

PRISM

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COA announces accreditation actions

The American Library Association's (ALA) Committee on Accreditation (COA) announced accreditation actions taken at the 2002 ALA Midwinter Conference under the 1992 Standards for Accreditation of Master's Programs in Library and Information Studies.

COA has continued accreditation of the following graduate programs leading to the first professional degree in library and information studies and has scheduled the next review in the year indicated:

- Master of Arts program offered by the School of Information Resources and Library Science at the University of Arizona (2005); released from conditional status
- Master of Library and Information Science offered by the School of Library and Information Science at Louisiana State University (2005)
- Master of Science in Library and Information Science offered by the School Of Information and Library Science at Pratt Institute (2008)
- Master of Library Science offered by the School of Information Studies at Syracuse University (2008)

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

- University of Alabama
- Clark Atlanta University
- University of Iowa
- McGill University
- North Carolina Central University
- University of South Carolina

- University of South Florida
- University of Southern Mississippi
- University of Tennessee
- Wayne State University

Further information about a particular program can be received by contacting the school. A complete list of programs and degrees accredited by COA can be found at <http://www.ala.org/alaorg/oa/lisdir.html>.

The ALA is leading force in accreditation, having evaluated educational programs to prepare librarians since its creation in 1924. The COA 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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Committee on Accreditation Roster

Jane Robbins, Chair

Dean, School of Information Studies
Florida State University
robbins@lis.fsu.edu
Term expires 2002

Jennifer Cargill

Dean of Libraries
Louisiana State University
Term expires 2004

Beverly Lynch

Professor, Graduate School of Education and Information Studies
University of California, Los Angeles
Term expires 2002

Bertrum H. MacDonald

Director, School of Library and Information Studies
Dalhousie University
Term expires 2004

Tana Massaro

Swedish Covenant Hospital
Term expires 2005

Stephen Matthews

Librarian/Media Coordinator, Audrey Bruce Currier Library
Foxcroft School
Term expires 2002

Sharon M. McPherron

Public Member
Term expires 2002

C. Allen Nichols

Director, Wadsworth Public Library
Term expires 2003

Charles T. Townley

Professor, College of Education
New Mexico State University, Las Cruces
Educational Management and Development Dept.
Term expires 2003

Philip M. Turner

Dean, School of Library and Information Sciences
University of North Texas
Term Expires 2004

Robert Wedgeworth

President, Laubach Literacy
Term Expires 2005

Mary Elizabeth (Ma'lis) Wendt

Associate Director
The New York Public Library
Term Expires 2005

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From the Director: **OUTLOOK**

Task Force on External Accreditation

Ann L. O'Neill

The work of the [Task Force on External Accreditation](#) provided a forum to express new, old, or radical ideas about library and information studies (LIS) education and accreditation. In this issue [Susan Martin](#), Chair of the task force, [Michael Eisenberg](#), Dean at the School of Information, University of Washington, and [Jane Robbins](#), Chair of COA, offer their views on the issues raised by the task force. This is my perspective on

the task force as an ALA staff liaison to the group.

Everyone at the meetings or hearings I attended had an opinion about the proposal or other topics under discussion. Some people applauded the idea, but thought it didn't go far enough or fast enough; others liked aspects of the proposal but wanted more time to review and consider the implications; and others said it was too radical or uncalled for. Despite the continuum of opinions, an important outcome of these meetings was new or renewed conversation about accreditation and LIS education between and among many groups. No matter what further steps the Executive Board takes, the lines of communication should remain open and the dialogue should continue.

At every meeting, however, I heard misstatements or misconceptions about accreditation, ALA, and COA. Often, someone would correct the speaker or ask me for clarification. Still, each misstatement made me think about its origin; for example, was the person unfamiliar with ALA accreditation or were our documents not clear on this topic? Although in the Office we are continuing our efforts to reduce accreditation jargon, to improve clarity of documents, and to provide more information on our website, these misunderstandings have convinced me we should do more. I believe it is imperative that Office staff become more proactive in our efforts to educate LIS educators, members of ALA and other library and information associations, employers, students, and the public about COA and the ALA accreditation process. Also, those of us involved with ALA accreditation must encourage greater participation in the process by LIS educators and professionals from more diverse backgrounds.

