

PRISM

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COA announces accreditation action

The Committee on Accreditation (COA) of the American Library Association (ALA) has announced accreditation action taken at the 2001 ALA Annual Conference under the *Standards for Accreditation of Master's Programs in Library and Information Studies*.

COA has continued accreditation of the following graduate program leading to the first professional degree in library and information studies and has scheduled the program's next review in the year indicated: Master of Information Sciences program at the University of Puerto Rico (2008).

Graduate programs leading to the first professional degree in library and information studies at the following institutions will be reviewed in academic year 2001-2002:

- University of Arizona
- Clark Atlanta University
- University of Iowa
- Louisiana State University
- Pratt Institute
- University of South Florida
- University of Southern Mississippi
- Syracuse University
- University of Tennessee

Individuals wishing further information about a particular program should contact the program directly. [A directory of accredited programs](#) is available at the Office for Accreditation web site.

The American Library Association is a leading force in accreditation, having evaluated educational programs to prepare librarians since its creation in 1924. ALA's Committee on Accreditation is recognized by the Council for Higher Education

Accreditation (CHEA) as a reliable authority to determine the quality of education offered by graduate programs in the field of library and information studies.

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From the COA Chair: **PERSPECTIVE**

COA priorities for 2001-2002

Jane Robbins

Colleagues,

I am pleased to have been appointed Chair of the [Committee on Accreditation](#) for my fourth and final year on the Committee. I trust this will be a year of fully open and candid communication between the Committee, the Office, and all interested in ALA accreditation standards and processes. Elsewhere in *PRISM* you will read about the Committee's strategic plans, but here let me state that priorities for 2001-2002 in addition of course to the ongoing process of program reviews and accreditation decisions, are four:

- 1) Appointment of a Taskforce to report to COA with the responsibility to review the 1992 Standards for needed revisions. [Note: A previous and first review Taskforce, chaired by Carl Orgren, did their work in 1997-1998.]
- 2) Continue cooperation with the ALA Ad Hoc Task Force on External Accreditation
- 3) Finalize the revision of the Accreditation Decision Appeals Process
- 4) Clarification/communication regarding:
 - a) Length of time between comprehensive reviews
 - b) The nature of continuous review
 - c) Definition of reviews that are:
 - i. virtual
 - ii. focused

Please feel free to contact me, Jane Robbins, about issues related to accreditation through the [Office of Accreditation](#), 800-545-2433 extension 2432, or by e-mailing me directly at [Florida State University](#), 850-644-2216.

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CHEA recognition update

Ann L. O'Neill

I am pleased to announce that the American Library Association and Committee on Accreditation (COA) practices have been reviewed and approved by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). [CHEA](#) is the national body responsible for recognizing agencies that engage in professional, specialized, and regional accreditation.

Recognition by CHEA means that ALA and COA meet a set of requirements, best practices, and guidelines that ensure a high quality review of programs. Meeting these requirements is an indication that ALA's accreditation process respects and protects the rights of institutions, programs, students, and the profession and public-at-large.

The purpose and process of CHEA recognition is similar to our comprehensive reviews. The purpose is to ensure the continuous evaluation, assessment, and improvement of the accreditation policies and procedures used by COA and ALA. As part of the process, we developed an application document to demonstrate our compliance with the five areas in CHEA's recognition standards: advances academic quality, demonstrates accountability, encourages purposeful change and needed improvement, employs appropriate and fair procedures in decision-making, and continually reassesses accreditation practices. The application document was reviewed by a recognition committee. In March of 2001, Rick Forsman, Chair of COA, and I met with the recognition committee to answer questions about the document. During our meeting, the recognition committee expressed no reservations about the rigor or nature of ALA's accreditation process.

On May 7, 2001, ALA and COA received our recognition letter from the Council for Higher Education Accreditation. The letter states: "*At its meeting on May 1, 2001 the CHEA board of directors reviewed the recommendation of the CHEA committee on recognition regarding the recognition application submitted by the American Library Association. The board of directors accepted the committee recommendation and recognized the American Library Association.*" ([full text of letter](#)) We will submit an interim report in five years and our next review will be in ten years.

