

**A PAPER ON EDUCATION FOR LIBRARIANSHIP AND
ALA'S *Standards for Accreditation of Master's
Programs in Library and Information Studies, 1992***

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General Introduction

There is a general lack of consensus on the nature and boundaries of library studies¹ in the 21st century. The distinction between library studies and information studies (or library science and information science) is little understood and less charted. I propose a definition of library studies that is centered on the human record—that vast assemblage of messages and documents (textual, visual, and symbolic) in all formats created by humans since the invention of written and visual communication. Library studies is the discipline of the profession that assembles and gives access to sub-sets of the human record; that lists and organizes those sub-sets so that they can be retrieved; that works to ensure that records of those sub-sets are integrated to allow universal access to the whole human record; that is dedicated to the preservation and onward transmission of the human record; and that gives help and instruction in the use of the human record. (At this level, library studies should be seen as embracing archival studies.) Library studies embrace all forms of recorded human communication—print on paper, manuscript, recorded sound, audio-visual materials, electronic resources and documents, etc.—and seek to provide equal access to all those forms. Library studies are informed by a set of core values—intellectual freedom, service to individuals and society, stewardship of the human record, universal access, etc.—and is conducted within an ethical framework

that embraces those values. This paper outlines a framework for education in library studies based on this definition and on statements in the ALA accreditation standards and in the draft of ALA's "core competences."

ALA Accreditation Standards

The ALA *Standards for Accreditation of Master's Programs in Library and Information Studies*, 1992 (hereafter "the Standards") address "the essential features of programs of education that prepare library and information professionals." This paper is concerned with those professionals who work in libraries or in related areas and with what those professionals need to have acquired in the course of attaining a master's degree from a program accredited by ALA. The approach taken is to provide a draft interpretation of the Standards that will lead to each program teaching a "core curriculum" of courses (based on ALA's Core Competences and statements from the Standards) within a wider curriculum. That wider curriculum may vary from program to program and will include subjects not defined below as part of the field of library studies.

Core competences

The report of the 1999 Congress on Professional Education contained two recommendations related to the core competences of librarians:

"Identify the core competencies for the profession. A clear statement of competences should be available to educators, practitioners and the public; while there has been concern expressed about lack of attention to particular core competences, there is a statement of core competences and of their importance for accreditation in the current

[1992] Standards for Accreditation; these need to be affirmed and profiled, or reconsidered and revised; the resulting statement should be available separately as well; it may be necessary to specify the disciplinary base (e.g. organization of information and knowledge) and its application (e.g. classification, cataloguing)."

The second recommendation was:

"Describe the competencies of the generalist of the future. It sometimes appears that each specialist association/division/group has defined the essential professional and personal competences required to be employed, and effective, in their environment; while these statements are useful both for educators for planning educational programs and professionals for planning continuing education, there needs to be a foundation set for the generalist librarian."

Two task forces have been working on the formulation of these core competences for nearly six years and, at the time of writing, there is a July 2005 draft that, it is hoped, will lead to a draft to be presented to the ALA Council for approval.ⁱⁱ I have mentioned, when appropriate, statements drawn from this draft in the areas analyzed in the following section.

The field of library studies

The first section of the Standards lays out the mission, goals, and objectives of an ALA accredited program. It delineates the "essential character" of the field as follows:

- *the essential character of the field of library and information studies; that is, recordable information and knowledge, and the services and technologies to facilitate their management and use, encompassing information and knowledge creation, communication, identification, selection, acquisition, organization and description,*

storage and retrieval, preservation, analysis, interpretation, evaluation, synthesis, dissemination, and management

This paper is, as stated before, not concerned with “information studies,” and does not attempt a definition of this term. Also, this paper does not seek to reword the Standards. However, it is worth pointing out that libraries are not concerned with “recordable information and knowledge,” since, in theory, any information or knowledge can potentially be recorded, but with *recorded* knowledge and with information (that is, with the human record). That is, until knowledge and information is recorded (either formally in being published, or as an unpublished item), it cannot be added to the human record and, hence, subject to the processes of a library or the work of a librarian.

The definition of the essential character of library studies given in the Standards contains, in outline, the broad subjects with which programs for professional librarians should be concerned.

