

**SCHOOL OF LIBRARY AND  
INFORMATION STUDIES (SLIS)  
University of Wisconsin-Madison**

PROGRAM

PLANNING

GUIDE:

M.A. DEGREE PROGRAM

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## **INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS**

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### **Librarianship And Other Information Professions: What Role Can I Play In Them?**

Librarianship is a profession with a long and distinguished history. The unique skills developed and practiced by librarians for many decades, combined with a unique focus on user access and the social role of the librarian, have in recent years been applied in a milieu in which computer technology has an increasingly important place. Library and information science (LIS), the discipline which forms the basis for the information professions, has drawn in turn from other disciplines, including computer science, communications, business administration and linguistics. LIS has contributed to different disciplines through classification theory, understanding users' information behavior, and bibliography, for example. The marriage of traditional library practice with a focus on user needs and ever more sophisticated technology has opened new areas of opportunity, both within libraries and in the wider information arena.

### **Librarianship: Information Professionals in Libraries**

Libraries are collections (virtual or actual) of materials organized and interpreted to meet broad and varying needs of people for information, knowledge, aesthetic enjoyment and recreation. The task of librarians, assisted by other staff members, is to enable libraries to function effectively for the benefit of their user communities.

Libraries can be classed in several ways, among them by intended clientele: public, academic, school or special. The term "special libraries" encompasses a large and varied group, but special libraries typically focus on a special subject or format and serve a larger parent organization, such as a corporation or research group.

### **Nature of the Work**

According to the Occupational Outlook Handbook of the Bureau of Labor Statistics,

“The traditional concept of a library is being redefined from a place to access paper records or books to one that also houses the most advanced media, including CD-ROM, the Internet, virtual libraries, and remote access to a wide range of resources. Consequently, librarians, or information professionals, increasingly are combining traditional duties with tasks involving quickly changing technology. Librarians assist people in finding information and using it effectively for personal and professional purposes. Librarians must have knowledge of a wide variety of scholarly and public information sources and must follow trends related to publishing, computers, and the media in order to oversee the selection and organization of library materials. Librarians manage staff and develop and direct information programs and systems for the public, to ensure that information is organized in a manner that meets users' needs.

Most librarian positions incorporate three aspects of library work: User services, technical services, and administrative services. Still, even librarians specializing in one of these areas have other responsibilities. Librarians in user services, such as reference and children's librarians, work with patrons to help them find the information they need. The job involves analyzing users' needs to determine what information is appropriate, as well as searching for, acquiring, and providing the information. The job also includes an instructional role, such as showing users how to access information. For example, librarians commonly help users navigate the Internet so they can search for relevant information efficiently. Librarians in technical services, such as acquisitions and cataloguing, acquire and prepare materials for use and often do not deal directly with the public. Librarians in administrative services oversee the management and planning of libraries: negotiate contracts for services, materials, and equipment; supervise library employees; perform public-

relations and fundraising duties: prepare budgets; and direct activities to ensure that everything functions properly.” (For more information see: U.S. Dept. of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics *Occupational Outlook Handbook: Librarians*, <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos068.htm>.)

### **Archives**

Archivists acquire, organize, and maintain control over a wide range of recorded information deemed important enough for permanent safekeeping. This information takes many forms: photographs, films, video and sound recordings, computer tapes, and video and optical disks, as well as more traditional paper records, letters, and documents. Archivists work for a variety of organizations, including government agencies, museums, historical societies, corporations, and educational institutions that use or generate records of great potential value to researchers, exhibitors, genealogists, and others who would benefit from having access to original source material. (For more information see: U.S. Dept. of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics *Occupational Outlook Handbook: Archivists, Curators, and Museum Technicians*, <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos065.htm>.)

### **Other Professions**

Graduates of schools of library and information studies have traditionally found positions in many areas outside of library organizations. More recently these opportunities have undergone a striking expansion as the need for people to select, organize, present and preserve information has become universally recognized. Our graduates now take jobs as archivists, museum registrars, web designers, information systems analysts, records managers, information product developers and sales representatives, to name but a few occupational categories. Some people work independently as information brokers or consultants.

