

## Institutional contexts of LIS education in Poland<sup>1</sup>

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The main objective of this article is to show the evolution of the LIS education in Poland, from the first forms of education programmes for librarians to the current situation. The author, using the method of document analysis and the deductive method, selected the most important dates, facts and factors that had an impact on the Polish LIS education. The study showed that in the field of LIS, the Polish educational market is strongly institutionalized and varies depending on the university.

Keywords: LIS education, Poland, deregulation of profession

### 1. Introduction

This article is my personal account of how LIS as a field of higher education emerged and developed in Poland. I will present and then discuss the changes that have taken place since the first educational programmes in LIS until today, emphasizing the most important institutional similarities and differences in the organization of LIS education, highlighting the most important strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities and threats for LIS in the current higher education landscape.

The resources used for writing this article include publications on LIS and reports describing the reforms and legal acts introduced at specific moments in the development of LIS education in Poland. The majority of these materials is in Polish. Some English-language publications presenting the historical context and the education of librarians in Poland were also consulted.

One of the first publications discussing the system of education of librarians in Poland was a 1974 text by Barbara T. Kulawiec which discussed the specific way in which library education can be gained (Kulawiec, 1974, p. 246). A 2002 article by M. Sroka focused on the changes in the LIS education programmes after 1989. This article also shed light on the information science component in this field of education and illustrated the analysis with examples from the universities of Warsaw, Cracow and Wrocław (Sroka, 2002).

Foreign publications on this subject include an article by Leif Kajberg presenting the European curriculum development project launched in 2004, in which the author discussed the specific character of LIS studies in Poland (Kajberg, 2007).

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<sup>1</sup>The author's previous works were used widely for this paper.

Recent publications in Polish on educating librarians enabled us to identify the most important developments in the current LIS higher education landscape. These publications were mostly made on the occasion of anniversaries of LIS institutions in Poland. These were, among others: *Development and perspectives of Polish book science (Rozwój i perspektywy bibliologii polskiej, 1995)*. The most recent jubilee paper, published in 2016, was a book titled *University education of librarians* (“Uniwersyteckie kształcenie bibliotekarzy”), prepared under the editorship of J. Konieczna and S. Kurek-Kokocińska, in which the authors of individual articles reported on the changes in LIS programmes in their home institutions.

The topic of recent changes, especially the factors causing them, was presented in 2017 by M. Antczak and G. Czapnik in the text *Employers' expectations and the concept of studies in the Department of Library, Information and Book Science at the University of Lodz* and in 2018 by M. Antczak and Z. Gruszka in *How to Make New in the Age of Competition? Creating New Education Offer in the Field of Information Science in Poland on the Example of the University of Lodz* (2018). The article by Maćśorzata Fedorowicz-Kruszewska, in which the author analyzed the current state of LIS education in Poland, is also noteworthy (Fedorowicz-Kruszewska, 2019).

## 2. Overview of the LIS education development in Poland

Polish LIS studies are understood as library science, library and information science, and sometimes – to reflect their practical nature – as librarianship. They are available at two levels as Bachelor and Master studies.

The history of Library and Information Science (LIS) education in Poland has a long tradition. The first education programmes for librarians emerged in Poland at the beginning of the 19th century and were mainly limited to the teaching of bibliography. The courses in the field were briefly conducted at the Volhynian Gymnasium in Krzemieniec, Jagiellonian University in Cracow, Vilnius University and Warsaw Main School – here the head of the bibliography department was Karol Estreicher, an accomplished researcher in the field of Polish national bibliography (Fluda-Krokos, 2016, p.67).

Kulawiec (1974) noted that before the Second World War, the education of librarians was organized by library institutions, including the Polish Librarians' Association, the Society for Public Libraries and the Society for Public Schools. Attempts to set up library training were also made at the socio-cultural department of the Free Polish University in Warsaw. The programme of studies organized by the universities included elements of library education, e.g. children's librarianship, statistics, accounting, bookbinding (Kulawiec, 1974, pp. 244–245).

