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# International Assistance and National and Individual Contributions in the Development of Education for Library, Information and Archival Studies: Some Evidence from a Case Study

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**Abstract:** This is a very brief summary of a study that focused on the development of education for library, archive, and information services (LIS) in Iraq, where significant progress seemed to have been made before the Second Gulf War, despite the country's increasing economic problems and political isolation in the last decades of the twentieth century. It drew evidence from the published literature, previously unexplored archival material, and discussions with some of the participants. The study examined professional education for librarianship, documentation, information and archives work against the background not only of the evolution of LIS, but also in the broader context of the country's national, economic, and social development. It examined trends in international assistance for library development, and briefly reviewed parallel developments in other Arab countries to provide a benchmark.

Based on this wide ranging examination, it drew some tentative conclusions about the issues that fostered the development of LIS education in Iraq, including: the attitude of government and university officials; the organisation and allocation of state finance; the development of literacy and the education system; the duration and nature of external support; the activities of foreign experts; the development of the cadre of teachers of LIS; the role played by advocacy and opportunism. The study also identified a number of factors that have held back development, including: the pressures on the state budget; the absence of a comprehensive government strategic plan to develop a culture of reading and independent learning; and a lack of flexibility in the management of the state education system.

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An understanding of these factors, and the approach to identifying them, may contribute to strengthening the foundations of LIS education in both developing countries and those that have an established infrastructure.

**Keywords:** international agencies, technical assistance, education for library, information and archival studies, leadership, politics, Iraq

## Introduction

Histories of the development of programs of library, archive and information studies (LIS) in the developing countries are few, partly because these programs are relatively recent phenomena. Most were developed with international assistance in some form, and that itself is an even more recent phenomenon. Setting aside some early efforts by American consultants in Latin America, and a trickle of LIS students to Western European countries from their colonies and dependencies, most LIS education in the developing countries has taken place in the period since the end of the Second World War. That is now 70 years ago, and it is surely time for some reflection on the lessons that can be learned from examining not only what happened, but also why and how it happened, particularly while some of the individuals involved can still be interviewed for their recollections, and the official records of the organisations concerned are becoming available.

Jesse Shera (1952) once remarked that the study of library history allows librarians not only to understand the present but also to fulfil their social responsibility more effectively. The nature of international assistance in LIS education is changing rapidly, for a variety of reasons that include: globalisation; the growing cadre of LIS teachers in the less developed countries and their increasing professional sophistication; and changes in the support that international organisations now provide

for LIS education. Future developments seem likely to depend more on initiatives from within the Schools of Library, archive and Information Studies (SLIS) in the developing countries, and on new forms of collaboration between teachers from the wealthy and the less wealthy countries. These approaches call for new skills, a clearer understanding of what has or has not been successful in international development, and some fresh thinking about what might prove effective in future.

## Focusing the Study

This paper is based on an in-depth case study of the development of LIS education in Iraq up to 2002. Iraq might not appear to be an obvious focus for such a study, so a word of explanation seems necessary.

The author first became interested in LIS education in Iraq in the early 1980s during a visit to Baghdad to discuss collaboration between Al-Mustansiriyah University and the then College of Librarianship Wales. An initial, narrowly focused search of the professional literature undertaken before the visit suggested that Iraq was a major beneficiary of international assistance for the development of its library and information services and related professional education during the third quarter of the twentieth century. These inputs had resulted, *inter alia*, in the establishment of a postgraduate Diploma program in the University of Baghdad, where it seemed that students were being taught by a small group of part-time staff. The literature also indicated that the School of Library Science at Al-Mustansiriyah University was more recently established, and that its small undergraduate cohort was similarly taught by part-time staff. On arrival in Baghdad, it was discovered that the postgraduate program had been transferred to Al-Mustansiriyah University. The part-time teaching staff at the two universities had been the same people, and they had been concentrated as a full-time cadre. There were now substantial numbers of undergraduates, and only a handful of students taking the postgraduate Diploma. Something had clearly changed, but how and why had these developments taken place?

