KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN UNIVERSITY: PREPAREDNESS OF MASTER OF INFORMATION SCIENCES GRADUATES FROM THE FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES IN OSIJEK FOR THE LABOR MARKET

UPRAVLJANJE ZNANJEM NA SVEUČILIŠTU: PRIPREMLJENOST MAGISTARA INFORMACIJSKIH ZNANOSTI S FILOZOFSKOG FAKULTETA U OSIJEKU ZA TRŽIŠTE RADA

Gordana Dukić, Tamara Jozinović

Abstract: *Knowledge management can help universities to achieve their goals more effectively. Knowledge transfer is a very important part of the knowledge management process in higher education. Starting from this fact, the purpose of this study was to assess master of information sciences graduates' preparedness for the labor market in the context of knowledge transfer activities. The sample included master of information sciences graduates from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Osijek. According to the results, respondents were moderately satisfied with the knowledge and skills gained during the study, which implies that they were not fully prepared for the labor market. The findings also indicate that their level of satisfaction was not significantly influenced by sociodemographic characteristics. The study suggests that it is necessary to improve knowledge transfer processes within the institution.*

Keywords: *knowledge management, knowledge transfer, labor market, level of satisfaction, master of information sciences graduates*

Sažetak: *Upravljanje znanjem može pomoći sveučilištima da učinkovitije ostvare svoje ciljeve. Transfer znanja vrlo je važan dio procesa upravljanja znanjem u visokom obrazovanju. Polazeći od te činjenice, svrha ovog istraživanja bila je procijeniti pripremljenost magistara informacijskih znanosti za tržište rada u kontekstu aktivnosti transfera znanja. Uzorak su činili magistri informacijskih znanosti koji su završili Filozofski fakultet u Osijeku. Prema rezultatima, ispitanici su bili umjereno zadovoljni znanjima i vještinama stečenim tijekom studiranja, što implicira da nisu potpuno pripremljeni za tržište rada. Rezultati također ukazuju da njihova razina zadovoljstva nije bila značajno uvjetovana sociodemografskim obilježjima. Studija sugerira da je potrebno poboljšati procese transfera znanja unutar institucije.*

Ključne riječi: *magistri informacijskih znanosti, razina zadovoljstva, transfer znanja, tržište rada, upravljanje znanjem*

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the idea of knowledge management has become very popular because of the increased awareness of the importance of knowledge for the organization's prosperity and survival, and the growing ability of information and communication technologies to support activities related to knowledge creation, distribution, and use [1]. Today, knowledge is often viewed as the most valuable strategic resource, which contributes significantly to achieving organizational goals. Successful organizations realize that they have to manage their intellectual capital to remain competitive and relevant in a dynamic and turbulent world. In an attempt to accomplish this aim, organizations have initiated and developed a range of knowledge management projects and programs [2]. However, although many organizations understand the importance and potential of knowledge management, there are still a lot of problems to be solved.

Knowledge management is an interdisciplinary field, which includes management science, economics, engineering, information and computer sciences, sociology, psychology, human resource management, business intelligence, but also many other disciplines. Therefore, it is not surprising that there are a variety of definitions of knowledge management. According to Robinson et al. [3], knowledge management is "a method of exploiting, or transforming knowledge as an asset for organizational use to facilitate continuous improvement." Bergeron [4] defined knowledge management as "a deliberate, systematic business optimization strategy that selects, distills, stores, organizes, packages, and communicates information essential to the business of a company in a manner that improves employee performance and corporate competitiveness." García-Holgado et al. [5] consider that knowledge management is

"the planning, organizing, motivating, and controlling of people, processes and systems in the organization, oriented to ensure that its knowledge-related assets are improved and effectively employed." From an interdisciplinary perspective, Jashapara [6] defined knowledge management as "the effective learning processes associated with exploration, exploitation and sharing of human knowledge (tacit and explicit) that use appropriate technology and cultural environments to enhance an organization's intellectual capital and performance." Taking into account the above definitions, it can be concluded that knowledge management involves the activities of knowledge creation, capture, storage, organization, validation, presentation, retrieval, transfer, sharing, and application.

Universities, as higher education institutions, play a crucial role in the social, economic, and technological development of a country. They are especially important for building a knowledge economy and learning society, which are based on education, research, creativity, innovation, and the intensive use of information and communication technologies. However, universities will need to multiply their engagements and impacts, since their potential is still not fully used. In this context, the present study examines the role of knowledge management in higher education. The main aim of the study is to assess master of information sciences graduates' preparedness for the labor market. In order to explore the effectiveness of knowledge transfer activities, as an integral part of knowledge management, the study is focused on graduates' satisfaction with the knowledge and skills gained at university. More precisely, the study seeks to determine how much they are satisfied with the competencies acquired during their higher education.

