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Future Colleagues: Documents Education in Library and Information Science Programs; Who Teaches What, When and Where

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Thank you, Tim, for the fine introduction and thanks to the audience for attending this session on Documents Education. As Tim mentioned, this program grew out of a lunch session held at last spring's conference. In February 1998, George Barnum and George Carlson posted on GOVDOC-L a request that documents librarians that teach documents courses for library science programs meet one day at lunch and share information and impressions, particularly how to teach the increasing amount of electronic information.

That session was attended by about a dozen documents librarians, all who taught as adjuncts. While the information shared was valuable and a good exchange of ideas, I left the session wondering if there wasn't more to the issue. In talking with Cass Hartnett, I expressed the thought that it might be an interesting program to have an adjunct faculty member, a full-time faculty member, and a library school dean on a program about documents education. As the old saying goes, once you're on a program committee you've got a 50/50 chance of becoming the program. So here I am.

As I mentioned, I left last year's lunch with more questions than answers. While there were about a dozen in attendance and all taught as adjuncts, I also knew of several individuals who are full-time tenured library science faculty who also teach documents on a regular basis. The names: Hernon, McClure, Richardson, and Morehead immediately come to mind. The question that came to mind was how many LIS programs employ adjuncts (practicing documents librarians) to teach their documents courses?

Another question that came to me after the meeting was how many document courses are taught in the traditional classroom setting versus distance courses, courses over the Internet, or even taught at an off-campus location? As an adjunct faculty for Catholic University of America School of Library and Information Science, I teach at the University of Richmond site, 95 miles from the main campus. From this several other questions began to materialize.

Once I realized that I was going to be on a panel and not just organize it, I sat down and worked on a plan to survey who teaches what to whom when. I decided on two approaches. First, I would post to GOVDOC-L a survey asking individuals who had taught a Government documents class for a LIS program during the last three years some basic questions. I would follow-up this questionnaire with a survey of LIS program Web pages.

The questionnaire was sent out on GOVDOC-L in February. To date I have received responses from 23 individuals representing 22 LIS programs. The questions asked were:

1. Have you taught a semester length class in Government information resources for an ALA accredited Library/Information Science program in the last three years (after 1995)?
2. What was the title of the course listed in the catalog?
3. How many credits was the class valued?
4. What was the enrollment or average enrollment of the class?
5. What percentage of the class was devoted to Federal, state/local, and international information sources?
6. How many times or years have you taught the course?
7. Do you teach any other course related to Government information?
8. What is your rank or status in the school or program? If you are a tenured member please provide your rank. If not, are you an adjunct or visiting faculty?
9. Is the class taught on the main campus in a traditional setting, off-campus in a traditional setting, by satellite or a distance learning class, or via the Internet?

I augmented these 23 responses with a survey of the Web pages of the 48 accredited library science programs. While looking at each page I tried to identify the name of the Government information course, who taught it, noting rank and status, when the course was last taught, how frequently the course was offered, and what pre- or co-requisites were required to take the Government information course.

I would like to spend the next couple of minutes going through the data I gathered.

Of the 48 LIS program Web pages surveyed, only one school did not list a course in Government information (Texas Women's University) and five schools listed multiple courses (University of California-Berkeley, Syracuse, SUNY-Albany, South Carolina, and Washington). Course titles varied, but the three most frequent course listings were:

- * Government Publications 9
- * Government Information Sources 7
- * Government Documents 4

I was only able to identify one course covering State/Local information sources (SUNY/Albany) and one covering international information (South Carolina).

In addition to the traditional courses mentioned, I found several courses with impressive and unique names. Now, I have with me some rewards (M&Ms) for members of the audience who can name the school where the following courses are taught. The audience will have three guesses at which point the panel will earn the goodies.

First class title: Government Information: Collection/Organization/Dissemination

School: Indiana

Second class title: U.S. Government Information Policies, Resources and Services

School: Simmons

Third class title: Subject Focused Information Sources and Services: Government

School: Michigan

While I did not include it in the audience participation portion of the show, the title of the document course at UC-Berkeley is Information Policy.

So what courses does a library school student need to take before they have the Government documents class? 16 schools require at least one course, usually an Introduction to Information sources, seven schools require at least two courses, and three schools require more than two courses (Queens, Drexel, Washington). I include Drexel because it has a core requirement of seven courses and while you do not have to take them all before the documents course it appears that way on the Web page. One school has no pre- or co-requisites and 19 schools did not list whether there was such a requirement.

Prerequisites outside the usual introductory courses include:

- * Computer-Based Information Tools (Indiana)
- * Cataloging and Classification (Clarion)
- * Electronic Database and Information Services (North Texas)

Now that we have an idea of which Government information courses are taught and what prerequisites are required, let's return to one of my first questions: Who's teaching Government documents?

From library school Web pages I was able to identify 53 instructors of Government information. Of these instructors around 40% (23) were full-time library science faculty members. At least 20% (13) were identified as adjuncts. Another 40% (17) were not identified as to their status but are most likely adjuncts. Two important points can be drawn from this data. First nearly 60% of all Government documents education is being provided by adjunct faculty. Second, of the full-time library science faculty teaching Government documents, 18 of the 23 are tenured faculties; at least the positions of associate and full professor are usually associated with tenured faculty.

One of the questions I asked of GOVDOC-L was how many times or years the instructor has taught the class. The number of years or times taught average almost 7 (6.8). However, at least one-third of the respondents (9) have taught the class less than four times.