### **How Does My Background Fit Into the Information Professions?**

Several factors will interact to prepare you for a professional career: your educational background, your subject interests and your program in this School. An additional important factor is your previous life and work experience. Now is the time to think about how these factors, coupled with your preferences and with the types of information activities indicated above, can help lead you toward a rewarding career.

If you plan to be a school librarian and have been pursuing studies in education, much of your undergraduate work will have consisted of courses that are related to and are useful in your job as a librarian. The typical academic or public librarian, however, does not have an undergraduate basis that is coordinated with the period of graduate professional information study leading to the M.A. degree. This is not necessarily a disadvantage; it permits flexibility. If you are among those who had an undergraduate major or minor in a subject field that interests you deeply, you may want to use that as a focal point in your professional study. Having an advanced degree in another field in addition to the M.A. degree from this School is, of course, excellent preparation for subject-based positions.

Many job candidates, however, find it can be difficult to translate even a fairly deep subject interest into a specific information profession position, particularly if employment aspirations are limited by family or geographical factors. Also, you may be one of the many students whose subject background is quite broad and whose subject interest is flexible enough to accommodate a variety of library and other information positions.

It is usually effective to plan for a career on the basis of 1) type of information profession (librarianship, archives management, information systems analysis, etc.); 2) type of institution (public library, government data processing center, publisher, etc.) or 3) type of activity (work with children, preservation, indexing, etc.). Within each of these areas many variations are possible.

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE MASTER'S PROGRAM**

The Master of Arts (MA) degree program aims to provide students with the values, skills and knowledge to enter the information professions, and in particular to:

1. Understand the characteristics of, and interactions among, information, information technologies, and the people who provide and use these sources and services, from all segments of a multicultural, multiethnic, and multilingual society;
2. Comprehend the philosophies and uphold the principles of information ethics, and ethical information policies;
3. Aspire to leadership in a continuously changing field;
4. Envisage and plan how to meet the varied and changing information needs of individuals and groups in a global society;
5. Provide public service through continuing education programs, consulting services for library and information centers, and participation in professional organizations;
6. Promote excellence in research contributions to the base of theoretical and practical knowledge in libraries and archives, and in information studies.

Students who successfully complete the Master of Arts degree in Library and Information Studies demonstrate knowledge, understanding of, and proficiency in:

1. Theoretical and historical perspectives that provide a critical grounding for practice, including theories, concepts, and issues in the organization of and access to information, the history of American librarianship, reading, information technology in society, and theories and issues of the relationship of information and power;
2. Professional techniques and technologies, including research skills, knowledge of all types and formats of information sources and the ability to evaluate them, familiarity with technical services and public services and how they work together, high level of skill at negotiating information needs from the reference interview to community analysis, and competency with software and hardware that provides the foundation for confidently and quickly learning new systems and programs;
3. The practice of good teamwork and communication skills, a reflective, problem-solving mindset, and the creative vision to take on and grow with leadership roles, including the ability to work effectively in groups and with diverse people, to give excellent presentations and facilitate meetings, and effectively to write planning and other administrative documents;
4. Formal and informal information policies and ethics from the global to the local level, a strong service ethic and commitment to intellectual freedom required to cope with the necessary tensions pervading information provision, including knowledge of organizational, governmental, and international policy, understanding of societal communication processes, including scholarly communication, and commitment to excellent service;

5. Library and information services for a particular client group, context, or type of agency (e.g., children, small public libraries, the disadvantaged, humanities scholars);
6. Library and information services within a particular functional area or type of service (e.g., cataloging and classification, reference services, collection management)

Adopted by the faculty, 10/15/1995; Revised and Approved by the Faculty 2/25/04, 4/07.

### **How Can I Fit All My Interests Into Elective Courses?**

You cannot. Make the choices that seem best--your adviser will try to aid you--and remember that members of any profession today have a need for continuing education. This is just the beginning of your professional career.