2. HIGHER EDUCATION AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

By nature, higher education institutions are knowledge-based organizations that are responsible for the creation and dissemination of knowledge. The mission of universities is to produce highly skilled graduates and researchers who are able to contribute effectively to society. Now, more than ever, universities have to provide students with knowledge that will help them attain their full potential in a rapidly changing world. Since the traditional education does not meet the needs of an information and knowledge society, universities should be transformed into learning organizations [7]. These are organizations that have developed knowledge management systems, which allow them to continuously adapt to the complex and changing environment based on learning [8]. Organizational learning and knowledge management are complementary to each other. In modern organizations, knowledge is generated by processes of organizational learning. On the other hand, the outcome of such processes is managed by knowledge management systems [9].

Many factors have contributed to the increasing importance of knowledge management in higher education. Metaxiotis and Psarras [10] single out the following ones: the growth of learner centered knowledge as well as action learning, the shift from closed to open knowledge systems, the increasing significance of work-related learning that can be integrated into academic programs, the recognition of work experience as a key source of learning, the growth of continuous or lifelong learning available to all, and the explosion of information and communication technologies which are able to revolutionize teaching and learning practices.

According to Nawaz and Gomes [11] there are many benefits of adopting knowledge management in higher education, such as improvement of services to students and faculties, minimization of time needed for the research, encouraging institutions to intensify interdisciplinary research activities, enhancing competitiveness and responsiveness of universities, concentration on the quality of research at the institutional level, reduction of administrative costs, improvement of curriculum development, and enhancement of human, organizational, innovation, and financial capital. Therefore, it is important for universities to adopt knowledge management practices and to provide high-quality study programs that enable students to become knowledge workers. In addition, higher education institutions have to encourage students' and faculty members' engagement in lifelong learning in order to improve their knowledge and skills.

Agarwal and Marouf [12] presented a theoretical framework for successful knowledge management initiation in a college or university. It consists of four stages: plan, design, implement, and scale up. In the first phase, it is necessary to form a knowledge management planning team and to identify goals and priorities. The design phase includes determination of the current state, development of success measures, and creation of action plan. In the implementation phase, a pilot is launched and support is provided. Also, early results are presented. The final stage includes usage of knowledge gained to realign strategy with university or college objectives, and scaling up to other units.

The purpose of knowledge management tools is to simplify and improve organizational processes related to knowledge creation and sharing. These tools have a great potential, but without an adequate strategy and developed organizational culture, they bring limited benefits. Based on the literature review, Pinto [13] identified the following knowledge management tools: knowledge repositories (document management, edition collaboration, documents sharing, searching and retrieval advanced mechanisms), knowledge maps (categorizing and indexing knowledge in taxonomies, creating knowledge maps, inserting tags and labels in documents, alerting to relevant information), workflow tools (business processes automation, support automated flows of activities, support documental flows), learning system (evaluation and progress tracking, collaboration tools, reusable learning and object libraries, workgroups, scheduling and reporting tools, searching and matching tutorials), corporate portal (environment personalization, filtering relevant information, search and retrieval advanced mechanisms, tasks and calendar management, unified access environment to other tools, integration), collaboration tools and web 2.0 applications

(interaction and collaboration), and ontologies (include information/knowledge categorization).

Siadat et al. [14] determined four main effective groups of factors on successful implementation of knowledge management in higher education. These are management, cultural, organizational, and technical factors. Their understanding is crucial for the development of knowledge management system. However, despite the progress that has been made in recent years, knowledge management projects have not yet been fully implemented in higher education [15]. Therefore, it is necessary to accelerate the process of knowledge management implementation in universities.

3. SAMPLE AND METHODS

The survey was conducted in May and June 2015, and included 58 master of information sciences graduates from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University in Osijek. Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents by selected sociodemographic characteristics.

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of respondents

Characteristic	Number of respondents	Percentage
Gender		
Female	48	82,8
Male	10	17,2
Age group		
24 – 28	37	63,8
29 – 50	21	36,2
Employment status		
Employed	43	74,1
Unemployed	15	25,9
Year of graduation		
2007 – 2011	12	20,7
2012 – 2015	46	79,3

There were more women than men in the sample. The majority of respondents were between the ages of 24 and 28, and were employed. Graduates who completed their studies between 2012 and 2015 dominated the sample. Despite the relatively small number of respondents, the sample included approximately one-third of all master of information sciences graduates from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University in Osijek.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. In addition, the Mann-Whitney test was performed to determine whether the differences between the groups are significant. The level of significance was set at $p < 0,05$ (two-tailed).

