Early feedback session planned

On Tuesday June 27, 1995 the Committee on Accreditation will host a series of meetings to obtain early feedback on the implementation of the 1992 Standards for Accreditation for Master's Programs in Library & Information Studies. These meetings will constitute a first round of evaluation for the process used to implement the Standards. The format for the day will include morning roundtable sessions in which panel chairs, deans/directors of the first eight schools to undergo evaluation, and selected panel members will meet together to discuss a variety of issues. A representative from the Association for Library and Information Science Education will also participate.

Issues to be discussed include: potential enhancements to the process; problems in documentation; specific suggestions for improvement in documentation and communication; panel recruitment, training, appointment and evaluation; logistics, scheduling and costs; and office support and consultation.

At the end of the morning session, results of these roundtable discussions will be presented to the Committee on Accreditation. In the afternoon, the Ad Hoc Advisory Panel to Revise the Accreditation Process (convened initially in 1992) will also review the results of the morning session and make recommendations to the Committee on Accreditation.

COA is scheduled to re-convene late Tuesday afternoon to determine what adjustments to the process are advisable at this time.

If you have comments or suggestions for this session, please contact the Committee on Accreditation or the Office for Accreditation.

COA plans standards strategy

During the spring COA planning and evaluation meeting in April, the Committee discussed the need for a systematic plan for evaluating the 1992 Standards for Accreditation of Master's Programs in Library & Information Studies and the review process. The plan will provide for interim reports to allow it to serve as a formative procedure. The goal is to produce a new edition of the Standards by 2001.

While recognizing that standards should not be changed too frequently, the Committee on Accreditation acknowledges the need to consider change more often than has been the practice in the past. Historically, accreditation standards revisions have occurred in 20-year cycles. After such lengthy tenure, revisions take years to accomplish at great expense. Balancing that against the quickly evolving changes in higher education and in the library and information studies field, clearly a more frequent, flexible, and incremental review is required.
From the COA Chair:

PERSPECTIVE

COA plans and evaluates

The Committee on Accreditation continued the momentum of Midwinter at our spring planning and evaluation meeting on April 7-9, 1995 and in our plans for the Annual Conference in June (see Upcoming Meetings list below). I hope you will be able to participate in the COA/COE/EA program at Annual Conference (see p. 3). This is your opportunity to contribute to a discussion of educational issues for our profession.

During the spring meeting, the COA discussed strategies for evaluation and review at many levels. One of the most stimulating discussions concerned our rapidly changing profession and I want to assure you that the accreditation process will not be stagnant. Please note our standards strategy item on page 1. Our interest in evaluation crystalized for some areas and steps are being taken in a number of areas to improve our processes.

The COA deliberation process is being refined and, as a result, the deliberations at Annual Conference will be greatly facilitated. Of a more immediate nature, a review of the accreditation documentation is being undertaken this month with the goal of clarifying certain points and standardizing language.

As an adjunct faculty member and an experienced practitioner, I encourage you to invite your colleagues to join the External Review Panel pool. We look to faculty and practitioners to participate on our panels. There are a number of criteria for panel members (see Prism 2(3) p.5). The most quantifiable criteria is “five years experience in the profession or in higher education or three years employment in an information-related field.” We are revising the application form and will be making copies available at Annual Conference. For copies of the application, ask COA members or check the OA table at conference.

The 1992 Standards, documentation, and list of accredited programs is available on the ALA Gopher. To access it, point your Gopher client to gopher.uic.edu port 70. The ALA menus and documents are under “The Library” option on the main menu.

Committee on Accreditation
American Library Association

Upcoming Meetings

Please join us for meetings of the Committee on Accreditation of the American Library Association. These meetings and other sessions sponsored by COA are scheduled as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ALA 1995 Annual Conference</th>
<th>June 25</th>
<th>June 26</th>
<th>June 27</th>
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<tr>
<td>Chicago, Illinois, June 25-26, 1995</td>
<td>2:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. COA</td>
<td>8:00 a.m. - 9:15 a.m. COA</td>
<td>8:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Feedback session</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 23 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. External Review Panel Seminar</td>
<td>8:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. COA</td>
<td>8:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. COA</td>
<td>2:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. Feedback session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 23 3:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. Meeting of ERP chairs</td>
<td>9:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. Conference program</td>
<td>8:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Feedback session</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 24 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. COA</td>
<td>2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. COA</td>
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<td>June 24 2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. COA</td>
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<td>June 25 8:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. COA</td>
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A culture of evidence