Since the beginning of regular academic education of LIS in Poland in 1945, the model of education in this field has changed several times. The first programmes were focused mainly on library organization, theory of bibliography, book popularization and social contacts with readers.

In 1945, the education of librarians was systematized, although not without organizational and political obstacles, when the first Department of Library Science in Poland was established at the University of Lodz. At the University of Warsaw, a similar LIS department was founded seven years later (in 1952), and at the University of Wrocław in 1956 (Fluda-Krokos, 2016, p.67).

The first regulation allowing academic training for librarians was issued in 1946, although studies at the University of Lodz had already been conducted since one year before. However, numerous reforms in the field of humanities, changes in education cycles and lack of support from the central authorities hindered the LIS education process. In 1952, the Ministry of Higher Education developed program guidelines that were successively implemented. After 1956, the LIS education cycle was extended to 5 years. It was shortened to 4 years in 1967, and again extended to 5 years in 1982. The curricula and cycles of studies were each time approved by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (Juda, 2016, pp. 99–101). Such approvals were often related to the necessity of including political content in the courses.

The first university programmes were created by scientists and academicians with many years of professional experience and knowledge of both domestic and foreign library science, who were aware of the need to train librarians according to the best practices, using various sources of information and reflection on the methodology. The heads of these first education programmes were also librarians who obtained degrees necessary to work at the university. Such names as Jan Muszkowski, Antoni Knot, Aleksander Birkenmajer – librarians and library researchers, as well as academics who were the first to hold senior management positions in the Departments of Librarianship in Łódź Wrocław and Warsaw – can be mentioned here.

It is impossible to list all the important academic textbooks from that time; however, it should be noted that most of them were written either by academics or library science authors or by the Polish Librarians' Association, which was reactivated after the Second World War in 1946 (Konieczna, 2017, p. 73).

The first students learned from the works of Jan Muszkowski *Życie książki* (*The life of a book*) (1951, 2015), Józef Grycz *Z dziejów i techniki książki* (*The history and technology of a book*) (1951), Józef Grycz and Alodia Kawecka-Gryczowa *Krótki zarys historii książki i bibliotek* (*Brief outline of the history of books and libraries*) (1956). The Polish Librarians' Association contributed significantly to the dissemination of knowledge on librarianship. Between 1946–1956, it published 58 publications devoted to various aspects of library activities. As shown by Gruszka (2018, p. 152), more than 60% of works published by the Association in that period were permeated with the socialist realism ideology prevalent at that time in the Eastern Bloc, which favored the achievements of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in the field of library and book science. This ideology was noticeably present in education programmes at Polish universities until after 1956 (Polish October) when its presence began to decline. However, these programmes still included 'obligatory' political content enforced by the Ministry, for example, the teaching of Marxist philosophy or the issues of political economy (Koredczuk, 2016, p. 38).

From the 1960s, Polish library science underwent changes resulting in the extension of its curriculum to include editing, information services, library collections maintenance, publishing, and bookshop issues relevant for library organization (Koredczuk, 2016, p. 38–39). This was a result of a wider, global bid to make information studies more scientific and to effect the shift from librarianship, bibliography and documentation to information science (Ibekwe-SanJuan et al., 2010).

From the 1960s, the status of a certified librarian was developed, whose function was similar to the function and tasks of a scientist. Since the 1970s, many library schools extended their programmes to include information and information technology tasks.

Starting from 1973, it became possible to obtain a Master's degree in the field of library and information science (Świdorski, 1981, p. 62). This resulted from the expansion of information studies and especially the evolution of the state information system in Poland, consisting of cooperating libraries and various types of information centers created in companies and ministries which supported the organization of economy in Poland. The information centers have been finally closed down in the beginning of the 1990s.

The dissolution of the Examination Committee for certified librarians and certified information and scientific documentation employees (2011) and the deregulation of the profession of a librarian in 2013 were reforms that led to a significant diversification of new programmes in the field of LIS.

The broadness and complexity of the LIS research field resulted in the specialization of LIS academic units. Some units conducted research on various theoretical aspects concerning the functioning of libraries and book theory (e.g. in Lublin, Lodz, Wroclaw), others focused heavily on developing theoretical research in the field of information science (in Torun, Warsaw).

