

LIBRARY EDUCATION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

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Abstract

This study compares the available directories of library science schools in Latin America and the Caribbean, which allows to identify the increasing and decreasing number of schools and programs from 1985 to date. Although the causes of this trend are not known, the data shows a Latin American library science studies which are continuously in motion. Regarding the creation of both schools and programs, the data that has been gathered suggests an influence of the European and American schools first and of the UNESCO programs later.

In order to understand the nature of library science teaching in Latin America and the Caribbean, the cultural diversity which characterizes the region and which results from its history must be emphasized. The conquerors, ethnias, and governments in the region determined such diversity. Differences between the Hispanic-Portuguese and Anglo-Saxon educational systems are described, as well as what they mean to library science teaching. Finally, we provide a numerical analysis of the schools and programs identified by our data sources.

With the purpose of homologating the Anglo-Saxon and Hispanic-Portuguese systems, the various study programs were elaborated following the classification used by Fang and Nauta. Thus, numerical data is provided per country on the number of schools and programs for training, technical studies, tertiary-undergraduate studies, tertiary-graduate studies, and tertiary-postgraduate studies.

Finally, a summary is presented about the existing schools and programs on Archival Science.

Introduction

Before addressing the main topic of this study, we must address several aspects to better understand the complex world of library science teaching in this part of the world.

Latin America is often thought to be a homogeneous cultural entity. Of course, this is a debatable conception since, in despite of its many common elements, it shows considerable differences.

Latin America is formed by a group of countries, with a common origin: The Hispanic heritage. This common origin paradoxically resulted in a first source of cultural differences, since Spanish conquerors came from different groups and kingdoms from Spain during the struggle to end Moorish rule.

Other features that have made these countries to create several forms of education and development were adopted throughout the way each nation took upon their independence. The existence of liberal or conservative governments, or the threaten of dictatorships that during long years dominated our nations (some of them brief and others longer, as the one Porfirio Díaz, in Mexico, which lasted more than three decades), have emphasized such differences.

Another significant expression of cultural diversity are the indigenous groups living in each region, which have their own different cultures, religions, traditions, and languages. Or, otherwise, the lack of these indigenous people has made some nations to differ from others that do show a strong indigenous presence.

If we widen our field of study by including the Caribbean, we find not also an area of Hispanic origin (Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Dominican Republic), but also the influence of other colonizing European countries, such as Great Britain, France, and Holland, whose cultural, social, politic, and religious traditions are diverse.

The preceding considerations are important because the development of educational processes cannot be separated from the cultural heritage of countries, but this will be analyzed later.

This study is based on previous works that collected information on programs and institutions devoted to library science teaching. However, our main sources, which are the works of Fang (1985 and 1995) and Maris and Giunti (1999), acknowledge they do not provide information on all the schools of Latin America and the Caribbean and, thus, data are not fully accurate; however, we have enough information such as to provide a clear overview on the situation and the trends of library science in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Educational System in Latin America

Educational systems of most of the countries included in this work are different from the ones of Puerto Rico and Jamaica. In almost all Hispanic-Portuguese countries, the system includes an elementary school of six years, a secondary school of three years, and post-secondary or high school studies preceding college, also of three years.

The next level is professional or tertiary-undergraduate studies. These schools do not provide general studies, unlike Anglo-Saxon countries. Furthermore, our professional schools focus on technical training, and their structure mirrors Spanish and Portuguese schools. Thus, educational systems in Latin America differ from other places, since the first professional educational level are tertiary-undergraduate studies, which takes four or five years, at a tertiary or higher level. Professional practitioners of library science are trained at this level. Next in the system is the level of tertiary-graduate studies, which may take one or, most frequently, two years. As for tertiary-undergraduate studies, this level requires the elaboration of a final work or dissertation to obtain the degree.

Institutions and Programs

As already mentioned, this work does not address all the institutions and programs providing library science studies, but only those for which we have available information. And we know that a great deal of schools have several programs, that there is variation in the level of the same, that they have been designed following different focuses, and that some of them are focused in preparing some special kinds of experts in library science. Let's begin by comparing the first and second edition of the directory compiled by Fang, with the help of figure 1.