I look forward to further discussions about accreditation and LIS education. My work with the external accreditation task force was a great experience - I had the opportunity to learn more about the organization and procedures of other specialized accreditors, to understand more about our profession, to hear opinions I might not otherwise have, and to meet more friends and colleagues.

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From the COA Chair: PERSPECTIVE

Everything old is new again

Jane Robbins

"Everything old is new again" is an apt cliché for the COA Chair's springtime column as well as for the idea of an accreditation body situated externally from ALA. In fact, the "new" idea of an external accrediting body that would develop standards and processes and manage the accreditation of library and information studies professional education programs dates back to discussions held in the 1920s that preceded the founding of the Board of Education for Librarianship in 1924. External accreditation does appear to be an idea that finds a forum approximately every 15 to 20 years which certainly can be

interpreted as an indicator of an idea with merit.

The Devil's in the Detail

Each time the idea of an external accrediting body surfaces it meets with significant support. The most recent surfacing has been that spearheaded by the Ad Hoc Task Force on External Accreditation. Certainly the Task Force proposal gained the broadest support to date and ventured furthest into detailing the structure, governance, and funding of such a body. Perhaps the Task Force's "dismissal with thanks" by the Executive Board in January is simply a hiatus in the progress made, but if history informs us on this matter, the idea of the external accrediting body will languish again for some years. This would, I think indeed be unfortunate. So, note the following:

We'll Take That under Advisement

The Committee on Accreditation has been actively monitoring the work of the Task Force and the various responses to its work. Committee members have agreed that there has been valuable progress made and the outcomes deserve further consideration. The agenda for the spring meeting of the Committee has a half-day session focused on the structure of the Committee as well as the related fundamental question of the definition of the field for which ALA accredits.

Stay tuned.

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External Accreditation Task Force Chair's perspective

Susan Martin, President, SKM Associates, Inc.

With the establishment of the [Congress on Professional Education](#) in 1999, came a series of challenges to the library and information studies profession regarding the manner in which we recruit, train, and retain qualified professionals for positions in libraries. The brainstorming sessions suggested pursuit of a number of topics, among which was the concept of an external accrediting process, independent of the American Library Association and possibly related to work done by other associations in similar fields.

A [task force](#) was created by the ALA Executive Board with the charge of determining whether an external accreditation process was possible and reasonable. This task force began its work in the fall of 1999 with representatives from ALA membership and other library and information associations. The group quickly came to the consensus that an external accreditation process unrelated to the membership-related structure that currently exists, would be feasible and reasonable.

Task force members devised a structure that would allow full representation of ALA and

its colleague associations on a governing body and an accreditation committee for programs of library and information studies. This structure was established in such a way that expansion of program accreditation both vertically (to bachelors and Ph.D. programs) and horizontally (to other areas of information studies) would be possible.

Realizing that it was necessary to bring a solid proposal to the [ALA Council](#), the task force contacted eight colleague associations to ask for their willingness to participate in such an accreditation process, including a financial commitment. Positive commitments were received from seven associations: [AALL](#) - American Association of Law Libraries, [ALISE](#) - Association of Library and Information Science Educators, [ASIS](#) - American Society for Information Science, [CLA](#) - Canadian Library Association, [MLA](#) - Medical Library Association - Modern Language Association, [SAA](#) - Society of American Archivists, and [SLA](#) - Special Libraries Association. Subsequent to this, the task force received a positive and unsolicited commitment from [ARMA](#) - The American Records Management Association.

