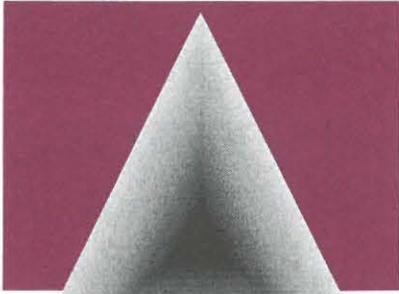


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PRISM

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Davis appointed	2
Publications online	4
COA hosts Alliance	4
USDE recognition	5

COA actions at Midwinter

The Committee on Accreditation (COA) has announced actions to continue accreditation under the 1992 *Standards for Accreditation of Master's Programs in Library and Information Studies*, of the following graduate programs leading to the first professional degree:

- Master of Library Service, School of Library and Information Studies, The University of Alabama;
- Master of Library and Information Studies, School of Library and Information Studies, University of Hawaii;
- Master of Library and Information Studies, Graduate School of Library and Information

Studies, McGill University;

- Master of Library Science, School of Library and Information Science, North Carolina Central University;
- Master of Library and Information Science, College of Library and Information Science, University of South Carolina.
- Master of Library and Information Science, Library and Information Science Program, Wayne State University.

Individuals wishing further information about a particular program, or information concerning the COA decision document, should contact the school. ▲

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Panel seminars scheduled

196

• The Office for Accreditation is organizing the session *Ins and Outs of Being a Review Panel Member* in Boston on Saturday June 8, 1996 from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. during the Special Libraries Association Annual Conference. This program will 1) introduce SLA members to the function of accreditation as an educational quality assurance mechanism, 2) encourage SLA members to nominate themselves and others as potential members of external review panels, and 3) provide focused training for potential external review panel members. The seminar is open to anyone interested in

attending; it is not limited to SLA members and there is no fee. To sign up, please contact Anne Marie Del Vecchio, director, Professional Development, SLA, 202-234-4700 x617 or anne@sla.org.

- On Friday, July 5, 1996 from 10:00 to 12:00, the Office for Accreditation is planning a seminar for the External Review Panel pool members. Everyone with an application on file is invited to participate. The agenda will address the accreditation environment, a typical review experience, preparing for the review, and what to expect during the review and

(continued on page 4)

Getting involved

Brooke E. Sheldon

546
This is a recruitment message . . . and it is intended for any and all faculty and/or deans who thus far have managed to live full and largely productive lives without a large involvement in the accreditation process. I will readily concede that it is possible to do this, but today's column is intended to make a pitch for your interest in, and commitment to becoming an external review panel member.

There are some disadvantages to being involved. First, and most obvious, is that it will require some time. You will have to participate in external review panel training. Second, you will have to spend three or four days at a school with your fellow panel members. Third, you will have to spend some time in writing an evaluation, although much of the burden (i.e., coordinating and final editing) of this is usually assumed by the chair of the panel. You will not be compensated for this work. Your travel expenses, however, will be paid. You will expend time that could be spent on projects that are deemed more important to your school, and for which the rewards are more tangible.

Why do I think you ought to consider it, anyway?

First of all, this will be of enormous help to you in gaining perspective about what is really going on in Library and Information Science education. It is not just what is happening at the program being evaluated, it is the insight provided by your teammates who will represent faculty from key specializations in our field and "real world" practitioners. I can't imagine that any dean would fail to see the benefits of having one or more faculty members participate externally in the accreditation process. The experience, the ideas you will encounter, will help you be a better faculty member in working with your colleagues in your home university.

Second, take a look at the leaders in LIS education over the past 25 years or so. Almost all of them from Shera to Holley and Reed to Robbins have been actively involved in both the accreditation process and the work of ALISE. When we have training sessions such as last year's teleconference, and the workshops conducted at ALA and other association meetings we can provide good information on how the process works but often not much attention is paid to the real attributes needed for a panel member. These include: intense listening skills, absolute integrity and ability to retain confidentiality, high degree of flexibility and ease in working under some pressure in a team environment.