Kulawiec listed 10 types of education programmes for librarians in Poland, stating that in the years 1949–1970, 12 724 people were awarded diplomas or certificates in this field. These were:

1. The qualifying course in general librarianship
2. The state library course
3. One-year study in librarianship
4. Two-year study in culture, education and library science
5. The state center for remote education of librarians
6. Library science high schools
7. Education undertaken by higher pedagogical and teacher institutions
8. University education
9. Higher interdepartmental studies
10. Postgraduate library science studies (Kulawiec, 1974, pp. 246–253).

From the beginning of the 1970s, LIS education was designed in the following ways: 4-year full courses (until 1967 and after 1982 – 5-year studies), the interdepartmental courses for students of the 3rd and 4th years of studies in various fields, postgraduate studies and a college of education for students of philological departments.

After the closing down of the Department at the University of Lodz in 1970, only 5 universities and 2 pedagogical and teaching schools offered educational programmes in LIS (Więckowska, 1971, p. 230-231). According to Więckowska who assessed the study programmes in the early 1970s, LIS education at that time prepared students for work in all types of libraries. The drawback of those programmes however was the overloading and the lack of contemporary, modern, content (Więckowska, 1971, p. 239). At the same time, two models of studies were developed: one focused on humanities and social science (teaching about the library) and one focused on mathematics and social sciences (emphasizing the informative function of libraries (Kurek-Kokocińska, 2016, p. 35).

In the late 1980s, many LIS schools and departments reviewed and revised their existing programmes (Aparac-Jeluś, 2016, p. 68; Sosińska-Kalata, 1996, p. 3; Kurek-Kokocińska, 2016, p. 71). Polish scientific press was also a platform for deliberations on the education of librarians in Poland, including its drawbacks and problems. The special issues of "Przegląd Biblioteczny" in 1983 and then in 1985 discussed widely the problem of the academic education of librarians. There was a belief that there were too many educational centres and that the classes were held by teachers who were not experienced practitioners, that there were not enough practical classes (Fluda-Krokos, 2016, pp. 76-77). I. M. Johnson's research of selected Central European library schools in the early 1990s showed that many of them shared the same problems. In the case of Poland, the main observations were related to major financial problems of education, non-exclusiveness of studies, outdated and several decades behind LIS programs in the West, lack of opportunity to travel abroad etc. (Johnson, 1993, pp. 22-23).

The difficulties which affected Polish LIS education in the 1980s and 1990s were caused by the unfavorable economic and political situation and underinvestment of many sectors, including science and culture. B. Sosińska-Kalata concluded in 1995 that the main problems of LIS education in Poland were: costly system of education in Poland, failure to adapt the curricula to the market economy and lack of pathways between individual types of teaching (Sosińska-Kalata, 1996, p. 1; Fluda-Krokos, 2016, p. 85).

Mid-1990s marks the beginning of the period of greater openness to new ideas and the modernization of academic education, which has continued gradually since then. It involved the purchase of equipment and access to international databases. At the same time, libraries were also modernized, in particular those at universities. Moreover, Poland's accession to the European Union in 2004 was also very significant as it brought with it the possibility to apply for external funds for the development of competitiveness. EU funding was used both by libraries and by universities offering LIS training to prepare postgraduate studies which combined library competencies with ICT, language skills, etc.

The repositioning of LIS in Poland initialized at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century resulted in the change of names of institutions providing education to librarians to match the introduction of new content, new needs and users' expectations as well as

technological innovations, especially the increasing significance of the Internet. In 2003, the Institute of Library Science of the University of Wrocław was renamed the Institute of Information and Library Science. A similar change took place in Łódź in 2013: the Chair of Information and Library Science became the Chair of Informatology and Bibliology. In Warsaw, we witnessed the absorption of the Information and Library Science Studies by the Faculty of Journalism, Information and Book Studies, and in Cracow in 2019, the Chair of Information and Library Science was changed to the Information Science Chair of the Jagiellonian University in Cracow.

