

**Trends in Library and Information Science Education:
Report of a Meeting
August 1-2, 2007
Washington, DC
Institute of Museum and Library Services**

A group of seven deans of graduate schools of library and information science convened at the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) in Washington, DC, in August 2007 to discuss present and future demand for library and information science (LIS) professionals. Another participated by conference call in part of the discussion. The list of participants is attached to this report. Jose-Marie Griffiths, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, served as facilitator. Topics discussed included current research on the profession, trends in enrollment and placement, challenges and potential opportunities in LIS education, and strategies for capitalizing on the opportunities. Two background reports were provided as preparatory reading: 1) a 2006 research study by Jeffrey Pomerantz on Digital Library Education in Library and Information Science Programs¹ and 2) the report of a workshop convened in 2006 by IMLS and the Department of Canadian Heritage, "Canada-US Dialogue on Digital Cultural Heritage: Digital Readiness and Cultural Heritage Institutions."² The reports together show increased offerings on digital library topics within LIS programs and increasing need for digital competencies and other professional skills among all types of cultural heritage institutions.

Mary Chute, Deputy Director for Libraries at IMLS, opened the meeting by welcoming participants. Joyce Ray, Associate Deputy Director of the Office of Library Services, gave a brief history and overview of the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian

¹ www.dlib.org/dlib/november06/pomerantz/11pomerantz.html

² <http://www.ala.org/ala/alalibrary/libraryliaisonedcommittees/alasaaaamjointcommittee/calmadditionaldocuments/calmadddocuments.cfm>

Program (LB 21), now in its fifth year of operation. Initially the program focused on basic recruitment and education of master's level LIS students and doctoral programs producing LIS faculty. It has since expanded to address additional needs, such as an Early Careers Development Program for non-tenured, tenure-track faculty; doctoral programs in library management; and programs to build institutional capacity to enable LIS schools to expand their curricula to meet emerging needs in areas such as digital preservation, data curation, information policy and leadership skills.

Current Research

Jose-Marie Griffiths presented preliminary findings of her research on the future of librarians in the workforce, a study funded by IMLS in 2004. These results show the demand for librarians continuing to increase over the next decade as the current (aging) professional workforce retires. She found that employers are not eliminating positions when vacancies occur, and that new opportunities are arising both within and outside of libraries for graduates with the skills that LIS programs provide. The study will provide an analysis of the current and projected U.S. library workforce by state and region, types of employers, and functional specializations, with data collection to be completed in Fall 2007. Further, the study will assess the likely demand and opportunities for librarians over the next two decades, the skills they will need, the capacity of graduate LIS schools to meet projected needs, and incentives for attracting highly qualified individuals to the field. The report will recommend strategies for the recruitment, education, and retention of future librarians. Griffiths also described another IMLS-funded study underway at UNC Chapel Hill, directed by Joanne Marshall, which complements her own project. The Marshall study is tracing the career patterns of graduates from five LIS programs in North Carolina over the past 30 years to better understand the educational, workplace, career and retention issues faced by LIS graduates.

Trends

As the discussion shifted towards the current environment and trends in LIS education, participants reported that the number of students enrolling in graduate LIS programs is increasing and the average age of students is decreasing. More students are now coming directly into LIS programs after receiving bachelor's degrees. Younger students are typically attracted to technology and to the "new library." Graduate students in LIS programs, in addition to those in graduate museum studies and archival programs, want exposure to multiple digital and technology-related courses. Students generally do not want rigid limitations when choosing courses to meet curriculum requirements; they want a variety of choices and interdisciplinary options. The one exception seems to be in youth service areas such as school library media, where students tend to remain in that field without straying into other programs.

Harry Bruce, University of Washington, described the increased demand in his school. He said the University of Washington has to turn away students because of program and space limitations. He noted the particular interests of employers for graduates with strengths in taxonomy, policy, metadata management, financial information and information security.

Brian Cantwell-Smith, University of Toronto, discussed his program, which includes museum studies as well as library and information science. He noted that museum studies students want access to technology courses offered in LIS programs and vice versa. Michele Cloonan, Simmons College, said that students are interested in both "the artifact" and in "digitizing the artifact," which conceptually links the concerns of museums and libraries through attention to archival principles. Cantwell-Smith said that in the past couple of years he has begun grouping libraries, museums and archives under the same organizational umbrella as "institutions of cultural heritage." He suggested the need for a convergence of curricula for graduate LIS, museum studies

and archival programs. He pointed out that the similarities in professional skill sets needed to work in libraries, museums and archives, as well the ways in which these institutions each function to preserve collections (including digital collections) and make them publicly accessible outweigh the differences. Michele Cloonan, Simmons College, agreed and directed participants to an article on this topic by a member of the Florida State University faculty, Paul Marty.³ Susan Roman, Dominican University, reported on promising opportunities for collaboration and integration in library, museum and archival education that she has experienced in Chicago, with its rich variety of cultural heritage institutions; other major metropolitan areas also provide fertile environments for cooperation.

