Select Bibliography International and Comparative LIS Research: Texts and Examples of Research

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International and comparative LIS texts

Older texts

Danton, J Periam. 1973. The Dimensions of Comparative Librarianship. Chicago: American Library Association. – A foundational text. Critically reviews attempts to define comparative librarianship and distinguish it from international librarianship before discussing terminology, definition and scope; purpose and value; publication, research and education; and methodology. Imbued with the positivist approach of 1960s and 1970s social and educational research methods texts which sought to emulate methods of natural sciences, but still worth reading.

Krzys, Richard, and Gaston Litton. 1983. World Librarianship: A Comparative Study. Books in Library and Information Science 42. New York: Marcel Dekker. – Pioneering work; ambitious and fascinating but ultimately unsuccessful attempt to create a new discipline, seeking to establish a global librarianship, in which practitioners will share a single body of knowledge, and be able to practice anywhere in the world in accordance with a universal professional theory and philosophy. Very formulaic.


Later work

Lor, P.J. (2019), International and Comparative Librarianship: Concepts and Methods for Global Studies, De Gruyter/Saur, Berlin; Boston. – After the initial flurry of interest, later work was mainly repetitive. This is the only comprehensive monograph since the 1980s.


Cultural factors


Bulmer, M. and Warwick, D.P. (Eds.). (1983), Social Research in Developing Countries: Surveys and Censuses in the Third World, UCL Press. – Edited work comprising chapters dealing with a wide range of issues in social research, with focus on research for development.

Argues that mainstream research in postcolonial societies still ignores, marginalizes and suppresses other knowledge systems and ways of knowing. Useful discussion of colonialism, colonial legacy, postcolonial condition; also interesting from methodological perspective: language and cultural issues in questionnaire surveys, research ethics in team research.

Liamputtong, P. (2010), *Performing Qualitative Cross-Cultural Research*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. – Deals with culturally sensitive qualitative research methods that are appropriate for cross-cultural research, with emphasis on indigenous groups (first peoples in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the USA), refugees, immigrants and minority groups, and on women and subaltern groups. Examples often drawn from sensitive topics (often from research on reproductive health). Strong ethical, caring, responsible and responsive basis. Particularly useful for language and translation/interpretation issues.

Marshall, A. and Batten, S. (2003), “Ethical issues in cross-cultural research”, in Roth, W.-M. (Ed.), *Proceedings of the University of Victoria Faculty of Education Research Conference - Connections '03*, University of Victoria, Victoria BC, pp. 139–151. — Very thorough, scholarly overview, many references. Value & worldview, systems approach; research design; informed consent; entry into the field, control and participant roles. Approaches to data collection, participative action research. Writing, representation, and dissemination of results. Community ethics.

**Comparative disciplines**

**General**

Hantrais, L. (2009), *International Comparative Research: Theory, Methods and Practice*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, England. – Recommended as a multi-disciplinary introduction; only 194 pages but comprehensive; gives a lucid overview of the field, with useful definitions, covering disciplinary approaches, research design, methodological issues, international settings, and project management; from a European perspective.

Ragin, C.C. (1987), *The Comparative Method: Moving beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*, University of California Press, Berkeley CA. — Ground-breaking text for comparative studies of ‘large macro-social units’ such as countries; weighs up the trade-off between qualitative case-oriented strategies to disentangle ‘multiple and conjunctural causation’, and variable-oriented quantitative strategies; introduces the method of ‘qualitative comparative analysis’ which qualitative and quantitative approaches.

**Comparative education**


Steiner-Khamsi, G. (2010), “The politics and economics of comparison”, *Comparative Education Review*, Vol. 54 No. 3, pp. 323–342. — Very useful article, dealing with the nature and purpose of comparative research, especially its use as a policy ‘tool’; the study of ‘educational transfer’ and policy borrowing; area studies; comparative methodology; globalizations and problems of using nations as units of analysis; rhetoric of globalization and ‘international standards’ in development aid; theoretical frameworks for global dissemination and policy diffusion; educational transfer research.
Comparative politics


Examples of International and Comparative LIS research

“*Foreign librarianship*”: country studies by insiders


Jackson, Miles M. 1981. *International Handbook of Contemporary Developments in Librarianship*. Westport CT: Greenwood Press.—Early example of a popular genre: a collection of country chapters contributed mainly by authors from those countries.


“*Foreign librarianship*”: country studies by outsiders


Munthe, Wilhelm. 1939. *American Librarianship from a European Angle*. Chicago: American Library Association.—Widely cited as the ‘grand-daddy’ of comparative librarianship, although the comparison is largely implicit and not systematic.

**Regional studies**


Kaser, David, C Walter Stone, and Cecil K Byrd. 1969. *Library Development in Eight Asian Countries*. Metuchen NJ: Scarecrow Press.—Contains a chapter, following roughly the same structure, per country, each of which was visited by at least one of the authors.


**Thematic multi-country surveys**


Aims to display the structure and reveal the web influence of institutions in the MENA zone, in terms of countries and universities.

**Comparative studies in the strict sense**


**International influence and innovation**


public library models: the modalities of their creation, relations with government, place in society, functions and functioning. Highly recommended.


LIS development in developing and emerging countries