Of course there are other ways of contributing to the accreditation process. It is possible to discreetly let the incoming president of ALA know of one's interest in serving as a member of COA, or one can actively lobby for such a position. But the first step, it seems to me, is to gain some grassroots experience by participating in external review panels. It may take quite awhile to actually receive an assignment because each review team is tailored to the programs specializations. So, my suggestion is, if you are interested, contact the Office for Accreditation. Talk with Mary Taylor or Prudence Dalrymple, and become part of the colorful history of LIS education. ▲

Davis appointed to COA

Hiram Davis, senior advisor to the Librarian of Congress for Staff Development and Staff Transition, has been appointed to the Committee on Accreditation. Betty Turock, ALA President, has appointed Dr. Davis to a two-year term which expires in 1998. Dr. Davis holds a Ph.D. from The University of Michigan. His research is in strategic planning, technology, diversity, education and training. Dr. Davis is a member of the ALA Council and has served as a member or chair on many ALA committees. ▲



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Why Prism? revisited

531
Prudence W. Dalrymple

Like the image of the prism that is on our masthead, the accreditation process is a triangulated one. Data from three independent, yet related, parties are brought together when an accreditation decision is rendered. One of these parties is the LIS program which reflects on itself through its Program Presentation, its response to the external review panel's report, and oral presentations by the dean or director. The program is accountable to its faculty and students, and to its parent institution. It also interacts with its constituent groups such as alumni, employers, and even corporate partners. Another party is the external review panel as it works with the program during the review, in its report, and through the chair's oral presentation. The external review panel performs a peer review function that provides both observation and analysis, and it is accountable to the Committee on Accreditation. The third party, the COA itself, reviews all the data presented to it through the Program Presentation, the External Review Panel Report, and the oral presentations. After weighing all the data equally, it renders its decision in the accreditation decision document. The COA is accountable to the professional association (ALA) whose membership empowers it to conduct accreditation, and to the outside agencies that review its policies and practices.

All three of these perspectives are independent from one another yet they contribute toward a balanced decision. While the "separation of powers" concept is inherent to the accreditation process, a consistent point of reference throughout this process is provided by the consultation and support of the director and the Office for Accreditation. The Office's

consultative role is to assist all three partners as they move through the process. Because staff do not contribute any data, and do not enter into decisions, they can act as a repository of information and insight about the process itself.

With the program, the staff consultant is available to work with deans, directors, and faculty as they initiate reaccreditation or candidacy. By serving as a collection point for information about the accumulated experience of other programs, valuable insights are captured and can be shared with others later on. It is for this reason that the director of the Office acts as the primary consultant, so that there is an opportunity for experience and insight to be collected and disseminated centrally. Issues and questions related to process can also be identified and examined to assure consistency and equity, while preserving the flexibility that is a hallmark of the new process. And finally, the staff consultant watches for potential problem areas before they become troublesome.

When COA deliberates on a program, it balances three perspectives—that of the school, that of the panel, and its own, as a representative of the profession and the public interest. If one perspective is given short shrift, or if another is given too much importance, the clear analytic light of the prism is deflected and ceases to function optimally. The role of the consultant is to work with all three perspectives, to ensure that the full measure of attention is given to each viewpoint, and that the communication channels among the participants are clear. ▲

Thank You

The Office for Accreditation sends each program enough copies of Prism for each faculty member. Thanks to the programs' staff members who handle that local distribution. If your program needs more copies, please notify the Office for Accreditation. ▲

Publications available online

158
The new *Library & Information Studies Directory of Institutions Offering Accredited Master's Programs* is currently available on the ALA Gopher (gopher://gopher.ala.org). The *LIS Directory* replaces the biannual list of accredited programs, the *Graduate Programs in Library and Information Studies: Descriptive Information* and the *Guidelines for Choosing a Master's Program in Library and Information Studies*.

The following accreditation modules were revised and are now available on disk or through the ALA Gopher:

- *An Overview*

- *Guidelines for the Program Presentation*
- *Guidelines for the External Review Panel*
- *Guidelines for Appeals*

The disk includes a search tool for your convenience in locating items of interest. The disk is made available through the generous efforts of Dr. Charles Rubenstein, School of Information and Library Science at Pratt Institute. For copies of the disk which includes the above listed manuals plus the 1992 *Standards* and the *Outcomes Assessment Resource Manual*, please contact the Office for Accreditation. ▲

COA hosts Alliance

254
The Alliance for Education and Training for Knowledge Work met from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. on Saturday January 20, 1996 in San Antonio. Brooke Sheldon, chair of the Committee on Accreditation, welcomed the attendees and introduced Jane Robbins, Dean of the School of Library and Information Studies at Florida State University, who facilitated both this meeting and the initial meeting in July 1995. Following introductions, the group reviewed the draft statement for a continuing role of the Alliance prepared by the working group in November 1995. Discussion focused on defining the boundaries of the Alliance. The group expressed the need to prioritize goals and activities and to implement at least one project quickly to test the benefit of having an Alliance. Many participants made comments and suggestions for improving the draft statement. These will be incorporated in a second draft statement.