Challenges

While participants agreed that the current trends, such as the broadening of students' interests, are positive, they noted that they also present problems. LIS graduates may have a solid grasp of technical skills upon entering the workforce but feel they are weak in business skills, "as if they want an MBA incorporated with their LIS." Although participants recognized good opportunities for collaboration with computer science departments, for example, they agreed that LIS programs cannot provide "informatics for everything."

A common concern was that LIS programs risk diluting their overall effectiveness and making little or no meaningful impact on the special interest topics. In addition, most institutions do not possess enough LIS faculty to extensively diversify their programs. The idea of thematic or subject-specific summer institutes or other ways to broaden LIS

³ Marty, Paul F. 1999. Museum Informatics and Collaborative Technologies: The Emerging Socio-Technological Dimension of Information Science in Museum Environments. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science*. 50 (12):1083.

curricula by sharing courses and faculty among schools attracted a great deal of interest. Schools could build on the WISE (Web-based Information Science Education) distance education model, which IMLS has supported to provide sharing of LIS distance education courses among WISE consortium members; the NEH summer institute model; or the rare book school approaches at the University of Virginia and UCLA to provide faculty the opportunity to teach a specialized topic in more detail than is possible in regular LIS curricula. Students could come from other LIS schools to one summer institute location to learn about a specialized topic—cataloging, for example—taught by leaders in the field. This arrangement could also provide faculty members opportunities for visiting summer appointments, thus broadening their own experiences.

Other related opportunities include Certificates of Advanced Study, either for continuing education programs for MLS graduates or for advanced LIS education for professionals coming into the field with other advanced degrees, and the establishment of post-doctoral programs, in which students could gain teaching experience and which would provide incentives to enable more aggressive recruitment of faculty from LIS doctoral programs and related fields.

Elizabeth Liddy, Syracuse University, noted that Professors of Practice, who typically are experienced library practitioners and are not tenure-track, can provide a good means of addressing students' needs for practical information. Their presence can also help schools satisfy accreditation requirements, and “students want what they bring.”

All participants identified increasing the diversity of students and faculty as a goal. Jana Bradley, University of Arizona, noted the success of the Knowledge River program at her school, which is aimed at recruiting LIS students from Latino and American Indian communities. She identified an additional need for doctoral programs to educate future faculty members from diverse backgrounds.

As the demand for LIS education increases, along with the diversification of LIS programs, the demand for additional, qualified LIS faculty grows. But as large schools diversify, the pool of faculty qualified to teach in certain LIS areas decreases. Likewise, schools that do not have doctoral LIS programs have to rely for faculty on the schools that do have doctoral programs. Other issues also contribute to the need for and availability of LIS educators, such as institutional barriers to hiring or the increasing number of job opportunities available to LIS graduates outside of academia, either in libraries or in the private sector (in positions with information providers such as Google, Microsoft or Yahoo, for example).

Participants also discussed the development of information science as a distinct field within library education programs and its effect on the educational community. Several mentioned that while membership in the I-School Caucus⁴ is restricted, the emphasis on information science is the direction in which virtually all LIS education is moving. The challenge will be for ALISE (Association of Library and Information Science Educators) and the I-Schools to keep the whole field involved in discussions about curriculum and other important issues, and to work together to maximize the sharing of resources and information. In that regard, the next two years of ALISE conferences will focus on themes that address common interests such as information policy and community engagement.

Potential Opportunities and Strategies

Three “big ideas” for new collaborative projects emerged from the meeting, which participants agreed to pursue, along with other interested partners to be identified:

- 1) A workshop to bring together LIS and museum educators and representatives of innovative collaborative projects to discuss the

⁴ http://www.ischools.org/oc/conference08/ic08_about.html

potential of curricular convergence and resource sharing for the education of library, museum and archives professionals;

- 2) Summer institutes to enable LIS programs to invite visiting faculty to offer courses on particular topics to broaden opportunities for both students and LIS faculty; and
- 3) Development of an open repository with learning objects for LIS education.

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