and statistics for information studies
- seminar on information, communication, and technology (ICT)

Accreditation

Library and information science education is at the departmental level within faculties (schools). The curriculum structure depends on policies and regulations of higher education institutions affiliated. Only the parent institutions of those schools, in cooperation with the Commission on the Higher Education in the Ministry of Education are responsible for the approval of LIS curriculum.

The role of professional organization - The Thai Library Association (TLA) - in influencing the formal education system in quite different from counterparts in many other countries. TLA does not performed any accreditation of LIS schools. However, the TLA assumed some responsibilities, along with LIS schools, both are responsible for professional development and continuing education of information professionals.

Market Trends of Information Professionals

Graduates in library and information science are considered a majority of information professionals in Thailand. A survey on manpower need and planning by Department of Library Science, Chulalongkorn University (1995) identified 18 job titles of information professionals such as librarian, information specialist, curator, information manager, researcher, audio-visual specialist, computer system specialist. The survey result shows that "librarian" is the job title mostly identified in both

government and private sectors, while the number of librarians working in the agencies studied comes in third place. Information professionals work mostly in educational institutions. This survey also covers manpower need for the next three years and it is found that "computer system specialist" and "librarian" are mostly needed.

The major job market for librarians is the government sector. The majority of librarians are working as government officials in the civil service. The job classification of the civil service has eleven levels. Professionals with minimum academic qualifications equivalent to a bachelor's degree begin their career at Level 3. A librarian, starting at level 3, shall obtain a bachelor's degree in library science, library and information science, or information science. (Charuvarn Sindusopon 1999: 86) A research on the status of library and information science graduates academic year 1992-1996 (Kanyarat Dadphan 1999) indicates that most graduates work as librarian in academic libraries. Bachelor's degree graduates mostly work in private agencies, while master's degree graduates mostly work in government agencies.

Library schools realize the diverse needs of the job market. Curriculum now gear to equip graduates with skills and competencies to work in both government and private sectors. There also are curriculum revisions in many library schools, taking in to account the evaluation and suggestions from employers of information professionals in various organizations.

Continuing Education

One of major roles of library schools is to provide continuing education to assist those who are already in the profession. Information professionals, themselves, are also responsible for professional development.

An important development activity is that of continuing to study in formal education systems in pursuit of a higher degree. Therefore it is the responsible of LIS schools to equip those already experienced professionals with needed new competencies. Furthermore, activities such as short courses, workshops, and seminars organized by LIS schools, can help the professionals develop new techniques, skills, and attitudes.

Professional associations are perceived to have responsibilities in creating professional excellence. The TLA's objectives are to support and promote librarianship, library education and cultural activities; and to support library institutions all around the country for growth and professional development. The TLA annual conference provide a chance for professional interaction. The academic section of TLA is responsible for academic service and dissemination.

Continuing education begins with the professionals themselves. They are the ones that identify the needs for specific skills and competencies. Both LIS schools and the professional associations then assist them in their professional development process.

It is obvious that if the profession is to move into a new world, prepared for the many challenges and changes that are occurring, both the library schools and the professional association must take a strong leadership role.

Conclusion

Library and information science education will reach its 50th anniversary in 2005. There is an ongoing efforts of educators to revise, improve and enhance the educational programs. There are new programs both at undergraduate and graduate levels. The first collaborative doctoral program is now offered with one objective of educating the next generation of educators. All library schools attempt to provide appropriate curricula for the Thai society and to produce a well-trained information professional to meet the needs of the job market.

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About Dr. Pimrumpai Premsmit

Pimrumpai Premsmit received a BA with honors and MA in history from Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University. She was awarded a scholarship to study abroad and received Master of Science and Doctor of Arts in Library and Information Science from Simmons College in Boston, Massachusetts, USA.

She is now teaching full time at the Department of Library Science, Faculty of Arts at Chulalongkorn University. Her past administrative positions include Associate Dean for Academic Affairs (1998-2000) and Associate Dean for Planning and Development (2000- September 2004) of Faculty of Arts. Now she is the Head of the Department of Library Science at Chulalongkorn University. Her publications include several articles on information management, information systems, library and information science education, strategic planning for academic libraries and digital libries . Current research focuses on leadership in university libraries; case studies.

She is a member of the Thai Library Association . Now a member of Academic Task Force Committee of TLA. She was a TLA executive board member (1993-1994) and chair of the Academic Affairs Devision. She was also member of the Bangkok Organizing Committee for the 65th IFLA Conference (1999), and chaired the Sub-committee for Volunteer Service.