Library and Information Science Education in the Arab World

Lokman I. Meho, Ph.D.

University Librarian

American University of Beirut

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Historical background

- First library school was founded at Cairo University (1951), second at Omdurman Islamic University (1966)

- Until mid-1970s, Arab countries relied on:

  - Training provided or sponsored by local library associations, ministries of culture or education, academic and national libraries, and local, regional, and international organizations (e.g., UNESCO)

  - Education overseas, especially Egypt, France, the UK, and the US

Barriers that impeded the development of LIS education in the Arab world

- Librarianship was neither recognized nor well understood in the region

- Concept that librarians needed academic training was an alien idea

- Lack of sufficient local faculty to teach in LIS programs

- Lack of professional literature including teaching material in Arabic

- Heavy reliance on expatriates and foreign librarians

Number of Active LIS Programs Founded per Decade: 1950-Present
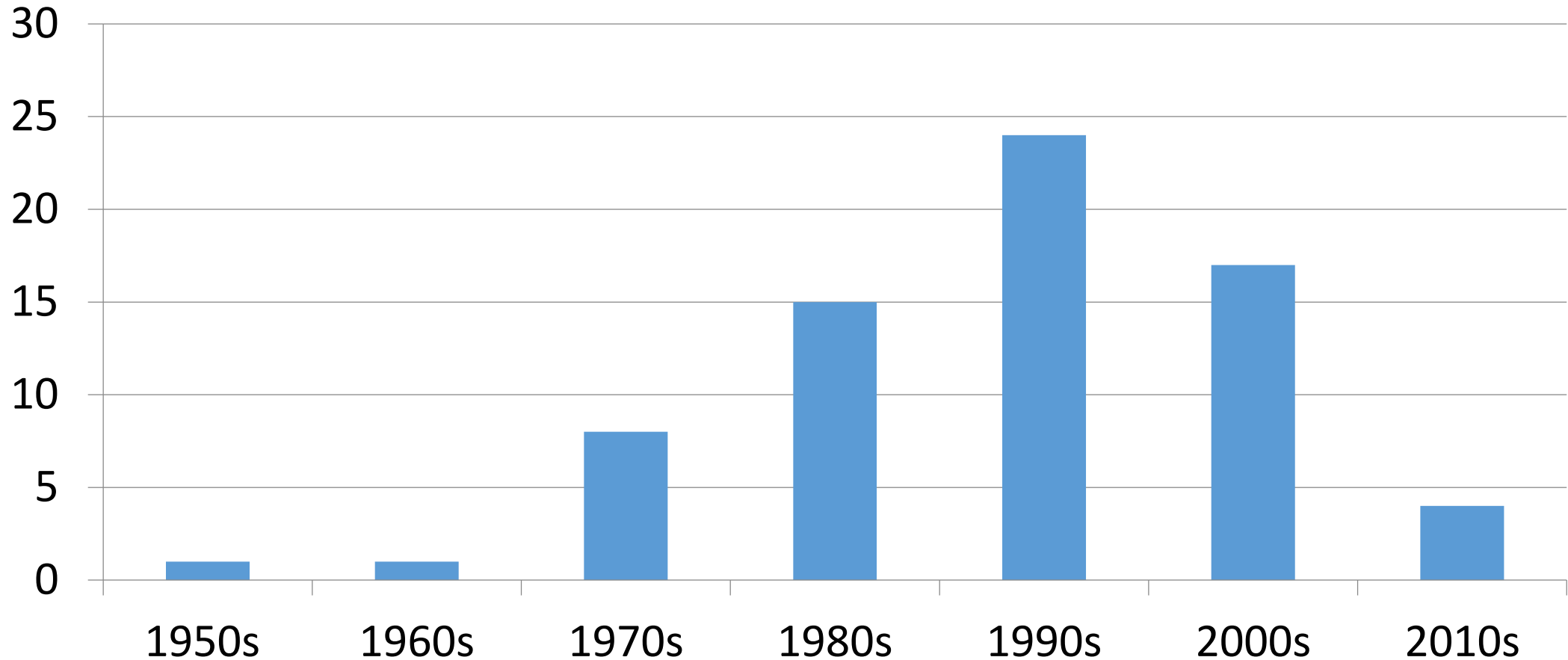
Factors that contributed to increase in LIS programs in the Arab world: Significant increase in need of people to run and manage the thousands of information centers that began to rapidly emerge after the 1950s

Number of active LIS programs in each country

Countries	Number of LIS programs
Egypt	22
Sudan	10
Saudi Arabia	6
Algeria	5
Jordan, Libya	4
Iraq	3
Kuwait, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Yemen	2
Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates	1

Recommendations for the future growth and prosperity of Arab LIS programs

- Include more information science content in curricula (digitization, IT, online services, etc.)

- Apply modern teaching methods and diversify curricula (almost all programs in Egypt have the same curriculum)

- Provide more professional orientation for programs (internships, hands-on training, work-based student assistantships, etc.)

- Advance graduate-level LIS education
  - Most LIS programs are still mainly at the undergraduate level where LIS content is minimal

- Encourage or make it a requirement for students to enhance their language and communication skills

More recommendations for future growth and prosperity

- Improve faculty-student ratio (more qualified faculty and less crowded classrooms)

- Offer faculty incentives for excelling and provide them with opportunities for professional development

- Improve information technology infrastructure (computer labs, equipment, and software, digitization labs, electronic and smart classrooms, etc.)

- Improve library research and teaching material (books, journals, databases)

More recommendations for future growth and prosperity

- Build stronger professional associations and develop and implement national and regional accreditation standards

- Advocate independence from or enhance resource-sharing with other larger academic units
  - 2/3 of programs are still departments within not so hospitable environments (e.g., arts & humanities colleges)

- Build good, informative websites for the LIS programs

- Market or publicize the value and significance of the libraries and the profession

  - Most students have never heard of the field before enrolling in the LIS programs

  - Most people are unaware of the many services that libraries offer