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The Future of Library Education in Brazil: Challenges and Opportunities

The Future of Library Education in Brazil: Challenges and Opportunities

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ABSTRACT:

After a comprehensive study in all the Brazilian municipalities aiming to analyze the quality and number of existing libraries, the Brazilian government passed a law in 2010 that provides about the universalization of libraries in the teaching institutions in the country, especially in elementary teaching schools, both in the government and private institutions. Owing to this, the country is faced with the pressing need of building 130 thousand libraries until 2020, which means building 34 units a day. Likewise, an emergency proposal is necessary to prepare librarian professionals capable of managing such spaces. As from a historical view of the evolution of the libraries and of librarianship courses in Brazil, our aim is to discuss the current demands and the possibilities of capacity-building of professionals to act in library spaces, observing the existing courses at technical, undergraduate and graduate (*strictu sensu* master and doctoral) levels and, lastly, the present proposal of forming librarians by means of distance education.

Keywords: Library education, Brazilian Law, library professionals, school libraries

1 INTRODUCTION

Brazil is a country with continental magnitude, marked by cultural, social and economic diversity. In this context, continuous investments in the areas of great social and economic impact, such as basic sanitation, health, education and promoting the quality of life of the population are crucial and demand

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permanent care.

According to the Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics – IBGE, Brazil has about 194 million inhabitants, its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) reached US$ 2.223 trillion in 2012 and the per capita income is US$ 11,303 (BRASIL, 2012).

In educational terms, Brazilian education has achieved significant improvements in its indicators. About 51.5 million students attend basic education. This number also includes students in the technical education, special education (for people with disabilities) as well as young and adult education modalities. Brazil currently has 194,939 basic education schools[3].

The Brazilian government has heavily invested in structuring agencies of national comprehensiveness based on educational programs and projects, along with establishing a set of standards and laws.

These actions include the Accessible School Program, Literate Brazil and Pro-Literacy Programs. To foster higher education formation, it established the Brazilian Open University System, which offers higher education (undergraduate and graduate) courses, in the distance education (DE) modality, benefiting the population segments that have difficulty in accessing quality education. There are about seven million undergraduate and graduate students attending 2,016 higher education institutions.

The Brazilian government also established the National Program for Fostering Reading and the National Library at School Program, which aim to promote access to culture and to foster Reading among students and teachers, by distributing collections of literary, research and reference works (Brasil, 2013).

However, maybe the most important governmental measure regarding education was passing Law nº 12244 in 2010, which provides about the compulsory universalization of school libraries in the country (Lei, 2010).

The Law provides that, by 2020, all the elementary schools, be they government or private, must have a library with at least one book per student. This means that, in seven years, Brazil will have to build 128 thousand new libraries, i.e., 39 libraries a day [4].

Besides this impressive goal, the number of library professionals to be formed and that are capable of managing such spaces and services still have to be calculated – the country will need at least 178 thousand new librarians by 2020.

Therefore, faced with the Law requirements, the aim of this work is to discuss the situation of the Brazilian libraries and the formation of its librarians.

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[3] BRASIL. *Federal Government*. Brasília: 2010. http://www.brasil.gov.br/sobre/educacao

[4] ALL FOR EDUCATION. Brasília, DF, 2013 http://www.todospelaeducacao.org.br/comunicacao-e-midia/noticias/25630/para-cumprir-lei-brasil-precisa-construir-39-libraries-escolares-por-dia/

The study is conducted as from a revision of the historical evolution of the libraries and of the librarianship courses in Brazil. The central idea is to discuss the current demands and the possibilities of forming professionals to act in libraries, observing the courses at technical and higher education, undergraduate and graduate (stricto-sensu master and doctorate) levels, as well as forming librarians by means of distance education.

2 HISTORY OF THE BRAZILIAN LIBRARY

Discovered in 1500, Brazil was a Portugal colony, turning into an independent monarchy in 1822 and soon becoming a republic in 1889. All this rapid change occurred due to the Portuguese royal Family strategically moving to Brazil in 1808, owing to the Napoleonic wars.

The Portuguese royal family brought along the Portugal Royal Library, which was installed in the city of Rio de Janeiro and years later became the National Library[5].

