

An Archival Summer School

Fitting archival education into the Bologna Process

The Bologna Process

Since 1999 Europe is living the Bologna Process.

In 1999 some 30 European education ministers met in Bologna and issued a joint declaration to establish a European Area of Higher Education (EAHE) by 2010. The main actions to be undertaken were:

- a system of academic grades which are easy to read and to compare
- an educational system essentially based on two cycles: bachelor and master
- a system of accumulation and transfer of credits: the European Credit Transfer System
- co-operation with regard to quality assurance
- mobility of students and staff
- the European dimension of higher education

The first stage in the process has been very 'government-driven' and focussed on the first four actions. Systems can be created by changing the national laws and by ordering the institutions for higher education to act accordingly. So, since 1999, European universities are changing their previous systems into the bachelor-master-format and are coping (or struggling) with the introduction of European credits. In a report, presented to the education ministers in Bergen (2005) it was estimated that:

- a little more than 50% of the students are enrolled in the bachelor-master-system, accumulating European credits
- some 80% of the countries have ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention, preparing for the mutual recognition of diploma's
- almost all countries have made provisions for a quality assurance system based on the criteria set out on the European level

Especially during the last two years, however, new issues have been brought into the discussions:

- the two-cycle-system is being replaced by a three-cycle system: bachelor, master and doctorate
- with the introduction of the doctorate the place of research in higher education and the relation between 'Bologna' and the development of a European Research Area is getting more attention
- corollary to this development discussions are more explicitly dealing with the 'employability' of the different diploma's
- the idea of 'lifelong learning' has been introduced into the process, leading to discussions on the need for flexibility: flexible learning paths, recognition of prior learning etc.
- the 'social dimension' has become part of the 'discours': how to ensure the accessibility of higher education 'to all'
- mobility is once more brought forward as an important part of the process

It is remarkable that - with these issues - the tone of the Communiqués has changed. At first being mostly about governments taking actions, recent declarations point to the 'central role' of the institutions, the staff and the students as partners in the process 'to ensure the introduction of the innovative teaching and learning processes that Europe needs'. They welcome the support of organisations representing business and the social partners and look forward to intensified co-operation.

Now that the framework has been set up, it is up to the 'partners' to make the system really work...

The Summer School: the idea

Inspired by the actions in the Bologna process and influenced by these new issues, the Dutch Archiefschool took the initiative to invite archival educators from several North-west European countries to a meeting in Amsterdam (Spring 2005). Central theme of the meeting was to explore the possibilities for co-operation.

The Amsterdam meeting did result in the establishment of an informal network of archival educators. The main goals of the network are:

- the exchange of information on educational content, - methods and – techniques
- stimulating co-operation in curriculum - and course development
- stimulating international mobility of staff and students

During the meeting it was decided that the network should meet regularly - at least every year - to compare the different programs and to discuss new challenges. More important, the network is expected to produce tangible products of co-operation: a course, a workbook for students etc.

A first product that was decided upon, an *overview of the organisation of archival education in North-western Europe*, was presented to the second meeting of the network, which took place in Hamburg, Germany (14th – 16th September 2006). See: www.xyz.qq

During this second meeting a more ambitious project was discussed: organising a joint summer school.

- General idea: The network develops a program. Educators from several institutions are responsible for a part of this jointly developed program. Students from the different institutions are the participants.
- Goals:
 - For the network: a better understanding of the different educational arrangements
 - For the educators: 'participating observation' in a specific case, enabling more profound discussion of educational content, - methods and – techniques
 - For the students: confrontation with diverging views/ideas and with different educational methods, exchange of learning experiences, maybe development of an international student network

Most of the discussion focussed on the feasibility: organisation, content and funding.

Organisation

How long?

Summer schools show a variety in length: from one to several weeks. As longer as the summer school is, the more necessary it is to have an arrangement for the participating students (in terms of EC's and exemption in regular programs).

What level?

Since there is a great variety in the organisational embedding of archival education it will not be easy to define a level that is attractive to all. There was a slight preference for combining bachelors (final stage) and/or masters (early stage). The network should decide on this after consultation of the institutions

What time of year?

Summer seems the most obvious moment for a summer school, but again: there is variety in the beginning and ending of the academic year in different countries. It may be that (early) januari is a more suitable time of year.

Where?

There is no preference for a specific place in Europe. The choice will be made on the most favourable requirements: easy reach, cheap lodgings, teaching facilities and the like.

Other suggestions?

The network should take into account existing/earlier initiatives in archival education (a.o. Open Society Archives, the 'Courants' program in Paris) and existing summer-school organisations in the respective institutions.

Content

The content/program of the summer school is highly dependent on the expected level of the students. Several possibilities were discussed. One possibility is to pay attention to future challenges to the archival profession. Another interesting approach may be to zoom in on one particular challenge (e.g.: digital records) and to develop a program dealing with how this affects the existing archival work processes. A list of suggestions, result of a brainstorm by freshly graduated German colleagues who attended the meeting, is reproduced as Appendix.

Funding

Funding will, as usual, have a big influence on the organisational decisions. It may be possible, however, to organise a low-cost summer school, for instance by using existing facilities during holidays. The need for external funding is closely related to how much the participants – students and staff – are willing and able to pay ...

External funding may be found at different levels:

In several countries institutes have a budget for international activities. They may be interested in the educational impact of the summer school.

Institutions (faculty, university) almost always have this sort of budget. Usually, they are interested in international activities for students – if only for reasons of PR. But they may also be sensitive for the argument that this initiative is in line with the Bologna process.

Governments certainly have budget – if only through taking part in international arrangements - and they have committed themselves to the Bologna process. In order to apply, however, the commitment of the institutions is usually needed

The Summer School: next steps

The participants in the Hamburg meeting generally reacted with enthusiasm. It is obvious, however, that a lot of preliminary work needs to be done before the summer school can actually be organised. The network decided that it would probably be best to start with a rather restricted pilot. The pilot should have a one-week-program (or two weeks at max.). Some 10 lecturers from different institutions should be responsible for the program, which would preferably have ca. 20 participants.

Next steps

- Before organising the pilot a document will be made, which resumes the main elements of the proposal and the ensuing discussions during the meeting
- This document will be used by the network-participants
 - to start a 'local' discussion with the colleagues in the respective institutes – and preferably with the students – on the desirability and feasibility of the summer school
 - the document can also be used to test the enthusiasm (and its financial impact) within the institution
- The network participants will communicate their local findings to each other
- Based on the reactions a definitive proposal will be made ...

Hans Scheurkogel
(Amsterdam, September 20th, 2006)

Appendix

CONTENTS for a SUMMER SCHOOL Suggestions from students

Expert knowledge

Strategies in RM

Archival standards

Archival law

ICT-knowledge/terminology

Dealing with budgets

'New' public management

English for archivists

experience

experts

methodic skills

leadership qualities

project management

application of law

presentation methods

moderation methods

Human resource management

Public relations:

- superiors

- public administration

soft skills

taking initiative

taking responsibility

forms

workshops

exchange of pract.

round table with

lectures (practical)