In order to perform educational tasks, university teachers continue to use the books published by the Polish Librarians' Association which offers the widest range of topics – including a series of valuable textbooks devoted to the foundations of this profession: *Librarianship* (2013; ed. by Tokarska), *Information Science* (2016; ed. by W. Babik) and *Library Management* (2018; ed. by M. Wojciechowska) – which constitute a consolidated description of current issues in the field of LIS.

However, universities also use simultaneously their own publications, foreign textbooks, as well as online materials which are made available to them free of charge, thanks to agreements between the Ministry of Science and Higher Education and database providers – as part of the Virtual Library of Science (*Wirtualna Biblioteka Nauki*, 2018).

Virkus noted that the majority of LIS schools are parts of faculties of arts and humanities, as well as within social sciences, communication and media, business management or computer science faculties (Virkus, 2007, p. 8). Currently, LIS education in Poland is located within the departments of philology, humanities, management, journalism, information and bibliology.

In the last 10 years, the number of LIS institutions in Poland has decreased. The programs at the University of Białystok and at Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce have been closed down. Presently, 12 public academic units provide education in this field as 3-years' Bachelor and 2-years' Master studies. These are: the University of Wrocław, University of Łódź, University of Warsaw, Jagiellonian University in Cracow, Pedagogical University in Cracow, Silesian University in Katowice, Maria Skłodowska-Curie University in Lublin, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun, Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz, University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, private Poznań School of Social Sciences. The Kalisz branch of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań offers only Bachelor studies in the field of LIS.

Most LIS studies focus primarily on information science. They also seek to find their own model of education and preservation of the local context of studies. Few academic centers have maintained education in the field of library science.

Another change taking place in LIS education is the fact that some universities (Łódź, Białystok, Kielce) have entirely withdrawn from educating librarians. The university of Łódź's programmes are focused on digital information environment (Bachelor's studies) and information science with business English (Master's studies). They cover different aspects of analysis, synthesis and management of various

types of information as well as questions concerning information audit, information architecture, media monitoring, cybersecurity etc. Similarly, Maria Skłodowska-Curie University in Lublin offers a Bachelor's degree in information architecture and a Master's degree in applied informatology. Other institutions maintained the 'traditional' librarianship programmes (University of Wrocław, University of Warsaw), while developing information design studies (Pedagogical University in Cracow, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun), digital publishing in the web (University of Wrocław), architecture of information space (University of Warsaw), information management and bibliology (Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun).

The analysis of educational programmes shows that in the newly established programmes, the emphasis was placed on information technology, information visualization, and information management, but without entirely abandoning the traditional topics – i.e. information and knowledge organization, the theory and history of information and communication. Also, the programmes are not limited to the Galleries, Libraries, Archives, Museums (GLAM), hence trainees may work in different sectors of the market.

The universities that have retained their programmes on library and information science have also modernized their offers, with the Bachelor programme being generally devoted to theoretical and introductory subjects, while the Master programmes tackle specialization subjects.

In general, Master studies in the field of library and information science still place great emphasis on the librarian's work, i.e. the rudiments of work with various library documents and the cultural history of books and libraries. They also introduce topics such as information architecture, information science, scientific communication, quality assessment of documents.

As already mentioned, Master programmes focus on specializations such as information and knowledge management, business foundations, etc. Since 2007, students who complete the Bachelor's program may obtain the degree of "*licencjat*" and after Master studies that of "*magister*". After their Master's program, the students may continue education at doctoral studies, which since 2022 will be conducted only at doctoral schools.

Each University offers a specific blend of Masters' tracks corresponding to certain areas of specialization. There are however significant differences which make it difficult to compare the individual education offers. Two examples will illustrate the variety of offers. The Master course in Library and Information science at the University of Wrocław offers to students the possibility of specializing in digital libraries, libraries in the knowledge society, public and school libraries (Programy studiów, 2018b). The University of Warsaw offers the following specializations at the Master's level: information and knowledge architecture, cultural heritage, editing, information and communication in cultural institutions, organization and management of libraries, information and knowledge management (Programy studiów, 2018a).

