CHAPTER-9

UNESCO's PROGRAMME IN THE FIELD OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Evaluating UNESCO's performance in library education and training is a difficult task because there are neither the conceptual devices nor ready-made criteria to gauge it. The patchwork of disjoined efforts does not lend themselves to easy statistical analysis. To assign cause and effect would have to be guesswork, for the documentation on the subject is distressingly sparse. All that can be attempted here is to place UNESCO's contribution in the longer perspective of history and to arrive at some broad generalizations.

9.1. UNESCO Activities in Perspective

As the initial part of this study pointed out, UNESCO was only one channel through which international efforts promoting library education flowed. In the first twenty years following World War II, most international assistance was bilateral in character, originating primarily from the U.S. government and the large American foundations. The American Library Association, through its International Relations Office, played a key role in the administration of this assistance programs. Bilateral arrangements also involved the governments of the United Kingdom, France, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. Compared to the extensive support provided by the U.S. Government, foundations, and the American Library Association on a bilateral basis, UNESCO's aid was more that of the contributor to, rather than sole instigator of, new educational facilities or the
upgrading of existing ones. This, however, does not diminish the historical significance of UNESCO's contribution, which was qualitatively different.

In retrospect, UNESCO's lineal ancestors, the International Commission on Intellectual Cooperation of the League of Nations and the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation, had a modest mandate and their achievements in the promotion of library education were correspondingly small. These organizations confined themselves to research and fact finding, leaving other potentialities unrealized. Laboring under more auspicious circumstances, UNESCO has been able to multiply its own research capabilities far beyond those of the Institute and to expand them to analysis as well as prescription. The bulk of UNESCO's research output has appeared in the form of background papers and reports for conferences, including briefing documents, all of which receive only limited distribution within the Organization. Strangely, only a small proportion of these research products reach the public through the manuals and reference works series.

What really distinguishes UNESCO from its lineal ancestors, however, is its activism, the emphasis it places on operational activities; that is, its readiness to involve itself on the grass-roots levels to pursue its mission. UNESCO's activism stems from three sources, and it is important to see how these affect the logic of the Organization's philosophy and policies.

First, UNESCO functions as a distributive and transfer mechanism in well defined scientific and professional areas, including librarianship. Thus, the Organization has concentrated its efforts on
developmental projects in underprivileged countries of the Third World, primarily through the financial contributions of the western industrialized nations which had implicitly accepted responsibility for the advancement of these countries and have channeled some of their human and material resources through UNESCO.

Second, as an organization of governments, UNESCO is endowed with regulatory authority, which it uses mainly to encourage agreement among governments on important cultural, social, and scientific issues through conventions authorities. Through this regulatory function, UNESCO has achieved standardization in many professional areas, as in statistics, Bibliographic description, terminology, and others.

Third, in its capacity as a supra-national body mandated to facilitate international cooperation among a great variety of professional groups and interested scholarly audiences, UNESCO has constantly sought ways and means by which international cooperation could be made more effective. This has resulted in the pooling of services and resources and in general integrating efforts. Thus, UNESCO tends to treat matters on a regional and global scale. These three types of functions—distributive, regulatory and integrative—define UNESCO's operational activities and make it unique in character.

Because of this unique character, UNESCO has been burdened with great expectations. In order to understand why the Organization could not live up to all of them, it is necessary to understand UNESCO's limitations and internal contradictions. The most conspicuous of these is the limitation put upon its distributive and transfer functions by the fact that resources in short supply destined for professional
purposes had to be allocated on the basis of political decisions made by the political body of UNESCO. Obviously, this restricted the initiatives that could be taken by the professional responsible for the administration of the library program in the Secretariat. If certain important issues were not taken up, it was not necessarily the fault of the professional staff. Aside from the political and financial limitations, the library program in particular suffered from other adversities as well. The initial Library Divisions was created at a time when librarianship was regarded as a low prestige occupation, its social role was not well understood, and information Science with all its ramifications for data processing and scientific communication had not yet appeared on the horizon. Librarians were regarded as "Servitors" rather than fully accepted professionals. Because of this, the library program was at first misplaced in the Secretariat. Despite several reorganizations, no appropriate niche could be found for it. Compounding this was the fact that scientific and technical documentation, including special librarianship, had been handled separately as program areas in the science sector resulting in overlapping concerns, duplication of effort, and difficulty in the coordination of similar pursuits.

