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***NEW MASTERS PROGRAMME IN LIBRARY AND
INFORMATION SCIENCE***

2nd Monitoring Report

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Content of the report

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1. Summary

This second monitoring report covers the reporting period from November 2009, when the monitoring visit to Armenia was undertaken, to end of June 2010. The 'wider objectives' and the specific project objectives remain unchanged as documented in the 1st monitoring report.

The evaluation during this visit included the following activities

- Reading of minutes, reports and survey results produced since the last visit
- Interviews and discussions with lecturers and students of the NMPLIS Summer School
- Interviews and discussions with students, academics, library and archive employees and other stake-holders such as the rector of Ilia State University

These activities were undertaken in preparation of and during the visit as evidenced in the appendix.

This visit also evaluated the implementation of recommendations of the first monitoring report.

The conclusions of this visit are summarized in section 10.

2. Project workplan in the current reporting period

In the 7 month reporting period – from month 10 to month 17 of the project - covered in this monitoring visit, the most important tasks by all partners were

- Procurement of equipment– this was still an issue in Georgia and therefore covered again in this report.
- Implementing the VLE environment
- Training in partner countries
- Development of curriculum documents
- Implementation of the Bologna process (on-going)
- Maintenance of the website and continued dissemination of project results (on-going)
- Management and communications (on-going)

The following sections of this report provide some observations on the achievement of these tasks.

3. Procurement of equipment and resources

The Georgian partner had delayed the procurement process for a good reason, namely to ensure to get state-of-the art equipment, in this case Mac laptops, rather than standard PCs. Two tenders previously issued in Georgia did not produce desired results. The Georgian team has ascertained that customs' regulations will allow shipment / import of hardware from the UK partner without any problems thus the procurement process for the Master's program in Information Management (School of Graduate Studies, Ilia State University) will happen in time for installation before the MA course is due to begin (March 2011).

The procurement of e-resources has gone ahead as planned and according to the licensing agreement with Emerald publishing. Georgia will join the licensing agreement at the moment the Masters course starts, and is planning training courses for participants on how to use the resources. Uzbekistan has a licensing agreement with Emerald for two universities. Usage of Emerald data bases included in the curriculum program of library faculties will be taught as of September, 2010.

Installation of the equipment has been carried out by the Uzbekistan partner in April, 2010, after some delays in the procurement process due to some problems with the tender, and the quality of equipment. Two training centers with PC's - Tashkent University of Information Technologies(TUIT) and Tashkent Institute of Culture(TIC) - were officially opened in May, 2010. Now they are used as training centers for students, teachers and librarians to learn Moodle and electronic databases of Emerald, EBSCO publishing and local publishers. The universities have provided the centers with special rooms, furniture and Internet.

The procurement and installation of equipment had already been carried out by the Armenian partner, according to the timeline in the work-plan. A solution to the problems besetting the Uzbek partner, namely the issue of paying in international currency, is that the procurement process is handled by Middlesex University.

There is general agreement by the participants of the course in RGU and the summer school as to the usefulness of lists of recommended reading, including articles and books that had been provided. Project budget allows purchase of e- and print resources, and Georgia plans to look into possible translation of some key texts.

4. Implementing the VL environment

Moodle has been implemented in all three partner countries and is gradually being populated with content, such as the lectures of the summer school. Each folder for a set of lectures contains those articles for recommended reading that are freely usable without copyright restrictions, chapters of books, references. Access to the Moodle learning environment is password protected and available to project participants, but it is envisaged that some content will be translated into partner languages and made available to the professional community at large to share knowledge and learning.

The VLE was used throughout the summer school by lecturers and students, and as the participants were not identical with those that had undergone training in RGU, this meant that the skills to work with Moodle were spread more widely.

All 3 countries are in the process of up-loading documents in the VLE pertaining to the masters' courses. The Uzbek partner is planning to use Moodle in TUIT for distance learning from January, 2011, following the training courses for teachers. The Moodle system has been installed by both universities and some teachers are in the process of familiarizing themselves with it. It is foreseen that it may be necessary to hold an additional training course for Uzbek teachers.

5. Training in partner countries

During the course of my visit a 2 week summer school for students from Georgia, Armenia and Uzbekistan was taking place at Ilia State University, held by lecturers from the EU countries.

The professional focus of the Summer School was to be the:

- Curriculum Development within the context of Bologna
- Introduction to digital library building and access, including issues pertaining to archives
- Combination of the library and technology background
- Marketing Library and Information Service

Wider perspectives were to stimulate reflection on educational needs, new competencies and new learning and teaching in the LIS (library and information science) field. At a practical level, the summer school also helped to market the new Masters course to potential Georgian participants.