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. Students with well-developed specific information career objectives in mind should carefully consider whether taking more credit hours than the 42 required for the MA degree will be advantageous. After obtaining the broad professional preparation recommended for and obtainable through 42 credit hours, a student may wish to take 6 or more additional credit hours in an area of specific interest. Other students may wish to enter the Specialist Certificate Program which requires the MA degree for admission and 24 credits hours of additional course work as well as other requirements.

### **Credit Load for Completing the M.A. Degree**

Eight to twelve credits in a regular semester is considered full-time at the graduate level. Course load maximums are; 12 credits in a regular semester, 8 credits in the summer term and 3 credits in the intersession (a three-week session held in late May to early June). Graduate-level study, in contrast to undergraduate courses, places heavy reliance on out-of-classroom work. You should expect every 3-credit course to be equivalent to 10-12 hours of work per week, and avoid excessive commitments.

### **Map Out Your Entire Program**

If possible, plan your entire tentative program with different scenarios. Be flexible in your thinking. Not every course will be offered every semester. You must take 450 in your first semester. LIS 450 and 734 are always scheduled in the fall only. You will then be able to schedule your courses around those that you want but that are not given every semester. Courses given every semester can then be taken when suitable. You can generally obtain from the School office tentative course lists for the next two semesters.

Both the School Library Media and Archives and Records Administration specializations have their own requirements. Please check with the advisers of those specializations for more information.

### **Interrupted Programs**

Students, who find they must skip a fall or spring semester, must file a **Re-Entry** Form with the Graduate School and notify this School in writing requesting readmission. This should be done as early as possible to assure space in that term.

### **Accommodating Special Needs**

The SLIS faculty and staff want to provide a welcoming and accessible learning environment for all students. We want each of you to be as successful as possible and to feel fully included in all teaching, learning, and extra curricular activities associated with the program. If you do have special needs, contact faculty members early to let them know your situation. Accommodations should be negotiated as early in

the semester as possible. If you are getting behind in your courses, or having trouble in any way, talk to your instructor, your adviser, or the Student Services Coordinator. We also encourage you to contact the McBurney Disability Resource Center (see Web site: <http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu/> or call: 608 263-2741) about campus disability-related policies and the services available to you. The Writing Center is also a valuable campus resource (see Web site: <http://www.wisc.edu/writing/>, or call: 608 263-1992).

## **PRACTICUM REQUIREMENT**

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### **Guidelines for the Practicum Experience**

The objective of the practicum requirement is to allow students the opportunity for additional integration and application in a work setting of knowledge, skills, and attitudes learned in the classroom. It provides students with beginning professional experience and an opportunity to associate with professionals who can provide role models and further the students' acculturation as professionals.

The following general guidelines pertain:

1. Each student must have completed LIS 450, 451, & 551 prior to fulfilling this requirement, as well as other courses appropriate to the placement. (For example LIS 651 should be completed before doing a cataloging practicum.)
2. The minimum required number of hours for the non-credit practicum is 40 hours. Additional hours may be required for a specific experience. Once a student has agreed to a specified commitment of time, he or she must be prepared to honor the commitment.
3. A practicum should meet the following criteria:
  - A. It should involve the student in a meaningful activity or project that requires the exercise or development of professional level skills and judgments. Routine, repetitive work may--indeed, should--be a part of the experience; it should not, however, constitute the entire experience.
  - B. It should allow the student to have a sense of how what he/she is doing relates to the entire library operation. Students should have the opportunity to interact with other staff members.
  - C. The student should have proper instruction in the tasks to be performed and adequate access to supervision and advice, as well as the opportunity to work independently.
  - D. The student should have the opportunity to reflect on the practicum experience to consciously tie together theory and practice.
  - E. It should provide for an evaluation of the student's work, shared both with the supervising faculty member and with the student him/herself.
  - F. It should provide the practicum site with useful assistance.

