Jurgita Rudžionienė
Lecturer, Institute of Library and Information Science,
Faculty of Communication, Vilnius University (Lithuania)
Ramunė Petuchovaitė
Lecturer, Institute of Library and Information Science,
Faculty of Communication, Vilnius University (Lithuania)

PROFILES OF CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE SPECIALISTS IN LITHUANIA

Проблемы непрерывного библиотечного обучения и образования всё чаще находит место так и в локальном, так и в интернациональном контексте. В многих странах и регионах имеется накопленный определенный опыт в этой сфере. Цель доклада – идентификация и анализ главных профилей непрерывного библиотечного обучения на основе деятельности Трейнинг Центра для библиотечных работников, основанном Институтом Открытого Общества в Будапеште (ИОО), на Факультете Коммуникации Вильнюсского университета (Литва).

The aim of the paper is to identify several profiles of continuing education for LIS specialists. It contains different aspects of the matter with the emphasized attention on training content and management issues.

Prerequisites for CPE and local context

The widest spectrum of factors has shaped the background for Continuing Professional Education (CPE) for library and information workers at Training Centre for LIS specialists of Vilnius University Faculty of Communication. It covers forms and methods, occurrences and phenomena. The following items took their place in Lithuania:

1. New requirements raised for libraries, new services, new resources, new funding models.

2. Impact of Open Society Institution (OSI) and OSF-Lithuania Library programs 1993-2002: library as community centre.

3. Library automation.

4. Public internet access points (PIAPs): Ministry of Culture, Business alliance *Window to the future*, Ministry of Internal Affairs (with Phare support).

5. EU Structural funds: employability, social inclusion, new (ICT) skills.

6. Result: huge demand for CPE for LIS specialists as agents of change (Glosiene, Petuchovaite, 2003).

Who we are: institutional background. Since 1991 education is provided by the newly established Faculty of Communication (FC). The creation of the FC should be regarded as a determined effort to start the education of a new generation of communication and information professionals. The international dimension of this professional area has been especially successfully revealed. Since its foundation, the FC has aimed not only at meeting the needs of the emerging information society, but also at influencing its development, concentrating on the role of knowledge, on the optimal ways of the organization of information, and on designing possible future models of virtual organizations.

Vilnius University (founded at 1547) Faculty of Communication is the leading institution of higher education for the widest scope of communication and information specialists in Lithuania. Education was provided since 1949. In 1949-1999, almost 4 thousands qualified librarians graduated Vilnius University. The mission of the FC is to educate professionals who are able to organize and manage information and knowledge in the institutions of culture, research, business and/or government, to present the information to society, to formulate and implement the policy of information; to conduct research in various spheres and aspects of communication and information science. The FC strives to carry on as nationally and internationally recognized institution of higher education. It cooperates with more than 30 academic partners in Europe and United States of America. It is a member of IFLA, ICA, EUCLID, NORDIS-NET, FID, European Journalism Training Association, Baltic Association for Media Research, INFOBALT Association.

Fifty years of continuous work in the field of LIS at Vilnius University, recent attempts to modernize teaching, learning and research with regard to the highest international standards, to integrate the best achievement of the foreign countries create new approaches and strategies of education of the professionals for libraries which are important tools of democratization and creation of open civic society.

Professional development: the international dimension

One can observe continuing process of seeking optimal ways of implementing CPE for LIS specialists worldwide. From the 1st conference of IFLA Continuing Professional Education Round Table (CPERT) in 1985, it provided a forum for educators and trainers who have an interest in the management and provision of continuing professional development activities for librarians and other information professionals. Since August 2002 CPERT was reorganized into Continuing Professional Development and Workplace Learning Section. In its strategic plan for years 2004-2005 the *mission* and *goals* find their place.

