

Competencies Needed for Librarianship in a Networked Society

Heather Moulaison

The College of New Jersey Library, Ewing, New Jersey – USA

&

Terry Weech

**Graduate School of Library and Information Science,
University of Illinois – USA**

What is a Networked Society?

- **A society connected for communication & information sharing.**
 - **Often using digital technology.**
 - **What is the role of the library in a Networked Society using digital technology?**
 - **The development and maintenance of digital libraries.**

What are “Digital Libraries”?

- **Little consensus in the literature on the definition of Digital Libraries (DL).**

- **One Definition:**

Organizations providing resources to select, structure, offer access, interpretation, distribution, and preservation of collections of digital works and making them economically available.

(Based on the Digital Libraries Federation working definition)

What has been said about Education for Digital Librarianship?

- LIS Education has not been a leader, but a follower, in digital libraries.
- Both the DL research and practice communities are in the same planetary system, but one is on Mars and the other on Venus. The research community is grounded mostly in computer science, the practice community in LIS.

(A paraphrasing of statements from Saracevic & Dalbello, 2001)

Brief History of Education for Digital Librarianship

- 1960s - The Term “Digital Library” began to develop from applications of technology
- 1980s - Computer Science takes initiative in Digital Libraries
- 1990s - Libraries and Library Education began involvement as funding for projects became available

Elements of Digital Librarianship Education

- Computer Science (CS)
- Library and Information Science (LIS)
- Communication
- Other (Sociology, Information Technology, Medical Informatics, etc.)

Model Curriculum Content for Digital Librarianship

An effort to blend LIS and Computer
Science curricula to achieve a more
general digital libraries program of study:

Model Curriculum Content for Digital Librarianship

- Theoretical and Historical Foundations
- Technical Infrastructure of the Digital Library
- Knowledge Organization in Digital Libraries
- Collection Development and Maintenance
- Information Access & Utilization of Digital Libraries
- Social, Economic and Policy Issues
- Professional Issues

(From Spink and Cool, 1999)

One Response to the Model Curriculum

- Would the recommended digital libraries curriculum increase LIS fragmentation?
- Would an approach that integrated DL make a separate DL program unnecessary?
- Would a separate DL program merely split LIS graduates into traditional & IT-intensive roles?
- Should LIS or CS faculty teach in the DL program?
- What is the appropriate level (UG, Graduate, Post Master's) to teach the DL program?
- What balance should there be between “Hands on” vs. Conceptual topics in DL programs?

(Based on Coleman, 2002)

Competencies for Cataloging in a Networked Society

- **Elements of Cataloging Courses Compared to the Model Curriculum for Digital Librarianship:**
 - **Theoretical and Historical Foundations**
 - **Cataloging courses often trace the evolution of library organization and digital formats throughout history as a way of grounding the course in an historical context. Coming from this perspective, the student is better able to understand the brisk pace of change that cataloging and libraries in general are currently undergoing and they are led to anticipate a future of rapid changes in the profession**

Elements of Cataloging Courses Continued:

- **Technical Infrastructure of Digital Libraries**
 - **As students learn to encode the MARC record, they study the advantages of controlled vocabularies and the functionality of access points in the online environment. They also come to understand methods for providing keyword access to the surrogate by including notes. Lastly, they learn to anticipate user need by providing and maintaining an authority file to direct users to established forms of headings.**

Elements of Cataloging Courses Continued:

- **Knowledge Organization in Digital Libraries**

- Cutter's objectives are the driving force behind the organization and representation of information in cataloging and are now interpreted to emphasize organization in an electronic environment.
- Topics such as filing order in the OPAC, searchability of controlled vocabulary fields, and cross references, are ways Cataloging courses teach skills necessary for knowledge organization in a digital environment.
- Discussions of metadata schemes, namely the Dublin Core Metadata Initiative, appear in Cataloging course syllabi

Elements of Cataloging Courses Continued:

- Collection Development and Maintenance
 - At each step in the cataloging process, students are reminded that the user's needs should always be kept in mind. Consideration for users and their search methods are paramount. This tenant of cataloging librarianship in its most distilled form is influenced by Ranganthan's *Five Laws of Library Science*. Students learn that cataloging is not an exercise to be carried out in rote fashion, but a way of enabling the library user to access organized knowledge.

Elements of Cataloging Courses Continued:

- **Social, Economic and Policy Issues**
 - Although professional catalogers and administrators are concerned with these issues, they do not appear to be a focus in Cataloging courses.
- **Professional Issues**
 - Courses in cataloging focuses more on theory and practice. One of the standard textbooks devotes two chapters to administrative issues related to cooperation and networking and to in-house catalog maintenance.

Competencies for Cataloging in a Networked Society

- **Summary:** Of the questions that Coleman raises about the model digital library curriculum, the one concerning the balance between “hands on” and conceptual topics could also be applied to the Cataloging curriculum. Instructors of Cataloging have discussed this topic on the Educat listserv. In a thread on the use of OCLC in November 2005, Cataloging instructors appear to be at the same impasse. Instructors acknowledge the need to teach tools so students have the competencies necessary to carry out the work on a practical level. They also maintain that a theoretical understanding of the online environment is fundamental (2005).

Digital Librarianship Programs

The trend to formal programs of study:

- Of the 56 ALA Accredited Programs in U.S., only 4 have digital library programs of study.
 - **Indiana University**
 - **Rutgers University**
 - **Syracuse University**
 - **University of Illinois**

Review of Digital Librarianship Education

- Two are Master's Degree program
- /
- One is a post-bachelor's certificate and the other a post-master's certificate
- All have a mix of technical courses and non-technical courses.

Questions about Future of Education for Digital Librarianship

- In 2004, Johns Hopkins University moved from a degree in Digital Libraries to a Digital Technologies concentration. Is there a message in the decision to drop a concentration on Digital Libraries?
- Are DL programs necessary or has the practice and the field gone beyond the need for specific programs in digital librarianship?
- If separate DL programs or tracks are not needed, what changes are needed in our traditional programs ?

Current Research In Progress

- ALISE Research Grant – 2005 “Digital Librarians: Who Are They, What Skills Do They Need, and How Can They Be Educated? “
- IMLS Funding “Building an Effective Digital Library Curriculum ...” 2004-2006 (UIUC and IU)
- IFLA-Education and Training Research Grant – 2005 “Study of curricular trends for digital librarianship”

Future of Digital Librarianship Education in a Networked Society

In Conclusion:

- Are we too critical of LIS education's lack of initiative in meeting the educational needs of digital librarians?
- Should there be special programs for digital librarians or should all librarians be educated to work in a digital library environment?
- Are there other educational providers that are as appropriate; more appropriate providers of DL education?

Networking and Digital Librarianship

QUESTIONS?

COMMENTS?

**Good bye and Good Luck
in your Networking and
Digital Efforts!**



Thank You

Heather Moulaison

e-mail: moulaison@tcnj.edu

Terry Weech

e-mail: weech@uiuc.edu