

**ASSESSMENT REPORT**  
2000-2001  
School of Library and Information Studies

**Introduction**

The School of Library and Information Studies (SLIS) offers two graduate degrees--the Master of Arts and the Ph.D. The master's program leads to 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, a program individually tailored to the needs of the student. There is no undergraduate program, although many introductory (400 to 600 level) courses are open to juniors and seniors.

The professional master's degree is accredited by the American Library Association (ALA). The School offers a number of specialties. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction approves our School Library Media Specialist certificate. Our archives specialty, although taught since its inception by adjunct faculty, is nationally ranked.

**Assessment**

The SLIS master's programs is **accredited by the American Library Association's Committee on Accreditation**. Our major assessment during the 1999-2000 school year consisted of preparing for our accreditation visit, held October 12 and 13, 2000. Prior to the visit, the external review panel received extensive documentation from the School. This documentation is available in the office of Mary Anne Fitzpatrick, College of Letters & Science. The panel visited with students, alumni, employers, university constituents, administrators, and the faculty and staff. Their report to the Committee on Accreditation was followed by the Director's appearance before the COA. The COA in January informed the School that it had approved an extension of the accreditation of the master's program for the full seven years allowed, until 2007.

The College of Letters & Science allowed the School to combine program review with the accreditation process. A committee headed by Dennis Dresang evaluated the Doctoral Program, the faculty, and continuing education. They pointed up weaknesses in the program brought about by the large number of retirements of senior faculty during a short period of time and recommended some remedies, which the School is considering.

**Direct Indicators**

Direct indicators of student learning as measured against the **stated goals and objectives** of the program include the following: **embedding testing, student evaluations of teaching, student portfolios (including--for example-- reflective journals, course papers, reading critiques, scripts of presentations, web pages and accompanying process papers), and performance evaluations by field experience supervisors.**

## Indirect Indicators

Annually the **faculty reviews the SLIS program goals and objectives**. In addition, the School employs periodic **student, alumni, and/or employer surveys** to assess the curriculum in relation to changing professional demands. SLIS maintains **statistics on job placement** of its students. The director regularly conducts informal **exit interviews** with graduating students. The School keeps in regular **communication with the supervisors of field experience students**. An **Advisory Council** meets at least annually to provide input into the program.

## Narrative

The School operates under an assessment plan originally adopted in 1996 and modified as the situation changes. The plan includes both ongoing and new approaches.

- **Self-study and accreditation.** The ALA accreditation process occurs roughly every seven years. Annual updates include two styles of reports: annual statistical summaries and bi-annual narrative reports addressing areas of ALA concern. SLIS will file both types of reports in October 2001, following our accreditation visit in October 2000.
- **Advisory Council.** Since 1992, SLIS has had an Advisory Council that meets at least once per year. Part of its agenda always includes opportunities for members to interact with students and to advise the director and faculty on various aspects of the program.
- **Placement assessment.** Each year the School gathers information about students' job placement, including time to placement, job title and location, and beginning salary. The figures are used to monitor our success from year-to-year and in relation to other schools and the field as a whole. The cumulative results from all schools are published annually in *Library Journal*.
- **Faculty review of objectives and curriculum.** The first faculty meeting of each year is generally devoted to a review and discussion of the School's objectives, the degree to which the curriculum meets these objectives, and suggestions for modifications. Concerns arising out of that review are referred to the appropriate committee (SLIS committees are generally composed of faculty, academic staff, and students).
- **Fieldwork/Practicum.** In the fieldwork courses, students not only assess their own learning through fieldwork, but their faculty and site supervisors also have the opportunity to assess their learning.
- **Portfolios.** A number of courses have begun using portfolio assessment as a means to evaluate students' integration of material learned. Adoption of portfolio assessment as a strategy for the entire program is still under study.
- **Student forums.** This year we have made an extra effort to determine how successful we have been in the creation of an atmosphere that is welcoming to students of color and

international students. Students and a visiting faculty member have solicited input not only on how we are doing, but also on how we could do a better job of dealing with diversity issues. Some exciting ideas have come out of the work, including a one-credit-hour brown bag seminar on international librarianship and a “diversity across the curriculum” reading assignment and pervasive discussions. We are also working with the General Library System on ways we can support each other in diversifying the profession.

- **Graduate/employer surveys.** SLIS in 1999 surveyed employers and graduates as a part of the re-accreditation self-study. We anticipate doing a smaller survey during spring of 2002.

### **Assessment Focus for 2001-2002**

Over the past several years, SLIS has revised its required core courses. The new courses to come out of that revision will be implemented in part in the fall (the inability to hire short-term staff has made it impossible for our small faculty to implement the entire revision). This year on portion of our assessment efforts will be directed toward gauging the success of the revision and the reorganization of electives.

Another focus will be our doctoral program, under thorough examination. We will begin by including our doctoral students in our fall retreat in order to engage them in the evaluation and revision process.

A third arena will be diversity. We will be assessing the effectiveness of our planned “diversity across the curriculum” activities through conversations with our international students and students of color and surveys of other students. We will also be working with Memorial Library and the General Library System on this issue.

A fourth arena will be our participation in distance and continuing education efforts, as well as outreach.

### **Summary**

Because it is a professional school accredited by an outside agency and concerned with the placement of our students in professional positions after graduation, the School of Library and Information Studies uses various assessment approaches on an ongoing basis. Among out most important assessments is the placement of our graduates and their subsequent performance. The past year marked the end of one period of intense self-assessment with the culmination of the accreditation process. We now begin again to set goals and objectives and to focus on other areas needing attention, as outlined above.

Submitted on behalf of the faculty  
By Louise S. Robbins, Director  
May 24, 2001