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Specific LIS studies in Italy are quite young and LIS teaching in Italy follows the history, characteristics and evolution of Italian libraries. In other words, it has adapted to their holdings, users and consequent management needs.

Furthermore, we have to say that slightly less than 40 years ago, the core of most of our libraries was composed of high culture and rare books, mainly from libraries of princes, abbeys and universities, and the collection management and users needs were completely different from the interest and themes that in other countries and nowadays in Italy ask LIS to support the information and reading needs of our society.

So In Italy librarians were scholars and men of letters in the same way as users themselves. Librarians – being scholars – were able to understand the meaning and value of legacy, of the heritage they had to preserve and safeguard.

These librarians and scholars were the first library science professors, they managed to add technique to knowledge and to write handbooks for vocational courses and for training, as well as high level textbooks for University programmes.

But, apart from the Special School for Archivists and Librarians that was set up in 1927 at Rome University “La Sapienza”, we have to say that the Seventies marked a turning point for Italian libraries and consequently for library education and training: Paris and Copenhagen conferences in the previous decade, ISBD and Italian Cataloguing Rules publication, and the setting up of the Central Institute for the Union Catalogue, did increase the attention to the functions of libraries and to the enhancement of cultural heritage and more professional skills were required. The need to coordinate activities, promote services, regulate the provision of tools, grew higher and higher.

At the end of the Seventies, more precisely in 1978-1979, the degree course in “Cultural heritage preservation” was started at Udine University. The programme included a specialization in archival and library studies, and it was the first specific degree for students who wanted to be trained as librarians. Apart from the traditional and rather generic “Library and information science”, there were specific courses such as “Theory and technique of cataloguing and classification”, “Preservation of library material”, or else “Automated management of libraries”.

After 1987 the same degree course was started in many other Italian Universities, such as Viterbo, Pisa, Parma, Bologna-Ravenna, and Venice. At last there was a consistent University curriculum for librarians, albeit not in all Universities, notwithstanding the shortage of funding and staffⁱ.

A significant reform in Higher Education started in Italy in November 1999ⁱⁱ as a consequence of the commitment to the Bologna Declaration. This reform, and the subsequent further changes decreed in 2004ⁱⁱⁱ, transformed higher education in Italy, by introducing a three-tier structure:

- a three-year study course awarding a first level degree, the “Laurea Triennale”;

- a second level, where first level graduates can then attend a two-year course awarding a “Laurea Magistrale” (called “Laurea Specialistica” before 2004)^{iv};
- and finally, the third level, where the graduates holding a “Laurea Magistrale” who pass a selection, can enter the third cycle of University education, which is the Doctorate, and which usually lasts three years.

The reform of Higher Education envisaged also the possibility of starting specialization and master courses on specific topics. According to the subject, length and qualifications required, either a “Laurea Triennale” or a “Laurea Magistrale” would be necessary to apply.

The three-tier education provided by the reforms, that is Laurea Triennale, Laurea Magistrale and Research Doctorate, were comparable to the structure envisaged by the Bologna Declaration, that is Bachelor, Master and Doctoral degrees.

In accordance with the commitment undersigned in the Bologna declaration, the reform introduced the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System, whereby 180 Credits were needed for “Laurea Triennale” and further 120 Credits were needed for “Laurea magistrale”.

Thanks to these reforms, first level graduates were given a good knowledge of the scientific methods and contents, with the aim of enabling them to find a job and to carry out professional activities.

“Laurea Magistrale” graduates were offered an advanced training for highly qualified activities in specific domains^v, while the *Research Doctorate* instead provided the competences needed to carry out highly qualified research at Universities, public institutions or private bodies^{vi} and it was considered as an academic qualification to be assessed only for scientific research^{vii} (at least as indicated by several decrees and law). Specialization courses (also considered as third cycle courses) had instead the purpose of providing students with the knowledge and abilities needed for certain professional activities, they were established by law, the study period could vary, but it could be no less than two years; for instance, some specialization courses in Medicine or Surgery could be five or six years courses, with 300-360 Credits. Universities can independently start first and second level Master classes and lifelong learning education (after a Laurea Triennale or Laurea Magistrale), also in cooperation with other Italian or foreign institutions.