The services and technologies to facilitate their [carriers of recorded knowledge and information] management and use. Libraries, great and small and of all types, have a variety of services (listed below) in common and use all appropriate technologies to increase the cost-efficiency and cost-benefit of those services. It follows that a core professional library curriculum should cover those services and the various forms they take in different types of library as well as the impact of technology on those services. It should be noted that the July 2005 core competences draft calls for “technological knowledge.”

Information and knowledge creation and Communication. It is very important that librarians understand the processes by which published and unpublished carriers of recorded knowledge and information (hereafter “documents”) are created. Libraries are concerned with published and unpublished printed documents (books, printed journals, music, maps, etc.), manuscript texts, sound recordings, videorecordings, microforms, sundry A/V materials, three-dimensional created objects, realia, and, of course, digital documents and resources of all kinds. Bibliography (the study of printed documents) has a long scholarly history not matched for other means of communication, but the educated librarian should also have detailed knowledge of all the processes by which all forms of communication are created; the means by which they are disseminated; their history, present, and future; and, the role that each plays in library services. The July 2005 core competences draft calls for knowledge of “resource building,” which includes “the basic concepts, terminology, literature, and issues related to the creation, evaluation, and selection of specific items or collections of information.”

Identification. Librarians have to identify relevant documents in all media in order to carry out the great majority of their professional tasks. Knowledge of the widest range of resources in which documents can be located is, therefore, an essential component of a library education. The July 2005 core competences draft calls for knowledge of “knowledge dissemination: service,” which includes the ability “to retrieve ... information from diverse sources for use by individuals and groups.”

Selection. Libraries today have a variety of “collections.” The most obvious is the collection of tangible objects that the library owns and houses. There is also the universe of such collections owned by other libraries to which the library has access by means of union catalogues, inter-library lending programs, document delivery processes, etc. Then there are the intangible objects (electronic documents and resources) for which the library pays (by subscription and otherwise). Lastly there is the universe of intangible documents that are available to the library and its users by means of the computer access provided by the library. Selecting documents to add to the first and third of these “collections” once relevant documents have been located and identified (collection development) is a primary professional activity in which all librarians should be educated. Further, the educated librarian should be aware of policies and approaches by which all libraries build their collections. The July 2005 core competences draft calls for knowledge of “resource building,” which includes “the basic concepts, terminology, literature, and issues related to the creation, evaluation, and selection of specific items or collections of information.”

Acquisition. Once tangible and intangible documents and resources have been identified and selected they must either acquire them or arrange access to them. This task (acquisitions) is performed in great part by library workers other than librarians in many libraries, but an educated librarian must have a more than passing acquaintance with acquisition and access processes (including such acquisitions mechanisms as approval plans). Although libraries acquire and give access to documents and resources from both public and private sources, the latter involve some specific issues. A

graduate of an ALA-accredited program should be conversant with the private sector encompassing publishers and vendors and the legal and financial implications of interacting with that private sector. The July 2005 core competences draft calls for knowledge of "resource building," which includes "a conceptual grasp of the prevailing methods for the acquisition of specific items or collections of information resources."

Organization and description. The organization and description of documents by means of cataloguing, classification, and indexing (hereafter "cataloguing") is the intellectual heart of librarianship. The bibliographic architecture that results from cataloguing according to national and international standards is the vital element in all library cooperative programs and the structures (codes, classification schemes, subject heading lists) that create that architecture are among the basic documents of librarianship. It is worth noting that cataloguing is applied to all four types of "collection" (see *Selection*, above) and, in fact, makes each type of "collection" (each sub-set of the human record) feasible. The July 2005 core competences draft calls for knowledge of "knowledge organization," which includes both the basic principles of, and the standards and methods used in, the organization of knowledge.

Storage and retrieval. Each medium used for documents is stored in ways appropriate to that medium and retrieval of those documents is facilitated or hindered by the means of storage. The educated librarian is fully conversant with storage and retrieval systems for all documents (tangible and intangible). The July 2005 core competences draft calls for knowledge of

“resource building,” which includes “the basic principles of storing, preserving, and conserving information.”

