

Introduction to Greek Special Issue

Greece is known throughout the world as the cradle of civilisation, the birthplace of democracy and a country which is exceedingly proud of its cultural heritage. It is a concern for its cultural heritage which still requires development projects to be delayed, for years if necessary whilst archaeological excavation is undertaken. It is a heritage which stretches from the tomb of Philip of Macedon, now converted into a superb museum, in northern Greece to the palaces of Knossos and Phaestos in Crete. Of course it takes in many, many in between: Olympia, Delphi, Mycenae, Epidavros and many, many more. It is a heritage rich in literature as well as archaeological sites from the classics of Homer, Herodotus and others to the more recent writings of Nobel prize winning poets such as Seferis and Elytis and eminent writers such as Ritsos, Cavafy and Kazantzakis. Strange then that with such a rich cultural heritage maintained with such pride that those major cultural memory institutions, libraries, have played such a small part in the country.

The library at Alexandria, with an important Greek component, is often perceived as the first major international library; a fact that is recognized in several ways; for example in the new Library at Alexandria (<http://www.bibalex.org/English/index.aspx>), the naming of a library journal Alexandria and the naming of an early digital library, the Alexandria Digital Library (<http://www.alexandria.ucsb.edu>). Alexandria is, of course, an Egyptian city with a major Greek presence.

Given this heritage and the pride which is shown in it, it is strange that as recently as 20 years ago, there was hardly a library in the country worthy of the name. Fortunately there have been significant changes in that time period due in no small measure to the efforts of a small but determined group of librarians of vision: Tzekakis, Trohopoulos, Xenidou-Dervou.

A significant hindrance to the development of libraries has been the lack of a well educated and trained library workforce. It was only in the late 1970s that the first attempts at offering any form of LIS education took place in Greece under the guidance of a Greek from Alexandria: George Cacouris who is undoubtedly the father of Greek LIS education. Since his pioneering efforts, three LIS departments have emerged in Greece; in Athens, Thessaloniki and Corfu. In recent years there have been significant developments in Greek LIS education and so this is an appropriate time to present a themed issue examining current issues. In so doing we have sought to present papers which, though they discuss matters from a Greek perspective, consider issues which are of much wider relevance. Garoufallou, Siatri and Hartley provide a brief background to the remainder of the issue by outlining the state of libraries in Greece. Manessi explores the differing approaches to LIS education in the two types of higher education institution in Greece. Moniarou-Papaconstantinou and Tsatsaroni explore the impact political changes at national level, institutional

change and discipline development on the LIS curricula. Dendrinou presents a Greek perspective on the relationship between Library Science and Computer science professionals whilst Giannakopoulos discusses the relationship between education for librarianship and for archival work. Moniarou- Papaconstantinou, Chatzimari and Tsafou report on a curricula revision based on a survey of former students. Finally Garoufallou and colleagues report on an investigation of the education, training and skills development needs of academic librarians and consider the role that LIS departments could play in meeting that need. Moniarou-Papaconstantinou and Tsatsaroni explore the impact political changes at national level, institutional change and discipline development on the LIS curricula. Dendrinou presents a Greek perspective on the relationship between Library Science and Computer science professionals whilst Giannakopoulos discusses the relationship between education for librarianship and for archival work. Moniarou- Papaconstantinou, Chatzimari and Tsafou report on a curricula revision based on a survey of former students. Finally Garoufallou and colleagues report on an investigation of the education, training and skills development needs of academic librarians and consider the role that LIS departments could play in meeting that need.

To all these authors and to the others who offered papers which, whilst interesting, did not fit into our final structure, we offer our thanks. We hope that we have produced an issue which reflects the rapid development in LIS education in Greece but also one which provides a Greek perspective on issues of wider interest.

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