Evelyn H. Daniel, Lokman I. Meho, and Barbara B. Moran

9 Education for Library and Information Science in the Arab States

Introduction

This chapter provides an introduction to library and information science (LIS) education in the 22 countries that comprise the League of Arab States. These countries have a total population of 393.5 million people (World Bank, 2016). The population of the member countries varies tremendously; from Egypt with almost 90 million people to Bahrain with less than a million inhabitants (UN Development Program, 2014). Although on the whole these countries share a common language, religion, and cultural history, they vary greatly in other factors such as political structure and socioeconomic conditions. Their gross domestic product per capita ranges from $1,361 in the Comoros to $101,057 in the United Arab Emirates (UN Development Program, 2014). Because of space constraints, this chapter provides only a brief overview of the rich and complex state of LIS education in the region, focusing on programs that offer or have offered at least a bachelor’s degree in the field.

Information about LIS education in the Arab world is fragmented and sometime contradictory; there is no one single source that provides even the names of all the existing programs in the region. The latest (2007) IFLA World Guide to Library, Archive and Information Science Education compilation of LIS programs is out of date and has very incomplete and inconsistent information about the programs in the Arab countries. This source lists only 16 programs in these countries (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, 2007). In 2012, Aufi and Lor identified 36 LIS academic departments in the region (Aufi & Lor, 2012). In an attempt to compile a more comprehensive list for this chapter, the authors first searched the LIS literature in English, Arabic and French, and identified a number of programs. The preliminary list was...
circulated to individuals and to listservs, and more programs were discovered. All of the available websites from the programs were searched to gather additional information. The resulting list of the LIS programs in the Arab world is presented in this chapter (Tab. 9.1). Seventy-one current programs of LIS education were identified plus an additional six programs that have ceased to exist. Unfortunately the list contains only the most basic facts about each program because there is no central source of more comprehensive information. Unlike the Association for Library and Information Science/American Library Association (ALISE/ALA) statistics which provide easily comparable and comprehensive data about all the accredited LIS programs in North America (Library and information science education statistical report 1983–), a similar source of information about factors such as budgets, number of students, number of faculty or length and types of curricula in the LIS programs in the Arab states is not available, and perhaps will not be until some form of regional or international accreditation makes it a requirement.

The chapter begins with a brief look at the history and development of education for librarians and information specialists in the Arab states. Then LIS education in different parts of the Arab world is examined separately because of the variation of LIS programs across the region. The chapter closes with a discussion of current trends and some of the challenges that LIS education in the region faces in strengthening the preparation of future information workers.

**History of LIS Education in the Arab World**

Higher learning is deeply rooted in the history and societies of the Arab Middle East (Herrera, 2004). After the spread of Islam in the 7th century, religious schools known as *madrasas* were established and became the main institutions of higher learning in the Middle East (Makdisi, 1981). Examples of these institutions include the University of al-Qarawiyyin in Fez (859) and al-Azhar in Cairo (970) – both considered among the oldest universities in the world. During the same period, other institutions of the Arab world such as hospitals, libraries, observatories, and private homes known as “academies” undertook the development of the non-religious sciences, inspired by the ancient Greeks (Romani, 2009). The most famous of these academies was the Beit al-Hikma (House of Wisdom) which was founded in the early 9th century in Baghdad and by the middle of the century had become an unrivaled center for the study of humanities and science in addition to being one of the largest repositories of books in the world. Under the Ayyubids and Mamluks, many madrasas and other information centers were founded, playing a fundamental role in the relatively high
literacy rates of the medieval Islamic world. As the balance of power and intellectual vitality shifted away from the Middle East to Europe after the sixteenth century, the place of the Arab Middle East in the academic world underwent a dramatic reversal. The Middle East became an importer of knowledge from Europe.\(^3\)

From the mid-19th century on, a variety of foreign schools and colleges were established in Egypt, Syria and Lebanon, many of which still exist today. These schools were established by religious missions, foreign governments, local communities, and private associations from France, Great Britain, Austria, Greece, Germany, the United States, and Italy (Herrera, 2004). The missionary schools, supported by French Catholic and later British, German, and American religious denominations provided a European and American type of education. Examples are the Syrian Protestant College which was founded in 1866 and renamed in 1920 to American University of Beirut and Saint Joseph University [Université Saint-Joseph] which was founded in Beirut in 1875 by the Jesuits (Donohue, 2004). Foreign colonial powers also established research centers that included some of the region’s best libraries and library collections, for example, the French Institute for Arab Studies in Damascus (Institut français d’études Arabes de Damas) which was established in 1922.

Institutions of higher education continued to grow during the first half of the 20th century. By 1950, there were 12 universities in the Arab world. Despite the existence of several modern universities, research centers, and private schools in the region since the 19th century, the earliest calls for establishing an LIS program in the Arab world to support such institutions were made only in the mid-1940s. Yusuf As’ad Daghir, then Director of the Lebanese National Library, was among the first to make such calls. He advocated that the Arab governments work together for the establishment of an LIS institute that would help in the advancement of the region and help bridge the gap between the Arab countries and the West. (Daghir, 1947, pp. 164–174) This early vision was fulfilled in 1951 with the establishment of the LIS department at Fouad I University (currently Cairo University). However, it was not until the mid-1970s that LIS education became widely available in the Arab world.

In 1963, in an article in an issue of *Library Trends* devoted to international library education, Nasser Sharify reported that in the Middle East “professional training of librarians is still in its infancy” (Sharify, 1963, p. 227). He describes

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\(^3\) For historical background and further details on the history of education in the Middle East, see Makdisi, 1981. For a brief summary of the history of higher education in the Middle East to current times, see Herrera (2004); al-Rashdan (2009) and Romani (2009).
various UNESCO efforts and the efforts of local library associations to provide training for librarians but at the time this article was written the library program at the University of Cairo was still the only one in the region. Sharify differed from Daghir in that he did not advocate a pan-Arab approach to LIS education but recommended that each individual country examine the question of the establishment of a library school and consider carefully the factors about the level of program, the availability of faculty, teaching facilities, and library laboratories. He states that ideally a graduate school would be the solution, but taking into consideration the existing university patterns of the regional universities, an undergraduate program might be more feasible at the present. Sharify closes by stating, “Not only is library education a matter of national concern for each country, but in the last analysis, nationals must accept responsibility for development of libraries and library service” (Sharify, 1963, p. 255).

From the mid-1940s until the mid-1970s, Arab countries relied heavily on training, courses and workshops provided by local library associations, ministries of culture and education, national and academic libraries, UNESCO and other regional and international organizations (Bouazza & Nimer, 1986; Itayem & al-Akhras, 1984; Sharify, 1963). They also relied on sending their citizens overseas to pursue degrees in the field, especially to Egypt, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States. One of the barriers that impeded the development of LIS was that the profession of librarianship was neither recognized nor understood in the region. The concept that librarians needed academic training to be effective in their work was an alien idea to all but a few specialists who had received professional library training abroad (Sharif, 1981). Another major impediment was the lack of indigenous faculty to provide a sufficient number of full time instructors to teach in library education programs. In addition, there was also a lack of professional literature including teaching material in Arabic (Bouazza & Nimer, 1986, p. 12).

During the 1950s and 1960s, UNESCO, in particular, played a significant role in the growth of interest in education for librarians not just in the Arab states but throughout the developing world. Between 1966 and 1972, UNESCO sponsored thirteen regional meetings and seminars across the world, which were very significant in developing LIS programs internationally. Hundreds of key librarians from all continents joined in a “collective search for ways and means to promote library education” (Keresztesi, 1982, p. 374). In 1959, UNESCO sponsored a Regional Seminar focused on the development of libraries in the Arab world which identified the “lack of adequate library training facilities as the largest single factor retarding library development in the area” (Sharif, 1981). A UNESCO Expert Meeting on the National Planning of Documentation and Library Services in the Arab Countries, held in Cairo in February 1974, once
again highlighted the importance of indigenous professional education for librarians. The delegates recommended “that national institutions and programs of professional education be established, developed and maintained as the principal means of supplying adequate numbers of professional staff for documentation and library services as an integral part of the national educational structure at universities or other institutions of higher education, and that they be provided with ready access to appropriate library and information resources” (Kent, 1967 quoted in Sharif, 1981). In addition to these conferences, UNESCO also fostered national initiatives through its willingness to provide significant financial resources and to deploy field representatives to provide the most up-to-date professional expertise available.

LIS education in the Arab world finally came to fruition with the founding of a number of new programs in the 1970s. Among the first were two programs located in Iraq. In 1970 al-Mustansiriyah University established a Department of Library Science within the University Libraries. This program initially offered a diploma but added a bachelor’s degree in 1974. In 1972 with the help of UNESCO, a one-year postgraduate library science program was started at the University of Baghdad (Itayem & al-Akhras, 1984). In the same year, the program at Omdurman Islamic University in the Sudan was reactivated (it was deactivated three years after it was originally founded in 1966). Then the action shifted to Saudi Arabia where in 1973 an LIS program was begun at King Abdulaziz University and in 1974 at Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University (Sharif, 1981). In the mid-1970s, a number of programs in Northern Africa and the Levant were established. The first school in French speaking North Africa, the School of Information Sciences [L’École des sciences de l’information], opened in 1974 in Rabat, Morocco. Once again UNESCO under the United Nations Development Program provided aid and contributed $1,445,750 over a five-year period from 1975–1980 (Sharif, 1981, p. 93). Over the next five years, three library programs were founded in the region, including the programs at the University of Algiers (Algeria) in 1975, the University of Tripoli (Libya) in 1976, and the Institute of Press and Information Sciences [Institut de presse et des sciences de l’information] in Tunisia in 1979. The first library program in the Levant was founded in Lebanon in 1975 at the Lebanese University and afterwards one was started in 1977 at the University of Jordan.

During the 1980s, the momentum to institute LIS programs continued. As can be seen in Fig. 9.1, 17 programs in the region were opened in that decade including programs in countries where none existed before (i.e., Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and Syria). New programs were added in Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Tunisia (see Tab. 9.1 for more specific information). This growth accelerated during the 1990s with the establishment of 26 additional programs. There were 18 new programs established in the first decade of the
21st century and four more have opened since 2010. At present, the only Arab states without LIS programs are Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, and Somalia.

![Number of LIS Programs Founded per Decade: 1950-Present](image.png)

**Fig. 9.1:** Number of LIS programs founded per decade, 1950–present.

The increase in LIS programs in the Arab world in the past 20 or so years is not surprising given that modern universities were relatively recent arrivals in the region. As mentioned earlier, there were only 12 universities in the 22 Arab nations in 1950. That number has ballooned in the past few decades; in 2010 there were approximately 400 universities in these countries not including over 1,000 other institutions of tertiary education such as community colleges and teacher training institutions. The number of students enrolled in higher education in the region rose from 2.967 million in 1998–1999 to 7.607 in the 2007–2008 academic year, a jump of 256% (UNESCO, 2010). The growth in the number of LIS programs reflects not only growth of higher education, but also the increase in the number of libraries and information centers that needed to be staffed by trained LIS graduates. It is also interesting to note that two of the programs that have opened in the past 10 years were founded in private institutions located on campuses of US or British universities that offer a westernized form of LIS education: the Graduate Program in Library and Information Science in the College of Computer Information Technology at the American University in the Emirates and the Library and Information Studies MA program at the University College London Qatar (UCL-Q).

At the present time there are 71 LIS programs in the Arab region that provide at least a bachelor’s degree, and there has been a move in the past few years to
upgrade many of these programs to the master’s and doctoral degree levels. In 2016, more than half of these programs offered a master’s or postgraduate degree (usually in addition to the bachelor’s) and 31% offered a doctoral degree. However as Aufi and Lor point out, while most LIS programs in the US and England offer graduate level programs only, there has only been one LIS school in the Arab world that has discontinued its bachelor’s program (Aufi & Lor, 2012, p. 481).

We began our research thinking we would find uniformity in LIS education across the countries in the Arab world, but soon discovered there were more differences among the programs than similarities. The impact of factors such as political structures, socioeconomic conditions, and continuing conditions of civil unrest, terrorism and war had resulted in vast differences in the way programs in the region had developed. For instance, the disparity between the programs in the Gulf area and those in Iraq were huge. So, rather than deal with each country individually, we decided to follow a regional approach to explore the variations in LIS education across the Arab world and thus organized the chapter to focus upon the LIS programs using the following geographical divisions: Egypt (a single country grouping listed first because the first LIS school in the Arab world opened here), the Maghreb (Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia), Gulf States and Yemen (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen), Iraq (a single country grouping because of recent conflicts), the Levant (Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria), and Northeast Africa and the Comoros (Comoros, Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan). The development of LIS education in countries within each group are discussed in the next section.