The 5th World Conference on Continuing Professional Education for the Library and Information Science Professions, held in August 2002, represented the final activity of CPERT as an IFLA Round Table. Transformation the Round Table to the IFLA Section for Continuing Professional Development and Workplace Learning was aimed to lead to greater visibility within IFLA to issues associated with continuing professional development. The forum gave the possibility for the broad theoretical discussions, reports

of research studies, descriptions of 'good practice', case studies, analyses of problems, project reports and evaluations, and a state-of-the-art reviews (Clyde, 2003).

From the OSI Information Program (previous OSI NLP – Network Library Program) viewpoint, professional development encompasses knowledge or skills needed by those employed in the field of library and information science in order to develop their abilities within the discipline (Robinson, 2000) at postgraduate level, many of contemporary concepts were not addressed to undergraduate level education which is undertook by workers some years ago - it does not aim to cover issues which are included in most undergraduate courses. In this case professional education has the right place.

OSI (Open Society Institute, Information Program) Training Center Initiative

The Training Center Initiative (OSI Information program), established in 1999 has the aim was to promote modern, service–oriented libraries throughout Central and East Europe and post soviet area, via strategic approach to professional development of library and information staff. It aimed to achieve this stimulating continuing education activities both on national level (19 Centers have received direct OSI funding, methodological development) and on international level, covering the region including Central and East Europe states (Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Lithuania) and post soviet area (Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kirgyzstan) and Mongolia. Each of these countries host a single center. An individual center may comprise several cooperating organizations or institutions. The Training Center initiative was conceived to create a network of independent centers for CPE of LIS professionals in countries throughout the regions. Funding was planned for one or two years, after which centers were expected to continue on a self-financing basis (Training Centers Network, 2002).

Training Center (TC) for LIS Specialists at Vilnius University

Extension training *organizational model* was chosen and carried out at Vilnius University Faculty of Communication (VU FC): VU TC for LIS Specialists is a coalition of the main players in the field concerning the content. It integrates the resources, competencies and strengths of the partners. Institutionally TC is an unit of Vilnius University Faculty of Communication – satellite of Library and Information Science Institute. Main sources of funding are project funds and fees of course participants. Main funds came from international projects:

- Open Society Institute-Budapest (OSI) support, 1999-2002,

- EC Leonardo da Vinci DELCIS project 2000-2002,

- EC Phare 2001 project *Bibliotemlink*, 2003-2004.

In the landscape of CPE for LIS specialists in Lithuania actually appear some more self-dependent players: Lithuanian Cultural Administrators Training Center (LCATC) – it covers employees from cultural institutions: museums, cultural centers

mostly, and public libraries; National M. Mazvydas Library of Lithuania (NLL) training activities are addressed to public librarians too, and Pedagogical Professional Training Center (it offers CPE only for school librarians). All of them are state financing, and this is significant difference from VU TC. It is not made an attempt to discuss their input in CPE in Lithuania in this paper (e.g. LCATC and NLL).

The *objective* of the TC for LIS Specialists at Vilnius University is to organize continuing professional training in the field and to serve the training needs of the library and information specialists of all types. It is aimed to achieve improvement the institutional and continuing professional education of librarians, and bring them closer to users through a networked cooperation.

The main players and partners during the period of 1999-2004 are: National M. Mazvydas Library of Lithuania, Klaipeda University Library, Vilnius County A. Mickevicius Public Library, Vilnius Central Public Library, Lithuanian Librarian's Association, Lithuanian Cultural Administrators Training Center, SME Baltic Computer Academy (MicroLink Netcoms).

Experiencing shift from training the individual to meeting organizational objectives TC is expected to serve customers well. Scheme and model of Lithuanian perception and case of CPE of library and information workers at the TC is analyzed from the approach of several profiles: content profile (curriculum development and training strategies and methods), organizational/managerial profile, marketing and promotion.

Content profile

1. Curriculum development. TC training curriculum tends to maximum flexibility according to:

- requirements for information society,
- needs of LIS specialists.

