Library and information science education and occupations in Thailand

Assoc.Prof.Dr.Chumpot Wanichagul

Abstract

The current information society is a knowledge-based society in the present developing countries where the people are engaged in the use of information technology to improve themselves and society as a whole. Library and information science profession is vital profession to help create a knowledge society. This profession is based on the establishment of the development of information, the important of the increasing amount of continuous rapidly information demand; causing elements in the study related to library and information science. The establishment of educational institutions for library and information science were undergone at all levels through the world. In Thailand, the first library school was started to teach the library and information science in 1951 at the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University. Following in the next decade year with another universities and teacher colleges throughout the country opened the courses to study for the library and information science in three levels: Bachelor degree course, the two-year master's program and the two-year postgraduate course. The degrees are offered as Bachelor Degree of Library and Information Science; Master of Information Science, Master of Information Management, and Master of Library and Information Science; and Doctor of Library and Information Science. The profession librarians have the work employment related to the information industry as well as other various positions as the information technologist to perform duties related to all kinds of information, the information system specialist to perform the design and control the use of information systems and the information scientist to perform duties in support of the study. Thetrend of the library and information science curriculum should be considered to improve to meet the needs of the present knowledge-based society. The role of the librarian is seven more important to have the ability to work as a librarian, teacher, the ability to be self-employed, the ability to be a researcher.

Keywords: Library and information science, libraries and societies, study and teaching, library and information science professions, library schools, curriculum.

History and Development of Library Science in Thailand

The curriculum and methods of teaching and learning in higher education in library science in Thailand as the disciplines of management of libraries has initiated from the United States since 1951. It was first introduced by providing teaching subjects related to the library management in the evening at the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University according to the requirement of the librarians at the earlier time to run the library management as well as the establishment of the USIS’s library at that time. It was then the beginning of the library science curriculum development of programs in library and information science up until now.
Concepts and how the teaching of library science curriculum being done in Thailand was summarized as the following periods: (Ambhanwong, 1978, p. 57; Klaisuban, 1988, pp. 97-100; & Wanichagul, 1989)

The early teaching of Library Science (1951-1981)

Learning and teaching of library subject in 1951 at the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University was providing as a special education. Instructor was an American librarian from Fulbright Foundation, which the project was supported each year for 5 consecutive years. Subjects of study included: Fundamental of Library Management, Cataloguing and Classification of Books, Reference Services, Acquisition of Books, Advance of Cataloguing and Classification of Books, and Library Administration.

Special course offered to the librarians became the beginning of the establishment of the Department of Library Science in the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University in 1955 for the diploma degree and then extended to the undergraduate education.

In the early stages of learning library science was pertaining to teach in undergraduate and graduate levels at many universities in Thailand. Those library schools had offered and conducted the curriculum to meet the needs of different types of libraries across the country. They were Chulalongkorn University (undergraduate 1959; graduate 1964); Thammasat University (undergraduate 1964; graduate 1986); Chiang Mai University (undergraduate 1968; graduate 1987); Ramkhamhaeng University (undergraduate 1971; graduate 1992); Khon Kaen University (undergraduate 1975; graduate 1994); Songkhla Nakharin University (Pattani Campus) (undergraduate 1975; graduate 1987); Sri Nakharinwirot Prasanmit University (undergraduate 1981; graduate 1977); Mahasarakham University (graduate 1982); and the Teachers Colleges (undergraduate 1976; graduate 2000).

The courses aimed to provide the librarians with a wide knowledge in three ways: the wide knowledge in various academic management and administration of the libraries, broad knowledge in the field of literature and information types, and a wide knowledge of various information sources. Graduates in library science, therefore, had enough knowledge to pursue a career as a librarian in different libraries and could perform various works.


Since 1981, the manpower need of the library profession has increasing with a high demand. The Economic and Social Development Plan has urged all the stakeholder concerned the demand for the establishment of libraries and information services in the agency in different type of names - Library Center, Information Center, Information Science Center, Academic Center, for example. The library and information science institutions, then considering the needs of production capacity to meet the social needs, began to change and improve the course for a social information needs, such as a change of Library Program of the Department of Library Science to Department of Library and Information Science in the Teachers College in 1989 and Sukhothai Thammathirat University has set up the Department of Information Science directly in 1988.
Characteristics of graduates in library and information science to complete the goals of the curriculum at both undergraduate and graduate levels, composed with the following dimensions:

1. Professional leadership
2. The ability to manage information
3. Ability to work in an agency information resources center
4. The ability to study and research on advances in information science and technology, information technology
5. Instructors who develop the library profession
6. Librarians with their own librarianship ethics

The curriculum in the year 1982-1992 was designed to produce graduates to go to the information society. The name, of course, is vital to keep pace with the changing needs of society, from library science to information science. The expanded version of the library information services from the libraries to the state agencies and other information providers to distribute more and more information easily. Teaching library science courses in this period will feature a mix of library science and other disciplines in terms of ideas and applications involving with information. The graduates, then, realized the relationship of science and the environment works. Appropriate to the needs of the information society and the profession can be used to fulfill more for the society.