Each student will be required to complete a practicum of at least 40 hours. This can be accomplished through one of the following:

1. A practicum in the SLIS Laboratory Library.  
This is a not-for-credit option. Contact the SLIS Laboratory Library Staff. The practicum will be tailored as closely as possible to your needs and interests, while also serving the needs of the SLIS Laboratory Library.
2. A practicum option in one of the LIS courses.  
Some of the elective courses lend themselves to practica. Faculty may accept practica in lieu of a major paper or other assignment in upper level courses. Contact the course instructor with requests/ideas. Archives students fulfill this requirement in LIS 977.
3. Field Project in Library and Information Agencies: LIS 620 (or C&I 620 for School library media specialist students).  
The Student Services Coordinator receives requests from students and sites. In concert with the School Library Media faculty adviser and current SLIS instructor, the Student Services Coordinator negotiates the semester placements. Submit a completed Field Practice Placement questionnaire (online at [http://www.slis.wisc.edu/academics/administrative\\_forms/index.html](http://www.slis.wisc.edu/academics/administrative_forms/index.html)) well in advance of the semester in which you wish to enroll (note: the general placement form and the placement form for school library media specialization are two different forms).

LIS 620 requires a minimum of 120 contact hours under a supervising librarian at an approved site. School library media specialist students MUST register for the C&I 620. It requires 210 hours divided between an elementary and a secondary site. Prior registration and prior site supervisor certification are required from the School of Education. Both LIS 620 and C&I 620 include 5-7 seminar meetings, readings, a journal, a final paper and site visits by the course instructor.

4. Field Project in Library and Information Literacy Instruction: LIS 826.

This field project is a partnership between SLIS and campus libraries that provides instruction experience as part of the coordinated library & information literacy instruction program at UW-Madison. Both Fall and Spring semesters provide 7-9 site placements available with a coordinator for instruction at a variety of libraries on campus. The practicum component of the course is 120 hours and has three parts: teaching a drop-in workshop; observing and backing up 15-18 required workshop sessions; extensive work with instruction projects at a home site library. This course also include 7 seminar meetings, readings, a journal, a statement of teaching philosophy, a final paper and site visits by the course instructor.

5. An independent study: LIS 999.  
This option is rarely approved: it includes a minimum of 40 hours of practicum component as part of a study which includes a review of the relevant literature and a written analysis of the experience. Only full-time faculty or academic staff can serve as course instructors for 999s.

In the event that students wish to take more than one practicum, resulting in more demand for practica than there are practicum opportunities, priority will be given first to those students needing the practicum to graduate at the end of the current semester, then to those who have not had a practicum experience, and only then to those who have had at least 40 hours of practicum experience, but want more.

## **EXEMPTION & ADJUSTMENT OF COURSE CREDIT REQUIREMENT**

### **Exemption**

Students who have previously taken courses which they believe are equivalent to the School's required courses may ask the Student Services Coordinator for referral to the appropriate faculty member (i.e., the individuals on the regular faculty who teach the courses) to determine course equivalencies and recommend exemptions to the adviser. The student may be asked to meet with the School's director in order to make a final determination. Procedurally, all requests for course exemptions are reported to the director on the "Program Credit Reduction Form," online at [http://www.slis.wisc.edu/academics/administrative\\_forms/index.html](http://www.slis.wisc.edu/academics/administrative_forms/index.html). The director will make final decisions.

### **Adjustment of Course Credit Requirement by Exemption**

The course credit requirement for the Master of Arts degree is 42 credits. At the time of admission, a student with graduate-level work completed within the last 5 years may include a maximum of 9 credits as electives of previous work in the required 42 credits. Discuss the specific course selection with your faculty adviser. The electives should contribute to a cohesive program and not be just a random selection.

It is possible, though unusual, for a student to become exempt from several specific course requirements in the School by means of exemptions and/or demonstrating equivalency through transcripts, etc: however, in **no** case will the course credit requirement be adjusted to fewer than 33 credits.

Up to 9 graduate credits of electives may be applied to the master's degree from a field outside library and information studies. The student's plan of study in library and information studies and related fields must have a rational focus and must be developed by the student in consultation with an adviser.

