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A careful blend of general and vocational education:

Is this still necessary in the education and training of the modern LIS professional?

Prof. Jaya Raju (PhD)

Department of Library and Information Studies

jayar@dut.ac.za

Presentation outline



- Introduction
- An evolving discipline
- General education debate revisited
- Empirical study
- A blend of general and vocational education
- Conclusion and Recommendation

Introduction

- Purpose
- An evolving discipline
- The debate revisited
- Empirical study

An evolving discipline



- Responding to a changing information and technological environment
- Library science vs information science
- Emerging information market
- “...*the field is changing: the boundaries, players, capital and rules of competition are all in a flux.*”
(Van House and Sutton 1996: 145)

The debate revisited



- Value of general education in higher education
- Liberal arts philosophy vs vocational philosophy
- General education in ILS education and training

Empirical study



- Among LIS employers and educators – South Africa
- Majority view: general education is essential in the provision of LIS services
- Some comments

Empirical study

Some comments



- good service is dependent on the general knowledge and the intellect of the individual providing the service
- a lack of general education is a serious impediment in LIS services
- information workers without a broad knowledge base are not effective

Empirical study

Some comments



- information work not only requires ‘techniques’ but also general and subject knowledge to deal with in-depth consultation and guidance
- human and social sciences and even natural sciences provide a good foundation on which professional education may be built
- general education allows individuals to go beyond routine processes and make critical decisions and lead institutions

A blend of general and vocational education



- Modern information professional operates in:
 - a knowledge driven economy
 - powered by globalization and rapidly advancing ICTs

- Dynamic context necessitates lifelong learning embodied in general education

- Contemporary ILS curriculum **MUST** integrate lifelong learning and vocational study

A blend of general and vocational education



- “ *...a familiarity with the body of knowledge and methods of inquiry of the arts and sciences and a capacity to integrate knowledge across experience and discipline may have far more lasting value in such a changing world than specialized techniques and training, which can quickly become outmoded...*”
(Barker 2000: 7).

Conclusion



- General education is as essential as vocational preparation for the current LIS work environment

Recommendation

- The modern ILS curriculum:
 - to allow graduates to meet the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities presented by a dynamic information landscape located within a knowledge based, technology driven and global economy
- must capture a careful blend of general and vocational education.



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Thank you!