Awareness of Iraq's experience, coming at a time when SLIS in the United States – and later in the United Kingdom – were being closed, stimulated the author's interest in what it is that enables schools in our discipline to survive and prosper. Over the next few years, as the author became involved in IFLA and other international activities, that interest focused more and more on how those issues played out in schools in the developing countries.

Further contacts with Iraqi LIS teachers, after the Second Gulf War, revealed that, even during the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s – which had a major impact on Iraq's financial and human resources –, and after Iraq became politically isolated following the first Gulf War in 1990–1991, and despite the consequential declining state of its library and information services, Iraq's LIS education continued to evolve, with the introduction of Master's and doctoral programs, additional university schools of library and information studies, and college programs for library technicians. How had these developments been achieved, given the country's circumstances?

## Shaping the Study

After reviewing the role of USAid in providing post-war overseas library technical assistance, Brewster (1976) suggested that “An evaluation and qualitative measurement of these library development efforts, either on an individual project level, on a countrywide or regional basis, or on the basis of agency sponsorship appears to be in order.”

Once time permitted, the author began an in-depth case study of the development of education for library, archive and information studies in Iraq, up to 2002. In his study of the contribution of UNESCO to library education, Keresztesi (1977) had also commented on the lack of any previous in-depth studies, and quite independently came to the same conclusion as Brewster that “This is uncharted territory for which first the criteria, methods, and tools of measurement would have to be developed, and then they would have to be applied to a few representative countries.”

Between them, these two researchers suggested a number of issues that would need to be encompassed in such a study, making clear that, *inter alia*, LIS and LIS education do not exist in isolation, and, as Foskett (1980) wrote, “By stressing the importance of the environment in which any system exists, comparative librarianship highlights the potential dangers of cultural imperialism, while in its emphasis on the true nature of ‘universals,’ it ensures that, following Bacon's advice, we shall know which flowers can be transplanted and where the soil will be fertile.”

Douglas Foskett was one of a number of individuals who took an interest in the 1970s in the potential of comparative librarianship and the comparative methodologies in the social sciences that had been developed over the previous 100 years or so. As a social-scientific method,

comparison does not consist of relating observable facts, but in tracing the relationships presumed to exist between different phenomena, aspects of complex sets of interlinked situations, levels of socio-cultural systems, or problems and varying problem solutions, by searching out the empirical manifestations of conjectured relationships with a view to ascertaining their validity. Seminal texts in the field were written in the United Kingdom by Simsova and McKee (1970) and in the United States by Danton (1973), in which they argued that LIS and LIS education needed to be examined in a broad political, economic, cultural, and educational context. Regrettably, interest in developing the theoretical underpinnings of comparative librarianship withered fairly quickly, and its use in LIS has been limited, probably because of the challenge of integrating such a broad range of knowledge and theoretical understanding into LIS studies. Nonetheless, its basic premise remains sound.

Kerestezi had suggested that the way forward was through the medium of a case study. It had been cogently argued that the use of a single case study is appropriate for exploratory research (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 1996), and that comparative methodology could be applied in a case study (Collings 1971). A case study approach using approaches suggested by comparative methodologies was therefore judged to be an appropriate strategy for this research.

The factors that require to be considered in a comparative study that were suggested by Simsova and McKee (1970) and Danton (1973), and others were adapted to provide a consistent framework, setting LIS education in the broad context of the economic circumstances in the country; the national political and administrative context within which libraries and information services evolved and operated; general educational and social trends; the evolution of local publishing; the scale and nature of library archive and information services; the policies and practices of the international agencies that assisted in the development of libraries and education for librarianship; as well as the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of the key individuals involved, the responsibilities with which were tasked, and their effectiveness in those roles.