As part of the 42 credits required for the degree:

1. A minimum of 33 credits must be taken from SLIS (which would include credits taken as a special student or while a graduate student in another department); and
2. A minimum of 33 credits must be taken as a UW-Madison grad student.

School library media specialist students may apply up to 15 credits to their master's degree from the courses offered through the University of Wisconsin System School Library Education Consortium.

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## **STANDARDS FOR SATISFACTORY PROGRESS**

The following are standards adopted by the SLIS Faculty. The Graduate School has minimum standards as well. Where the SLIS rules are more rigorous, the School's rules take precedence over the Graduate School.

### **Probationary Admission**

A student admitted on probation must have that status removed in a timely fashion as outlined in their admissions letter, and by performing satisfactorily during the first semester of fulltime study. (9-12 credits)

### 1. Progress Toward a Degree

Progress (course work, examinations, special papers or research) should be maintained: See, in the Graduate Catalog, "Library and Information Studies Criteria for Satisfactory Progress": <http://www.wisc.edu/grad/catalog/letscli/libraryG.html> .

### 2. Incompletes

Incompletes for coursework are given only rarely. Faculty reserve the right to determine that an incomplete is not justified, resulting in the assignment of a course grade. Students are advised that they should request an incomplete only in instances where unforeseen developments prohibit completion of work. Should an incomplete be necessary, students should make clearing the incomplete their highest academic priority.

Students may not have more than one incomplete on their record at any one time, and this must be removed within the semester following the one in which the student originally enrolled in the course. Students carrying more than one incomplete on their record will not be allowed to continue taking courses.

### 3. Grades

Within the student's total program, one grade of BC or C is allowable in either a required or elective course if it is balanced by a grade of A or AB earned either prior to or concurrently with the unsatisfactory grade. A second grade of BC or C or any grade of D or F will normally result in the student being dropped from the program. In addition, a student's graduate program cumulative grade point average must be maintained at 3.00 or above.

Registration is not a guarantee of enrollment under conditions of unsatisfactory progress. Students who fall into unsatisfactory progress will have an academic hold placed on their record.

### 4. Grade Appeal Procedure

The assignment of a course grade is a judgment for which the instructor in the course is solely responsible, and appeal of this judgment is a serious matter. If a student feels that a grade assigned for a course is an inaccurate or unjust reflection of his or her work and learning in the course and wishes to appeal it, the following appeals process will apply:

- i. The student must first discuss the matter with the instructor who assigned the grade that is being appealed. This should be done no later than the end of the first two weeks of the semester following the one in which the grade was awarded (Spring semester for Fall grades; Fall semester for Spring and Summer grades).
- ii. If, after this discussion, the student wishes to appeal the matter further, he or she should submit an appeal in writing to the Director or Associate Director. This should be done within two weeks of the student's discussion with the instructor.
- iii. The written appeal will be considered by a committee consisting of the Director or Associate Director and two other faculty members selected by the Director, at least one being a member of the SLIS Executive Committee. The instructor will be informed that such an appeal has been submitted. The committee will gather such information and documentation as it deems appropriate.
- iv. If the committee finds adequate basis for doing so, it will ask the instructor to reconsider the grade and to report the results of the reconsideration to the student and to the Director. Alternatively, the committee may decide that the appeal lacks sufficient basis for action. In either case, the student will be notified of

the committee's decision and of the student's right to appeal to the College of Letters and Science, using the College's appeal procedures.

### **5. Unsatisfactory Progress Appeal Process**

A student who has fallen into unsatisfactory progress, but wishes to appeal for reconsideration, must petition the director in writing through his or her adviser. This appeal should provide good evidence of plans and ability to return to conformance with the standard and to acceptably complete the program. The petition should be filed immediately upon receipt of notification of unsatisfactory progress. The petition must be received no later than Friday of the first week of classes in the subsequent academic term. By Friday of the second week of classes, if the student has not submitted a petition, he or she will be dropped from the program.

Application for re-admission will be acted upon on an individual basis, depending on the School's judgment of the student's potential for completing the program.