This was reached by offering 3 training curricula during 4 years. Each curriculum insize/volume is 400-484 hours. The training at TC is implemented in modular way. Each of these curriculum was offered twice per year. The core elements of the training curricula should be in constant correlation with the main elements of the market and should response current and future needs of specialists. Core elements of the perfect curriculum, according to L. Robinson, should be:

1. The information environment and information policy.
2. Information generation, communication and use.
3. Assessing information needs and designing responsive services.
4. The information transfer process.
5. Organization and retrieval of information.
6. Research, analysis and interpretation of information.

7. Applications of information and communication technologies to library and information products and services.

8. Information resource management and knowledge management.

9. Management of information agencies.

10. Quantitative and qualitative evaluation of outcomes of information and library use (Robinson, 2000).

Most of these elements are adapted and elaborated in each of 9 class-training modules and 3 distance-training courses, which cover basic computer skills, internet based information services, Web page design, computer competencies (ECDL), integrated library systems, library in information society, library and information center management, bibliographic control, legislation and regulations for library services, managing change in libraries, digital library community services, EU library and information policy, psychology of communication and management etc. The length of each module is 24-40 hours. The key principle of the training module is constant migration of training curriculum content and forms (Glosiene, Petuchovaite, 2003).
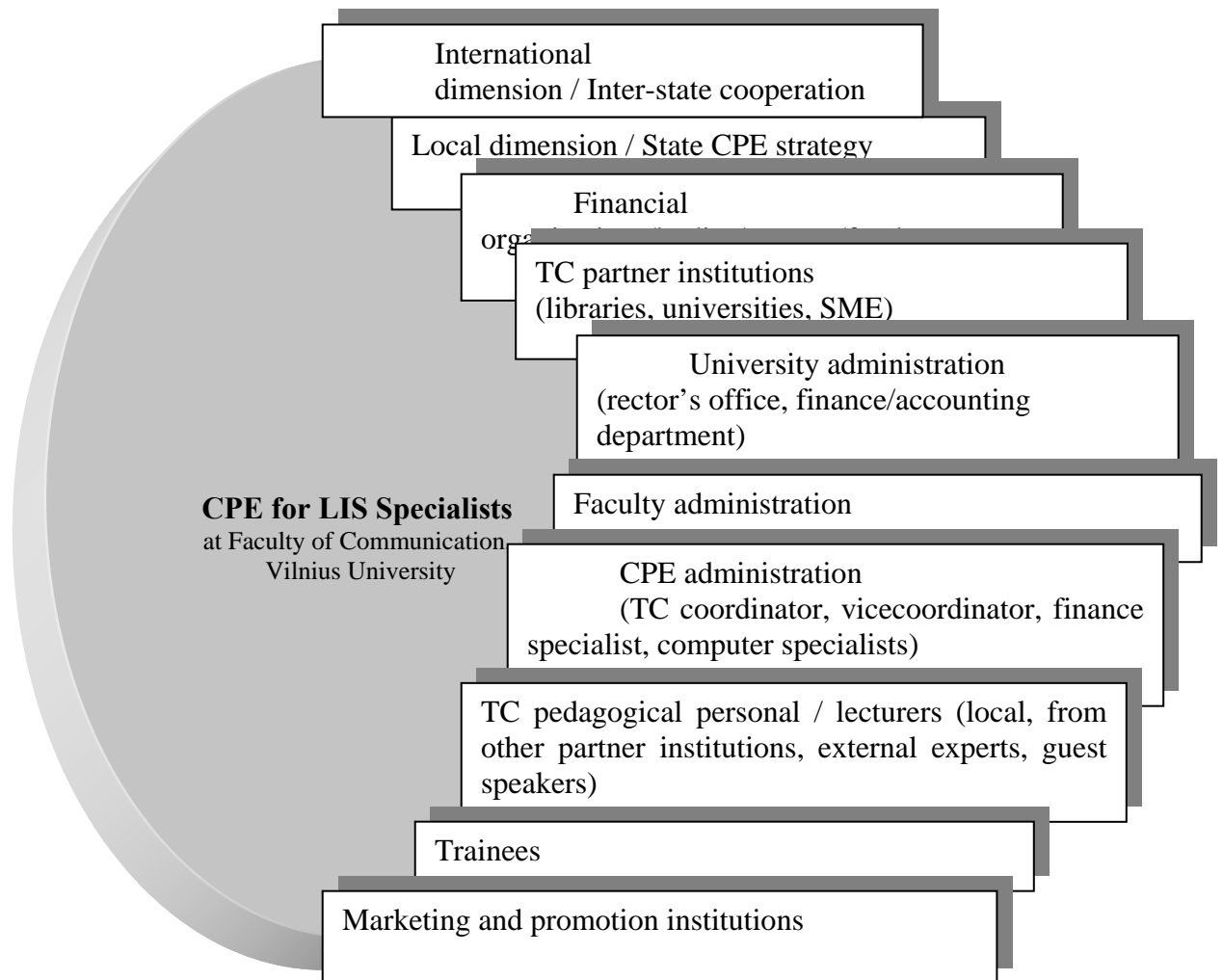
2. *Training strategies and methods.* Typically, when conducting educational programs, instructors often identify a set of program learning expectations, as well as a set of active-like and passive-like teaching techniques, such as case studies, individual research projects, group projects, classroom discussions, lectures by instructor, guest speakers, videos shown in class, classroom presentations by students, computerized learning assignments, which they believe best help accomplish the learning expectations. (Rodrigues, 2004).

