

A REPORT ON THE NEW MASTERS PROGRAMME IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE

In the framework of the TEMPUS programme, which aims to teach new trends and developments in Library and Information Science to representatives from Georgia, Uzbekistan and myself from Armenia, I participated in training courses held at Robert Gordon University (Aberdeen, Scotland).

The main purpose was to improve our theoretical and practical knowledge of Library and Information Services in order to develop curriculum back in our respective countries; but also to exchange what we have learned with Robert Gordon University. Together we considered the state of libraries in our countries, and discussed the outdated soviet-type MSc and BA programmes in the field.

The new curriculum was designed in a way that would see full time students complete assignments before writing a Thesis in order to achieve an MSc level Diploma in Library and Information Services.

Together with Peter Reid, Course Leader for the MSc in Information and Library Studies we also took extra 'curriculum development' classes. These classes were spread over two semesters; we attended six weeks of each semester, after which we became distance learners and submitted our assignments online. Additionally we also discussed with Peter what useful materials we could acquire for our countries.

We visited several libraries in Aberdeen city, including the Central Library and the Library of Aberdeen University, and we also went to Edinburgh and visited the Central Library. The purpose of these visits was to study their experiences and also to teach our colleagues about the current state of LIS in Armenia, Georgia, and Uzbekistan.

During the second visit to Aberdeen (February-March, 2010) we concentrated on exploring Moodle. We contemplated how Moodle would fit into the curriculum; the amount of credits it should be worth, its suitability for distance and full time students etc. During our study we also listened to guest speakers from the Robert Gordon University Library and IT department, who are responsible for the maintenance of the University's Moodle. Teachers demonstrated to us how they create classes on Moodle, how they share them among students, and how they send e-mails to the students in the classes.

While in classrooms with our whole group during the first semester, we studied these subjects: 'Cataloguing and Classification'; 'Information Studies'; 'Knowledge Organization'; 'Management Principles and Operations'. The courses were designed in a way that gave learners an understanding of these subjects that they could put to use at work.

During the second semester we studied 'Information Services', 'Library Planning and Development', and also 'Research Methods' in preparation for writing a Masters dissertation. Though we participated in all classes and are considered full time distance learners, we are not having a fieldwork placement. Instead we will write about our work in our own libraries, and what we do day-to-day.

The final stage of my study was in London. I visited Middlesex University; attended short presentations from the library staff, and presented what I have learned at RGU, and how useful it was. I also visited the British Library.

Overall the classes were very useful. The extra curriculum development classes with Peter, and the meetings organised by him, were very practical and gave me a good understanding of how we can develop library services and management in Armenia.

When I return, my main focus will be on working with Moodle, and the topic of my thesis is 'Web 2.0 technologies and information dissemination in the academic libraries of Armenia'. The idea of choosing this topic is to increase the overall understanding of the importance of implementing IT technologies in libraries. In conclusion, I think the knowledge gained from Robert Gordon University and my Masters dissertation will help me to work in the Fundamental Scientific Library and on the Masters course of 'Library and Information Sciences' at the International Scientific Educational Centre of NAS RA.