**Egypt**

Egypt was not only the site of the first LIS program in an Arab state, but currently is also the country with the most programs. Nearly a third of all of LIS programs in the region are located in Egypt. The program at University of Cairo was the first LIS program in the region. It started as a four-year evening program leading to the bachelor’s degree. It became a department in the College of Arts in 1954. The master’s and PhD programs began in 1956, and the postgraduate in 1969 (Itayem & al-Akhras, 1984). Because LIS education developed earlier in Egypt than anywhere else in the region, the school at Cairo University played an important role in the spread of LIS education across the area. Halwagy, writing in 1992, claimed:
“One can hardly find a single department of library science in the Arab world established without one or more of the staff members who graduated from Cairo University. Moreover, most, if not all, similar departments in other Arab countries have followed the example of the Egyptian department in regulations and curricula” (Halwagy, 1992, p. 259). The Supreme Council for Egyptian Universities and Institutions has the responsibility for setting standards for LIS education, in addition to endorsing fields of specialization, approving higher education plans and priorities and accrediting fields of study (Mikhail, 2010). It is likely the presence of this central coordinating organization that has led to the homogeneity in programs and curricula reported by Aufi and Lor in the Egyptian universities (Aufi & Lor, 2012, p. 479). For example, all the state-funded Egyptian programs except for the one at al-Azhar are located in the same university administrative unit: the College of Arts.

LIS programs in Egypt have proliferated over the past two decades. In 1992, Halwagy reported there were five LIS programs in Egypt: Cairo, Alexandria, Beni-Suef, Tanta and Menoufia (p. 256). Thirteen more programs opened before the decade closed, and another four have opened since 2000. Except for the program at October 6 University, all of the LIS programs in Egypt are in publicly supported institutions. There was an attempt about 15 years ago to open a LIS school in the new Bibliotheca Alexandrina; this school was expected to have a western style curriculum with an integration of technology throughout the program (Aman, 1999). However, despite the fact that UNESCO approved the proposal and funding for the school, the first director of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina decided not to include the school as part of the new library (Aman, 2014).

To enrol in an undergraduate Egyptian LIS program a student must have a secondary school certificate. The undergraduate program takes four years to complete; students who successfully complete the program are awarded the BA (Abdel-Hady & Shaker, 2006). There has been a rapid rise in the enrolment in all levels of LIS programs over the past decade. In 1992–1993, there were 900 students in the undergraduate LIS program at Cairo and a total of 750 undergraduates in all the other programs (Abdel-Hadi & Bouazza, 1994). Mikhail reported a vastly expanded undergraduate population in 2010. The largest program was at Tanta University with 1,781 undergraduate LIS students in 2009–2010: at that same time the program at Alexandria reported 1,562 undergraduates in all the other programs (Abdel-Hadi & Bouazza, 1994). Mikhail reported a vastly expanded undergraduate population in 2010. The largest program was at Tanta University with 1,781 undergraduate LIS students in 2009–2010: at that same time the program at Alexandria reported 1,562 undergraduates, and the one at Cairo 1,278 (Mikhail, 2010). The number of postgraduate students is also soaring. By 2010 the number of LIS dissertations reached 1,264 with 854 (68%) for the master’s degree and 410 (32%) for the PhD degree. However, part of this enrolment surge is likely a result of the fact that in Egypt, as in some other parts of the Arab world, admission to LIS programs is easier than admission to more prestigious academic programs such as medicine or...
engineering, and some students enrol in LIS programs as a way of earning a university degree. LIS does not seem to be a first choice for many students. According to Mikhail, those who get a degree usually prefer to get a job abroad rather than stay in Egypt (Mikhail, 2010).

The enrolment figures alone would indicate a thriving LIS education sector in Egypt. However, as in many other parts of the world, the Egyptian LIS programs face problems. Some of the major historical problems and challenges include (1) inclusion of archival studies and records management with LIS studies; (2) the founding of several new LIS departments in regional universities in the 1980s and 1990s without good planning and preparation and without consideration of the specific needs of the LIS programs; (3) the presence of LIS programs in Colleges of Arts, Education, and Humanities which impose on students coursework that has little or nothing to do with LIS; and (4) academic restrictions that impede improving and updating curricula and programs, thus, prohibiting programs from staying current with developments in the field and staying on par with international and even with other Arab LIS programs (Mahmud, 2014). Mahmud states that these challenges continue to exist even today and nothing seems to be planned to deal with them.

Isma’il (2013) surveyed a sample of 635 (or 56% of all) undergraduate LIS students at Alexandria University, and found that more than two-thirds of the students never heard of or knew anything about LIS before enrolling in the program. The five most important reasons for enrolling in an LIS program were: belief in LIS degree providing many job opportunities after graduation in and outside the country and in both the public and private sectors; ease of study; coursework requires less effort in comparison to other fields; and parents’ recommendation. Similarly, Mikkawi (2011) reported on a survey of a sample of 335 freshman and senior students at three LIS programs in Egypt (Cairo, Tanta, and Assiut). He found that nearly one-third of the students had not wished to enroll in an LIS program, and half of the students had neither heard of nor knew anything about LIS before enrolling in their programs.

In terms of current problems facing the LIS sector in Egypt, one of the most commonly voiced complaints is that the curricula of the programs have not kept pace with the changing needs of the modern library. LIS programs in Egypt often did not provide students with hands on training or courses in digitization, online information services, and electronic documents and their management (Amin, 2009). As a result, the graduates often find they cannot cope with the job demands of the modern library (Magdy, 2011). According to ‘Abd al-Rahim (2014), only 40% of the LIS programs in the country have their own labs (e.g., computer labs and/or bibliographic labs). The others rely on central labs of the colleges of arts. Mahmud (2014) reports the following additional problems:
(1) mismatch between skills gained in the program and job market needs; (2) lack of jobs or job opportunities; (3) poor personal, professional, and research skills of the graduates; (4) lack of accreditation standards; (5) lack of diversity in curricula among the programs – nearly all LIS programs in the country follow the same curriculum; and (6) lack of enough faculty members. The recent political turmoil in Egypt has only led to less funding for LIS programs resulting in overcrowded classrooms, poorly paid faculty, and outdated equipment.

However, this lack of funding is not confined to LIS education. In Egypt, students pay no tuition fees to attend the public universities. While there is strong support to continue to keep tertiary education free, institutions of higher education are not being funded sufficiently to be able to keep current with those in the rest of the world, especially in the rapidly changing fields of science and technology. At present, there is a move to establish more private institutions to offer an alternative to the poorly performing state funded system. Private education, which often features western style curricula, is costly and out of the reach of most students. Despite the call for systematic reform of the educational system, the present economic and political insecurity make it difficult for changes to be enacted (El-Awady, 2013).

The Maghreb

The Maghreb is the traditional name given to the area of North Africa west of Egypt encompassing the nations of Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia. There are currently 12 LIS programs in the region: five in Algeria, four in Libya and one each in Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia. The need for LIS education in this region became evident after the countries gained their national independence in the 1950s and 1960s. Before the creation of formal LIS programs, instruction in library science in the Maghreb was provided by institutions such as the Bibliothèque Nationale in Algeria and the Institute Ali Bach Hamba in Tunisia (Semra, 1994).

Except for Libya, all the countries in this region are former French colonies, and LIS education in the Maghreb reflects the influence of that colonial history. All of the nations in the Maghreb had civilizations based on the printed text, and thus their library traditions are older than those in many other countries in the Arab world. Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia each has a national library inherited from their French colonial past. For example, legislation enacted in 1926 under the French Protectorate created the Moroccan National Library (Lajeunesse & Sène, 2004).
The first LIS program in the Maghreb was the School of Information Sciences (L’École des Sciences de l’Information or ESI) established with the help of UNESCO in Rabat, Morocco in 1974. In 1975 the Institute of Librarianship and Documentation (Institute de Bibliothéconomie et Documentation) in Algiers was founded, followed by the establishment of a program at al-Fateh University (currently University of Tripoli) in Libya in 1976 (Gdoura, 2008). LIS education began in Tunisia in 1979 at the Institute of Press and Information Sciences. The first LIS program in Mauritania was not established until 2008. A brief overview of LIS education in each of the countries of the Maghreb follows.

Algeria

In the Maghreb, Algeria is the country with the largest number of LIS programs. Libraries existed in Algeria before the French colonized the country, but there was no LIS education until 1975, – over a decade after the country won its independence from France. However, prior to the establishment of formal LIS education in Algeria, the Bibliothèque Nationale and afterwards the Ministry of Information and Culture provided training for librarians on a regular basis starting in 1964 (Dyab, 2002). The first program, the Institute of Librarianship [L’Institut de bibliothéconomie] was established at the University of Algiers in 1975, and started with 13 students; the programs at the University of Constantine and the University of Oran were opened in the early 1980s. Two new programs were opened in 2009: one at Université de Tèbessa and the other at Université Badji Mokhtar – Annaba. There are also five universities that have LIS sections that altogether employ 22 faculty members and enrol or provide training to thousands of students, but they are not considered here because the highest LIS degree they offer is a two-year post-high school diploma rather than a bachelor degree (Sidhum, 2014). The programs in Algeria are offered in both Arabic and French (Bin al-Tayib, 2013).

The LIS programs like the rest of the Algerian system of higher education are in the midst of a major change in structure as they transition from their previous degree structure to a new degree structure, the three-stage “licence, master’s, and doctorate (LMD)” system, based on the French model of higher education. The LMD model is one accepted by the Bologna Process, the European Union (EU) initiative designed to create a system of comparable and understandable degrees throughout the EU. The Bologna Process is intended to serve as a mechanism to permit students to transfer credit and establish degree equivalency between one university or national higher education system and another (Johnson, 2013). As is discussed later, not only Algeria but also Morocco
and Tunisia have looked to the Bologna Process as a means of reforming their systems of higher education. (Croché & Charlier, 2012) Under the LMD model, the requirements for each degree level are as follows:

- licence or bachelor’s degree: three years or six semesters of study;
- master degree: two years or four semesters after the bachelor; and
- doctorate degree: at least three years or six semesters of studies, fieldwork and/or research after the master. It is the highest degree in the LMD system.

The LIS programs in Algeria began the process of implementing the LMD system in 2004 (Zahra, 2013). The five programs in Algeria currently employ 151 faculty members (70 females and 81 males; 40 with doctoral degrees, 30 who are doctoral students or ABDs, and 81 who hold master’s degrees). The program at the University of Algeria has the largest number of faculty members at 71 (or 47% of the total in the country), followed by the program at the University of Constantine with 27 faculty. The program at the University of Constantine currently enrolls over 700 undergraduate students, 150 master’s students, 30 doctoral students in the new system, and another 80 in the old system (Bin al-Tayib, 2013). The program at Université de Tébessa has the smallest group of faculty at 14 (Sidhum, 2014). According to Sidhum, who surveyed 79% of all 151 faculty members in the five LIS programs, 40% of the faculty members’ time is spent on research and attending conferences, 33% on thesis and dissertation advising, 13% on teaching, and 5% on curriculum development. The 120 faculty members who were included in the analysis indicated that LIS is becoming more popular in the country, especially after the introduction of the LMD system that guarantees equivalency with degrees offered in most European countries. Some of the serious problems that LIS faculty members encounter in Algeria are lack of collaboration and low scholarly productivity. (Sidhum, 2014)

Libya

Libya, the most easterly of the countries in the Maghreb, gained its independence from Italy in 1951. Before formal LIS education was established in Libya, education and training for librarians was offered from the late 1960s until the establishment of LIS programs by the Institute of Public Administration and by university libraries in Tripoli and Benghazi. Participants received a certificate of attendance at the conclusion of the programs, which usually lasted from one to three months. Those who attended the programs were predominantly people already working in school and/or public libraries or cultural centers (Dyab, 2002). Professional librarians in Libya then held degrees from other countries.
including Egypt, the United States and England. In 1976 undergraduate LIS study was begun at the University of El-Fateh (now the University of Tripoli) to meet an increasing need for professional staff for the growing number of libraries in the country (Dyab, 1997). Students from several Arab and African countries enrolled in the program, which was regularly revised to keep abreast with the new advances and trends in LIS studies. In 1995, the Department started a master’s degree program.