Preservation. There is considerable concern about the preservation of the human record. That concern began with the “slow fires” of books printed on acidic paper, the brittleness and fragility of microfilms and films, the impermanence of manuscripts, and all the other threats to the tangible media, and has grown in considering the mutability and instability of electronic records. The educated librarian should be conversant with all the perils to human record in all formats and with all the methods and procedures for averting those perils. The July 2005 core competences draft calls for knowledge of “resource building,” which includes “the basic principles of storing, preserving, and conserving information.”

Analysis. The educated librarian should be able to analyze the content of carriers of recorded knowledge and information in all formats and to make an informed assessment of their suitability for particular uses.

Interpretation. Users of libraries, both on-site and remote, require assistance in the use of the collections to which those libraries give access. That assistance can take many forms. The latter encompass reference and advisory services; librarian-faculty consultation processes; informal help of all kinds; librarians working as part of research teams in specialized institutions; recommended readings lists, lists of web sites, etc.; library instruction/information competence programs; and all other human-to-human interactions. The educated librarian should be aware of the details and strategies of all these approaches, and the scope and limitations of all sources used in these interactions. The July 2005 core competences draft

calls for knowledge of “knowledge dissemination: service,” and “knowledge accumulation: lifelong learning,” both of which include specific reference to a variety of reference services, library instruction, and other human-to-human interactions.

Evaluation. All library collections (tangible and intangible) and all library services and programs should be subject to continuing evaluation and assessment. That evaluation can be evidence-based or can be on the basis of professional experience. The educated librarian should be conversant with all assessment techniques and their applications in a variety of library contexts. The July 2005 core competences draft calls for knowledge of “knowledge dissemination: service,” which includes the ability “to ... evaluate... information from diverse sources for use by individuals and groups.”

Synthesis. The educated librarian should be fully prepared to synthesize information from a variety of sources and present the results in a manner that is useful to the library user. These syntheses can take many forms, depending on the nature of the enquiry and the nature of the sources. The July 2005 core competences draft calls for knowledge of “knowledge dissemination: service,” which includes the ability “to ... synthesize information from diverse sources for use by individuals and groups.”

Dissemination. Libraries, especially special libraries, have moved beyond library services based on “waiting to be asked,” to the anticipation of user needs by bringing materials and services to the attention of potential users (often called selective dissemination of information). The use of techniques

such as user profiles is facilitated by computer technology. The educated librarian should be knowledgeable about such programs.

Management. Libraries vary greatly in mission, size, and funding sources. They may have hundreds of employees of various types or only one employee. They may own and give access to vast general collections or they may be concerned with smaller, intensively specialized materials. No matter what the type of library, there are management, personnel, and financial implications requiring librarians with and education in all administrative/management issues. This part of the field of library studies is heavily influenced by, and draws upon, the wider field of management and business studies. The July 2005 core competences draft calls for knowledge of “institution management,” which includes such topics as planning, management, change management, and partnerships and collaborations.

Values and ethics. The ALA accreditation standards also call for the objectives of an accredited program to reflect “the philosophy, principles, and ethics of the field.” I believe that that these should be a discrete and stated part of the core curriculum, though I am aware that there is a school of thought that think these topics should be woven throughout the curriculum. Irrespective of which approach is chosen, there is a need for the philosophy, principles, values, and ethics of library studies to be addressed specifically and to form part of the mental furniture of the educated librarian. The July 2005 core competences draft calls for knowledge of “the ethics, values, and foundational principals of the library and information professions” and an understanding of “the role of library and information professionals in the

promotion of democratic principles, intellectual freedom, and diversity of thought.”

The curriculum

The Standards state:

The curriculum is based on goals and objectives and evolves in response to a systematic planning process. Within this general framework, the curriculum provides, through a variety of educational experiences, for the study of theory, principles, practice, and values necessary for the provision of service in libraries and information agencies and in other contexts.

The curriculum is concerned with recordable information and knowledge, and the services and technologies to facilitate their management and use. The curriculum of library and information studies encompasses information and knowledge creation, communication, identification, selection, acquisition, organization and description, storage and retrieval, preservation, analysis, interpretation, evaluation, synthesis, dissemination, and management.

