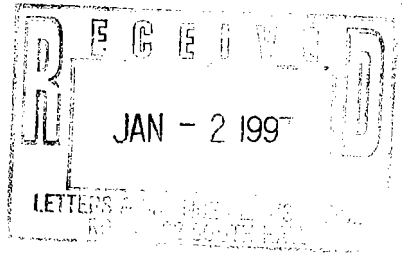


# School of Library and Information Studies

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University of Wisconsin — Madison

December 30, 1996



To: Philip R. Certain, Dean

From: *Ju* James Krikelas, Interim Director

Re: Assessment Plan

Enclosed is the Assessment Plan for the School of Library and Information Studies as requested.

enclosure

## **SCHOOL OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION STUDIES**

### **Plan for Assessment of the Graduate Program (Master of Arts Degree)**

#### **Introduction**

The School of Library and Information Studies (SLIS) offers two graduate degrees — the Master of Arts (in Library and Information Studies) and the Ph.D. (in Library and Information Studies). The master's program is essentially a professional degree; the Ph.D. is a research degree. The School also offers a post-master's program of study leading to a Specialist Certificate in Library and Information Studies. There is no undergraduate program although many introductory (400- to 600-level) courses are open to undergraduate juniors and seniors.

The major efforts of our instructional program focuses on the professional master's degree and is the emphasis of our current and planned assessment efforts. The general master's program is accredited by the American Library Association (ALA). The School also provides two programs within the master's degree that are approved by the Department of Public Instruction and lead to the regular Instructional Library Media Specialist (902) license; the regular Master of Arts program and a special sequence of 15 credits that supplement the 24-credit undergraduate work in the School of Education which satisfies the Initial Instructional Library Media Specialist license (901). In addition, the School provides a nationally recognized specialty composed of a sequence of courses in archives acquisitions, management and preservation.

#### **Goal and Objectives of the Master's Program**

The goal of the master of arts degree program is to educate graduates to have the knowledge, skills, and understandings sufficient for the practice of librarianship and information service at a basic professional level in a diverse, technological, and global society. The MA program also aims to provide a foundation, including relevant concepts from fields outside library and information studies, upon which students can build further competence and specialization. Specialization beyond the basic or general level can be accomplished by completing additional courses or learning experiences, beyond the 42-credit master's program, or by careful selection of elective courses and learning experiences within the 42 credits.

The general objectives of the MA degree program are to provide each graduate with:

A. General or foundation-level knowledge, including:

1. Major theoretical frameworks that address information production, gathering, and use by individuals and groups;
2. Multiple information environments within a multicultural society;
3. Librarianship as a service profession and its role within the broader context of the production, gathering, and use of information by individuals and groups;
4. The literature of library and information studies, including research literature, and its use to address problems and questions;
5. Historical, professional, and ethical perspectives in librarianship and information services, including professional education;
6. Information needs, information-seeking behavior, and information use by people in their various roles, situations, and contexts;
7. Methods that are used to study information needs, uses, and seeking behavior, including community analysis;
8. Societal communication processes, including scholarly communication;
9. Types of information sources;
10. Issues related to the development of collections of information sources;
11. The information professional as an intermediary between information sources and information users;
12. Theories, concepts, and issues in the organization of information;
13. Major tools and systems for organizing bibliographic information;
14. Current and emerging technologies of relevance to information organization and services;
15. Information agencies as organizations;
16. Management principles and practices;
17. The place of the working professional in the organizational environment;
18. The effect of managerial style on organizational behavior;
19. The relationship of information agencies to their external governing authority;
20. Measurement and evaluation of information services and activities;
21. Principles and techniques for the provision of bibliographic or indexing access to information.

- B. General or foundation-level understanding of professional commitments and social responsibilities relevant to library and information services, including the importance of:
1. The free flow of ideas and information;
  2. The right of the individual to information access and the protection of individual privacy and other rights, as well as the implications of these to librarianship;
  3. The nature and implications of the concept of libraries and information agencies as service institutions in a diverse and complex society;
  4. Continuing professional education for lifelong professional growth.
- C. Knowledge, skills, and understandings beyond the foundation level sufficient to practice library and information services at the basic professional level in a context or contexts chosen by the student, such as: (1) Library and information services for a particular client group, context, or type of agency (e.g., children, small public libraries, humanities scholars); and (2) Library and information services within a particular functional area or type of service (e.g., cataloging and classification, reference services, collection management).
- D. Knowledge and awareness of perspectives and orientations of importance to the practice of librarianship and information services, including: (1) multiculturalism; (2) internationalism; (3) technological perspectives; and (4) research perspectives.

### **Current, Ongoing Assessment Approaches**

Accreditation & Self-study — As noted above, the School undergoes an accreditation process that occurs every seven years and includes annual updates in the form of two styles of reports: every year a statistical assessment summary is prepared as prescribed by the accreditation committee; every other year the statistical evaluation is supplemented by a narrative evaluation noting progress on areas that the ALA Committee on Accreditation identifies as requiring improvement. The major accreditation process includes a comprehensive self-study prepared by the School. Sections of the report are prepared by committees, chaired by a faculty member, consisting of faculty, staff and students. As part of the preparation of the self-study, a mail questionnaire is sent to graduates of the program and to representative employers. The students are asked to evaluate the program in terms of their original expectations and the degree to which the educational process prepared them for the work they are

doing. Similarly, employers are asked to judge how well students from are program are prepared to perform the job requirements and how our students compare to graduates of other accredited library schools.