In 1985, a second LIS program was opened at the University of Garyounis (currently the University of Benghazi) and in 1993 a third program was opened at al-Jabal al Gharbi University. The latter program depends heavily on staff members from the University of Tripoli and the curriculum is almost the same. Arabic is the language of instruction in all of these programs (Dyab, 2002). In 2001, the Libyan Academy for Graduate Studies founded the Department of Information in the School of Humanities which included a PhD program in Information and a master’s program in information which was composed of two divisions: Information Systems and Information Technology. In 2007, the Department was renamed to Information Studies and replaced the two master’s divisions with one in Information Management and another in Archives Management, offering PhD degree in Information Studies and master’s and postgraduate diploma degrees in Information Technology, Library and Information Science, and Archives and Documentation each focusing on five or more of the following areas: basics of information science, information and communication technologies, information management, information and material processing, research methods, information storage and retrieval, information use and users, and knowledge management (Bezan, 2014). In 2014, more than 30 students were admitted to these programs.

**Mauritania**

The newest LIS program in the Maghreb is found in Mauritania. This largely desert country forms a bridge between the Arab Maghreb and western sub-Saharan Africa. Currently, Mauritania is among the poorest countries in the world, but as one of Africa’s newest oil producers, Mauritania hopes for a more prosperous future as its offshore reserves of oil and natural gas are developed. It was not until 1962 that a national library system was established, and the national library opened in 1965 (Diouwara, 1993). LIS education in Mauritania began in 2008 when a bilingual (Arabic/French) undergraduate program – Librarianship, Archives, and Documentation [Bibliothèques, archives et documentation] – was created at Nouakchott University.
Morocco

The sole provider of LIS education in Morocco is the École des Sciences de l’Information (ESI). After the establishment of the National Center for Documentation in 1968, it became clear that Morocco was suffering from a severe shortage of trained information workers. In 1974, ESI was founded with the aid of UNESCO and UNDP; and a group of promising Moroccan students were sent abroad to earn PhDs to provide an initial faculty for the new institution. ESI is another of the programs of LIS education in the Maghreb that is not located in a university. Instead it is a free-standing institute of higher learning operated under the auspices of the Ministry of Planning (Dyab, 2002). In Morocco, as in some other francophone countries, a distinction is made between librarians and documentalists, but in Morocco the education for both takes place at ESI in a program designed for “informatistes,” a term that is unique to francophone LIS (Moulaison, 2008). The education system at ESI has been modeled on LIS education in France, and until recently, when some courses have begun to be taught in English, all instruction at ESI has been in French.

ESI is noted for the strength of its faculty, its building and its equipment (Dyab, 2002). Students are admitted to all the programs at ESI on the basis of a competitive exam. The number of students admitted is limited, and entry to the program is competitive because graduates are almost assured of finding work after the completion of their degrees. Since 2011, as a result of the Reform Act of Higher Education in Morocco, ESI has restructured its programs. Like other programs in the region, ESI has adopted the French style LMD (licence, master’s, and doctorate) degree structure. According to its website, ESI is making these curricular changes to “meet the needs of the current job market and major changes affecting the field of content management, information and knowledge” (École des Sciences de l’Information, 2014). When the reform is complete, ESI will offer the following undergraduate and graduate degrees:

- specialized informatiste or “licence” (3 years)
- master in information science (4 semesters)
- specialized Master’s degrees (4 semesters)
- PhD (3 years)

As part of the reform, the teaching and research at ESI will be concentrated in four areas: 1) Library and Documentation; 2) Archival and Records Management; 3) Management and Management of Information Systems; and 4) Business Intelligence and Competitive Intelligence (École des Sciences de l’Information, 2014).
ESI is at present one of the strongest LIS programs in the Arab world, and it has the potential to become even stronger as it attempts to expand its international perspective. ESI explicitly states that it has designed its new program to meet the requirement of the Bologna Process (École des Sciences de l’Information, 2014) in order to facilitate student mobility and degree equivalency for its graduates. In addition, ESI is exploring the possibility of becoming a member of the iSchool organization and already lists itself as an “i-School” on its website. ESI appears to have ambitions to be a player in the global LIS world.

**Tunisia**

LIS education in Tunisia began in the 1960s (1964–1971) at the Institut Ali Bach Hamba. In 1979, the Institute of Press and Information Sciences [l’Institut de presse et des sciences de l’information or IPSI] was founded and provided the first LIS program in the country. From 1979 to 1992, IPSI offered a program in librarianship, documentation and archives, at first only at an undergraduate level, but beginning in 1988 a master’s [maîtrise] program was also offered. In 1981 a second program of LIS education was begun at the Higher Institution of Documentation [l’Institut supérieur de documentation de Tunis or ISD] and for about a decade Tunisia had two LIS programs. However in 1992, IPSI discontinued its LIS program and subsequently all LIS education in Tunisia has been centralized at ISD (Habchi, 2014).

Although it is located on the campus of the University of Manouba, ISD is a public institution with legal and financial autonomy (Decree no. 81–63 of 11 July 1981) operated under the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (L’Institut Supérieur de Documentation de Tunis, 2014). In 2008, ISD like the programs in Algeria and Morocco adopted the “licence, master’s, and doctorate (LMD)” degree sequence and began offering a professional master’s degree in Library Science and Documentation. Since inaugurating the LMD degree sequence, ISD has begun to offer several new master’s degrees and is working towards the establishment of a doctoral degree program in 2015 (Habchi, 2014). The LIS programs at ISD are offered in French and Arabic. Admission to the licence program is based on the results of a national competition run by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (L’Institut Supérieur de Documentation de Tunis, 2014). ISD is modernizing its courses and bringing its degrees into line with those established by the Bologna Process.
Gulf States and Yemen

The Member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) comprise Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). We include Yemen in this group to encompass the entire Arabian Peninsula. Like the Maghreb region, LIS education is flourishing in the Gulf region where many governments appear to have an understanding of the important role information plays in the economy and in knowledge management (Rehman, 2009). This understanding has meant new national educational policies and calls for curricula reform, new goals for education and a shift in emphasis of the LIS degree. The Gulf States have invested their not inconsiderable resources into many new experimental forms of higher education, although the growth in new forms of educational institutions is not without its critics because the innovations come from outside and may have been imported without sufficient thought for cultural fit (Donn & Manthri, 2010).

The rapid growth of extra-governmental investment in higher education is demonstrated through private and non-government institutions, foreign universities with local campuses, virtual universities and partnerships between local and foreign universities (Miller-Idriss & Hanauer, 2011). These often coexist somewhat uncomfortably with the more traditional government sponsored education programs. A key difference between them is that government sponsored programs are usually free or have very low fees attached. In addition, the extra-governmental programs are typically expensive; and non-government institutions are subject to fewer regulations.

The driving force for change in higher education for the Gulf States is the economy and the issue of human workforce deployment, which has changed substantially in the last decade. Before the oil boom, the indigenous population held all manner of jobs in the economy. After it, they did not. Government jobs supported by oil revenues demanded skills not available in the indigenous population. After decades of population growth, a surplus of indigenous job seekers has been created. Prospects for the future suggest even higher unemployment until new employment opportunities are generated (Capelli, 2005). The Gulf has been seen as a region where everyone who wants to, can find work, but this is no longer the case. Oil revenues comprise a declining share of the economy.

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4 Some programs offered outside of regular hours are offered on a fee basis to pay faculty for after-hours teaching.

5 A recent Economist article (April 19, 2014, p. 54) reports that the migrant population in the Gulf States makes up 44% of the population compared to 15% for North America and 12% for Europe.
In all six Arab Gulf countries, but especially Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, dependence on foreign workers has increased. Eighty percent of the Kuwaiti work force is expatriate, as is 53% of that of Saudi Arabia (International Monetary Fund, 2008). Donn and Al Manthri (2010) assert that discussions of education policy are dominated by a belief that the sole role of higher education is to support the labor market. All six Gulf countries have a youthful population so that the issue of employment has become intricately interwoven with education. The World Economic Forum says that it is not just a question of creating new jobs but also a question of shifting jobs away from expatriate workers and towards natives (World Economic Forum, 2003). In most Arab Gulf countries, as is true of the Arab world generally, the state is the largest single employer providing around 40% of the jobs for the workforce. Nationals, after receiving a free education, expect guaranteed public employment at any level and profession they desire. Some employment procedures and practices to assist the speed at which nationals move into employment currently occupied by migrant workers include quotas, market-oriented inducements to employers, restructuring and redefining jobs (so that there are not “foreigner’s jobs” or “dirty jobs”), liberalization of the telecommunications market, privatization of state-owned assets (public transport, power generation) and opening up local markets to international trade (Zakharia, 2005). With the prospective of ever-higher unemployment, education and training have become central to successful economic diversification, which has implications for LIS education.

We identified 14 LIS programs in this region, two of which began in the 1970s, six in the 1980s although one has closed, two in the 1990s and four in the new century for a total of 13 current programs. Nine of these 13 programs exist in government-sponsored universities within arts, humanities or social sciences faculties or colleges; three have institutional homes representing some of the newer university arrangements; and one is a program mainly for school and public librarianship in the Kuwaiti Public Authority for Applied Education and Training. The language of instruction for the older schools is Arabic or a combination of Arabic and English (Jabiri, 2009). An issue in this respect is the continued lack of current LIS literature in Arabic (Alqudsi-Ghabra & al-Ansari, 1998). Six of the programs offer only a bachelor’s degree; three schools offer only a master’s. Oman’s program offers both a bachelor’s and master’s, as does one of the programs in Saudi Arabia. Two schools offer the full suite of degrees: bachelor’s, master’s, and PhD – both of these are in Saudi Arabia and are housed in Computer and Information Science faculties.

“LIS education is most influenced by the faculty members who run these academic departments,” said the authors in a study of the bio-bibliographic profiles of six library schools in the region (Ansari, Rehman & Yusuf, 2000).
They examined the resumes of 49 of 65 faculty members and found that most received doctorates from Western countries during the 1980s and 1990s and that the majority of them had considerable professional and managerial experience. The faculty offered instruction in traditional areas of library operations and service but had weak research and publication records and few engaged in continuing education activities or were active in national or regional professional forums (Ansari, Rehman & Yusuf, 2000).

Rehman, al-Ansari and others have been active in a series of subsequent studies of member LIS schools in the GCC Member States. A 2001 study of five programs in three countries reports that a four-year undergraduate degree, patterned on the credit hour-based semester system is the entry for professional practice (Rehman, al-Ansari & Yousef, 2002a). In an earlier work Rehman noted that the Gulf countries started four-year bachelor programs during the 70s modeled on the American and British models and on Egypt, added master’s programs in the 80s and one started offering a Ph.D. degree replicating the Egyptian tradition (Rehman, 2000). On the basis of his research, he claimed that employers and managers were “conscious of the inadequacies of their bachelor degree programs” and sent large numbers of students to the U.S. and U.K. for master’s and doctoral studies (p. 148). His book proposes an updated competency-based curriculum (Rehman, 2000).

A 2002 study by Rehman and colleagues presents the results of a survey of 144 academics and professional leaders from North America, Southeast Asia, and the Arabian Gulf on what these competencies should be, and found that the curriculum should include: knowledge of information theory, information use and users, the social context of information, information needs, ethics, information resources development concepts and process, information organization and processing, information searching and retrieval, access services, automation and networking, web design and searching, research capabilities, planning and evaluation, human resource skills, and communication (Rehman, al-Ansari & Yousef, 2002b). In comparing responses from the three regions, surprisingly few significant differences were found. For example, national information policy was perceived to be highly important by participants of the Southeast Asian region, moderately important for those of the Arabian Gulf and less by North American participants (p. 210). A very high degree of importance for conservation and preservation was reported by the Southeast Asian group and significantly less by the other two (p. 211). Library automation, by contrast, was perceived as very important by the North American and Southeast Asian participants and less so by the Arabian Gulf group (p. 212). Participants from the Arabian Gulf placed competencies relating to the Internet and the virtual library at the highest level (p. 213).
The need to conduct systematic reviews of significant aspects of the performance of LIS programs is important. Rehman investigated the evaluation strategies of nine of the Gulf programs (Rehman, 2008a). The schools were doing evaluation through self-study or external reviewer and all agreed that an accreditation system independent of higher education authorities should be in place although there was little agreement as to who the accrediting body should be. The most popular candidate was SLA/Arabian Gulf Chapter, perhaps based on the Association’s active role in the region. Seven programs favored certification and two proposed the Ministry of Education as an accrediting agent. A more recent study by Rehman examined in greater detail the practicalities of developing a proposal for accrediting LIS programs in the region (Rehman, 2012). He rules out SLA’s Arabian Gulf Chapter because SLA headquarters does not deal with the evaluation of academic programs. He also rules out the Ministries of Education because of their bureaucratic structure, which he considers inconsistent with academic practices; and national accrediting bodies like the American Library Association (ALA), which he believes will not accredit programs in other countries. As a result he suggests working through the GCC Universities Forum perhaps with the assistance of IFLA’s Education and Training Section. He states that Kuwait and Umm al-Qura (Saudi Arabia) Universities initiated a symposium on LIS education in 2006, a useful way to create wider awareness of the issue. Rehman concludes: “It is significant to note that all the nine schools favored the establishment of an accreditation system” (p. 71).

