

Formation with a Universitarian Specialization¹

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I will start with two apologies. As a bad pupil I did not send my paper to our kind and efficient organizers in time to have it translated. This is why I will deliver it in English and not in French. I apologize for that to my government. Also I guess the title "Formation with a universitarian specialization" must be mine but it is misleading or at least unclear and I apologize for that as well to all of you. My intention is simply to tackle or try to tackle two issues. First, how are French librarians trained and how do we foresee the future of their formation. Second, what are the specific problems of university libraries in France presently and how can formation help to solve them.

Let me start by telling you first a few words about ENSSIB, the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Sciences de l'Information et des Bibliothèques, a School with a name as long as mine, of which I became Dean exactly a year ago. My colleague Bertrand Calenge told you that many changes occurred in 1992 in France in the library field. Until that year most French librarians were trained in a school called Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Bibliothèques (ENSB) in which they ended after a competitive exam at graduate level. The School then was strictly professional and lasted a year followed by an internship of a year. After that, students became librarians receiving a diploma then called Diplôme Supérieure des Bibliothèques. At that time, that is my time, an important minority of French librarians was trained in another school, one of our so called Corns??? Ecole de Sart founded in the beginning of the 19th century which has a tradition of excellence in the field of historical scholarship. When the Sartist students, the students from the Ecole de Sart had completed their three years of studies and defended their theses, they entered either the archive administration or the libraries where they had to go through three months of internship before becoming librarians.

In 1992 an important reform transformed the ENSB to ENSSIB, the present school. There was more to this than a mere change of name from being a professional school ENSSIB became technically a university. It is now part of the French university system. What consequences did that entail? First all French conservatories now receive their training in ENSSIB where studies now last 18 months. The Sartist students, students from the Ecole de Sart, who choose to enter libraries follow the same course of studies. ENSSIB has become their application school for libraries just as another school also founded in 1992, the Ecole de Patrimoine, which is their application school for those who elect to enter the archive administration. Other students continue to enter the School by competitive exam at graduate level. Let me stress that this exam is increasingly competitive; just think that last year there were 1600 competitors for 19 positions only. All the students are paid during their studies,

¹ Το κείμενο της ομιλίας του κ. Dupuigrenet-Desroussilles απομαγνητοφωνήθηκε διότι δεν μας στάλθηκε το γραπτό.

by passing the exam they have gained the right to enter the civil service. I indicated that the end of the School at graduate level in fact the average age of our students is 27 years and the average degree of their diploma is usually 5 years of university before entering the School and not 3. So, we have a first characteristic which is the high level of university studies of our students. The second consequence, more direct consequence, of the changes of 1992 has been the change in the teaching personnel. Until then teaching was done only by librarians. Since 1992 it is done partly by librarians partly by university professors and lecturers. The nature of the curriculum itself has also been altered, to accommodate new areas of knowledge into the library field, computer science, economics of information, management of libraries, the sociology of organizations or the sociology of culture.

I have spoken so far only of the students in librarianship. Since 1992 the School also delivers other diplomas for students who have not entered the School by competitive exam; diplomas in documentary informatics and a diploma in information science. These diplomas are delivered jointly by the School and the universities of Lyon that is another link with the university world.

Teaching methods have also been altered and continued to be. We have been asking from students not only during the lessons period but during the internship period that they have, they spend 5 months in internship in different periods. They have been asked to write reports about the experience they have had in the libraries in which they had their internship, in places that can be as remote and interesting as Cambodia, Russia, Mexico, United States so as to enhance the level of librarianship in France.

Another consequence of the 1992 reform was to create in the School a research center, the Research Center on Information Science with three main areas: the economics and management of information, the history of the book, and computer science as applied to libraries. In the research center are mixed professors and lecturers of the ENSSIB itself and researchers from other universities and schools. Two other consequences have been drawn from the 1992 reform. The School has become or tries to become a resource center for information science for the whole of France. This involves making of the ENSSIB library a reference library in information science, but also to use publications of the School which started in paper form in 1994 to use them to disseminate frenchness in librarianship worldwide. We have created last year a Website for the School on which you will be able to find not only practical information about the School but also the articles of the leading french journal in librarianship, the Bulletin de Bibliothéque de France that we publish also in paper form and the most interesting of students' reports from their internships.

Last aspect of the 1992 reform, the importance that we give to continuing formation of chief librarians. Bertrand Calenge has shown you how fast the trends changed in French libraries with these 32 competencies that we are supposed to have. This cannot be taught in a 18-month curriculum of course. We have developed in close contact with the Institut d'Information des Bibliothécaires, directed by Bertrand Calenge, continuing formation sessions that will permit French librarians to accommodate specialized knowledge that they will need during their career. With all these

developments we are trying to keep a balance between the necessary professional aspects of the School and its university nature.

As I announced and seeing that we are here in a gathering of university librarians having listened to what I have said, I thought it would be good to give you a detailed picture of the situation of French university libraries and the way formation can help solve their problems. Contrary to what one might imagine from abroad, the former Administrateur Generale of the Bibliotheque Nationale Andre Michel wrote a famous report - famous in France — on university libraries to alert the government and the public to the crying needs of institutions that had fallen far behind European standards. Situation has improved very little since. To give just a few figures: the average library m² per student ratio is today at 0.5, whereas the Michel report recommended a minimum of 1.5 library m² per student. In 1975 there were 4 university agents whatever their stages are for 1000 students, today they are just 2.7.1 remind you that in Germany, the European country with a student population most comparable to France there is 1 agent for 115 students, more than 3 times more. This is due, of course, to a formidable increase in the number of students; 970000 in 86-87, 1450000 in 94-95, a 50% raise. If we now count the students registered at university libraries they were 600 started in 1987, 1000000 in 1993. Meanwhile 630 librarian positions have been created whereas the Michel report asked for the creation of 1500 positions before 1995.