As for Library and Information Studies, the reform has envisaged for Italian Universities the possibility to award a Laurea Triennale in Cultural Heritage Studies with a wide range of curricula ranging from arts and archaeological to environmental heritage, music, cinema, recreation and so on. There is however also a curriculum in Archival and Library Heritage, targeted for librarians and archivists.

Students who hold a Laurea Triennale can instead enrol to a specific Laurea Magistrale in Archival and Library Studies. In both curricula, students can, may are encouraged to, take a stage at institutions or enterprises under an agreement with the University in order to have a working experience and to acquire professional expertise.

As for the third cycle, the Research Doctorate, students who hold a Laurea Magistrale can take the entrance exam to the “Research Course in Bibliographic, Archival, Documentary Sciences and the Preservation and Restoration of Archival and Book Heritage”, one of the first Doctoral programmes in Italy, which started in 1998/1999 thanks to a joint initial collaboration of the Universities of Udine, Rome and Milan and then to the cooperation with the Universities of Calabria, Tuscia, Florence, Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan and Tor Vergata in Rome.

Other Doctoral programmes dealing with books and librarians are implemented by Universities

interested in offering a wider range of educational opportunities, such as, for instance, the “Doctorate in humanistic studies at Trento University, and the “Doctorate in Library and Documentary sciences” at “La Sapienza” University in Rome.

As for specialization courses, a second level programme in Archival and Library Heritage has been implemented at the Special School in Rome with seven different routes ranging from Librarian to Palaeographer archivist.

Master courses are quite numerous; they focus on investigating different topics of librarianship, and they start if Universities have the necessary funding and if a minimum number of students apply. Just to mention a few, there is the second-level International Master in “Digital Libraries Learning”, which is a joint venture among Parma, Oslo (Norway) and Tallinn University (Estonia), and the first level Master “Archiving the future: organization and management of paper and digital documents in public administrations organized by the Verona University.

Weaknesses

So, We can say that nowadays Italian students can rely on a specific professional programme aimed at training librarians, that is a two-tier University course in Library Science, comparable to other University courses aimed at training other intellectual professionals^{viii}. However, the innovation process is slackened by a few weaknesses. For instance, the Italian Ministry for education and research has classified the disciplines taught at Universities in such a way that Library and Archival Studies are included in Historical sciences, as if they were only aimed at managing and preserving historical documentation and sources. In fact they have traditionally been considered as functional to, and dependent on, historical studies and not as independent studies, as they truly are and as they are considered abroad. This implies that nowadays – according to the Ministry – Library Science is, for instance, separated from Information Science, which is included in Engineering Studies.

Library Science is included instead in a wider range of topics related to Cultural Heritage preservation, among which studies on the preservation and management of any expression of the arts and recreation, ranging from museums to archaeological sites, sculptures, paintings and photographs. Many topics that would be useful to the teaching of Library and Information Science are not included, instead they are in other completely separate disciplinary fields such as Sciences, Law, Communication studies, Economics and so forth.^{ix}

The reform triggered by the Bologna process has surely better defined the course study that enables Italian students to acquire a specific training as librarians. These courses are consistent with the three-tier model based on the credits system. Students can then move to other European Universities and integrate these experiences in their study course. Although, sometimes we have to say that Italian students find it difficult even to move from one Italian institution to another and to integrate their study course with other programmes in other Italian Universities.

The reform has provided for specific degree courses in the three-tier structure that did not exist before. Curricula are more specialized and more profession-oriented (also through stage periods, whose value is often underrated), even though students come from different classical studies backgrounds.

Actually the three-cycle programmes in Library Science would include many useful and advanced profession-oriented courses, BUT they do not always start, mainly on economic

grounds. The different Governments that have been ruling the country, keep cutting the budgets for research and higher education. Consequently, the courses taught in different degree programmes have to be cut too. The courses actually taught, therefore depend on economic and political circumstances. The most common are basic and general programmes, such as Archival, Bibliography, Library studies, Library management, History of printing material and press, Palaeography and Diplomatics, Informatics in Human studies.

Nevertheless the complexity of LIS studies has dramatically risen, because the technology and the growth of information and knowledge available, that modified the users' needs and, for library, the way to manage, spread, access and preserve the recorded knowledge.