### **3. The weight of national and European policies in shaping LIS education in Poland**

In the course of analysis of the political factors influencing LIS in Poland, two levels, namely domestic and international, and in both these categories certain critical events which have influenced significantly the perception of LIS studies in Poland should be mentioned.

The key factors affecting LIS education in Poland are European standards and the guidelines from the Ministry of Science and Higher Education.

Undoubtedly, the involvement of Polish universities in the Bologna Process was an important element of the modernization of LIS studies. According to Sirje Virkus (2007, pp. 6–8), the process provided support for international cooperation understood as exchange of researchers and students, enabling knowledge transfer and gaining new experience (Kabatangare Tumuhairwe, 2013, p. 7).

The development of mobility was possible from the end of the 1990s, when the adaptation of study programmes to match the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) began. The previous five-year studies in all higher education institutions were divided in accordance with the ECTS Bologna Process: three years' first-degree studies and two years' second-degree (master's) programmes. In addition, those awarded a Master degree could continue their education as doctoral students (Johnson, 2013, p. 4). Such a division of studies into two stages resulted in the need to revise the curricula from the point of view of the scope, volume, and content taught. The same change also caused a higher mobility of LIS students and staff. Maria Próchnicka noted in 2007 that the changes in the teaching programmes are the consequence of transformation of higher education in Poland since its integration into the European Union and also have had an effect on the quality of studies and students' profile (Próchnicka, 2008, pp. 28–29). The new teaching standards introduced the learning outcomes, along with the description of knowledge and competences obtained by students during respective courses.

Currently, Polish universities, offering programmes in LIS have fully implemented the European Diploma Supplement, the principles of Assessment, and mobility programmes such as ERASMUS, which allows students to carry out part of their studies abroad, with a guarantee that the acquired knowledge will be recognized in their home country (Johnson 2013, pp. 4–8). The assessment of quality is maintained in the new Act on Higher Education in Poland (2018) and means regular evaluation by the Polish Accreditation Committee, which verifies, among other things, the courses, the quality of the Bachelor's and Master's degrees, and the scientific record of faculty members (Koredczuk, 2016, p. 40; Wozniczka-Paruzel, 2003, pp. 52–54).

On the national level, the main role is played by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. In terms of the law, the organization of higher education in LIS has been under the rule of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education.

One of the most adverse decision was the dissolution of the Examination Committee which had been created for the purpose of evaluating the knowledge and

qualifications of librarians and certified information professionals working on documentation and information science. Active between 1948 and 2011, the Committee was composed of library directors and representatives of scientific bodies appointed by the Ministry of Science. The examination which librarians and other information professionals sat, if passed, constituted the highest achievement in their professional career. Their position in a university library was equivalent to holding the position of an academic teacher (Tadeusiewicz, 2012, pp. 173–175). The dissolution of the Examination Committee in 2011 was one of the stages in the ‘opening’ the profession initiated by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education and the Ministry of Justice. Furthermore, in 2013, a deregulation of the profession took place, resulting in the abolishment of official qualification requirements to work in a library. This meant that the verification of the education of a prospective employee was left entirely to the discretion of the Heads of LIS institutions. At present, scientific libraries intend to progressively phase out the position of certified librarians, based on the new Act on Higher Education introduced in 2018. In the absence of laws regulating the professional requirements for each job position, some directors of libraries adopted their own internal guidelines on requirements, career paths and expectations towards employees. Future employment of LIS graduates depends mostly on their ability to function in the labor market. This also means that a graduate of Marketing, Economy or History can be employed to perform library tasks.

The new Act on Higher Education in Poland adopted by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education brought some more changes in 2018. From the academic point of view, it introduced a significant change, namely the shift of library and information science, also referred to in Poland as “bibliology and informatology”, from humanities to social sciences, into a discipline named the science of social communication and media. On the one hand, the analysis of the functioning of libraries and book theory have been ignored, on the other hand, library and information science has been pushed in the direction of a clearer social context, but without being treated on an equal footing with communication or media science, and also in way, ignoring the distinctive nature of Polish LIS studies which was recognized by Leif Kajberg:

“But there are other themes that have a firm curricular place in some of Europe’s LIS schools. A very illustrative example is the scholarly concern with books, historically, culturally and socially. [...] Today, LIS academic institutions in such countries as the Czech Republic, Latvia, Poland and Romania offer courses in this field [i.e. book theory]” (Kajberg, 2007, p. 78).

