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SOFT SKILLS AS A KEY FACTOR IN THE FUTURE PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS OF STUDENTS MAJORING IN "INFORMATION, LIBRARY, AND ARCHIVAL STUDIES"

Ⓐ *This article explores the crucial role of soft skills in enhancing the professional success of students majoring in "Information, library, and archival studies". With the increasing integration of information technology in Ukraine and beyond, professionals in these fields must demonstrate a unique blend of technical proficiency and non-technical competencies to remain competitive. While "hard skills" provide the necessary technical knowledge for task-specific performance, soft skills – such as interpersonal communication, adaptability, emotional intelligence, critical thinking, and teamwork – are key to achieving personal and professional growth, creating effective information environments, and engaging with diverse user groups. The study examines existing literature, presenting insights from various researchers who underscore the value of soft skills in complex, multidisciplinary settings. It also discusses a competency model proposed by The Boston Consulting Group that envisions soft skills as essential competencies for the 21st-century workforce, supported by studies from Harvard and Stanford which highlight that career success is largely attributed to these non-technical skills. An integrated approach for developing soft skills is proposed, emphasizing both theoretical and practical training that prepares students to adapt to the ever-evolving demands of the labor market. This strategy includes diagnosing students' initial soft skills levels, offering theoretical instruction, engaging in practical activities, and providing feedback, all aimed at fostering flexibility, problem-solving, and creativity. Ultimately, the article concludes that soft skills development is indispensable in preparing future professionals for effective interaction within the information sector and enhancing their adaptability, competitiveness, and service quality. The findings advocate for embedding soft skills training within educational programs to ensure students are fully equipped for successful careers in the dynamic field of information, library, and archival studies.*

Keywords: *soft skills; information, library, and archival studies; students; professional development; communication*

М'ЯКІ НАВИЧКИ ЯК КЛЮЧОВИЙ ФАКТОР МАЙБУТНЬОГО ПРОФЕСІЙНОГО УСПІХУ СТУДЕНТІВ СПЕЦІАЛЬНОСТІ «ІНФОРМАЦІЙНА, БІБЛІОТЕЧНА ТА АРХІВНА СПРАВА»

Ⓢ *Досліджується важливість розвитку «м'яких навичок» для підвищення професійного успіху студентів, які опановують спеціальність «Інформаційна, бібліотечна та архівна справа». Із швидкою інтеграцією інформаційних технологій в Україні та за кордоном фахівці цих галузей мають володіти збалансованим набором технічних і нетехнічних компетенцій для забезпечення конкурентоспроможності. У той час як «жорсткі навички» надають фундаментальні технічні знання, «м'які навички», як-от: міжособистісна комунікація, адаптивність, емоційний інтелект, критичне мислення та командна робота є ключовими для професійного зростання та ефективної взаємодії з різними категоріями користувачів. Аналізуючи наукову літературу з даної тематики, авторка статті відзначає значущість «м'яких навичок» у мультидисциплінарних умовах і розглядає компетентнісну модель, запропоновану Бостонською консалтинговою групою. Ця модель, підтверджена дослідженнями Гарвардського і Стенфордського університетів, демонструє, що успішна кар'єра значною мірою залежить від нетехнічних навичок. Запропоновано комплексний підхід до розвитку цих навичок, що охоплює діагностику початкового рівня, теоретичну підготовку, практичну діяльність та отримання зворотного зв'язку, спрямованого на формування гнучкості, креативності та здатності до вирішення проблем. Результати дослідження свідчать про доцільність інтеграції тренінгів із розвитку м'яких навичок у навчальні програми для забезпечення адаптивності, конкурентоспроможності та підвищення якості послуг фахівців у сфері інформаційної, бібліотечної та архівної справи.*

Ключові слова: *м'які навички; інформаційна, бібліотечна та архівна справа; студенти; професійний розвиток; комунікація*

Statement of the Problem: The demand for specialists in information and library science in Ukraine, although currently modest, has significant potential for growth due to the integration of modern information technologies into all spheres of public life. This sector requires not only proficiency in traditional library and archival disciplines but also a strong foundation in information systems, digital resources, database management, and information security. Developing new educational programs

aimed at integrating information technologies presents new opportunities to prepare multifunctional specialists capable of working at the intersection of library, information, and IT sectors.

To build a successful career in this field, it is essential not only to master specific professional competencies (the so-called "hard skills") – such as information systems management, basic programming knowledge, and data analysis skills – but also to continually enhance soft skills. These include critical thinking, effective communication, creativity, time management, and the ability to work collaboratively. The balanced development of both hard and soft skills enables professionals not only to remain competitive in the labor market but also to adapt successfully to the dynamic and rapidly evolving information technology landscape.

Analysis of previous studies and publications. In exploring the role of soft skills in professional success, previous studies emphasize the increasing relevance of non-technical competencies for students in information, library, and archival studies. Researchers highlight how soft skills like communication, teamwork, adaptability, and problem-solving are essential for navigating complex, multidisciplinary environments.