4. FINDINGS

Respondents rated their level of satisfaction with the knowledge and skills gained during the study on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (completely dissatisfied) to 5 (completely satisfied). Their responses were summarized using descriptive statistics (Table 2).

Table 2. Level of satisfaction with the knowledge and skills (descriptive statistics)

| Knowledge and skills	Mean	Median	Standard deviation
General knowledge and skills			
Communication with customers and public	3,43	4,00	1,06
Communication with colleagues and superiors	3,62	4,00	1,18
Written and oral presentation	3,55	4,00	1,08
Teamwork and leadership	3,48	3,00	0,98
Evaluation of an organization's success	4,10	4,00	0,89
Analysis of users and their needs	4,02	4,00	0,89
Knowledge of ethical principles and regulations	3,84	4,00	1,06
Library knowledge and skills			
Library circulation	3,34	3,00	1,31
Collection development	3,74	4,00	1,19
Knowledge and use of reference materials	4,17	4,00	0,90
Databases search	3,21	3,00	1,06
Creating and managing databases	3,09	3,00	1,25
Digitization	3,57	4,00	1,01
Organization of bibliographic records	4,19	4,00	0,85
Information finding, evaluation, and use	3,86	4,00	1,19
Cataloguing	3,33	3,00	1,32
Use of library automation software	2,83	3,00	1,27
Technical processing of library materials	3,26	3,00	1,32
Preservation of library materials	3,66	4,00	1,02
Digital preservation	3,81	4,00	1,00
Knowledge and skills in publishing			
Management of publishing organizations	3,57	4,00	1,13
Publishing products	3,45	3,00	1,05
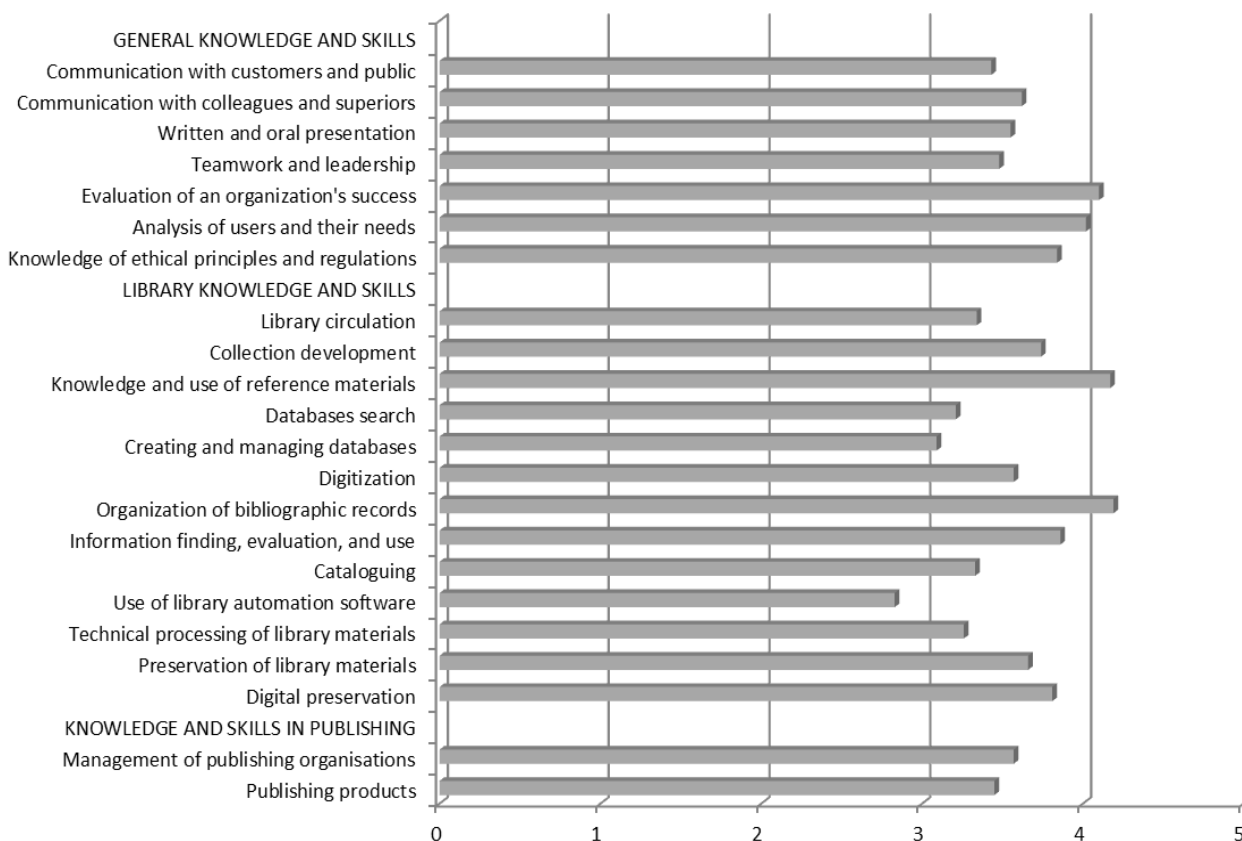
Figure 1. Level of satisfaction means