The learning outcomes were defined as:

- explored the debates surrounding the digital library and the knowledge society
- analysed the interaction and the Web access between digital libraries and the user
- considered the complex aspects of digital library creation, management and access
- reflected on strengths working in a team
- became familiar with digital library issues and workflow

All participants were highly appreciative of the opportunity to take part in this summer school, to expand and deepen their knowledge and learning. The lecturers from EU institutions commented on how developing the content of the summer school had been a real collaborative European effort of a professional team, and that this course had great potential for replicability in other countries. They commented positively on the adequate level of English language by the participants.

It should be noted that issues pertaining to digital archives were also covered in this summer school.

All lectures given during the summer school are available via the project website at <http://library.iliauni.edu.ge/nmplis/ss2010/>

I appreciated being asked to give a presentation about Europeana, the European digital library with content from libraries, archives, audiovisual archives and museums, one of the EU flagship projects funded by the European Commission. This met with a lot of interest to the extent that Georgian participants plan to localize Europeana's interface in Georgian language.

In this section about training, here are some comments by participants of the courses in the RGU:

- professionals, methodology and content were highly appreciated by all participants. They learnt a great deal regarding implementing the Bologna process, and details such as description of assignments. In particular participants commented with gratitude on the great deal of effort RGU staff put into special sessions provided over and above what normal masters' students get.
- It would have been good to have had a better preparation of what to read – what is mandatory reading, and what material is complimentary.
- It might have been more productive to attend one full course rather than two short courses, However, it is recognized that 12 weeks is the maximum period permitted in TEMPUS, therefore splitting it was a way to ensure maximum benefit from different parts of the course.
- Those participants without an LIS background struggled at first because they had many white spots to fill; however the course both broadened and deepened knowledge of LIS.
- There were rather negative comments about accommodation during the course – but this reflects the low EU monthly allowance.

6. Development of curriculum documents and planning of the Masters course

The Needs Assessment report for Georgia had been finalized and provides a robust basis for the development of the curriculum, which has been submitted to Robert Gordon University. All future lecturers involved have submitted their course structures and materials. This process was greatly

supported by the personnel of Robert Gordon University, with unfailing patience and giving freely of their professional expertise.

Admissions for the new Masters course have started, and currently 20 students are registered for the course to begin in March 2011. The interviews with some of these students (most of them already working in a library) were very positive regarding their motivation to improve their knowledge and prospects of promotion.

The Uzbekistan partner, based on their RGU experience and modules, changed the Masters course in TIC and was planning to start the new Masters course in TUIT in 2010, but this proved not be possible. The main reason was that there were not enough teachers to lead the new courses. The university will pay attention to train more teachers and the new MA course will start in TUIT next year.

In Armenia, starting from 2009, the ISEC opened and the first 6 students are already involved in the educational process. The Virtual Learning Environment is set up, and is accessible at <http://vle.sci.am>. Teaching staff have prepared several courses which will be taught as from Autumn 2010. These courses are:

How to prepare courses in the Moodle Environment: Teachers Guide

How to work in the Moodle Environment: Students Guide

Digital Libraries

Machine Readable Cataloging

Authority Control

Ilia State University and Robert Gordon University are planning a long-term partnership to support future Masters students in Georgia through consulting, distance courses, student exchanges and public lectures. This will also contribute to the sustainability of the Masters program in Georgia.

Along with the Master's program, the Georgian team was asked by the Ilia State University administration to design a BA program, as interest in the LIS field is rising amongst the students. Thus the Major and Minor programs at the Bachelor's level will be offered to the students as from October, 2010.

The Georgian team already started preparing to design the PhD program in Information Management. They see the program as a result of the good cooperation with the partner countries, who cooperate in this Tempus project.

7. Sustainability

There appear to be no concerns about the sustainability of the Masters program in Georgia: the rector of Ilia State University confirmed the university's strong interest in hosting a research program in library and information sciences in particular, and improving the quality and quantity of research in general. He is confident that the program can be sustained by tuition fees and state grants. A marketing and public relations campaign by the librarian of Ilia State was carried out using the media – with appearances even on TV – and has met with a good response of registrations for the course so far.

An important initiative was to convene the stake-holders, e.g. scientific, educational, cultural, public and social institutions of Georgia, to raise awareness of the contribution the masters course and its research component will make to the modernization of information systems in the country, and their role in developing society and economy. A number of such key institutions have signed a Memorandum of Understanding agreeing to cooperate in joint research, the development of study

programs, the accessibility of scientific resources. Several of these institutions will provide part-time lecturers to the new masters program. Equally important, the institutions commit to sending students to the Masters program and providing them with employment after completion.