Prudence W. Dalrymple

One of the more important and interesting issues raised by the new accreditation process is the role of evidence in both the program presentation and the evaluation review. Many deans remember the 105 questions that were asked in the Guide to the Self-Study, and the “Sources of Evidence” that were listed in the 1972 Standards. In my experience, most deans and faculties are relieved not to be restricted to a standard format and required evidence. On the other hand, chairs and members of the panels who evaluate the program are charged to base their assessments on observations of reality. Knowing how much data to include in a program presentation involves seeking a balance between making unsupported statements and including vast amounts of evidence “to be on the safe side.” Achieving this balance is not easy, particularly in the early stages of the new accreditation process, and it is a struggle to provide appropriate substantive data to support judgements. I’d like to propose that this problem can be addressed by striving to create a “culture of evidence.”

By a “culture of evidence" I mean a commitment to grounding decisions on data. All institutions collect numeric and factual data that can be tapped to substantiate and strengthen what is said in a program presentation. Often all that is needed is the incentive to analyze and present it in a meaningful way. As the LIS community works together to refine the picture it has of itself as a field, there is ample opportunity to share experience on how to mine the data that is available and to present it in a clear and cogent way—not only for accreditation purposes, but to external constituents.

Planning a program presentation can be likened to designing a research project where the research question is “Does this program meet the Standards?” Additional questions might be: “Does the program meet its own objectives?” And just as importantly, “Why does it fail to meet these objectives?” As any good researcher knows, the data collected is driven by the question asked. Since the accreditation process is highly influenced by the individual nature of the program and its parent institution, not all programs will ask the same questions or collect the same data. The flexibility of the new process allows schools to individualize their approach to the program presentation. But just as research requires that the investigation be conducted in a systematic way, and that the data, analysis and results made available for peer review, so the program presentation and the accreditation review require that statements be open to further investigation. As academics, we require nothing less of our students.

The Committee on Accreditation is committed to basing its decisions on the data provided. COA, as it refines its annual reviewing process, is striving to develop a database of numeric and factual data to draw upon in analyzing the reports that accredited programs submit. Collecting the right data, analyzing it appropriately, and reporting it accurately are all areas of concern in the accreditation process. They are all essential elements in creating a “culture of evidence.”

COA/COE/EA program

The Committee on Accreditation, the ALA Committee on Education and the Education Assembly are co-sponsoring a discussion forum, Issues in Education for the Profession. The forum is scheduled for Monday, June 26, 1995, from 9:30 to 11:00 a.m. during the ALA Annual Conference in Chicago. Please consult the conference program for location.
Meet the OA staff

Prudence W. Dalrymple, Ph.D.
Director
312-280-2435
800-545-2433 ext. 2435
p.dalrymple@ala.org

Pru is responsible for planning, executing and implementing the accreditation function for library and information studies programs in the United States and Canada. She provides leadership within ALA, higher education, and the accreditation community. She is available for consultation throughout the accreditation process and works with the deans, directors and external review panel chairs, especially during the program presentation development stage of the process. As the Committee on Accreditation staff liaison, Pru is the primary contact for COA members.

Mary C. Taylor, M.L.S.
Assistant Director
312-280-2436
800-545-2433 ext. 2436
mary.taylor@ala.org

Mary shares major responsibility for the Office for Accreditation. Working with COA, she plans and implements the external review panel member recruitment, selection and training activities. She manages the interim reporting program. She is responsible for the Office communications program and is editor of PRISM. In the accomplishment of these responsibilities, Mary is available to deans, directors, chairs, faculty and the general public.

Vivica A. Williams
Administrative Assistant
312-280-2432
800-545-2433 ext. 2432
v.williams@ala.org

Vivica handles the day-to-day operations of the office. She keeps address records up-to-date, makes meeting arrangements for COA, produces a semi-annual list of accredited LIS programs, and implements the communications program. She performs support services for the director, assistant director, and COA.

Office for Accreditation, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611; fax: 312-280-2433.

External Review Panel seminar planned

On Friday, June 23, 1995, the Office for Accreditation is organizing a session for the External Review Panel pool members. Everyone with an application on file has been invited to participate in a three hour seminar. The agenda will address the accreditation environment, a typical review experience, preparing for the review, and what to expect during the review and afterward. Attending this session gains individual applicants priority status in being assigned to a panel.