A further framework was provided by identifiable periods in Iraq's history, defined by changes in the nature of the country's government, or by circumstances precipitated by the government's actions. They were:

- from the earliest times to the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire
- the British wartime administration and post-war League of Nations' "Mandate" between 1914 and 1932

- the first years of independence during the Hashemite Kingdom that lasted from 1932 to 1958
- the duration of the first Republican government from 1958 to 1968
- the first years of the Ba'athist Republic from 1968 until the beginning of the war with Iran in 1980
- a period of increasing economic difficulties arising from the costs of the war during the 1980s
- and finally a period of international isolation commencing in 1990 that resulted from the United Nations' embargo following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait

The evidence for the research was found in libraries in Britain, France, Portugal, and the United States, and in archives in all those countries – none of which had previously been examined for a study such as this – but was limited by the time and funding available, and by the inability to access some key archive files and most of the material in Arabic that was identified. Because of the scatter of information in the published LIS literature, and the range of topics examined, the research involved examining more than 4,000 journal articles, books, and archive files – another reason why studies such as this are few. The final report, which may be published in 2016, runs to some 300,000 words. For the purposes of this brief paper, however, only the main thrust of the narrative will be presented.

## The Development of LIS and LIS Education in Iraq

The principal focus of this research is the development of LIS and LIS education following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World War, but the preceding period had not been thoroughly examined by recent library historians – and much of what is in print is based on an incomplete understanding and out of date evidence. An examination of that period did, however, reveal some noteworthy features:

- Formal training in the organisation of archives and libraries has a long history. The first training centres for archivists and librarians in Iraq were initiated perhaps as early as 2600 BCE (Black 2004), and the first school known to have a systematic curriculum and a specialized staff seems to have been established as early as the eighteenth century BCE (Al Werdi 1983).

- A structure for what we call bibliographic records, an approach to organising collections – which we call classification – and rules for the management of libraries were also devised in those early times. Contemporary attitudes and practices seem to have been influenced by these traditional approaches well into the twentieth century.
- The other noticeable feature is that, throughout the period from the Sumerian society to the Caliphate in the Middle Ages, librarians and archivists tended to be highly regarded. It may be salutary to consider why the LIS profession has since become less valued in society.

More recent history began when the Ottoman Empire, concerned about Russian incursions into the fringes of its territory, decided to join the German and Austro-Hungarian alliance in 1914, prompting the British to send troops from India to Basra to protect its interests in the Gulf. They gradually advanced from there and Egypt into the Ottoman provinces in the Eastern Mediterranean. After the First World War, the League of Nations “mandated” to the British government the responsibility for guiding the development of three Ottoman provinces that were to become the new state of Iraq. Iraq’s development then depended – as it had during the 400 years of Ottoman rule – on the country’s very limited domestic resources. It was not until 1929 that the British Parliament authorised the government to spend money on developing the country’s colonies and protectorates, and the British economy – still recovering from the costs of the war – was then hit by the effects of the global Depression. Consequently, the British legacy in Iraq was small, but it was nonetheless significant. Steps were taken to rebuild the state education system that the Turks had abandoned and despoiled, and to equip the schools with new textbooks in Arabic; the libraries of two of Iraq’s few Higher Education Colleges (Medicine and Law) were put on a new footing at the behest of their British administrators, Sir Harry Sinderson, and Henry Flavelle Forbes; the inclusion of a Library was part of the grand vision of the British archaeologist and diplomat, Gertrude Bell, for the new Iraq Museum, and she ensured that the Museum also housed the Library of the American School of Oriental Research in Baghdad, an important collection that later became integrated with the Museum’s; and the socially concerned wife of a British Judge, Muriel Flavelle Forbes, proposed the establishment of a library that over time has become the Iraq National Library and Archives.

