REFLECTIONS FROM AN ERASMUS+ TRAINEESHIP AT THE NATIONAL SZÉCHÉNYI LIBRARY

Sywar AYACHI
Marmara University, Institute of Turkish Studies
Department of Information and Records Management
sywarayachi@yahoo.com
https://orcid.org/0009-0007-1331-7719

ABSTRACT

This article examines the author's Erasmus+ traineeship experience at the Hungarian National Széchényi Library (OSZK) between 11 January and 12 March 2024, as part of their master's degree program in Information and Records Management at Marmara University. The Erasmus+ program, initiated by the European Union, aims to promote international collaboration and mobility in education. The traineeship provided the author with an opportunity to explore practical aspects of library and information science beyond theoretical realms. Tasks included engagement with digital preservation and GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums) standards department, as well as participation in organized visits to external institutions. Through these experiences, the author acquired valuable skills and knowledge, enhancing their professional development and solidifying career aspirations in academia. Furthermore, the author discussed the impact and benefits of the traineeship on both the host organization and the author himself.

Keywords: Erasmus+ Traineeship, OSZK, Digital Preservation, Metadata Management, Professional Development

ULUSAL SZÉCHÉNYI KÜTÜPHANESİNDE GERÇEKLEŞTİRİLEN ERASMUS+ STAJINDAN YANSIMALAR

ÖZ

Bu makale, yazarın Marmara Üniversitesi'nde Bilgi ve Belge Yönetimi yüksek lisans programı kapsamında 11 Ocak 2024-12 Mart 2024 tarihler arasında Macaristan Ulusal Széchényi Kütüphanesi'nde (OSZK) gerçekleştirilen Erasmus+ staj deneyimini incelemektedir. Avrupa Birliği tarafından başlatılan Erasmus+ programı, eğitimde uluslararası işbirliğini ve hareketliliği teşvik etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Staj, yazarın teorik alanların ötesinde kütüphane ve bilgi biliminde pratik yönleri keşfetme fırsatı sağlamıştır. Staj kapsamında dijital koruma ve GLAM (Galeriler, Kütüphaneler, Arşivler ve Müzeler) standartları departmanında çalışılmış ve diğer kurumlara düzenlenen ziyaretlere katılım sağlanmıştır. Bu deneyimlerle yazar, değerli beceriler ve bilgi kazanmış, mesleki gelişimini artırmış ve akademideki kariyer hedeflerini sağlamlaştırmıştır. Ayrıca, çalışmada gerçekleştirilen stajın hem ev sahibi kuruluş hem de yazar üzerindeki etkileri ve faydalarını tartışılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Erasmus+ stajı, OSZK, Dijital Koruma, Metaveri Yönetimi, Mesleki Gelişim

INTRODUCTION

As part of lifelong learning, the European Union introduced the "Erasmus" program in 1987 to foster closer collaboration among universities and higher education institutions across Europe. This initiative aimed to establish a structured and cohesive system for facilitating student exchanges across borders. Over the years, the program has expanded its scope, now known as "Erasmus+[1]." This comprehensive framework includes various former EU initiatives focused on promoting international cooperation and mobility in education, training, youth, and sports within Europe, and it has begun extending its reach beyond Europe's boundaries. According to the 2022 Erasmus+ annual report, the program had a total budget of €4 billion, with 26,000 projects, around 73,000 organizations, and nearly 1.2 million participants in mobility activities. Furthermore, Turkiye's statistics in the 2022 Erasmus+ annual report show that more than 40,000 Erasmus+ participants (staff and learners) traveled to Turkiye, while nearly 80,000 Erasmus+ participants (staff and learners) left Turkiye. (European Commission, 2023)

Fortunately, the author of this article is one of the beneficiaries of the Erasmus+ program in 2024. They are a master's degree student at Marmara University, Faculty of Science and Literature, Institute of Turkish Studies, Department of Information and Records Management. They had the opportunity to intern at the National Széchényi Library (OSZK)[2] in Budapest, Hungary. In this article, the author shares their experience as an Erasmus+ trainee at the OSZK. Firstly, they discuss the tasks carried out during the traineeship. Secondly, they mention the skills and learning outcomes. Furthermore, they present the impact and benefits of this traineeship on both the host organization and the trainee.