Although a relatively short time perspective make it difficult to formulate a well-balanced evaluation of the consequences of these recent changes, the Polish circles of scientists and librarians is divided in their opinions on the changes which started in 2011. Deregulation did not have a positive impact on the prestige, earnings, employment prospects of librarians in Poland. Instead, it resulted in a noticeably lower interest of students in this field of study. Moreover, reforms in the Higher Education led to the fact that LIS has been swallowed by communication and media sciences,

which hinders, or even makes it impossible to hold research work, especially in the field of the theory of books and libraries as it was hitherto done.

#### **4. Conclusions**

The Polish educational landscape in the field of LIS is strongly institutionalized and varies depending on the particular university. The study programmes and educational offers in Poland are also influenced by different local and inter-institutional factors.

The opening of the profession made it necessary to re-adapt the study programmes to the labor market requirements. In order to prepare a new education program that would meet the expectations of candidates and provide them with the skills desired by employers on the market, new programmes were designed on a university-business level, with library directors and local business representatives. The offer of apprenticeships available to university students has also changed. They often gain their first professional experience not only in libraries, but also in the commercial sector, in publishing companies, press industry, Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) companies, local companies managing various types of information. Bringing the universities closer to the economic sector is also supported by the university councils set up at each university as a result of the introduction of the new Law on Higher Education and Science (Act of 20 July 2018 the Law on Higher Education and Science, 2018).

Another dimension is that between the university and ministry, there is the necessity to conform to, for example, the Law on Higher Education and Science or the Polish Qualifications Framework. It should be noted that each university applies its own regulations governing the conduct of the studies programmes.

The strengths of the modern Polish LIS education include the creation of distinct specializations at the Master's courses in individual universities. The available programmes offer more choice in terms of the learning outcomes planned by students. It is also important to emphasize the presence of content related to information science. The changes introduced in the programmes have undoubtedly increased the interdisciplinary character of LIS education, enriching it with topics from psychology, sociology, law, etc. Moreover, thanks to the fact that for several years the curricula have been based on education (learning) outcomes, the departments have been able to verify what knowledge, skills and social competences are acquired by the students after graduation. One important strength of these programmes is undoubtedly their bid to improve the attractiveness of graduates on the labour market through the widening of the curricula to meet the needs of the commercial sector. This means that a person with a Bachelor's or Master's degree is now better prepared to work not only in libraries, but also in publishing companies, press industry, BPO companies, local companies managing various types of information, and also has enough fundamental knowledge to start their own business.

The weaknesses of the available LIS programmes lie in the variety of names under which they appear, as this is the main element attracting the future students. The diversity in names and the presence of locally flavored programmes make it difficult to compare them on Polish, European and international levels.

However, this opening up of the curricula and the labor market orientation have entailed the weakening of the historic books and information science dimension, which has now been absorbed, as a result of the higher education reform, into the communication and media science but without a separate name. The application of the modified OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) classification of scientific disciplines to Polish science was intended to simplify its scheme and make it more comparable with the world science, but it is perceived as not being suited to the specific nature of Polish science.

On the one hand, the deregulation of the library profession has led to numerous problems concerning the education programs offered, on the other hand, it has caused a thorough modernization of study programmes, which evolved through observation of other national and foreign centers educating librarians.

When discussing the current situation of LIS in Poland, it should be noted that it is shaped mostly by individual universities and has become dependent on local markets and on the activity of education programme designers who are responsible not only for research in the discipline, but also for running the education programmes, establishing and maintaining cooperation with local businesses and cultural institutions, and monitoring the careers of graduates.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to express my gratitude to Tatjana Aparac-Jelušić, Michael Buckland and Fidelia Ibekwe for their valuable and constructive suggestions during the development of this paper.

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