A recent analysis of trends in LIS departments in Gulf universities points to a shift in affiliation from arts and humanities to science and technology colleges in order to attract students with high GPAs who prefer to enroll in science and technology and medical fields (‘Udah & Ma’tuq, 2011). With the exception of Yemen, the Gulf States stand out in the Arab world for their attention to, and investment in, higher education with interesting programs and advances in LIS. Each country is considered individually below.

Bahrain

The Kingdom of Bahrain is a small island that is connected to the mainland by the King Fahd Causeway to Saudi Arabia. It was a British Protectorate until becoming an independent state in 1971, and was declared a kingdom in 2002. Bahrain is one of four Arab countries that did not have and still does not have an LIS program. Training of librarians, however, was provided in the mid-1970s by the British Council, and afterwards by several government and academic agencies (e.g., Inservice Training Center, the Ministry of Education, and the
Department of Education at the University of Bahrain), especially for people interested in school and public librarianship. For people interested in academic and special librarianship, the country relies on foreigners or sends its students and staff to other countries for LIS education, especially Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, and the United States (Alian, 1994).

**Kuwait**

The State of Kuwait was also a British Protectorate. It became an independent state in 1961, and since 1963 has been a constitutional monarchy. Early library training was offered in 1968 by the Bureau of Staff in coordination with the Ministry of Education and in 1971–73 by Kuwait University (Randi, 2013). There are currently two degree programs. One was founded in 1977 at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training as a diploma program and updated to a bachelor’s degree program in 1986, focusing on school and public librarianship. The program was revised in 1998–1999 to include other types of librarianship. Today, it has 20 faculty members and four lecturers (Randi, 2013). The other program is in Kuwait University and, although initiated in 1977 as a diploma program, added a bachelor’s degree in 1987 and, representative of the new thrust in higher education in the Gulf States, started a master’s in LIS in 1996 after a long history of attempts to establish a program in different colleges and departments (Alqudsi-Ghabra & al-Ansari, 1998). It began in the College of Graduate Studies and later transferred to the College of Social Sciences as a science program. Its 1996 curriculum was rigorous and up to date including a fieldwork component in approved libraries and organizations that demonstrate all the major functions and services expected of a library or information agency, adequate resources, and at least one full time LIS professional willing to supervise the students (Alqudsi-Ghabra & al-Ansari, 1998). In 2005, it began to offer a minor for undergraduate studies and, by 2011, 188 students had graduated from the MLIS program and 235 had completed the minor. In 2012 there were 14 faculty members in the department (Randi, 2013). The Public Authority program is mostly taught in Arabic with some English while the newer program at Kuwait University is completely taught in English, perhaps responding to the call for a more universal language in the interests of globalization and international commerce.

Despite a strong beginning, a 2006 evaluative study of the master’s program at Kuwait University identified curricular deficiencies that were believed to inhibit career opportunities, such as information and communication technology, business, LIS skills and soft skills like teamwork, presentation skills, public
relations and marketing (Rehman, 2008b). The study technique used focus groups of professionals and employers from the public and private sector plus students and graduates of the program. Recommendations included the creation of career tracks and internships, strengthening technical capacity and encouraging a shift in the mindset of graduates to seek opportunities in diverse work settings, a name change for the department (the term “library” translates into Arabic as a low status organization), collaboration with the national professional association, the creation of information literacy initiatives, and a professional development program. There is a need for more faculty development and greater collaboration with IT, MIS and business degree programs on campus. One of the study authors (Rehman) on the basis of his earlier studies suggests the nine programs in the region would benefit from each other’s experiences and from examining two Saudi LIS programs (at King Saud and Umm al-Qura Universities) – schools that have shifted their focus toward the non-library employment market with good success.

An earlier study of LIS professionals focused more specifically on information and communication technologies (ICT) skills and urged the now familiar litany of new coursework, new teaching and learning methods, use of external standards for professional associations for curriculum revision, greater collaboration with employers and development of internship opportunities beyond libraries (Buarki et al., 2009). The need for greater motivation for changes was also mentioned. The authors followed up their earlier study with a review of the specific ICT skills needed (Buarki, Hepworth & Murray, 2011).

Rehman & Sumait (2010) identified some issues relative to the curriculum redesign taking place in the master’s program that Rehman directed: changing the name to “information management” in place of library and information studies, adding specialization tracks in librarianship, information management, information technology (IT) applications and knowledge management, and adding a project or thesis culminating requirement to strengthen the research and creation aspect of the program. They noted that changes in the curriculum caused some conflict with two other IT-related departments which were resolved through meetings and by cross-listing courses and allowing students to take courses in one another’s department.

Oman

The Sultanate of Oman, an absolute monarchy, is ethnically diverse, with over 12 different languages spoken. The 2010 UNDP report ranked Oman as the most improved nation over the preceding 40 years (UNDP, 2002). In 1970, Sultan
Qaboos came to power and gave high priority to education in order to develop a domestic workforce. A new university named for him opened in 1986, and in 1987 an Information Studies program began within the College of Arts and Social Sciences, offering coursework in both Arabic and English. The department offers three programs: the bachelor’s and a master’s in LIS, and a Higher Diploma in Medical Librarianship. A recent study of the curriculum found only two new IT-related courses added between 2002 and 2011, but found the program working to keep up with technological developments to better prepare students for jobs (Sleem & Al-Suqri, 2012).

Qatar

The State of Qatar is an absolute monarchy that was a British Protectorate until 1971. It sits on a small peninsula surrounded on three sides by the Persian Gulf and by Saudi Arabia to the south. It is one of the world’s richest countries per capita and is currently undergoing a remarkable transformation under a National Vision 2030 plan in order to achieve an advanced, sustainable, and diversified economy. Qatar is an influential player in the Arab World and its news group, Al Jazeera, is internationally known and respected. Qatar has a population of 2.25 million people, but only 250,000 are citizens; the rest are foreigners who live and work in the State. Qatar is reforming its school education through a contract with the RAND Corporation, and has built an “Education City” which hosts a number of branches of well-known US universities offering a number of professional programs such as journalism, engineering, foreign service, Islamic studies, and medicine.

Library science education in Qatar started in 1977 as a minor within a history major in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Qatar. In 1988 the minor was upgraded to a 36-credit hour postgraduate diploma program and by 1996, 35 students had graduated from it. In 1998, the University decided to establish an LIS department and replaced the postgraduate program with a BA program. From 2001–2006, the department graduated 394 students, more than two-thirds of which ended up working in the public/government sector and 13% in the private sector. The remainder were mostly females whose parents or spouses did not want (or did not allow) them to work. In 2004 the department was merged with the Department of Communication (Hasanayn, 2007). The LIS program finally closed in the late 2000s.

In 2013, a new LIS program in Qatar was founded within the Qatar Education City. This program from University College London is taught in English, as are programs in most of the foreign university branches in the country.
A brochure describing the program states that it will be “developed within the broader context provided by the Qatar Foundation, the Qatar National Library, and the growing cultural and information environment in Qatar” (UCL, Qatar, 2014a and 2014b). External accreditation is being sought through the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) and, if received, this LIS program will be the first in the Arab world accredited by an outside agency.

**Saudi Arabia**

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, created in 1932, is the second largest Arab state by land area (after Algeria), with a population of 27 million Saudi nationals and 5 million foreigners. Its position as the world’s largest oil exporter makes it one of the 20 most powerful countries in the world and one of the wealthiest as well. It ranks as a regional power and maintains hegemony in the Arabian Peninsula. Education is free at all levels. Classes are separated by gender. Higher education has expanded rapidly with large numbers of universities and colleges founded since 2000. Saudi Arabia boasts two world class universities: King Abdulaziz and King Saud (Times Higher Education, 2014), both of which have LIS programs.

We identified six LIS programs in the country. Most are in very large universities (more than 50,000 students). One is a woman’s program at the University of Dammam founded in 2010. The language of instruction is Arabic, as is true for most of the other programs. Two programs that describe themselves as Information Science programs are at King Abdulaziz University and King Saud University. These programs indicate that they offer courses in both Arabic and English. Riyadh, the capital, boasts four universities. In addition to King Abdulaziz University, the Imam Muhammed ibn Saud Islamic University, and King Saud University (only male students), the first woman’s university and the largest women-only university in the world, Princess Noura bint Abdulrahman University (formerly the Girls College of Arts), is also in Riyadh. It has an LIS program in the College of Art and an LIS bachelor’s program in the College of Computer and Information Science. Sources of information about LIS education in Saudi Arabia are limited and somewhat dated; the most recent article we retrieved was a brief summary from 1998 (Alsereihy, 1998).

To tackle the twin problems of extremism and an inadequate university education for a modern economy, the government has initiated a program with a substantial budget of approximately two billion dollars US with the aim of moving teaching away from religion toward more secular subjects and from traditional Saudi methods of memorization and rote learning and toward encouraging...
a more analytic and problem-solving curriculum (Lindsey, 2010). In 2009 an expert on girls’ education, Princess Noura bint Abdulrahman, became the first woman minister in Saudi Arabia. Women comprise 60% of Saudi Arabia’s college enrollment but only 21% of its workforce.

United Arab Emirates

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a federation of seven principalities ruled by hereditary emirs, which became independent of their status as British Protectorates in 1971. The first President of the UAE, Sheikh Zayed, set a policy of shifting revenues into healthcare, education and infrastructure. This policy has served the country well. The literacy rate is very high (90%). Demographically, the population is diverse with less than 20% identified as UAE nationals. Immigrants make up more than 80% of the total population according to UN data (2013). Because of the number of immigrants, the male/female ratio is also very high: seven males for every three females; the difference is particularly marked in the age range from 25–54 (61% of the population) with 2,639,018 males and only 820,915 females (Central Intelligence Agency, 2014).

In 2008, Boumarafi pointed out that libraries and information centers in the Emirates largely depended on expatriates and foreign librarians. He urged the need for training and professional programs and described the early history of a diploma program for girls in the Higher Colleges of Technology in Sharjah and Al Ain, although neither program flourished. In 2006 the Community College at the University of Sharjah offered diploma programs to prepare semi-professionals but the programs lacked library resources, computer labs, and qualified instructors. He estimated that over 230 professionals were needed for academic library positions and nearly 1,300 for school libraries plus hundreds of public, special and departmental librarians. He urged the establishment of a master’s program (Boumarafi, 2008).

Government-supported higher education institutions includes Zayed University, formerly a women’s university but now coeducational, and many Higher Colleges of Technology, plus research centers and institutes, and a dedicated education zone designated the Dubai Knowledge Village, where a substantial number of international universities including Tufts, George Mason, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, New York University, the Sorbonne, among others, have established local branches. Collaborative educational enterprises, like the Gulf Medical University and Dubai Knowledge Village, an educational free trade zone in Dubai, offer more educational opportunities with the goal of building the capacity of the local workforce and growing their own faculty.
A feasibility study for a graduate program in Information Management was recently completed for Zayed University (Zayed University, 2013). Responding to a state directive, the emphasis was on opportunities for Emirati employment pointing to an Omani program as a model and citing three prior LIS program proposals from 2009–2010. The report from employers and potential students found great enthusiasm for the development of a high quality program but reservations were expressed based on “current poor experience of many Emirati students with library services” and a perception that “many Emirati would be unwilling to work in library and information management organizations where the working conditions are unlikely to be equivalent to those in government departments” (Zayed University, 2013, p. 27). No action has been taken on the program to date.

An earlier design for a new private university, proposed by a group of nationals and expatriates, that would offer education for lower tuition than that at the other private universities, also failed to come into existence. Aman and Mika describe a design for an LIS bachelor’s program for this proposed university using model curriculum recommendations from the Information Resources Management Association and UNESCO’s framework for a curriculum in informatics and containing a rigorous evaluation and assessment process (Aman & Mika, 2004).

However, one new LIS program has been established in 2012 in the College of Computer Information Technology of the American University in the Emirates, a private university. It offers both a Bachelor of Science in Information Technology Management and a 36-semester hour LIS master’s degree. The programs are offered in English and delivered on a full-time basis on the Dubai International Academic City campus. The undergraduate program is “web-centric and allows a wide usage of information technology” (American University in the Emirates, 2014a). The master’s program lists an array of career opportunities from library management to information analyst in both public and private sectors and includes a mandatory internship (American University in the Emirates, 2014b).