In parallel with the installation of this important institution, school libraries started to be established in the country, especially in Jesuit schools, the aim of which was to catechize native Indians and to instruct settlers. Along the centuries, public libraries were also established, initially in the State of Bahia, later in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and other states.

The first National Municipal Public Library Census was held in 2009 by the Ministry of Culture which revealed that 79% of the 5,585 Brazilian municipalities had at least one public library. There are 4,412 public libraries. In 13% of the cases, they were still at implementation or reopening stage, whereas 8% were closed, extinct or had never existed. Considering the operating ones, Brazil has only one public library for every 33 thousand inhabitants, a very low average as compared to France, which has a library for every 2,500 inhabitants[6].

Besides the public libraries, Brazil currently has 52,634 school libraries, 2,165 university libraries and about 10 thousand community libraries.

Yet, according to a statement by the President of the Federal Librarianship Council (CFB), "90% of the 5,796 registered public libraries do not count on an adequate collection, do not meet the population demands or count on capable professionals."

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[5] The National Library is the depository of the Brazilian bibliographic and documental collection. Considered by UNESCO the seventh largest National Library in the world, it is Latin America largest library (NATIONAL LIBRARY FOUNDATION, 2006). Among its many responsibilities, are those of preserving, updating and disseminating a collection of over eight million items, an ever increasing collection, as from donations, acquisitions, as well as legal deposit.

[6] CENPEC. National Municipal Public Library Census. http://www.cenpec.org.br/biblioteca/educacao/estudos-e-pesquisas/censo-nacional-das-bibliotecas-publicas-municipais

Only 26.7% of the Pre-Elementary Education schools count on a library in their structure. In the case of Elementary Education, this percentage rises to 35.7% and, in Secondary Education, to 72.9%.

Faced with the framework presented here and referring to Law nº 12244, aforementioned, and after two years of the Law enforcement, there has been little improvement concerning the installation of its new libraries.

Moreover, several movements originated in the librarian and professor classes in the area are seeking to define parameters for building school libraries to meet the current social and cultural demands. One of these is the "Temporary Committee for School and Public Libraries", recently established by the CFB, articulating actions to establish and to develop policies that allow complying with the technical, social and political responsibilities of this typology of libraries in Brazil" (letter from the entity).

Other actions developed by the CFB concern the elaboration of documents with recommendations about public policies in school libraries in national ambit, activities towards acknowledging and politically representing the profession before the existing authorities at the municipal, state and federal levels, events and different actions regarding courses and disciplines.

From the point of view of professional formation, the general framework was founded on the very evolution of librarianship teaching in Brazil, described as follows.

3   EVOLUTION OF LIBRARIANSHIP TEACHING IN BRAZIL

In 1911, aiming to bridge the gap of employees with capacity to organize the collection of the National Library in Rio de Janeiro, the first Librarianship course in Latin America and the third in the world was established, following the École de Chartres (France) model.

The first group graduated in 1915, having one and a half years of theoretical and practical formation. The practical part was conducted at the very National Library, using its services, considered a standard. Hence, in the beginning, lessons were given so as to form employees to work with the foundation collection: being a librarian was being a learned person, who knew and could well organize a specific collection to aid the reader who went there to conduct a specific research.

With the establishment of the Department of Culture and Recreation of the Municipal Government of São Paulo in 1922, bibliophile Rubens Borba de Moraes was summoned to modernize the Municipal Public Library and to establish a library network in the city of São Paulo.

From then on, libraries started to be understood as centers for irradiating civility and instruments of social development, more specifically "this new

dimension comprehended the need, the opportunity and the urgency of forming good readers to build the national intelligence. This presupposition required a live function from library" (Galindo, 2012, p. 33).

Experience showed Borba de Moraes the need to form skilled professionals for the libraries in Brazil. Together with Adelpha Silva Rodrigues de Figueiredo (1894-1966), in 1936, he organized the elementary Librarianship course of the Department of Culture of the Municipal Government of São Paulo at the *Mackenzie College*, inspired by the North-American model, which emphasized the technical aspects of the profession. He also founded the Paulista Librarianship Association, starting the associative actions of the class, as well as a new Librarianship course at the School of Sociology and Politics in 1940.