Task force members made presentations and held hearings at various library and information meetings at ALA's Annual Conference 2001 and met with the ALA Council in round table discussions designed to evoke questions as well as answers. The majority of the discussions were positive, in favor of the proposal being extended by the task force. Two issues that have yet to be resolved have to do with the amount of control being given up by ALA, and the relative weight of the ALA's contribution to the new organization as reflected in the new governance structure.

At ALA's Midwinter Conference 2002, the [Executive Board](#) held a lengthy and substantive conversation about external accreditation. The Board determined that the task force had fulfilled its charge. With the various associations that have agreed to work with ALA toward the future of accreditation, the Executive Board has appropriately determined that the next steps are in their hands. The task force is delighted with this decision, and looks forward to a revitalization of accreditation in a manner that reflects all library and information studies associations.

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LIS education & accreditation: a dean's perspective

Mike Eisenberg, Professor and Dean, Information School of the University of Washington

The purpose of this short article is simple and direct: to clear up some apparently widely-held misconceptions about library education today, so that people in the field and those of us in higher education can work together for the improvement of libraries and librarianship. I believe that there are some serious misconceptions about library education programs, and we need to clear the air so that we can move forward together.

Misconception #1: Library schools are closing or threatened.

While it is true that there was a wave of library school closings in the past, that is not the reality today. Library programs today are thriving. There are more student slots in master's degree library education programs than ever. This is a result of increases in on-campus enrollment as well as distance learning offerings. Many schools have achieved new status and clout. Syracuse University, for example, is moving to a completely renovated building at the center of campus. Florida State University now has over 1,200 students across its degree programs and has one of the most prestigious endowed chairs on the campus. My own school, the University of Washington, has moved from an almost invisible program governed under the Graduate School and housed in a corner of the library to a central and independent unit with dean-level status and located in the newest building on campus.

There are fairly new library degree programs, the Master of Information Science at the University of Puerto Rico for example. Valdosta State University (Georgia) is developing a program and the University of Denver is rebuilding theirs. Both are seeking accreditation.

Misconception #2: Schools who change their names and no longer include library in the title are no longer committed to libraries and librarianship.

Much as librarians of all types -academic, school, public, special-have expanded the scope and nature of their work to include the full range of information and technology resources, services and systems, the schools have expanded their nature and scope. The 21st century information school is inclusive in nature embracing the full range of information and library careers. Good cataloging dictates assigning an inclusive, broad term to describe such schools, rather than a laundry list of every program (library science, information management, information science, informatics, information systems, information policy, etc.). Many schools are opting to simply use "information" in the title as this captures the common thread among all programs and also sends a powerful message on campus and in society. The fact that these schools now include programs that educate information professionals for environments other than libraries does not lessen the schools' commitment to libraries. Library programs are stronger and command more resources than ever. At my school, for example, we were able to expand enrollment in just the library program by over 100 students along with adding new undergraduate and graduate degree programs.

Misconception #3: When schools merge with other units on campus (communications, education, computer science), library science takes a back seat.

The reality in higher education administration is consolidation of small programs into larger units with more critical mass in terms of faculty, students, and resources. Universities are not singling out library education; we see this happening in journalism, communications, human development, and design. In library education, we have clear

examples of programs that are thriving in larger units-Rutgers University, the University of Hawaii, and UCLA, for example. Library and information science faculty are versatile and often assume leadership positions within these new schools.

Misconception #4: Library education programs no longer educate children's and young adult librarians...or catalogers.

Schools today strive to be inclusive-with programs covering the full range of library and information careers-and children's and youth services work is still a major part of almost all library education programs. Certainly, there is a supply and demand issue (i.e., there are more jobs than people to fill them), but schools continue to educate solid numbers of students who go into children's, young adult, and school library work. The solution is for schools, professional organizations, and people in the field to work together to recruit students interested in this kind of work and to ensure that the programs provide a range of learning opportunities in the schools and communities. That's what we are doing at the University of Washington. In fact, our first major fund-raising effort is for a new endowed chair in children's and youth services, one honoring our most distinguished alumnus, Beverly Cleary.