Another important step for building the strong basis for information studies at Ilia State University was the establishment of an Information Studies Centre. The centre was initiated by the masters program team, in order to carry out research on the most significant trends in the field in order to enhance the high quality of this educational program.

The project is both important and timely for Uzbekistan because of current library reforms. The Government is supporting the project of building the new National Library of Uzbekistan and changing its organizational structure. The National Library is one of the informal partner of the project and is in need of well qualified librarians. Statistics (from Marat Rakhmatullaev) show that the requirement for librarians with master degree comes to more than 100 per year. There are more than 12000 libraries and 22000 librarians in this country. More than 80% of them are in need of professional development. The training centers and new courses will help to address this situation.

8. Communications and dissemination

All participants of the project that I met, be they lecturers or students, from EU or partner countries, enthusiastically described the team spirit and the excellent understanding and collaboration. Communications between all partners looks to be vivid, and productive. The summer school provided the frame-work for exchange of ideas and materials, and discussions of progress between partner countries.

The Georgian project team underlined the positive collaboration between academics, IT specialists and the wider stake-holder community – library professionals and academics. All members of the Georgian library consortium are being kept informed about the progress of the project, and are agreed that the MA program is an important part of library modernization, as documented in the Memorandum of Understanding outlined in section 7 above.

The students that had taken part in the course in Robert Gordon University outlined their dissemination activities of what they had learnt to their colleagues in their countries through presentations at professional meetings, articles in journals, training sessions, and even a video about library modernization produced by the Uzbek team. This corresponds to a recommendation in the first monitoring report, namely that there should be systematic sharing of learning throughout the Georgian, Armenian and Uzbek communities.

Regarding the project website, it was agreed that all participants would strive once again to populate the website with any reports or articles, and the content of the summer school. Once again it is recommended that there should be a translation of pertinent text, such as a summary of the project goals and activities, into partner languages.

9. Conclusions

This visit confirmed that the project is progressing well according to work-plan, timeline and budget. Project management is proceeding smoothly and efficiently, and the objectives of the project are being achieved. The impressive professional commitment and personal motivation by all partners in carrying out their tasks in a great team spirit is worth a special mention.

The recommendations from the first monitoring report have been taken on board and are implemented or in process.

The third and final monitoring visit, to Uzbekistan, is planned for the first quarter of 2011.

Last but not least, I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation for the efficient and friendly support by Middlesex University in arranging my travels and the readiness by Alan Hopkinson, project leader, to fully answer all my questions immediately. Equally so, I am most grateful to Natia Gabrichidze and her team, and Irakli Garibashvili, for their excellent professional support to make my visit to Georgia productive as well as enjoyable.

Appendix

Documents consulted in preparation of the visit

- Project description as in the application
- Minutes of the consortium meeting, Rezekne
- Intermediate report on implementation of the project 15 Jan – 15 July 2010
- Needs assessment by Georgia of curriculum development
- Draft curriculum of the MA in Information Management for Georgia
- Co-operation Memorandum of Georgian libraries and institutions

People met / interviewed

Irakli Garibashvili, director, National Scientific and Technical Library, Tblisi, Georgia

Natia Gabrichidze, library director, Ilia State University, Tblisi, Georgia

Tamar Mosiashvili, deputy director of the library, Ilia State University, Tblisi, Georgia

Prof. Gigi Tevzadze, rector, Ilia State University, Tblisi, Georgia

Prof. Ketevan Gurchiani, vice chancellor, Ilia State University, Tbilisi, Georgia

Emzar Jgerenaia, deputy director, department of science, culture and education, National Parliamentary Library of Georgia

Noshreen Chkhaidze, director, Innovative Systems Institute, Tblisi, Georgia

Giorgi Sabanadze, marketing manager, Peritus Group, Tblisi, Georgia

Magda Magradze, Caucasus Regional Manager of the Academic Fellowship Program, Open Society Institute Georgia

Georgian participants of the training courses at Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen

Future students of the new Masters' Program at Ilia State University

Students / lecturers from Georgia, Armenia and Uzbekistan taking part in the Digital Library Summer School

Georgian stakeholders – academic, research and special librarians

Lecturers of the Digital Library Summer School from EU project partners

Prof. Anna Maria Tamaro, University of Parma,

Dr. Mario Perez-Montoro and Prof. Alice Keefer, University of Barcelona

Dr. Anthony Olden, Thames Valley University

Dr. Tigran Zagaryan, project leader Armenia

Dr. Marat Rakhmatullaev, project leader Uzbekistan