Futhermore, all the advanced and specific features of LIS discipline and profession have to be dealt with in such basic and general programmes, whereas more specific topics, such as Theory and technique of cataloguing and classification, Digital library, Automated management of libraries, Information access and retrieval, Information management, and the like, should be separately taught.

The number of LIS courses triggered in our universities can be wider or reduced, for instance we can have only one course of Bibliography and Librarianship, but what matters is the content, what is taught in these courses, which often vary from university to university and often from course to course.

So We can't trigger new courses, and often we find it difficult to start new specific laboratories as well, although at no costs.

This is because universities can not hire new teachers, and at the same time because the requirements to offer new degree programs and courses, or to continue those already initiated, have become stricter, based on the number of teachers, students, and on the relationship between them,

However, I think that if we can't trigger new courses or seminars to make LIS teaching more competitive and current, we can't attract the interests of students for a good professional training and so increase their number.

The path has been sketched, but there is a need to follow up in order to increase the number of these programmes beside the basic courses and to substitute some of the non specific topics.

Moreover there is sometime still no possibility to compare, assess and accredit regularly the quality of courses, even though the implementation of "Lauree Magistrali" is a step in the right direction and, at least as far as the structure of library science specific courses is concerned, LIS courses can be now recognizable and in future measurable, before the reform they didn't. A nation wide University strategy for the teaching of library sciences would be needed however, in order to specify the minimum requirements for a University degree course to train all levels of librarians.

Finally, I'm wondering if, to overcome these weaknesses that limit our LIS routes, we can borrow from libraries the strategy that allows them to co-operate and deal the continuing crisis conditions and budget constraint, sharing through Library Networks their resources and making the most of their distinctive features and specialization of collection and services,

I'm wondering if, in the same way we can share our LIS university resources, teachers, classes and programmes, creating a co-operation among disciplinary fields that in Italy are traditionally

separated within any university, as the courses of Computer science, or Communication and Engineering. But also, and mainly, we can share in “inter-university” second level courses the teaching resources among universities nearby, may be in the same city, or Region, or neighboring regions as well.

Inter-linking in this way the individual specificity of existing routes, thereby creating a complementarity between them, aimed at widening and improving the quality and the number of courses and offering a postgraduate vocational degree, to get closer to european and international standards.

I think that this could be the right way, and in the case of the University of Milan, we can guess of sharing our courses with the Politecnico, the Catholic University, the University of Pavia or Parma and Verona as well.

ⁱ Alberto Petrucciani, "La laurea in biblioteconomia: finalità e prospettive dei nuovi ordinamenti universitari", *Bollettino AIB. Rivista italiana di biblioteconomia e scienze dell'informazione*, vol. 41, n. 2 (giugno 2001), p. 146.

ⁱⁱ Decreto Ministeriale del 3 novembre 1999, n. 509 “Regolamento in materia didattica degli Atenei” .

ⁱⁱⁱ Decreto Ministeriale del 22 ottobre 2004, n. 270 “Modifiche al regolamento recante norme concernenti l'autonomia didattica degli atenei, approvato con decreto del Ministro dell'università e della ricerca scientifica e tecnologica 3 novembre 1999, n. 509”.

^{iv} Il DM del 3 novembre 1999, n. 509 definisce le lauree di secondo livello come “Lauree Specialistiche”, mentre nel DM del 22 ottobre 2004, n. 270, le lauree di secondo livello sono indicate come “Lauree Magistrali”.

^v Decreto Ministeriale del 22 ottobre 2004, n. 270 “Modifiche al regolamento ...”, art. 3.

^{vi} Legge 3 luglio 1998, n. 210 “Norme per il reclutamento dei ricercatori e dei professori universitari di ruolo”

^{vii} DPR 11 luglio 1980, n. 382 “Riordinamento della docenza universitaria, relativa fascia di formazione nonché sperimentazione organizzativa e didattica”, Titolo III, capo II “Dottorato di ricerca”.

^{viii} Petrucciani, "La Laurea in biblioteconomia ...", p. 145.

^{ix} Anna Maria Tammaro, *Internationalisation and quality indicators in Library and Information Science Education*, (Ph.D. dissertation on discussion), Newcastle (UK), Northumbria University, a.a. 2009. § 4.2.