Still another difficulty was the shifting of priorities in the whole agency which required constant adjustments in the library program. The program personnel, too changed frequently. Each newcomer brought different cultural traditions, values, professional philosophies, and work styles, all of which had a disruptive effect on the continuity of polices and operations.

Finally, a realistic assessment of UNESCO's performance in library education must find that in the constellation of organizational
concerns, in which more than forty program units were competing, librarianship as a program area did not loom as large as some of the others. And library education was only a sub-goal within its parent program area, lacking a distinct program identity and an administrative locus of its own. But despite all these factors, as we have seen the organization had made immeasurable contributions to the cause of world-wide education in librarianship.

9.2. The Success of UNESCO

Placed against its historical and organizational background, what emerges from the record is a remarkable succession of accomplishments. Much of UNESCO's production in the area of librarianship found expression in the form of hortatory and recommendatory resolutions which constituted the principal output of the numerous conferences, meetings and seminars. While many of the recommendations were never acted upon, taken together they represented a body of cogent pronouncements which forcefully defined the critical issues at hand, proposed solutions, and called for actions. With these resolutions, the world was provided with an agenda on matters concerning library education and training for the next generation.

The conferences, meetings, and seminars themselves were meticulously prepared and engineered events, many of which have since become recognized as landmarks in library history. Not only did they establish UNESCO's presence and authority, but they also provided valuable educational experiences to hundreds of participating librarians from all over the world. From among them a
crops of library statesmen emerged, many of whom have assumed leadership in developing countries.

There is not sufficient documentation for a case-by-case study of the various UNESCO projects, their achievements and subsequent effects. Even without such evidence, however, it is clear that the various development and training activities that UNESCO brought about were successful simply because they occurred, for, regardless what happened to a particular mission or educational project, the mere fact that it was introduced was a positive achievement for the countries concerned and a success in international cooperation. That the staff officers for the library program who were recruited from all over the world could work together to perform their duties in an atmosphere of committed professionalism without debilitating ideological entanglements is a major accomplishment.

But the ultimate indicator of the success of the UNESCO enterprises, including library education, is the program's steady expansions, for it is only through the successful completion of the task at hand that an organization can move on to new tasks at hand that an organization can move on to new tasks.

The propelling force behind this continuous task expansion has been UNESCO's integrative impulse generated by its responsiveness to the demands of the changing environment. It was this responsiveness that led to UNESCO's constant search for efficiency and improvement of services, products, and operations through consolidation, coordination centralization, and other applicable methods.
But beyond these administrative concerns, UNESCO is also called upon to assert moral authority and international leadership, a burden it must accept by virtue of its global vantage point from which it views the needs of the world. It is thus incumbent upon the Organization to play an integrative role in the intellectual sphere as well by stimulating syntheses in trends, movements, and new developments. It must lift the individual disciplinary fields of science, education, and culture to higher plateaus and must chart those new directions.

In examining UNESCO's actual and potential roles in the field of Library education and training, that is, its activities as distributive and transfer agent, its role as a regulatory authority and its integrative capability, it is clear that the Department of Documentation, Libraries and Archives has functioned most effectively as a distributive and transfer agent. UNESCO has not availed itself to its regulatory authority, even when it was asked to do so, as for example in the case of the African library school's wishing to harmonize their admission standards and degree offerings. Attempts to play an integrative role can be seen both in the Organization's promotional efforts, the various regional seminars, and in the establishment of regional library schools. Beyond these, especially in so far as facilitating international cooperation among library educators is concerned, the record is not distinguished. Whereas the Organization took many initiatives directed towards solving the problems of various other constituents of contemporary librarianship, not a single attempt was ever made to convene library educators in any international meetings. Nor were library educators; particularly favored with invitations to participate in the work of international bodies.
There is no doubt that UNESCO performed as indispensable service in promoting and assisting the establishment of educational and training facilities for librarians and in administering the transfer of contemporary library thought and practice from the more advanced countries to the less sophisticated areas of the world. But there is no escaping the conclusion that in the first twenty-five years, UNESCO fell short of providing international intellectual leadership in the field of library education.