Other Librarianship courses started to be offered in the country, even though they did not have common standards that regulated the subject or the duration or the curriculum framework. Due to that, the Brazilian Federation of Librarian Associations (FEBAB), created in 1959, sought the normalization of the courses, obtained from the Federal Education Council, which set the curriculum and the minimum duration of the Librarianship courses in Brazil. Over the years, the courses have been restructured, adding or replacing contents, disciplines and curriculum frameworks (Oliveira, Carvalho & Souza, 2009).

The proliferation of higher education courses in the country hence required the regulation of the profession. Thus, the Federal Council and regional librarian councils were established in the different Brazilian states, the professors' association as well as the Brazilian Association of Education in Information Science (ABECIN) and the research one, National Association for Research and Graduate Studies in Information Science and Librarianship (ANCIB).

Today, there are legally structured courses for forming professionals to act in libraries at technical level, of (presence and distance)higher education (undergraduate studies and BA in librarianship), as well as *strictu sensu* (master and doctorate) graduate studies in librarianship and information science.

3.1 TECHNICAL LIBRARIANSHIP COURSES

In Brazil, the technical-professionalizing courses are included at the secondary education level. They aim at capacity-building, requalifying or reinserting the student in the market, by teaching theoretical and practical contents in the different activities of the productive sector.

Inserted in the "Educational and Social Development" axis is the library technician course. Lasting two or three years, the course forms professional to act in the treatment, recovery and dissemination of information in physical or virtual environments. Their technical profile allows individuals to perform auxiliary routine activities at libraries or of documentation and information centers. Their

role also includes serving users, managing the collection and accounting for the conservation of documents and equipment [7].

There are few professionalizing technical librarian courses in the country, offered in capitals, such as Porto Alegre, Curitiba, Maceió and São Paulo. One of the best and oldest ones (started in 2001) is that of the National Service for Trade Learning located in São Paulo.

Anyway, the Brazilian legislation does not allow library technicians to act on their own, once only librarians are allowed to manage libraries[8]. Exerting the profession is only allowed to those with a higher degree in librarianship.

3.2 LIBRARIANSHIP GRADUATE COURSES

There are currently 43 Librarianship courses in Brazil. A more expressive number of courses (70%) linked to public (state and federal) universities is verified, unevenly covering the whole country.

The courses are concentrated in the capitals, the Southeast region holding 45% of them, followed by the South region, with 10%. These are the two Brazilian regions presenting the highest development and, naturally, greater demographic concentration. With day and evening courses, the yearly number of places is close to three thousand students.

Concerning the yearly formation of professionals with a higher degree in librarianship, the table below shows the situation in 2009.

Table 1 - Librarianship courses offered in Brazil

Region	Institution		Places offered	
City/State	Legal Status		Period	
	Government	Private	Morning	Evening
General Total				
North Region (5%)	2	-	86	30
Northeast Region (10%)	10	-	277	230
Southeast Region (45%)	8	10	502	1073
South Region (15%)	5	1	115	190
Midwest Region (10%)	3	1	130	130
Total	28	12	1110	1653

Source: BRASIL. MEC, 2010

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[7] BRASIL. MEC. *Catálogo Nacional de Cursos Técnicos*. http://pronatec.mec.gov.br/cnct/et_apoio_educacional/t_library.php

[8] Law nº 4084, of June 30 1962 provides about the librarian profession and regulates its exercise and Law nº 9674, of June 25 1998 provides about exerting the Librarian profession and determines other provisions.