Yemen

The Republic of Yemen occupies the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula and is the second largest country in the region. Yemen has a troubled history with a long civil war between North and South Yemen which was resolved in 1990 when the unified Republic of Yemen was proclaimed. Additional serious political upheaval occurred in 2011. The country is currently in a transitional period of political reforms (BBC News Middle East, 2014). Before LIS programs were
founded in Yemen, library training was provided by local and foreign specialists under the auspices of the UNESCO, the British Council, regional organizations, the Ministry of Culture and Education, other government agencies, and the central libraries of local universities, among others. Yemen also relied heavily on sending its own library staff to Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Iraq, as well as the United States, United Kingdom, Soviet Union, and India to pursue bachelor’s and advanced degrees in the field and make up for the lack of LIS programs in the country. This was done occasionally from the 1970s until the first bachelor’s degree program was founded at the University of Sana’a in 1995. During its first five years, the LIS program at Sana’a University enrolled 624 students. Currently, it offers bachelor’s, master’s, postgraduate, and PhD programs in the field. The other LIS program in the country, which was established in 2001 at the University of Aden offers both the bachelor’s and master’s degrees. Both programs are housed in Colleges of Arts.6

Iraq

The Republic of Iraq is bounded to the east by Iran, on the north by Turkey, on the west by Jordan and Syria and on the south by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. In 1920 after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the League of Nations determined the present borders of Iraq and placed the country under the authority of the United Kingdom. A monarchy was established in 1921 and the Kingdom of Iraq gained independence from Great Britain in 1932. In 1958 the monarchy was overthrown and the Republic of Iraq was created. The Ba’ath Party controlled Iraq from 1968 until 2003, when a multinational force led by the US and Britain invaded Iraq and Saddam Hussein and the Ba’ath Party were removed from power. The overthrow of Saddam and the invasion of the country were accompanied by devastating losses of human life plus the looting of many libraries and the burning of parts of the National Library and Archive. The already weak economy was almost completely destroyed by the 2003 invasion and the subsequent violence. Slowly, Iraq is rebuilding its society. Supplies of water, electricity and other necessities are still below what is needed. As Saad Eskander, director of the Iraq National Library and Archive, wrote, “We forgot a long time ago what situation constitutes normal and what situation does not. [Since the American troop withdrawal last year], life has not changed for the overwhelming majority of the

population, especially for the poor. Senseless atrocities, indiscriminate destruction, and blind hatred are always there; they are part of our lives” (Kniffel, 2012, p. 43).

LIS education in Iraq is being treated individually in this chapter because the devastating impact of the recent conflicts on libraries and library education make it a special case; in effect, the knowledge infrastructure of this country has been destroyed (Mousawi, 2013). However, Iraq does not stand alone in having its cultural institutions ravaged by civil unrest, terrorism and war. In many other Arab countries, library education has been damaged by unrest of various types. For example, Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine, Somalia, Sudan, and Syria have all encountered disorder and instability. War, terrorism, and other acts of violence affect all sectors of society, and education is often one of the most affected. The physical destruction of libraries and universities and the ongoing impact of the conflict on infrastructure and the day-to-day life in Iraq continue to have grave after-effects on LIS education.

Despite the ancient libraries that had existed there, Iraq did not begin developing modern libraries until the early 20th century. Its National Library originated in 1921. Library training started under the supervision of the UNESCO in 1953 with workshops that lasted from three months to two years. Almost immediately after it was founded in 1960, the central library of the University of Baghdad started to offer three month- and six month-long training workshops followed by longer ones which led to the establishment of a postgraduate LIS program in 1972. By the mid-1970s, there were 110 public libraries, three academic libraries, and almost 5,000 school libraries (Al-Kindilchie, 1977). A 1979 UNESCO report recounted a four-fold increase in the total number of libraries in the country since 1959–1960 (Kalia, 1979). However, that same report points out deficiencies in the libraries. There was no national coordinating agency to pool resources and services. In addition, existing resources were underutilized, for example public libraries did not lend freely but required any borrower to deposit an amount equal to the value of a book before it was lent (Kalia, 1979). Despite these problems, through the 1980s “Iraq’s largest libraries and archives were relatively well preserved, adequately if unevenly cataloged and administered by a trained cadre of employees” (Khoury, 2003). By the early-1990s, there were 489 public libraries, 117 academic libraries, and almost 11,000 school libraries in the country (Al-Kindilchie, 1994).

During the war with Iran, and following the invasion of Kuwait, the Gulf War and the imposition of U.N. sanctions on Iraq, conditions in Iraqi libraries deteriorated. Funding to libraries was cut, and it became more difficult for them to function. The Saddam regime imposed censorship on collections. At the National Library, for instance, many publication and records were removed
from the stacks and placed in restricted areas where readers had no access. For more than 20 years, the National Library was not able to purchase any publications from abroad (Kingley, 2013). The deteriorating conditions in Iraq were worsened by the events occurring after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein in 2003. The looting and burning of not only the National Library but other libraries and cultural institutions have been well documented. Although the libraries in Iraq have made some progress in the last decade they are still suffering the effects of long neglect and isolation with often limited collections and damaged buildings and equipment. Libraries have been low priority in the overall restoration and development of Iraq. To rebuild these libraries, Iraq needs well-educated librarians who are able to bring leadership to the rebuilding effort. Unfortunately, LIS education was just as hard hit as the libraries. Just as the libraries before 1980 seemed to be progressing and becoming modernized, so did library education.

The first LIS program in Iraq was founded in 1970 in the Library of al-Mustansiriya University in Baghdad. However, the program offered only a two-year diploma degree; it started its bachelor’s degree program in 1974 (Itayem & al-Akhras, 1984). So, for the purposes of this chapter, the history of LIS education in Iraq can be traced back to 1972 when the University of Baghdad, with support from UNESCO and UNDP, started to offer a one-year postgraduate diploma in the field. This program, however, was transferred to al-Mustansiriya University in 1977 and was finally closed in 1982. Soon after the transfer, the al-Mustansiriya University changed the status of its LIS program from a section in the Library into a full-fledged department within the College of Arts with responsibility to run both the University of Baghdad and al-Mustansiriya LIS programs (Itayem & al-Akhras, 1984). Then in 1983, the University of Basrah started to offer a bachelor’s degree in LIS and in 1996 the University of Mosul followed suit. All three programs had the same curricula. In 1992, al-Mustansiriya began to offer both the master’s and doctoral degrees in LIS; these are still active today. At one time, both Basrah and Mosul offered master’s degrees but were forced to discontinue them because of lack of qualified faculty (Khairi, 2010). In addition to the three programs above, there are two technical institutes that offer a two-year diploma in library science. According to Johnson, the LIS education in Iraq was at one time among the best in the Arab world (Johnson, 2005, p. 254). In the quarter of a century since the invasion of Kuwait in 1990, Iraqi library education has lagged behind its counterparts in the rest of the Arab world. The isolation that followed the imposition of sanctions had a detrimental effect on both libraries and LIS education. As one observer wrote, “The whole library profession became slowly de-professionalized as faculty lost contact with new developments, particularly in automation, and as talented professionals – as happened across academia and the professions – chose to move abroad” (Spurr, 2005).
Khairi, a faculty member from al-Mustansiriyah, described the grim conditions in the LIS schools. All lost furniture and equipment and many had their buildings damaged in the 2003 overthrow. Dangerous conditions existed in all the universities. For example, at al-Mustansiriyah University, one of the university’s professors (not from the LIS Department) was assassinated, two others were shot and survived, and many others were threatened. Many students and faculty left the universities because of the unsafe conditions (Khairi, 2010). A large number of the LIS faculty members left Iraq to teach abroad. It is difficult to find statistics about exactly how many students and faculty any of these programs have at present.

According to Zubaydi as of 2001, there were 25 faculty members in these three programs, all graduates of institutions in Iraq (56%), United States (40%), and Egypt (4%). Only 16% of all 25 faculty members had doctoral degrees; the remaining faculty had either a postgraduate LIS degree (4%) or an MLS (80%). All of the faculty members had academic backgrounds in LIS or arts and humanities (i.e., none came from a technology, science, or medical background). According to these 25 faculty members, in 2001 the most significant problem of LIS education in Iraq was the quality and motivation of the students, who were admitted to the programs with low GPAs. To this problem are additional difficulties of lack of library and computing resources, lack of scholarly activities among the faculty, and lack of practicum and internship venues. The students enrolled in Iraqi LIS programs are usually those who have the lowest high-school GPAs accepted for admission to the Colleges of Arts and, by extension, the universities. With the lack of library and computing resources, both faculty and students are denied access to tools and materials that would keep them up-to-date with progress in the field (Zubaydi, 2001).

LIS education in Iraq was essentially isolated from the rest of the world from the mid-1980s to recent times (Khairi, 2010). An entire generation in Iraq has never spent time abroad, attended international conferences or built connections with colleagues outside of their own country (Johnson, 2005).

The war with Iran had drained the state budget, and funds for study abroad gradually dried up. The last students to take postgraduate courses in Britain and the U.S.A. probably completed them in about 1988, and many of the librarians who were trained abroad before then have since left Iraq for better-paid jobs or personal security elsewhere.... The calibre and enthusiasm of the Iraqi teachers of Librarianship and Information Sciences have been taxed to the full as they struggled to develop their courses while coping with declining resources. No books about Librarianship and Information Sciences were bought after about 1985, and all foreign journal subscriptions ceased in 1992 (Johnson, 2005, p. 253).

There have been a number of efforts to provide help to the struggling LIS programs in Iraq, but no systematic, long-term plans have been developed. However, if Iraq is to rebuild its libraries and archives and reconstruct its
shattered knowledge infrastructure, it must at the same time develop a strong system to educate the information professionals who will make the rebuilding effort possible.

The Levant

The Levant is a geographic and cultural region located on the Eastern Mediterranean. Today, it includes six countries or states: Cyprus and Israel, which are not included in this chapter, as well as the four Arab states of Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria. The Levant is one of the most ethnically and religiously diverse regions of the world. It is home to Arabs, Armenians, Jews, and Kurds, among many others. While Sunni and Shi’i Muslims make up the majority of the population, the region also includes millions of Christians, Jews, and sizeable numbers of people from many other religions and sects. Arabic, Hebrew, Kurdish, and Armenian are the predominant languages in the region.

The region was under the rule of the Ottoman Empire from the 16th century until 1918. Following the collapse of the Empire after World War I, Lebanon and Syria were mandated to France until their independence in 1943. Jordan and the Palestinian territories were mandated to Great Britain until 1946 and 1948 respectively. With the announcement by Britain that it would unilaterally withdraw from the Mandate on 15 May 1948, Israel declared its independence on May 14, 1948, and on the following day the 1948 Arab-Israeli War began.

With the exception of Lebanon which had several professionally trained librarians with LIS degrees from France and the U.S.A., interest in library training was almost non-existent in the Arab countries of the Levant until the 1950s. As in several other Arab countries, library training and education in the Levant during the three decades after independence was largely limited to attending short courses or workshops in European countries or those provided by local libraries or government agencies as well as attending and pursuing library science degrees at Cairo University. The first LIS degree programs in the Levant were founded in Lebanon in 1975 and Jordan in 1977. The first program in Syria was founded in 1984 and in the State of Palestine in 1997. The following is a brief overview of LIS education in each of the Arab countries of the Levant.

Jordan

Jordan was founded under a British mandate after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire during World War I. It gained independence in 1946. Although its people
are considered among the most educated in the Arab world, Jordan had no academic or major public libraries until the early 1950s. Awareness of the need for libraries began after a UNESCO visit to the country in 1955 which initiated the modern library movement there. Then in the first half of the 1960s, three major events helped solidify this movement, namely, the founding of the Amman Public Library in 1960, the University of Jordan in 1962, and the Jordan Library Association in 1963. The latter is one of the most active in the Arab world and one which has had profound influence in the country, especially through its library training programs and publications (Mansour, 1993) as well as the start of an LIS diploma program in 1965 at the Teachers College in Amman. The diploma program, however, graduated only one group of students and folded in 1967 because of lack of qualified instructors.