Results of the appeal process may include a requirement that a course be repeated, an additional course or courses be taken or other action.

Exceptions to the School's regulations may be granted. Requests, with justification, should be submitted in writing through the student's adviser to the director of the School.

Adopted by the Faculty, September 25, 1985, effective May 27, 1986  
Faculty Handbook 4.50 [Version in Program Planning Guide abstracted for MA Students.] 8/01

## **PARAPHRASING AND DOCUMENTING SOURCES**

College writing involves integrating information from numerous sources and requires use of one or more standardized styles. The Writing Center, 6171 H.C. White Hall, is an invaluable source for this information. See the Writing Center Web site: <http://www.wisc.edu/writing/>. Especially review the Writer's Handbook > Citing References in Your Paper (see: <http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/Documentation.html>).

## **ACCESS TO STUDENT RECORDS**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) gives you the right to review educational records that are maintained about you and restricts access to these records by others. There is a helpful brochure available from the Office of the Registrar (<http://registrar.wisc.edu/>) which explains campus application of this law. Below is an outline of the application of the law within the School.

First, with regard to your access to your educational records, one such record is the student record which you may see on request of the student records manager in the main office. The other set of records is a file folder kept for each student and recent graduate. This folder contains application materials, copies of correspondence with you, and various administrative and academic records. If you wish to review your file, make an appointment to see the Student Services Coordinator, 4217 H.C. White Hall, to determine if any materials in the file are not subject to your review, such as confidential letters written before January 1, 1975, or letters you have waived your right to see. All other materials are open to your inspection.

One important set of materials maintained for students or graduates who request it is a Placement Credential package, containing letters written on your behalf by faculty members and others. You may

retain or waive your right to inspect such letters. Forms for this purpose are available from the main office and on the Web: [http://www.slis.wisc.edu/academics/administrative\\_forms/CredentialsForms/index.html](http://www.slis.wisc.edu/academics/administrative_forms/CredentialsForms/index.html).

The School is not one of the campus offices authorized to give out transcript information. We will refer requests for educational records to the Registrar. We will not disclose information from your educational records to others without your prior consent, with the exception of the limited categories of people outlined in the brochure referred to in the first paragraph above. For this School, people who have access to your records are the director and departmental secretary, the Student Services Coordinator, staff, and members of the faculty. Each person in these categories will obtain only that information which is relevant to the discharge of their responsibilities in the School.

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## **CHECKLIST FOR MASTER'S STUDENTS**

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**Tier One**

*Required courses*

	<b>Sem/Yr.</b>	<b>Grade</b>
450 (3 cr.) Information Agencies and Their Environment	_____	_____
451 (3 cr.) Foundations of Reference	_____	_____
551 (3 cr.) Organisation of Information	_____	_____

**Tier Two**

*Optional, but strongly recommended* - Choose at least **three courses** for a minimum of **9 credits**

635 (3 cr.) Reference and Information Services	_____	_____
639 (3 cr.) Information Literacy Pedagogy	_____	_____
644 (3 cr.) Digital Tools, Trends, and Debates	_____	_____
651 (3 cr.) Cataloging	_____	_____
654 (3 cr.) Management	_____	_____
655 (3 cr.) Collection Management	_____	_____
661 (3 cr.) Information Ethics and Policy	_____	_____
710 (3 cr.) Research Methods	_____	_____
734 (3 cr.) Archives Administration	_____	_____

**Tier Three**

*Electives* - All other courses for a maximum of 24 credits (maximum of 9 credits can be taken in other departments)

3 cr.	_____	_____
3 cr.	_____	_____
3 cr.	_____	_____
3 cr.	_____	_____
3 cr.	_____	_____
3 cr.	_____	_____

**Practicum-Required**

\*must file practicum completion form if not doing LIS/C&I 620, LIS 826 or LIS 977

**Modifications (transfer credits, etc.)**

\_\_\_\_\_cr

Total credits (42 required to graduate) \_\_\_\_\_

Expected semester of degree completion \_\_\_\_\_