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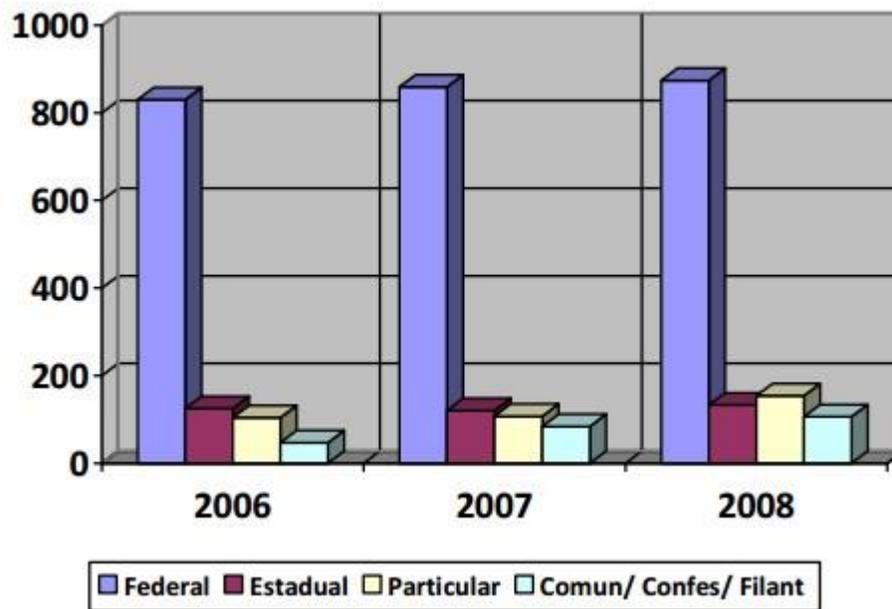
Figure 1 – Number of students concluding their Librarianship undergraduate studies (2006-2008)
Source: BRASIL. MEC/INEP, 2006, 2007, 2008.

Despite inspected by the Ministry of Education, the program content and the curriculum of the Brazilian courses, with few exceptions, focus on a more generalist formation of the librarian professional, not particularly concentrating on any type of library (be it a school, public, university or specialized), or even of a specific theme (health information, public information, legal information, etc.).

About five years ago, this situation stimulated university movements to discuss a greater depth for librarianship formations, which resulted in some more specialized proposals, such as information management, library and society and information science.

Today, according to the CFB, there are an estimated 30 thousand capable librarians in Brazil, concentrated mainly in the South region of the country. The regions and states with a larger number of librarianship courses are also verified to be those with a greater concentration of professionals.

The graph below evidences the lack of professionals in some Brazilian states. (pg.8 of the DL document of the CFB).
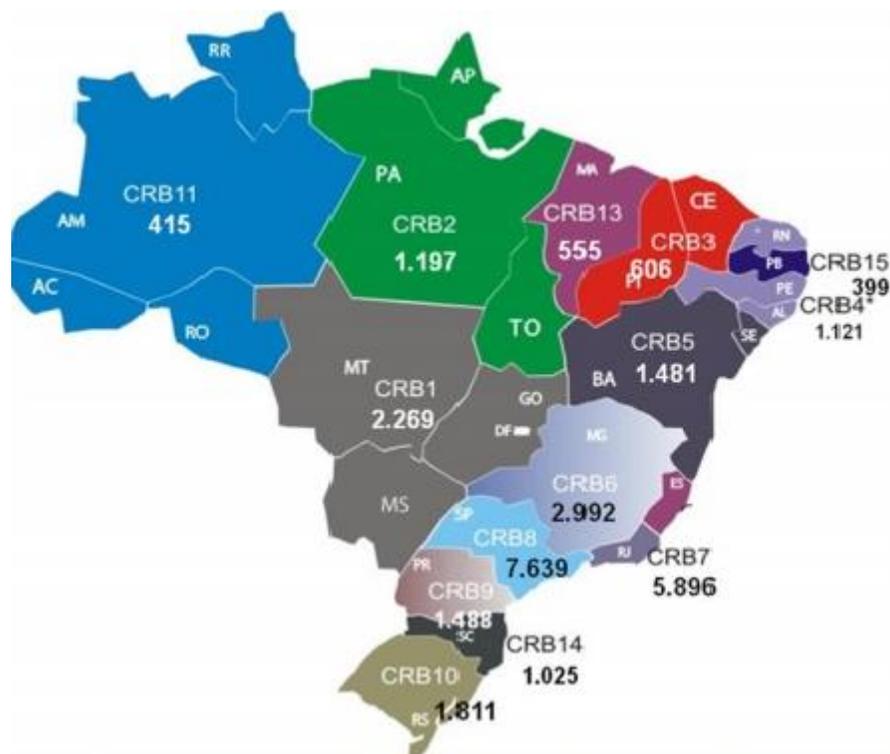
Figure 2 – Professionals registered in the CFB/CRB System
Source: Federal Council of Librarianship

3.3   GRADUATE PROGRAM IN INFORMATION SCIENCE

The graduate courses in the Librarianship area emerged after the specialization course created in 1954 by the then called Brazilian Institute of Bibliography and Documentation (IBBD), later denominated Brazilian Institute of Information in Science and Technology (IBICT).