Hundreds of small public and school libraries were founded in the country in the next decade or so. As a result of a huge shortage of trained library personnel for these libraries, the University of Jordan started a postgraduate diploma program in LIS in 1977. This program went through several revisions: in 1979 by a group of experts from the British Council and UNESCO, from 1982 to 1984 by faculty from al-Mustansiriyah University of Iraq, in 1986 by its own faculty upon their return from the U.S.A. after completing doctoral education in the field, and in 1992 when the program was down-graded from a 33-credit hour program to a one-year 24 credit hour “Vocational Diploma in Library and Information Science.” The program folded in 1995 because of lack of a sufficient number of qualified faculty members. Important to note here is that when the British and Danish faculty revised the program in 1979, they introduced an English exam as part of the admission requirements to ensure that admitted students had enough language proficiency to read assigned material which were largely in English because Arabic ones were lacking and out-of-date. However, as a result of student protest, the end of UNESCO’s support, as well as the departure of all British and Danish faculty members from the program, the English exam admission requirement was cancelled. According to Alian (2002) major problems that this program encountered included: unclear and unrealistic objectives, poor curriculum and inconsistency with the latest developments in the field, lack of stability in the curriculum, lack of any kind of admission criteria or restrictions, oversight of the market needs, and paucity of faculty members with advanced skills, expertise, and knowledge, as well as use of traditional and obsolete teaching methods. Nevertheless, the program graduated over 300 people who contributed significantly to the development of libraries and the library profession in Jordan. Many of the graduates of the program went on to pursue graduate degrees in the U.K. and the U.S.A. (Alian, 2002).
After four years without an LIS program in the country, the Balqa Applied University founded the first full undergraduate LIS degree program in the country in 1999, followed by similar programs at Balqa’s satellite colleges: Princess Alia University College (2003), Irbid University College (2003), and al-Karak University College (2007). These three colleges, Balqa Applied University, and several other university colleges used to offer diplomas in LIS during the 1980s and 1990s. In 2000, both Philadelphia University Jordan and Zarqa Private University started to offer a bachelor’s degree in the field, and in 2006 al-Hussein Bin Talal University established its undergraduate program in LIS, which currently enrolls 300 students and has six full-time faculty members (four with PhDs). The public university of Balqa managed to enroll 162 students in its first two years, whereas the more expensive private universities of Philadelphia and Zarqa managed to attract only a total of 57 students (Philadelphia’s program ceased in 2011). Zarqa, however, currently enrolls nearly 400 students and has four full-time faculty members. The Higher Education Council has the responsibility for setting standards for LIS education in the country (Younis, 2002).

Perhaps the most significant development in LIS education in Jordan was when the University of Jordan decided in 2006 to start a master’s program in the field, and postgraduate and undergraduate degree programs in 2007. According to the Department’s website, its master’s program has so far graduated more than 30 students, many of whom are now in key positions in Jordan and neighboring countries. The Department currently includes six full-time faculty members (four professors, one associate professor, and one lecturer). The bachelor’s degree in all LIS programs in the country requires the completion of 132 credit hours: 78–90 credits in LIS and information technology and 42–54 credits in general education. The MLS degree requires the completion of 33 credit hours without thesis or 24 credits with thesis (Younis, 2013).

**Lebanon**

Modern librarianship in Lebanon started in the 18th century with monastic libraries and began to flourish in the 19th century with the founding of two of the oldest and most prominent universities in the Arab world: the American University of Beirut (1866) and Université Saint-Joseph (1875). Although several other libraries have been founded in the country since then (e.g., the Lebanese National Library in 1922 and many private and American and French school libraries), libraries started to emerge in significant numbers in Lebanon only in the 1960s – a trend that was hindered by a 15-year civil war that ended in 1989.
Today, Lebanon is home to hundreds of public, school, and special libraries and over 50 academic libraries distributed among one public and over 40 private colleges and universities.

College or professional level library training in Lebanon started in the 1960s. During a one-month visit in 1960, a UNESCO expert provided a training session in cataloging at the National Library in Beirut and submitted a proposal to UNESCO recommending the establishment of a library school in a university to include a graduate program. Between 1962 and 1965, the American University of Beirut Libraries offered six-week long summer courses in basic and medical librarianship, which were attended by nearly one hundred people from all over the Middle East. This was followed in 1968 by annual summer workshops given to local library staff at Beirut College for Women (later named Beirut University College and more recently the Lebanese American University). In 1970, these workshops were developed into a 2-year long Library Technician Program leading to an Associate degree in the field (Hafez, 1986). This program continued until the late 1990s. Then, just before the 1975–1989 civil war started in the country, the first bachelor’s degree program was founded, at the Lebanese University.

Unlike in the great majority of Arab countries where the LIS programs are/were affiliated within Colleges of Arts, Humanities, or Education, the program at the Lebanese University was established and continues to maintain full college or school status under the umbrella of the Faculty of Information and Documentation. While the focus was initially on the journalistic type of information, more LIS courses were introduced into the curriculum as time passed. By 1993, the program had graduated 200 students and is currently offering the bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees and enrolls more than 200 students. Given the popularity of the field in the country, two more programs were founded at private universities: in 1996 at the University of Balamand, and in 2005 at Beirut Arab University (Muhyiddin, 2004). In large part because these programs had to compete against a virtually tuition-free LIS program at the Lebanese University, the program at Balamand was frozen for over a decade before it reopened in 2012 under the name of the Faculty of Library and Information Studies with bachelor’s and master’s programs in LIS. The current program at Balamand is still inactive, however, because of lack of students.

Until recently, librarians from prominent universities in the country had always considered the LIS programs in Lebanon to be weak, graduating educationally and professionally incompetent individuals who could not operate independently and had serious language deficiencies; this was largely because for
nearly 30 years the curriculum at the Lebanese University did not change much, and that there was a lack of planning and mismatch between market needs and the LIS curriculum, lack of use of modern teaching and instruction technologies and methods, lack of modern computer labs and libraries, lack of training opportunities, poor educational level of enrolled students, and the ignorance of the society about the significance of the LIS profession (Muhyiddin, 2004). With the gradual improvement in the curricula of the LIS program at the Lebanese University over the past decade or so (revised twice in this period), the hiring of many faculty with doctoral degrees from France, the U.K., and the U.S.A., the engagement of students in many internships and training opportunities before graduation, and the significant improvement in the activities of the Lebanese Library Association, LIS graduates of the Lebanese University began to be more attractive to employers. Although they are yet to lead any major library in the country, LIS graduates of the Lebanese University today form a sizeable proportion of professional librarians in the main libraries in the country.

Palestine

The State of Palestine is a sovereign state in the Levant that is recognized by the United Nations. Its independence was declared on 15 November 1988 by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and its government-in-exile was then located in Algiers. It claims sovereignty over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and has designated Jerusalem as its capital. Most of the areas claimed for the State of Palestine have been occupied by Israel since 1967 in the aftermath of the Six-Day War, with the Palestinian Authority exercising socio-political administration since 1993 in limited areas. In 2012, it was granted observer status by the United Nations.

The tradition of libraries in Palestine is old with mosque and family libraries having played significant cultural and historical roles, but it was only as of the mid-1990s that the modern library movement started in the region. Following the Oslo Accords which were signed in 1993 and 1995, a number of universities and libraries started to emerge in Palestine, and so did the need for professional librarians. Despite the founding of an undergraduate LIS program in 1997 in al-Aqsa University and in 2001 at the Universal Studies Academy, both in Gaza City, Khader (2012) who provided a detailed account of the development of libraries in Palestine and their challenges and obstacles, recommended the founding of more LIS schools to train and produce much needed professional librarians.
Syria

Similarly to Lebanon and Palestine, LIS education in Syria has received little
attention in the literature. According to Lahham (1993) and ‘Abd al-’Alim (1995),
until 1984 Syrian librarians generally received their training abroad (mainly
Egypt) because of lack of a library school in the country. In that year, when the
country had 75 trained professional librarians and nearly 1,000 libraries, the
first LIS program was founded at Damascus University and was affiliated with
the Faculty of Arts and Humanities. The goal was to prepare the necessary special-
ized workforce to manage and lead the country’s libraries. By 1990, the
program had 40 graduates and had enrolled 450 students. Admission was, and
still is, limited to those students with a GPA at a certain level that changes
from one year to the next depending on scores received by students in the
national high school test. The degree requires the completion, over a period of
four years, of courses in management of libraries and information centers, refer-
ce, collection development, technical services, indexing and abstracting, special
libraries, digital libraries, databases, information storage and retrieval, knowledge management, and information economy. These are in addition to
courses in research methods, statistics, cognitive science, information technol-
gy, English language learning, Arabic language learning, and a course on
nationalist socialist culture, which was required in the first year of the program
(Younis, 2013). A similar undergraduate program was established in Syria in
2007 at the University of Tishreen, Faculty of Arts and Humanities. Then in
2008, the University of Damascus started to offer the MLS degree in library man-
agement and information services as well as in information storage and retrie-
val. The master’s degree is a two-year program consisting of coursework during
the first year and a thesis in the second year.

According to ‘Assafin (1998, 2004), the undergraduate program at the Uni-
versity of Damascus suffers from the fact that it focuses so much on non-LIS
courses (e.g., courses on the history of civilization, literature, and philosophy),
theoretical or non-practice-based courses, library rather than library and infor-
mation science-related courses, and on textbooks that are not only old but also
overlap in content. The program also suffers from the following problems: only
10% of its LIS courses are in the area of information services; fewer than one-
fourth of its faculty members are holders of doctoral degrees (all from Russia
and Egypt); the program admits such a huge number of students that makes it
difficult to find training opportunities for them all, let alone jobs; and the LIS
department lacks the library and computing resources necessary for providing
quality LIS education. Muhanna (2011), however, claims that the LIS program at
the University of Damascus is constantly improving and that its curriculum has gone through three major revisions, the last being in 2008. It is believed that the LIS program at the University of Tishreen has adopted the most recent curriculum of the program at the University of Damascus.

Northeast Africa and the Comoros

The remaining countries in the Arab League are located in Northeast Africa and the Indian Ocean. Both the Comoros and Djibouti are small republics with fewer than one million inhabitants in each. They were colonized by France and became independent in 1975 and 1977, respectively. Arabic and French are the two predominant languages and Islam is their main religion. The countries have very few libraries and neither has a library professional association. A comprehensive survey of the literature did not identify any indications of library training or education there; however, both have national documentation centers. The Union of Comoros, a federal republic comprising an island archipelago between Madagascar and Tanzania, has a national library. Djibouti, in the horn of Africa at the mouth of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, does not have a national library, but has an academic library at the University of Djibouti and a few special and governmental libraries.

Somalia

The Federal Republic of Somalia, has a population of approximately 11 million people; Arabic is the official language and Islam the official religion. The country was created in 1960 by the merger of a former British protectorate and an Italian colony. Since its independence, Somalia has encountered political, economic, and cultural instability and has undergone internal armed conflicts for almost three decades. Despite its past history of being in a near state of anarchy, the country is in the process of establishing a federal parliamentary republic. The country’s national library was established in 1976 but closed in the 1990s. At present there is an effort underway to rebuild the national library in Mogadishu. This library, which would also serve a public library for the city, is the first library to be built in Somalia since the civil war started in 1991 (Shepherd, 2013). Just as in the Comoros and Djibouti, there is no indication that any LIS programs exist in the country.
Sudan

The Republic of the Sudan is located in the Nile Valley. Its predominant religion is Islam. Almost one-fifth of its 40 million population lives below the international poverty line, which means living on less than $1.25 per day. Sudan was colonized by the British from 1898 to 1956. After independence it became known as the Republic of the Sudan. In 2005, and after several years of rampant ethnic strife and internal conflicts, a peace agreement between the north (largely Muslim) and the south (largely Christian and adherents of several African religions) was signed, and the south was split off and became independent in 2011 and named the Republic of South Sudan.

The Republic of the Sudan is currently the third largest Arab country in terms of both area and population. Higher education in the country began in the 1940s at Gordon Memorial College which was originally founded as a primary school in 1902. In 1948, there were 262 students at the Gordon Memorial College. In 1951 it merged with the Kitchener School of Medicine (founded in 1924) and was renamed University College Khartoum with the University of London setting the examinations and awarding the degrees. When the country gained independence in 1956, the University College became the fully independent University of Khartoum which then enrolled a total of 1,633 students. Until the end of the 1980s, there were only five universities in the Sudan, enrolling less than 10% of the high school graduates of the country. In 1989, a higher education revolution was announced and by the end of the 1990s, there were over 30 new public and private universities established in the country. The 40 or so universities in the Sudan today enroll over 200,000 students annually. With the increase in the number of higher education institutions in the country, the number of LIS programs also increased: from one in the 1960s to three in the 1980s, six in the 1990s, and 10 in the 2000s.

Until the early 1960s, library professional development and training in the Sudan benefited significantly from the British Council in Khartoum, which regularly organized seminars and workshops in the field and funded several relevant consultancies. From 1961 until at least the 1990s, the University of Khartoum’s Department of General Studies regularly offered training courses for employees in libraries and archives. In 1966 the first LIS program was established at Omdurman Islamic University. The goal of the program was to prepare professionals to work in different types of libraries, archives, and information centers. The program was closed after the University was converted in 1969 into a College of Arabic Language. The University reopened its doors in 1972 with all its previous Colleges and departments, including LIS. Initially, the program was run mainly by faculty from the University of Cairo with support from Sudanese
faculty. In 1972, the Sudanese faculty took over and revised the program to meet the specific needs of the Sudanese libraries and society. The curriculum was last revised in 1995, introducing information science related courses, such as information storage and retrieval, and launching the first master’s degree program in the country. Despite graduating many librarians since 1972, by mid-1980s half of the country’s 14 higher education libraries still did not have professional librarians among their staff members. This was largely because librarianship was not an attractive career for young Sudanese, as the profession was rather obscure, and graduates of Omdurman University LIS program preferred to work in the libraries of the oil-rich Arab states where there is a better work environment and much higher wages (Abdel Karim, 1985).