The improvement of the knowledge society (1982-2003)

Since 1992, the change of social environment affects the library and information science institutions to adapt of the curriculum. The change of the curriculum and the course subjects have been implemented to providing a well-known social, self-known solutions, and using knowledge to professional development. The aim of the course, although interesting and valuable, but a problem has been occurred that the students began to diminish. Needs were not getting a response from the information providers.

In 1995, the economic globalization, especially as the driving force for Thailand to move and adapt over time. Human resource development, then, was important to accelerate the implementation of the development of the country's population to be an asset to the quality of the National Economic and Social Development Plan.

During this period of time, the amendment revised library science curriculum has been discussed that students must be taught how to use new technology and innovation for the library management. The students, then, could be provided to learn and access the information with regarding technology fields. (Techamanee, 1983, pp. 2-3) That was to cut some subject out of the old and add new into the curriculum. The library schools needed to hire new teachers with the knowledge and expertise in technology and the need to invest in expensive computer and other new technology instruction media.

It was the duration period from the information society to step into a knowledge society that everyone needed more information with deep knowledge of information technology as knowing modern audiovisual media, for example. However, the library and
information science professional institutions could not meet the demand for this. The curriculum was, once again, changed to meet the needs of the science involved in library activities, whether the computer education, information management, information technology management, information technology and so on.

**Accelerate the development of programs to meet the needs of wisdom society (2004 - Present)**

After the year 2003, the improvement course in library and information science have improved and changed according to the order of the demand in the information society. But basically continued improvement in its original form, do not differ much. The Bureau of Standards and Evaluation of Higher Education, under the operation of the Commission on Higher Education, Ministry of Education, announced in 2005 the criteria of the undergraduate standard courses applicable to every university in Thailand. All universities must continue to improve teaching according to the criteria defined, including the development and improvement of the general education curriculum.

In library and information science, it was of course one of the main curriculums, which must be changed. Many of them changed the course degree title, but some of them were still using the old name. Curriculum changes were made to both undergraduate and graduate courses such as Kanchanaburi Rajabhat University (Bachelor - Information Science, Master - Knowledge Management); Ubonratchanani Rajabhat University (BA - Library and Information Science); Muban Chombueng Rajabhat University (Bachelor – Information Management, etc.).

The main course was created for people who were good people. A way of life that is good and capable professional. And who has the wisdom to society in social development should proceed with creating a network for teaching together. The cooperation of the profession of library and information science is valuable to developing countries according to a society of true wisdom society.

**The present courses management of Library and Information Science in Thailand**

**Characteristics of graduates**

The Library and Information Science curriculum in Thailand is designed to produce graduates with the following features:

1. Knowledge of Library and Information Management that can be implemented in real practice
2. A thirst for knowledge and adapted to develop themselves to keep pace with the changing needs of society, political and economic development
3. The communication skills of information technology and can be applied in the profession
4. Minded a leader and a follower and a willing to work with others
5. Realizing of the moral and ethical conscience of the profession as well as the responsibility of the societies

**Curriculum course levels and library and information science institutions**
Professional education in library and information science (LIS) is a combination of library science, meanwhile, the integration of knowledge in the field of information science and other related professional along within the library science disciplines. The study was divided into 4 levels.

**Undergraduate Education**

Chulalongkorn University was the first university to open the library science curriculum in 1959 and following with other universities and the teachers colleges (now Rajabhat universities) throughout the country. The degree offered varied in each institutions- B.A. in library science, information science, library and information science, library management, information management.

**Graduate Education**

Chulalongkorn University was the first university to open the master degree in library science and following by other universities. The degree they offered were differed-(Chulalongkorn University –M.A. in Library Science; Srinakharinwirot University – M.Ed. in Library Science; Mahasarakham University –M.A in Library Science and M.Ed. in Library Science; Thammasat University – M.A. in Library Science; Burapa University – M.A. in Library Science; Bansomdet Chaophraya Rajabhat University – M.A. in Library Science; Kanchanaburi Rajabaht University – M.A. in Library Science).

**Higher Certificate Education**

Chulalongkorn University was the only institution that opened the course of library and information science in the higher certificate level after the master degree level in library science. It was initiated in 1988, aiming to produce high-class professionals in the field of knowledge management library. Expertise in planning management in libraries and Information centers to produce graduates who are competent in planning, management and use of computer and information services.