These are material difficulties but beyond these difficulties lie structural difficulties that I would like to stress, too. First, the French university libraries are organized in sections by area of knowledge - by discipline — and they are torn between the necessity of centralization for reasons of efficiency and a desire to decentralize to answer the needs of teachers, students and scholars in campuses that are in France as elsewhere more larger and larger. The central library in each section is torn between the needs of the undergraduate students and the needs of specialized documentation of teachers and scholars. Because we do not have enough personnel we tend to mix too often the tools that are needed for graduate students and the research libraries. Universities and their librarians should be able not to sacrifice one to the other. But maybe the most important problem that we face is that the politics of documentation has a difficulty to exist at the university level. You have heard maybe that for a number of years now, the French universities are autonomous, they define their own policy. Is documentary policy part of their policy? And I echo there preoccupation that I've heard this morning: Is documentation associated with defining of the policies of teaching and research with the computer politics of University? Situations in France are very unequal, although normally chief librarians are associated with the university senates. At teaching level, documentary politics should be anchored in each discipline. There is a great difference there between the French and the British situation but it's striking to me how in Britain documentation seems to be everybody's preoccupation in a university. Every teacher whatever his level participates in the documentary policy in the university. For example students, when they arrive at the university, are brought to the library and formation to documentary research in their own field is not a problem, whatever the number is, from the moment each teacher with the help of librarians can integrate it in his own program. This means that each teacher is not only conscious of the issues at stake but he has also

received adequate information for that. This is probably made easier in the speaking countries by the fact that lectures, teachers and librarians come from the same formations whereas in France a functional difference has been institutionalized. Finally, the existence in the english speaking words of reference librarians specialized in each important area of knowledge facilitates these twinnings.

Reference librarians have natural correspondence in the lecturers and teachers who teach this discipline, whereas in France even if they have specialized functions in a library, librarians are statetarily presented as generalists. Even if recent surveys show that librarians tend to think, estimate that they are more and more integrated into the University, it is very difficult for them to make this rule respected. The documentary policy of the university is not always clear or clearly announced. A recent survey by the association of the directors of university libraries has tried to evaluate the quality of relations established between the university libraries and the computerized resource centers of universities. In a number of cases it reveals a reciprocal insatisfaction and an ignorance of complementary competencies that are in certain cases interchangeable. In France it is very rare to see a chief librarian being asked to exercise the responsibility of a computerized research center in a university, whereas the situation has become banal in the english speaking world.

Being the last speaker of the day, I will pass in a number of things that! would like to stress, and try to tell you how in front of the situation in univeristy libraries, we think that formation in a School like ours can help.

First, of course, if we want to have better chief librarians, I would say we need to have more, but that does not depend on the School. It depends on the general policy of the government. All the school can do is to give to future university librarians a better knowledge of the politics and the issues at stake inside the universities. The autonomy of universities has meant that librarians now do not depend, as they did for years, from a ministry, from a vertical institution. Now they are partners inside the university at the same level of univeristy life, they have to find their place in that world, there is no other. We have to prepare them to that.

Second, we have to encourage them to develop a specific scholar interest apart from information science itself. Up until now students who had started a thesis work in a field that was not information science were discouraged or were prohibited in fact to continue that work during their stay in ENSSIB. This is not the case anymore. We decided that a few months ago, it will be effective starting this year. We think it is important that in the case a student can have a double competence;, one in information science and another in any field of knowledge we should encourage him.

Finally we think that we should train them to be able to teach the use of modern documentary research tools not only to students but to all university personnel. There is a teaching function of librarians inside universities towards they have to be prepared if they want to be respected partners in the university.

To me these goals, and this will be my conclusion, it is essential that in ENSSIB librarianship be conceived in an international prospect. We have to fight our parochial

tendencies, to aim at a competitive librarianship, library problems are not the same the world over but they are compatible and we all learn and profit from comparison. One of the advantages of being part of the university system has been for us the ability to use the cooperative habits of the scholarly community. First and particularly for research purposes, in 1995 for example ENSSIB organized an international symposium on the economics of information with 20 foreign speakers out of a total of 30. In May 1997 with the Consortium of European Research Libraries a conference on the dissemination of ancient book collections in Europe called the Travelling Book. We have research programs with the European Union on subjects as diverse as the developments of use a machine interface or automatic indexing of the Arabic language. In teaching also, we try to balance the knowledge of the French situation with the experience of foreign countries. I have already mentioned the geographical range of internships that we offer our students. We also value the presence of foreign students that is a special diploma that is opened to them.

We also have exchange programs in the Socrates framework and we will be very happy, of course, to enroll Greek students in these programs. I was very happy to see that this internationalist approach was shared by the organization of the Greek academic libraries and I take this opportunity to thank the organizers for everything I have heard and what I will learn tomorrow.

Thank you very much.