The knowledge and skills were classified into three categories: general, library, and those in publishing. Overall, respondents tended to be slightly more satisfied with the general knowledge and skills than with those related to librarianship and publishing. The mean values, also shown in Figure 1, indicate that they were most satisfied with the following knowledge and skills gained during the study: organization of bibliographic records, use of reference materials, evaluation of an organization's success, and analysis of users and their needs. In these four cases, the means are greater than 4.

Table 3. Analysis of differences in the levels of satisfaction with the general knowledge and skills

General knowledge and skills		Gender		Age group		Employment status		Year of graduation	
		Female	Male	24 – 28	29 – 50	Employed	Unemployed	2007 – 2011	2012 – 2015
Communication with customers and public	Mean rank	30,45	24,95	27,72	32,64	29,30	30,07	32,58	28,70
	Z, p	$Z=0,979$	$p=0,328$	$Z=-1,120$	$p=0,263$	$Z=-0,150$	$p=0,881$	$Z=0,740$	$p=0,459$
Communication with colleagues and superiors	Mean rank	29,92	27,50	29,53	29,45	29,36	29,90	24,71	30,75
	Z, p	$Z=0,416$	$p=0,677$	$Z=0,008$	$p=0,993$	$Z=-0,101$	$p=0,919$	$Z=-1,135$	$p=0,256$
Written and oral presentation	Mean rank	29,42	29,90	28,61	31,07	28,97	31,03	20,33	31,89
	Z, p	$Z=-0,075$	$p=0,940$	$Z=-0,546$	$p=0,585$	$Z=-0,415$	$p=0,678$	$Z=-2,183$	$p=0,029$
Teamwork and leadership	Mean rank	29,21	30,90	32,91	23,50	30,40	26,93	27,17	30,11
	Z, p	$Z=-0,293$	$p=0,769$	$Z=2,142$	$p=0,032$	$Z=0,712$	$p=0,476$	$Z=-0,557$	$p=0,578$
Evaluation of an organization's success	Mean rank	29,63	28,90	26,74	34,36	29,13	30,57	26,38	30,32
	Z, p	$Z=0,121$	$p=0,904$	$Z=-1,754$	$p=0,079$	$Z=-0,294$	$p=0,769$	$Z=-0,759$	$p=0,448$
Analysis of users and their needs	Mean rank	29,22	30,85	31,23	26,45	30,08	27,83	29,79	29,42
	Z, p	$Z=-0,285$	$p=0,776$	$Z=1,093$	$p=0,274$	$Z=0,463$	$p=0,643$	$Z=0,061$	$p=0,951$
Knowledge of ethical principles and regulations	Mean rank	28,66	33,55	30,19	28,29	28,91	31,20	24,75	30,74
	Z, p	$Z=-0,863$	$p=0,388$	$Z=0,424$	$p=0,672$	$Z=-0,465$	$p=0,642$	$Z=-1,136$	$p=0,256$

Table 4. Analysis of differences in the levels of satisfaction with library knowledge and skills

