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A new era: Exploring the possibilities and expanding the boundaries

The BOBCATSSS 2023 conference took place in Oslo, Norway, from 25 to 27 January 2023. The conference theme, 'A new era: Exploring the possibilities and expanding the boundaries', aimed to explore the possibilities for services and programming, as well as the expansion of physical and virtual boundaries in this new era for libraries, archives and information services. The theme reflects the trend that libraries, archives and information services of all types are exploring opportunities to promote access to information, culture and knowledge through the development of their collections, as well as serve as meeting places and foster knowledge-exchange processes. As will be explored in depth in this special issue, understanding these trends demands consideration for the digital and physical provision of programming and services, as well as the information needs of special groups.

BOBCATSSS 2023 was organized by Oslo Metropolitan University in collaboration with University College London and the University of Borås, and marked the conference's 31st year of excellence in promoting library and information science (LIS) research in Europe and beyond. The conference received over 50 submissions for presentations, posters and workshops from LIS students, faculty members, researchers and practitioners globally. While the majority of the submissions came from LIS students in various European universities, the organizers also received submissions from faculty members and researchers outside of Europe. Committees, primarily composed of students and some faculty from the organizing universities, as well as universities internationally, were involved in every aspect of the conference planning. This included the review of abstracts and papers, organization and creation of the conference programme, selection and invitation of keynote speakers, budgeting, website and media promotion, and compilation and publication of the conference proceedings.

As noted, for over three decades, the BOBCATSSS conference has been a prestigious European initiative for LIS students, fostering academic and intercultural communication, exchanging best practices, and bridging traditional and innovative forms of education. BOBCATSSS, founded by Professor Ruud Bruyns (also known as Father BOBCATSSS) along with other European colleagues, represents one of the many contributions of EUCLID (European Association for Library and Information Education and Research) to the LIS community (see, https://bobcatsss.info/ for more information about the association). The name BOBCATSSS is an acronym representing the university network, with the letters denoting the initial letters of the cities where the universities that initiated the BOBCATSSS symposium are located: Budapest (Hungary), Oslo (Norway), Barcelona (Spain), Copenhagen (Denmark), Amsterdam (The Netherlands), Tampere (Finland), Stuttgart (Germany), Szombathely (Hungary) and Sheffield (England). In recent years, additional members have joined the network from Borås (Sweden), Riga (Latvia), Moscow (Russia), Tallinn (Estonia), Krakow, Torun and Warsaw (Poland), Sofia (Bulgaria), Kharkiv (Ukraine), Ljubljana (Slovenia), Bratislava (Slovakia), Prague (Czech Republic), Osijek and Zadar (Croatia), Berlin and Potsdam (Germany), Porto (Portugal), Ankara (Turkey) and Parma (Italy). In 2019, EUCLID was renamed to BOBCATSSS Association, acknowledging the name's wider recognition. Since its inception and continuing to the present day, the BOBCATSSS symposium has been organized and managed by students from various LIS departments at European universities spanning both eastern and western Europe.

Thanks to the efforts of the conference organizers and the support of Steven Witt, editor of *IFLA Journal*, selected papers from BOBCATSSS 2023 are featured in this special issue. This special issue gives the participating students, along with LIS researchers and professionals, the opportunity to engage – many for the first time – in scholarly communication through the publication of peer-reviewed articles. The authors from the conference submitted their papers to *IFLA Journal*, following its guidelines and undergoing a rigorous peer-review process. Out of 28 submissions, 14 were accepted for publication in this special issue. Two other papers submitted to the special issue are under consideration for a regular

issue of *IFLA Journal*. The BOBCATSSS community values highly the support provided by the journal to the BOBCATSSS community and future LIS professionals.

In relation to the conference theme – exploring the possibilities for services and programming, as well as the expansion of physical and virtual boundaries, in this new era for libraries, archives and information services – three themes emerged in the accepted papers. The first concerns the accessibility and inclusiveness of libraries, archives and museums for various, often overlooked or underserved, user groups. The first article under this theme, 'Making libraries accessible: The vision of Access City Award winners', by Radoslav S Hristov, highlights good practices in providing access to libraries for people with disabilities and summarizes current library service trends for this broadly defined user group. The subsequent two articles address services and programming in relation to more specific groups. In 'On making libraries and museums more accessible for autistic people', Tirill Bjørkeli Svaler studies how libraries and museums can become more accessible and, in turn, more inclusive for autistic users. Based on Bjørkeli Svaler's investigation, a list of ideas for how to make library and museum spaces more suitable for autistic people is offered. Then, in 'Public library services for people with dementia: A study into students' perceptions', Tomislava Žilić and Sanjica Faletar present the findings from a study investigating Croatian LIS students' knowledge about dementia and their perceptions of the role of public libraries in developing dementia-friendly communities. This study responds to libraries' work in offering cognitive engagement and social inclusion events for people with dementia, as well as their efforts to provide information to caregivers and educate the general public about dementia. The final article within this theme, 'Prejudice but no pride: The Portuguese Universal Decimal Classification's labelling of sexual orientation', by Paulo Vicente, Ana Lúcia Terra, Maria Cristina Vieira de Freitas and Maria Manuela Tavares de Matos Cardoso, investigates the cultural and religious biases embedded in library collections and the resulting implications for library inclusiveness for the LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and others) community.