Also in 1954, the Brazilian government established the CNPq (National Council for Scientific and Technological Development), one attribution of which was to "keep a relationship with domestic and foreign institutions for exchanging technical-scientific documentation" (Ferreira, 1999, p.6).

In 1970, the first Master's Course in the Librarianship area was established in the current IBICT. According to Barreto (1995), the creation of the course marked "the beginning of awareness, in Brazil, about the need of organizing and controlling information as a tool for the very development of science and technology."

Nevertheless, only in the 1990s did the expansion of the area occur, as a consequence of the change in names and of the supervision of the schools or departments and of Librarianship undergraduate courses, which caused a rearrangement of the librarian professional formation. These departments also

started to add professors not connected with Librarianship formation, to meet the new perspectives in the librarian professional formation.

Table 2 – Large Area: Applied Social Sciences
Area: Information Sciences

PROGRAM	INSTITUTION	STATES
LIBRARIANSHIP	UNIRIO	RJ
INFORMATION SCIENCE	UFBA, UFPB, UFPE, UEL, UFF, UFSC, USP, UNESP/MAR, UFRJ-IBICT	BA, PB, PE, PR, SC, SP
INFORMATION SCIENCES	UNB, UFMG	DF, MG
INFORMATION MANAGEMENT	UEL, UDESC	PR, SC
DOCUMENT AND ARCHIVE MANAGEMENT	UNIRIO	RJ

Source: CAPES, 2010

There are currently 15 graduate programs, at masters' and doctoral levels, in nine Brazilian states. According to the CNPq researchers and research team register, it is now possible to identify 68 research groups registered in the Information Science area, congregating 1071 researchers, 28 of them being foreigners (CNPq 2010 data).

In 2010, meeting the new demands provided by the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES) of the Ministry of Education, four professional master's courses in information science, information management and librarianship were established. The first professionals granted with that degree have recently entered the market.

3.4   DISTANCE LIBRARIAN FORMATION

Law 12244, aforementioned, and the Brazilian movement towards a decentralized higher education with the UAB support, favored the emergence of a new space for forming librarian professionals: distance education.

In 2010, CAPES, counting on the CFB aid, proposed the course, elaborated and approved a pedagogical proposal for the distance undergraduate librarianship course.

Russo, Fonseca and Barbalho (2012, p. 66), suggest that "the choice of the Librarianship area was strategically defined by the recent movements conducted by the federal government, which has perceived the importance of the influence it can exert regarding the increase in the interest for reading, in the development of citizenship and in broadening the knowledge of the Brazilian population."

The proposal is organized around six thematic axes (starting from theoretical foundations and management of units and services), taking 2,500 hours and eight academic semesters to be concluded.

In 2011, three Brazilian universities (South, Southeast and North regions) had their proposals approved by MEC. Two of them started their activities in the following year: University of Caxias do Sul (200 places), University Salgado de Oliveira (2000 places).

In 2012, aiming to foster and to facilitate the establishment of new courses, CAPES opened a public announcement regarding the preparation of didactical material to be used by distance courses in the area.

5   FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Faced with data of such magnitude and observing this country of continental size, the distance education strategy is observed to be able to yield expressive results in the short term. Following the example of countries, such as Australia and Spain, among others, this teaching modality has shown to be quite efficient.

Brazil today counts on 30 thousand librarians operating in public, school, community and university libraries. For the over 197 thousand basic and higher teaching educational institutions, there are 178 thousand professional job places, if we consider that each educational institution will have to have a library and a professional librarian.

As can be seen, the country has been getting structured – albeit slowly – to reach a higher and more qualified level of information access services to the population and to students at all levels.

In the same way as the Brazilian society has been legalizing the physical existence of libraries and the preparation of professional librarians to meet this future demand, the country has also discussed the revision of its copyright legislation and proposed an open access to information policy and to the knowledge produced in research and in teaching institutions.

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