On this same day, OA is providing another forum for individuals who have either served or are scheduled to serve as panel chairs. The discussion will include preparing for the review, managing the visit, and preparing the report.

For further information, please contact the Office for Accreditation.

ALISE forms ready in May

Data collection forms for the ALISE statistics will be sent out this year in late May. As a result of discussions at the ALISE and ALA Midwinter meetings, both groups agreed to make the forms available earlier this year so that the schools can complete those sections for which data are available during the summer. The due date will remain October 15, as in the past. The Committee on Accreditation agreed in 1992 to accept data submitted by schools on ALISE forms in order to eliminate duplicate data collection and to reduce the burden of reporting. Direct questions and suggestions to: Office for Accreditation, at 800-545-2433 ext. 2432 or to Tim Sineath, editor, ALISE statistics, tsineath@ukcc.uky.edu.
Dalrymple appointed to certification task force

Prudence Dalrymple, director of the Office for Accreditation, has been invited to serve on the National Policy Board on Higher Education Institutional Accreditation (NPB) Advisory Task Force on Certification. Certification is a new term being used by the NPB to refer to the review and approval of accrediting agencies, also referred to as recognition. The Task Force is charged to develop a plan that could lead to the creation of a certification process and to serve in an oversight and advisory capacity during implementation of the plan. The plan is expected to

- define the primary purposes and goals of accreditation;
- recommend one or more accreditation models to accomplish those purposes, and
- develop a mechanism to certify and monitor agencies that conduct the accreditation.

The plan will be recommended to the NPB and 45 college and university presidents who will meet in Washington on June 19-20, 1995. The plan will also be available to the accreditation and larger higher education community for comment. The group hopes to be a catalyst for a broad-based and beneficial conversation about accreditation in general and certification/recognition in particular. The Task Force members are:

- Daniel Aleshire, Associate Director
  Commission of Accrediting
  Association of Theological Schools
- Prudence Dalrymple, Director
  Office for Accreditation
  American Library Association
- L.M. (Mac) Detmer, Executive Director
  Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs
- William F. Dorrill, President
  Longwood College
- Robert Glidden, President
  Ohio University
- Norma Rees, President
  California State University at Hayward
- Howard Simmons, Executive Director
  Commission on Higher Education
  Middle States Assn of Colleges and Schools
- Billie Stewart
  National Policy Board on Higher Education Institutional Accreditation
- Douglas Ward, Associate Executive Director
  for Educational Affairs
  Department of Education
  American Osteopathic Association

COA analyzes fees, cost-benefit

At its spring meeting, the COA’s Cost Benefit Working Group reviewed the budget assumptions for the Office and COA. The Working Group consists of two public members and an LIS dean. Based on its review, the COA decided that an increase to the site visit fee was not appropriate at this time. COA will continue to work with the Office to gather data regarding the costs of site visits and will review the overall fee structure on a regular basis.

As part of its discussion on this issue, COA reviewed the present financial condition of the Office. Based on an overall projected budget, the ratio for the contribution of the American Library Association to that of the accredited programs is still 10 to 1. The annual fees paid by an accredited school to the American Library Association are approximately $670 ($500 annual fee plus present site visit fee of $750 amortized over seven years). This compares very favorably with similar agencies for the services provided. The Cost Benefit Working Group concluded that there is high value received by the accredited schools.
ASPA addresses planning and recognition

At its spring meeting held in Washington March 19-21, 1995, the Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors (ASPA) voted to seek a permanent staff member to administer its programs. It also charged the Board to develop a three to five year plan with short, medium, and long-term objectives. A report on both matters will be due at the August ASPA meeting.

Discussions regarding a recognition process continued. Due to changing conditions in higher education, if it becomes necessary, ASPA would propose to establish a national service/oversight organization for accreditation. ASPA voted to approve the final drafts of three statements on vision, values, and philosophy. It also approved a Code of Good Practice for a national service/oversight organization and for accrediting bodies themselves.

Professional development sessions addressed joint data collection, training of site visitors, conduct of joint site visits with other accrediting agencies, and interim reporting issues.

Program (cont. fr page 3)

The discussion will focus on educational issues for the profession and how ALA's role should or could be expanded. Questions will include: What are the educational implications for implementing ALA's Goal 2000 and how should these be carried out? How can library and information studies education contribute to ensure equity on the information highway?

Margaret Kimmel, SLIS, University of Pittsburgh and chair of COE is organizing this forum.