According to Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary [3], "soft skills" refer to interpersonal abilities that enable people to interact and work well with others. S. Nahod [10] delineates "hard skills" and "soft skills", with the former encompassing technical expertise needed for task execution and the latter – often referred to as social skills – being essential for professional success and personal growth [10]. L. Ivanova, O. Skorniakova [4] further describe «soft skills» as encompassing a range of interpersonal, motivational, and organizational abilities, including time management, negotiation, leadership, and emotional intelligence – each critical for professional duties and team-based effectiveness [4]. The author's previous studies also focus on the development of soft skills through gamification tools [12], as well as the enhancement of professional skills relevant to the future career prospects [11] of students majoring in «Information, Library, and Archival Studies».

Swedish researcher A. Berglund highlights specific soft skills crucial for professional efficacy, including ethical responsibility, critical self-assessment, resource management, leadership in diverse teams, continuous learning, and effective communication [2].

The development of soft skills as a crucial component for future specialists has been explored by several researchers, including K. Koval, who argues that soft skills are among the most significant factors for student employability [7]. N. Kolyada, O. Kravchenko examine practical approaches to soft skills formation within higher education, highlighting effective strategies for skill integration [6].

S. Ahmad [1] explores the perceptions of university information professionals in Pakistan regarding continuous professional development (CPD) for soft skills. Findings show a lack of accessible CPD programs focused on essential soft skills like communication, persuasion, self-management, and interpersonal skills, which participants consider crucial for their roles.

M. Kupryaeva [8] discusses the importance of developing soft skills in university training for future professionals, focusing on adaptability, creative thinking, multilingualism, and interpersonal communication.

N. Leshchenko [9] emphasizes the importance of soft skills for future educators, particularly in transforming traditional professional standards. Key soft skills include intellectual abilities, critical thinking, emotional intelligence, creativity, teamwork, interpersonal communication, and time management.

This literature review highlights the critical role of soft skills in fostering professional success across diverse fields, including information, library, archival studies, public administration, education, and university training. Studies emphasize that essential non-technical competencies—such as communication, teamwork, adaptability, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence – enhance an individual's ability to navigate complex, multidisciplinary, and rapidly evolving environments.

However, a consistent gap exists in accessible training programs and professional development resources for these skills, which many professionals and educators view as vital for sustainable growth and adaptability. Addressing this gap through targeted training initiatives can help equip students and professionals alike for long-term success in dynamic workplaces.

The purpose of this article is to examine the critical role of soft skills in shaping the future professional success of students majoring in information, library, and archival studies.

Presentation of the main research. Researchers from The Boston Consulting Group have developed a competency model for 2025, which outlines essential universal competencies necessary for effective performance in the 21st century – a time marked by the rapid advancement of information technology. Furthermore, studies from Harvard and Stanford Universities reveal that only 15% of career success is attributable to technical skills, whereas 85% depends on soft skills [13].

In contemporary scientific discourse, the terms "hard skills" and "soft skills" have become increasingly significant. "Hard skills" refer to the technical knowledge and abilities required to perform specific professional tasks, while "soft skills" encompass interpersonal and self-management abilities that facilitate successful self-realization and professional achievement. For professionals in information, library, and archival fields, soft skills such as communication, emotional intelligence, adaptability, and teamwork are integral components of both their professional training and practical work. These skills help in creating an efficient information environment and ensure high levels of engagement with society.

Recruitment specialists highlight a prevalent trend in the labor market, where candidates often possess technical "hard" skills but may lack essential personal attributes. Employers, therefore, prioritize candidates with well-developed soft skills, recognizing that such employees not only excel in task performance but also enhance the workplace environment by fostering a positive and collaborative atmosphere. This approach ultimately boosts team effectiveness and supports better adaptation to ongoing changes, underscoring the critical role of soft skills in modern professional contexts.

In the context of training for information, library, and archival professionals, "soft skills" can be understood as a collection of competencies that enable flexibility in professional activities. These skills include a specialist's ability to adapt to change, think beyond conventional frameworks, transcend rigid functions, and operate effectively under uncertainty. Notably, "soft skills" exhibit emergent properties, as the interaction of their elements produces new qualities that cannot simply be reduced to the sum of their parts. Additionally, they generate a synergistic effect: combining these skills within an integrated framework significantly enhances the effectiveness of professional work.

Thus, we can articulate our perspective on soft skills for future information, library, and archival professionals. These competencies are universal and encompass interpersonal communication, adaptability, critical thinking, emotional intelligence, teamwork, and time management. Such skills enable professionals not only to execute technical tasks but also to foster a comfortable information environment, cultivate relationships with users and colleagues, and adapt to the rapid changes occurring in information technology and society.

Professionals in the information, library, and archival fields require a high level of soft skills, as their roles within the human-information-human system are inherently unpredictable, often lacking standardized processes or strict algorithms. This demands a capacity for creative problem-solving, effective engagement with diverse users, and proficient management of information flows, making soft skills indispensable for success in these fields.