9.3. New Organizational Developments and their Implications for Library Education

It was the Divisions of Scientific and Technological Documentation and Information, belonging to the Natural Sciences Sector. This pursued the most intensive integrative venture during the latter part of the period under review. The venture, which had important implications for library education, was the launching in 1971 of the World Science Information System (UNISIST), designed as a system of international scientific information exchange based on the voluntary cooperation of existing and future information services in member states. The success of UNISIST has been staked on an adequate supply of highly skilled manpower, and for this reason, the education of such manpower was incorporated among UNISIST's five main program objectives.

Thus, while the Department of Documentation, Libraries and Archives was concentrating on its distributive and transfer services to developing countries, the divisions of Scientific and Technological Documentation and information was moving toward greater
integration of Scientific community but, for obvious reasons, profiting most the advanced countries.

After 1971 center stage was given to UNISIST shoes mission-oriented and well-focused program sharply contrasted with the many-faceted and broad-gauged activities of the Department of Documentation, Libraries and Archives.

The overlapping but divergent orientation of these two units in effect pitted the immediate interests of the underprivileged member states against the interests of the technologically advanced nations which are now in the minority in UNESCO. For the countries comprising the Majority, the creation of libraries and documentation centers had greater urgency than the eventual benefits to be derived from UNISIST at some later date. Moreover, the existence of these facilities was the prerequisite to joining UNISIST in the first place.

In view of these developments, the Department of Documentation, Libraries and Archives had to come to the realization that while its ongoing commitment to assist member states in developing library and information services was the correct policy under the circumstances, its methods of operation needed a cogent philosophical underpinning and a more unified program structure. A giant step toward meeting these needs was made with the institution of the National Information System (NATIS) program. NATIS obtained organizational legitimacy at the Intergovernmental Conference on the planning of National Documentation, Libraries and Archives Infrastructures held in 1974.
Like UNISIST, had an articulated manpower development component. It was soon recognized that the attempt to implement the parallel objectives of these programs resulted in duplication of effort and competition between the two program units. The problem was finally resolved at the nineteenth session of the General Information Programme, attached to the Directorate or UNESCO, under the authority of the director of the Bureau of Studies and Programing.⁶

Whether this new arrangement will lead to genuine integration of the library development concerns of UNESCO on the one hand and its technologically motivated information service efforts on the other, remains to be seen. For library education specifically, the merger may augur well as it promises to give it a more central thrust in the overall program, and perhaps it will lead to an intellectual reconciliation of traditional librarianship and information science.

9.4. New Trends in UNESCO Educational and Training programmes in Library and Information Services

After 1971 UNESCO's educational and training activities assumed a more unified character, for now they were pursued as organic program elements within the broader framework of either UNISIST or NATIS. The UNISIST manpower development drive was inaugurated in 1971 with a worldwide survey of training programs in information and library science, carried out contractually by the Education and Training Committee of the International Federation for Documentation (FID). The survey registered an influx of new subjects in the curricula of many library schools, in the areas of communication, management, and automation, as compared to the last survey taken in 1950. It also revealed a certain trend in Europe of attempting to unify librarianship
and documentation within the new discipline of "informatics," without much agreement, however, on what its proper subject matter was to be.7

Subsequently, the educational thrust or UNISIST has been moving toward increased integration with other parts of its program. For example, the creation of Ad hoc Committee on Training policy and programme, marked the first time a body with these specific charges was constituted.8

And as the UNISIST machinery gradually sets itself in motion, through the deliberative process of intergovernmental conferences and meetings of the Ad Hoc Committee, the philosophy, policies, and the Short-and long term objectives of the educational and training program are becoming more clearly defined, with new activity areas suggesting themselves.