At a first glance, the reduction in only one decade of both schools (34%) and schools with known programs (38%) is striking; at a second glance, we find the case of Ecuador, a country that was not included in the first edition, we note the closing of the only school existing in Nicaragua and that Costa Rica opened a new

one whose program is unknown. In general, this comparison suggests that out of 71 schools in 1985 only 47 were working in 1995, and that the 69 schools with known programs were reduced to 43 in the same period. Also, it should be noted that the countries with most schools and programs are Argentina and Brazil and that, from all the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, only 18 do provide formal study programs in library science.

Figure 1. Comparison Between the First and Second Edition of the Works published by Josephine Riss Fang (1985, 1995)

Country	1985 Schools (A)	1985 Schools with Known Programs (X)	1995 Schools (B)	1995 Schools with Known Programs (Y)	Difference Between Schools (B-A)	Difference Between Schools Having Known Programs (Y- X)
Argentina	13	13	9	9	-4	-4
Bolivia	1	1	1	1		
Brazil	31	31	13	13	-18	-18
Chile	1	1	1	1		
Colombia	4	4	3	3	-1	-1
Costa Rica	1	1	2	1	1	
Cuba	1	1	1	1		
Ecuador			2		2	
El Salvador	1	1	1	1		
Guatemala	1	1	1	1		
Jamaica	1	1	1	1		
Mexico	7	5	4	4	-3	-1
Nicaragua	1	1			-1	-1
Panama	1	1	1	1		
Paraguay	1	1	1	1		
Peru	2	2	1	1	-1	-1
Puerto Rico	1	1	1	1		
Uruguay	1	1	1	1		
Venezuela	2	2	3	2	1	
Total	71	69	47	43	-24	-26

Source: Josephine Riss Fang and Paul Nauta, *International guide to library and information science education*, (München ; New York : K. G. Saur, 1985). Josephine Riss Fang, Robert D. Stueart and Kulthida Tuamsuk, *World guide to library archive and information science education*, 2nd rev. and enlarged ed. (München ; New Providence : K. G. Saur, 1995)

It is also likely that data collection has not been as successful in the second edition of the directory, resulting in an apparent reduction of schools and programs.

Taking into consideration the extent of the work performed by the editors of the abovementioned study, as well as the difficulties and disadvantages inherent to its conformation, we deemed reasonable to analyze the data provided by Maris and Giunti on study plans in Iberoamerica, which are shown in figure 2.

Figure 2 Schools and Schools with Known Programs by Maris y Giunti (1999)

Country	Schools	Schools with Known Programs
Argentina	26	26
Bolivia	1	1
Brazil	31	18
Chile	2	2
Colombia	4	4
Costa Rica	3	3
El Salvador	1	1
Guatemala	1	1
Mexico	8	8
Panama	1	1
Paraguay	1	1
Peru	2	2
Puerto Rico	2	2
Dominican Republic	2	2
Uruguay	1	1
Venezuela	2	2
Total	88	75

Source: Estella Maris Fernández and Graciela María Giunti, *Planes de estudio de las escuelas de bibliotecología, archivología y museología de Iberoamérica* (Buenos Aires : Sociedad de Investigaciones Bibliotecológicas ; IFLA, Programa Avance para el Desarrollo de la Bibliotecología en el Tercer Mundo, 1999)

Although the work is limited to Iberoamerica, Maris and Giunti provide data on 16 countries, with a total of 88 institutions, from which 75 have known study programs; the difference observed between schools and programs in the case of Brazil results from the lack of information about the programs for 13 schools, although it

is known that they offer some kind of teaching regarding library science. However, this confirms that most of the programs do concentrate in Argentina and Brazil.

Almost 20 years after the first edition and at 10 years from the second edition of Fang's directory, what are the differences between both editions and Maris' one? The answer may be found in figures 3 and 4.