Library knowledge and skills		Gender		Age group		Employment status		Year of graduation	
		Female	Male	24 – 28	29 – 50	Employed	Unemployed	2007 – 2011	2012 – 2015
Library circulation	Mean rank	30,14	26,45	31,50	25,98	30,29	27,23	34,79	28,12
	Z, p	$Z=0,635$	$p=0,526$	$Z=1,222$	$p=0,222$	$Z=0,612$	$p=0,541$	$Z=1,243$	$p=0,214$
Collection development	Mean rank	30,86	22,95	27,51	33,00	28,53	32,27	31,50	28,98
	Z, p	$Z=1,391$	$p=0,164$	$Z=-1,228$	$p=0,219$	$Z=-0,757$	$p=0,449$	$Z=0,469$	$p=0,639$
Knowledge and use of reference materials	Mean rank	28,28	35,35	30,92	27,00	28,30	32,93	32,50	28,72
	Z, p	$Z=-1,290$	$p=0,197$	$Z=0,909$	$p=0,363$	$Z=-0,978$	$p=0,328$	$Z=0,736$	$p=0,462$
Databases search	Mean rank	27,55	38,85	30,59	27,57	30,14	27,67	31,38	29,01
	Z, p	$Z=-1,996$	$p=0,046$	$Z=0,675$	$p=0,500$	$Z=0,500$	$p=0,617$	$Z=0,440$	$p=0,660$
Creating and managing databases	Mean rank	28,26	35,45	30,04	28,55	30,72	26,00	31,33	29,02
	Z, p	$Z=-1,249$	$p=0,212$	$Z=0,325$	$p=0,746$	$Z=0,950$	$p=0,342$	$Z=0,425$	$p=0,671$
Digitization	Mean rank	29,20	30,95	28,24	31,71	29,47	29,60	31,00	29,11
	Z, p	$Z=-0,305$	$p=0,760$	$Z=-0,789$	$p=0,430$	$Z=-0,019$	$p=0,985$	$Z=0,356$	$p=0,722$
Organization of bibliographic records	Mean rank	29,10	31,40	27,15	33,64	31,24	24,50	34,46	28,21
	Z, p	$Z=-0,409$	$p=0,683$	$Z=-1,503$	$p=0,133$	$Z=1,420$	$p=0,156$	$Z=1,216$	$p=0,224$
Information finding, evaluation, and use	Mean rank	30,56	24,40	27,92	32,29	29,13	30,57	28,88	29,66
	Z, p	$Z=1,094$	$p=0,274$	$Z=-0,988$	$p=0,323$	$Z=-0,290$	$p=0,772$	$Z=-0,141$	$p=0,888$
Cataloguing	Mean rank	29,48	29,60	28,91	30,55	29,56	29,33	28,92	29,65
	Z, p	$Z=-0,011$	$p=0,992$	$Z=-0,358$	$p=0,720$	$Z=0,037$	$p=0,971$	$Z=-0,128$	$p=0,898$
Use of library automation software	Mean rank	30,88	22,90	29,36	29,74	30,57	26,43	27,42	30,04
	Z, p	$Z=1,386$	$p=0,166$	$Z=-0,075$	$p=0,940$	$Z=0,831$	$p=0,406$	$Z=-0,484$	$p=0,629$
Technical processing of library materials	Mean rank	30,42	25,10	27,78	32,52	27,87	34,17	22,17	31,41
	Z, p	$Z=0,918$	$p=0,359$	$Z=-1,045$	$p=0,296$	$Z=-1,265$	$p=0,206$	$Z=-1,722$	$p=0,085$
Preservation of library materials	Mean rank	29,28	30,55	28,18	31,83	28,26	33,07	29,08	29,61
	Z, p	$Z=-0,216$	$p=0,829$	$Z=-0,824$	$p=0,410$	$Z=-0,988$	$p=0,323$	$Z=-0,091$	$p=0,928$
Digital preservation	Mean rank	30,01	27,05	27,68	32,71	28,87	31,30	26,63	30,25
	Z, p	$Z=0,517$	$p=0,605$	$Z=-1,134$	$p=0,257$	$Z=-0,492$	$p=0,623$	$Z=-0,683$	$p=0,495$

Respondents were the least satisfied with the knowledge and skills in using library automation software. It is necessary to mention that students believe that such software is difficult to learn, since it requires advanced ICT competencies. Only the mean value of this item is less than 3. However, it can be concluded that master of information sciences graduates have generally positive attitudes toward the knowledge and skills gained at university, but not to a sufficient extent. This is also confirmed by the median values. Most of the medians are greater than 3, indicating respondents' satisfaction with the acquired knowledge and skills. Still, there are many areas in which master of information sciences graduates were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

The significance of differences in the levels of satisfaction with the general knowledge and skills based on gender, age, employment status, and year of graduation were analyzed by the Mann-Whitney test. The results of testing are shown in Table 3. According to the Mann-Whitney test, younger and older master of information sciences graduates differed significantly in their ratings of teamwork and leadership skills gained during the study.