In 1986, a new undergraduate program was founded at the Omdurman Ahlia University, followed by one at the Neelain University (which was formerly the Khartoum branch of Cairo University), and a postgraduate diploma program at the University of Khartoum’s Centre for Information, Libraries, and Archives. The latter was merged in 1992 with the newly founded Department of Library and Information Science at the University of Khartoum, with degree programs at the bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral levels. By the year 2009, there were 10 active LIS programs in Sudan (seven in the state of Khartoum). In 2013, the total number of full-time faculty teaching at these 10 programs was 84 (65% with doctoral degrees and 35% with master degrees). Eight of the chairpersons of the programs held doctoral degrees and two held only a master’s degree. (‘Alim, 2013)

In the early 1990s, when there were still only four LIS programs in the Sudan, Wesley (1994) argued that teaching in these programs depended too heavily on part-time input from practicing librarians. She further stated that the main problems of the LIS programs in the Sudan then included: (1) the scarcity of qualified staff; (2) poor library collections and scarcity of publications and teaching materials in Arabic; (3) poor resources and facilities; and (4) poor state of development of the national information infrastructure. According to Amin (2013), similar problems seem to persist today. Based on a field survey of six LIS programs in the state of Khartoum, Ahmad & Muhammad Ali (2013) found remarkable differences in the number of LIS credit hours that students complete in order to obtain their bachelor degree and that the number of required information technology courses was minimal (10–15% of the total).
### Summary of the Situation

**Tab. 9.1: LIS programs in the Arab States offering at least a bachelor’s degree in the field.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>College/Faculty</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Year Founded*</th>
<th>Degree Programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>Université Badji Mokhtar -Annaba</td>
<td>Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences</td>
<td>LIS</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>BA; MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>Université Constantine 2</td>
<td>Institut de Bibliothéconomie</td>
<td>Institut de Bibliothéconomie</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>BA; MA; PhD</td>
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<td>Université d'Alger 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1975</td>
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<td>Université de Tébessa</td>
<td>Humanities and Social Sciences</td>
<td>Library Science</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>BA; MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>Université d’Oran</td>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>Bibliothéconomie et documentation</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>BA; MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Ain Shams University</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>LIS</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>BA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Al-Azhar University-Assiut</td>
<td>Arabic Language-Boys</td>
<td>LAS</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>BA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Al-Azhar University-Cairo</td>
<td>Education-Boys</td>
<td>LIS, and Instructional Technologies</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>BA; MA; PhD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Al-Azhar University-Shbeen El-Kom, Al Minufiyah</td>
<td>Arabic Language-Boys</td>
<td>LAS</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>BA</td>
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<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Al-Azhar University-Tafahna El-Ashraaf, Daqahlia</td>
<td>Education-Boys</td>
<td>LIS, and Instructional Technologies</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>BA</td>
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<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Alexandria University</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>LIS</td>
<td>1981</td>
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<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Assiut University</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>Library, Archives, and Information Science</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>BA; MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Benha University</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>LIS</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>BA; MA</td>
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</table>

(continued)
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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>College/Faculty</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Year Founded*</th>
<th>Degree Programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
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<td>Arts</td>
<td>LAS</td>
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<td>BA; MA; PhD</td>
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<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Cairo University</td>
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<td>Library Science, Archives, and IT</td>
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<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Fayoum University</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>LAS</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>BA</td>
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<td>Helwan University</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>LIS</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>BA; PGD; MA; PhD</td>
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<td>Kafrelsheikh University</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>LIS</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>BA</td>
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<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Mansoura University</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>Archives and LIS</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>BA</td>
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<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Menoufia University</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>LIS</td>
<td>1991</td>
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<td>Minia University</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>LIS</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>BA</td>
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<td>Egypt</td>
<td>October 6 University</td>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>Libraries and Information Systems</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>BA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Sohag University</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>LIS</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>BA; PGD; MA; PhD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
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**Table 9.1** (continued)
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* Refers to the year the bachelor, master, postgraduate, or doctoral degree program started.

** Denotes programs that ceased.

ILS = Information and Library Science; IT = Information Technology(ies); LAS = Library and Archival Science; LIS = Library and Information Science(s)
We finished our absorbing and often exhilarating exploration of the development of LIS education in the Arab world with much admiration for what had been accomplished in the less than half century since LIS education became widespread there. Today the LIS programs across the region (and, one might add, around the world) are in a period of evolution as they attempt to change to meet the needs of modern information agencies. Although all of the programs share some similarities, they differ in certain national and regional characteristics. For each of the geographic divisions that we adopted, a brief summary of the current situation is provided below.

**Egypt**

Egypt led the Arab world in the development of LIS education, and as a result of its pioneering role, it influenced the development of LIS in the rest of the Arab world, particularly in its focus on undergraduate education, the placement of the LIS program in the arts and humanities, and admission of students through a competitive national process that ranks school choice by examination outcome. Despite Egypt’s early leadership role in LIS education, at present, the political and economic problems confronting the country have impeded the Egyptian programs from keeping pace with some of the others in the region.

**The Maghreb**

A number of the LIS programs in the Maghreb are well established and the programs in the area are diverse in scope, size, funding, and specializations. These programs display much more heterogeneity than those found in most other parts of the Arab world. For instance, unlike Egypt where all of the programs except one are situated in a College of Arts, the programs in the Maghreb have a variety of institutional homes and two of them, ISD in Tunisia and ESI in Morocco, are institutions that provide LIS education outside the organizational structure of a university. However, the major distinction that sets these programs apart is that, except for those in Libya, all the programs in the Maghreb are still influenced by their French colonial history, and in many ways the systems of higher education in these countries are more like the ones in France than they are like others in the Arab world. This continuing French influence is not surprising. After independence, France continued to provide both monetary and other types of support to the educational institutions in its former colonies.
France sends one third of all its higher education aid to Northern Africa, and the two largest aid projects supported by the French Development Agency are in Morocco ($171.4 million) and Algeria ($141.5 million) (Bassett & Maldonado-Maldonado, 2009, p. 288). Many of the institutions in these countries have partnerships with French universities, and many faculty members in the LIS programs received their degrees in France. The LIS programs in Algeria, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia use French as a language of instruction. Their programs have been based on the French model of LIS education, and now most of them are transitioning to the LMD degree system to conform to the Bologna process. At present, Algeria, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia are all partner countries in the EU’s Tempus and Erasmus educational initiatives; these partnerships also promote closer relationships and international cooperation (Croché & Charlier, 2012; Johnson, 2013). It is impossible to predict how this cross-Mediterranean alliance will progress, but indications are that interest is strong on both sides. Ironically, its colonial past has made it easier for the LIS programs in the Maghreb to overcome isolation and participate in the broader world of international LIS education.

The Gulf States and Yemen

The Gulf Region countries clearly show growth and positive change in LIS education. Higher education is well-supported and there is hospitality to experimentation with a variety of extra-government institutions although one might remember earlier efforts to change conservative education practices that led to parallel education systems: one religious and classic and one secular and scientific (Cook, 1999). It would be a missed opportunity if parallel education tracks evolve again whereby one system is private, technical, expensive and focused on global issues, and the other system is government-supported, inexpensive and focused on more traditional and historic values. Although the authors found evidence of some inter-relationships among the schools in the region, Al-Suqri charges that there has been little collaboration among the LIS departments in the GCC region which he sees as a serious weakness for sustainability and long-term survival. He finds evidence of significant shortcomings in the schools in terms of technological

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resources, expertise and facilities along with high drop-out rates of students. One barrier to effective collaboration that he identifies is the relatively weak IT infrastructure; another is the lack of government involvement and support for collaboration. He suggests that the regional chapter of the Special Libraries Association could act as a vehicle for the development of collaborative activities and mechanisms in the Gulf region (Al-Suqri, 2010).

**Iraq**

The LIS programs in Iraq are still suffering the after-effects of over thirty years of war and civil unrest. The conflicts continue. In late July 2014, it was reported that the Department of Librarianship and Information Studies at the University of Mosul had been closed as a result of actions taken by terrorists in the area. Peace and stability must return to Iraq before the LIS programs will be able to progress and make up for the decades when they have been relatively isolated from the progress in LIS education that has occurred in most of the other programs in the area.

**The Levant**

As echoed by Younis (2013), LIS programs in the Levant suffer from the fact that they are not up-to-date with their course offerings and content, and are lacking in areas related to information, computer, and communication technologies. The programs not only focus significantly on traditional practices (e.g., technical services), but they do so with little hands-on practice or training. Furthermore, most departments lack the necessary laboratories, computing equipment, and information technology infrastructure that would better prepare the students for the labor market. While internships are part of the requirements for graduation in many of the LIS programs in the Levant, most institutions that offer LIS degrees lack the library resources (from books to journals and databases) necessary to teach effectively. Moreover, many of the students who study LIS do so not because of their interest in the field but as a result of government policies that force students with certain high school GPAs (usually low scores) to enroll in LIS programs if they wish to attend college at all. Most students enroll in and graduate from these programs still lacking foreign language skills and the necessary computing skills to increase their chances of employment. Finally, LIS programs in the Levant suffer from the fact that many of their faculty members are graduates of other Arab LIS programs, and many do not hold doctoral degrees.
This is not to mention the internal conflicts and wars in nearly the entire Levant region that must be taking a significant toll on the progress and development of these programs.

Northeast Africa and the Comoros

There are no LIS programs in the Comoros, Djibouti, or Somalia. As for the Sudan, the programs there suffer from shortage of qualified staff, poor resources and facilities, and poor state of development of the national information infrastructure. As is true for several of the other Arab countries, many of the students in the Sudan enroll in LIS programs in the country because it is the only field for which they are eligible and many of the graduates do not find jobs after graduation because of the large number of graduates, the small number of libraries that can absorb them, and the difficulty of the graduates in finding non-library jobs because the programs did not prepare them for such jobs (Ahmad & Muhammad Ali, 2013; ‘Alim, 2013; Amin, 2013; ‘Uthman & Hasan, 2013). With respect to the last point, the LIS graduates are in constant competition for jobs with graduates of computer science, business administration, and journalism programs (Ahmad & Muhammad Ali, 2013).

Conclusions

From our look at the individual countries and regions, it is clear that the LIS programs in the Arab states have made many advances in the last fifty years but, like LIS programs across the world, will need to continue to change to face the challenges of the new information world. Many of the writers we consulted (e.g., Abdel-Hady, Al-Suqri, Bouazza, Elayyan, Gdoura, Muhyiddin, Rehman, Sanabani, and Younis) provide often-overlapping recommendations for the future growth and prosperity of the Arab LIS programs. We heartily endorse these recommendations. These include curriculum revision to include more information science content; enhanced communication among students and faculty and practitioners through stronger professional associations; improved information technology infrastructure connecting libraries and information centers and LIS schools; stronger research programs and a more professional orientation for the programs; modern teaching methods; and attention to national information and records management policies; and, we would add, keeping up to date on the fast-changing information technology.
This conclusion will summarize the strengths and weaknesses we found in the programs. Some programs are encountering great challenges, but we also found great promise in our overview of LIS education in the Arab world. One indicator of a healthy education sector is the opening of new programs. We count 20 active new programs since the turn of the century. Another is the successful graduation of large numbers of individuals, which appears to be the case, despite the fact that there is some question about how, or if, these graduates are being absorbed into the workforce. Many female graduates, who constitute the largest number of LIS students, end up staying at home after marriage. In other cases, the available number of graduates for library/information jobs may be less than the numbers suggest. In addition, there may be a mismatch between the knowledge and skills acquired in the educational program and those demanded in the workplace.

We found substantial growth in the number and vitality of LIS programs in two regions: the Maghreb and the Gulf States. In the latter case, many of the countries in the Gulf region have made it a deliberate policy to invest in higher education and infrastructure. New universities both public and private, research centers, alternative institutions for delivering education, and more public libraries are opening.8 It is also clear that the curricular content of many programs is transitioning to a broader information-based, more professional orientation so that graduates are qualified to work not only in libraries but also in other information-intensive organizations, like banks, cultural institutions, mass media and large companies, particularly international corporations.