The certification program was divided into two specific disciplines.
1. Libraries Management
2. Information and Library Automation System

The students were required to complete 30 credits, divided into 15 compulsory credits and 15 credits of electives.

The higher certificate education at Chulalongkorn University has been opened just only one class ever since.

**Doctoral Education**

Sukhothai Thammathirat University offered the Ph.D. degree in Information Science since 2010, emphasizing the importance of the information and information technology that
played an important role in achieving development, particularly in education and administration. The doctoral curriculum has been designed as the interdisciplinary science involving many disciplines, especially information technology management, marketing communications, public relations, education and other as the information was the core content. The study of information science education, then, is important and necessary for personal, professional and social organizations. This requires a knowledge of advanced information management and application of information technology.

Doctor of Philosophy (Information Science) curriculum was composed of 54 credits and were arrange to teach for the compulsory third subject series, the academic preparation of the dissertation, and the students are experienced in participation as follow:

1. Information Science Dimension
2. Research and Advance Methodology in Information Science
3. Seminar in the field of Information Science Research
4. Dissertation
5. Doctor of Information Science Seminar Experience

Sukhothai Thammathirat University offered the Doctor of Philosophy (Information Science) degree to finish the course within 3 years (2 semesters each year) and the students can extend their study was based on the availability of up to 6 years.

Doctor of Philosophy (Information Studies) at Department of Information Studies, Khon Kaen University aims to produce of human resources in the field of information and information technology - the high level of competence in the management of information and knowledge by integrating the knowledge. The graduates should have the skills on management information and communications technology (ICT) and social knowledge, including the ability to analyze problems and create new knowledge through research, as well as the moral social responsibility to push for social learning. This will lead to the development of the country as a whole.

The management of Library Science / Library and Information Science Curriculum

Library science and information science studying in Thailand was based on the contents of library and information science in generally. Education programs are different out in each institution and level of education, such as the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University opened the course in Information Study as a major-minor plan for the major subject and was selected as the minor subject for other students from another faculties. Other universities may have different management the courses away. To graduate, students must learn the course of about 120-140 credits in undergraduate. The management of the curriculum is usually divided into 3 different groups of subjects as follow:

1. General education subjects
2. Specific subjects (The core, compulsory, and elective subjects)
3. Elective subjects

Example
List of General Education Subjects:

Thai for Communication
General education subjects are the core contents for all bachelor degree student to study and learn during their education in the universities. Whether in which major they are studying, they have to study at least 30 credits of the general education subjects which are grouped about the main disciplines in human, science, social, and other integrated sciences. All the requirement of the general education subject will reflect about the mission, goals, and the characteristics of the institutions.

**Example**

List of Core Subjects:

- Information in Social Society
- Collection Development and Management
- Organizing Information Resources
- Information Resources and Reference Services
- Information Analysis
- Abstracting and Indexing Services
- Management of Libraries and Information Centers
- Information Management Technology
- Global Perspectives in Library and Information Science
- Advanced Administration of Libraries and Information Centers
- Research in Library and Information Science
- Technologies for Library and Information Science

The core subjects in the present library and information science curriculum are very interested to study according to the need of the information society and are acquired by the demand of the business sectors to work as the manager in the responsibility of the various information jobs.
Example
List of Elective Subjects:

Serials
Information Services
The Modern Publishing Trade
Library of Congress Classification
Information Sources
Research Methods in Information Studies
Instructional Media Management in Libraries and Information Centers
Computerized Retrieval System
Office Information Management
Web Site Design and Development in Information Work
Knowledge Management in Organizations
Information Resources in Business
Archival Management
Independent Study
Information Repackaging
Database Management in Information Work
Electronic Libraries
Website Creation and Development
Information Science and Thai Society
Information Literacy

The elective courses can support the students for further studying in depth in the professional subjects and for their own interests of their careers.

The three different groups of subjects in the library and information science curriculum served the needs of the library and information science professions for the graduates. All the subjects concerned can integrate the role of the LIS professional as manager as an in depth understanding of the technical, human, conceptual skills, and communication skills between LIS professional and the possibility to be done as a manager in the organizations. Appreciate the different uses of skills to suit the position in an organization, and appreciate what skills could mean in building up an organization for any manager jobs and a LIS professional for libraries.

Jobs for the library and information science professions

The field of library and information science has a wide variety of types of jobs available in Thailand. Most of them are in either school, public libraries or in the libraries of education institutions such as colleges and universities. There were also the majority of the positions that offer specializations and the opportunities to work in other business sectors or companies as the information managers or alike. The graduates can show the role of the LIS professional as managers of information management. They have an in depth understanding of the technical, human, conceptual skills, and communication skills between LIS professional and manager. Appreciate the different uses of skills to suit the positions in an organization, and appreciate what skills could mean in building up an organization for manager and a LIS professional for many types of libraries. In addition, law firm librarians have extensive experience in training attorneys and paralegals in the use of the full range of
information resources to minimize the amount of time involved and maximize the quality of the result (Ahmed, 2009).

