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Tempus IV

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

1st Monitoring Report

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Distribution

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0.2	revised	M. Segbert-Elbert	20 Nov 2009	Revision of points 4 and 6 according to input from Georgia
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Type : Report

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Participants: See list of persons consulted in annex 1

Report by: Monika Segbert-Elbert, external expert

Content of the report

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2. Project objectives and workplan
3. Main observations
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1. Summary

The project, now 10 months into its time-line, is proceeding according to the workplan and can already show some positive and timely results. A solid core team has been formed between the EU partners and the three partner countries, and the indicators of progress as outlined in the description of work are being met. Some recommendations, inter alia for an improved flow of communications, are included in this report, to maximize the sharing of knowledge and experience gained in the project.

The evaluation activities as described in the proposal were to be

- read minutes, reports and survey results
- attend meetings
- interview students, academics, and library and archive employees

These activities were undertaken in preparation of and during the visit as evidenced in appendix 1 and 2.

2. Project objectives and workplan

The proposal elaborates as 'Wider Objective' of the project the following:

- To ensure that the Partner Country universities are offering new curricula in library and information studies and archives up to European standards and well-tailored to the demands and needs of the labour market

The Specific Project Objective/s are given as:

- To bring curricula, teaching methods and associated learning facilities into line with recognised EU and international standards by February 2011 and test in the following 12 months
- To introduce an infrastructure for a Virtual Learning Environment by December 2009
- Join European cooperation in Life Long Learning
- Set up training centres in Armenia, Georgia and Uzbekistan (one per country)

The workplan gives a clear indication of the tasks to fulfill these objectives. In the reporting period covered by this monitoring visit, the most important tasks by all partners were

- Procurement of equipment and services
- LIS curriculum development and training of staff and students
- Conducting a needs assessment pertaining to LIS education and English language skills
- Look into the availability / affordability of appropriate e-resources
- Engage in on-going dissemination about the project
- Establish management procedures and communication flow within the consortium

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

3. Procurement of equipment

The procurement of equipment has been successfully and efficiently concluded by the Armenian partner in the project. A very nice, welcoming and inviting learning ambience has been created providing excellent access to the hard- and software, and learning tools like the smart whiteboard.

The virtual learning environment is up and running under <http://vle.sci.am/moodle>, using the open source software moodle and building blocks developed in a previous Tempus project.

The Uzbek partner reports some deviation from the workplan concerning the procurement of equipment. They conducted the tender on time and chose the company, which will equip the educational centers, but, as there were some problems with the local companies on the quality of the equipment and delivery, another month will be needed to get the equipment in place. Now the invoice from the selected company is being submitted to Middlesex University to make the payment. In the meantime, both Tashkent Institute of Culture and Tashkent University of Information Technologies are preparing special rooms for technology enhanced educational centers.

4.LIS curriculum development and training of academics and students

This is a core component of the project, laying the basis for the future master's courses. In this reporting period the tasks were to

- Plan LIS and archives teaching in line with EU standards
 - Do a needs assessment for curricular development
 - Start to develop the curriculum documents
 - Improve the English language skills of academics and students
- Train partner country academics through their attendance of the masters course in Library and Archives Studies in Aberdeen

The needs assessment was undertaken and discussed in the consortium meeting, but the report has not yet been finalized.

It is recommended that this report be finalized and made available to all the partners in the consortium, especially to the partner countries to support their planning of the LIS curriculum.

Each partner country is developing its own curriculum document as Georgia and Uzbekistan already have LIS schools (but no masters' courses) and the issue there is to define the course content according to EU standards (following the Bologna process), whereas Armenia is establishing a brand new Centre for post-graduate LIS studies. All three partner countries will be developing the curriculum documents in an ongoing process until M24, using Google doc for sharing their drafts.

In doing so, all 3 PC exchanged curricula and continue to discuss what they are preparing. Results show that the courses developed are quite similar.