During the Hashemite Kingdom that lasted from 1932 to 1958, oil production was increasing, and it was recog-

nised that economic progress requires that, as national income increases, it must not be entirely consumed, but that some must be invested. In 1950, Iraq’s Parliament set a precedent for the region by establishing a semi-independent Development Board, with some international experts as members, to advise on use of the majority of the oil revenue and to minimise the effects of local political corruption. The board’s initial plans focused on infrastructure projects and new buildings as part of ambitious plans for the modernisation of the country, including those buildings required to fulfil the plan enshrined in legislation in 1948 to create a public library service in each of Iraq’s 14 provinces, and the design (with British assistance) of a National Library building (which was never built because of the Revolution in 1958) that would provide accommodation for a School of Librarianship (British Council 1960).

Although Iraq was one of the founder members of UNESCO, the government did not sign an agreement on technical cooperation with UNESCO until 1950. The first calls for UNESCO assistance in library development came from the leaders of the fledgling Higher Education Colleges that were being established or expanded to produce the skilled manpower required; the first formal request coming through the Ministry of Education in April 1952 for expert assistance in “reorganising the Higher Teachers’ Training College Library, establishing a system of library improvements and training local people in library services.” This may not have been unconnected with the fact that Dr. Matta Akrawi, the former Head of the Higher Teachers’ Training College, was then employed by UNESCO in a senior position in the Education Sector in Paris. Luther Evans, the former Librarian of Congress, who became Director General of UNESCO in 1953, took a strong interest in the project, and his personal influence seems to have inflated the scale of activity proposed by the Iraqis from six months to one year and – at a time when UNESCO knew little about libraries in the Arab world – re-defined the project to include establishing a School of Librarianship (UNESCO 1953).

UNESCO, like the British Council and USIS, was experiencing some difficulty in recruiting people who would be willing to undertake international missions such as that proposed in Iraq on contracts with a fixed duration and no pension provision. The person selected for the mission was Cyril Saunders, who seems to have made somewhat exaggerated claims in his application for appointment, concealing that he had not completed the British Library Association’s qualification program, and making the most of experience in a single British public library system that was confined to reference and branch library work. His strongest points were that he had some

familiarity with the Middle East, having served for a time as an officer with the British Army in Egypt during the First World War; that he had worked for an international organisation – the British Council, after the Second World War, most recently in Turkey; and that he was available – because the Council had not renewed his contract.

Saunders arrived in Iraq at the end of 1952, formally attached to a small UNESCO mission developing science teaching. He wasted no time in delivering some initial talks about librarianship, and at the beginning of March 1953 initiated his first course, comprising two lectures and one demonstration class each week, each of one hour duration, for the next four months, and concluding with a final test. The initial enrolment included 10 staff from various College's libraries, and 15 final year students from the College's English language section. It was aimed at a fairly elementary level, which he argued matched the students' experience, and was said to have received good feedback from them. A further course was presented from February to June in 1954, but without the College students whose practicum had had to be re-arranged then.

Saunders had recommended two of his students for further training, and in 1953 a delegation of British university professors advising on the development of the proposed university had provided a reminder, *inter alia*, of the need for trained librarians in the College libraries (UNESCO 1959). The Iraqi government appeared to have responded favourably, but Saunders noted that although two people had been awarded Iraqi government scholarships to study librarianship abroad, those selected had not attended the course that he had just completed (UNESCO 1955). This may have been one reason why early suggestions that Saunders's mission should be followed by a specialist sent to serve as head of a School of Librarianship (UNESCO 1962) were not pursued.