The preceding section of this paper delineates and defines the parts of the field of library studies. The second paragraph of the excerpt from the Standards given above clearly states that the curriculum of an ALA accredited program should include each of the parts of the field delineated and defined above. The “goals and objectives” stated in this paragraph should, as a minimum, be to produce librarians whose education has, “through a variety of educational experiences,” given them an understanding of the “theory, principles, practice” of each of the parts of the field and who understand the core values of librarianship (see Appendix) and their application to each of those parts of the field.

The faculty

The Standards state:

The school has a faculty capable of accomplishing program objectives. Full-time faculty members are qualified for appointment to the graduate faculty within the parent institution and are sufficient in number and in diversity of specialties to carry out the major share of the teaching, research, and service

activities required for a program, wherever and however delivered. Part-time faculty, when appointed, balance and complement the teaching competencies of the full-time faculty.

This is a clear direction that, in order to be accredited by ALA, a program of library studies should not only cover all the parts of the field as defined and delineated earlier within a core curriculum, but that should also have qualified graduate faculty who are intimately involved with the **major share** (my emphasis) of teaching and research in the subjects encompassed by the field preferably by direct teaching or, at a minimum, by curriculum development and coordination. No matter how the term “major share” is defined (and it would be disingenuous to define it as, say, 51%), it is the clear intent of the Standards that an accredited program would use adjunct, part-time, faculty to meet either extraordinary circumstances or to teach in specialized areas. In other words, a program in which the teaching of important parts of the field of library studies such as cataloguing (“organization and description”) and reference (“interpretation”) were the responsibility of adjunct faculty would not be in accordance with the letter or spirit of the Standards.

In the words of the Standards, adjunct faculty members “enrich the quality and diversity of a program.” This is undoubtedly the case because practitioners acting as adjunct faculty bring real world experience and practical knowledge that can benefit their students greatly. However, there are three important potential disadvantages to the use (particularly the overuse) of adjunct faculty. First, in many departments, adjunct faculty members have little or no influence over the curriculum—that being the province of the full-time faculty. In such situations, the adjunct professor is

a “hired gun” teaching what he or she is told to teach. Second, the Standards specifically refer to research and service activities carried out by full-time faculty. If a program uses adjunct faculty members to teach a substantial part of the field as listed above, it follows that the “research and service activities required for a program” will not be carried out because few adjunct professors are engaged in research and service. This is by no means a small point. The effective and evolving practice of librarianship requires a flow of research into library studies. If the full-time faculty members of ALA-accredited programs are not engaged in research in the field as set out in the Standards, the field itself will become withered and inward looking. Third, PhD candidates work with full-time faculty members in the areas of interest to those full-time faculty members. When the latter are primarily or wholly concerned with areas of teaching and research far removed from the field of library studies, the next generation of teachers (today’s PhD students) will also concentrate on those extra-library areas and the spiral away from library studies will be intensified.

Summary

There is a field of library studies based on interaction with, and the transmission of, the human record. The ALA accreditation standards define that field (albeit in sometimes elliptical terms). That field should be at the heart of programs that seek, or seek to maintain, ALA accreditation. Such programs should have a faculty that is adequate, in number and types of specialization, to teach and do research in library studies. ALA accreditation should only be granted to a program teaching that curriculum, creating

research in that field, and maintaining and supporting a faculty dedicated to those aims.

Appendix: core values

These values reflect the history and continuing development of the profession and have been advanced, expanded, and refined by numerous policy statements of the American Library Association. Among these are:

- *Access*
- *Confidentiality/Privacy*
- *Democracy*
- *Diversity*
- *Education and Lifelong Learning*
- *Intellectual Freedom*
- *Preservation*
- *The Public Good*
- *Professionalism*
- *Service*
- *Social Responsibility*

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to express our values more eloquently than ALA already has in the Freedom to Read statement, the Library Bill of Rights, the ALA Mission Statement, Libraries: an American Value, and other documents. These policies have been carefully thought out, articulated, debated, and approved by the ALA Council. They are interpreted, revised or expanded when necessary. Over time, the values embodied in these policies have been embraced by the majority of librarians as the foundations of their practice.

ⁱ. I have chosen to use the term “library studies,” rather than “librarianship,” in this paper because the ALA accreditation standards refer to “library and information studies.”

ⁱⁱ. DRAFT Statement of core competences, July 2005. Unpublished.