Regarding the training of staff in EU, it was decided at the kick off meeting that all training efforts would concentrate on RGU, as RGU and Barcelona share the same curricula but the language barrier for studying in Spain could not be overcome at this stage. Unfortunately training of staff is the area in which the budget was reduced by 50%. This presented a major challenge as the consortium was not told until after plans had been made for the PC participants to attend the course (which is split into 2 semesters). However, in the end, following the language tests, there are 3 participants from UZ, 5 from GE and 1 from AM, which most likely can be covered from within the remaining 50% of the budget. It is understood that participants in this course are the teachers or academic staff who will be teaching the future masters' courses in partner countries.

The numbers are conditioned by challenges posed by having to pass the IELTS test. Thus the original idea as articulated in the proposal was not that the participants would gain a qualification,

but that they would sit in on the course to experience them, and would only take a qualification if their English would pass 6.5 in the IELTS test.

It is not immediately clear how the participants in the course were chosen, what quality control is in place to assess their progress, and what exactly will be the follow up to their course participation in Aberdeen on they return to their countries.

However, especially the Georgian group that attended the course reports that this was a very fruitful visit in which they learnt much about the requirements for Masters' courses in Scotland, acquired a lot of new knowledge in LIS, and this enabled them to start writing the curriculum for their new Masters' course. At the same time it was also a very useful team building exercise.

It is recommended that guidelines should be agreed as to the follow-up after the course, such as sharing of knowledge with the library and archive community in the country in articles and conferences, and the submission of a report outlining lessons learnt for the benefit of the other members of the consortium. It is imperative that the same people attend both parts of the course to maximize the acquisition of knowledge.

5. Sustainable access to appropriate e-resources

The partners propose to evaluate which e-resources will be most useful to academics and students, and then negotiate affordable and sustainable access with the providers, with the help of eIFL.net, the global organization specializing in the provision of electronic information for libraries in developing and transition countries.

First contacts have been made with Emerald Publishing, one of the foremost publishing houses in the LIS field, to negotiate fair and affordably priced licenses for all partner countries. Senior staff of Emerald Publishing visited Tashkent Institute of Culture and Tashkent University of Information Technologies, Uzbekistan, and familiarized themselves with the project. As a result of this they offered reasonable price and content for access to their databases.

It is recommended, as a next step, that a list of recommended e-resources for the LIS faculties in PC will be compiled and shared between PC's, taking into account the 'reading' list the students will bring back from their course in Aberdeen.

In the case of Armenia, there appears to be no problem regarding the sustainability of access to these e-resources, due to the fee-based nature of the master's course.

However, it is recommended to start now in getting funding for e-resources into the state budget lines for the coming years, as this can take up to two years to achieve, to ensure long term sustainability of access.

6. Management and communications

During the kick off meeting and the first board meeting the issues of project management and communications were addressed and procedures were met in place. The timeline for deliverables is on track. The comments below are just observations on details designed to be helpful to manage project documents and reporting to the coordinator:

- There is as yet no reporting regime by the partner countries Georgia and Uzbekistan to the project coordinator, Armenia. In consequence it was not as easy to obtain up to date information from them about their progress and challenges.

It is recommended that regular reporting to the grant holder about progress and/or deviations from the workplans introduced;

- There is some unclarity as to the status of some documents as they lack dates, author details, version control. It is suggested that a template be introduced to manage this;
- It is not clear who chases missing reports or deals with unfinished reports. It might be useful to have an agreed list of deliverables with due date, so that the coordinator can remind project participants of their duty to deliver on time. The coordinator may need to work with the authors on improving the quality of some of the reports.

The proposal outlines, precisely for these purposes, the production of a Project Handbook. This has not yet started, but some information is already available like project reporting templates, financial tables etc.

It is recommended that the production of this Project Handbook is commenced as soon as possible, by bringing together existing pieces and creating the missing chapters.

It is also recommended that there be a space on the website where the final deliverables are hosted for all partners to share, in a section reserved for members of the consortium. The consortium will have to decide who owns the responsibility for keeping that section up to date.

7. Dissemination activities

The project is required to engage in dissemination activities about its achievements and results. Some important activities have already taken place – the poster session at IFLA, for which in addition to the attractive poster, fliers and leaflets were produced, in Chinese, Russian, French and English. This reached a large part of the global library community. The project team presenting the poster session was also able to talk to prospective partners in future follow-up projects.

