

EDITORIAL

LIS Pedagogy in the "New Normal" Learning Environment

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Several months into pandemic, people and institutions all over the world have done various measures to curb the spread of COVID-19. In the Philippines, besides public health and the economy, one of the most affected sectors is education. Schools and universities have launched distance and flexible learning modalities accompanied by applicable platforms to continue the learning of the students while ensuring their safety. This is no different for colleges and universities offering library and information science degrees in the undergraduate and graduate levels. In the midst of closed libraries and other cultural institutions such as museums, archives, and local studies centers due to the ongoing community health protocols, the LIS schools continue their role in providing education and training to their students who are set to become librarians, information professionals, archivists, and cultural workers in the near future.

From the early beginnings of library education in 1914, the Philippines at present has around 80 LIS schools, which offer either or both the Bachelor of Library and Information Science and Master of Library and Information Science degree programs (Professional Regulation Commission, 2019). Continuous developments in the curricula and required qualifications and expertise of teachers have been in place through the years. Advances in LIS education are also seen in the increasing number of students and

academic institutions establishing LIS degree programs. To guarantee the quality of subjects, and pedagogical methods and resources used by LIS teachers, organizations such as the Council of Deans and Heads of LIS Schools (CODHLIS) and Philippine Association of Teachers of Library and Information Science, Inc. (PATLS) underscore the collaboration among the member schools to actively find ways on how to help one another, especially the students. This collaboration has become more evident during this pandemic wherein both teachers and students grapple with issues regarding free access to online learning materials, proficiency in the usage of various online tools and learning platforms, formulation of appropriate class activities and assessment tools, carrying out remote laboratory and practicum/internship, and performing research mentorship.

The first semester of academic year 2020-2021 marked the first time that remote learning was widely implemented in higher education institutions (Joaquin et al., 2020), including LIS schools. With this drastic change in the delivery of learning, LIS teachers faced the challenge of adopting remote learning modalities and methods for their courses. To get the sentiments of LIS teachers as they transition from face-to-face teaching to remote learning, CODHLIS organized an online meeting held last May 29, 2020, which was attended by LIS educators from various schools in the

country. Topics discussed in the said meeting were issues and concerns encountered by students and teachers in remote learning and the need to revise the learning outcomes of certain courses in the LIS curriculum to accommodate the changes in the delivery of learning.

To prepare teachers for remote learning delivery, most universities held various online training sessions and workshops about remote learning. For example, the University of the Philippines System conducted a series of webinars on remote learning, wherein topics included recalibration of course content, appropriate assessments, and ensuring the mental health and well-being of students. Aside from recalibrating the objectives and learning outcomes of courses, teachers were also required to prepare *course packs*—a compendium of learning resources comprising of a course guide, study guides for each topic in a course, lecture notes, and learning assessments (e.g., activities, exercises). Depending on the policies of the universities, these completed course packs were required to be distributed to the students before or at the start of the semester, either in print or electronic format through the learning management system (e.g., Moodle, Google Classroom) procured by the university. The need to make the course packs available in print format aside from electronic format, stems from the reality that not all students have the necessary equipment and stable internet connectivity in their respective residences to attend synchronous class meetings and accomplish the requirements of the course, especially during the months leading to the first semester and the first few months of the semester. Likewise, LIS teachers had to learn how to utilize various software to effectively teach their students, such as videoconference software (e.g., Zoom, Google Meet), learning management systems, video recording and editing software (for those who are creating video recordings of their lectures), and digital whiteboard software. Also, the conduct of internship/on-the-job training courses was adjusted due to the pandemic and prevailing community quarantine guidelines, which resulted to LIS schools turning to alternative internship programs, wherein students are to accomplish certain deliverables for the host institution through online, such as on-going projects or similar endeavors. In addition, accomplishing the thesis as final

requirement for the degree program is a challenging undertaking in this setup. Presentation of proposals and final defense were delivered via videoconference, and the conduct of literature review and data gathering were undertaken through online means. The abovementioned modifications in the traditional teaching and learning structure had been and will most likely be implemented and exercised in the next coming months until such time that it will be safe for everyone to gather again in schools, colleges, and universities. These changes have visibly affected both students and teachers alike, as they struggle to adapt to the remote learning environment, while coping with the harsh realities of living under community quarantine.

As all of us do not know when this pandemic will come to an end, we are resiliently striving to look for avenues and approaches to support each other and make the entire LIS community withstand and overcome this crisis. Substantial adjustments have been made to accommodate the learning requirements and needs of our students and teachers as well. As teachers, we must be acquainted with the students' circumstances in setting our priorities in terms of teaching strategies, content delivery, and evaluation. This pandemic has taught us the value of cooperation, flexibility, and compassion—and these should remain in and with us even when the pandemic is over.

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