Figure 3 Comparative Chart of Schools According to Fang (1985 y 1995), and Maris and Giunti (1999)

Country	Fang 1985 Schools (A)	Fang 1995 Schools (B)	Maris 1999 Schools (C)	Differences (C-A)	Differences (C-B)
Argentina	13	9	26	13	17
Bolivia	1	1	1		
Brazil	31	13	31		18
Chile	1	1	2	1	1
Colombia	4	3	4		1
Costa Rica	1	2	3	2	1
Cuba	1	1		-1	-1
Ecuador		2			-2
El Salvador	1	1	1		
Guatemala	1	1	1		
Jamaica	1	1		-1	-1
Mexico	7	4	8	1	4
Nicaragua	1			-1	
Panama	1	1	1		
Paraguay	1	1	1		
Peru	2	1	2		1
Puerto Rico	1	1	2	1	1
Dominican Republic			2	2	2
Uruguay	1	1	1		
Venezuela	2	3	2		-1
Total	71	47	88	17	41

According to the data gathered by Maris, at the end of the last century Latin America had 88 institutions teaching library science (17 and 41 additional institutions to the ones identified in the first and second edition, respectively, of

Fang's directory). In addition to the differences regarding the number of schools, we must point out that this source does not provide information related to Cuba, Ecuador y Jamaica, but it does so for Dominican Republic.

Figure 4 Comparative Chart of Schools with Known Programs Fang (1985 and 1995), and Maris and Giunti (1999)

Country	Fang 1985 Schools with Known Programs (A)	Fang 1995 Schools with Known Programs (B)	Maris 1999 Schools with Known Programs (C)	Differences (C-A)	Differences (C-B)
Argentina	13	9	26	13	17
Bolivia	1	1	1		
Brazil	31	13	18	-13	5
Chile	1	1	2	1	1
Colombia	4	3	4		1
Costa Rica	1	1	3	2	2
Cuba	1	1		-1	-1
Ecuador					
El Salvador	1	1	1		
Guatemala	1	1	1		
Jamaica	1	1		-1	-1
Mexico	5	4	8	3	4
Nicaragua	1			-1	
Panama	1	1	1		
Paraguay	1	1	1		
Peru	2	1	2		1
Puerto Rico	1	1	2	1	1
Dominican Republic			2	2	2
Uruguay	1	1	1		
Venezuela	2	2	2		
Total	69	43	75	6	32

Regarding programs, information was available for 75 schools (6 and 32 additional schools in the first and second edition, respectively, of Fang's directory).

To identify the variables implicated in Fang's and Maris' results regarding the number of schools and programs is an enormous task. However, if we take a

chronological approach considering the establishment date of schools, we may determine whether differences are due to a recent change in educational systems.

Data on the establishment dates of schools have been gathered. Although some of them have been reorganized later, these modifications are not included this time.

The figure 5 shows the years of creation, organized per decades.

Figure 5 Schools established per decade

Decades	Fang 1 st ed	Fang 2 nd ed	Maris
Without date	2	4	29
1910-1919	1		
1920-1929	1	1	1
1930-1939	2	1	2
1940-1949	14	19	11
1950-1959	10	7	14
1960-1969	15	6	6
1970-1979	25	17	15
1980-1989	1	2	13
1990-1999			7
TOTAL	71	47	88

Using the preceding figure, we may determine the periods showing the highest growth in library science teaching. As it may be seen, almost all schools have been established starting from the decade of seventies and in general after the Second World War. Thus, the influence of the UNESCO may have played an important role, as well as its programs to promote libraries and library science teaching.

Although the data identified so far is illustrative in nature, it does not provide an answer to our concern of knowing with at least some certitude the number of library science schools in Latin America and the Caribbean. We therefore deemed pertinent to use directories of schools available in Internet, from which we obtained the results shown in figure 6.

As it can be seen, the data related to the number of schools operating in Latin America and the Caribbean widely differs from one source to another. However, Maris and Giunti (1999) are outstanding since they have identified 88 schools, followed by the Associação Brasileira de Educação em Ciência da Informação with a total of 79 schools, the Fang's *International Guide to Library and Information Science Education* (1985) with 71, and the Directory on Institutions on Library and Information Science in Iberoamerica and the Caribbean (INFO LAC) with 51 schools. Because there was not enough information about the programs' levels on the Web's directories, we consider appropriate to establish that kind of comparison only between Fang (1985 and 1995) and Maris and Giunti (1999).

Later we will detail the available data to better understand the characteristics of library science teaching in Latin America and the Caribbean. It must be noted that when I refer only to Latin America and not to the Caribbean, I am talking about the nations with a Hispanic-Portuguese heritage.