LIS professionals have been creatively played the role in the information and research resources management in all the organizations. The evaluation, acquisition, organization, sharing and distribution of information in all formats, including books, periodicals, online database services such as Proquest Dissertation, internal work product documents, is an integral part of their expertise. The graduates from the LIS can get the jobs easily in Thailand, even though some obstacle may concern about the position they applied. They can perform their role as the school librarians and the librarian teachers in the schools, the specialists in the special libraries, the researchers in the company, the curators in the museum libraries and the freelance librarians to work within the internet world. The Thai Library Association is a major organization to help improve the quality of the library science professions. Many library standards were introduced into consideration from the sectors concerned. However, there were not enough qualified librarians for the school libraries throughout the country as the positions for the librarians in the school are not accredited to be considered. The school librarians can be the Math, Science, English or Thai language teachers that can handle the tasks in the library management.

The future of the profession of library and information science.

Management of professional education in library and information science in Thailand should be considered to have started a trend to change the name of the Library Science to Information Science at the initial stage. Some of the courses were renamed according to the changing society such as the Library Services to the Information Services; Introduction to Library Science to Introduction to Information Science. Some new courses have been introduced to learn for the need of the users like Information Management System and the new subjects concerned about the new technology or innovation of distribution the information.

Responsible for the administration authorities should take into account the state of the art knowledge in various conditions of the curriculum in order to correspond to the study of knowledge creation according to the library science disciplines. The relationship between the study of LIS and the library services in the libraries should be done together as the information technology is changing rapidly.

Many new information science curriculum has been developed so far to strengthen the need of the information society. Recently, the dual curriculum of Library Education and English was introduced for the teacher curriculum of five years studying at Mahasarakham Rajabhat University and every school out of more than 30,000 primary and secondary schools throughout the country needs at least one qualified librarian teacher (Boonyakanchana, 2013, p. 6) The graduates can get the accreditation degree for the teacher certificate to teach in both primary and secondary education schools. The library schools should follow the need of the social information society to review and construct the new courses for the rapidly demand of the jobs.

Conclusion

The curriculum and methods of teaching and learning in higher education in library
science in Thailand as the disciplines of management of libraries has initiated from the United States since 1951. Concepts and how the teaching of library science curriculum being done in Thailand was summarized as the following periods: The early teaching of Library Science (1951-1981), Aiming to help build the information society (1982-1991), The improvement of the knowledge society (1982-2003), and Accelerate the development of programs to meet the needs of wisdom society (2004 - Present). The professional education in library and information science (LIS) is a combination of library science, meanwhile, the integration of knowledge in the field of information science and other related professional along within the library science disciplines. The study was divided into 4 levels: Undergraduate education, Graduate education, Higher certificate education, and Doctoral education.

Library science and information science studying in Thailand was based on the contents of library and information science in generally. Education programs are different out in each institution and level of education. The management of the curriculum is usually divided into 3 different groups of subjects as follow: General education subjects, Specific subjects (The core, compulsory, and elective subjects), and Elective subjects.

All information science educators and administrators must follow the direction of the library services that has been changed from the past. The curriculum should be reviewed and rebuilt. Instead of being a collection of resources, providing resources, interlibrary loan services, and providing a computer in the library, the libraries should be the places where the people can meet and perform any activities concerned within the information in the community. The libraries will become a learning organization which is different from the organization of learning in the public sectors which aimed to increase their profits. The organization of learning in the library done by the qualified librarians will focus on information literacy to help societies and the communities as more new courses would be initiated to be used for the social collaboration for being learned together.

For the LIS educators and administrators involved, the LIS curriculum should be reviewed about the contents of getting to know more a range of highly desirable transferable skills. These skills are most required from the employers. They are communication skills, customer services, interpersonal skills, analytical / research skills, organizational skills, relationship building / collaboration, and technological competencies (Fraser-Arnott, 2013, pp. 12-13). The LIS professions in the field of information management and administration can meet the need of the manpower demand in the country as well as in ASEAN in the new coming years.

References

Ahmed, P. (2009). The role of the library and information science professionals


Wanichagul, C. (1989). *Fundamental of information science*. Kanchanaburi: Library Science Department, Faculty of Humanity and Social Science, Kanchanaburi Teacher College. (Thai)

**About the author**

Assoc.Prof.Dr.Chumpot Wanichagul is currently the head of the Doctoral Degree in Administration for Educational Development Program at Kanchanaburi Rajabhat University. Formerly, he was the Director of the Academic and Information Technology Center, Kanchanaburi Rajabhat University.