Town Hall Meeting Seeks to Address Student Concerns

By Amanda Lindsay

In her opening speech at the town hall meeting on June 15th, Dr. Kimmel addressed the following issues:

**Number of students in classes** – this is a nationwide issue; the consortium of library schools reports an overall rise in enrollment and class size. Faculty are aware of this problem and they are trying to respond by hiring new faculty and creating more adjunct and TA positions. Two new faculty members have been hired this semester, Judith Jablonski and Sherry Koshman.

In the fall, 3 sections of LIS 2000 (understanding information) will be offered as well as 2 sections of each LIIS 2001 (organizing information), 2002 (retrieving information), and 2600 (introduction to technology). In addition, faculty are considering new classes – collection development and management, tech services, legal issues, indexing and cataloging, and copyright – and will approve all new course selections by the fall.

The school has also partnered with WISE, a consortium of library schools to offer classes online, which allows students a broader range of options.

**Technology** – Faculty are addressing this concern by establishing core competencies for students entering the program. Classes are being redesigned to teach more network applications instead of software, and tutorials or remedial courses will be offered to help students acquire the skills necessary to take more technically advanced courses.

**Core Courses** – These classes have been discussed at length by the faculty. Core classes allow leeway for different teaching methods, but overall should provide students with specific skills.

**Accreditation** – The school is accredited through ALA (the American Library Association) – there are 53 schools in the United States and Canada that are accredited. The school is responsible for giving a program presentation and the accreditation committee will look at the school’s mission and goals, faculty, students, finance, and facilities before reaccrediting the school. The school prepares for this process by talking with committees of alumni, students, and employers and sending out email surveys, among other things.

**Communication** – In order to increase communication between students and faculty, two representatives from the student body will be invited to attend faculty meetings. To help students communicate with each other, instructions for joining the MLIS listserv will be announced in classes at the beginning of the semester and the BiblioFILE will be continued.

Dr. Kimmel expressed the faculty’s commitment to supporting the program, and said that they looked forward to working with students before opening the floor up for questions and comments.

The first comment of the evening was from an SAA member who wanted to know if the specific concerns that SAA had addressed in their letter (about the program’s technology courses) were going to be dealt with. In response, Dr. Kimmel said that LIS 2663 (technology for information management) will not be offered in the fall; instead a revised LIS 2600 will be offered. The faculty is currently looking into revamping current courses and adding new ones.

Dean Larsen added that they have three faculty members specifically addressing this need.

The second comment brought up the increased enrollment and the need for job placement advisors over recruitment staff. Dean Larsen spoke about the organizational structure changes under consideration, including a push to identify staff that will focus only on the recruitment/enrollment/advising/graduation/placement cycle. This led to a comment that the role of advisors need to be stronger, and Dean Larsen explained that they are not looking for a temporary solution, and major discussion about the tech sequencing and courses have already been addressed. He also mentioned the importance of remedial activities and student services as a way to make sure students are getting into the right classes at the right time.

The next comment brought up the digital libraries track, mentioning that it should be completely ready before it is offered to students. Dr. Kimmel did acknowledge this, but pointed out that other courses from the university could be applied to the digital libraries track to complete the sequence.

The next question was about the limited physical space for technology classes – since there classes are dependent on practical application, are the faculty looking at ways to fix this problem? Dr. Larsen explained that they are looking at floor plans and blue prints to see if there are ways they can create more lab space to accommodate a better teaching arrangement and that hopefully they will find a solution in the near future.

The final comment of the night was about oversubscribed classes. A student asked how the instructors and students should deal with classes of this size if they can’t be limited. Dr. Kimmel explained that they are trying to solve this by limiting some classes to specific groups and increasing the number of core classes offered each semester.

Following the meeting, students expressed some frustration with the lack of faculty presence at the town hall and the short period of time that had been allotted for the event. (45 minutes, precisely.) Overall, however, students are looking forward to improvements in the program and expecting increasing support from faculty advisors and class instructors.
**SCALA** - Ice cream social and officer elections for the upcoming semester will be held on July 20th at 5:15 in the 5th floor commons room.

**SLA** - West Penn Hospital Medical Library Visit. Join the Special Libraries Association on Tuesday, July 12, 2005. Meet in SIS lobby at 2:00 PM. An RSVP should be sent to Molly Krichten at mlk63@pitt.edu.

**SAA** - The Student Chapter of the SAA is working on the poster to be presented at the national convention. They will be travelling to New Orleans for this the week of August 15th.

**Information Sciences Library** - A meeting will be hosted in the third floor IS library on Wednesday, July 13th and Wednesday July 20th to give students an opportunity to brainstorm and discuss upcoming library instruction opportunities. Both meetings begin at 2:00 pm.

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**Spotlight on…**

**PLG, Progressive Librarians Guild**

The purpose of PLG is to "provide a forum for the open exchange of radical views on library issues."

Currently, we’re organizing a reference project for prisoners in conjunction with Thomas Merton Center’s "Book Em."

President: Lauren Brosius
Vice President: Jonah Macallister-Ericson
Secretary: Mary Hanlin
Business Manager: Maggie McFalls

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**Congrats to the Book Cart Drill Team! 5th Place at the World Championships!**

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**Of Course, Alexander von Humboldt!**

A Brief Piece of SIS History (With Footnotes!)