The article about the project in the ARL (American Research Libraries) journal LEAD reached a large global audience. The project coordinator also started a project group on Facebook and Slideshare.

The Uzbek partner gave reports about the project in IT Submit in Tashkent and local and international conferences, such as the international seminar ‘Technologies of scientific, educational and technical information development and use in the network of electronic libraries’ and the lastIssikKul conference which is a major event in the library sector in Central Asia. Papers with the information about the project were published in the conference proceedings.

One of the main means of dissemination is the project website, which is pleasing and informative, although it would be good if some sections such as ‘informative visits’ and ‘reports’ were up-dated and enriched by the relevant documents.

It is recommended that the project website also carries information in the languages of the partner countries, eg Armenian, Georgian and Uzbek. This will be of interest to potential LIS students, and academics in these countries that are not fluent in English.

8. Final remark

This was a fruitful and satisfying visit due to the progress of the project, its obvious impact on students and librarians aspiring to expand their LIS knowledge by taking part in a postgraduate course, the cooperation by all partners to furnish me with the requested information, and last but not least the warm hospitality of the Armenian colleagues.

The timetable for the future annual monitoring visits was discussed and agreed to be a visit to Uzbekistan in the 2nd year, and to Georgia in the 3rd. In addition there will be participation in the final conference in Uzbekistan in the 3rd year. I look forward very much to accompanying this project in its important and valuable tasks.

Appendices

1. Documents consulted in preparation of the visit

- Project description as in the application
- Minutes of the kick off meeting, Aberdeen, 18-20 February 2009
- Minutes of the consortium meeting, Yerevan, 1-2 July 2009
- Report by Alan Hopkinson on a visit to Armenia, Georgia and Uzbekistan
- Needs assessment for curriculum development study
- Report on Requirements and Provisions by Archives by IngarsGusans
- List of IELTS results

2. People met / interviewed and notes from the conversations

Director ISEC, Albert Sargarsyan

- very proud of the shiny new teaching labs
- no problem with sustainability re tuition fees in future
- 15 places for LIS postgraduates in ISEC

ArusyakHarutyunyan (student that passed IELTS but could not go to Aberdeen):

- went to Aberdeen on a project visit helping interpret, now head of international department, can not manage long trip, but would be very interested to study LIS degree (university education in English and Law, interested in the IPR for digital materials)

KarapetMinasyan, deputy director FSL and lecturer in ISEC /FSL

- elaborated the theme of the courses, from translated literature, correspondence courses, also from anglo-american literature, and French
- but he does not think they have got it right yet – literature in the library is out of date and from the Soviet times, ideologized
- sketched the evolution of the digital library, the typology and structure of libraries, collection building and management incl e-resources, digitisation and preservation, etc
- has to teach all this in 4 courses, some of the texts had to be translated into Armenian, but students are expected to read in English
- also History of the Armenian book, and also History of Armenian Bibliography
- Library legislation exists but has not been adopted
- International agencies (UNESCO, IFLA..)
- All these courses will begin at November

ISEC students (5 of them are working librarians)

Marina Karapetyan

- working in acquisition dept, inventorising and cataloguing books,
- degree from Armenian state pedagogical university in museology, and library studies
- doing the Master in the new faculty, for 2 ½ years
- improving her English and IT skills during the course
- students exchange in the course of the Tempus project (also Erasmus Mundi)

AnnahitHovhannesyan

- programmer and systems administrator, for Aleph
- worked in the library 2 ½ years
- master degree from polytecnic university

- Evergreen installation all done, cataloguing is working, next circulation, registration of partons, serials control

TatavikZargaryan (interview by skype 25.11.2009)

- Student just returned from Aberdeen, preparing for her 2nd masters' degree to become lecturer at ISEC
- No language problems in following the course in Aberdeen
- Course content good and relevant
- Teaching methodology new and interesting for Armenian reform of teaching
- Will give lecture on what she has learnt to staff and students at ISEC
- Will liaise with Aberdeen and other course participants on compiling a bibliography of useful reading and a list of e-resources that should be accessible