

LIS Questions/Thought Starters for 2014 BOV Meeting

The Elliance project, declining enrollments, and emerging specialties in the sector give us the opportunity to think about possible new directions for the MLIS program.

Is it time to drop “Library” from the degree title?

Should we be presenting a range of specialist and generalist tracks under a broader umbrella program, e.g., Master of Information?

While some of our iSchool peers have retained the MLIS or MLS title for their programs, others offer programs with a broader title, to reflect the growing diversity of employment options open to graduates with expertise in information science and cognate subjects, e.g., Master of Science in Information Studies (MSIS, Texas) and Master of Science in Information (MSI, Michigan)

Similar arguments could be made for moving to an umbrella title for the PhD program.

Should we increase the number of credits required to complete the Master’s program and/or extend the suggested duration of the program?

Our discussions about the knowledge, skills, and hands-on experience needed for emergent specialties, such as digital curation and data science, suggest that an internship, extended practical project, or other type of in-depth field experience is highly desirable as preparation for areas where professional practices are still being developed and established.

Some of our iSchool peers require 36 credits to complete the Master’s program, e.g., Indiana, Maryland, and Syracuse – Rutgers requires 36 credits + 3 non-credit classes (including an e-portfolio capstone). Others require more credits, e.g., Illinois and Texas require 40 credits; Michigan and North Carolina require 48 credits.

Programs requiring 40+ credits are often taken over 2 years/4 semesters, enabling students to undertake internships or other types of in-depth practical experience during the summer. At Michigan, students are required to take 8 credits of field experience, which they are advised to do during the summer.

Should we reduce the amount of choice offered to our reduced MLIS student population, by offering some electives as online only? increasing the number of required courses? reducing the number of elective courses? offering all courses only once per year?

The number of core courses/credits required by our iSchool peers varies significantly, with some requiring fewer, and others requiring substantially more than we do (e.g., North Carolina has a 22.5-credit core, Syracuse has a 19-credit core).