When does the LIS program schedule classes? Most classes are scheduled during the fall or spring semesters (24). Another seven programs schedule the Government documents class in the summer. Courses are usually taught once a year (12 responses). Most classes are taught at the main campus in a traditional setting; however, I was able to identify four off-site instructors, two instructors using distance or satellite methods, and three courses taught via the Internet. Classes usually have at least 20 students enrolled (16 of 23 responses).

Course content overwhelmingly favored the teaching of Federal information resources (80% of content) over state/local (8.7% of content), and international resources (11% of content). Of the 23 responses, four indicated teaching no international information sources and another three acknowledged teaching no state/local resources.

Syllabi were posted for 11 courses. Two were restricted to on-campus viewing and one syllabus was under construction. Of the 11 syllabi, full-time faculty had developed eight; raising the conclusion that full-time faculty have the resources (time or support) to post syllabi for their courses.

In reviewing pages posted by SLIS programs, I came upon a few that I would like to point out as good or unique sources of information. I found the following pages of interest:

- * University of Illinois

<http://alexia.lis.uiuc.edu>

- * University of Michigan

<http://www.si.umich.edu>

- * Syracuse University

<http://istweb.syr.edu>

- * University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill

<http://ils.unc.edu/>

As an alumnus, I am obligated to mention the UNC site. It is unique for its searchable index of master's papers that can be searched by paper advisor so all of you curiosity seekers can see who has done a paper for Ridley Kessler.

- * South Carolina

<http://www.libsci.sc.edu/>

I mention South Carolina because I found Professor Williams' page to be one of the best individual faculty pages.

If you would like to look at other SLIS program Web pages, I suggest using Ann Roselle's page of Library and Information Science Schools - Classes on Government Information. Ann's page is located at: <<http://www.library.ewu.edu/godort/classes.html>> and is also available through GODORT's Education Committee page: <<http://library.ucsb.edu/ala/educomm.html>>.

In conclusion, the following can be said about the current state of Government documents education in accredited library programs in the United States:

1. classes are still taken in a traditional setting on the program's main campus
2. 60% of the classes are taught by adjunct faculty
3. full-time faculty teaching Government information are usually associate or full professors
4. only one in four course syllabi are on the Web
5. The Government information course is usually available at least once a year, during the fall or spring semester
6. Classes are usually at least 20 students
7. Courses focus mostly on Federal resources (80%) with little international (11%) and less state/local (9%)
8. The instructor has taught the course an average of 6.8 times but one-third of the instructors have taught the course less than four times

Sources of Data:

Analysis of 48 SILS Web Pages

Survey posted on GOVDOC-L (23 responses, 22 programs)

48 programs, listing 55 courses

5 schools list two courses (Berkeley, Syracuse, SUNY-Albany, SC, and Washington)

Course Titles:

Government Publications 9

Government Information Sources 7

Government Documents 4

Pre- and Co- Requisites

None 1

One course 16

Two courses 7

More than two courses 3

(Queens, Drexel, Washington)

Information not available 19

Who Teaches

53 instructors identified

Library School Faculty 23

Professor 9

Associate Professor 9

Adjunct faculty 13

Status Not Determined 17

Teaching Experience

Instructor taught the course an average of 6.8 times

1 in 3 have taught the course less than four times

When Is the Course Taught?

Fall or Spring semester 24

Summer 7

How Often Is the Course Taught?

Annually 12

2 times a year 3

Every semester 2

Every two years 2

Location Taught

Main campus 17

Off-campus site 5

Distance/satellite course 1

Internet course 2

Average Class Size

Class usually has at least 10 and usually >20

Content

Federal 80.0%
State/Local 8.7%
IGO/Foreign 11.4%

Available Syllabi:

UCLA
http://dlis.gseis.ucla.edu/courses/473/DLIS_473_Reading_List.pdf

Indiana
<http://www.slis.indiana.edu/courses/L628S98.html>

LSU
<http://adam.slis.lsu.edu/courses/7203/>

Kent State
<http://ariande.slis.kent.edu/~classes/60611/>

Clarion
<http://eagle.clarion.edu/~faculty/buchanan/SYLLABUS991.HTM>

Tennessee
<http://funnelweb.utcc.utk.edu/~wrobinso/534syl.html>

North Texas
<http://courses.unt.edu/chandler/SLIS5660/index.htm>

Wisconsin
<http://polyglot.lss.wisc.edu/sl/syllabi/653/>

Library School Web Pages of Interest

Illinois
<http://alexia.lis.uiuc.edu/>

Kentucky
<http://www.uky.edu/CommInfoStudies/SLIS/>

Maryland
<http://www.clis.umd.edu/academics/programs/gels.html> (GIS Specialty)

Michigan
<http://www.si.umich.edu/>

Syracuse
<http://istweb.syr.ed>

SUNY-Albany

<http://www.albanv.edu/SISP/>

UNC-Chapel Hill

<http://ils.unc.edu/> Searchable Index to Masters Papers

South Carolina

<http://www.libsci.sc.edu/> Professor Williams' home page

Another Source of Interest

Ann Roselle's Library and Information Science Schools links

<http://www.library.ewu.edu/godort/classes.html>

Also linked from GODORT Education Committee page

Conclusion:

Course usually taken on main campus; 60% taught by adjuncts; there is usually at least one pre-requisite course, only one in four syllabi on the Web, course usually taught during fall or spring semesters; usually taught once a year, classes usually larger than 20, courses focus on Federal information (80% of content), little state/local (8.7%), or international just over 10%; the instructor has taught the course an average of 6.8 times, one-third of instructors have taught the course less than four times.