The group indicated an interest in developing various models of organization and membership structures. The models would recognize the value of maintaining flexibility so that groups could choose whether to participate in

specific activities. The participants expressed an interest in continuing to meet to further define their roles and develop a clear vision of a shared mission.

The following organizations were represented: American Association of Law Libraries, American Library Association, American Society for Information Science, Association for Library and Information Science Education, Association of Independent Information Brokers, Association of Research Libraries, Canadian Library Association, Council on Library Resources, Medical Library Association, National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, Society of American Archivists, Special Libraries Association. ▲

Seminars (cont. fr. page 1)

afterward. Attending this session gains individual applicants priority status in being assigned to a panel. For further information, please contact the Office for Accreditation. ▲

ALA drops USDE recognition?

437
The American Library Association (ALA) has announced that it will not seek recognition as an accrediting agency from the United States Department of Education.

The decision was reached after a meeting on November 29, 1995 of the Department of Education's National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity attended by ALA President Betty J. Turock and Prudence Dalrymple, director of the ALA Office for Accreditation.

Turock said the decision was made after it became clear that ALA falls outside the scope of recognition permitted by the Secretary under Section 496 (m) of the Higher Education Act of 1992 as amended.

The statute that re-authorized the Higher Education Act of 1992 permits the Secretary to recognize only those agencies whose accreditation plays a "gatekeeping role" to establish eligibility for non-HEA federal funding. This change affected the relationships among some accrediting agencies, institutions of higher education and the federal government.

ALA's Standards for Accreditation require that the parent institution for U.S. programs be accredited by one of six regional accreditors, which provide the gatekeeping function.

Turock pointed out that ALA, like other accrediting agencies such as the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business and the Council on Social Work Education, is free to establish accrediting practices deemed most appropriate for its circumstances.

She said the Secretary of Education has described ALA as among the programmatic accrediting agencies that "provide an excellent measure of quality assurance in their respective fields of accreditation."

In keeping with its commitment to meeting the highest standards in accreditation practices, Turock said ALA will continue to participate in non-governmental accreditation orga-

nizations such as the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation and the Association for Specialized and Professional Accreditors.

On February 1, 1996 Dr. Dalrymple received the following letter from Richard W. Riley, Secretary, United States Department of Education,

"My staff has informed me that the Committee on Accreditation of the American Library Association has voluntarily withdrawn from recognition as a nationally recognized accrediting agency. I understand the agency has taken this action because it falls outside of the scope of recognition permitted me by Section 496(m) of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended.

I wish to acknowledge the excellent work the Committee on Accreditation has done over the years in providing an outstanding measure of quality assurance in your particular field of specialization, and I am confident that the Committee will continue to represent the highest standards of quality assurance in higher education. Please give my regards to the members of the Committee, and thank them for me for their continuing commitment to improving the quality of higher education in this country." ▲

Are you bilingual?

62
External review panel members who are bilingual (Spanish/English or French/English) are needed for several program reviews. If you have a speaking/reading knowledge of Spanish or French or both, please send email or fax a note to Mary Taylor and indicate in which languages you are proficient and whether you have a reading knowledge or speaking knowledge or both. ▲

Committee on Accreditation
American Library Association
Upcoming Meetings

Meetings of the Committee on Accreditation of the American Library Association are as follows:

SPRING

- COA Spring Meeting*
Chicago, Illinois, April 12-14, 1996

SUMMER

- ALA 1996 Annual Conference
New York, New York, July 5-8, 1996
July 5 2:00 p.m.-5:30 p.m.
July 6 8:00 a.m.-5:30 p.m.
July 7 2:00 p.m.-5:30 p.m.
July 8 8:00 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

**Closed meetings*

ALA network addresses change

Effective March 31, 1996, the ALA personal addresses, listservs, gopher, Web site and FTP site will have new electronic addresses:

- <listname>@ala.org
- gopher.ala.org or gopher://gopher.ala.org
- http://www.ala.org
- ftp.ala.org

Note the new addresses for the Office for Accreditation staff on this issue's masthead. If you send a message to an old address, you will get an error message with the correct form of address.

For more information, email Rob Carlson at rcarlson@ala.org or phone 800-545-2433 x2437.



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