The long term objectives of the programs involve the building up in each country or in small homogeneous regions of the facilities needed for professional education and training. In the meantime, however, the absence of national educational capabilities in many countries dictates that UNESCO provide opportunities for basic professional education as well as specific courses for special audiences for the purpose of adapting, updating, specializing, and retraining personnel.9

To raise the standards of such courses and to insure that their objectives are achieved, guidelines were drafted and criteria for evaluating them were formulated.10

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To carry even further its integrative activities, UNISIST, through its Ad Hoc committee on education and training, defined which disciplines were pertinent to the study of information science. It has also launched a project for producing a Handbook of information systems and services\textsuperscript{11} intended as an authoritative reference text primarily for workers in scientific and technical information services in developing countries.

Among the new actively areas suggesting themselves, the most important was the monitoring and Harmonization of national and international assistance programs for training and education in the field of scientific and technical information.\textsuperscript{12} the vigorous pursuit of UNISIST objectives in manpower development during the past five years has spawned a succession of specialized courses and seminars in all part of the world. These courses have been geared to particular audiences. For example, courses in advanced information work in Katowice, Poland, and at the university of Sheffield were intended for teachers in this subject. On the other hand, management seminars organized by the University of Maryland college of Library and Information Services were offered to managers. Of information system in developing countries people in minds as for example, those who have the ability to duplicate such courses in their own countries.

The achievements of the Department of Documentation, Libraries and Archives during the same period have also been significant. Developmental efforts within individual member states culminated in 1974 in the establishment of a school of information science at Rabat, Morocco, with an investment by the united nationals development programme amounting to one and half million dollars.
The Department's educational policies took anew turn with the announcement of a plan to organize a series of meetings, courses and seminars in different regions of the world specifically for supervisors of schools and departments of library science and documentation. The first such meeting took place in India in November 1976 bringing together leading library educators from Asia. The meeting dealt with intra-regional cooperation in curriculum design, exchange of teachers and students, preparation and use of course materials and continuing education and other topics. The numerous issues and recommendations emanating from the first meeting already provide ample evidence that future cooperation between UNESCO and the library teaching profession can be productive.\textsuperscript{13}

Encouraged by this hope, UNESCO, in partnership with the department of Library and Information Studies, Loughborough university of Technology (United Kingdom), designed in 1974 an experimental one-year special academic program. This program leads to a Master of Arts degree in Archives, Library and information Studies and Education (MA/ALISE).\textsuperscript{14}

Its main purpose is to provide an opportunity for instructors of library science in developing countries to upgrade their professional competencies in librarianship, education and curriculum development, and research. The library studies revolve around UNISIST, NATIS and UBC (Universal Bibliographic Control), a UNESCO-IFLA cooperative scheme. So far, unfortunately, the program has attracted mostly junior members of library school facilities who normally lack the authority to initiate the curriculum revision in their own institutions which UNESCPO had hoped to encourage.
Thus, in recent years the activities of the Department of Documentation, Libraries and Archives have revealed some new features in the area of library education and training. But on the whole, its services lacked the scope and dynamic of UNISIST. For example, the advent of NATIS would have been an appropriate occasion to recognize priorities within the Department giving library education a distinct was missed.

In summary, the emergence of UNISIST and NATIS have a generally invigorating effect on UNESCO’s polices and actions in the field of library education. Among the organization’s global concerns, proportionately more effort is put into education and training as program objectives than in the past. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that UNISIST and NATIS have helped define with the grater precision UNESCO’s role in the development of the world’s library and information services.

Today, increasing attention is being paid to the teaching profession as a means to advance the aims of UNESCO. The organization has been providing more opportunities to teachers of library and information science both for professional growth and international interaction. There is a greater concern with the quality and impact of the courses and seminars which are so conceived as to maximize their “multiplier effect.”