The LIS programs we examined are still mainly at the undergraduate level, which means the LIS content is minimal as it must compete for a place in the curriculum with general knowledge and other content (often mandated). Undergraduate programs can be valuable if the content concentrates on technologically sophisticated skills,9 although the programs we examined seem to concentrate on technical skills for libraries of bygone days. Still, in most countries, graduate LIS programs exist and one might cautiously project a trend in the graduate direction where resources permit and where conflict and political unrest do not prevent forward movement. Although in some countries admission to an LIS graduate degree program requires a bachelor’s degree in that subject,

8 The number of universities active in the Arab region as of 2009 was 398 compared to 174 in 1998 (UNESCO, 2009).
9 There has been an upsurge in information science programs at the bachelor’s level in the United States.
this does not appear to be a major pattern today. Today, the typical requirement
to enter a Master’s in LIS is a BA degree in any field.

As Johnson pointed out that “the last 20 years ... have been turbulent times
for [LIS education] throughout the world” (Johnson, 2013, p. 64). Technological
and social changes in professional practice have put pressure for change on the
curriculum, the resources requirements and the ways instruction is delivered.
Higher education throughout the world has been undergoing a period of rapid
expansion and change driven by neoliberal ideas of education that downplay
nationalism and highlight the centrality of the private sector, the primacy of the
job market in dictating what will be taught, and give great emphasis to account-
ability, testing and assessment (Miller-Idriss & Hanauer, 2011). Some theorists
posit a growing convergence of educational systems gradually moving to a
single uniform modern system (Anderson-Levitt, 2003), and certainly the LIS
field, like most professional fields, has always emphasized a universal and
inclusive approach.

From the earliest times, libraries have sought standardization as an effective
and efficient way of encouraging the free flow of information, whether in books,
data sets, or in human expertise. Standardizing measures permeate LIS educa-
tion through associations of practitioners and educators, professional publica-
tions, and published standards and guidelines for accreditation or certification.
In the English-speaking world accrediting bodies like ALA (U.S.A. and Canada)
or CILIP (U.K.) have had a powerful effect on upgrading faculty and facilities,
revising curricula, and responding to the needs of the job market in order to
place graduates in needed positions.

More global efforts toward standardization include IFLA and UNESCO activ-
ties and the Bologna Process for the European Union. A pan-European associa-
tion of LIS education and research, called EUCLID, was established as part of
the Bologna Process in order to encourage comparable degrees, a standard
system of credits, curricular guidance, student mobility (with attention to lan-
guage skills), quality assurance and comparable student assessment schemes
(Johnson, 2013). IFLA has promulgated a standard for LIS educational programs
now in a second edition (Smith, Hallam & Ghosh, 2012).

Despite these international efforts a continuing lack of information about
the overall characteristics of the Arab region’s higher education institutions
continues to make it difficult to make comparisons or to see progress. One pro-
mising project is attempting to develop a standardized system of classifying
institutions of higher education in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)
(Bhandari & Adnan El-Amine, 2012). The ministers of 57 Islamic states have
called for the institutions of higher education in their countries to develop reliable
and transparent indicators for measuring their performance in order to
facilitate innovation and to enhance quality measures for successful international competition (Sawahel, 2011). Critics of an international system of measurement suggest that what is measured should reflect the values and objectives of the society. Academics in the developing world have long argued that education should be evaluated by its effect on the entire nation, for example in fostering a sense of cohesion based on pride in the country’s history and culture. Before Arab universities can start measuring success, the critics suggest they need to decide what it is they want to measure (Guttenplan & Wheeler, 2014).

The lack of clear agreed-on success criteria for higher education has had an impact on the status of libraries. In a recent two part study of experts in the field, Sanabani and ‘Alaywi (2010a and 2010b) focused on reasons for the decline of the status of the library profession in the Arab world. Although many of the causes of this decline echo the problems reported by Johnson and others, one might argue that the status of the library profession in the Arab world was never high for socio-cultural reasons including the lack of a widely educated populace and a culture of reading. Add to this the protectiveness by some scholars of their knowledge sources, and the result is that active library programs are not high priority items. Attention at the national level to clarifying goals, revising educational programs, and reforming higher education should stimulate change toward a more hospitable culture that should enhance the status of the profession through a clearer understanding of the value of modern library services.

Gdoura, in describing the characteristics of the North African library network, points out that many of the libraries and information centers have provided outstanding documentary services despite the lack of coordination and documentary policy (Gdoura, 2008). Although statistics are lacking, large libraries have begun to develop database management systems, digital libraries and online catalogs. Gdoura reiterates the problem of status described above and groups the difficulties of libraries and information science into economic, technical, managerial, and social issues. For the latter he identifies resistance to reading and “a worrying level of illiteracy” (p. 171). Further, he describes the political climate as “not favorable to freedom of expression and freedom of association and exchange” (p. 174), central concerns of libraries and LIS educational programs.

Despite these problems Gdoura identifies research opportunities for LIS faculty at the Universities of Cairo, Alexandria, and Constantine. He cites six Arab associations that sponsor colloquia, seminars and public proceedings. He finds 11 specialized LIS periodicals in the North African region which publish research results despite problems of irregular publication and weak editorial policy and expertise. Gdoura’s analysis of the published research of these journals demonstrates a strong emphasis on practical and empirical aspects and little emphasis on theoretical and methodological issues. He suggests ways to
stimulate theoretical research in information science through the creation of a bibliographic database, open archives, and publication of an Arab encyclopedia of information science. His summary and suggestions provide evidence of a healthy vitality in the Maghreb region clustered around the growth of information science education and research often in institutions outside the university system.

As we did our research, we faced difficulties in finding information, but were fortunate in finding some excellent articles describing LIS programs in particular areas. One of the authors of this chapter is fluent in Arabic, and located and translated a substantial amount of material published in Arabic plus identified URLs for most of the programs on our list. The URLs, on the whole, however, lead to extremely limited websites, often with only cursory information. A recent World Bank report (2012) states that Arabic digital content amounts to just 0.162% of the total digital content available online; and the number of websites hosted in the Middle East and North Africa region amounts to only 0.198% of the global total (Gelvanovska, Rogy & Rossotto, 2014, p. 22). Although we found websites for most of the LIS programs, the information provided even in Arabic is often severely limited. Perhaps one project for the Arab LIS programs would be to take a leadership role in sharing information about their accomplishments by developing their websites to demonstrate how these tools can be effective vehicles for communication and promotion. More easily available information would be a step toward harmonizing the various programs to permit easier movement of LIS professionals across countries. It would also make collecting the kind of information required by an accreditation or certification program or other method of quality control easier.

In 2004, Hafiz examined the content of websites of LIS departments in the Arab world and compared them to those in Canada and the United States. He found at that time that websites of many universities in the Arab countries were nonexistent or under construction, and that those universities which did have websites for individual colleges only included a listing but no website for the departments within the Colleges. Some LIS departments had websites, but these were often limited to contact information with only a few words about the program and its missions and goals. In many cases the websites were largely inactive, and did not include current information (Hafiz, 2004). His conclusion was that none of the LIS departments’ websites could be considered interactive, informative and up-to-date. He included recommendations and justifications for developing workable websites. Much can happen in a few years in the technology area but, even twelve years later, we might echo many of Hafiz’ findings.

Involving students in the improvement of websites as an educational project might be one way to showcase their skills in web design and development and
increase their job opportunities. Incorporating these skills into the curriculum could enable each school to create an information-rich web presence providing details about the faculty and their research, the strategic direction of the program, the achievements of and placement information about the graduates, affiliations with associations and other organizations. An informative website might act as an example to other higher education units. Of course, curricular emphasis in this area presupposes access to the necessary technical resources and expertise. These are not often found in abundance in Colleges of Arts and Humanities but are often more widely available in science and technology faculties. It appears that many schools are aware of this problem and are attempting to redress it by seeking different organizational alignments. We support this nascent trend.

The institutional home where most of the programs are housed is often a barrier to progress. Most LIS programs in the Arab world are departments in a College of Arts and/or Humanities. While we do not share the devaluing of the humanities that seems to be a part of the “education for jobs” [and only jobs] movement, we do wonder if the placement of these programs contributes to their low status. For example, current curricula for Bachelor of Science in Information Science (BSIS) degrees often includes mathematics, analytical skills, systems design, database design/implementation, and evidence-based evaluation, i.e. coursework that is not often found in arts and humanities programs. Professional programs typically draw from disciplines across the humanities, science and social sciences, and are not wholly at home in any one discipline. Historically library science programs were closer to the humanities, but in the last forty years they have found greater compatibility in the social sciences because of the increased focus in the LIS field on understanding the user population using tools and concepts from psychology and sociology combined with a strong empirical/experiential research tradition which also uses methodologies developed in the social sciences. It is difficult to modernize a curriculum and attract research faculty if the program is not in a hospitable environment.

Modern LIS programs train information professionals to go out into the community to analyze citizen needs and to work collaboratively with other community groups to respond to those needs and to strengthen community organizations. These programs use the tools of literature and reading, storytelling, collective memory and community gatherings and they encourage the development of outreach and leadership skills. There is an emphasis on capacity-building, preserving local heritage, rejecting stereotypes, and embracing a multi-cultural approach. These activities build social capital and strengthen local identity. These activities would also seem compatible with the Arab emphasis on humanistic and holistic education.
Worldwide communities are discussing the issue of how to increase social capital and strengthen regional identity, often accomplished through cultural institutions like libraries, archives, and museums. In the Arab regional conference on higher education held in Cairo in 2009 a core issue was social responsibility in higher education and several papers addressed problems that universities face in assuming this responsibility (UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States, 2009). Some of these papers discuss disputes arising from the disparity between the culture acquired in the university and traditional social values; others spoke to the weak civic and political orientations of university students and their lack of organizing skills. Still others concentrated on how universities can exit their closed environments and become more involved in community affairs. Higher education programs that train social professions, such as teachers, historians, linguists, philosophers, sociologists, psychologists, and librarians are important for strengthening an intellectual and growth culture. Rebalancing the flow of resources in a more equitable manner, while still privileging science and technology, is called for in the report.

Based on the evidence we examined in preparing this chapter, it appears that one of the greatest needs for the LIS programs in the Arab world is to work more closely with one another to increase the quality of LIS education across the region. In 1994 Johnson reported on a meeting in Morocco of representatives from LIS programs in the Arab speaking world. One of the topics discussed was the poor communication among the programs in the area, and one of the outcomes was an agreement to establish an Arab Association of Library and Information Science Education (Johnson, 1994). As far as we can tell, such an organization was never established, although we recognize the Arab Federation of Libraries and Information (AFLI) as a potential parent or affiliate organization. Having a regional organization, similar to the European Association for Library and Information Education and Research (EUCLID) or the Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE), would provide many benefits. A pan-Arab LIS association could be a mechanism for sharing information and resources relating to LIS education among the region’s programs, all of which share linguistic and cultural similarities. Such an association could be a way to address many of the weaknesses we saw in the programs. It could strengthen Arab LIS education by serving as a proponent and advocate for the field, and thus give it a stronger public voice in shaping its future. It might provide a way for some of the stronger programs to help those which have fewer resources by sponsoring faculty and student exchanges and joint research projects. In addition, such an organization would be a strong candidate to maintain a current, up-to-date directory of Arab world LIS schools. Ultimately this proposed association might serve as a body to...
promote and coordinate accreditation efforts for the programs in the region. Rehman (2012) investigated the possibility of a regional accreditation agency for the LIS programs located in the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations. Although he reported that all the programs in the Gulf are engaged in some sort of evaluation process, none are presently accredited, although he states that “there is a general consciousness about the need for instituting accreditation programmes to ensure quality in LIS education in this region” (p. 66–67). Worldwide, there is a growing interest in methods of quality assurance in LIS programs and, with the caveat mentioned above about beginning with consensus on desirable attributes, some sort of regional accreditation would be a great step forward in having the programs in the Arab world recognized for their achievements and welcomed as part of the global LIS community.

In conclusion, we have tried to provide a balanced overview of LIS education in the Arab states in the context of developments in higher education in the region. Not surprisingly, we found it impossible to provide the same level of information about each country because the amount of published material about the programs is uneven. For example, a great deal of information is available about new developments in LIS education in the Gulf States and in some of the countries of the Maghreb, but very little could be found about LIS education in several other Arab countries.

We hope this chapter contributes forward progress toward what needs to be done to provide current and accurate information about LIS education in Arab world. We encourage others to build upon what we have done (as we built on others). We plan to put the list of LIS programs on the web and make it freely available so that it can be updated as programs change.

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References

There are different approaches to the Romanization of Arab names thus occasionally the same author may be cited in two different ways in this list of references because we used names as they were listed on the books and articles we consulted in preparing the chapter. When needed, we used the Library of Congress system of transliterating names from Arabic.


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