The second theme concerns the information behaviour of certain communities. The first article, 'Sexual orientation for the LGBTQ+ community: Information sources and barriers', by Marina Clavijo-Toledano, Laia Heredero-Cardona, Noelia Úbeda-Cano and Juan-José Boté-Vericad, explores the information access barriers faced by LGBTQ+ community members. Their study found that the participants preferred to use Internet resources to meet their information needs. In the second article under this theme, 'Expanding information behaviour boundaries: A study with religious leaders', Evandro Ribeiro Rodrigues and Ana Lúcia Terra report that religious leaders of Santo Daime required information to guide participants in spiritual programmes, deal with administrative issues, and strengthen religious knowledge and faith. The leaders indicated that they consulted various sources to meet their information needs, including interpersonal information networks. Lastly, the third article, 'Multicultural libraries: A study on the information behaviour of the Terena people, Brazil', by Lilian Aguilar Teixeira, Ana Lúcia Terra, Oswaldo Francisco de Almeida Júnior and Antônio Hilario Aguilera Urquiza, investigates the information behaviour of the indigenous Terena people. The study aims to develop a multicultural library model, trace the Terena's information profile, identify information mediators, and discuss the social role of information science in maintaining the Terena's identity within Brazilian society.

The third theme concerns the accessibility, representation, and inclusiveness of digital collections and environments. Within this theme, 'The role of users in the organization of digital information: A Portuguese experience in an academic museum and archive setting', by Patrícia Isabel Silva and Ana Lúcia Terra, highlights the importance and value of user participation in organizing digital collections based on a case study involving six users. The second article with this theme, by Ana Luísa Silva and Ana Lúcia Terra and entitled 'Cultural heritage on the Semantic Web: The Europeana Data Model', discusses the principles and technologies of Linked Data. It presents the Europeana Data Model, with two representation approaches, and addresses the challenges faced by cultural heritage institutions in adopting these data models. The contribution by Lara Díaz Martínez and Davinia Pérez López is titled 'A gender perspective in the design of a video-on-demand search engine'. They offer a prototype design for an advanced search engine within a video-on-demand platform to eliminate gender gaps, leading to an inclusive, satisfactory and pleasant user experience. In their article 'Open educational resources on preservation: An overview', Marija Milošević, Ines Horvat and Damir Hasenay provide an overview of the available open educational resources on preservation. Their study investigates open educational resource platforms, identifies relevant resources, and analyses them using an existing theoretical framework on preservation. In 'Integrating print reference materials,

curated digital collections, and information needs', by Olga Makarova and Katherine Ashcraft, the current status of print reference materials – mainly bibliographies – is examined. The authors propose solutions to improve their usability and appeal as dependable reference points for researchers. Marina Encheva, Anna Maria Tammaro, Gergana Yancheva, Plamena Zlatkova, Giulia Conti and Mari Maasilta discuss the perceptions of students and teachers with regard to a 'STEAM model for digital fluency skills', while the final article under this theme, 'Guidelines on assigning the subjects of theses and dissertations in repositories', by Mariângela Spotti Lopes Fujita and Jessica Cristina Panuto, explores how Brazilian university repositories guide subject representation in the self-archiving of their information resources. It highlights the value of the self-archiving process in the dissemination and broader access of scientific information.

The publication of this special issue sadly comes shortly after the passing of István Papp, one of the founding fathers of BOBCATSSS and a leading figure in the Hungarian as well as international LIS community. This special issue concludes with a tribute to István, 'In memoriam: István Papp, a librarian for all seasons', by his long-time collaborator, fellow BOBCATSSS founder and friend Ragnar Audunson.

The guest editorial board comprises Péter Murányi, a retired associate professor and the representative of Berzsenyi College, Szombathely, Hungary in 1994, one of the founding institutions of BOBCATSSS; Tania Todorova, a professor and former chair of the BOBCATSSS board, as well as BOBCAT of the Year 2023; Jamie Johnston, an associate professor and chair of BOBCATSSS 2023; and Nafiz Zaman Shuva, an assistant professor and chair of the Proceedings and Publication Committee of BOBCATSSS 2023. The members of the board extend their deep gratitude to all who served as reviewers for this special issue. We want to convey our sincere appreciation to the authors for their invaluable contributions to this special issue. Your dedicated efforts to investigate and illuminate the possibilities, as well as extend the boundaries, in this new era for libraries, archives and information services have significantly enriched the scholarly discourse. Through your insights and research, you play an essential role in shaping the future of the LIS profession, and we appreciate the impact of your work on the broader community.

We warmly invite students, faculty members, researchers and practitioners worldwide in the field of LIS to explore the contents of this special issue. Happy reading!

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