BACKGROUND

The Erasmus+ program presents an invaluable opportunity that no student should overlook if given the chance. Erasmus+ encompasses both Erasmus Education and Erasmus traineeships. Opting for the traineeship route allowed the author to explore the practical realities of being a librarian beyond the theoretical realm. The National Széchényi Library served as the host organization. The author's internship commenced on January 11, 2024, and concluded on March 12, 2024. Those two months were dedicated to learning, professional development, and continuous growth.

It is important to note that the traineeship was voluntary and did not involve any formal evaluation from the sending institution. Its objectives were solely focused on putting into practice the knowledge acquired in the field of information science, gaining practical experience, acquiring new skills, and experiencing the information science landscape in European countries.

TASKS CARRIED OUT

The author's Erasmus+ experience began with an introduction to the library, encompassing its history, collections, and building infrastructure. Simultaneously, they engaged with two key departments, which are the digital preservation, and the GLAM standards department.

Throughout the internship, organized visits to external institutions enriched their understanding of library-related practices. In this section, the author talks about the tasks undertaken during their experience.

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[1] European Commission. (n.d.). Erasmus+ Program. Retrieved from https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/
[2] National Széchényi Library website. Retrieved from https://www.oszk.hu/

Introduction to the National Széchényi Library:

During the first day, the trainee was introduced to The National Széchényi Library with a guided tour inside the building. OSZK is a cornerstone of Hungarian cultural preservation, housing a comprehensive collection of traditional and modern library materials. Its mission encompasses collecting, processing, and storing treasures of Hungarian national culture, facilitating access to its collections and coordinating access to collections from other institutions. OSZK plays a crucial role in cultural preservation and scholarly research, serving as a primary repository for human science research related to Hungary. The B1 code used in its projects' titles refers to ''Bibliotheca1'' which means Library Number one in Hungary. Through international collaboration and strategic development, OSZK aims to enrich library collections, enhance electronic access, and serve as a central hub for coordinating library development efforts within Hungary. Furthermore, the OSZK proudly houses The Corvina Library[3], which represents a significant collection of historical importance. The term "corvina" refers to books that were once part of the library of King Matthias Hunyadi and/or Queen Beatrix, or were associated with other representative stocks of the palace. These books are characterized by specific features, such as the presence of the coat-of-arms of King Matthias and/or Queen Beatrix on the frontispiece, as well as the distinctive corvina binding, often velvet or gilded leather. In 1869, Abdülaziz, Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, gifted four corvinas to Franz Joseph I, enriching Hungary's Corvina Library. These books, associated with the royal library of King Matthias Hunyadi and/or Queen Beatrix, were received by the OSZK, contributing to its cultural significance. (Corvina Library, n.d.)

On 5 February 2024, the trainee was invited to attend the celebration of the Turkish - Hungarian culture year where a press conference was held inside the OSZK. During her speech, the ambassador of Turkiye to Hungary mentioned that Turkiye has gifted two Corvinas in digital copies to the OSZK. Noting that not all Corvinas are back to Hungary, some of them are still in different institutions inside Europe, and Turkiye possesses two Corvinas in Topkapı Palace.

The presence of such a collection within the OSZK underscores its significance as a repository of Hungary's cultural heritage and its commitment to preserving and displaying historical treasures for future generations.

The digital preservation department:

The first department the trainee worked with was the Digital Preservation Department. This department was dedicated to safeguarding the nation's digital heritage using the best practices outlined in the PREMIS (PREservation Metadata: Implementation Strategies) [4]standards. PREMIS provided a comprehensive framework for defining and expressing metadata necessary for the preservation of digital objects, covering aspects such as object characteristics, provenance, fixity, administrative details, and rights management. Mr. Renyi Matyas Attila, the head of the Digital Preservation Department, was the trainee's mentor. He introduced the trainee to the PREMIS Standards and the theoretical aspects of digital preservation. Later on, the trainee was introduced to the practical aspects of digital preservation with tools like Dote and Java for data processing, and DSpace for storage, to ensure the long-t erm accessibility and integrity of digital materials. Dote

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[3] Corvina Library website. Retrieved from https://corvina.hu/en/front/
[4] The PREMIS (PREservation Metadata: Implementation Strategies website. Retrieved from https://www.loc.gov/standards/premis/

processes various digital formats, while DSpace provides a reliable repository for storing the growing collection.