In 1951, Danton's (1949) book "Education for Librarianship," was translated into Arabic. This was reported to have been the only UNESCO publication that had aroused interest in Iraq before it was published, and several copies sent to the Ministry of Education were distributed to the staff of the Baghdad Public Library (UNESCO 1959, 1960). With the encouragement of the Secretary of the UNESCO National Commission, Saunders organised an intensive three-week course for public librarians from throughout Iraq in the summer of 1954. Saunders involvement with the public libraries does seem to have been appreciated locally. The next Iraqi

request for assistance included an element of public library development. This time the person appointed had had substantial senior management experience in public libraries in Britain, South Africa and Australia, as well as managing the extensive network of libraries serving the British Army in the Middle East. Harold Bonny, who was to undertake several assignments for UNESCO over the next 10 years, arrived in Baghdad in March 1957. Like Saunders, his activities included presenting several intensive training courses, both for public librarians and for teacher-librarians. UNESCO Headquarters were still keen for Bonny to encourage the development of a School of Librarianship, but the Iraqi authorities resisted this (Dix 1958). Indirectly, however, Bonny did facilitate a development that proved influential in that respect, encouraging the Ford Foundation to make several major grants to support the development of the University of Baghdad's Central Library, and acting as an intermediary for UNESCO in promoting its first pan-Arab Conference on library development. The 1959 Beirut conference, which Bonny directed, was the first of many in the Arab world to express concern about the scarcity of skilled personnel in libraries in the region and the need to develop LIS education programs.

The Ford Foundation's grants brought a number of consultants to the University of Baghdad, one of whom, Rudolf Gjelsness, had been Dean of the University of Michigan SLIS. The grant also enabled a number of Iraqis to take Master's Degrees in LIS in the United States, several of them later becoming teachers in the programs that were to evolve in Baghdad University. Gjelsness and his successor, David Wilder, appear to have lobbied effectively to gain the support of the Iraqi authorities for the establishment of a formal library training program, and in 1966 the Iraqi government began approaches for UNESCO support for this. The sequence of subsequent events is a little unclear, because some of the relevant UNESCO archives are not yet accessible, but it seems that the Iraqis prioritised funding from the allocation of UNESCO budget that was at their discretion – the Participation Programme – to bring an expert on LIS education to teach a course in Baghdad. The person chosen, with UNESCO's assistance, was Ahmed Anwar Omar from the Cairo University SLIS. In 1967, with the assistance of several Iraqis, he taught an experimental course of six month's duration, and further recommended the introduction of a regular postgraduate program (McGowan 1969).

At the beginning of 1968, another UNESCO consultant, Anand Srivastava, Head of the Department of Library Science at the University of Rajasthan in Jaipur, arrived to

assist Dr. Hisham al-Chawaf, Head of the University of Baghdad Central Library, and five Iraqi librarians, who had begun teaching a second six-month course even before he arrived. Dr. Al-Chawaf seems to have been a serious man who did not take his responsibilities lightly, according to an American librarian who was a long-term resident in Baghdad (Coté 2014), and clearly had his own vision of the future, which he advocated strongly, but – as one of his staff commented – although he did not know how to do all the things that he recognised as needing doing, he did not let others help (Al-Obaidi 1962). Perhaps consequently, he may not have always articulated clearly the case for some of his proposals, possibly expecting that his audience would understand the subtext.

Srivastava's experience of LIS education was mainly in India, but he had taken a one-year Master's Degree at the University of Atlanta, and he seems to have had some well-developed diplomatic skills (Srivastava 1974). His brief from UNESCO was to advise the Iraqi authorities on future development, and after discussions with the authorities, he proposed that there should be a one-year program leading to a postgraduate Higher Diploma. Srivastava's proposal seems to have met with the approval of Dr. Al-Chawaf and the Iraqi authorities and fulfilled UNESCO's long-standing aim. It also enabled UNESCO to take advantage of the creation of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1965–1966, which offered UNESCO the potential to support more substantial programs of technical assistance (Leonard, Jenny, and Nwali 1971). A successful case was made for UNDP support, which enabled Srivastava to return to Iraq in 1969, and to stay there almost continuously until 1973. During that time, he laid the foundations for the future, establishing the program as a Graduate School within the University of Baghdad's academic regulations (with Dr. Al-Chawaf as Head of the School), helping to define the curriculum, weeding out teachers who failed to achieve acceptable standards, and arranging for the continuing development of others, which included sending one person to the United States to audit courses to familiarise her with the then new subjects of information science.

