Face-to-Face with Anna Maria Tammaro, University of Parma – Partner of Digital Library Learning, Erasmus Mundus
Thought Leadership on Digital Library Learning

Digital Libraries are a new research topic, opening up important opportunities for a multi-faceted approach spanning information seeking behaviour and social processes such as learning and knowledge sharing, in addition to Digital Libraries as collections of content that need curation (collection, description, preservation, retrieval and so forth). Digital Library Learning (DILL), a two-year international master programme funded by the European Union under the Erasmus Mundus programme, is chartered with taking forward an interdisciplinary approach to take scholarship to the next level. The Programme has brought together three European partners (pictured from left to right): Tallinn University (Estonia), Oslo University College (Norway) and Parma University (Italy). Anna Maria Tammaro from Parma University shares her thought leadership on the programme and its synergy with DL.org.

What is the main focus of the DILL international master programme?

DILL brings together the best experiences in digital libraries teaching and research both in Library and Information Science (LIS) and Computer science. DILL students with different backgrounds are recruited globally.. During their internship in different European countries, they gain experience in different

types of digital libraries. DILL aims to be interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary, thus adapting to all these different environments, training students to be flexible and use research methods to apply a professional approach and most effective orientation. In a nutshell, DILL is educating the leaders of future DLs. Students have to have a vision of services that can be provided by adopting digital technologies, but they also have to take stock of their individual starting points, which can sometimes be difficult and challenging circumstances. Users and their contexts are the focus of the Parma modules, together with the best research results from the DL space.

What specific competences does it help develop and what value-add does it offer in the evolving DL landscape?

DILL seeks to develop technology-based competencies, transversal competencies and library related competencies. "Competencies" are broadly defined here, not as a specific skill set but as learning outcomes we want students to achieve by the end of their DILL Master (http://dill.hio.no). LIS competencies are focused on understanding user needs and activities, together with the main principles of collection development and designing user-centric services. The main value-add lies in educating professionals well placed to support users, also in a non-"institutionalised" DL.

You played a very active role in the Seminar. What are the main drivers behind the synergy with DL.org?

This synergy has its roots in the Seminar "IT profiles and curricula in libraries" held in Parma in 2005 in close collaboration with the EU's DELOS Network of Excellence. The outcomes of this initiative are being taken forward by DL.org, recognising that research and education have much to gain from

working more closely together, sharing and applying research findings in education. The DELOS Reference Model has been used in DILL since its inception. Binding together research and education will become even more important should the DILL PhD programme be approved. In this respect, DILL could make an important contribution to research projects by bringing into sharper relief knowledge on the educational needs of DL professionals and guidance on teaching-learning approaches to ensure research outcomes inform learning material in the most effective way possible.

What was the main message you conveyed during your talk at the Seminar?

DL is an emerging area of research, where we continue to use analogies as in the traditional library. However, a number of issues are yet to be clarified. The subject can be very broad, ranging from digital library curation, which is more technical in focus, to digital scholarship, which is related to different organisations of information. Furthermore, hurdles that need to be cleared include conflicting paradigms, such as disintermediation. Taken in isolation from each other, LIS and IT approaches have a number of constraints. While interdisciplinary convergence is needed, it will not suffice in overcoming all the constraints. This is where a multidisciplinary approach comes into play, encompassing disciplines such as linguistics, economics, psychology, and semiotics, among others.

What were the main discussion points during the round table?

The discussion brought to the fore a range of perspectives with one underlying theme, that is, that the characteristics of different Digital Libraries both converge and diverge. More events like this are needed where participants are chartered with exploring a range of discussion points, building bridges and consensus on the best way forward.

In my view, the participation of a Master student in the roundtable brought the most value-add. Marcial Batiancila effectively conveyed the needs of current and future professionals that educational and research programmes need to take on board.

How do you see Education in DL evolving over the next few years?

DL education is growing, so more eLearning programmes will be needed alongside innovative ways of delivering courses, moving forward. Internship also should become an essential part of DL education. However, we also need to work towards a stronger theoretical foundation basis. Whether this will be Human-Computer Interaction (HCI), knowledge management, or communication theory is, for now, an open question.

Stephanie Parker, Trust-IT Services Ltd

Profile - Anna Maria Tammaro

Anna Maria Tammaro is a professor at Parma University, where she has served as Rector Delegate for eLearning since 2008 and Local Coordinator of the Master Erasmus Mundus Digital Library Learning since 2007. Her international expertise in the field of Digital Libraries has been recognised through her roles as Research Fellow at the Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois, U.S. and as Education and Research Division Chair as a Member of Governing Board and of Standing Committee with IPA-International Publishers Association on behalf of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA). Her publications and research interests span DL curriculum; quality assurance and inter-university, international educational programmes and eLearning.