Advisory Council — An advisory council was established in 1992, as a result of suggestions made by the Accreditation Committee. The council has met at least once a year; two meetings were held in 1995, so by mutual agreement the next meeting will be scheduled for the Spring of 1997. The council consists of library administrators, library and information agency practitioners, alumni, an official representative of the School's alumni association, SLIS staff, and SLIS students. Although the content of the meetings varies it always includes some presentation by students discussing various aspects of their educational program. Feedback from council members is reported to the faculty, and feasible suggestion are investigated and often implemented.

Placement Assessment — One measure of the accomplishment of our objectives is the comparative success we have in placing our students. Each year, the School requests information about the student's job placement status. A consistent pattern exists among our graduates: a small percentage continue their graduate education (usually in other academic disciplines) in order to better qualify for work in academic libraries; a smaller percentage seek employment outside of the library and information services (again, these students come to the School with that objective in mind); most of our graduates seek work in all types of libraries or in information services (including information brokerage). Our evaluation seeks information on how many receive job offers up to a month after graduation; how many receive job offers within three months and, later, within six months, as well as the number of students still seeking placement after six months. These figures are used to monitor our performance from year to year and our performance vis-a-vis other accredited schools. The data collected is reported annually, and the cumulative results (for all participating schools) appears in the Spring issue of *Library Journal*.

Faculty Review of Objectives & Curriculum — For the past seven years, the first faculty meeting (normally held in late August) is devoted to a review and discussion of the School's objectives, the degree to which the current curriculum reflects these objectives, and suggestions for evaluation of one or more of the foundation courses. This year, an evaluative report on changes implemented in LIS 450 ("Information Agencies and Their Environment") two years ago is scheduled for faculty discussion in the next (Spring 1997) semester. Additionally, the School maintains a standing

Curriculum Committee composed of faculty, staff and students that reviews suggestions for changes and additions suggested by students and faculty. Many of the issues are based on student and alumni input. Students are regularly encouraged to comment on the relevance of the program to their career goals, and takes the form of: (i) anonymous feed back of each course as part of the faculty evaluation reports prepared by students; and (ii) information gathered from irregularly conducted "exit" interviews conducted by the Director of the School.

### **Proposed Assessment Plan**

The new accreditation standards of the American Library Association (1992) will emphasis outcomes assessment measures. In anticipation of our 1998 self-study the School planned to seek external assistance to identify and summarize the different types of assessment. The schedule was advanced to help in the preparation of this report and a study was commissioned to be carried out by the Center for the Study of Information Professionals, Inc. The final report identified eight standard activities that can be used to provided assessment data:

- Capstone courses;
- Fieldwork/practicum;
- Locally-developed comprehensive exams;
- Exit interviews;
- Student advisory council;
- Individualized assessment;
- Portfolios; and
- Graduate/employer advisory council and surveys.

The consultant recommended three of these assessment approaches for consideration: Fieldwork/practicum; Portfolios; and Graduate/employer surveys; and a fourth approach representing a modified, and more structured, Program advisory council. The council will be composed of graduate-practitioners and employers of graduates. The council will be charged to assist the School in evaluating each of the assessment measures currently used as well as those that may be implemented in the future.

Based on these considerations, the School of Library and Information Studies proposes the following plan for assessment:

1. Two current assessment approaches will continue to be used but with a more rigorous measurement focus: The Accreditation Self-Study (conducted every seven years); and The Annual Faculty Review of the Schools Goals and Objectives vis-a-vis the Curriculum. For the latter, the faculty will explore the practice of incorporating as many of the relevant objectives in the form of measurable performance or test results. The activity will begin at the faculty retreat in August 1998.
2. Reconstitute the current Advisory Council as the Program Advisory Council by March 1998. The current council will be meeting in May of 1997, and their input into this process will be solicited. [The transition from the current Interim Director to a new Director serves as a logical time for this change.]
3. Continue collection of statistical measures as a method of determining long-term trends in graduation rates, employment (placement) rates, and degree of student-body diversity. A review of the statistical data was begun in October 1996, and will be concluded by April of 1997. The result will be a planning calendar for implementing changes and for systematic collection of data. The Program Advisory Council will be asked to review the relevance of these for assessing the program as part of their first meeting.
4. The 1997-98 Curriculum Committee will be charged to conduct an evaluation of the Portfolio approach to program assessment. If the review is favorable they will present a plan for implementation; if the review is unfavorable, the Committee will be required to investigate the feasibility of two other approaches: the re-creation of a capstone course [previously LIS 861] or the re-implementation of the comprehensive examination. Deadline: August 1998.
5. Continuation of the employer and graduates survey with a fixed, regular timetable. The first survey will be conducted in the late spring of 1998 for use in the self-study. Subsequently, the survey will be conducted every third spring. A special task force will be appointed in 1997-98 to review the questionnaire, create a list of actual and potential employers (for use in random selection), and a list of graduates in each of three categories: 1987-1991 graduates, 1992-1996 graduates, all 1997 graduates. (Subsequent surveys will use category parameters incremented by seven years.)

Submitted on behalf of the faculty by  
James Krikelas, Interim Director  
27 December 1996