As for cataloging, well, it's only the hottest topic in the field and in our education programs! Cataloging and classification, taxonomies and metadata-these are the areas of knowledge and skills most in demand.

Misconception #5: Library and information schools oppose accreditation.

At the last conference of the Association of Library and Information Science Education, the deans and directors of accredited schools reaffirmed their commitment to accreditation and to ALA's involvement in accreditation. The schools are also eager to be centrally involved in pursuing ways to broaden the discussion about guidelines and standards, accreditation of areas in the information field other than library science, and involving other professional organizations in the process. There was a recent proposal to ALA Council related to this, but the deans and directors felt a need to be brought into the planning process from the beginning as well as facilitation of a genuine exchange of ideas.

The bottom line concerning library education is: our schools are alive and well, thriving in fact. There are tremendous opportunities in our information society. Faculty and staff at the library and information schools are eager to work with librarians, professional organizations, employers, and others in the field to continue to move us all to center stage.

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ERP opportunities

Library and information professionals who serve on External Review Panels often describe the experience as invigorating and enriching, both professionally and personally. As with most volunteer efforts, it gives back to the participant more than it takes and builds community within the profession.

The charge of External Review Panels is to verify and report to the ALA's Committee on Accreditation about the information in the Program Presentation documentation. Visit our web page [External Review Panel Member Information](#) for details and resources including the [web form](#) for signing up to serve.

Workshops on External Review Panel service are given by library and information professionals experienced in the process. The next workshop will be held at the ALA's Annual Conference 2002 in Atlanta on Friday, June 14, from 12:00-4:30 PM at the Ritz Hotel. Invitation letters will be mailed for the session in late April. If you are interested in participating, contact Karen O'Brien in the Office for Accreditation (kobrien@ala.org).

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Revised accreditation process draft

Renée McKinney

The ALA Office for Accreditation has drafted a revised accreditation process document. Entitled *Accreditation Process Policies and Procedures (AP3)*, the document pulls together in one resource previous versions of *An Overview*, *Guidelines for the Program Presentation*, *Guidelines for the External Review Panel*, and *Guidelines for Appeals*.

AP3 reflects changes to the accreditation process since the process documents were originally published. These changes have been in place for some time, but were previously tracked through an errata sheet that was enclosed with copies of the documents. The current draft document includes changes in the accreditation process adopted by COA as of January 1, 2002 and reflects comments on flow, clarity, and consistency provided by deans, directors, and chairs of programs, as well as External Review Panel chairs who have served since 1994. Programs that have recently undergone a comprehensive review will find the policies and procedures to be essentially the same.

The most significant change in accreditation process and procedures is in the "Guidelines to Appeals" section. Following a careful study of appeal practices of other specialized accreditors, the Committee revised its appeal process, and submitted it to legal counsel for review. At the 2002 Midwinter meeting, the appeal process in this draft was approved by the ALA Board, which has final authority on the "Guidelines for Appeals." The Board is expected to take action on the final appeal document no later than the ALA 2002 Annual Conference in June 2002. The final document, *Accreditation Process Policies*

and Procedures, will include the "Guidelines for Appeals" section and is planned for distribution in August or September 2002.

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Panelists recognized

The accreditation review process requires a substantial commitment of time and energy by External Review Panels on so many levels. The people who make this commitment to assuring the quality of the masters level programs in library and information studies deserve recognition and thanks.