The current realities and Ukraine's path toward European integration highlight the need for specialists in the field of information, library, and archival studies who are in demand in the labor market. These qualified employees must possess a combination of diverse professional and interpersonal skills essential for a successful career. Among the key requirements is proficiency in the English language, which serves as a critical factor for effective communication, not only with international partners and clients but also for engaging with global information and documentation, often presented in English.

Another important aspect is the ability to work collaboratively in a team, which encompasses effective communication, active listening, and strong written expression skills. These competencies are fundamental to the modern work environment, as integrating information technology and digital resources necessitates coordinated efforts across various departments and disciplines. Additionally, the ability to systematically negotiate – from initial contact with the customer to the presentation of the final solution – represents a crucial element of professional success. This capability implies finding common ground with clients and solving complex problems that require strategic thinking and an understanding of the broader project context.

Furthermore, an information, library, and archival studies specialist must effectively structure and organize vast amounts of information and documents, ensuring they are stored properly and easily accessible to end users. Such professional responsibilities demand strong time management skills and the ability to meet deadlines, especially in a fast-paced and ever-evolving information environment. The specialist must also adapt to new challenges and respond swiftly to changes in a dynamic workplace.

In our study, we analyze soft skills that, while not directly tied to the technical aspects of professional activity, significantly influence its effectiveness. We believe that future information, library, and archival professionals should possess several key competencies.

Communication is a vital element, as it facilitates the exchange of information, knowledge, and ideas among individuals, forming the basis for effective interaction within the information environment. Purposefulness is characterized by a stable and conscious desire to achieve results, which is particularly crucial in the context of evolving technological platforms and information requests. Creativity is essential in the information sector, enabling professionals to move beyond stereotypical solutions and propose innovative approaches to problem-solving.

Critical thinking is imperative for the effective processing and consumption of information, central to the professional training of specialists who must handle vast amounts of data. Customer focus allows for the timely identification of the needs of information resource users, a critical aspect in the library and archival fields. People management is a strategic skill that empowers leaders to optimize team performance effectively.

Problem-solving and decision-making are vital skills in the information sector, as professionals frequently encounter new and unpredictable challenges. Emotional intelligence enhances understanding of the emotions of users and colleagues, fostering productive working relationships. Knowledge management is crucial for handling information arrays, encompassing not only the collection of data but also its effective application to address current issues.

The ability to work under uncertainty is essential, enabling professionals to adapt quickly to changes in the professional environment. Lean manufacturing principles, which focus on identifying and eliminating waste in work processes, are relevant across all fields of activity. Finally, self-analysis and self-reflection allow professionals to evaluate their actions and make necessary adjustments to their professional practice.

It is important to note that the development and enhancement of these soft skills are vital for the successful adaptation of future information, library, and archival professionals to the demands and realities of their professions

To develop soft skills in future information and library professionals, it is essential to implement an integrated approach that addresses both theoretical knowledge and practical training. We propose a strategy for soft skills development in these fields, based on a systematic approach that combines foundational knowledge with hands-on experience.

The first step is diagnosing students' initial soft skill levels to identify their strengths and areas for improvement. This assessment may be conducted using questionnaires, self-evaluation tools, and simulated professional scenarios. The next phase involves theoretical instruction to introduce students to the concept of soft skills, emphasizing their significance in professional practice and exploring methods for enhancing them. Lectures and seminars may include discussions of real-world cases in information management.

The practical stage emphasizes engaging students in skill-building activities such as communication training, collaborative problem-solving projects, and role-playing exercises to simulate workplace scenarios. Interactive learning methods—such as business simulations and forum discussions – further foster critical thinking and creativity. Ongoing assessment, including evaluations of group work and feedback sessions, ensures continuous progress monitoring, allowing educators to adjust instructional methods as needed.

By following this strategy, students will be better prepared to adapt to the demands of the modern professional environment, enhance their employability, and achieve success in their careers. The development of soft skills in future information, library, and archival specialists is therefore a crucial aspect of professional training, enabling them to engage effectively with users, colleagues, and stakeholders in an ever-evolving industry.

Conclusions. Thus, a modern specialist in information, library, and archival science should not only possess in-depth expertise in their specific field but also demonstrate a broad set of universal skills, enabling them to work flexibly, creatively, and effectively in the complex and rapidly evolving landscape of the information society. Consequently, the development of soft skills among future professionals in these fields is a critical component of their professional preparation. Given the demands on specialists in a continually transforming industry, soft skills hold particular value as they enhance effective interaction with users, colleagues, and other stakeholders.

In conclusion, fostering soft skills in future information, library, and archival professionals is essential for their professional and personal development. These competencies not only improve service quality and support innovation but also increase the competitiveness of professionals in the job market. Thus, educational programs should aim to integrate soft skills training into the curriculum, equipping students with the foundational skills needed for a successful and adaptable career.

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