By Lori Prince

As some of you know, the school we now call SIS was founded in 1901 as the Training School for Children’s Librarians, and it was a department of the Carnegie Library. Way back then, you didn’t have to have a bachelor’s degree to get into the program, but it sure did help. Applicants who had not graduated from college had to take an admissions examination that covered the subjects of Literature, History, and General Information. Here are some examples of what you needed to know to get into SIS 1.0:

Mention an important historical event connected with the name of Leondas, Simon Bolivar, Robespierre, Simon de Montfort, Cannibal, William Wallace, Commodore Perry, Blücher, Gustavus Adolphus, Duke of Alva.

Give a brief account of the conflict between the French and the English for the possession of North America.

Name our present secretary of state, the American ambassador to the Court of St. James, the premier of Great Britain, the governor of the Philippines, a prominent United States senator and the state which he represents.

(a) Name a well-known astronomer, an educator, a financier, a naval commander, an engineer, with the special work or action with which the name of each is most frequently connected.

(b) Name an orchestral leader, a composer of oratorios, two composers of opera, a famous pianist.

Mention two great portrait painters, two landscape painters, two painters of religious subjects, two painters of animals, two sculptors, with at least one important work of each.

Who were Linnaeaus, William Ellery Channing, John Tyndall, George E. Waring, Frances Willard, Alexander von Humboldt, Sir Humphry Davy, Charles George Gordon, Stephen A. Douglas, Calvin, Mary Lyon, Cavour.1

Feeling undereducated? Elizabeth Nesbitt, a graduate of the school in 1922 and later an instructor and then Associate Dean, puts it all in perspective: "I think it absolutely accurate to say that I doubt whether many college graduates could have passed these examinations..."2


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**Welcome to Campus**

Fast Track students!
ALa Chicago - Catching a Breeze in the Windy City

by Sharon Stillwagon

With a record 27,800 people in attendance, the 2005 American Library Association (ALA) Annual Conference in Chicago offered an all-encompassing library event with a stunning variety of programs. Over the course of a week, June 23-29, ALA committee and interest group meetings attended to business while sessions with titles like “The Googlization of Everything: A Threat to the Information Commons?” and “Mother Goose on the Loose” drew good-sized audiences. From Sen. Barrack Obama (D-Ill.) addressing an enthusiastic crowd of 10,000 librarians at the Opening Session to Book Lust with Nancy Pearl, conference programming inspired, educated and entertained attendees.

With the vast halls and meetings rooms of McCormick Place acting as a hub, librarians and library staff from all walks of library life attended programs and exhibitions. Not surprisingly, attendees regularly met people with an interest in similar issues or aspects of library work. Countless vendors promoted their library wares, demonstrating innovations in online information systems, arranging author signings and distributing creative giveaways. Shuttle bus rides between McCormick Place and other hotels holding ALA sessions were not necessarily hassle-free, but they afforded riders an opportunity to meet and chat with colleagues from across the country.

With Chicago’s vast selection of restaurants and the Taste of Chicago food festival drawing crowds to Grant Park, conference goers did not go hungry. The high attendance at ALA association “happy hours” and vendor soirees ensured that thirst was not an issue either.

Fellow attendees reported the conference to be a terrific personal and professional development experience - a sentiment with which I happily concur. What other event can offer MLIS students the opportunity to hear experts speak on library “hot topics”, arrange interviews with a national job placement center and return energized about the valuable work to be done in libraries?

The 2006 ALA Annual Conference will be held in New Orleans, June 22-28. For more information, visit http://www.al.org.

SLA Toronto, 2005 "Putting Knowledge to Work"

by Karen Liljequist

This June, the Special Libraries Association (SLA) annual conference, held in Toronto, Ontario, highlighted how information professionals deliver information and knowledge within their organizations using the Association’s core values. The conference offered an incredible opportunity to attend professional development sessions and meet with a variety of professionals in the field of information and library science. The sessions were designed to offer practical and current overviews on topics facing information professionals today, with options such as “Blogging/RSSing the Librarian Way,” “One-Dot Shopping: Finding Government Statistics on the Web,” “Strategic Technology Tools Overviews,” “Top Ten Tips for Librarians,” “Taking the Sting out of Statistics: Basic Concepts” and “The Challenges of Consulting Work Outside of the U.S.” Other “hot” sessions included “Digital Licensing,” “Improved Internet Searching” and “Criminal and Investigative Research.”

The conference also offered new member roundtables, working breakfast meetings and a variety of receptions hosted by various SLA divisions like Legal, Business and Finance, Chemistry, Information Technology, and the Solo Librarians divisions.

The student chapter of SLA also met with the local Pittsburgh chapter to begin developing programming, networking, field placement and future events for the summer and the fall.

The next SLA event is a visit to a special medical library scheduled for Tuesday July 12 at 3:00. Look for an e-mail and posters with more details during the week of July 4th!

Did you know?

(Cause you should!)

Funding is available from the School of Information Sciences for students interested in attending professional conferences. Preference is given to students presenting papers or posters, but many students are able to receive funding each semester.

For more information, visit: http://www2.sis.pitt.edu/resources/student_to_conferences.html.
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**August 1** – last day of Summer semester  
**August 8** – degrees conferred to graduating students  
**August 14-22** – SAA Annual Conference in New Orleans (featuring a poster presentation from SIS students!)