



Proposal for ARL Visiting Program Officer Susan Weaver

Appointment period: January 31 through May 31, 2006

INTRODUCTION

Kent State University has approved a Professional Improvement Leave (PIL) for spring semester, 2006 for Susan Weaver, Professor of Library and Media Services and Director of Library Services at the Kent State, East Liverpool Campus. Weaver's initial proposal was the introduction of LibQUAL+™ to the Greek academic library community. A copy of that proposal (November 2004) is included along with this document.

Preparation for the leave has resulted in the following:

- Aristotle University has agreed to provide housing, for a fee, from February 1 until May 31, 2006.
- Contacts have been made with Greek librarians about the project
- The paper "LibQUAL+™: An International Assessment Tool" was presented at the annual Greek Academic Librarians Association Conference in Athens Greece, December 3, 2005. The paper will appear in the published proceedings. The presentation stimulated interest in LibQUAL+™.
- The "Library Assessment Conference" at TEI in Thessaloniki Greece, June 13 - 15, 2005 initiated the discussion of assessment among Greek librarians. Martha Kyriallidou, Bruce Thompson, Colleen Cook, and others were presenters.
- Weaver and Kyriallidou have collaborated on the goals of the project.

THE PROJECT

Specifically, the objective of the project is to raise awareness about assessment and assessment tools and to instill a "culture" of assessment among the Greek librarians. As a VPO, Weaver will explain and provide information regarding assessment in general as well as specific ARL measurement tools such as LibQUAL+™, MINES for Libraries™, and DigiQUAL™. One of the goals of this VPO is to familiarize librarians in Greece with the methods, evaluation, management and marketing approaches that help libraries make better decisions and improve their services to their users. Susan will provide training regarding data acquisition, analysis and understanding of data, and using the data to make changes, promote the library, and improve services to library users.

Examples of successful implementations of LibQUAL+™ in other European countries may serve as models for Greek implementation. It is important to convey the international progress that has been made in translating the survey into numerous languages and to discuss



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the experiences of countries such as Finland, Denmark, Norway, Switzerland, Germany, Australia and South Africa. These examples will show that assessment and library excellence does not recognize international boundaries.

The essence of the work in Greece will be “missionary” in approach and, as such, the success is greatly dependent on the willingness of the Greek Librarians to tune in and embrace the offerings. Although interest was expressed by some librarians following the presentation at the annual conference, others voiced opposition to becoming involved in LibQUAL+™ at this stage in the development of Greek libraries. It is important to understand and acknowledge Greek library development over the past decade, consider the local context, and analyze the barriers and facilitators to effective and sustainable library assessment in the Greek environment.

Greek libraries have made amazing progress over the last decades. In the mid-90s the libraries were primarily concerned with cataloging the collections, retrospective conversion, and other preparations for an online catalog. Once past that hurdle, they began to identify new areas for improvement. As members of the European Union they were able to obtain funding for training, collection development, digitization and other projects. Currently national projects are focused on shared resources. A national union catalog and HealLINK, a shared resource for electronic journals, consume much of the energies. Issues related to marketing of the electronic resources available that closely tied the use of the resources to reference and information literacy programs need to be further developed to raise librarians to a true partnership status in the educational and academic enterprise. Resistance to using assessment tools for fear of faring badly with an international benchmarking tool may need to be overcome by emphasizing the benefits of the implementation for the Greek academic enterprise in general. An important goal for the VPO would be to reveal how LibQUAL+™ results could be used to promote, within the libraries, the development of services that improve access to information. The research, and the analysis based on the data, can then be used externally, with the university administration and other political bodies (Ministry of Education and European Union), to lobby for funding for such improvements.

VPO EXPERIENCE AND QUALIFICATIONS

The Kent, East Liverpool Library participated in LibQUAL+™ in 2003 under the direction of Susan Weaver. OhioLINK also participated as a consortium. In addition, Weaver attended numerous training sessions provided by ARL. She has spent the past year reading and studying assessment, in general, and LibQUAL+™, in particular.

Weaver is well acquainted with the Greek library community. In 1993/94, she spent 6 months working at Aristotle University Library as a consultant for the Main Library. She has extensive experience in teaching and training in Greece including presentations at the Greek Academic Librarians Conference in 1994 and 1996, teaching a 2 week long workshop on Information Literacy in Thessaloniki Greece (1998), presenting a workshop on Internet resources for librarians at Panteion University, Athens, Greece (1994), and presenting lectures for the Aristotle University faculty on Internet II and the Internet as a Scholarly Resource (1996, 1998). See attached vita for more information.

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EXPECTATIONS AND OUTCOMES

ARL will:

- Designate Martha Kyrillidou, Director, ARL Statistics and Measurement Program as a contact person.
- Provide material and information that describe ARL assessment tools
- Provide advice and guidance
- Consider publication of outcomes

Kent State will:

- Pay the VPO's salary
- Provide professional improvement leave to work on this project

Aristotle University will:

- Provide office space and computer access
- Provide, for a fee, housing.
- Allow library staff to work with Weaver as interpreters and mentors throughout the project.

Susan Weaver will:

- Keep ARL contact person informed about the project
- Consult with ARL about specific demands or requests from Greek Librarians
- Be a positive and informed representative for ARL
- Attempt to reach as wide an audience as possible.
- Prepare a final report for ARL at the conclusion of the leave
- Following the leave, continue to work with and advise Greek librarians if and when they implement LibQUAL +™ or other ARL assessment tools.

Kent State University libraries is a member of the Association of Research Libraries. It serves more than 24,000 students and about 1,500 faculty. With a proud 94-year history, Kent State University comprises eight campuses, nine Ohio college disciplinary programs and many graduate programs and interdisciplinary programs. Located in Kent, Ohio, the Kent Campus is a dynamic and diverse "city within a city" – complete with its own sophisticated computer and communications network, food service, transportation system, police department and health service.

Aristotle University is one of the major comprehensive universities in Greece. The Aristotle University **today** consists of 41 Departments as well as many other units, such as laboratories, study rooms, libraries, clinics, etc., which make it the largest university in the country in terms of the staff, the number of students and the facilities offered. At the same time, due to the



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research work and the activities undertaken by the teaching and scientific staff, the University has gained international recognition.

The Association of Research Libraries is a nonprofit organization of 123 research libraries in North America. ARL's mission is to influence the changing environment of scholarly communication and the public policies that affect research libraries and the communities they serve. See <http://www.arl.org/>.

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