The GLAM standards department:

Alongside the digital preservation department, the trainee worked with the GLAM standards department. The term "GLAM" typically stands for Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums. The GLAM standards cover areas such as metadata, digitization practices, conservation techniques, cataloging protocols, and ethical considerations related to cultural heritage materials. The GLAM standards department inside the OSZK is responsible for setting and maintaining standards related to the management, preservation, digitization, and accessibility of cultural heritage materials held by the library. The department ensures that the valuable cultural artifacts and information stored in the library are properly managed, preserved, and made accessible to the public for research and education.

The mentor enquired the trainee about their research interest and the latter mentioned their huge passion about Open Science. Luckily, the OSZK was already planning a project related to the topic: Open Science-Compliant Data Management Plan, which is part of implementing the Horizon Europe Program, where the European Union requires EU institutions to comply their research data with Open Science, following the principle "as open as possible, as closed as necessary." Therefore, a mandatory Data Management Plan for FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Re-usable) and Open Research Data was required. Mr. Dancs Szabolcs head of The GLAM standards department was in the process of compiling a document about the policy, which covers any sort of data to be managed at the different departments of OSZK. Therefore, the trainee's first task was preparing a presentation on Open Science and delivering it to researchers across various departments at OSZK. The first presentation happened on 22 January 2024, and the second presentation was on 14 Feb 2024. The number of attendees did not exceed 10 in both sessions. The second task was creating a survey dedicated to researchers of OSZK to: firstly, estimate Open Science/Open Access/Open Data Awareness; secondly, to identify the current workflows and data formats in different research departments; moreover, to help compile a detailed document – using the results of the survey – about the policy which covers any sort of data to be managed at the different departments of OSZK. The survey was also followed by several interviews with some researchers from the OSZK. The culmination of the project involved constructing an article based on the insights gleaned from both the survey and interviews. Overall, the project received positive reception from a significant portion of researchers across various departments at OSZK. However, it is worth noting that some researchers remained indifferent or skeptical towards the idea of sharing their research data. Further details about the project will be disclosed in the article, which is expected to be published by CeLISR soon.

Organized visits to external institutions:

Not confined solely within the walls of OSZK, the trainee seized opportunities to broaden their learning horizons beyond it. One such opportunity arose through organized visits to institutions related to OSZK.

The Hungarian Parliament Library:

The first visit was to the Hungarian Parliament, with a guided tour followed by a visit to the parliament library[5]. There, the library staff warmly welcomed the trainee and delivered a presentation about the history and collection of the parliament library. The library at the Hungarian Parliament serves as a legislative, public, and special library, focusing on law, public administration, political science, and history. It houses the largest collection of Hungarian parliamentary documents and offers select materials from foreign parliaments (mostly from UK, USA; France and Germany). With approximately 50,000 documents available across 12 subject areas in its reading room, as well as a substantial collection of old newspapers and periodicals, the library provides a rich resource for researchers. Although it does not lend books, all documents are cataloged online for easy access. Overall, the library holds around 600,000 volumes and acquires 3,500-4,000 pieces annually.

The Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTAK):

The second visit was to The Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences[6] . Another warm welcome from its staff with an informative presentation. The Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, founded in 1826 by historian Count József Teleki, stands as a cornerstone of Hungary's scholarly heritage. Initially housing Teleki's personal collection of 30,000 volumes, the library began formal operations in 1831 alongside the Academy itself. Despite facing challenges during periods of war and economic instability, the library persevered, expanding its collections through various means including endowments and exchanges with foreign institutions. Following significant reorganization in 1949 to align with the Academy's mission of supporting research, the library continued to grow, eventually opening its dedicated building to the public in 1988. Today, the library serves as a vital hub for scholarly inquiry, offering extensive resources across a multitude of fields. Its online catalog, ALEPH, provides access to comprehensive bibliographic records of nearly all documents within its collections, including books, periodicals, manuscripts, rare books, and more. Moreover, the library's specialized subsets within the database cater to specific research needs, such as periodicals, dissertations, and rare book collections. In addition to its physical collections, the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences operates REAL [7](Repository of the Library and Information Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences), a digital repository. REAL hosts various collections, including dissertations, digitized books, periodicals, manuscripts, and images. These resources contribute to scholarly research and accessibility, reflecting the library's commitment to fostering academic inquiry. Furthermore, the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, alongside its open access repository, utilizes the Open Journal Systems (OJS) as an open-source software platform for managing and publishing scholarly journals online. OJS enables academic institutions, libraries, and organizations to host their own journals, manage the peer-review process, and publish articles in an open-access format. In addition, that is the case of the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences' OJS. It is worth noting that MTAK in conjunction with its open-access policy works on advocating for a better access to scholarly resources in Hungary.

