

Topics of interest for global LIS students

Information Studies at Curtin has welcomed international students into its research programs for over twenty years. During that time the subjects under investigation have been many and varied. And yet when we looked more closely at what had been researched, two characteristics stood out; with very few exceptions all the research topics were solidly based in professional practice, and they related to the stage of development of the student's country of origin.

The focus of the research has been improving the delivery of library, archives, or records management services in the students' country of origin. In a number of cases this has involved comparisons with Australia as a model of a developed country.

Information literacy has been a popular area of study. Students from South Africa tackled the issue from a number of directions. The need for information literacy programs at a school level and the best methods of implementation when resources were scarce were investigated, as well as the use of the internet to deliver information literacy programs which targeted students at a time when the South African Government was trying to increase the number of indigenous students at university and other institutions of higher learning. In the Maldives, a nation of small scattered islands, an exploratory study of information provision and access gave insight to the development of an information culture which will increase levels of literacy.

Related to the issue of information literacy is the existence of a digital divide. Students from the Middle-East and Malawi have examined the role libraries can play in bridging this divide.

Communication practices and the use of digital media to make scholarly and cultural materials available have interested

students from around the globe. Students from Oman, Jordan, Kuwait, Vietnam, and Japan have investigated and written about topics ranging from digital theses and virtual museums to archives and the role of organisations such as UNESCO in the dissemination of information.

Of interest to the more developed countries of Asia, such as Thailand and Malaysia, are the benefits that partnerships between public and private enterprise can bring to the economy. Economic factors were also behind an investigation of information needs and searching behaviour of aquaculture scientists in Vietnam.

International students who have not researched topics related to the developmental stage of their country of origin have had a particular interest in their chosen topic. Metadata, scientific and universal preservation, the role of a Practicum, the marketing and retail strategies used by public libraries, mobile libraries, and user satisfaction with information services have all been areas of research which have been worthwhile and interesting areas of research into professional practice.

International students have given us an opportunity to gain more of an understanding of different environments, conditions, and professional practices. Their research has added to our professional knowledge base and they are actively disseminating their findings in journals such as Library Review, Library Hi-Tech, and Library Management. Take the time to read their work. They are the leaders who will play a major role in the development of their nations.

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