In planning educational and training events for its various specialized audience. UNESCO has recently been taking advantage of the strengths and interests of existing library schools around the world to develop special courses, seminars, and workshops as well as a few degree-granting formal academic programs. Such programs have
sometimes been instigated by UNESCO with its financial support, as in the universities of Sheffield and Loughborough, and sometimes not, as at Case Western Reserve university where the international program in information science and Library Automation has been offered since 1974.\textsuperscript{15}

The appearance on the scene of these academic "nodes" catering to international needs is a new phenomenon, unless one is inclined to regard them as the latter day reincarnations of the American Library School in Paris.

These academic experiments obviously have some potential, but it is too early to pass judgment on them. The task they face is not only simply one of logistics. They will not meet the needs if they operate merely as relay stations passing on Western expertise to practitioners from developing countries. In the long run, their utility will depend on their ability to generalize from contemporary international experience and create a body of valid principles and a methodology out of which the new field of international librarianship may some day emerge.

\textbf{9.5. UNESCO's Future Role in Library Education}

It took UNESCO thirty years to find an appropriate place for its library and information program in the hierarchy of the Organization's structure. Lifting the Department of Documentation, Libraries and Archives, and the Division of scientific and technological documentation out of their prior position of subordination to their respective disciplinary program sectors and attaching them jointly to the directorate of UNESCO, is not merely an administrative change. Rather, it suggests that the political and cultural authorities delegated
to UNESCO by the peoples of the world have at last recognized the community of all social institutions concerned with the collection, organization, and dissemination of the human record.

Furthermore, it is also probable that it was an awareness of the supra-disciplinary nature of "information" which prompted the Directorate of UNESCO to grant the new Division of the General Information Programme a place within the organization which is independent from the subject oriented program sectors, for the generic concept of "information" is a context of librarianship and documentation connotes all forms of the human record, along with its service mechanisms, institutions, and social use. "Information" is a basic ingredient of every scientific discipline and scholarly field. It is fundamental to all human needs. In addition, "information" has acquired in modern times a quasi-autonomous position overarching all fields, and existing as a superstructure, a phenomenon with its own evolutionary patterns, laws and behavior.

At the present time, we comprehend only imperfectly the nature of the "information" phenomenon. The great challenge that lies ahead of UNESCO is to stimulate, initiate, and integrate fundamental and applied research and distill from the international experience what is universally applicable. In so doing, it would contribute to the upgrading and expansion of the substance of the courses now being taught in library schools throughout the world.

In its commitment to the developing countries, UNESCO must not neglect its obligations to the rest of its member states. One way of meeting this obligation would be engaged in research because, in
Lester Asheim's words, "in librarianship, the United States can be said also to be, still a developing country."16

The existing arrangement of contracting research with IFLA, FID and individual entrepreneurs does not substitute for a well-orchestrated continuous research activity carried out teams of highly skilled, specialized researchers on a full-time basis. UNESCO must create its own research arm in the form of an international research institute which would concern itself with all aspects of "information" with such an institute, under the aegis of the Secretariat but independent from it, the organization can play a much needed leadership role in the advancement of library and information science. This could be the next step in the evolutionary process.

The establishment of such an institute is not without precedent. UNESCO has brought into existence scores of International and regional institutes in other fields, particularly in education and the physical sciences. With the joint financial support of UNESCO, the United Nations and interested foundations such an institute could also perform teaching and training functions for UNESCO and serve as a forum for the exchange of ideas among librarians, information specialists and practitioners of the various learned professional of all nations.

References


3. UNISIST Newsletter, 1 (1973):1. The five main program objectives are:

(1) Improvement of tools of systems interconnection,

(2) Strengthening the role of institutional components of the information transfer chain,

(3) Development of specialized manpower

(4) Development of scientific information policies and structures

(5) Assistance to developing countries in the development of scientific and technical information infrastructures


10. Ibid., p.2.

11. The Handbook on Information System and Services was to be the collective product of an international editorial board with Pauline A. Atherton, School of Library Science, Syracuse University, USA, a chief editor.