ALA and COA have been recognized since 1975 by the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation and the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation, the recognition agencies that preceded CHEA. We are also a member of the Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors ([ASPA](#)) and follow its Code of Good Practice.

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External panel service "energizing"

Christian M. Boissonnas

I had the chance last year to participate as a panelist in the external review of the graduate program in Library and Information Science at the Université de Montréal. There were four of us appointed and two observers. Of the members, I was the only practitioner panelist, having spent most of my 35 years in technical services. The other panelists were school deans or had long experience with library education issues. So, why me? Was it because of my one-semester stint as adjunct instructor at a nearby school? No. The key factors were two: I had expressed interest to the Office of Accreditation in being involved. Second, the Université de Montréal provides the only accredited French library education program in North America. On that front my credentials were impeccable; I am a native French speaker. Still, I was concerned about my lack of experience.

When the external panel met in Montréal, we had already spent substantial time reviewing documents provided by the school. In addition I had read everything I could lay my hands on about ALA accreditation of library schools. The chair of our panel had assigned to us specific areas to review on behalf of the group as a whole (curriculum, faculty, students, administration and financial support, and facilities). My area was facilities, which fit better with my experience as a long-time technical services manager than any other.

The visit at the school was a thrill, from being picked up at the airport on a Sunday by a school staff member, to individual meetings with faculty and students, and to long discussions with my colleagues on the panel. These colleagues were very articulate and knowledgeable people who taught me much about the intricacies of a library school program. We each wrote a section of the report which dealt with our assigned area, and edited the complete work.

The experience went very smoothly, thanks in no small part to our chair who, in close cooperation with the school, organized our visit. The two outstanding impressions that remain with me involve the students and my fellow panel members. The connection with students, seeing them as the librarians and information scientists of the future, was exhilarating. They were informed, engaged, and had definite opinions. Those who worry about the future of librarianship can relax. With these students and others like them entering the profession the future is very bright, even if we can't see well what it looks like. And my colleagues, tolerant of my ignorance, reaffirmed the bond that exists between library educators and practitioners, a bond which often seems to exist only as an abstraction.

I understand that practitioners are not as involved with the accreditation process as they could be. That is too bad. Having been part of a team once, if I get the chance, I will do it again. Do not miss the chance of being on an accreditation team if you have the opportunity. It is energizing and uplifting.

The author Christian Boissonnas is Research and Statistics Librarian at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. He can be reached at cmb3@cornell.edu.

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Workshop prepares external reviewers

Professionals from across the U.S. and Canada, from public and special libraries, academia, and private industry gathered June 15 during ALA's 2001 Annual Conference in San Francisco for a day-long External Review Panel Workshop. Workshop facilitators Marion Reid and Brooke Sheldon offered participants a 360-degree look at the program review process, highlighting their experience with external review panels, program and institutional administrators, faculty members, the Committee on Accreditation, and the Office for Accreditation.

Applying the *Standards for Accreditation of Master's Programs in Library and Information Studies*, groups worked on a case study utilizing a sample Program Presentation and External Panel Report. Table discussion leaders Art Gunn, Ed O'Neill, Jim Schmidt, Tim Sineath, Peggy Sullivan, Phil Turner, and Tom Wilding successfully met the challenge of keeping group activities within time limits so that groups could share their analysis in plenary session.

Phil Turner reprised the ever-popular skit *The Exit Interview* in which "appropriate" panelist interaction with program and institutional representatives is demonstrated. Tom Wilding received particularly good response to his role as "COA Conscience" showing virtuosity on bell and duck call.

Suggestions made on evaluations will be worked into the design of next year's workshop at ALA's Annual 2002 Conference in Atlanta. Until then, learn more about the external review panel process by visiting the [resource page](#).

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Spectrum Scholarships

Applications for this year's round of \$5,000 Spectrum Initiative scholarships will be accepted beginning October 1, 2001. Fifty \$5,000 scholarships are available. Visit the [Spectrum Initiative website](#) for more information.

Through scholarship programs and other initiatives, Spectrum has been increasing minority representation in library and information studies programs. This effort is helping to fulfill the goal of developing "a representative workforce that reflects the communities served by all libraries in the new millennium."

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