The Department of Information Science at Eötvös Loránd University:

Ms. Rita, another mentor who serves as the head of the Special Collection Department at the OSZK and is also engaged in the Open Science Compliant Data Management Plan Project, holds a position

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[5] The Hungarian Parliament Library website. Retrieved from https://konyvtar.parlament.hu/en/
[6] The Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences website. Retrieved from https://konyvtar.mta.hu/index_en.php
[7] (Repository of the Library and Information Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Retrieved from https://konyvtar.mta.hu/index_en.php?name=v_5_5

as a lecturer at Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Humanities[8], Institute of Library and Information Science, Department of Information Science. She graciously invited the trainee to the department to share their Erasmus experience with undergraduate students and to discuss the topic of Open Science. The opportunity to lecture there was incredibly fulfilling, and it felt immensely rewarding for the trainee to share insights with budding scholars. Additionally, it provided a profound sense of satisfaction to engage with students and discuss important topics in the field of information science. It was a great opportunity to familiarize the trainee with the department and its rich history.

SKILLS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

As part of the Erasmus+ traineeship at the National Széchényi Library (OSZK), the trainee acquired a multitude of valuable skills and experiences that have enriched their professional development. Immersed in a dynamic environment, the trainee had the privilege of exploring various aspects of library and information science, improving both technical and interpersonal skills along the way. Firstly, they gained a complete understanding of digital preservation practices through their involvement with the Digital Preservation Department. Under the guidance of Mr. Renyi Matyas Attila, they learned to apply the PREMIS standards effectively, ensuring the long-term accessibility and integrity of digital materials. Hands-on experience with tools such as Dote and DSpace equipped the trainee with practical expertise in data processing and storage, crucial for preserving digital heritage. Additionally, the trainee's engagement with the GLAM standards department offered understanding into metadata management, digitization protocols, and ethical considerations surrounding cultural heritage materials. Collaborating on the Open Science Compliant Data Management Plan Project provided a platform to enhance their research and presentation skills, enabling them to effectively communicate complex concepts to diverse audiences. Furthermore, organized visits to external institutions, including the Hungarian Parliament Library and the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, broadened their perspective on scholarly inquiry and library management practices. Overall, the Erasmus+ experience encouraged an integrated approach to information science, equipping the trainee with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to thrive in a dynamic and evolving field. This experience has solidified their career aspirations, affirming their passion for the field of library and information science, and they are now certain that they aspire to pursue a career as an academician, utilizing their acquired skills and knowledge to contribute meaningfully to research, education, and the advancement of the Library and Information Science field.

IMPACT AND BENEFITS

The trainee's involvement in the Erasmus+ traineeship at the National Széchényi Library (OSZK) has resulted in multifaceted impacts for both the host organization and the trainee themselves. Firstly, their contributions to the Open Science Compliant Data Management Plan Project have facilitated the development of an Open Science-related course for OSZK's researchers, promoting a culture of openness and accessibility within the institution. This initiative not only enhances the library's standing as a hub for scholarly research but also promotes greater collaboration and knowledge sharing among its academic community. Furthermore, the trainee have gained firsthand experience in implementing theoretical knowledge into practical projects, improving their skills in digital preservation, metadata management, and research presentation. This learning experience has not only

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[8] Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Humanities website. Retrieved from https://www.btk.elte.hu/en/

enriched their professional development but has also provided them with valuable insights and networks that will undoubtedly strengthen their future career prospects in academia and beyond.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the Erasmus+ traineeship at the National Széchényi Library has proven to be a pivotal chapter in their academic and professional journey, significantly augmenting the trainee's expertise in digital preservation, metadata management, and cultural heritage stewardship. Through collaborative efforts such as the Open Science Compliant Data Management Plan project, they have acquired practical skills while contributing to the cultivation of a culture of openness within OSZK. The author extends their gratitude to the host institution; the National Széchényi Library, to the sending institution Marmara University, the Department of Information and Records Management, and particularly to Prof. Dr. Güssen Güneş, the Erasmus coordinator. Additionally, heartfelt appreciation extended to the author's advisor, Prof. Dr. Burçak Şenturk, whose mentorship and encouragement has been pivotal in directing this experience. As they reflect on the profound impact of this traineeship, the author is poised to apply the knowledge and skills acquired toward future academic pursuits and professional endeavors.

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