Organizational/managerial profile

It is extremely complicated profile, required ability to balance and well planned schedule of various activities of training. Its successful implementation assures equal and effective flow of all planned and necessary activities both financial and technical. 10 core elements can be identified in the process of implementation of CPE activities via TC as umbrella organization, covering several partner institutions and other bodies necessary involved for the implementation of CPE content. Those institutions or bodies are internal and external. Day-to-day mutual contacts are maintained between TC and each of 10 core elements, and impact in play-back direction is constantly made to the TC activity result from each of these core elements (see figure 1). Those elements could be considered as different levels too. Actually the communication between TC, as one side, and other segments, as another side, is going on at least at two levels/ways parallelly:

- vertical level (according to waterfall model),
- horizontal level (each element individually with CPE, and vice versa).

Figure 1. **Core elements / levels of CPE content realization**

International
dimension / Inter-state cooperation

Local dimension / State CPE strategy

Financial
org...

TC partner institutions
(libraries, universities, SME)

University administration
(rector's office, finance/accounting
department)

Faculty administration

CPE for LIS Specialists
at Faculty of Communication
Vilnius University

CPE administration
(TC coordinator, vicecoordinator, finance
specialist, computer specialists)

TC pedagogical personal / lecturers (local, from
other partner institutions, external experts, guest
speakers)

Trainees

Marketing and promotion institutions

Marketing and promotion profile

After the process of undergoing of marketing mix 7 P of CPE at TC : prelude, product, publics, price, place, promotion, postlude, main elements of SWOT analysis could be identified. Main *strengths* of CPE for LIS specialists at TC are infrastructure, professional cooperation both local, national and international, corps of qualified lecturers, flexible and actual curriculum, need for training, ability for TC management. *Threats:* lack of state support, lack of understanding at national level, low salaries.

Main lessons and results: **quantitative versus qualitative?**

Quantitative results of the 4 years activity of TC are:

1. Almost 25 percent of all Lithuanian librarians received training at TC (1.664 participants).

2. Training courses duration - 171 weeks (3,5 years non-stop during 4 years period).

3. More than 10 TC lecturers were involved into OSI Network Teaching Program – they conducted training courses in Kirgyzstan, Kazachstan, Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Mongolia during years 2002-2003.

It is obviously, that amount and quality and up-to-date training is an important precursor for organizations – libraries, archives, museums who wish to improve their productivity and to survive in the competitive climate by offering high quality services. Discussed model is the flexible establishment of lifelong learning idea. It is universal, as the main principles and rules of CPE are elaborated. It has all necessary prerequisites for implementation of the idea of lifelong learning. The most serious lack and obstacle - lack of CPE policy at Vilnius University still as well as adequate Lithuanian state policy in the field.

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