The mean ranks indicate that younger graduates were more satisfied with such skills than their older colleagues. Also, graduates who completed their studies between 2012 and 2015 were significantly more satisfied with the acquired written and oral presentation skills than those who graduated earlier.

Table 4 presents the results of the analysis of differences in the levels of satisfaction with library knowledge and skills. The Mann-Whitney test confirmed that only the difference in satisfaction with the acquired database searching skills between female and male graduates were statistically significant. According to the mean ranks, male graduates were more satisfied with database searching skills gained during the study than their female counterparts.

The Mann-Whitney test was also used to examine the significance of differences in the levels of satisfaction with the knowledge and skills in publishing (Table 5). The results indicate that there was no significant difference between any of the groups.

Table 5. Analysis of differences in the levels of satisfaction with the knowledge and skills in publishing

Knowledge and skills in publishing		Gender		Age group		Employment status		Year of graduation	
		Female	Male	24 − 28	29 − 50	Employed	Unemployed	2007 − 2011	2012 − 2015
Management of publishing organisations	Mean rank	29,14	31,25	29,72	29,12	29,81	28,60	27,29	30,08
	Z, p	$Z=-0,363$	$p=0,717$	$Z=0,126$	$p=0,900$	$Z=0,240$	$p=0,811$	$Z=-0,518$	$p=0,605$
Publishing products	Mean rank	29,40	30,00	29,47	29,55	29,87	28,43	24,50	30,80
	Z, p	$Z=-0,096$	$p=0,923$	$Z=-0,008$	$p=0,993$	$Z=0,287$	$p=0,774$	$Z=-1,190$	$p=0,234$

5. CONCLUSION

Higher education has an important role to play in providing qualified staff for the labor market. The question is, how successful are Croatian higher education institutions in fulfilling this mission? This issue is particularly acute in times of crisis, when unemployment is high and many graduates cannot find jobs. The purpose of the present study was to determine how well master of information sciences graduates are prepared for the labor market in the context of knowledge transfer activities within university.

Knowledge management can be very useful to higher education institutions. However, despite its benefits, knowledge management is still not integrated into higher education environments. Therefore, in time to come, it is necessary to pay more attention to knowledge management as a means by which universities can more effectively achieve strategic goals and objectives.

The study was focused on knowledge transfer as a process of transmitting knowledge from teachers to students. Knowledge transfer is a very important part of knowledge management in higher education institutions, since they have a core responsibility to equip students with necessary competencies and thus prepare them for the workplace. The results of the study show that master of information sciences graduates from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Osijek were moderately satisfied with the knowledge and skills gained during the study. This implies that, in their opinion, they were not fully prepared for the labour market. The findings further suggest that responses of the surveyed graduates were mostly consistent throughout. There were only a few statistically significant differences noted in the levels of graduates' satisfaction with the knowledge and skills gained at university. Therefore, the level of satisfaction was not substantially influenced by sociodemographic characteristics, such as gender, age, employment status, and year of graduation.

Overall, the study indicates that it is necessary to improve knowledge transfer processes within the institution and to better prepare students for the challenges of today's job market. Some steps in this direction have already been made. Since it was observed that the current curriculum was not satisfactory, new academic programs have been initiated. It is expected that these programs will enable students to develop the competencies that fully meet the labor market and community needs. In addition, more attention began to be paid to students' practical training not only in libraries, museums, and archives, but also in private enterprises that employ information professionals. Despite a lack of funds, student visits to information institutions outside Croatia are also planned. In this way, students will have the opportunity to expand their knowledge and experience. Further efforts must be made to motivate students to do their best in achieving learning objectives and to encourage them to participate in scientific activities. It is also necessary to consider the introduction of new methods of teaching, especially those involving specialized technologies. However, since teachers are the key factor in the education process, they are most responsible for student achievement. Hence, without effective teachers it would not be possible to achieve the desired improvements in students' knowledge and skills, and to prepare them for the future.

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Authors` contacts:

Gordana Dukić, PhD, Associate Professor
Josip Jurja Strossmayer University of Osijek
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Department of Information Sciences
Lorenza Jägera 9, 31000 Osijek, Croatia
E-mail: gdukic@ffos.hr

Tamara Jozinović, Master of Information Sciences Graduate
Josip Jurja Strossmayer University of Osijek
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Department of Information Sciences
Lorenza Jägera 9, 31000 Osijek, Croatia
E-mail: tjozinovic@knjiga.ffos.hr