The emergence of an undergraduate program in Al-Mustansiriyah University, a relatively new university in Baghdad, had its origins partly in a debate among the LIS teachers and others about the relative merits of undergraduate and postgraduate LIS education, which was resolved in 1970 – perhaps by someone who had been withdrawn from teaching the postgraduate program. It can be seen as a response to the general

pressures on the Iraqi government to expand opportunities in higher education for its growing population, and to provide the skilled manpower that were needed in new occupations.

By the mid-1970s, at least 11 people seem to have been sharing the teaching in the University of Baghdad's Graduate School (UN-ECWA 1977), while the staff at Al-Mustansiriyah University comprised 14 people (Al-Amin 1977, quoted in Sharif 1977). Ahmed Helal, working as a UNESCO consultant at the Iraqi Scientific Documentation Centre noted that the only full-time LIS teacher in Baghdad University was Srivastava. Most of the teachers on both programs were the same people. The division of their time and energy between teaching in two Universities and fulfilling their obligations as employees of libraries in the city was proving problematic. Helal urged the government to appoint full-time teachers for both programs (UNESCO 1972). More significantly, he commented that "The present structure of the Graduate School of Library Science attached to the Baghdad University and the Department of Library Science in the Mustansiriyah University should be altered to improve the quality of the graduates. Cooperation between these two institutions should be strengthened" (Helal 1972).

It is not clear if Helal was leading or reflecting local perceptions of the situation, or if he was being used as a vehicle to articulate local perceptions to the university and government authorities. His comments were eventually implemented in a different form from that which he may have anticipated. The then President of Al-Mustansiriyah University was said to be interested in libraries and was supportive of a merger with the Graduate School, and the Ministry of Higher Education was eventually persuaded that it was not desirable that these staff should spend much of their time commuting around the city to fulfil their three roles (Johnson 1981).

The postgraduate Higher Diploma program was transferred from Baghdad University in 1977. It was enrolling few students, because it was not as attractive as it might have been if it had led to a Master's Degree, which brought a higher salary without taking account of the holder's level of responsibility. This dilemma was partly resolved in 1983, when Al-Mustansiriyah University terminated the Higher Diploma program. This was in line with a Ministry decision to discontinue all postgraduate Diploma programs (except in certain medical specialisms) (Johnson 2004b), possibly mainly to moderate the demand by Iraqi students to study abroad – as the costs of the war with Iran began to impact on the state budget – by clearing the way for expanding less

expensive local provision at Master's Degree level (Johnson 2004a). Within a few years, the LIS Department in Al-Mustansiriyah University was offering a full-time, two-year program leading to a Master's Degree. However, the Ministry would not approve admission to LIS Master's Degrees by graduates whose Bachelor's Degree was not also in LIS.

After much discussion of the growing demand for specialist personnel to operate and manage libraries, the establishment of a new Department of Library Science in the University of Basra was approved in 1983, and another at the University of Mosul in 1986, both teaching undergraduate programs. Programs for Library Technicians' education were also established during the 1980s in Baghdad and Mosul.

Throughout the 1980s, it became increasingly difficult for Iraqis to secure government funding to study abroad at any level, and following the United Nations embargo on Iraq after the First Gulf War in 1990, it became almost impossible. Few of the Iraqi LIS teachers had PhDs, but the experience of teaching research methods to their Master's Degree students and supervising their dissertations no doubt helped to underpin the PhD program in Librarianship and Information Studies, which was established at Al-Mustansiriyah University in 1992–1993 (Al-Kindilchie 1994; Khairi 2010), partly to fill the gap in opportunities for overseas study (Ismail 2004), and partly to try to ensure that library science graduates were seen as suitably qualified for the high-level appointments in libraries and information centres to which non-librarians were still then being appointed (Johnson 2004c). The program follows the American pattern with one year of full-time course work, followed by the preparation of a dissertation. Ten years later there seems to have been between 10 and 20 students currently working their way through the dissertation stage.