On behalf of all the constituencies vested in LIS accreditation, appreciation is extended to the following panelists who served in the fall 2001 academic term:

Chairs of Panels

Carol Doll
Jose-Marie Griffiths
Barbara Moran
C. James Schmidt

Panelists

Gail W. Avery
Marcia Bates
Lorene B. Brown
Joseph Busch
John Cronin
John D'Amicantonio
Prudence Dalrymple
Andrew Dillon
Joan Durrance
Judith J. Field
Mary Helms
Maria Chavez-Hernandez
Marjorie M. K. Hlava
Edward Garten
Phil Mulvaney
Sydney Pierce
Marion Reid
Donna Shannon
Herman Totten

Lamar Veatch

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Educators meet with COA at ALISE 2002

Renée McKinney

Over 100 educators attended the ALA Committee on Accreditation's (COA) open meeting held during the 2002 [Association of Library and Information Studies Educators](#) (ALISE) conference in January. Activities focused on discussing the merits of various accreditation decision scenarios. Attendees heard brief presentations from COA members past and present, then worked in small groups on the accreditation decision scenarios and reported to the whole group.

COA members and Office for Accreditation staff circulated among the tables and recorded comments from the small group discussions and captured the small group reports. Here is a synopsis of what was recorded:

- **Reports:** Although reports provide the opportunity to keep COA informed of program developments, they seem to have no direct effect on their accreditation status. Changing this would be more in keeping with the spirit of continuous review
- **Comprehensive Reviews:** Attendees said that they wanted to have more preparation time, more guidance from COA for the comprehensive review via concrete examples, and more consistent decision-making.
- **Conditional Status:** Attendees asked for different terminology to describe conditional status. It was also suggested that a need exists for ways to end conditional status early through annual reporting and/or focussed visits, rather than through a comprehensive review.
- **External Review Panel:** Attendees asked to have the role of ERP's in comprehensive reviews clarified via more training for both panel members and program representatives. It was also requested that COA revisit the issue of ERP judgements on programs' compliance to the Standards.
- **Length of Review:** Overall, attendees expressed a preference for standardized review periods based on compliance with codified standards, rather than a flexible period.
- **Standards:** Attendees suggested adding a quantitative aspect to the Standards to make COA's decision-making more transparent and predictable.
- **Appeals:** Attendees asked that all accreditation decisions be appealable-not just withdrawals and denials.

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ERP Chair workshop

Library and information professionals involved in external review panel service gathered in New Orleans at ALA's Midwinter Conference in January 2002 to have a focused, full afternoon devoted to the challenges of chairing panels. This expanded workshop format gave attendees a chance to hear how their colleagues approach the work and gave everyone a chance to grapple with specific problem scenarios. June Lester, Professor in the School of Library and Information Studies at the University of Oklahoma, provided expertise in developing the agenda, the problem scenarios, and she facilitated the workshop.

Topics presented were:

- **Advanced Planning** presented by Bob Grover, Dean and Professor, Emporia State University
- **Conducting the Visit** presented by Ed O'Neill, Consulting Research Scientist, OCLC
- **Completing and Delivering the Report** presented by Danny Wallace, Director, School of Library and Information Studies, University of Oklahoma
- **Getting Organized as a New Chair** presented by Barbara Ford, Assistant Commissioner, Central Library Services, Chicago Public Library

Presenters emphasized the need for panelists, especially panel chairs, to go into a program review with a solid understanding of [ALA's standards for accreditation](#) and the program's self-study report, the Program Presentation. As presenters concluded, they joined attendees at their tables to work through a specific problem scenario that had been developed from review experiences. Each group reported out to the whole group on their problem solving strategies.

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Office staff changes

There have been two changes in the Office for Accreditation staff since the last issue.

[Karen O'Brien](#) was promoted to Assistant Director effective August 21, 2001. Previously Karen was the Office's Program Officer. Her experience and higher education backgrounds have allowed her to take on the new duties quickly. Responsibilities of the position include developing training activities, overseeing Office publications, and

working with AASL/NCATE reviews for school library media programs.

[Renée McKinney](#) joined the Office for Accreditation staff as Program Officer on November 5, 2001. Renée has a MILS from the University of Michigan and experience in publishing, records and project management, and reference service in academic libraries. Her primary duties are to coordinate meetings and training activities, edit and coordinate Office publications, track annual reports from LIS programs, and oversee management of Office and COA files. Please join us in welcoming Renée to ALA and the Office for Accreditation.

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