## Influences on Development

From the available evidence, it does seem reasonable to draw some tentative conclusions about the factors that were critical to the successful establishment of education for librarianship and information science in Iraq. The factors that appear to have contributed may be summarised as:

- The efforts of foreign residents to establish the first modern libraries in Iraq
- The benevolent, if uninformed, attitudes towards library provision engendered by the familiarity of most senior Iraqi officials and politicians with information-rich environments (in which most of them had studied)

- The establishment by the Iraqi government of an impartial Development Board to which the majority of the oil income was transferred, providing a transparent assurance that the state's income would be used for improving public services rather than for individual benefit, and thus laying the foundation of a network of library buildings
- The expansion of the higher education system, and its increasing emphasis on the provision of professional, vocational and technical education, providing a foundation for the establishment of an undergraduate program with the substantial number of students that would justify an increasingly large and diverse body of LIS teachers
- Financial support from a variety of sources for Iraqi graduates to study for higher degrees in LIS
- The encouragement, guidance, and leadership of foreign consultants (notably the critical interventions of Omar and Srivastava) in the evolution of LIS educational programs
- The early and increasing, but managed participation of Iraqi counterparts as part-time assistants in the delivery of training and teaching, creating a cadre of experienced and tested teachers
- Progressive and increasingly substantial support over an extended period for LIS staff development and then for the establishment of formal LIS educational programs
- The role of individual Iraqis (LIS teachers, university officials, senior government administrators and politicians) in advocating for developments in LIS and LIS education
- The consolidation of the programs in Baghdad in a single SLIS with full-time teachers
- A group of teachers that did not hesitate to take advantage of the opportunities that government policy and the country's circumstances offered for extending the range of programs to encompass higher degree work, despite the challenges that circumstances presented

The role of influential individual Iraqis in restraining early developments in LIS education should not be interpreted as displaying a negative attitude towards it. Rather, it should be seen as a more realistic appreciation of the local situation than UNESCO's. The pressures on the state budget caused by the need to provide social services for a population that was growing faster than the oil income probably distracted attention from the need for qualitative improvements in teaching methods in all levels of education to underpin a culture of



independent reading, and from quantitative and qualitative enhancements to the output of the publishing industry. These deficiencies did little to promote the use of library services, and thus probably had an indirect effect on the image of LIS education. Some specific factors that may have held back the development of LIS education in Iraq may be summarised as:

- The negative attitude towards undergraduate education for library, archive and information work that allocated to it the academically weakest and least motivated university entrants
- The inflexible educational system that prohibits the admission to Master's Degrees in LIS of graduates in other disciplines, which could enhance their familiarity with the information needs and resources of specialist information services, and/or provide the theoretical knowledge required to conduct research into issues that significantly impact on the effectiveness of libraries, archives and information services

## Conclusion

Despite the scale of the study, its limitations meant that it could only reach tentative conclusions. It did, however, reveal how – at different times – both the international donors and Iraqi institutions initiated changes in LIS and LIS education in Iraq, and the part played by particular individuals. The motivation that underlay these initiatives – particularly those taken by the Iraqis – needs further explanation, if relevant information can be found in the archives of the Iraqi government and universities. It would be invidious to claim that one party or the other contributed more to the developments that took place, but – as one might expect – the balance in developing LIS education can be seen to have shifted over time from the inputs provided by the international donors and their consultants to the efforts of the Iraqi teachers. The study demonstrated that international support provided in various forms by a variety of agencies and individuals *over an extended period – and with a unified sense of professional purpose if not with a closely coordinated action plan* – contributed to creating a strong foundation for the development of LIS education. It also showed how development was sustained independently after the withdrawal of international support by a group of teachers who recognised and seized the opportunities that local circumstances presented.

## Afterword

LIS studies of development programs and projects have generally focused more on description and less on analysis, and need to engage more with social theory from other fields, to create new and generalizable knowledge. Indeed, even though this problem has been recognised in the Arab world, the situation remains much as it was described 25 years ago:

Although the number of studies has increased since the 1960s, a good portion of the literature published about librarianship in the Arab countries is descriptive – a serious problem with the literature on librarianship in the developing countries generally. Many of the articles describe a library or a library system, but do not attempt to analyze problems and suggest solutions based on the specific context dealt with (Alqudsi-Ghabra 1988).

In doing research such as this, examining a historical situation from an external perspective, evidence about the internal circumstances of Iraq has been drawn mainly from the work of Iraqi, other Arab, and foreign scholars who have described aspects of the development of the country. The general history of modern Iraq has been reviewed by several recent historians. In considering these, care was taken to allow for the possibility that their authors' perspectives may have been distorted by the revisionist approach that is currently fashionable among some historians. This study has sought to avoid the revisionist approach, which is based on criticising earlier value systems in terms of more recent epistemology rather than evaluating the overall situation that had existed at a particular time in an objective way to determine whether what was done was the best that could be accomplished in prevailing circumstances. Criticism with the benefit of hindsight changes nothing. The people who were involved in Iraq's library development based their activities on what they knew, conditioned by the knowledge and attitudes that were extant at the time that they were involved, and the resources available to them.

Another source of reports was those written by expatriates who had worked as officials in the country's administration or as educators, who potentially might have exhibited the colonialist attitudes that tend to be a concern of the proponents of orientalist or postcolonial theory. Although there have been few formal studies that have applied postcolonial theory to librarianship and information services in developing countries (Khanal 2012), such a discussion does not appear in the LIS literature about Iraq (or the Arab world, so far as the author has discovered). Postcolonial theory is a body of academic study that seeks to draw on critical theory to understand

the loss of power, identity, and culture when a group of people is dominated by a powerful force. Like revisionist history, it is essentially backward looking, and increasingly meaningless. The postcolonial condition – which broadly describes Iraq’s situation in the aftermath of the Ottoman Empire and the brief British “Mandate” – is characterised by contradictions, paradoxes, and tensions as developing countries seek the opportunity to finish the project of their modernisation in their own way or at their own pace (Persram 2003). The challenge that Iraqis actually face now is how to maintain their modernist approach – one that increasingly embraced secularism – whilst retaining a non-Western, Arab identity. Although the results of this research have emphasised the benefits of undertaking critical studies of the nature of contemporary Iraqi society, the value of the orientalist or postcolonial approach is questionable. The social changes now being proposed by Islamic conservatives in the Arab world, Serageldin (2014) argued, would limit the intellectual freedoms of the non-Muslim minorities and “would circumscribe the Muslim majority within the confines of dogmas articulated by a tiny minority.” The gulf between traditional and religious attitudes and secular education does not bode well for the promotion of libraries as open gateways to knowledge, and has become a hindrance to the development of libraries (Al-Shahi 1980). That is what needs to be explored.

Finally, allow me to comment on one omission from this study – an examination of the curricula of the SLIS in Iraq. The documentation available permits an examination of only the structural changes in curricula. There have been several examples of criticisms of the relevance for students from developing countries of undertaking education for librarianship in a more advanced country, as all the early students from Iraq did. Similarly the relevance of legacy curricula that SLIS in developing countries derived from study in an advanced country or from the efforts of consultants provided by international agencies has been criticised in papers from Latin America and Africa. However, there appears to have been little comment by Iraqi librarians on the impact of developmental activities on their curriculum. This is not necessarily a problem. Perhaps it reveals that the SLIS in Iraq have a relatively large number of academics; that a significant proportion of them have learned to think independently; and that they have identified, sought out, and together agreed the information required to adapt the curriculum to local realities; rather than complaining about the situation in which they might otherwise find themselves – wide open to criticism from their practitioner peer group.

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